

The Sweet Hour of Worship

Written by The Light

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An act of worship within itself does not make it right before God. It is not the action (fervency, frequency or sincerity) of worship that lends it validity or value, but the object of that worship. To illustrate, let us contrast the worship of an idol with that of Christ. Surely we must admit that among those who are idolaters are found those who by fervency, frequency and sincerity declare their faith in the idol to be as qualitative as those who believe in God. One would be hard pressed to prove that an idolater who sacrificed a first-born child to his god, loved that god less than we love Christ when we have not made such a sacrifice. But if worship that is so sacrificial is vain, why is that so? Friend, it is because true worship takes its power, its value, its validity from the object that is wor-shipped. An idol is nothing but the product of one's imagination; Jesus Christ is God the Son, the "living One." An idol is a representation of a created thing; Jesus is the Creator (John 1). For worship to be of any value, it must have God as its object and do His will.

How Does One Determine True Worship?

But even among those who worship Jehovah, there are those whom Jehovah will not accept as true worshippers. The Old Testament is replete with examples of worship-pers whom God rejected (Nadab and Abihu, Nu. 26:61; Israel, Amos 5:21; etc.). How can we know the difference between the true and the false, between the accepted and the rejected? I suggest that we can be sure of worship that God accepts only as God expresses Himself about what He wills and wants. Jesus asserted of Him, "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" (John 4:23, 24).

In this passage, we see a number of things. First of all, God seeks us to worship Him. Secondly, there are true worshippers and false worshippers (note the context). Thirdly, true worship must consist of worship that is of the spirit and according to truth. God does not seek ritual worship or unauthorized worship.

Men have long been asking, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Some continue to ask as though there has been no answer. Jesus has stated, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy

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word is truth" (John 17:17). Acceptable worship is worship that is according to truth and the truth is defined by what the Scriptures teach. Hence we are seeking to find what is "scriptural worship." Nothing else is worthy of our consideration. Feelings, traditions, popularity, etc. are not bases on which we determine true religion. It must be based on a "thus saith the Lord."

Worship in Harmony With the New Testament Is Scriptural Worship

No better example of scriptural worship can be given than that of the Scriptures themselves. The New Testament church was led by the apostles under the headship of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18) as the Scriptures were being written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We can be assured that we are on safe ground when we imitate approved apostolic examples (Phil. 4:9). The true and faithful disciple of Christ will attempt to follow these scriptural patterns and not invent unscriptural ideas or follow traditional practices which are not rooted in God's Word.

So far as the various words for "worship" are concerned, the New Testament indicates that worship is an act of devotion or praise (either public or private) or an act of service directed toward God. Various words used in the text describe the action of worship as "to make obeisance, do reverence," "to revere, stressing the feeling of awe or devotion," or "to serve, to render religious service or homage" (cf: Thayer, Vine, etc.). The church of Jesus Christ in the first century, from its beginning in Acts 2, worshipped God. The definitions used above described their worship. Can we find a better example to follow in our worship today than this New Testament church? Would any deny that what they did under the direction and approval of the Holy Spirit and the apostles was pleasing to God? Let us examine the Scriptures to learn what these early Christians did in worship to God. The New Testament reveals that what the first century church offered in worship, so must we. —Adapted