



Worship the Lord in Spirit and Truth (John 4:20-24)

Worship is the ultimate destiny of humanity. It is the inner spiritual attitude expressed with our body – bowing our heads, raising our hands, kneeling before God, bowing down in prostration, etc. However, our body only deals with the external. To offer God acceptable worship, we must fulfill the essential conditions in the inward attitude of our hearts.

1. Jesus' teaching on worship (John 4:20-24) – When Jesus was confronted with the rival claims of Jerusalem and Samaria he took the conversation to a whole new level – 'True worshippers must worship Him in Spirit and truth.'
 - a. Jesus' words were prophetic. The temple was destroyed, and it made the Jews impossible to worship God in the physical location soon afterward (70AD, ~40 years later).
 - b. However, before the temple was destroyed, the Lord made an alternative provision to worship Him. He transferred the requirement from '*physical location*' to '*spiritual condition*.' Beware of the future third temple in Jerusalem. The two spiritual conditions that Jesus requires are in 'Spirit' and 'truth'.
 - c. The most shocking truth of all in the entire scriptures - 'God the Father actually seeks the worshippers of this kind – true worshippers.' Consider the fact that heaven is saturated with the worship of the most glorious angels before even the creation of the world till now. And yet, the Father is actively looking for worshippers of this kind who worship Him in Spirit and truth! Why? Not for the lack of worshippers in heaven, but the Father seeks something from human beings.
 - d. Are you a worshipper of this kind? It is possible to be a Christian but not be a true worshipper. The great falling away in the last days is on the issue of true worship! The challenges of the last days (deception, persecution, betrayal) will filter out those who do not truly worship the living God. At the end of the age, mankind will be divided into two groups only, based on who or what they worship.

Worship is the ultimate destination of mankind. No man can deviate from this destination set by God. Either we will worship God and have God's seal on our foreheads, or we worship satan and have satan put his mark on our forehead or hands, i.e. mark of the beast. The decisive issue is not what you profess to believe, but who you worship.

The danger of the current 'vaccine mandate' is that it recognizes no bodily autonomy. This is not the mark of the beast, but a step towards it. The real issue is ownership, and behind the ownership is worship. The real question is, who owns your body? Or 'whose temple is your body?'

When the ultimate question is asked, will we say with Jesus? '*Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*' (Matt 4:10)

2. Requirement #1: In truth – sincerity, absolute openness, honesty, exposing our hearts.
 - a. There is no room for external religious performance-based outward show in true worship. Eight kinds of persons are excluded from God's presence. '*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*' (Rev 21:8).

How did they become these? We become like what we worship. '*He who is unjust let him be unjust still; he who is filthy let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.*' (Rev 22:11) We serve whom we worship.

Ananias and Sapphira's lie cost them their lives (Acts 5). Lies and insincerity cannot access God's presence. '*God is light and there is no darkness at all...*' (1 John 1:5-6). There is no room for pretense and insincerity before God who sees all. '*Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts (innermost being).*' (Ps 51:6) '*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.*' (Ps 51:17; Is 66:2)

Everything in our heart and life must be open for God's inspection when we come before Him in worship. Mere lip service can never bless God's heart. Cain had the spirit of murder and jealousy within him and his offering was rejected by God. But instead of getting his heart right, he murdered

Abel. True worship requires absolute sincerity and honesty from us. This always leads us to brokenness before the holy God.

b. The law of grain offering (Lev 2:1-3, 11, 13)

- (i) Our lives must be finely ground without lumps (v1) – ‘brokenness’. Is this what God is doing in your life?
- (ii) It must be accompanied with oil (Holy Spirit) and frankincense (worship), and offered in fire (holy passion) (v2). Note the grain offering is given to the priest, but frankincense must be given exclusively to the Lord only (v3).
- (iii) There must be no leaven or honey in the offering. Leaven (yeast) causes the dough to inflate. *‘Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.’ (1 Cor 5:8)* There must be no honey (sweet words that do not stand the test of fire) in worship.
- (iv) Salt typifies covenant (salt of the covenant) or commitment – heart and life committed to the Lord and His word (v13). Commitment to obey the word of the Lord is essential in worship.

3. Requirement #2: In Spirit – (‘Sprit’: Holy Spirit, or ‘spirit’: human spirit). The ‘living water’ in John 4:14 refers to the Holy Spirit which will flow within our spirit. *‘But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.’ (John 4:14. C.f. 7:39)*

- a. Total human personality: spirit, soul, body (1 Thess 5:23). Gen 2:7 – Man is made from two sources – the dust of the earth from below, and the breath/Spirit of God from above. From below came his physical nature (body). From above came his spiritual nature (spirit). The union of the Spirit and clay produced a ‘living soul’ – the human personality. When Adam sinned, his spirit was cut off from God’s presence.

Paul says our spirit-man was ‘dead in trespasses and sins’. However, when we repent and turn to God our spirit comes alive in Christ. Which part of our personality is capable of direct fellowship with God? It is our spirit, not our soul, nor our body. Our body and soul are important in engaging God in worship, but only our spirit is capable of directly engaging God in fellowship.

- b. 1 Cor 6:16-17 – *‘Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.’*

Paul is describing two types of union:

- (i) in the flesh (man/woman – sexually through the body)
- (ii) in the spirit by the spirit of God.

Man can unite with a woman physically. We can unite with God in spiritual union by the Holy Spirit. Our soul and body are not capable of this, but our spirit is. Worship leads to true fellowship. This ‘liberty in the Spirit’ to worship the Lord directly spirit to Spirit was not possible in the old covenant. The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out yet! (John 7:39) But now in Christ, true worship in spirit and truth is possible for every truly born-again child of God. We cry out, ‘Abba, Father’ by the Spirit of God.

This is the highest activity human beings are capable of, just like the Seraphim and the twenty-four elders. The true church of God has three main functions:

- (i) Worship of God.
- (ii) Fellowship of the believers.
- (iii) Mission toward the lost.

Everything flows from worship to fellowship to mission.

4. The pattern in Isaiah 6:1-4 and the Church in the last days

- a. *'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.'* (Is 6:1) We need to be gripped by this vision of Isaiah. This is the greatest need for the church today. Perhaps Isaiah had a secret hope of reforming Israel under the good king Uzziah, and his hope was dashed to pieces when Uzziah died with leprosy.
- b. The first thing that struck Isaiah in his vision of God's throne was the heavenly worship of the seraphim (fiery ones). Seraphim have six wings. Cherubim have four wings. *'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!'* (Is 6:2-3) Worship relates to the holiness of God.

Three things are expressed by the seraphim in this heavenly encounter:

- (i) Worship is expressed by four wings covering their faces and feet – reverence.
- (ii) Praise is expressed by spoken words, *'Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD Almighty.'*
- (iii) Service is expressed by flying with two wings.

Important proportion: four wings for worship and two wings for service. Worship comes before service. What we worship, we will end up serving. This is the law of human nature. The temple was filled with smoke – *'the incense of worship.'* Then the Lord was talking within the Godhead, not to Isaiah. This is the most sacred revelation within the Godhead, into which the angels do not pry. Why did Isaiah hear the Lord's inner conversation? He was in worship.

- c. The direct outcome of receiving the revelation of the holiness of God:
 - (i) *'Woe is me, for I am undone!'* True repentance and self-humbling. Isaiah was an upright man but when he saw the LORD in holiness everything changed. *'Holy One of Israel'*. This is the essential element of true worship, which we have very little of. C.f. Heb 12:28-29.
 - (ii) Supernatural cleansing and empowerment by the fire of God. The coal from the altar of God touched Isaiah's lips. Isaiah prophesied with unparalleled beauty and fire of God. C.f. The end-time church must have the same experience to bring the fire of God cast to the earth (Rev 8). E.g. Elijah.
 - (iii) Hearing of the Lord's voice, the intimate dialogue within the Godhead. *'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'*
 - (iv) Inner strength to carry out the commission. *'Here I am! Send me.'* His was not an easy ministry assignment. *'Keep on hearing, but do not understand....'* Isaiah's mission was not going to be successful for a long time. How long? *'Until the cities are laid waste...utterly desolate ...'*