

# The Old Paths

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## “Reasons For Worship”

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I know we often hear sermons emphasizing the need for scriptural worship. We are told of the need for worshipping God through singing praises (Eph. 5:19), and partaking of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week (I Cor. 11:23-34; Acts 20:7). We have been taught that we must give of our means to God on the first day of the week because this is the only way the church receives money to do her work (I Cor. 16:1-2). We have also been shown in no uncertain terms that prayer and preaching are a part of the worship of the church (Acts 2:42). In the course of instruction, it is also emphasized that we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together with the saints (Heb. 10:25). In our study, we have also learned that, “*God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (Jn. 4:24).

Yet, in our study, has anyone ever taken the time to explain the reasons for worship to God? There are several reasons for worship. Perhaps when we understand the reasons, it will help eliminate those old questions we hear when folks do not assemble like, “Do I have to be there?”, or “Do I need to be at every worship service to be considered faithful?”, etc.

To understand the reasons for our worship, we must go to the Bible and learn some basic truths. For example:

### God Has Always Expected His People To Worship Him.

From the days of Genesis, we see God demanding worship, and telling folks what is acceptable in worship. In Genesis 4:1-7, we see Cain and Abel worshipping Him. The reason that Abel’s worship was accepted and Cain’s worship was rejected was because Abel’s sacrifice was “*by faith*” while Cain’s was not (Heb. 11:4). These men had the same access to God’s will, and had the same opportunity to obey or disobey. Therefore, when Abel accepted God’s will, God responded in kind. When Cain disobeyed, then God did not have respect for the offering he brought.

From that time forward, we see where God has told men what is necessary to please Him in worship. We never see a time when man just “threw up” whatever he pleased, and God accepted it. On the contrary, when man worshipped God, he did it on God’s terms or it was not accepted. This was true beginning in Genesis 4, and all the way through John 4!

### Our Worship To God Is Just That – “To God!”

When we worship God, we are not doing so to please self, nor to please others. If this is our purpose, then it is not true worship! Jesus condemned the Pharisees for following the traditions of men rather than the word of God in their worship. He told them that they had made their worship vain because they laid aside God’s commands in

order to do what they wanted (Matt. 15:8-9). This same principle holds true today. We cannot think that we are going to please God in worship if we are not following His prescribed method for worship, as we already studied in the first paragraph of this article.

Take careful note of the fact that worship has always been something that God mandated. He never allowed men to simply do what they please, but told men what is expected of them. For instance, we know this is the case with Cain and Abel, but we also see this is the case when God prescribed acceptable worship under the Law of Moses. The books of Exodus and Leviticus describe the way He wanted to be worshipped, and those folks were to follow it. Some years later, Jeremiah would say, “*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (Jer. 10:23). This principle certainly holds true in light of our worship! We don’t know what pleases God until He tells us. When we read the New Testament, this fact has not changed. God now commands our worship be offered to Him through the preaching, prayer, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, giving of our means, and singing (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19). We have not been left to guess at what God wants. Therefore, in worshipping, our worship is “to God,” for He is the one who told us what He wants! When folks stray from this pattern, their worship is no longer “to God,” and is vain!

### Our Worship To God Is A Sacrifice.

In Old Testament times, God demanded that the people offer sacrifices of bulls, lambs, goats, heifers, birds, grain, oil, and the like. Today, we do

not find God commanding that we offer animals to Him. Jesus Christ died for us, and made that sacrifice "once and for all" (Heb. 7:27, 10:9-10, 14, etc.). At the same time, this does not mean that God does not want sacrifices from us! First of all, we see God demanding that we give ourselves as "living sacrifices" to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). When we do good, and show generosity and fellowship with brethren, God is mindful of such sacrifices (Heb. 13:16). In fact, all our lives ought to be used in the Lord's service, after what Christ did for us (II Cor. 5:14-15).

In studying the Bible, we see that our time when we gather to worship constitutes a sacrifice as well. In Hebrews, we read, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15). Therefore, when we sing, pray, or preach, is this not "the fruit of our lips"? Let us remember that this is a sacrifice to God. Peter spoke of this as well, calling Christians "living stones" who "are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5). When we cheerfully give of our means, and when we reverently memorialize the Lord's death at His Table, these are sacrifices we offer to God as well! I am afraid that we often forget just what significance and importance God places upon our weekly worship to Him! This is more than something "we do." This has great significance to the Christian, for we are offering something to God, and asking for His acceptance, just as Abel, Moses, and countless others did in the Bible.

Let us beware, though, because if there is a time when this sacrifice becomes nothing more

than a "ritual," then we are not worshipping God as we should.

### Our Worship Must Be "In Spirit And In Truth."

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman, He told her, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). This passage makes it clear that a reason we worship is because it has been commanded! Those who are going to worship, "must" do so in a certain way. The word "must" is the strongest word in the English language, and tells us that this is without exception. Our worship "must" be "in spirit and in truth." In this sense, our worship closely parallels the worship of the Old Testament, for they were to worship God "in sincerity and in truth" (Josh. 24:14).

To worship God "in spirit" means to worship God with the right attitude. To worship God "in truth" means that we worship according to what has been revealed by God. Notice that God has commanded both as we worship! To worship "in" one to the neglect of the other means we have omitted an important aspect to our worship. God said we "must" have both! Specifically, we are worshipping God in singing "in spirit and in truth", in our prayers, "in spirit and in truth", in our preaching "in spirit

and in truth", through our giving "in spirit and in truth", and when partaking the Lord's Supper "in spirit and in truth". When we understand this, then perhaps we can see why it is so repulsive to God when folks turn aside from His commands to do something that God says is in reality, "vain worship"!

### Conclusion

In studying the reasons for worship, I hope we can see why worship is so important to God. When we assemble together, we are not assembling to please men, for free baby-sitting, to meet a date, or for "social hour"! Our worship needs to be taken seriously because we are gathering together to offer our spiritual sacrifices to God Almighty!

In studying the reasons for worship, may we be humbled and embarrassed by the times we asked, "Do I have to go?" or, "Will God consider me faithful if I stay home today?" and a multitude of other excuses. We need to remember that God is holy and deserving of our worship. Let us remember who we are, and offer our worship to Him in a way that would be pleasing to Him by offering our spiritual sacrifices cheerfully, lovingly, and whole-heartedly; recognizing that we are here to worship the God of the Universe, our Creator, and our Sustainer! (Acts 17:28)

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