

WORSHIP

The Bible teaches that the church comes together on the first day of the week for the purpose of worshiping God (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:12). It is appropriate to ask how to worship and to discover what worship means. We must also inquire as to the object or focus of our worship. Any dictionary will describe worship as an act of adoration or reverence given to or directed toward deity. Worship involves man but is not directed at man.

Worship has been a part of man's life from the earliest days of creation. Both Cain and Abel were found to offer sacrifices unto God (Genesis 4). In this first example of worship, we find both Cain and Abel giving a portion of their goods to God. Jehovah certainly had no need of the items brought, but desired the attitude that was to accompany such devotion. It is noteworthy that Cain's worship to God was not acceptable (Genesis 4:5). So we see that from the earliest, worship is restricted. That is, some worship is acceptable and some is not. The judgment of what is acceptable does not lie with man but with God Himself. We further observe that God allows no worship other than that directed to Him alone (Exodus 34:14; Matthew 4:10).

One may also have good intentions and a desire to worship God but do so incorrectly. We know that a good conscience and good intentions are not sufficient to please God. Paul said he never violated his conscience even while persecuting the Church (Acts 23:1). This same Paul found some people, during his missionary journeys, who worshiped ignorantly and he immediately set about trying to correct their misunderstandings (Acts 17:23).

In John 4:24, Jesus speaks about worship and concludes by saying that the "true worshipper...must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." It is not possible to worship correctly without worshipping in spirit and in truth. Our spirit is involved with our worship. Not that we suddenly have spirit, rather the spirit given us by God when we were created in His image (Genesis 1:27). But we also worship in truth or according to truth. God's truth is revealed in Scripture alone (John 1:17; 8:32; 14:6; 16:13; 17:17; Acts 26:25; Romans 2:2,8; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:12,13; 2 John 9; Revelation 22:18,19). Therefore, if we worship in truth we learn from one source and that source is the Bible alone.

Now if we were to honor a great President, Prime Minister or Potentate of some government, would we not worship him according to *his* preferences and according to *his* desires? Certainly! Would we honor the President of Mexico by playing the national anthem of Great Britain? Never! Or might we honor golfing legend Arnold Palmer by extolling the victories of Tiger Woods, or worse yet by sounding our own abilities? Of course not. Yet what we find in many worship assemblies today is just that: Honor and praise directed at everyone and everything except God. We have chosen to do it our way at our time and in our fashion without considering what God has chosen and instructed. God is the object of our faith, or so we say. Let's give unto Him all the glory and honor possible.

Bryant Evans

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP OR PERFORMANCE: SPECTATOR OR PARTICIPANT