

Worship and God's Throne

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John 4:23–24 (NKJV) “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, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

There are many misconceptions about worship. The question that needs to be answered is, “What *is* worship?” In order to answer this question, it is important to first define the term “worship.” The English word “worship” comes from an Anglo-Saxon word “worth-ship.” In a generic sense this describes the esteeming of worth to a deity and dignitary through words, attitudes, and actions.

The common Hebrew word for “worship” is *chavah* that means, “to tell, declare, show, make known.” This word is used to describe the actions of bowing or prostrating oneself in humility before someone of high rank or position in order to show honor and deep reverence. It carries with it the idea of offering oneself as a sacrifice or offering.

The common Greek word for “worship” is *proskyneo* that means, “to prostrate, to kiss the hand in a token of reverence.” The kissing of the hand or foot of a dignitary was an expression of submission. The Persians bowed the knee and touched their head to the ground as an expression of profound reverence. As we can see, worship involves paying the proper respect, honor, and reverence due to a deity or dignitary.

The concept of worship is difficult to understand for anyone who does not live in a kingdom. In a kingdom, each person's life, death, and freedom is in the hand of the king. Approaching a king is no light matter. Approaching a king in a dishonorable or disrespectful way could result in imprisonment, penalty, or death. Therefore it was of utmost importance that a king be approached according to royal protocol. Protocol is a strict code prescribing the proper etiquette for conducting oneself in the presence of royalty.

In a biblical sense, worship is the proper and required protocol for approaching a Holy God who is Creator and Sovereign King. Patterns of worship set forth in the Bible are actually divine protocols mandated by God that allows us to approach Him without dishonor, offense, or transgression.

Acceptable worship begins when we understand that God is holy and is a high and lofty King who sits upon an eternal throne. Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV) declares, “*For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”* Worship involves approaching God's throne in heaven to give Him the honor and reverence He deserves. Those who approach Him in proud disregard of divine protocol will fearfully discover they have greatly erred!

In the beginning, creation was God's throne room. God established heaven as His throne: “*The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes*

behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.” (Psalm 11:4 NKJV) God established the earth as His footstool: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool...’” (Isaiah 66:1 NKJV) Jesus said, “But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.” (Matthew 5:34-35 NKJV)

God desired man to have fellowship with Him on the earth. After the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, man was unable to approach Him. Yet God desired that men be able to approach His throne in worship.

The subsequent mention of the “house of God” in Scripture is actually God’s revelation to re-establish His throne, and thus worship, on the earth. We see this first in Jacob’s vision at Bethel (“House of God”) as recorded in Genesis 28:11-12, 16-17 (NKJV): *“So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it...¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!’”* God desired to reunite earth and heaven in worship. Establishing the house of God on earth provided a way for man to approach God’s throne again in worship.

God’s plan to establish His throne in His house was later developed further when God gave Moses the plan for the Tabernacle. God gave great detail about the Ark of the Covenant (that represented God’s throne), the structure of the Tabernacle (that would act as God’s throne room), and the Law (that set forth the protocol required for His people to approach Him). Approaching God was no trivial, simple or casual matter! It required a holy priesthood; a holy place; a holy sacrifice; holy worship times, days, and seasons; and a holy protocol, i.e. the Law.

The association of God’s house with God’s throne was developed further in the Tabernacle of David. David was the king of Israel and yet He recognized God as the true King of Israel. He set up in Jerusalem what became known as the Tabernacle of David where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. It was in this Tabernacle that David incorporated psalms set to music to be used to exalt the Lord in worship. The Psalmist declared in Psalm 99:5, *“Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool—He is holy.”* Later Isaiah prophesied: *“In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”* From His throne God will judge the earth, establishing righteousness and justice throughout His kingdom.

Worship belongs to God. It is not ours to redefine. Acceptable worship is the act of approaching a holy God on His terms in an acceptable way with an acceptable sacrifice for an acceptable purpose. 1 Chronicles 16:29 (NKJV) says it well: *“Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!”*

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