

Call to Obedience #279
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GOD IS SEEKING WORSHIPPERS

By Reimar Schultze

True worship comes out of a life of intimate devotion.

"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" —John 4:23

In the fourth chapter of John's gospel, we have a conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well that focuses on worship. Of course, we do not have the whole discourse, but at one time, Jesus is telling the woman, "Ye worship ye know not what" (v. 22).

Do we know what worship is all about? Is it going to church and following a religious ritual of hymns, Scripture reading, confession, hearing the Word preached, of holy communion and fellowship, the giving of our tithes and offerings, and of special songs? Is that worship?

There are different definitions for worship, and you are entitled to come up with your own description. Here is my suggestion: Worship is the appropriate human response to the Divine. We are created to worship God. That is our purpose. Can you live with that?

I think we are on the way. Using that definition, we can determine what a worshipper is. And if we stay close to my suggested definition of worship, we can find the definition of a worshipper: a worshipper is a person who fulfills the purpose of his existence before God.

God has a purpose for you. If you find your purpose and get into it, you are a worshipper. Every one of us is born with a purpose. Unfortunately, Ephesians 2:8–9 are overdone at the expense of Ephesians 2:10. Verses 8 and 9 tell us that we are saved by faith and not by works. But verse 10 tells us that we are saved for a work—every one of us—which God has foreordained, which God has planned beforehand for us to walk in.

Jesus said that he was seeking worshippers. What kind of worshippers? He was seeking worshippers who would worship him in spirit and in truth, for only their worship is acceptable to God. Only those whose lives are in harmony with God's will are worshippers, pleasing to God. Only their worship is genuine and giving God the glory.

Notice how beautifully this is expressed in the words of the Amplified Bible:

"A time will come, however, indeed it is already here, when the true (genuine) worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth (reality); for the Father is seeking just such people as these as His worshipers. God is a Spirit (a spiritual Being) and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (reality)" (John 4:23–24 AMPLIFIED).

Did you see the words "true (genuine) worshippers"? Much of the Old Testament is filled with God's disgust toward the multitude of worshippers who did not live for the purpose God created for them. And yet, they thought that if they would go through the motions of a worship service, God would be impressed. Consider the word of God through his prophet Isaiah:

"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot [endure]; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting" (Is. 1:13). "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Is. 29:13).

Let's take a little journey to the beginning of the Bible.

Adam and Eve ceased to be worshippers when they ate the forbidden fruit. One act, just one act of disobedience caused them to cease to be true worshippers in spirit and in truth.

They were not created for disobedience but for obedience. Again, when they left their divine purpose for which they were born into the world, they ceased to be worshippers.

Cain thought he was a worshipper. He built an altar, he sacrificed, and he prayed. But he did not live in God's divine purpose. So Cain's worship was rejected. Oh, how many years do you think he worshipped, believing that his worship was pleasing to God when it was not? Do you think it was two, three, ten or twenty years?

Are you the kind of worshipper Jesus is seeking?

Saul worshipped God, but because he spared Agag and the best of the sheep, his worship was not acceptable. The sacrifice he made to God was not acceptable because he did not obey God.

Have you sacrificed to God with your tithes and offerings? If you are fulfilling God's divine purpose every day of your life, your offerings are as a sweet-smelling savor unto the Lord. But if you choose your own way, your sacrifices mean nothing. Look at God's word to Israel in Isaiah:

"The ox [instinctively] knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib, but Israel does not know or recognize Me [as Lord], My people do not consider or understand...To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me [unless they are the offering of the heart]? says the Lord. I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts [without obedience]; and I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of he-goats [without righteousness]. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you that your [unholy feet] trample My courts? Bring no more offerings of vanity (emptiness, falsity, vainglory, and futility); [your hollow offering of] incense is an abomination to Me...And when you spread forth your hands [in prayer, imploring help], 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 eyes! Cease to do evil" (Is. 1:3, 11–13a, 15–16).

In this passage, God tells his covenant people: your sacrifices mean nothing; your worship attendance means nothing; your offerings mean nothing; observing your holy days mean nothing; your prayers mean nothing.

Oh, this is an old story, is it not? God seeks true worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. But how many of the multiplied millions who go to church to worship actually worship? How many of the people in your church are true worshippers, who worship God in spirit and in truth? Are you one of them?

Everything we do in church that we call worship means nothing unless we get into the life for which God has created us. And this life begins with having a pure, a holy, a contrite heart—a surrendered heart.

Dr. A. W. Tozer warns us of worshipping God without a pure heart:

"Many of us are forgetting the caution of the Lord Jesus that we ought not to set our hearts on earthly things. He warned that there is a very real danger involved in the same heart of man that was made to commune with God and hold fellowship with the Divine Trinity, to soar away to worlds unknown and behold God upon his throne, that same heart may be locked up in a bank vault or in a jewelry box or somewhere else here on earth!" (Renewed Day by Day by A. W. Tozer, July 24, Christian Publications, Inc.)

Oh, how the hearts of worshippers can get locked up into so many things: sports, television and movie entertainment, fashions, gossip, family affairs, hobbies, travel and adventures.

Yet, how wonderful the hearts of most missionaries who forsake all to get locked into the divine purpose that they were born for to save a lost world—at any cost. Should not we who are called to stay home have like zeal for God that we might be true worshippers of him?

Listen again to the words of God from Isaiah 48:1:

"Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness."

God, the Lord Jesus, seeks those who worship him in spirit and in truth. They are the true worshippers. And when Israel prided herself in her fastings and sacrifices, as we see in Isaiah 58, God told them what a real fast is all about:

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (vv. 6–7).

To be true worshippers of God, the soul of man must cast off the garb of earth's religious values and be robed in the righteousness of Christ alone.

In the days of Jesus, and in the whole history of Israel, there has never been a shortage of worship. It is in the bloodstream of man to worship. If anthropologists and historians would get together, they would concur that there has never been a people—all the way from the north to the south, from the east to the west of our world—who did not worship. Man inherently knows that there is a supreme being and that life does not end with death. Yet, again, how many of these worshippers are true worshippers of God, giving worship acceptable to him? Again, only those who fulfill the divine purpose for which they were created.

All creation—except man—fulfills its purpose, as Psalm 148 tells us:

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created" (vv. 1–5).

Yes, he commanded, and they were created to praise God, to venerate him, to stand in obeisance before him.

"Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word" (Ps. 148:8).

There you have it again: "fulfilling his word." Even the fire and snow and hail are included. But God's deepest desire is to have man who was created in his own image, to fulfill his Word, to have his bride fulfill her divine purpose and give glory to God every day.

So, in the eyes of God, we cannot worship unless we are worshippers. And we are not worshippers unless we fulfill the purpose of our creation. If we do that, not only will we worship—that is, give God honor when we are engaged in specific acts of worship—but we will do more than that. Our whole lives will be one great act of worship from the moment of our surrender to Jesus until...forever.

The Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 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. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:20–24).