

What is Worship?

An Outline Study



Michael D. Taylor
www.TaylorNotes.Info

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

A. Definitions

1. Worship is all that we are, reacting to all that He is!¹
2. Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts²
3. Worship is offering of homage, honor, and praise to God³
4. Worship is bringing pleasure to God⁴
 - a) Worship is a universal urge, hard-wired by God into the very fiber of our being.
 - b) If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute.
 - c) Anything you do that brings pleasure to God is an act of worship (Psalm 147:11)
5. Worship is far more than music.
 - a) Every part of a church service is an act of worship.
 - b) Worship predates music.
 - c) Even worse, "worship" is often misused to refer to a particular style of music.
 - d) Worship has nothing to do with the style or volume or speed of a song. God loves all kinds of music because he invented it all – fast slow, loud and soft, old and new. You may not like it but God does, if it is offered to God in spirit and in truth.
 - e) Christians often disagree over the style of music used in worship, passionately defending their preferred style as the most biblical or God-honoring. But there is no biblical style!
 - f) The music style you like the best says more about you – your background and personality – than it does about God.
 - g) One ethnic group's style of music can sound like noise to another, but God likes variety and enjoys it all.
 - h) There is no such thing as "Christian" music; there are only Christian lyrics.
 - i) Today, many equate being emotionally moved by music as being moved by the Holy Spirit, but these are not the same. Real worship happens when your spirit responds to God, not some musical tone.

¹ Steven J. Cole, *The Priority of True Worship* <<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-23-priority-true-worship-john-423-24>>

² (Grudem 1257)

³ (MacArthur and Mayhue 939)

⁴ (Warren 64-67; 100-106).

- j) Some music actually hinders worship because it takes the spotlight off God and focuses on our feelings.
- k) Could you worship God in a church service without music?

B. The purpose of worship is to bring glory to God.⁵

1. We worship for God's benefit, not ours.
2. When we worship, our goal is to bring pleasure to God, not ourselves.
3. Our motive is to bring glory and pleasure to our Creator.
4. In Isaiah 29 God complains about worship that is half-hearted and hypocritical. The people were offering God stale prayers, insincere praise, empty words, and man-made rituals without even thinking about the meaning. God's heart is not touched by tradition in worship, but by passion and commitment.
5. "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men." Isaiah 29:13 (NIV).

The most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience rather than seeking God!

_Rick

C. Worship is not part of your life; it is your life.

1. The Bible tells us to worship God continually, from sunrise to sunset. Everything we do is to be an act of worship (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:23)
2. See Ps. 105:4; 113:3; 119:147; 5:3; 63:6; 119:62; 34:1.

D. We are to worship God alone.

1. (Matt. 4:10 NIV) "Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.
2. Worship is one-directional—Godward.
3. Chuck Swindoll writes that worship is not for seekers, nor is it to be conducted so that it does not offend outsiders to the faith.⁶ See Gal. 1:10.

WHY ARE WE TO WORSHIP?

The primary reason that God called us into the assembly of the church is that as a corporate assembly we might worship him.⁷

A. We are to worship because God delights in us.

⁵ The word *worship* comes from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "worthship" and is essentially ascribing "worth" to God. (Swindoll and Zuck 1175).

⁶ (Swindoll and Zuck 1175)

⁷ (Grudem 1003)

1. Psalm 147:11 ...the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.
2. John Piper writes: God rejoices in our thinking and feeling and doing what is right, --he delights in our seeing, savoring, and showing *his* own supreme value. God values our valuing him. God delights in our delighting in him (Psalm 37:4).
3. Fathers delight in their child when...
 - a) They see a resemblance
 - b) They spend time together
 - c) Their child obeys and enjoys the resulting goodness in life
 - d) Their child grows and matures

B. We are to worship because God commands it.

1. Exodus 7:16b." Let my people go so that they may worship me".
2. The primary reason God called us into the assembly of the church is that as a gathering of believers we might worship Him

C. We are to worship because God deserves it.

1. Isaiah 43:7 "...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."
2. Ephesians 1:12 ...in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

D. We are to worship because God put the urge in us.

1. Worship is a universal urge, hard-wired by God into the very fiber of our being.
2. According to the Barna Research Institute less than 1% of all believers perceived a connection between their efforts to worship God and their development as a disciple of Jesus⁸.
3. If people fail to worship God, they will always find a substitute.
4. What kinds of substitutes has man created for worship?

HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP?

A. P--We are to worship God passionately

(Mk. 12:30 NIV) "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"

⁸ Barna Research Group, *Discipleship Insights Revealed in New Book* by George Barna, November 28, 2000; <<http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=76&Reference=E&Key=worship>>

B. R--We are to worship God regularly

(Ps. 86:3 NIV) "have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long."

(Ps. 89:16 NIV) "They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness"

C. A--We are to worship God accurately

(Jn. 4:24 NLT) "For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth"

1. In spirit: worship is your spirit responding to God's Spirit (Rom. 8:16)
 - a) To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart, as opposed to formal, ceremonial, external worship by those whose hearts are not right with God (Matt. 5:18)
2. In truth: we are worship God as he truly is based on the truth of the Scripture.
 - a) We cannot create our own comfortable or politically-correct image of God.
 - b) All true worshipers are sincere, but all sincere worshipers are not true. For example, there are devout, sincere worshipers of Allah or Krishna or Buddha or the Mormon god or the Jehovah's Witness god. But they are sincerely wrong, because they are not worshiping the only living and true God, who has revealed Himself in the Bible.⁹

D. I--We are to worship God individually

(Matt. 6:6 NIV) "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. "

E. S--We are to worship God with singing.

(Ps. 33:1 NIV) "Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him."

(Ps. 100:2 NIV) "Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs"

F. E--We are to worship God expectantly

(Ps. 5:3 NIV) "In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly."

(Ps. 130:6 NIV) "I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning."

⁹ Steven J. Cole, *The Priority of True Worship* <<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-23-priority-true-worship-john-423-24>>

THE RESULTS OF GENUINE WORSHIP

Wayne Grudem offers five amazing results that take place when believers worship God.¹⁰

A. We Delight in God (Ps 16:11; Ps 73:25; Lk 24:52-53)

B. God Delights in Us (Zeph. 3:17; Is 62:1-5)

C. We Draw Near to God: The Amazing Unseen Reality of New Covenant Worship

1. In the old covenant, believers could only draw near to God in a limited way through the temple ceremonies.
2. Now, believers have the amazing privilege of being able to enter directly into the holy of holies in heaven when they worship. (Heb 10:19-22; Heb 12:18-24).
3. New covenant worship actually is worship in the presence of God.

D. God Draws Near to Us (James 4:8; 2 Chron 5:13-14; Ps 22:3)

E. God Ministers to Us

When we worship God, he meets with us and directly ministers to us, strengthening our faith, intensifying our awareness of his presence, and granting refreshment to our spirits. (1 Co 14:26; Heb 4:16).

F. The Lord's Enemies Flee (2 Chron 20:22)

Similarly, when God's people offer him worship today, we may expect that the Lord will battle against demonic forces that oppose the gospel and cause them to flee.

G. Unbelievers Know They Are in God's Presence (1 Cor 14:25)

TABERNACLE/TEMPLE WORSHIP

A. Worship was viewed as being aware of God's presence (Exod. 29:42-45).¹¹

1. Meet.
2. Speak.
3. Dwell.

B. God was central in worship.

1. Tabernacle was centrally placed among Israel's tribes (Num. 2:1ff).

¹⁰ (Grudem 1005-1009)

¹¹ Portions of the following were taken from Barry Liesch's "People in the Presence of God."

2. God's presence filled the centrally-located Tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-35).

C. The worshipper had an active role (Lev. 1:1-6).

1. He selected the animal.
2. He presented the animal.
3. He laid his hands on its head.
4. He slaughtered and divided the animal.

D. Worship cost something.

1. The primary word for worship in the OT is *abodah*, which is translated "a service of costly worship" The Greek equivalent in the NT is *latreia*, and has the same meaning.
2. An offering without defect (Lev. 1:3).
3. The animal life was sacrificed (Lev. 1:5).
4. Notice how David refused to offer a sacrifice that didn't cost him something (2 Sam. 24:18-25).

E. Worship focused on God's character.

1. His transcendence: God is greater than the creation and independent of it; he rules over it (Jer. 32:17).
2. His immanence: God is actively involved in his creation, especially mankind (Job 12:10; Ps. 139:1-4).
3. His holiness (Lev 11:44-45).
4. His exclusiveness (Exod. 20:3-5).
5. The power of his name (Exod. 9:16; 20:7; Jer. 10:6).

F. Worship toward God was highly reverent (Ps. 2:11; Eccl. 12:13).

1. "Fear" (*yir'ah*): respect and reverence for something that is terrorizing or awesome.
2. "Trembling" (*ra`ad*): to tremble with fear, especially with regard to God's judgments.

G. Worship involved various expressive postures.

1. Lifting up hands (Ps. 63:4).
2. Bowing and kneeling (Ps. 95:6).
3. Prostration: to cast oneself face down on the ground in humility, submission, or adoration (1 Chron. 29:20).

H. Worship involved the arts.

1. Skilled craftsmen for the Tabernacle (Exod. 26:1).
2. Skilled men and women to make the priest's garments (Exod. 28:3; 35:25).
3. Skilled musicians (Ps. 33:2-3; 54:1; 55:1; 67:1).

4. David danced before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:14).
5. Singing *to* the Lord, not just singing *about* the Lord (2 Sam. 22:50; Ps. 9:11; 18:49; 47:6; 147:1).

I. Worship included symbolism.

1. Shewbread: God's provision in the Wilderness.
2. Menorah: God's guidance and illumination.
3. Height of the temple: God's heavenly domain.

SYNAGOGAL WORSHIP

A. Worship took place in small groups.

1. Required ten males in order to form a synagogue.
2. Women were not considered part of the quorum.
 - a) Background: Synagogues—Post-Exilic Period? —No temple--Continued after 2nd Temple—convenience of locations.
 - b) Protestant worship patterns based on synagogal worship—prayer—scripture reading—teaching—lay involvement.
 - c) Jesus regularly attended synagogues.
 - d) Christian Jews continued to worship at the synagogue and the temple until 70 AD.
 - e) By the time of Christ synagogues were buildings designed for worship rather than homes.
 - f) Small groups of about 40 people.
 - g) Members were seated according to their trade guilds (silversmiths, goldsmiths, weavers, bronze workers, etc.).

B. Worship centered more on instruction than worship.

1. Torah (Hebrew for “learning,” of “instruction”).
2. Rabbis effectively replaced priests after the Exile.

C. Worship included music.

1. Psalms: Gr. *Psalmós*, song sung to the harp, orig., a plucking, as of strings.
2. Music was abandoned by rabbis during the Hellenistic Era because it was so closely associated with temple orgies.

D. Worship had structure and order.

1. Synagogal Creed (*Shema Yisrael*).
 - a) Reciting of the *Shema Yisrael* (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37–41).
 - b) Jewish men were also required to recite the *Shema* twice a day-

morning & evening. After 2nd Century all adults recited it.

2. Prayer.

- a) Eighteen Benedictions, fixed prayers with congregational responses.¹²
- b) Some prayers were sung.
- c) While today we do not recite prayers in our worship services we often sing them (e.g. Ps. 90 paraphrased, "O God Our Hope in Ages Past.")
- d) Prayers were regarded as more important than the sermon.

3. Reading of the Scriptures.

- a) The removal of the Torah from its cabinet and the removal of the mantle were very ceremonious activities—respect for Scriptures.
- b) The Mishna required at least seven lay readers.
- c) Synagogues had furniture, including a wooden pulpit, much like church pulpits, for the reading of the Scripture.¹³

4. Sermon (short homily). Occasionally, a distinguished guest was also invited to speak (Acts 13:15).

- a) Acts 13:15. Paul was invited to speak in a synagogue in Antioch, after the Scriptures were read.

E. Summary: Old Testament worship can be characterized as follows:

1. The Israelite's life centered on worship—it held a high priority in their daily lives.
2. God was the focus of worship, especially his characteristics of transcendence (sovereignty), immanence (intimacy), holiness (moral purity), exclusiveness, and the power of his very name were praised.
3. OT worship was conducted in a very reverent ("fearful") manner.
4. OT worshippers played an active part in worship--not simply observers.
5. Worship cost something—it required the worshipper to give something that had a high value.
6. OT worship had structure and order.
7. OT worship included symbolism and the arts, especially poetic music.

¹² Benedictions were spoken praises to God, not necessarily something done at the end of a service. The eighteen benedictions (Shemoneh Ezreh) are also called "The Amidah" or the prayer that is said while standing facing toward Jerusalem, most of which is said silently [<http://tzion.org/articles/EighteenBenedictions.htm>].

¹³ Synagogue furniture [<http://ahuva.com/Categories/Synagogues.aspx>].

NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP PRINCIPLES

A. True worship is about a person not a place (John 4:21).

1. Gentiles were about to be grafted into the plan of salvation (Eph. 3:6).
2. One central place (Jerusalem) for all believers would be detrimental to the spread of the gospel.
3. Some similarities between Jewish and Samaritan theology were:
 - a) They both considered themselves true worshippers of Yahweh.
 - b) Both placed supreme importance on the Pentateuch as a detailed way of life (the Samaritans rejected the rest of the Jewish canon).
 - c) The Samaritans exalted Moses to a place above normal.
 - d) The Samaritans believed basically the same as the Jews concerning final judgment, rewards, punishments, circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, and the ceremonial and judicial laws.
 - e) The Samaritans insisted that Mount Gerizim was the only true central sanctuary for all Israel.
 - f) They both looked for the Messiah (the Samaritans expected Him to rule from Mount Gerizim, and the Jews from Jerusalem).
4. Question: In what ways can believers today adopt a similar view of worship?
 - a) Only at church, not at work.
 - b) Only a specific time of the day.

B. True worship must be intelligent (John 4:22, 24b; Matt. 15:9).

1. "Worship what we know..." (4:22a, Gk: *oida*: to know by experience).
2. Knowing God's true characteristics.
 - a) The Samaritans were syncretists—worshipped the God of Israel but also practiced idolatry, and worshipped pagan gods from other foreign lands.
 - b) Question: In what ways can our view of our biological fathers influence our view of God?
 - c) How can we be sure that we know God's true characteristics?
3. Knowing what he has done for our salvation (4:22b).

C. True worship must be directed to God. (John 4:23; Matt. 4:10).

1. God the Father (4:21, 23).
2. To worship the Father is to worship the Son (John 10:30).

D. God seeks true worshipers (John 4:23).

1. "The kind of worshipers the Father seeks."
2. True worship is a two-way relationship.

E. True worship must be spiritual (John 4:24).

1. That God is "spirit" means that he is invisible, immaterial, imperceptible to our senses, and probably also means free from limitations of space and time (1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Pet. 3:8).
2. Worship "in spirit" → engages the human spirit.

NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP DISTINCTIVES**A. NT worship is trinitarian.¹⁴**

1. Worship of God the Father, through the mediation of the Son (Rom. 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:5), and prompted by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 11-13).
2. To ←through ←by. NT worship is to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.
3. Worship is thanking God especially for giving us his Son (John 3:16).

B. NT worship is Christocentric.

1. Jesus' birth, life, death, burial and resurrection are to be central (1 Cor. 15:3-6, note the words "...of first importance").
2. Communion is to be Christocentric.
 - a) The act of communion is a true distinctive of NT worship.
 - b) Lord's Supper. "...do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).
 - c) The Lord's Supper separated NT worship from Judaism (including synagogal worship), Hinduism, and all other religions.
3. Baptism is to be Christocentric.
 - a) The act of baptism identifies the believer with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.
 - b) But baptism is symbolic, not regenerative.

C. NT worship is energized by the Holy Spirit.

1. He energizes (Gk. *dunamis*, strength, power, ability) the believer's inner being (Eph. 3:16-21).
2. He teaches and reminds us (John 14:26).
3. He convicts us (John 16:8).
4. He guides us into truth (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 12:2-3).
5. He intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26).

D. In NT worship, all believers have an active role.

1. Worshipers are a holy priesthood who actively offer spiritual sacrifices (1

¹⁴ Liesch, 40-44.

Pet. 2:5). Does the word "sacrifice" imply we have to sacrifice animals? (See Heb. 13:15---a sacrifice of praise).

2. Worshipers are a royal priesthood who actively declare the praises of God (1 Pet. 2:9).
3. Worship is actively offering (Gk. paristemi, to place a person or thing at one's disposal) our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1).

E. NT worship uses a variety of music styles.

1. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
2. Psalms: poetic expressions of praise.
3. Hymns: contain great lines of theology.
4. Spiritual songs: choruses that are effective means of communicating to the unchurched.
5. Singing to the Lord, not just about the Lord.

F. Summary

New Testament worship can be characterized as follows:

1. It is not confined to a place, only to a person.
2. Its primary focus is to God the father, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.
3. It is energized by the Holy Spirit.
4. Its worshippers have an active role.
5. It uses a variety of music styles.
6. It not only involves lifting up praises to God, but also an offering of ourselves to him.

WORSHIP IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

A. It confirms the priesthood of believers (Rev. 5:9-10).

1. "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God" (Rev. 5:10a).
2. Everyone offers praise (vs. medieval worship where priests did all the praise, while people observed).
3. Worshipers appear to be "inside" vs. "outside" as in OT Tabernacle worship.

B. It confirms the worship of Jesus Christ.

1. Only Jesus Christ is worthy to take the scroll (Rev. 5:10).
2. Mind-blowing singing is directed to Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:11-13).

C. It confirms the use of vocal and instrumental worship.

1. Harps (Rev. 5:8; 14:2). Some resembled today's guitars.

2. Trumpets (Rev. 11:5, 15).
3. Singing (Rev. 5:11-13).

D. It confirms the use of physical symbols.

1. Symbols were used to be prodders of the mind, never to be objects of worship.
2. Altar (Rev. 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13).
3. Lampstands (Rev. 11:4).
4. Fragrant incense (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4; 18:13).

E. It temporarily engages the OT-like Temple (Rev. 11:19, et al.; 21:22)

1. God's temple in heaven (Rev. 7:5; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-6).
2. Note: Later, John did not see a temple in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22).

F. It confirms costly worship.

1. Tribulation saints who suffered because of their faith (Rev. 7:13-17).
2. Costly worship is specifically linked with their ultimate sacrifice of martyrdom (implied in Rev. 15:2).

G. It confirms a responsive worship.

1. God initiates action and the people respond (Rev. 5:6-14).
 - a) Initiation: Jesus takes the scroll.
 - b) Response: Four living creatures & 24 elders fell down and worshipped.
 - c) Response: Over 100 million angels encircle the throne and sing praise to Jesus.
 - d) Response: Every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth, and on the sea, sing praise to God.
2. God initiates the action and the people respond again (Rev. 19:1-6).
 - a) God condemns the great prostitute (false religious system).
 - b) Response: Four living creatures & 24 elders fell down and worshipped.
 - c) A great multitude of God's servants praise God so loud it's like thunder.

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