

HOME BIBLE STUDY

~ Lesson 6 ~

DOES IT REALLY MATTER HOW I WORSHIP?

The last lesson looked at how to understand the Bible properly. A correct understanding of God's word helps us to agree with God and to have unity with others who agree with God. Let us now look at what God says is pleasing to Him in worship.

WHAT DOES JESUS SAY?

As with anything, we could look to the world, to personal experience, to religious traditions or creeds for our authority. But, **we want to know what pleases God**, not what pleases men. We want to know what God wants us to do, not what men say we should do.

In John 4, Jesus passed through Samaria. It is important to realize that the Jews in Jesus' time did not care for the Samaritans. The Samaritans were not considered to be true Jews in their fleshly lineage or in their religion. Even so, Jesus stopped and spoke to a Samaritan woman at a well (4:1-8). This surprised the woman, for she knew that Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (4:9).

Jesus took this occasion as an opportunity to teach her who He is (4:10). She did not immediately understand. So, Jesus began to tell her things about herself that He could not possibly know without Divine help (4:16-19). This is why she then asked Jesus about the topic of worship, saying: "Our fathers worship in this mountain; and ye (the Jews) say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men

ought to worship." She was asking Jesus who was right, the Samaritans or the Jews.

Jesus replied, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain (Mount Gerizim), nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship **that which ye know not**: we worship **that which we know**; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and **now is**, when the **true** worshippers shall worship the Father **in spirit and truth**: for **such doth the Father** seek to be his worshippers. God is spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship in spirit and in truth." (4:21-24)

What does this mean? This means that the Samaritans worshipped according to their way, **but it was not based on knowledge**, nor approved by God (4:22). The Jews worshipped in the place **that was appointed by God** under the Old Testament Law **and was approved by God** (4:22). Yet, even though Jerusalem was where men ought to worship up until that time, the time "now is" when things would change. No longer would worship be done in a particular place (like a physical temple at Jerusalem), but **in spirit and in truth**. This is the kind of worshiper that **God seeks** and is pleased with. Therefore, Jesus said we **must** worship in this manner. No other way is now acceptable.

At this point, the question of our study must change. No longer should we ask, "Does it matter how I worship?" **Jesus said it does matter**. The question should now be, "What is worship in spirit and in truth?"

IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

"In spirit" refers to our inward self, our spiritual man. There is an outward man and an inward man (2 Corinthians 4:16). Loving and worshipping God with our inward man or spirit means our thoughts, our intentions, our will, our

emotions, and our mind (Matt. 22:37). Also, "in truth" means "according to God's word." For, Jesus himself said that God's word "is truth" (John 17:17). What we see, then, is that our **heart** must be right and sincere; and also **our actions** in worship must be in the way that God's word directs. Remember, that this is what pleases God. We have looked at the Bible, not the opinions of men. We now know that God wants and is pleased with worship that follows this rule of "in spirit and in truth".

PRAYER

What do we see in the New Testament that is part of worship? How does it fit with "in spirit and truth"? First, we see that Christians worshipped God by praying together (Acts 12:5). James tells us that we must pray "**in faith**, nothing doubting" (James 1:6-8). That is, we must trust in God, that He hears us, and answers us in harmony with His will for us. If we doubt this, then our faith is lacking. We are also to pray "**according to His will**" (1 John 5:14). Our prayers cannot be selfish or self-centered, that is not according to His will. We must pray for things that are in harmony with what God teaches and desires for us. For example, if you pray that the Lord will help you to see clearly what pleases Him, and you really mean it, you should have every confidence that God will answer you. The only question will be, will you accept it when He shows it to you?

THE LORD'S SUPPER

We read in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 that Christians were to take of the Lord's Supper. This was not a social meal, or a common meal. The purpose of this was not to fill the stomach. For it is written that the home, not the assembly of saints, is where the stomach should be filled (11:22,

34). Rather, this "supper" is a memorial and reminder of what Jesus did in dying for us (11:23-26). It is a time to think about why Jesus died and how we should be living (11:27-32). Our spirit is involved as we sincerely think on Christ and examine ourselves to see if we are being faithful. It is according to truth, in that it is a memorial meal, not a common meal. To change one part or another of this is to worship without our spirit or without the truth. Also, we see that this was done on the first day of the week (Sunday) (Acts 20:7). To do this on any other day would not be according to truth, even if we did it sincerely.

SINGING

We also read that God wants Christians to sing spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19-20). This is not common music or secular songs. This does not say that we may use whatever kind of music we like. What Ephesians 5 tells us is that **God is pleased** with us **when we sing spiritual songs from our hearts** to the Lord. Any other kind of music (even if we did it sincerely "to the Lord") would not be "according to the truth" of the Bible. If, for example, you could find a New Testament passage, which shows that God is pleased when we use musical instruments, then it would be something we knew pleased Him. But, since we only find that God speaks of Christians singing, then **we must follow what we know to be truth and not try to speculate on what "might" please Him.**

We must worship in spirit AND in truth. Worshiping God in spirit but without truth, is worthless. Likewise, worship in truth without the spirit is empty. Both elements must be present to please God. Jesus plainly said that worship that is without the heart and without truth is "vain" or "empty" (Matt. 15:8-9). **To change what we know the Bible says for**

what men want, does not please God
(Matt. 15:1-6).

STUDY

Next, we see that the Bible shows Christians gathering together to study God's word. You may not think of this as worship, but it is. For the Bible is the mind of God revealed (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). We show thankfulness, reverence and awe (from our spirit) to God (Heb. 12:18) when we give effort to know His will for us (the truth). The Christians of the first century "continued steadfastly" in the teaching (Acts 2:42) and preaching (Acts 5:42) and the "service of the word" (Acts 5:4). Study is also essential because the Bible is the basis of every aspect of our faith in Christ (Romans 10:17).

GIVING

Finally, we see that the saints gave as they had prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This was done only once a week (Sundays), not every day. This was not a tithe. There was no contract to sign saying how much you would give. There were no bake sales, benefit suppers, car washes or business ventures. The work of the local church was funded solely by the free-will offerings of its individual members, on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:2). The fact that it is as we "have purposed in our **hearts**" (2 Cor. 9:7), shows that our spirit is involved. Please also keep in mind this plain truth: You can read in your Bible about raising money on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2), but you do not read of any other way. So, we all know and can all agree that this is "**according to the truth**" of the scriptures. To speculate about other ways to raise money is to walk by man's wisdom, rather than by faith in God and His word.

CONCLUSION

Friends, it does matter how we worship God. Our **spirit** must be involved in the sincere, earnest, and purposeful worship unto our God and Savior. **Truth** must guide our thoughts and behavior so that we do the things we know that God is pleased with. Otherwise, we can end up being like the Samaritans, who worshipped "that which they knew not" (John 4:22). Or even like the Jews who replace God's way with the doctrines of men (Matt. 15:8-9).

Are you looking for a church that follows the simple, but very meaningful examples of worship in the New Testament? Please visit with us and see whether we measure up to the standard of God's word by worshipping both "in spirit and in truth." We heartily invite you!

"Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him **in sincerity and in truth...**"
(Joshua 24:14).

"...For it is God who works in you **both to will** and to **work**, for His good pleasure."
(Philippians 2:13)

Please complete the Home Bible Study questions page for this lesson, then send it in to be checked. After checking it, we will return it with the next lesson in the series. If you have any questions please write them down and let us know. We are here to serve you and will point to the Bible for the answer to all things.

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