

## **What is worship? 1**

We know that the word 'worship' comes from the Old English word 'weorthscipe' meaning 'worthiness, acknowledgment of worth'.

From this we get the concept of 'worth-ship'.

We also know that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit one God is worthy of our worship.

But as Christians what do we understand by 'worship'?

There are two crucial requirements for Christian worship: revelation and response.

**Revelation** is God revealing himself to us: revealing his character, his attributes.

**Response** comes from us: our awestruck reaction to the wonder of God. Forgive me for stating the obvious but as we know worship is about us giving to God not us receiving from God. When someone says, "I don't get much out of worship," it is a sure sign that they have no relationship with our triune God. Martin Luther stated that 'to know God is to worship him'. Worship is an essential symptom or expression of that knowledge.

### **Revelation**

So how does God reveal himself to us?

He reveals himself to us:

- through his works in creation [cf. Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18 - 20];
- through his written Word [cf. Psalm 19:7 - 11];
- through Jesus the Christ, the Word made flesh;  
[cf. John 1:1 - 18; 14:24; Colossians 1:15 - 20]
- through the Holy Spirit [cf. John 16:13].

**Christian worship is founded on theology - the knowledge of God.**

**The shortest route to a deeper and richer worship is a clearer theology.**

## What is worship? 2

### Service

The Hebrew word *ebed*' = servant.

Service of every kind is covered, including:

- acts of adoration;
- doing the chores.

Two very important words in N.T. are:

- *latreia* meaning service or worship;
- *leitourgia* - taken from secular life, meaning service to the community or state, usually without charge.

**The implication being that worship and service are one.**

### Whom and how do we worship?

We worship God alone. [cf. Exodus 20:1 - 3]

Our God is a triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are to worship him with our whole being.

**‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.’** [cf. Deuteronomy 6:5]

In Luke 10:27 an expert in the law quotes this command and adds **“and with all your mind”**.

Jesus the Christ replied, **“You have answered correctly . . . Do this and you will live.”** [Luke 10:28] In so doing Jesus the Christ is saying that life, including eternal life, is not achieved by good works but by having a correct relationship with God. And we know that a correct relationship with God the Father is only achieved in Jesus the Christ, God’s Son. [cf. John 14:6]

Worship should be both individual and corporate.

We should be worshipping God on a daily basis as we live out our life here on earth, remembering that we are **‘to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is [our] spiritual act of worship.’** [see Romans 12:1]

And we are to combine together with our brothers and sisters in Christ to corporately worship God.

The opening line of the great hymn, *‘O for a thousand tongues to sing . . .’* reflects the truth that God is so great that no individual can adequately worship him.

**Remember the ‘chief end of Man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.’**

## What is worship? 3

### The God we worship is both transcendent and immanent.

**Transcendent** refers to God's wholly otherness. He exists apart from and is not subject to the limitations of the material universe.

**Immanent**, in contrast, refers to God being at hand. He permanently pervades and sustains the universe.

### **In Scripture we find a tension between these two attributes of God.**

#### Sin cuts off people from God

In the Old Testament we see that animal sacrifices can bring about a new oneness with God. Such sacrifices usually have rituals associated with them. And any newness with God is temporary, because people keep sinning and are again cut off from God. So the cycle of sin, sacrifice, newness with God, sin . . . went on and on!

In the New Testament we find the one true and effective sacrifice to which the Old Testament sacrifice pointed. That being the once only sacrifice of God in Jesus the Christ. No more dead animals. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from sin. And his sacrifice has eternal benefits for those who place their faith in him: for those who become living sacrifices for him!

### **Such a sacrifice alone should bring us to worship our triune God.**

BUT while Old Testament sacrifices and rituals are no longer required, careful study and explanation of them are important.

Why? - because they reveal eternal principles of worship:

**sincerity; purity; holiness; right offerings.**

#### The commands of Jesus

In the New Testament we find that the commands of our Lord embrace a comprehensive understanding of worship and service.

#### **Fellowship**

**“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** [John 13:34]

#### **Ordinances and Evangelism**

**“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you.”** [Matthew 28:19 - 20a]

#### The Holy Spirit is essential for true worship

Jesus said:

**“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”** [John 4:23 - 24]

Yours in Christ,

Douglas