

Jesus- Worship

Worship has been an integral part of human life and culture since the beginning. The bible states in Genesis 4 that when Seth's son Enosh was born, the grandson of Adam and Eve, that men to began to call on the name of the Lord (or to worship). The Jewish people were very familiar with the practice and tenets of worship. Much instruction was given to them especially through Moses regarding the forms, rituals and practices of Old Testament era worship. There is much discussion on the topic in Deuteronomy. David epitomized the beauty, diversity, glory and grandeur of worship through his psalms and leadership in enlarging and enhancing temple worship.

Usually, when most of us think of Christian worship, we think of a **building**- 431 Nicholas Parkway East, **a day**- Sunday, **a time**- 9 or 11AM or if you're a real fanatic, 6PM, or even Wednesday, **a form**- prayers, singing, offerings, preaching, **and people**- worship leaders, musicians, choir, ushers, greeters, and of course the congregation. But what is Christian worship? Christian Worship (composite)- giving Jehova God glory and praise for who He is and thanking Him for what He's done. Expressing love for God.

Much has changed, at least on the surface, in regard to the methods and forms of worship over the centuries. There has not hardly been a century passed that some sort of major conflict has not broken out regarding what was considered "appropriate" for worship. For example: (just regarding music)

3rd Century- Instrumental music was shunned, associated with debauchery and immorality. Playing the lyre was associated with prostitution.

4th century- hymns with rhythm and marching. “How worldly can we get?”

5th century- “The congregation sings to much. The cantor will soon be out of a job.”

6th century- “solos by ordinary people? I come to worship God not man.”

7th century- Music in worship almost died were it not for the monks and their chants.

8th century- “How arrogant for musicians to think their new songs are better than what we’ve sung for generations.” Music, for the first time, began to be widely notated allowing new types of music easier to be created and taught to choirs.”

10th C- “Hymns with rhyme and accent? Surely worship should sound different than a school yard ditty” The development of new forms of Latin verse using rhyme and accent led to new expressions of worship.

13th C.- “This complicated, chaotic confusion is ruining the church.” Harmony!!!

14th C- “Don’t try that hymn at home; leave it to the professionals.” No congregational singing. Professionals did everything.

15thC- “It’s too loud. The music drowns out the words.” Music became increasingly complex. John Wycliffe- “No one can hear the words, and all the others are dumb and watch them like fools.”

16th C- “They want us to sing in today’s language. Shouldn’t God-talk be more special than that?” Henry VIII declared that all services would be in English.

16th C- “Now they’re putting spiritual words to theater songs that everyone knows.” Martin Luther set out to reform public worship by freeing the mass from what he believed to be rigid forms.

17th C- Much opposition to the use of the organ in reformation churches.

18thC- “Our children will grow up confused, not respecting the bible as an inspired book.” This was in regard congregations singing “man-made” hymns.

19th C- Their leader is just asking for trouble when he says, “Why should the devil have all the best music.” Said about William Booth of Salvation Army who used rousing melodies with a martial flavor to set the tone for his Army.

20th C- “These Christian radio quartets are on a slippery slope. Don’t they realize that the airwaves are the domain of Satan, “ruler of the kingdom of the air.” Said of gospel music and evangelistic teaching in the early days of radio.

This interesting and educational, but what we are, or at least I am, particularly interested in today is what Jesus taught and

practiced regarding worship. This should matter regardless of what century you live in.

Jesus on worship- be careful

Who/what you worship- God alone. The importance of the matter is not that we worship. The truth is we all worship, even the lost, the pagans, idol worshippers, false religions, agnostics, atheists, movie stars, politicians, students, retirees, etc. Everyone worships. Worship in itself could be and often is just a meaningless, empty, but dangerous human activity. It does matter that we do not worship other gods, people or things. It matters that we worship God and God alone.

⁸ Again, the Devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ And he said to Him, “I will give You all these things if You will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus told him, “**Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.**” ¹¹ Then the Devil left Him, and immediately angels came and began to serve Him. **Matt 4:8-11 (HCSB)**

The final temptation of Jesus by Satan himself centered around the matter of worship. Of course Satan’s ploy was to offer Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for His worship. Satan must have thought this a vulnerability in the humanity of Jesus. After all, power, authority, position, fame are some the things men have craved and lusted most after over the centuries.

But Jesus not only resisted the temptation, He used it as an opportunity to remind Satan and all of us of an extremely vital matter regarding worship- “Worship the Lord your God, and

serve only Him.” This is the first and foremost issue regarding worship.

Notice Jesus did not discuss here or anywhere else whether we should sing more or less of psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs. He did not discuss whether our worship should be more celebrative or solemn. He did not even mention whether drums and guitars were appropriate for worship. He did not mention time or place or what the thermostat should be set at. Nothing is mentioned about pews or chairs. Jesus only said, quoting Deuteronomy 6, is that what we must be concerned about is who we worship. Jesus expounded on this some more later on in His ministry.

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together in the same place.³⁵ And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test Him: ³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”**³⁸ **This is the greatest and most important commandment.** Matt 22:34-38 (HCSB)

Of all the commandments and laws God gave to Israel and to us through Moses, the most important one of all, according to Jesus, is about worship and in particular being very careful about who or what we worship should be our number one concern.

I said all that to say this “ the most important thing is not about how you worship, it’s about who you worship.” That said, there are some elements of how you worship that are vital to true Christian worship.

Be careful **How you worship- In Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well we find the most detail regarding how we are supposed to worship. But don't get too excited, you still won't find anything here either about form, liturgy, or style. Not even music, prayer, and preaching are mentioned.**

19 “Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that You are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, yet you [Jews] say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹ Jesus told her, “**Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**” **John 4:19-24 (HCSB)**

On mission trips, I have traveled to Canada (2), Venezuela, Syria, Spain, Guatemala and Cuba (2), as well as Wisconsin (2), Pennsylvania (2), Louisiana bayou (2), ships in the port of Gulfport, North Carolina (6/7), Indiana and West Virginia. For over ten years I led or participated in worship at the Waterfront Rescue Mission in Pensacola, made several trips to the federal prison in Atmore, AL for worship. I have assisted sister churches in regions I've served in revivals and community outreach events. I have worshipped with sister churches and ministries in all those places and many others while traveling or on vacation. Every place I have been, the worship has been “different” and not just the language. Some places were similar but all were different and many were very different. Some you

might have enjoyed. Some would have probably greatly offended you. In Cuba this last time, a young lady did an interpretive dance in worship. Some of you would have been disgusted while others would have been overwhelmed by the worshipful interpretation of the Christian song she danced to.

Everywhere I go, where Christian worship is involved styles and forms vary greatly but there are elements of worship that must be common to all these expressions if they are to be identified as genuine Christian worship- **spirit** and **truth**. This is the how of worship that we must be concerned about. Jesus clearly stated that these two elements are a requirement for true worship. So what does it mean to worship in spirit and truth?

spirit- The Greek “pneuma” translated spirit has several definitions (current of air, rational human soul, mental disposition, angel, demon, Holy Spirit) that are applied in different contexts in the New Testament. The context reveals which definition applies. In this case it is clearly the “mental disposition” definition of spirit that applies to the worshipper. This spirit (small s) is the attitude in which the worshipper must engage in worship. The danger that all “experienced” worshippers fall into is that of ritual, routine, tradition, comfort and even apathy. It is clear that Jesus was calling for worshippers to worship in a spirit of passion, enthusiasm, and whole-heartedness.

Jewish worship in Jesus time was all about rituals and rules. There was no life, no joy, no emotion as people went through the motions of worship. God’s presence was not invoked and no one experienced transformation. They left the same way they came.

Jesus called for passionate, whole-hearted, life-changing worship.

Truth- Of course passionate, emotional worship without truth could be compared to the people of Israel who made the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain. Moses heard a lot of passion from way up on the mountain but it wasn't expressed toward Jehova God. It was false worship. It was void of truth, false worship.

Our worship must be based on and totally reliant on truth in every form and detail from the beginning to the end, from the announcements to the benediction. God's word is the standard, the only standard, the plumb line for all that is said, sung, prayed or done in Christian worship.

Be careful that you know **Why you worship**- Remember worship is your response to God giving Him glory and praise for who He is and thanksgiving for what He has done. It is you telling Him that you love Him. You can and should be comfortable doing this any time and anywhere even all the time and everywhere. But what too often happens to us individually and collectively is that we get comfortable and set in our ways. Most of us prefer not to be surprised. We like our routine, seats, our time, our songs and we can get pretty steamy if that predictable, comfortable pattern is interrupted. These are not necessarily bad but we must be careful that our traditions don't become our priority rather than worshipping God. This was the very subject of some of Jesus' most heated conflict with the religious leaders.

1 Then Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to Jesus and asked, **2** “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands when they eat!” **3** He answered them, **“And why do you break God’s commandment because of your tradition? **4** For God said: **Honor your father and your mother; and, The one who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.** **5** But you say, ‘Whoever tells his father or mother, “Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a gift [committed to the temple]” — **6** he does not have to honor his father.’ In this way, you have revoked God’s word because of your tradition. **7** Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: **8 These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. **9** They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.”**”**

Matt 15:1-9 (HCSB)

Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees and scribes can be clearly defined as a heated conflict regarding worship. For the Pharisees and scribes it was all about traditions. Man made traditions were the central guideline for participation in worship. “That’s the way we’ve always done it.” Jesus scathing reprimand was that they had allowed or even worse caused their man-made human traditions to overrule truth and kill the spirit of worship. In essence they cancelled worship or at the least greatly distracted from it. (Nueva Esperanza)