



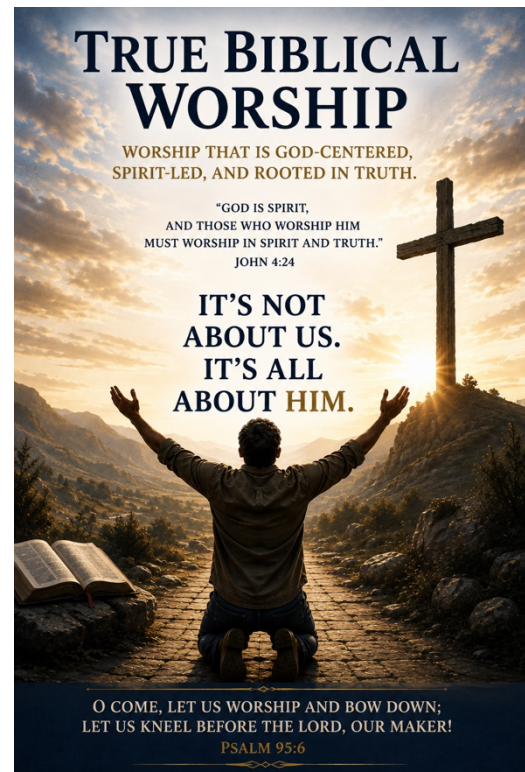
The Biblical Principles of True Worship – KIB 543

Foundational Issues
Kingdom Intelligence Briefing

Introduction

Psalm 24:3–6 (ESV)

3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? **4** He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. **5** He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. **6** Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. *Selah*



Dake's Notes:

Notes For Verse 4

a [He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully] The type of people that will inherit the earth and multiply and replenish it forever (Ps. 24:4–6; Gen. 8:22; 9:12; Dan. 2:44–45; 7:13–14, 18, 27; Lk. 1:32–33; 2Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:3–7, 21–27; 22:1–5). Four qualifications:

1. Clean hands (Ps. 15:1–5)
2. Pure heart (Ps. 51:7; Mal. 3:2–3; Mt. 5:8; Jn. 15:3)
3. No idolatry (vanity, 1Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:19–21; Heb. 12:14)
4. Truthful (Rev. 21:8)¹

Jesus said something very similar.

John 4:22–24 (ESV)

22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **24** God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

As we detailed last week, much of the modern worship movement is not worship at all. In many ways, they are like the Samaritan woman, who believes her people worship God when they have no idea who they are worshipping or how the true God desires to be worshipped.

One of the most important questions a believer can ask is, "What does God desire in worship?" Throughout Scripture, the emphasis is consistently placed not on what humanity prefers, but on what God seeks from those who come before Him. The Bible reveals that worship extends far beyond music, singing, or religious gatherings. **Worship is a covenant response to God that encompasses every aspect of the believer's life.**

¹ Finis Jennings Dake, *The Dake Annotated Reference Bible* (Dake Publishing, 1997), Ps 24:4.

From Genesis to Revelation, God reveals that true worship is characterized by reverence, obedience, holiness, truth, thanksgiving, and wholehearted devotion. This study examines the biblical characteristics of worship that is pleasing to God.

I. The Biblical Meaning of Worship

a. Old Testament Words

Shachah (שָׁחָה)

Meaning:

- To bow down
- To prostrate oneself
- To humble oneself before God
- To acknowledge God's supreme authority

This is the most common Hebrew word translated "worship."

Abad (עָבַד)

Meaning:

- To serve
- To labor
- To minister
- To work in devoted service

This word demonstrates that worship includes faithful service to God, not merely acts of praise.

b. New Testament Words

Proskuneō (προσκυνέω)

Meaning:

- To bow before
- To kneel in reverence
- To express humble adoration

Latreuō (λατρεύω)

Meaning:

- Sacred service
- Priestly ministry
- Worship through service

Sebomai (σέβομαι)

Meaning:

- Reverent devotion
- Deep respect
- Godly fear

Biblical Summary

The biblical picture of worship is one of humble submission expressed through reverence, obedience, and devoted service to God. Worship is not confined to a weekly gathering but is intended to characterize the believer's entire life.

II. God Desires Worship from the Heart

Isaiah 29:13–14 (ESV)

13 And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, **14** therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”

Isaiah describes how the people were merely going through the motions of worship, but their hearts were not in it. By their deeds, they were teaching the people a false reverence for God. God’s judgment was to do a new wonder in their midst: to reveal that their so-called wisdom was mere folly.

Matthew 15:7–9 (ESV)

7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: **8** “ ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; **9** in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”

Biblical Principle

God is not impressed by external religious activity if the heart remains distant from Him. Throughout Scripture, God evaluates the condition of the heart before the outward expression of worship.

Application

- Worship must originate from genuine love for God.
- External expressions should reflect an inward reality.
- Religious performance without devotion is unacceptable before God.

III. God Seeks Worship in Spirit and Truth

John 4:23–24 (ESV)

23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **24** God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Important Observations

a. God is actively seeking worshipers.

He is not seeking:

- Better music
- Larger crowds
- Greater performances

He seeks people who worship:

In Spirit

- Empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Flowing from the regenerated inner person
- Genuine rather than mechanical

In Truth

- According to God's revealed Word
- Grounded in biblical doctrine
- Free from false concepts about God

Spirit without truth becomes emotionalism. Truth without spirit becomes lifeless religion. God desires both.

IV. God Desires Obedience Above Religious Activity

1 Samuel 15:22–23 (ESV)

22 And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. **23** For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”

Biblical Principle

Obedience is itself an act of worship. Religious activities can never substitute for faithful obedience.

Examples

- Saul offered sacrifices while disobeying God.
- Israel maintained temple worship while living in rebellion.
- Jesus rebuked religious leaders whose traditions replaced God's commands.

Application

The greatest worship offered to God is a life that obeys Him.

V. God Desires Holiness

Psalm 96:9 (ESV)

9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

1 Peter 1:16 (ESV)

16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Biblical Principle

God's holiness demands a holy people. Holiness is not optional for true worship.

Application

- Personal purity
- Moral integrity
- Separation from sin
- Consecration to God

VI. God Desires Reverence and Godly Fear

Hebrews 12:28–29 (ESV)

28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable

worship, with reverence and awe, **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

Biblical Principle

Biblical worship balances joy with reverence.

- God is loving.
- God is gracious.
- God is also holy.

Worship should never lose sight of His majesty.

VII. God Desires Thanksgiving

Psalm 100:4 (ESV)

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!

Biblical Principle

Thanksgiving acknowledges God's covenant faithfulness. Gratitude is a mark of spiritual maturity. Complaining dishonors God. Thanksgiving glorifies Him.

VIII. God Desires Praise

Psalm 150:6 (ESV)

6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Biblical Principle

Praise celebrates:

- God's character
- His mighty acts
- His salvation
- His Kingdom

True praise is God-centered rather than man-centered.

IX. God Desires Humility

Micah 6:8 (ESV)

8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Biblical Principle

Pride has no place in worship. Humility recognizes God's greatness and our dependence upon Him.

X. God Desires Repentance

Psalms 51:17 (ESV)

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Biblical Principle

Repentance restores fellowship. God welcomes the repentant heart. Persistent rebellion corrupts worship.

XI. God Desires Love

Matthew 22:37 (ESV)

37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Biblical Principle

Love is the motivation behind every acceptable act of worship. Without love, religious activity becomes empty.

XII. God Describes Justice and Mercy

Amos 5:23–24 (ESV)

23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. **24** But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Biblical Principle

God rejects worship that ignores righteousness. Our treatment of others reflects the sincerity of our worship.

XIII. God Desires a Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Biblical Principle

The Christian life itself becomes worship. Every decision. Every action. Every relationship. Every act of obedience. All become acts of worship.

XIV. God Desires the Fruit of Our Lips

Hebrews 13:15 (ESV)

15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Biblical Principle

Praise should become the continual language of God's people.

XV. God Desires Good Works

Hebrews 13:16 (ESV)

16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Biblical Principle

Serving others is also an act of worship. Generosity reflects God's own character.

XVI. God Desires Christ-Centered Worship

Key Scriptures

- Revelation 5:9–14
- Hebrews 4:14–16
- 1 Timothy 2:5
- Ephesians 1:22–23

Biblical Principle

All Christian worship centers upon Jesus Christ.

He is:

- The Lamb of God
- The High Priest
- The Mediator
- The Head of the Church
- The Coming King

Christ remains the focus rather than personalities, programs, or preferences.

XVII. God Desires Worship According to His Revealed Order

Biblical Examples

a. Cain (Genesis 4:3–7)

Cain brought an offering according to his own thinking rather than in obedient faith.

b. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1–3)

They offered unauthorized ("strange") fire before the LORD and were judged because they approached God in a manner He had not commanded.

c. Saul (1 Samuel 13:8–14)

Saul unlawfully assumed the priestly role by offering sacrifice instead of waiting for Samuel, placing expedience above obedience.

d. Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16–21)

King Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense, a duty reserved for the priests, and was judged with leprosy.

e. The Golden Calf (Exodus 32)

Israel proclaimed a feast "to the LORD" while worshiping through an image of their own making, illustrating that sincere intentions cannot sanctify worship that contradicts God's commands.

Biblical Principle

God determines how He is to be worshiped. Human creativity is never a substitute for divine instruction.

XVIII. God Desires Worship that Produces Transformation

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Biblical Principle

True worship changes the worshiper. As believers behold God's glory, they are progressively conformed to the image of Christ.

XIX. The Pattern of Heavenly Worship

The book of Revelation provides the clearest picture of worship before God's throne.

Characteristics of Heavenly Worship

- God is central. (Revelation 4:8–11)
- The Lamb is exalted. (Revelation 5:9–14)
- Holiness is continually proclaimed. "Holy, holy, holy..."
- Humility is demonstrated. The elders cast their crowns before God's throne.
- All creation joins in worship. Angels, elders, redeemed humanity, and every creature proclaim God's glory.

Worship includes:

- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- Honor
- Glory
- Wisdom
- Power
- Strength
- Blessing

Everything points to God rather than the worshipers.

Theological Conclusion

One of the most consistent themes throughout Scripture is that God evaluates worship by the condition of the worshiper rather than by the excellence of the ceremony. Israel frequently maintained sacrifices, feasts, music, and temple rituals while their hearts drifted from covenant faithfulness. Through the prophets, God repeatedly declared that He rejected worship that was divorced from obedience, justice, holiness, and love (Isaiah 1:11–17; Amos 5:21–24).

The New Testament continues this emphasis. Jesus taught that the Father is seeking those who worship Him "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23–24), and the apostles described the believer's entire life as an act of worship offered to God (Romans 12:1–2).

Viewed through the lens of covenant theology, worship is far more than a church service or a collection of songs. It is the covenant response of a redeemed people who recognize God's holiness, submit to His authority, delight in His presence, obey His Word, and dedicate every aspect of their lives to His glory.

This understanding also provides a foundation for a further study of "acceptable worship" versus "unauthorized worship." From Cain to Nadab and Abihu, from Saul to Uzziah, and finally to the warnings given to the churches in Revelation, Scripture demonstrates that God not only commands His people to worship Him but also reveals how He desires to be worshiped. This distinction provides valuable insight for the Church today as it seeks to offer worship that is both biblically faithful and pleasing to God.