

*The Father Seeks Worshippers*¹

Introduction:

1. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman disclosed significant information regarding worship to God. *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" John 4:21-24*
2. Worship may be defined as spiritual communion with God through specific actions that indicate respect, reverence and devotion.
3. While we sometimes say we worship by singing, praying, giving, teaching God's word, and partaking of the Lord's supper, this is not precisely correct.
 - a. These activities are not worship in themselves but rather the means by which we worship. Just as one is not born again simply because he has been immersed in water – because he must also be born of the spirit (John 3:3, 5) – so also genuine worship happens not simply by doing certain activities in the correct manner, but by doing them with our spirits in communion with God.
 - b. Jesus taught that "God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24).
4. An often overlooked, but most important statement of Jesus, which we need to address, is that "the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (v. 23).
5. This lesson will focus on answering three questions
 - a. What did Jesus mean when he said we must worship "in spirit"?
 - b. What did Jesus mean when he said we must worship "in truth"?
 - c. What did Jesus mean when he said that the Father seeks such to worship him?

I. *What did Jesus mean when he said we must worship "in spirit?"*

- A. We should all have that worshipful spirit which John aptly described of worshippers in heaven. This description of heavenly worship serves as a model of the spirit each worshipper should have in his own heart as he humbly prostrates himself before the Lord.
 1. Around the throne of God, worshippers are described as prostrated before God as they give him glory, honor and thanks. . . "The four living creatures . . . do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!' Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created'" **Revelation 4:8-11.**

¹Copyright © by author, Robert L. Waggoner, 2003. Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute this manuscript, if unchanged, for non-commercial educational purposes. All other rights reserved. (Given at the end of this outline is an Addendum presenting scriptures pertaining to Christian worship.)

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2. As God the Father is worshipped for his eternality and his creation, so also God the Son is worshipped for his having redeemed us by his blood. “The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever” ***Revelation 5:8-14.***
- B. A person’s spirit is indicated by that person’s attitude and behavior. Many different spiritual qualities may be involved in acceptable worship to God.
1. The spirit of faith was apparently why Abel’s sacrifice was acceptable to God (***Genesis 4:1-7; Hebrews 11:4.***) By implication, Cain did not sacrifice by faith and therefore he and his sacrifice were rejected.
 2. Likewise, the spirit of reconciliation with brethren, if need be, is essential before one’s worship is acceptable to God. Jesus said, “if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” ***Matthew 5:23-24.***
 3. Moreover, Jesus declared that the spirit of obedience is required for one’s worship to be acceptable. Jesus condemned those persons who taught the doctrine of Corban (i.e., that the financial benefits they should give to support their aged parents could be given to the rebuilding of the temple). He said, “In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” ***Matthew 15:1-9; see also Mark 7:1-13.***
- C. God has always required that those who worship him be spiritually right with him. Even in the Old Testament, God required that those who worshipped him live with a spirit of righteousness. Unless they lived righteous lives, God was displeased with their sacrifices.
1. Speaking through Isaiah, God said, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? says the LORD. I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies; I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My

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eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” *Isaiah 1:11-17*.

2. Isaiah’s younger contemporary, Micah prophesied similarly, saying, “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” *Micah 6:6-8*.
3. From these passages, we may conclude in general terms that Jesus taught that acceptable worship requires that worshippers be in a right relationship with both God and fellow human beings, and that worshippers must come to God in the spirit of faith.

D. Other specific spiritual qualities involved in acceptable worship to God may be observed regarding specific New Testament mediums of worship.

1. For example, regarding financial giving, “let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of a necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver” *2 Corinthians 9:7*. He who gives should do so with the spirit of liberality *Romans 12:8*.
2. Regarding the Lord’s Supper, scripture teaches that it must not be in an unworthy manner (*1 Corinthians 11:27, 29*). The worshipper must partake in a spirit of self-examination (*1 Corinthians 11:28*), and in remembrance of the Lord (*1 Corinthians 11:24-25*).
3. Regarding singing, worship in spirit involves “making melody in your heart to the Lord” (*Ephesians 5:19*), “teaching and admonishing one another” and “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (*Colossians 3:16*).
4. Regarding prayers, worship in spirit is demonstrated by continually offering “the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (*Hebrews 13:5*), “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Ephesians 5:20*).
5. Regarding preaching and teaching, worship is spiritual in that it consist of “edification and exhortation and comfort” (*1 Corinthians 14:3*). Preaching requires convincing, rebuking, and exhorting, with all longsuffering (*2 Timothy 4:1-2*) and “a spirit of gentleness” (*Galatians 6:1*).

II. *What did Jesus mean when he said we must worship “in truth?”*

- A. We commonly answer by saying that true worship means conforming to the truth of God’s word, however this was probably not what Jesus meant in this conversation.
1. Correctness of ritual in worship was certainly required in the Old Testament.
 2. God specified precisely what sacrifices he wanted and how he wanted them made (see the Book of Leviticus).
 3. To worship improperly was to displease God. Because Nadab and Abihu used sacrificial fire that God had not ordained, they were stricken dead (*Leviticus 10:1-2*).
- B. We who live under the New Testament may also worship improperly, i.e., not according to the truth of God’s word.
1. For example, worshipping in truth requires that we sing because that’s what the New Testament teaches (*Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16*) – rather than by singing with accompaniment of a mechanical instrument.

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2. Or, we say that worshipping in truth requires eating the Lord's Supper every Lord's day when the church comes together because that's what the New Testament teaches (*Matthew 26:26-29; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:7*) – rather than once a month, or once per quarter.
- C. However, while these applications of the meaning of true worship are not incorrect, this type application is surely not what Jesus meant when talking to the Samaritan woman in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John.
1. What Jesus meant by true worship comes out of the historical context of the passage.
 - a. Jesus' comment was in response to the Samaritan woman's thinking about the Jews conviction that, under the Law of Moses, worship should be in Jerusalem, whereas the Samaritans thought that worship should be in Mt. Gerizim.
 - b. In saying "neither" (*John 4:21*), was not Jesus talking about something other than correctness of rituals in worship?
 - c. In this context, was not Jesus saying that those things which were under the Law – such as worshipping at Jerusalem – were but a shadow of the true things to come thereafter (see *Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1*)?
 2. Is not Jesus saying that true worship will not be according to the Law of Moses but will be according to Christian teaching?
 - a. In this sense, worship under the Law of Moses was but the shadow, whereas worship in the Christian age is that which is "true" (i.e., in the sense of real or genuine).
 - b. Worship under the Law, based upon animal sacrifices and an inferior covenant, was imperfect, but worship under Christ is perfect, being based upon Christ's blood of the New Covenant (See *Hebrews 7:11 – 9:14; 12:22-29*).

III. *What did Jesus mean when he said that the father is seeking such to worship him?*

- A. God has always sought worship from humanity. After Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden, God sought the worship of their children, Cain and Abel.
- B. Worship toward God relates specifically to recognition of what God has done.
 1. Prior to Christ's redeeming activity, worship toward God related specifically to God's creation and to God's deliverance of his people from perils in this life.
 2. In saying that the Father is seeking worshippers, Jesus may have had reference to the fact that worshippers were being sought by what was soon to be achieved through Christ's death and resurrection.
 3. Remember that John's vision in heaven portrayed worship by the heavenly host because of God's creation and Christ's redeeming work.
 4. We who live after Christ's redeeming activity have greater cause to worship God than those who lived before Christ's redeeming activity.

Conclusion:

1. Our hearts should therefore be filled with awe and gratitude not only for God's creation, but also for his redemption. Let us therefore worship fervently in spirit and in truth.
2. Since the Father is seeking worshippers, are you in a position to worship in spirit and truth?
3. Are you a recipient of Christ's redeeming activity? If so, does not that produce a sense of awe and worship in you?
4. If not, do you not need to become a Christian for your worship to be true worship?

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Addendum

True congregational worship activity consist of praying, singing, preaching and teaching, giving, and eating of the Lord's Supper.

- A. Prayers to God should be spoken in and through the name of Christ (Ephesians 3:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:5)² adoring and praising Him (Hebrews 13: 15; 1 Peter 2:9.),³ giving thanks for temporal and spiritual blessings (Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 4: 4-5.)⁴ interceding in behalf of others (1 Timothy 2:1.),⁵ and making supplications (Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1.)⁶ by faith (Mark 11:24; James 1:6; 1 John 5:15.)⁷ for Divine assistance.
- B. Congregational singing (1 Corinthians 14:26.)⁸ of songs, hymns and spiritual songs should be sung in praise to God and to teach and admonish one another (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).⁹
- C. Preaching and teaching should proclaim the good news of the gospel to any who may not have heard it (Acts 8:4, 12)¹⁰ and to reprove, rebuke and to exhort brethren (Acts 13:1; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 19, 23, 26; 1 Timothy 4:13; 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15).¹¹

²**Ephesians 3:11-12**, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. **1 Timothy 2:5**, For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

³**Hebrews 13:15**, Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. **1 Peter 2:9**, But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

⁴**Ephesians 5:20**, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, pray without ceasing, **1 Timothy 4:4-5**, For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

⁵**1 Timothy 2:1**, Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.

⁶**Philippians 4:6**, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **1 Timothy 2:1**, Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.

⁷**Mark 11:24**, "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. **James 1:6**; But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. **1 John 5:15**, And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him..

⁸**1 Corinthians 14:26**, How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

⁹**Ephesians 5:19**, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **Colossians 3:16**, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

¹⁰**Acts 8:4, 12**, Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. ... But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

¹¹**Acts 13:1**, Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **Acts 20:7**, Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until

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- D. Giving cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)¹² and as prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2)¹³ is done on the first day of every week.
- E. Eating the Lord's Supper in memory of Christ (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23- 33)¹⁴ should also be done on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7).¹⁵ Communion is but a combination of two words, "common" and "union." which is illustrated by the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).¹⁶

midnight. **1 Corinthians 14:3, 19, 23, 26**, But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. ... yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.... Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ... How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. **1 Timothy 4:13**, Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. **1 Timothy 5:20**, Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. **2 Timothy 4:2**, Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. **Titus 1:13**, This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, **Titus 2:15**, Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

¹²**2 Corinthians 9:7**, So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

¹³**1 Corinthians 16:1, 2**, Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

¹⁴**Matthew 26:26-29**, And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." **Mark 14:22-25**, And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."²³ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."²⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." **Luke 22:19-20**, And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."²⁰ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. **1 Corinthians 11:23-33**, For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."²⁵ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. ²⁷Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. ³³Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

¹⁵**Acts 20:7**, Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

¹⁶**1 Corinthians 10:16-17**, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. ¹⁷For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.