

Articles and Sermons :: What is true worship? by Bishop M.A. Lalachan**What is true worship? by Bishop M.A. Lalachan - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2017/3/17 21:33**

Worship is the oldest practice in the history of mankind. There is no culture in the history which has not practiced some form of worship. We were created to worship and the essence of worship can be found in the first of the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3) This actually teaches us three vital truths about worship. First we worship God because he is God. "Against atheism. The first commandment is first because God's revelation and man's response are foundational to everything else. Second, God alone is worthy to receive worship which forbids idolatry. So it requires that all services and acts of worship, which we tender unto the true God, with utmost sincerity, reverence and devotion. Third there is only one God, Maker of heaven and earth. Anything or anyone else claiming the title god is a disgrace. When we give our highest attention or allegiance to anything or anyone other than God, we are worshipping what is false. Since God is the object of our worship, He and He alone have the right to determine how we are to worship Him.

True worship is an encounter with the living God, experiencing God, Praising God, making an offering to God, expressing our love to God, reflecting our devotion to God and ascribing true worth to God. True worship, in other words, is defined by the priority we place on who God is in our lives and where God is on our list of priorities. True Worship is a response to God in which we move in God's direction. Moreover, we turn towards him, not because we want God to give something to us, but because we want to give something to him. Thus, in addition to responding to God, worship is also making an offering to God. It is giving him something he deserves, whether praise, thanks, adoration and offering. When we worship God, we respond to him by offering what he has allowed us freely and truly to give: our love, our devotion, our praise, our submission, our commitment, our service. To be sure, our ability to make these offerings depends upon God's initiative, not to mention the help of his Spirit. Yet when we choose to offer what God asks us to give, he is truly worshipped.

We worship God because he is God. True worship is a matter of the heart expressed through a lifestyle of holiness. Worship means "to give honor, homage, reverence, respect, adoration, praise, or glory to a superior being." God demands worship because He and He alone is worthy of it. He is the only being that truly deserves worship. He requests that we acknowledge His greatness, His power and His glory. The Bible says: Rev 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." The meaning of the New Testament Greek word most often translated "worship" (proskuneo) is "to fall down before" or "to bow down before." A biblical account of such reference we see in Leviticus 9:24 -- Aaron celebrated his first act of worship as the anointed high priest. Meticulously, he offered the required sacrifices to the Lord. Then the glory of the Lord miraculously appeared to all the people. "Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground." (Lev 9:24)

Here is the fundamental paradigm of biblical worship: bowing down before the Lord in response to his glorious self-revelation. It's an act of reverence in which we lower ourselves in humility so that God might be lifted up. It's a gesture of total submission, in which we say: "Lord, you are the King of kings, and I am your humble servant." Far more than "ascribing worth to God," biblical worship is a complete devotion of oneself to God. It's offering more than my praise, however well-intended. The multifaceted nature of God necessitates diverse responses in worship. Because God is a mighty King, we worship with humble submission. Because God is holy, we worship with reverent awe. Because God has saved us, we worship with exuberant thanksgiving. Because God is forgiving, we worship by confessing our sins. Because God is our loving Father, we worship with heartfelt adoration.

Biblical worship is offering completely to God. Whether we actually bow down in worship or not, the core of our worship should be the humble submission of ourselves to God. Our hearts and bodies are connected. What we do with our bodies impacts our hearts, and vice versa. Though it's possible to worship God fully without ever bowing down but the most important thing in worship is that you offer yourself humbly to God. The heart does indeed matter most. But, at the same time, No matter what I might think with my mind, feel in my heart, and express with my lips, when I put my whole body into communicating something, I'm engaged more completely. And you just might find that your heart follows your body, so that your gesture of worship leads you into even deeper and more heartfelt worship. Worship involves all that we are - heart, soul, mind, and strength. We seek to worship with our whole being, holding nothing back. As we worship, we exercise our minds in thinking about God, our wills as we offer ourselves to him, our emotions

ns as we open our hearts, our bodies as we follow the biblical imperatives to praise, sing, shout, clap, kneel, bow, dance, play instruments, and lift our hands to the Lord. As we offer all that we are in worship, we are transformed through an encounter with the living God. We experience repentance, forgiveness, renewal, healing, and empowerment for service. Worship is a state (an attitude) of spirit. The nature of worship is from the inside out and has two equally important parts. We must worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24)

From a New Testament perspective, acceptable worship is only possible through the revelation and redemption of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on the basis of his death, resurrection and ascension, and the gift of his Spirit. Worshiping in the spirit has to do with our innermost being and requires several things. The most important thing is that we worship God in spirit (in our hearts) and in truth (in our minds.)

First, we must be born again. God is worthy of homage, praise and grateful service because he is creator, lord of history, and judge of all. But humanly-devised religion receives God's condemnation in Scripture. It cannot bring people into a right relationship with God or enable them to please him. God must rescue them from the darkness of ignorance and the corruption of sin, bringing them to a true knowledge of himself, if they are to worship him acceptably. Revelation and redemption are the basis of acceptable worship in biblical thinking. So worship and God's covenant are closely linked in Scripture. Jesus Christ is at the centre of New Testament thinking about worship. He is the ultimate meeting point between heaven and earth and the decisive means of reconciliation between God and humanity. Fundamentally, then, worship in the New Testament means believing the gospel and responding with one's whole life and being to the person and work of God's Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit residing within us, we cannot respond to God in worship because we do not know Him. (1 Corinthians 2:11) Second, worshiping in spirit requires a mind cantered on God and renewed by His word. (Romans 12:1-2) Third, we can only worship in spirit by having a pure heart and clear conscious. Praise and worship toward God cannot come from a polluted heart. The second part of true worship is worship "in truth." All worship is a response to truth, and that which is truth is contained in the Word of God. Jesus said to His Father, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17) Worship is an expression of praise from the depths of our hearts toward a God who is understood through His Word. If we do not have the truth, we do not know God and we cannot be truly worshiping. Why should we worship?

Because true worship is a matter of great importance and false worship leads to dire consequences. God does not need our worship for His existence; He is complete in Himself, even without receiving the worship of His creatures. We, however, aren't complete. In our fallen state, we have separated ourselves from God. Worship draws us closer to Him. While worshiping God changes us for the better, the primary aim of our worship is not self-improvement. While God doesn't need our worship in order to be complete, our worship is still an obligation—something that we owe to God. But it is a duty that we can perform cheerfully, knowing that, in doing so, we are participating briefly in the life of heaven. God is the one who holds our eternal destiny in His hands. Our salvation depends on whether our worship is pleasing to God or not. Worship is a time when we pay deep, sincere, awesome respect, love, and fear to the one who created us. Since God is the object of our worship, He and He alone has the right to determine how we are to worship Him. God makes it clear that He seeks those who will worship Him "in spirit and in truth" Worship should cause us to reflect on the majesty and graciousness of God and Christ, contrasted to our own unworthiness. Our worship not only honors and magnifies God, but it is also for our own edification and strength. Worship helps us develop a God-like and Christ-like character. We become like unto those we admire and worship. When we worship God we tend to value what God values and gradually take on the characteristics and qualities of God, but never to His level. When we worship God we develop such traits as forgiveness, tenderness, justice, righteousness, purity, kindness, and love.

In broad terms, acceptable worship means relating to God or engaging with God on the terms that he proposes and in the manner that he alone makes possible. It involves honouring, serving and respecting him, abandoning any loyalty or devotion that hinders an exclusive relationship with him. God is seeking true worshipers. It is only in the Word of God that we can learn what worship is pleasing to God. God in his great wisdom has given clear principles and practices to guide the worship. Worship is not an occasion for us to hear sermons about us, sing songs about us, or focus on how to make ourselves feel happily inspired. Since we are prone to worship ourselves as idols, true worship is an important occasion to redirect our worship back to God. Though different worship services may emphasize different aspects of God's nature and work, and therefore inspire varied expressions in worship, yet, righteousness, love, peace and joy are the consistent virtues of Christian worship.