

Three Kinds Of Worship

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John 4:21-24

Man is by nature a worshipping creature. Wherever he has made history he has worshipped something.

In all lands, in all ages, with or without the Bible, wherever man has lived upon the earth, there has been inherent within him the idea of worship.

The Bible tells us who and how to worship.

The word “worship” is found 190 times in the Bible.

- Matt. 4:10, *“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”*
- Rev. 22:8-9, *“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”*

In these passages we are commanded to make God the object of our worship.

- We don’t pray to angels.
- We don’t pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as do the Catholics.
- We don’t even pray to Jesus, but we are to pray through Him to God. Jesus is our intercessor.
- 1 Tim. 2:5, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”*
- John 16:23-24, *“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”*

There are three kinds of worship mentioned in the New Testament.

Vain worship. Matt. 15:9, *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*

Ignorant worship. Acts 17:23, *“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”*

True worship. John 4:21-24, *“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”*

Vain worship.

The Jews had the object of true worship (God), but their worship was vain.

- Matt. 15:2-3, *“Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”*
- Matt. 15:8-9, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*

The question which the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus:

Matt. 15:2, *“Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”*

“The tradition of the elders” signified the religious customs or precepts which were handed down from generation to generation among the Jews, and recorded in the Talmud.

These traditions were regarded as equal in sacredness with the Law of Moses.

These traditions were enforced on the Jews, and punishment for violation of them was as severe as the punishment for the violation of the Mosaic Law.

The Pharisees saw that the disciples of Jesus had not washed their hands when they ate bread. Their tradition in the Talmud said, “He who eats bread with unwashed hands is as bad as if he were to commit fornication.”

But Jesus drew a distinction between their traditions and the word of God, and replied to their question by asking, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (verse 3).

Thus, Jesus showed that the word of God is to be held sacred above all things. Their traditions were the words of men, but the Law of Moses was the word of God.

Hence, Jesus declared their worship to be in vain.

Matt. 15:8-9, “*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*”

“Vain” means “empty, worthless, fruitless, to no avail, without force or efficacy.”

How was their worship vain? They substituted the commandments of men for the commandments of God.

Washing their hands was commendable, and it interfered with no part of God’s commands, that is, until they added it as a law; then it became a vain worship.

Adding to God’s law was presumptuous of them.

Peter also was presumptuous when he thought of an idea of worship on his own.

Matt. 17:1-5, “*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*”

Hence, whenever men do as a religious act that which God has not commanded, that becomes “vain” worship.

A few modern examples:

- Counting beads in prayer.

- Infant baptism.
- Instrumental music in worship.

The Prophet Isaiah, in pointing toward the kingdom of Christ:

Isa. 28:16-17, *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”*

Ignorant worship.

Paul speaking on Mars Hill at Athens.

- Acts 17:23-27, *“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.”*
- Acts 17:30-31, *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*

“I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” (verse 23).

The Athenians had erected altars to all the various gods which the believed to exist; these they worshipped. But to make sure they didn’t leave any god out of their worship of which they might not be aware, they erected one TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Paul now proposed to make known unto them who this unknown God was. Since they acknowledged their ignorance of this God, he would tell them the truth about Him.

Paul at once presented the true character and nature of this God, which distinguished Him from other gods.

This God *“made the world and all things therein.”*

This was admitted by many of the philosophers, but those of Aristotle’s school denied it, and maintained that *“the world was from eternity, and everything always was what now it is.”*

This God *“dwelleth not in temples made with hands.”*

Handmade temples could not contain Him.

If even the magnificent temple of Solomon, erected for the worship of God of Israel, could not contain Him, how could the splendid shrines of the Athenian Acropolis, dedicated to gods that were no gods?

1 Kings 8:27, *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”*

This God is not *“worshipped with men’s hands.”*

This God is not served with men’s hands as though He needed anything which they could supply, seeing that from Him men receive life and breath and all things.

The God that made the world will judge it.

Acts 17:30-31, *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*

God once allowed nations to walk in ignorance and demonstrate what men would do, and how much necessity there was for a revelation to instruct them in true knowledge of God.

We are not to suppose that God regarded idolatry as innocent, or the crimes and vices to which idolatry led as of no importance, but He suffered those nations to live without a direct judgment against them. But in the end of the world, all men will come before Him in judgment.

2 Cor. 5:10, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

True worship.

John 4:21-24, “*Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*”

In the past, the worship of God was long-confined to a local place.

The Samaritans worshipped Him “*in this mountain*” (verse 21), that is, Mt. Gerizim.

The Jews worshipped Him “*at Jerusalem*”. (verse 21).

But now, God is not to be worshipped in one local place (verse 23).

God is to be worshipped “*in spirit and in truth*” (verse 24).

Here Jesus sets forth the three elements of true worship.

God is to be the object of our worship.

- Matt. 4:10, “*Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*”
- Rev. 22:8-9, “*And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*”

Worship “*in spirit*” — the right attitude or motive of our worship.

Worship must be prompted by the right motive and with a deep desire to meet heaven’s approval.

Worship “*in truth*” — the right way to worship.

John 17:17, “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*”

All three of these elements must be present in our worship today. We can make the test in all acts of our worship:

- Prayer.
- Singing.
- Preaching.
- Giving.
- The Lord's Supper.

Conclusion.

Let us make sure that our worship is always pure and scriptural.

Let us see to it that our worship is not in vain; that it is not ignorant worship; and that it is true worship of the New Testament order.

