

The God We Worship

*It is the LORD your God you shall
fear.*

*Him you shall serve and by His
name you shall swear.
(Deuteronomy 6:13)*

*Exalt the LORD our God;
worship at His footstool!
Holy is He!
(Psalm 99:5)*

*God is spirit,
and those who worship Him
must worship in spirit and
truth.
(John 4:24)*

*Then I fell down at his feet to
worship him,
but he said to me,
"You must not do that! I am a
fellow servant with you and
your brothers who hold to the
testimony of Jesus.
Worship God."
(Revelation 19:10)*

This short series has looked at some of the Bible teaching about God, but it is important to recognise that this is not an academic study, of literary or philosophical interest. What the Lord God wants of His creation is that they should worship Him. Not because they are compelled to, or have no other choice, but because that is what they wish to do above all else. The enacted parable between Hosea and his adulterous wife Gomer demonstrated the feelings of the Lord God for Israel very clearly. It showed the love God has for His people, and His strong desire that they should worship Him.

In the Old Testament

The four quotations alongside this article show that the Lord God is to be worshipped, but they also show He must be worshipped in the correct way. That way is for Him to decide, and not for us. Just before the nation of Israel went into the land of Israel after forty years wandering in the wilderness Moses spelt this out for them. He was quite specific.

You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way.

But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name and make His habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock (Deuteronomy 12:2-6).

Moses was explaining to the people of Israel that there are ways in which it is acceptable to worship God, and ways which are not acceptable. Those principles apply still today. The requirements to offer sacrifice as under the Law is no longer there, but God must still be worshipped in the right way, a way which is reverent and fitting.

In the New Testament

What is meant by worship? In the New Testament about five different Greek words are used, mainly having to do with obedience, reverence and respect. The apostle Paul put it like this:

The secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you (1 Corinthians 14:25).

Another instance involving the Apostle Paul occurred when he was speaking in Philippi. We learn of a woman called Lydia.

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened

her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul (Acts 16:14).

There is clear approval of Lydia's behaviour here. She was a worshipper of God, and her heart was opened to the preaching of Paul. This was the way she responded to the message of salvation, her worship of God was acceptable. Lydia shows above all else that hearts must be opened to God.

The Apostle Paul set out the need for correct worship when he spoke in the Areopagus at Athens. He had



seen amongst all the shrines and altars in that city one with this dedication, "To The Unknown God". He took this as his starting point and preached the truth about the God of the Bible to the sophisticated thinkers of the city, who gathered to hear him.

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything (Acts 17:24-25).

Paul goes on to show what God really wants from His creation:

That they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In Him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed His offspring' (v27–28).

The apostle established the need for us all to worship God.

The Worshipper's Response

Paul had concluded his command for correct worship like this:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (v30–31).

Paul was telling the Athenians that correct worship of God is an imperative, and that remains true today. Most of those who heard Paul did not take much notice, it was just one more of the talks they heard, and maybe enjoyed, but which had little impact on their lives. Some did, perhaps realizing that this was something different.

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them (Acts 17:32–34).



And Us?

What Paul said is still true. The day is still fixed for God to judge the world, and He will do so by the Lord Jesus. Jesus will return, not to be rejected but to judge the world and to rule as its king.

If we are wise, then we will learn from the positive teaching of Paul. We should follow the advice we find given in Revelation:

Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water (Revelation 14:7).

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Bible Quotations from the English Standard Version

Concluded