



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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WHAT IS WORSHIP?

James E. Rogers

We would do well to contemplate what worship and service are and consider whether our worship and service is pleasing to God.

The sign found in the foyer of some church buildings which admonishes, “Enter to worship, leave to serve,” gives the correct picture of Christianity. The Christian’s life is characterized by worship and service to God. The Christian must give diligence to make sure his worship and service bespeak the things authorized by God. He must not allow additions, subtractions or substitutions to take the place of authorized worship and service. Jared Moore was correct when he wrote, “Religion is a direct personal relationship between man and God; and unless the emotions which accompany it are based on true conceptions, it degenerates into a contemptible sentimentalism.”¹

We would do well to contemplate what worship and service are and consider whether our worship and service is pleasing to God.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Moore observed, “Worship is based on belief in a personal Deity who is the source of all goodness, who loves mankind, and who rejoices in the love of his people.”² Brewer wrote that “*Worship* is the calm, serene, purposeful, meditative emotions of the soul joyfully expressed in song, in prayer, and other scriptural acts.”³ In a broad sense, the worship of God “may be regarded as the direct acknowledgement

to God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgment.”⁴

Worship is bowing oneself in respect. The first time “worship” is found in our English Bibles, it comes from a word meaning “to depress, that is, prostrate (especially reflexively in homage to royalty or God).”⁵ One is to bow himself down to God (Genesis 22:5). Nebuchadnezzar wanted Haniah, Mishael and Azariah to bow down before his image (Daniel 3:5,10,12,14,15,18,28). We learn further that “Worship” is from an Aramaic word which means “to do homage (by prostration).”⁶ The Greek word, *proskuneo*, the most frequent word rendered to worship, means “to make obeisance, do reverence to (from *pros*, towards, and *kuneo*, to kiss).”⁷

Worship is adoring one. The Greek word, *sebomai*, means “to revere, that is, adore” (Romans 1:25). “Worship is not an elective. It is an imperative, for without it our conception of the eternal Being will be distorted and untrue.”⁸

Worship is an individual action. “You must worship God yourself. No one else can do it in your place... It is correct that worship is also corporate. We do it with others, and it is from the entire people of God, but each one must worship God personally.”⁹ This indicates that one cannot please God

and refuse to engage in the acts of worship authorized by God. The beauty of the congregational worship service is the blending of each Christian’s participation as he pours out his worship to God.

THE CHRISTIAN MUST OFFER PROPER WORSHIP TO GOD (John 4:20,24)

“Ought” (20) and “Must” (24) are from *dei* which means “to bind.” Thayer observes that it references “A necessity of law and command, of duty, equity.”¹⁰ This shows we have a moral obligation to offer proper worship to God.

“The ones (*tous*) worshipping (*proskunountas*)” God must (*dei*) worship (*proskunein*) in spirit. The word, “spirit” addresses our inner attitude. The Psalmist described the proper attitude of those who would worship Jehovah when he invited the people to “come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker” (Psa. 95:6-11). Joshua captured the importance of having the proper attitude before Jehovah when he exhorted Israel to “fear Jehovah and serve him in sincerity and in truth” (Josh. 24:14). Worship offered with the proper attitude will be free of pretense, hypocrisy, pride and false piety. Worship offered with the proper

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What Is Worship?...



Editorial...

QUESTIONS ON SALVATION #4

Garland M. Robinson

Some say sinners must be born of the Spirit, Spirit baptism, not water baptism. Baptism is a work that follows salvation, not precedes it.

ANSWER: Where's the scripture that tells a Christian to be baptized? Saul (Paul) was told to go to Damascus and he would be told what he must do to be saved (Acts 9:6). He went to Damascus and for three days was so tormented by the knowledge of his sins that he would not eat or drink (Acts 9:9). That does not sound like a man that had been saved three days earlier. At Damascus, a disciple by the name of Ananias taught him the Gospel and told him, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He wasn't a Christian before he was baptized because he was still in his sins. He wasn't a Christian until after he was baptized. His sins were not washed away until he was baptized (at the point of his baptism). The water does not wash sins away. It is the blood of Christ that washes sins away (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). But, it is in water baptism that one contacts the blood of Christ. Christ shed his blood in his death and it is in our death to a sinful life that we contact the blood. That's why we read in First Peter 3:21, "...baptism doth also now save us."

Where in the scriptures do we read that a Christian ever was told to be baptized? Where's an example of a Christian ever being baptized? There is no such scripture. Being baptized in water is the step that makes one a Christian. That is when a sinner contacts the blood of Christ and he/she begins a new life (Rom. 6:3-6, 17-18; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Baptism is a burial of one who has died to sin. Dead people are buried, not live people. Does anyone want to be buried alive? Romans 6:3-6 makes clear that the old man of sin is buried in baptism in order "that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth

we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). If one is a Christian before he is baptized, then you're burying a live person. A Christian is one who has been forgiven of their sins.

Notice Romans 6:17-18, "But God be thanked, that ye WERE the servants of sin, but ye have OBEYED from the heart that form of DOCTRINE which was delivered you. Being THEN MADE FREE FROM SIN, ye became the servants of righteousness." When is one made free from sin? It's when they obey the doctrine (teaching) that was delivered to them. What was the doctrine they had received? Go back to versus 3-6 and you'll find the answer — the doctrine of water baptism.

Jesus shed his blood in his death and was buried. We die to our sins and are buried in water (Rom. 6:3-4). Jesus arose from the dead. We arise from baptism a new creature in Christ. "Therefore if any man be IN Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Romans 6:3 says sinners are baptized INTO Christ where they contact his saving blood and thereby are raised up out of the water to walk (live) a new life (v.4). Where is the passage that says a sinner's sins are washed away and he is now IN Christ, before he is baptized? There's not one! But, in water baptism, "...our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6,17-18).

Some say, sinners need the Holy Spirit to turn them from their sins so they can believe.

ANSWER: The Holy Spirit does not make man do anything. If so, why doesn't he make everyone turn from sin and believe? If He only makes some turn and believe, that would make him a respecter of persons. Romans 2:11 says, "there is no respect of persons with God." If one can only be saved by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, then it would be God's

fault if an individual was not saved. The point is, God has already done his part. By his grace, he provided the sacrifice of his only begotten Son on the cross that paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins. Now, it is man's choice to accept the Lord's sacrifice and humbly obey God in order to receive the benefits of his grace. Everyone has the opportunity to hear, learn, believe and obey God's commands. Those who do so are saved and those who do not are lost. That's why Peter told the thousands on Pentecost, "save yourselves" (Acts 2:40). Sinners save themselves by believing and obeying God's commands.

While man can't earn or deserve salvation, God can't save those who do not obey. Jesus said, Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the will of my Father which is in heaven." As a matter of fact, there are many who THINK they are doing God's will when they are not actually doing God's will. Notice verses 22-23 of this same text. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Do we need the Holy Spirit to tell us what to DO so that we can have forgiveness of our sins? Yes. As a matter of fact, the Holy Spirit has already told the entire world what to do. The words of the Holy Spirit are the words of the New Testament. He inspired it to be written (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21). We have everything we need to obey God and live a faithful Christian life (2 Peter 1:3). The inspired Word is for the whole world. It's every human being's task to learn it and obey it. Jesus died for ALL men, not just those who believe (Heb. 2:9). "The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Some say baptism is a public declaration of the new life you receive BY the Holy Spirit.

ANSWER: Where's the scriptures that teach this? It's a common belief, but no scriptures to prove it. It's just an effort to evade the Bible teaching of God's plan of salvation. The Bible

reveals the exact moment when one receives forgiveness of sins at baptism (Acts 22:16). That's the exact moment one becomes a Christian, saved from their sins.

Forgiveness of sins is not extended at the point of faith. Faith is a step toward forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16).

Forgiveness of sins is not extended at the point of repentance. Repenting is a step toward forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

Forgiveness of sins is not extended at the point of confession. Confession is a step toward forgiveness of sins (Rom. 10:9-10).

Forgiveness of sins is extended at

the point of water baptism. Baptism is the step that puts one INTO Christ. It puts one into contact with Christ's blood that washes sins away (Rev. 1:5).

It was in the Lord's death that he shed his blood. It's in our death to sins in baptism that we contact his saving blood (Rom. 6:3-18).

"TOSSED TO AND FRO"

Gary Colley

When Paul penned the letter to the church of Christ in Ephesus, he gave a very serious warning about what was facing them from the devil. It would seriously affect the future of the church Jesus built and purchased with His blood, over which He is the only head (Matt. 16:18; Luke 24:46-47; Eph. 1:22; 4:4-6). He did not want them to be like gullible youngsters or children who are easily taken advantage of when they might be tempted to do wrong with a piece of candy.

When we think of something tossed, we may have in mind a salad served with our meal. Or more than likely as with our subject, it's the danger of being "shaken in mind" and troubled as one in a boat on a rough sea in a storm when we are "tossed to and fro". Paul referred this to winds of doctrine. In the Bible the word "doctrine" (singular), refers to Heaven's-revealed teaching, while "doctrines" (plural) refers to the opinions, declarations and philosophies of men (Matt. 15:9).

When Paul called the elders of the church of Christ in Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, some thirty miles from Ephesus, he warned them about the dangerous situation they were about to encounter from among some in the eldership. He termed their wrong actions to be as "wolves" surrounding and about to attack and kill a flock of sheep (Acts 20:28)! He was predicting an action that was on the horizon which he later would call the "falling away" or more commonly seen as a general apostasy (2 Thess. 2:1-4).

This evidently refers to, as history records, the schemes of the high arche

of the **Catholic Church** which gradually gained ascendancy. It seems that it began within the eldership as Paul said. It came to pass when one elder wanted to be called the "chief elder." Then, when the "chief elder" of other congregations wanted to meet together, there were some chosen who were called "bishops, cardinals," etc. All of this was of their own making as were also those whom they appointed, until finally they decided to have one Papa or Pope over them all. They would elect him, and he also would appoint them. They thought they gave him Heaven's throne as the "head" of this apostate body, and falsely declared Peter to be the first Pope! This man would later declare himself to be the head of the church, "setting himself forth as God" (2 Thess. 2:4). Many religious people today still refer to the Pope as the "Holy Father." It is claimed that he was the first Pope in Rome. However, there is no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. If he was there when Paul addressed the letter to the Romans, Peter would certainly have been mentioned (Rom. 1:1-3). These prefer their humanly made system of error and delusion, more than the simple and pure Gospel (by which they might be saved)! It was shown by the inspired Paul that they would fool people with their false "miracles," deceitful arts and practices, to uphold their selfish and unrighteous schemes (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

Paul, in contrast, says he has been crucified with Christ and that his life now belongs to Jesus as his head and Savior (Gal. 2:20). He knew the Truth that made him free from the doctrines of men and their ungodly schemes, and so it can be with us today! He re-

fused to be "tossed to and fro" by the doctrines of men and determined to live only as the doctrine of Christ would guide him (Matt. 15:9; Matt. 28:20). We must decide to be of the same mind and judgment if we intend to go to Heaven (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 John 9-11). Jesus said to those who believed on Him "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Let each one of us make up our mind that we will abide in the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (John 17:17). This is the only safeguard against being tossed about to and fro, by every wind of doctrine, and be LOST!

Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Mary Baker Eddy, and others who have claimed later revelations and started their own religions, have been and are being "tossed to and fro" themselves, and are sadly tossing many unsuspecting souls "to and fro" by windy doctrines which will cause many to fail to obey the Lord and be lost! (Matt. 7:13-14; 14:6; Col. 3:1-4). They openly go against such passages of Holy Writ as Second Timothy 3:16-17; John 8:31-32; Revelation 22:18-19; Galatians 1:8-9.

No man or woman has any excuse for following any doctrines of men when we have the revealed will of God clearly once and for all times given (Jude 3).

10801 County Line Rd (107)
Madison, AL 35758

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<https://www.facebook.com/Leoni-Church-of-Christ-1703126336649662>

What Is Worship?...

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attitude will eliminate the desire to be entertained and also will eliminate judging the preacher by how high an emotional pitch the preacher can create in the assembly.¹¹

Boice observed that “We live in an entertainment culture where everything is supposed to be fun and effortless, so Christians who come to church on Sunday expect the same environment.”¹² Frank J. Dunn wrote, “Practices that appeal to the physical senses rather than our spiritual understanding are of no value in Christian worship and are displeasing to God. Some examples are tongue-speaking, musical concerts, choirs, singing with instruments, hand clapping, foot stomping, songs that are not spiritual, devotionals in the dark, hand holding, soul talks, personal witnessing, story telling, responsive readings, preachers who entertain, song leaders who put on a show, weekend retreats and other additions to the divine pattern.” Dunn is emphasizing that if our worship has to be stimulated with physical things, something is missing on the inside.

Worship according to the Biblical pattern should encourage and excite us to greater service to God. Brewer correctly observed, “The *primary purpose* of worship is not how it makes one feel; not what one *gets out of it*, but what one *gives into it*... One should and will receive grace from God in *true worship*. This is one of those strange paradoxes where we *get by giving*. If we do not put our souls into the worship, remembering that ‘*worship is an act, not a passive state*,’ we will get nothing out of the worship... Worship is a *soul act*. Spiritual energy must be expended.”¹³

“The ones (*tous*) worshipping (*proskunountas*)” God must (*dei*) worship (*proskunein*) in truth. The word, “truth” (*aletheia*), shows that we have an objective standard by which we may determine what is to be offered to God in worship. Arndt and Gingrich point out that *aletheia* is used “of the content of Christianity as the absolute truth...”¹⁴ This will provide us with a “Thus saith the Lord” for all we do and teach in worship.

WHAT IS PROPER WORSHIP?

Proper worship is that worship which is directed toward the proper object.

We must “worship God.” The first use of the word “worship” in our English Bibles points our worship toward God (Gen. 22:5). John was instructed to “worship God” (Rev. 19:10; 22:9). We must “worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). When the ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, David proclaimed that the people should “*ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him; Worship Jehovah in holy array*” (1 Chron. 16:29). We must “*exalt...Jehovah our God, And worship at his footstool; Holy is he*” (Psa. 99:5).

We must worship God and “have no other gods.” The first four of the ten commandments directed the Israelites to worship God and to “have no other gods” (Exod. 20:1-11). Jehovah’s covenant with Israel involved their habitation of the land of Canaan. Instructions were given concerning the destruction of the idolatrous worship system of the Canaanites. Following the details concerning idolatry in Canaan, Jehovah stated, “*for thou shalt worship no other god: for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*” (Exod. 34:10-14). In a statement concerning Jehovah’s power and dominion, the Psalmist admonishes, “*Let all them be put to shame that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: Worship him, all ye gods*” (Psa. 97:7). Zephaniah told of the time when Jehovah “*will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations*” (Zeph. 2:11). Isaiah pointed to the time when people “*shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem*” (Isa. 27:13). Paul admonished the Corinthians to “*flee from idolatry*” (1 Cor. 10:14-22) and John wrote, “*my little children, guard yourselves from idols*” (1 John 5:21).

Brewer observed, “If God is a personal Being who is related to us as a Father and who loves us and blesses us, we should seek to know him and to express our gratitude and love to him...the oftener we can commune with him, the better it will please us. Hence, there will never be the complaint from a true, intelligent worshiper

that every Sunday is too often.... Therefore, when men do not feel inclined to worship God and to want him in their lives, the cause is — call it what you will — *atheism*. They do not believe in God as a loving Father. They do not believe that ‘he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.’ If they did, of course, they would diligently seek after him.”¹⁵

Proper worship is that worship which involves the proper actions. These actions must be authorized by God (Col. 3:17). There are five authorized acts to be used in worship to God. While some do not like the terminology, acts, it is the case that each item of worship calls for action on the part of the worshiper.

SINGING of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is authorized in worship to God (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Instrumental music is not authorized nor is the imitating of the sounds of an instrument. Corporate worship involves *congregational singing*. Choirs, quartets, praise teams and solos are not authorized. No amount of wishing to please and appease people who are not interested in pleasing God will ever authorize those things which God has not authorized. The actions of “Jeroboam the son of Nebat” (1 Kings 12:25-33) and Jehovah’s response (1 Kings 13) to those actions should remind all of us of the importance of worshipping according to Jehovah’s authority.

PRAYING to God by the authority of Jesus is authorized (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:8-15). Praying to or through Mary or the use of candles and the like is not authorized. All who pray to God should be aware of the awesome privilege of being invited to the very throne of God through our covenant relationship with him. We should never take this privilege for granted nor misuse it by being flippant in our approach to him. The principle of approach is still to be governed by the knowledge and respect of his hallowed name (Matt. 6:9). Those who lead public prayers should take special care to pray in a way that all who follow may make the prayer personal and be able to say the “Amen.”

TEACHING the truth is authorized (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Being able to learn more of God’s will is a privilege which is not equaled by anything earthy. When the word of God is taught, our hearts should be open to

instruction and appreciative of revelation which made this wonderful word possible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The spirit of reverence exemplified by the people of God when “*Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people*” (Neh. 8:5) should characterize us today when God’s word is studied. We still need to be reading “*in the book, in the law of God, distinctly*” and giving “*the sense, so that*” people may understand “*the reading*” (8:8).

GIVING on the first day of every week is authorized (1 Cor. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 8,9). This giving is “*according as a man hath*” (2 Cor. 8:12) and “*as he hath purposed in his heart*” (8:7). It is to be based on one’s prosperity (1 Cor. 16:2) realizing that, as God causes us to “*abound in everything*” (2 Cor. 8:7), we should “*abound in this grace also.*” One’s prosperity each week may cause his amount to fluctuate from week to week. One should always remember he is not “*giving back to God*” because God never relinquished ownership. One should give realizing he is but a steward of what God has given him and that “*it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2). Our giving is a using of that which God has loaned us in one of the ways God has authorized us to use it.

Observance of the **LORD’S SUPPER** on the first day of every week is authorized (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). The authorized elements of the Lord’s Supper are *unleavened bread* and *fruit of the vine* (Matt. 26:26-29). There is no authority from God to observe the Lord’s Supper at any other time than *the first day of the week*. The Lord’s Supper is to “*proclaim the Lord’s death till he come*” (1 Cor. 11:26). The emphasis is on the Lord’s death, not our pleasure or emotion. As I grow in my Bible knowledge, I grow in my appreciation of the Lord’s Supper and what that really means!

Proper worship is that worship which takes the proper precautions. This will avoid *vain worship* by not allowing human tradition to make void God’s will (Matt. 15:1-9). This will avoid *false worship* by recognizing God will not accept substitutes (Zeph. 1:2-6). This will avoid *ignorant worship* by learning and obeying the truth revealed in the Bible (Acts 17:16-31). This will avoid *will worship* which causes men to seek a “*holy wow*” instead of a “*well done.*” When men want their way in worship, instead of

submitting to God’s way, they are guilty of will worship (Col. 2:23).

THE CHRISTIAN MUST OFFER THE PROPER SERVICE TO GOD

Service is different from worship, but worship grows out of service. The Bible encourages people to serve God. Joshua encouraged the Israelites to “*fear Jehovah and serve him in sincerity and in truth*” (Josh. 24:14). He recognized that in order for one to serve Jehovah properly, a choice would have to be made (24:15). Solomon was encouraged by David to know “*the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind*” (1 Chron. 28:9). Jesus told Satan that persons should “*worship the Lord thy God and him only...serve*” (Matt. 4:10). Jesus knew this would require a choice because “*no man can serve two masters*” (Matt. 6:24). Jesus promised that those who served him would be honored by His father (John 12:26). Paul described his work in Asia as “*servicing the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials*” (Acts 20:19). Paul also told Felix that he served “*the God of our fathers*” (Acts 24:14). The one who has rendered proper service to God on the earth will have the opportunity to serve God “*day and night in his temple*” (Rev. 7:15).

Proper service to God will cause one to be a good soldier in the Lord’s army. Paul charged Timothy to “*war the good warfare*” (1 Tim. 1:18). Involved in this warfare would be the necessity to “*suffer hardship...as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim. 2:3). Good soldiers must use the proper armor which is described in Ephesians 6:10-20. Proper use of this armor will enable one to “*stand against the wiles of the devil*” and to “*withstand in the evil day*” (Eph. 6:11,13). The good soldier may conclude his life of service to God with the knowledge that he has “*fought the good fight*” (2 Tim. 4:7).

Proper service to God will cause one to be a good seeker of the lost. Andrew knew the importance of bringing people to hear Jesus. “*He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus*” (John 1:41,42). “*Philip findeth Nathanael*” (1:45). The woman from

Sychar “*went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did*” (John 4:29). The result of this action was that “*many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman*” (4:39). Jesus commanded that his servants go “*into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation*” (Mark 16:15). The New Testament bears record to the work of first century Christians (Acts and Epistles). We must also take this commission seriously. When one is a good seeker of the lost, he imitates the example of Jesus who “*came to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10).

Proper service to God will cause one to be a good server of others. Paul concluded many of his epistles with lists of those who served God, Paul and others (Rom. 16; 1 Cor. 16; Col. 4). Phoebe is commended as a “*servant of the church that is at Cenchreae*” and is described as one who had “*been a helper of many, and of mine own self*” (Rom. 16:1,2). Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and others who were not named ministered unto Jesus of their substance (Luke 8:2-3). Jesus gave a simple illustration of how all can be servants of God in service to others. He also stressed that when service was rendered to others, it was being rendered to him (Matt. 25:34-40).

THERE IS TO BE A CORRELATION BETWEEN WORSHIP AND SERVICE

In the record of the first example of the correlation between worship and service, one is able to see the principles involved in such correlation. “*Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering*” (Gen. 4:4). Notice that before Jehovah respected Abel’s offering, He respected Abel. Abel’s offering provided evidence “*that he was righteous*” (Heb. 11:4). His worship reflected his daily walk. Abel was not something different in worship than he was in daily life. Abel filled his life with righteous works (1 John 3:12). Jesus provided testimony to the righteous lifestyle of Abel (Matt. 23:35). What a recommendation! Abel shows that what one is in his daily service to God will be reflected in his worship.

It is not by accident that one who ascends into Jehovah’s hill and stands

in Jehovah's holy place is one who has "*clean hands and a pure heart*" (Psa. 24:3,4). Isaiah recorded Jehovah's rejection of Israel's worship based on a rejection of Israel's lifestyle (Isa. 1:10-17). This is the same principle behind the rejection of Cain and his offering (Gen. 4:5; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11).

Jesus stressed the importance of one's lifestyle when it comes to worship. He instructed one who was not in the proper relationship with his brother to "*leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*" (Matt. 5:23). The lifestyle of early Christians is seen to correlate with their worship (Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-12; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). Emphasis is placed on proper service in view of proper worship in Revelation 7:9-17; 22:3. God intended for His people to take their lives and worship seriously!

CONCLUSION

Worship and Service serve as two good words to summarize the Christian life. May each Christian give the needed attention to these areas of his life. If an accountable person has not obeyed the Gospel Plan of Salvation (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 2:38; 8:37; 22:16), he should do so now. Those who are Christians should live faithfully (Rev. 2:10).

ENDNOTES:

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2. Moore in Brewer, p.337
3. Brewer, p.340
4. W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1966), Volume 4, p. 236
5. Word definitions are from BibleSoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Con-

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6. Francis Brown, The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), p.1104
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8. George Arthur Buttrick, Ed., The Interpreter's Bible, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1953), Volume 11, p.332
9. James Montgomery Boice, Psalms, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), Volume 3, p.1259
10. Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), p.126
11. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
12. Boice, p.1259
13. Brewer, p.341
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PO Box 2895
Cookeville, TN 38502

AN HONEST AND GOOD HEART

Jason Hilburn

There are a lot of people in "the Bible belt" of the USA and many other places in the world who would be described by most as good people — good religious-minded people who believe in Jesus, but are they all saved? Are they truly honest about what God's Word requires for man's salvation, or have many chosen to believe what seems convenient and comfortable? In religious discussions, whether online or in person, it is common to see many known as "good religious people" being dishonest, denying what the Scriptures plainly say. Perhaps they simply need to learn how to rightly divide the Word (2 Tim. 2:15), or perhaps they love tradition more than Truth (Mark 7:9).

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said there are four kinds of soils, or hearts (Matt. 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-15). The type of soil is determined by the person's attitude toward the Word of God. If we really want to be the good soil, being honest about what God's Word says is more important than being generally known as "good religious people."

HONESTY COMES FIRST

Jesus said, "*But that on the good*

ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). Why did Jesus mention honesty first? Perhaps it is because many put on a show of faith, religious piety, and good works, but the real test is when they learn that God has plainly said something that contradicts their beliefs or lifestyle. This is often when their honesty is tested and their soil type is revealed.

During Bible times, there were many who literally plugged their ears because they were not honest enough to accept the Truth (Acts 7:57; cf. Matt. 13:15; John 8:43; 2 Thess. 2:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:25; 1 John 4:6). They were content to remain in their own little bubble of falsehoods and did not want anyone bursting their religious bubble! Men like Jesus and Stephen were bubble bursters, and they were put to death by dishonest religious people. Jesus said, "*He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*" (John 8:47). Are there any dishonest religious people like that today, or was that simply a first century A.D. phenomenon? Today, there are still many who claim to follow God but are antagonistic toward things

God has stated very plainly. They claim they are "of God," but their dishonest reaction to His Words say otherwise.

Friend, if God plainly says something that contradicts your beliefs or lifestyle, are you honest enough to admit you are wrong? Will you deny your faults like King Saul, or confess them like King David (1 Sam. 15:15,20,21; 2 Sam. 12:13)? If God plainly says something that contradicts your *preacher*, are you honest enough to say your preacher is wrong (Acts 17:11; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Thess. 5:21)? If God plainly says something that contradicts your *parents*, are you honest enough to say your parents were wrong (Matt. 10:34-39)? It seems that many "good" people are not honest enough to do these things, perhaps because deep down they love themselves, their preachers, or their families more than God.

In psychology there is something called cognitive dissonance, which is a tendency to reject any information that contradicts what one currently believes. Being honest and objective can be challenging at times, but love is the key to overcoming this challenge (Matt. 22:36-40)! If we love God more than we love ourselves or anyone else, we will not allow anything to separate us from

Him, including dishonesty (John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:3). We will accept whatever God says because we realize being honest with His Word and actually following it is the only way to Heaven (Heb. 5:9). If we love our neighbors, we will not remain in error, knowing that the example we are setting is leading others to Hell instead of Heaven (Matt. 5:13-16). If we love ourselves and care about our own souls as we should, we will be willing to change and do what is best for our souls eternally (Matt. 22:39).

MANY “GOOD RELIGIOUS PEOPLE” ARE LOST

It was true in Bible times, and it is still true today. The rich young ruler could confidently affirm the many commandments he had obeyed, and he apparently believed in Jesus, but Jesus gave him a command he did not want to obey (Matt. 19:21). The ruler went away sorrowful because his possessions were going to remain between him and the Lord, and he would thus remain “imperfect” in the Lord’s sight (19:21). The disciples said, “*Who then can be saved*” (19:25)? They were surprised, because this man appeared to be an upstanding religious person, but many who appear to be saved in the eyes of the world are actually lost, and even one commandment rejected is enough to keep them from Heaven (Gal. 6:1; James 2:10). There are many religious people today who have many things right about their lives (as the ruler did), but their lives do not completely align with God’s Word, and they refuse to change. Will Jesus show partiality and usher them into Heaven, knowing that the rich young ruler was rejected? (Matt. 19:23-24; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:5-11; 1 Peter 1:17).

The Ethiopian and Cornelius were “good religious people” who were lost until they obeyed the Gospel in baptism (Acts 8:35-39; 10:6, 34-35, 48; 11:14). Saul of Tarsus was considered a “good religious person” to many, but he was as lost as he could be until he was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Saul needed to be honest enough to admit that he had been wrong. He proved he was honest because he repented and obeyed the command given by Ananias. Interestingly, many who are called “good religious people” today dishonestly reject the same command Saul obeyed! “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash*

away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). God said baptism was to wash away Saul’s sins, but many “good religious people” today are not honest enough to agree! Peter taught untold numbers of religious people that repentance and baptism is “for the forgiveness of sins,” but many “good religious people” today are not honest enough to agree (Acts 2:38,40)! Their position stands in contrast to the honest hearts recorded in Acts, in which even people who had been “baptized” once in error were honest enough to be baptized again after gaining a proper understanding of water baptism (Acts 19:1-5), and in which the mighty preacher Apollos was honest enough to admit he had been wrong about water baptism (Acts 18).

The churches of Galatia and Hymenaeus and Philetus are examples of religious people who believed in Jesus but were lost because of doctrinal error (Gal. 5:4; 2 Tim. 2:15-18). All these examples prove the point, but Jesus also plainly taught that many religious people who believe in Him will be devastated on the Day of Judgment: “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:21-23).

Friends, the truth is exactly as Jesus said: few will go to Heaven, because only those who actually do the will of the Father will make it (Matt. 7:13-14, 21-27). That requires honesty!

TESTING OUR HONESTY

If God says something other than belief is required for salvation, are we honest enough to agree? (Repent, Acts 17:30; confess faith in Christ before men, Matt. 10:32; be immersed in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38; worship God in spirit and in truth, John 4:24; do not forsake the assembling, Heb. 10:23-31; be faithful unto death, Rev. 2:10, etc.). If God says “*water...baptism does also now save us*” (1 Peter 3:21), are we honest enough to agree? If God says there is only one saved body, which is Christ’s

church, are we honest enough to agree (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)? If God says there is only one faith, are we honest enough to agree (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3)? If God says fornication is the only valid reason for divorce, are we honest enough to agree (Matt. 19:9)? To members of the Lord’s church, if God says the church must withdraw fellowship from brothers and sisters who refuse to repent, are we honest enough to agree (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 7:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6,14-15). More questions could be asked, but do we pass or fail such tests of honesty (2 Cor. 13:5)?

CONCLUSION

Just because someone is a “good” person in many ways, that does not mean that he is honest when it comes to God’s Word. If we reject what God has plainly said, we are not people of faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). Let us always be open-minded and objectively honest with God’s Word, allowing Him to mold us into what He wants us to be (Rom. 12:1-2).

PO Box 285
Baker, FL 32531

CONTRIBUTIONS

Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN.....	\$100
Anonymous	\$100
Anonymous	\$25
Bill Free.....	\$20
Alan & Irene Tate.....	\$100
Dan Huffines.....	\$50
J. K. Gossett	\$100
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WORSHIP PLEASING TO GOD

Denver Thomas

The reverence and sanctity that once characterized worship services in days gone by seems to have come and gone. Just a generation or so ago, people came to worship services prepared to serve the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. They knew the hour set aside for meeting and were present on time. They assembled quietly and were ready to worship. They knew and followed the book.

Today, it seems many come to entertain and to be entertained. I heard one preacher say from the pulpit *“we are here to entertain God.”* Many people do not seem to know the need to arrive on time. Many come at the last minute and want to *visit* a while. Starting time seems unimportant to them. Others come and chat about any number of topics, none of which have to do with worship or spiritual matters. One is left to wonder just what has happened to people today.

Jesus, in His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, said *“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.”* That hour is the here and now and that saying applies to His followers this day. This saying encompasses two distinct parts. The first is in “spirit” and involves our attitude and our commitment in His service. If our heart is not in the proper “frame-of-mind” then we will not be able to worship in “spirit” as we are instructed. Paul spoke to this when he wrote, *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”* (1 Cor. 11:26-30).

Then, there is the in “truth” which relates to how well worship follows the acceptable pattern. We have been incorporating five items in worship from early days and have Scriptures for what we do.

We **Sing** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

We **Pray** (Acts 1:14,24, James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:12; Jude 1:20).

We **Study** (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:12-13; 1 Peter 2:2).

We **Commune** (Lord’s Supper) (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30).

We **Give** (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7).

But then, there are those within the brotherhood who find the book insufficient for their needs, so they commence to add items. Sermons quite often contain material for which there is no Bible for support. All too often, instruments are added to singing. Choirs are assembled in place of congregational singing. And of late, women are being used in leadership roles in worship. And, not to be overlooked is the entertainment issue which has become all too commonplace, especially in larger congregations. Frivolity has become an all too frequent part of many lessons and

sermons. People like being entertained and there are those who are more than willing to oblige.

From the very beginning, there have been those who thought there was a better way. Jeremiah spoke to this in Jeremiah 10:23 when he wrote, *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”* The writer of Proverbs said *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14:12).

God has always demanded that His people follow that which He has instructed. Jesus gave us two warnings that many seem to totally ignore. In Matthew 7:21 He said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* And, in John 12:48 He said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”*

Are we listening?

PO Box 821
Milton, WV 25541

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Editor: **Garland M. Robinson** – seektheoldpaths.com

LEONI CHURCH OF CHRIST
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