

The Fullness Of Worship

By Don Kimbro

"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:20-24).

In Spirit and In Truth

The woman at the well believed that true worship was defined by where it took place, on a mountain top in Samaria. The Jews, on the other hand, believed that true worship could only take place at the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus said they were both wrong. True worship both then and now is worshiping God in *"spirit and truth."* The time and the place is not an issue with God.

When we think of worship today, I'm sure that most of us, like the Samaritan woman and the Jew, think of a location like a church building or perhaps a small gathering in a home. We go to church to worship the Lord. We sing songs and hymns of praise and adoration and depending upon your church tradition, we may expect to experience some degree of emotion. Our desire is to realize the presence of God in our midst.

Worship often produces feelings of great joy and excitement and well it should. Emotional responses to the glory and presence of God, have always been appropriate, when done in order and reverence. God has given us the subjective response of emotion. He has made us in such a way that we cannot think or contemplate spiritual things without some exercise of this ability.

But what happens if we fail to achieve a certain feeling? Suppose the hymns or praise choruses are not to our liking? Or we just don't feel very good at the time? Have we failed to worship God? Must we wait for another time? Perhaps there's more to worshipping God than what we may experience in a worship service.

What Does "Worship" Mean?

The word "worship" in its various forms is used over 250 times in Scripture. The very first time we see it is in the OT, when Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac. When he was lead to the place where Isaac was to



be offered to God, *"He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you'"* (Gen. 22:5).

The first time the word is used in the NT is at the birth of Jesus, when the Magi who had come in search of a new Jewish king inquired, *"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him"* (Matt. 2:2). What an interesting connection.

The foremost Hebrew word for worship is **shâchâh**. Its primary meaning points to physical positions of lying prostrate, bowing down or crouching, and even falling down flat, while doing homage, obeisance and beseeching God in deep reverence. This emphasis on physical posturing is an expression of humility and total subjection. There are many examples of this in the OT such as, *"Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD"* (2 Chron. 20:18); *The whole assembly bowed in worship ...* (2 Chron. 29:28); *"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker"* (Psm. 95:6).

Even Job when he received news of the terrible tragedy of the loss of his family, *"fell to the ground in worship"* (Job 1:20).

The compound Greek word for worship in the NT is **proskunéo**, and it is even more graphic. It is used over forty times in the NT and carries with it the same idea of our physical bearing but adds an action that literally means "to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand." The first part of the word **pros**, gives the word the direction "to or toward" the object of the action. True worship then, is an act of adoration performed by us toward God. He is the sole recipient and object of our affection. A great word picture isn't it?

How Do We Worship God?

Prior to becoming true believers in Jesus Christ, our human spirits were dead to the things of God (Eph. 2:1-10). We had no love for Him or desire to seek His presence. When we became born again our human spirits were made alive to His Spirit (Tit. 3:5). Our hearts were opened up to God's revealed truths and His revelation began to fill our minds as we became aware of His presence in our lives.

Worship is not just confined to what we do in church on Sunday mornings when we come together to sing *"psalms, hymns and spiritual songs"* to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It also goes well beyond what we do in our own personal times when we listen to praise and worship tapes, and we sing along, blessing and praising the Lord. Worship is not something that only happens in the context of music, singing, or vocal expression.

True worship encompasses every part of our lives as we acknowledge Christ's Lordship.

Other Ways We Worship God

We worship God by reading His Word

When we read and memorize God's Word we allow Him to speak to our hearts (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 1 Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:3).

We worship God by studying His Word

When we study God's Word we learn the absolute truths by which He wants us to live our lives. We acknowledge His Word as the standard of life (Acts 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15).

We worship God by teaching His Word

When we teach God's Word we share what we have learned with others for their enlightenment and encouragement (Acts 2:42, 6:7, 12:24, 18:28, 19:20; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:2).

We worship God by preaching His Word

When we preach God's Word we reveal the unsearchable riches of Christ and bring good news, hope and encouragement to others (Acts 14:15; 1 Cor. 9:16; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 4:13).

We worship God by keeping His Word

When we keep God's Word we demonstrate its priority in our lives and serve as an example for others to follow. We show our love for Him (Jn. 15:10, 14; 1 Cor. 11:2; Jas. 1:22).

We worship God by singing songs of adoration to Him

When we sing songs to God, we acknowledge the joy and devotion that dwells within us for Him (Psm. 40:3; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 5:13).

We worship God by praying and thanking Him

When we pray to God we acknowledge our total dependence upon Him. When we thank Him we say "I love you" for all He has done (Acts 2:42, 46; 3:1; 4:31; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17).

We worship God by loving His Son

When we love Jesus by doing his will and making Him Lord of our lives, God makes a place for us to live with Him forever (Jn. 1:11-12, 14:23).

We worship God by giving our lives to Him

When we offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, we make ourselves available for His service to minister His life and love to others (Rom. 12:1; 1 Th. 2:8).

We worship God by praising Him

When we praise God, we extol His virtues and acclaim His goodness through adoration and honor. We recite the good things He has done for us through His grace and mercy (Lk. 19:37; Eph. 1:6; Heb. 13:15).

We worship God by doing good

When we do good things in His name we attest to the reality and proof of our faith. We show that all good has its source in Him, who has made every good work possible (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:16).

We worship God by giving to Him

When we worship God by giving to Him we declare that everything that we have is a gift from Him (Gen. 14:20; Psm. 24:1; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 24:17;).

We worship God by loving one another

Jesus called it a "*new command*," that we model his love for us to one another so that others will know that we are his disciples (Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12,17).

We worship our Lord Jesus because he is worthy

"Then I heard every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and that is in them, singing: To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).