

Worship

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

Worship is a very important theme in biblical literature.

The mention of worship, either in the practice of genuine devotion to God or that of a corrupted form, is found more than eight hundred times in the Bible.

Obviously worship is not an insignificant issue in God's plan of redemption.

The Significance of Worship

Genuine worship takes two significant forms in the sacred writings.

First, it is a prescribed mode of **expressing honor to deity** (the holy Godhead) in praise.

Christ certainly illustrated this in his "model" prayer. The divine "name" is to be "hallowed," (i.e., honored in our prayers; Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2).

When our Lord specified, "hallowed be your name," the term "name" implies a devoted recognition of God's "authority, character, rank, majesty, power, and excellence" (Vine).

Second, there is the necessity to approach deity in **petitions** for the legitimate needs of our lives.

Consider the statement of the inspired writer, James. He plainly argues that we frequently shortchange ourselves in our prayer life simply because we neglect to ask God for the things we require: "you have not, because you ask not" (Jas. 4:2b).

Worship in History

Literally speaking, worship is the act of devoutly revering Deity—God the Father, God the Son, and divine Holy Spirit (cf. Mt. 4:10; 8:2; 2 Cor. 13:14).

This reverence is on the basis of the nature of these three sacred persons.

For example, the days of Adam to the implementation of Moses' law is referred to as the patriarchal age. During this time, godly men **worshipped Jehovah** (cf. Gen. 12:8b) as directed by God through the divinely designed family structure.

It was because of their worship neglect in the days of Noah that the Lord sent a universal flood that destroyed human civilization, possibly some seven billion souls (Morris, 144). Only those in Noah's ark were spared (1 Pet. 3:20; cf. 2 Pet. 3:6).

Incidentally, this catastrophe was authenticated by Christ himself (Mt. 24:27-39).

The next age of biblical history is that of the Mosaical age. It began with the giving of Moses' law until its replacement with the New covenant.

During this time, the Hebrew nation was obligated to worship Jehovah **according to the instructions** of the prophets commissioned by God.

There could be fatal punishment for those who violated divine revelation, assuming man to be free to ignore sacred instructions regarding certain worship standards.

The divinely imposed death sentences of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, were ample testimony of Heaven's wrath for such infractions (cf. Lev. 10:1-2).

Three Principles of Worship

Christ implemented a New Covenant that became effective in regulating **Christian worship** on the day of Pentecost following his death (Acts 2:1-42).

Jesus laid down three principles regulating true worship.

“God is Spirit: and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24).

This text reveals these major elements of sacred worship:

- the proper object, only deity;
- an appropriate disposition—a reverent spirit;
- practiced according to the truth (i.e., consistent with divine revelation).

A violation of these rules of worship is severely chastised in the New Testament.

In Paul’s letter to the church of Colossae (Col. 2:23), the apostle issued a blistering rebuke against those church members who were adopting **human ordinances** that he subsequently labeled as “will-worship” (i.e., a “self-made religion ... do-it-yourself religion” (Danker et al., 276).

This also has been defined as “voluntarily adopted worship, whether unbidden or forbidden” (Vine, “worship”).

Worship Violations

There are numerous violations of authorized worship in the general religious community.

Many deluded souls attempt to argue that the only thing that matters in worship is one’s sincere disposition.


This baseless theory is exploded by the material in the previous section of this article under the condemnation of will-worship.

Consider the following various elements of New Testament worship. A brief survey of common practices in Catholicism, Protestantism and a growing number of the Lord’s congregations reveals significant corruption from the New Testament pattern.

Teaching as Worship

Teaching the word of God is a tremendously crucial item of worship in the church.

Teaching is a multifaceted responsibility involving personal knowledge, talent in relating data, patience in the face of adversity and kindness.

Christ, of course, is the greatest example of teaching in the Scriptures. For an extensive study of Jesus as a teacher, see my book, [Jesus Christ Master Teacher](#) .

Next to the Lord, the greatest, most effective preacher who ever lived was the apostle Paul. He evangelized three continents and penned two-thirds of the New Testament epistles. His work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit revolutionized the world.

The Lord’s disciples were said to “have turned the world upside down” by their teaching (Acts 17:6).

It has been estimated that by the time Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:60), the Jerusalem church consisted of no fewer than twenty thousand souls (Kistemaker, 148).

Singing as Worship

Singing hymns was an important element of New Testament worship. Paul mentions this form of melody several times in his writings (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

One denominational scholar concedes:

“There is no record in the NT of the use of instruments in the musical worship of the Christian church” (Pfeiffer et al., 1163).

In his monumental work, [Instrumental Music in the Worship](#), M. C. Kurfees assembled a vast collection of testimony from church historians regarding the music employed by the early church. The evidence gathered by these scholars was unequivocally united. Instruments of music were not used in the early church (XIV, 143-197).

We must also mention the growing practice among churches of Christ of incorporating “special singing” in church assemblies (e.g., soloists, quartets or praise teams). There is no New Testament authority for such practices.

Christian worship is intended to honor God. It is not a demonstration of personal entertainment or aggrandizement. See: [Are Choirs and Solos Authorized for the Church Assembly?](#)

The Communion

The Lord’s supper, with its bread and fruit of the vine, is biblically depicted as a “communion of the body” and a “communion of the blood” of the Savior (1 Cor. 10:16).

There is so much unnecessary disagreement in the community of Christendom regarding instructions of the Lord’s supper commanded by Jesus (Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:17-20).

Several theoretical views may be entertained.

Some allege that the communion need not be observed at all. They contend it was a cultural phenomenon of the first century and thus not binding today.

Many argue that the time element is inconsequential. Thus, the supper might be served at any time—daily, weekly, monthly or even annually.

Both of these views are void of biblical support. The early church came together on the “first day of every week” (1 Cor. 16:2; see the Greek text).

Their gathering was for the breaking of bread (i.e., the Lord’s supper; Acts 20:7). The original text reflects this act as the primary purpose for the meeting.

The communion must be observed: with the right elements (bread and fruit of the vine), on the correct day (each Sunday), and for the stated reason (to celebrate the Savior’s death for our sins).

Prayers to Deity

The Lord is ever willing to listen to his sincere children.

Christ was a man who placed great confidence in the power of prayer. If such was the case with him, how much more ought his people to value this line of communication, as such was stressed in Psalm 107:23-28.

Prayer can be powerful if certain conditions are satisfied. Prayer is the avenue by which we:

- thank God for his providence and blessings;
- acknowledge our dependance upon him;

- solicit from the Creator the needs we have for serving him

The importance of prayer may be observed in the practices of some of God’s greatest people—Moses, Abraham, Jeremiah, and especially Jesus himself.

Jesus prayed for himself (Lk. 3:21-22), on behalf of others (22:31, 32), and when he faced death (Mk. 14:32-42).

The Giving Obligation

Generous giving to God is likely the most difficult challenge for many Christians. But giving is emphasized in the New Testament.

A variety of different words reflect the value of this act (see Vine). Giving is stressed as **worship** (Phil. 4:18). This is the obligation of **every Christian** who has prospered. Giving is to be “on the first day of every week” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). It is to be given into the “store” (treasury) of the local church. The amount must be **commensurate** with one’s prosperity.

These elements of giving are required for Lord’s day worship, though Christians are at liberty to give whenever they have opportunity (Mk. 14:7; Gal. 6:10).

Conclusion

The humble Christian worships God with a sincere heart and according to the divine truth as revealed in the New Testament.

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker” (Psa. 95:6).

Related Articles

- [The Divine Pattern of Acceptable Worship—Part 2](#)
- [Clapping as an Accompaniment to Singing in Worship](#)
- [May a Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?](#)
- [What About a Saturday night Observance of the Lord’s Supper?](#)
- [The Divine Pattern of Acceptable Worship — Part 1](#)
- [The New Testament Pattern of Giving](#)
- [Identifying the Church of the New Testament](#)
- [The Weekly Observance of the Lord’s Supper](#)
- [The Authorized Elements of Church Music](#)
- [Giving as an Expression of Worship](#)

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Scripture References

Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2; James 4:2; Matthew 4:10, 8:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Genesis 12:8; 1 Peter 3:20; Matthew 24:27-39; Leviticus 10:1-2; Acts 2:1-42; John 4:24; Colossians 2:23; Acts 17:6; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7; Psalm 107:23-28; Luke 3:21-22; Mark 14:32-42; Philippians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Mark 14:7; Galatians 6:10; Psalm 95:6

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