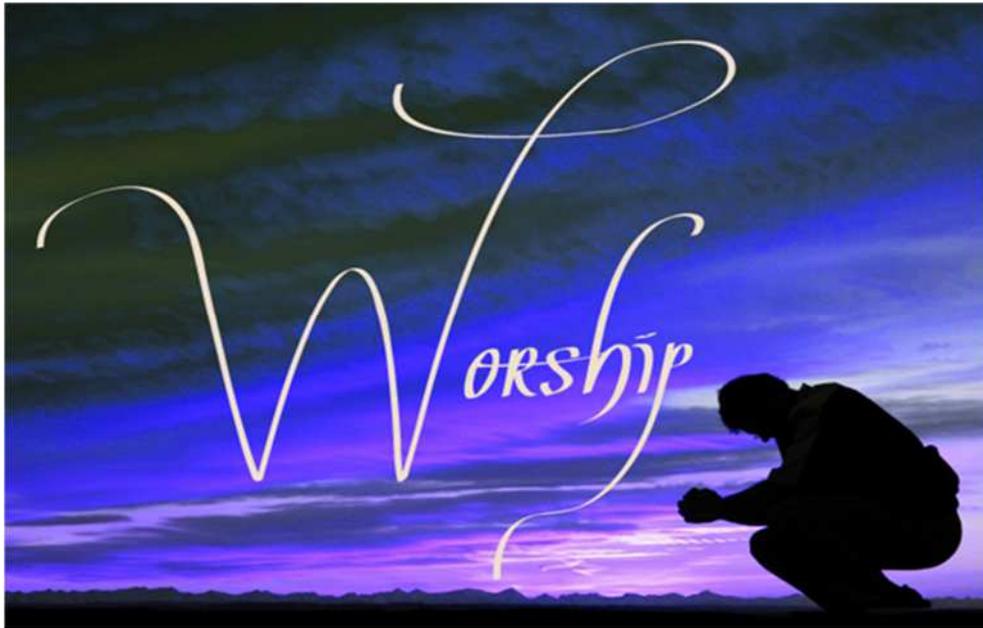


STEP BY STEP
Part Six in a Series of Eight



6. In Spirit And In Truth

**WORSHIP
IN THE CHURCH**

'caring for **PEOPLE** for **PEOPLE** matter to God' Romans 5:8

WORSHIP IS AIMED AT PLEASING GOD

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Bible, men and women of God are to be found in worship. Indeed, as Christians approach and get to know God, worship is the most natural response in the world. When Christians learn something of the greatness and goodness, the love and long-suffering, the mercy and majesty of God, then they cannot help but worship Him.

In the 21st century, worship has been a matter of some differences and debate. Many have expressed a kind of supermarket approach to worship, a pick and mix philosophy. The overwhelming thinking has been that worship should be something that pleases **me**! If I do not like this kind of worship and prefer that kind of worship, then that is the main thing. I will go where the worship pleases **me** best.

In **this lesson** we seek to put the idea of worship in a more appropriate context.

Surely the most important thing is not whether it pleases me but whether it pleases **Him**! Worship seeks to bring glory and honour to God and what is paramount is whether it does so, rather than whether I find it entertaining or aesthetically pleasing.

Please **Read John 4:1-30**.

Let us notice the words of Jesus to the woman at the well in Samaria She raises an issue with the Master. The Samaritans thought that worship should be made on Mount Gerizim whilst the Jews insisted that Mount Zion, the site of the temple was the appropriate place for worship.

Jesus instructs the woman that the time was coming and close upon them when the place of the worship will become unimportant and the only important thing will be the manner of worship.

We note the Lord's words there, **John 4:23+24 'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'**

Throughout the Bible, it is clear that there is such a thing as unacceptable worship. For many in the religious realm, there is no recognition that unacceptable worship exists, except in the case where the worship is unacceptable to us.

Jesus states that worship must be in spirit (**must engage the whole man, not just a matter of externals**) and in truth (**must be real/true worship, and must be according to God's truth**).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM OLD

UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Let us illustrate what is meant by unacceptable worship. This incident belongs to the Patriarchal Age where worship was chiefly by means of offering sacrifice. This predates the arrangements for worship communicated to Moses for the nation of Israel by a very long time.

We have only sketchy information about the exact nature of the worship. We see that Cain's worship did not find favour in the eyes of God. Some of this may have been due to the condition of Cain's heart as we see later in the story.

However, we may also conclude that another problem was that the worship was of the wrong form. Abel's worship was the offering of an animal from the flocks and this was acceptable to God. Cain's offering was of the fruit of the field and this was unacceptable.

Either God is totally unfair in His dealings (**not an option**) or we may infer that the two men had been previously been informed of this. But Cain's offering was more pleasing to him as an arable farmer! However, it was not pleasing to God. There is such a thing as unacceptable worship.

2. **Leviticus 10:1-3** 'Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored."'

Leviticus 10:8-11 'Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and so you can teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses.'

The scene of this incident is now in the Mosaical Age when Israel were commanded to worship according to the pattern given to Moses. In this instance we see that two sons of Aaron (**the brother of Moses**) decided to change the format of the worship by offering a '**strange fire**' on the altar.

Presumably they decided to substitute their own ideas for what should be burnt there. We notice that their decision to '**improve**' on God's plan for worship was not met with approval but so angered God that He sent down fire from heaven to make an example of them for Israel and us.

Some have pointed to **Leviticus 10:8-11** and suggested that part of the problem may well have been that they did this terrible thing under the influence of drink. However, that is no excuse before God. God has revealed a pattern for worship, which is pleasing to Him, and we can never improve upon God's pattern.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE NEW

3. Please **Read Acts 5:1-11**.

The third example of unacceptable worship comes from the Christian Age.

It took place in the church. Ananias and his wife Sapphira took the simple act of giving in worship, which they had been taught, was a free-will offering and conspired to turn it into something for their own personal gain.

In other words, they thought to enhance their standing by pretending to donate the whole proceeds of their sale whilst in fact holding back part for themselves. The problem was not what they gave. It was OK to give half the proceeds. The problem was the deceit involved in trying to dupe the church and in the last analysis God. They changed the principles of giving for something of their own. God does not accept human substitutes for divine instruction.

ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

WHAT PATTERN FOR NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP HAS BEEN LEFT?

Note that we are only concerned about the pattern for worship in the new covenant of Christ. It is not appropriate for us to offer sacrifices as Abel did, for that was under the Patriarchal Age and that kind of worship is not binding on us today.

Nor is it necessary for us to offer a Passover lamb in sacrifice for that was taught to the Jews under the covenant delivered to the Jews by Moses. The new covenant of Christ is now in force when men and women of any nation may approach God through the sacrifice of Jesus.

THE KIND OF WORSHIP GOD WANTS TODAY

HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP TODAY?

4. The Lord's Supper.

We refer you back to the first lesson in this series where this is dealt with in much greater detail. Suffice it to say here that this was a command of the Lord. Please [Read Luke 22:14-20](#) and [1 Corinthians 11:23-30](#).

Further it becomes clear that the pattern followed in the New Testament church was for the Lord's Supper to be observed each Lord's Day.

[Acts 20:7](#) 'On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.'

5. Prayer.

Everywhere in the New Testament we find that Christ prayed and encouraged his disciples to do so. Further the apostles taught the church to pray. Also, we find examples of the church in prayer.

Please [Read](#) the following Scriptures [1 Timothy 2:8](#) and [James 5:13-16](#) and [Acts 12:5](#) and [Romans 12:12](#) and [Colossians 4:2-4](#).

6. Preaching.

From the very outset of the church we find that the church were instructed in the way of Christ. This was according to the commission given to the apostles by Christ.

[Matthew 28:18-20](#) 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Disciples were to be taught the teachings of Christ. This was faithfully implemented in the church and the church was dedicated to learning the way of Christ.

[Acts 2:42](#) 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'

Paul urged Timothy to do the work of an evangelist by preaching the Word tirelessly and faithfully. Please [Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5](#).

THE LORD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

7. Giving.

The church of the New Testament is financed by free-will offerings. The first collections we read of were associated with the relief of suffering for the church in Judea, which was experiencing a famine.

Instructions were given that collections were to be taken on the Lord's Day. Please [Read](#) the following Scriptures [1 Corinthians 16:1-3](#) and [2 Corinthians 8:1-15](#) and [2 Corinthians 9:1-15](#). However later it is clear that the church were to use contributions from the members to finance the work of the church.

[1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) 'The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages.'

On a number of occasions Paul was supported by various churches in his work of preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ. Any work of the church in preaching, teaching, benevolent work, edification may properly be supported by the free will offerings of the members.

It is our privilege to take part in this act of worship to God.

MAKE MUSIC IN YOUR HEART

8. Singing.

Worship in song plays an integral part in the worship of Old and New Testaments. The Book of Psalms is clear evidence of the central role of worship in song in the Old Testament. Elaborate arrangements were entered into for singing in worship.

There is something about song, which allows man to express the deep things of the soul to God and also at the same time raises the spirit of man to focus on the divine. Few things can lift and bind the broken hearted like the truths of God expressed in song. Hence it is not surprising to see that song is part of the pattern for worship in the church.

Please **Read** the following passages, which deal with singing in worship. **Romans 15:8-9** and **1 Corinthians 14:15** and **Ephesians 5:18-19** and **Colossians 3:16** and **James 5:13**.

It is interesting to note that though instruments of music were used liberally in the Old Testament there is no single case in Scripture where it is used in New Testament worship. Nor are there any instructions for the use of an instrument.

Church history would suggest that the use of instruments in worship maybe something introduced by man following the apostolic times. We would not wish to add to worship something, which is not sanctioned by God. Many people visiting our services today comment on how good the singing is without the instrument, how greater emphasis may be placed on the words which can be the more readily heard.

CONCLUSION

Like all of God's commands, God requires Christians to worship not because He needs it, but because they do. There is something which is central to the psyche of man, placed there by the One who made us which means that we can never be truly happy or fulfilled without a worshipful relationship with our Creator.

If people decline to worship, God will not be the poorer, they will. **How many times do Christians enter into worship downcast, pressed down by the onslaughts of the enemy, discouraged and beset with problems?**

Christians leave, enthralled, lifted, thankful, eyes turned heavenward and hearts overflowing. Thank you God for your inexpressible gift.

EVALUATION SHEET

Please go ahead and fill in the evaluation sheet attached.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: info@the-scriptures.co.uk

EVALUATION SHEET

Step by Step Lesson 6

(Please type or write your answers within the lines provided)

Name:

Home Address or Email address:

QUESTIONS:

(Please reply with your answers via e-mail or a separate sheet of paper.)

Think about and write down what God means to worship Him in spirit and truth and ask yourself a real hard question, if you're a Christian **do you want to worship Him in a way that seems right and feels right to you, or is it more reasonable for us to worship Him as He has asked of us?**

SENDING YOUR ANSWERS

Once we have received your evaluation sheet we will send you the **next study** in the series.

Please return your completed evaluation sheet as an email attachment to info@the-scriptures.co.uk