

Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe

The Foundations of True Biblical Worship

Revelation 4

This morning there is just one truth I want you to hold onto, and think through, with me:

God has told us EXACTLY how He wants to be worshipped.

That description of how God has told us He wants to be worshipped is the title of our study today: *The Foundations of True Biblical Worship*.

To understand this topic we need to ponder several individual concepts, the first one is:

What Kind of Worship Does God Accept?

This question about worship is vital to every believer because:

- If our worship is not built upon the foundation that God has laid down: *it is not Biblical.*
- If our worship is not Biblical: it does not please God, *nor does He accept that worship.*

Think about that for a moment.

That means that any worship not offered the way that God has dictated is unacceptable worship.

That means that worship prompted by unsaved people is rejected; and any fleshly motivated, self-guided worship offered by un-surrendered believers is also rejected. Always remember the severity of Christ's judgment upon the fleshly excesses of the Corinthians.

Worship acceptable to God is what we must think about as we offer our adoration, and honor to God. God spends so much time in His Word describing the clean hands and pure hearts that must deliver any worship that is given to Him.

Have you ever gotten a meal on a dirty plate, or a drink in a greasy unwashed cup, or

seen raw food being prepared on a filthy counter, and right there and then decided: I will not accept that food?

Worship is much like the medium God used to portray sacrifices in the Old Testament: all of the sacrifices were from "clean" types of food or animals. Any unclean offering or any unclean person making an offering: made the worship offered, get rejected by God.

That idea of rejected worship is the theme of the final book of the Old Testament called Malachi. The Jews were going through the motions of worshipping God, but their hearts and lives were dirty: ***so their worship was rejected.***

People were also bringing to God animal offerings that were defiled, unclean, or sickly: ***so their worship was rejected.***

God wants us to worship Him, but He is very specific on what He accepts. That brings us to our second concept. Not only should we understand what kind of worship God accepts, but we also need to understand the truth that:

Biblical Worship Always Has Three Elements

Think about everything you know from the Bible about worship.

Every time worship is portrayed in the Bible it always has three elements: **first**, the person that is offering the worship; and **second**, the offering that they are bringing; and **third**, the One they are giving that offering to.

Those three perspectives are always present in the Bible. And all three elements had to be RIGHT or the worship was WRONG.

The first worship scene in the Bible is in in Genesis 4. The two characters are Cain & Abel. We all know the story. They bring their offerings to God, one offering of worship (Abel's) is accepted, the other offering of worship (Cain's), is rejected. Did you notice three parts to the scene of worship?

1. God was the One they worshipped.
2. They were the ones bringing the worship.
3. They presented offerings to God.

All three elements had to be RIGHT: the Right God, the Right offering, and the Right way they offered it. We know the story: Cain brought the **Wrong** offering (un-bloody produce), the **Wrong** way (self-styled, and un-submissive), to the **Right** God. Even though one element was right the worship was rejected.

All three elements must be **Right**, or the whole process is rejected. That could be a

summary of the entire Old Testament, as each chapter of the Old Testament is about whether: people lived the **right way**, offering the **right thing**, to the **right God**.

With that three part grid in mind you could analyze and organize much of the Old Testament.

There are passages about the God we worship to: Holy, Merciful, Eternal, and Almighty.

Then, there are passages about what types of offerings are acceptable to Him, and those that are not.

Finally, there is so much about the life of the one who offers to God: how they come, when they come, what preparations are needed, what is a wrong or bad way to come, and what is the best and pleasing way to come.

Most of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers is all about worship from those three angles. Now, fast forward to the most important verse about the Bibles we hold in our hands. We can ask another question. What is:

The Purpose of God's Word

Turn with me to II Timothy 3:16-17. Here Paul tells us where God's Word came from: **God inspired it**. So it is unlike any other book in the world. The Bible is Divinely breathed out truth.

Then Paul explains how we are to use the Bible as God's servants. He lists off what all Scriptures are written to do: all Scripture profitable for our "1. Doctrine; 2. Reproof; 3. Correction; and 4. Instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Now, using that verse, as we do our study of worship today, each time we look at the Scriptures we are seeking to find:

1. The **Doctrine** about true Biblical worship: what God has taught us in His Word is the "right" way to worship.
2. The **Reproof** about true Biblical worship: what God has taught us in His Word is the "wrong" way to worship.
3. The **Correction** about true Biblical worship: what God has taught us in His Word is the "way to get right" in our worship.
4. The **Instruction in Righteousness** about true Biblical worship: what God has taught us in His Word is the "way to stay right" in our worship.

Since worship is so important to God, we need to come to this study with our hearts open, and our minds seeking to hear and respond to what God says.

The Book of Revelation sums up what the whole Bible is all about. This is especially true in the subject we are in the midst of today. This last book of the Bible clearly identifies the three parts of worship. These three parts are simple.

- **The Worshipper:** who can worship God and how they prepare to do so. This is the one who offers.
- **The Worship:** what worship God desires, God seeks, God accepts, and what worship God is pleased by. This is the offering.
- **The Worshipped:** God as the object of our worship, and God as the receiver of our worship. This is the One we bring our offerings to.

There are three passages outside of Revelation that are so critical and foundational for our understanding, that we must remind ourselves of them before we proceed in our study of the elements of true Biblical worship. They are: John 4, Romans 12, and Philippians 3.

God Only Accepts Worship From His Children

Please open with me to Christ's words in John 4:22-24, first. As we read these words we are hearing Christ Jesus, who is God the Son, explaining what we are to be offering forever to Him: which is worship. So this is an incredible passage for worshippers.

John 4:22-24 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But 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. ²⁴ God *is* Spirit [The One Worshipped], and those who worship Him [The Worshipper] must worship in spirit and truth [The type of Worship God accepts]."

The essence of what Christ explains is that: true Biblical worship is only offered by born-again people who follow God's Word. The Spirit is the seal of the believer; and the truth is only found in the Bible. So there is one of the most crucial building blocks of true Biblical worship.

God Only Accepts Worship From His Servants

The second vital piece of truth from God about worship that we need is in Romans 12:1-2, and here we find that true Biblical worship can only be offered by a surrendered believer.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you [The Worshipper] present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God [The Worshipped], which is your reasonable service [The type of Worship

God accepts]. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

God only accepts surrendered worship, conformed to His Word, that is not conformed to worldly, proud, self-exalting, unconsecrated living. So the character of the one offering the worship is vital. God rejects worldly offerings in the NT, just like He did in the OT. Finally, Paul combines the words of Christ and the life of surrender, and states in Philippians 3:3 that only those who are saved can worship, they focus upon Christ as their source of joy, and they are denying the flesh.

Philippians 3:3 (NKJV) For we are the circumcision [The Worshipper], who worship God [The Object of our Worship] in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh [The type of Worship God accepts],

God wants us saved: that is in the Spirit; and humbly-surrendered: that is rejoicing in Christ Jesus; and finally, consecrated: having no confidence in the flesh.

Flesh-denial is critical to worship: anything that leads to pride or self-exaltation is to be avoided. Just as Nadab and Abihu were smitten for their misguided offering, so we are to never allow the flesh to guide our worship. In other words:

Beware of Fleshly Worship: God Wants Humility

That is one reason why we should pause before following some of our modern, popular worship leaders and see if their lives match up to the God they are serving. If their lives are not conformed to His Word, then their worship is not pleasing to Him, and should be avoided.

Just because music appeals to us, doesn't mean it pleases God. There is so much more to music than the sound, it is whether it is offered in Spirit and in Truth.

Worship always conveys the idea of giving something to God. The act of worship ascribes to God that He is worthy of our adoration, He is worth our devotion, and He is the delight and desire of our hearts.

God doesn't accept anything we throw at Him. He has carefully described the content He desires as: Truth; and the manner He desires as: in the Spirit.

Because there is no subject more important to us as God's servants than worship; and

Because worship of the True God is the mark of true believers; and

Because only those who respond to the Gospel become true worshippers of their true

God and King.

Then true Biblical worship is **selflessly** giving our adoration as a way of life, serving our King; and God's Word shows us:

How to Truly Worship the King of Heaven

The unity of the message of God's Word is amazing. Across 40 authors writing over 1,600 years: God gets one message across. That message is that He is the One and Only True God. His way is the only way. His Word is the only truth that leads to life eternal.

In Genesis 4, God would not accept Cain's worship because it was self-styled, and not obedient to His revealed Word: so Cain was rejected by God.

Then, from Exodus onward, God devotes 50 chapters to instruct Israel in just how to properly approach His presence in worship through the Tabernacle's offerings. Any deviation was met with rejection and disaster.

In Leviticus 10 God would not receive Nadab & Abihu's worship because it was offered in their own self-styled way, not His way: so God burned them up on the spot.

In II Samuel 6 we see the same with Uzzah's offering to help God out, but disobeying His rules: God struck him dead on the spot.

As we get to the New Testament we find that the Lord does not budge when it comes to what worship He is willing to accept.

Jesus explains to the woman at the well (John 4) that He only accepts the worship He prescribes, no matter how fervent or enthused it may be.

Paul explains that only those who are un-comformed to the world can offer that which is good, acceptable, and perfect worship (Romans 12:1-2)

Then, Revelation portrays for us the Heavenly pictures of worship that God desires, ordains, and sends as instructive portraits for us. Remember that Revelation was given to us as God's servants so that we might understand God's plans and desires.

In Revelation we see God illustrating for us the elements of true worship.

What God has already revealed from Genesis onward, is just repeated and emphasized in Revelation. So, the Book of:

Revelation Gives us the

Elements of True Biblical Worship

All that the Bible has taught about worship is applied in Revelation 1-3, as Jesus, who is God the Son, comes down and walks among His servants, the saints of His Church: and watches their worship. Here are the four elements of True Biblical Worship that are emphasized in these three chapters.

1. True Biblical Worship: Starts with and Flows from the Words that God Gave to Us (Revelation 1:1)

The right way to worship God is found only in His Word.

God's Word is vital to us, and the pathway God left for us to approach Him in our worship. All three elements of worship must be Right according to God's Word. The Right God, the Right offering, in the Spirit-prompted way of Truth.

In John 4:24 Jesus has already said that we are to worship God in Spirit and in truth: "God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Here in Revelation 1:1 we see that the One we worship wants us to approach Him with our worship in truth, that is: based upon the revealed Word of God. Worship that is to be accepted by God must be Word-guided, and Word-based. So first, True Biblical Worship: starts with and flows from the Word that God gave to us (Revelation 1:1).

Do you stop to eat from God's Word so that you can live each day in step with God? We were created to worship or glorify God. He wants our worship. If we desire to please Him, we will hunger and thirst for Him in His Word: our way of knowing how to properly worship Him.

2. True Biblical Worship: Is Only available for Those who are "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10)

John was able to see God in His Glory, worship Him as King, all because of the power of the regenerating, indwelling Holy Spirit.

Paul says in Philippians 3:3 that those who are saved worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no hope of salvation by fleshly efforts.

The Spirit quickens the flesh profits nothing John 6:63, only spiritual worship prompted by the Spirit can please God.

Principle 2: True Biblical Worship: is only available for those who are "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10).

Do you know that you have the Spirit of God dwelling within, the seal of every true born-again believer? The only worship God accepts comes from the power of His Spirit within us. Our connection to God, is only powered by His Spirit. To worship in an

acceptable way we must not quench the power of the Holy Spirit. Anything that diminishes His power we must avoid at all costs.

3. True Biblical Worship: Involves Seeing Christ's Beauty & Falling in Reverence Before Him (Revelation 1:17)

When John turns and sees Jesus as the Risen King of Kings, he falls before Him.

John falls before Christ just like Peter. When the huge school of fish were caught, in Luke 5:8-9, Peter fell on his face like John.

John falls before Christ just like just like the disciples in the boat, when the sleeping Christ was awakened and stilled the storm. Mk. 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Principle 3: True Biblical Worship: involves seeing Christ's beauty & falling in reverence before Him (Revelation 1:17).

We were created to glorify God. We most glorify Him by our adoring worship. Worship flows from reverence. Do you come in reverence, bowing before Him? Are you seeking with all your heart to find Christ in His Word? He said we only find Him in worship, when we "seek Him with all our hearts".

4. True Biblical Worship: Is Always Being Watched and Tested by Christ (Revelation 2:1)

Jesus reminds us that He walks about the Church as we gather (Rev. 2:1), to see if we are offering to Him the worship He desires, in the way He desires.

Jesus is examining our hearts and minds as we live, work, and worship. Jesus declares in Rev. 2:23: "and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."

Principle 4: True Biblical Worship: Is Always Being Watched and Tested by Christ (Revelation 2:1)

What does Jesus see each day as He watches? Are there days we are without time to worship? Are there days we are un-surrendered, so that we become worship-less? Are there days we are unconsecrated, so we neglect to adore and honor Him? Whether we eat, or drink, or anything we do, it is all to be done for the glory of the One we worship.

What Kind of Worship Does God Accept?

These truths about worship are vital to every believer because: If our worship is not

built upon the foundation that God has laid down: it is not Biblical. If our worship is not Biblical: it does not please God, nor does He accept that worship.

There is a song we all know, that captures the humble, seeking heart of true worshippers offering their pleasing sacrifices to God. Please stand with me, and sing to the One whose **Amazing Grace** has saved us: so that we can live lives of worship offered to Him.