



The Redefinition of "Worship"

"While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God."

—Nehemiah 9:3

"Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped."

—Job 1:20

"When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'"

—Matthew 14:32-33

"And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him."

—Matthew 28:8-9

Take out your concordance and look up "worship" and its variations such as "worshiped", "worshipping", etc. Look each verse up and start counting how many verses and chapters you have to go in either direction to find a word relating to music. It's not "zero", but the context of "worship" in the Bible is very rarely used in connection with music as in the examples above. So why is it we say, "It's worship time" to refer to that portion of a church service devoted to music?

Throughout the Bible we have a plethora of examples of worship, almost none of which involve music. If we look at the examples of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, David,

Job, the nation Israel, and on and on and on, we find them engaged in sacrifices, praises, and falling to their knees before God, but we rarely find them singing. When people came face to face with Jesus and the knowledge that He is the Son of God, the reaction was to fall down before Him and worship Him—sans song. In fact, it's interesting to take the concordance and look up "singing" and related terms to find that in the most worship-related context they're most often associated with "praise". To be sure, that's an aspect of worship, but it is not the *whole* of worship.

To begin with, God desires genuine worship that is rooted in spirit and in truth:

*"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true **worshippers** will **worship** the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His **worshippers**."*

—John 4:23-24

This is achieved by rejecting the world's influences while embracing His ways to the exclusion of all else:

*"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of **worship**. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

—Romans 12:1-2

In fact, music is mentioned as one of a number of tools to be used, but for the goal of building up the body. It's not seen as having a different purpose or function exclusively defined as "worship":

"What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

—1 Corinthians 14:26

In today's context of "worship time" actually meaning a block of time devoted to music, there is often arguments—nay, even outright battles—that erupt over opinions about whether or not a particular Sunday's "worship" was meaningful or not. What is really being said in

these arguments is that the music didn't set the tone or mood or something along those lines. The biblical teachings concerning worship indicate that "worship" is something that God's people most often prepare themselves for in advance, not something prepared for and presented to them.

God's People Consecrate Themselves. *"The Lord also said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.'" (Exodus 19:10-15)* They separate themselves from the world and actually make preparations to be devoted exclusively to Him as they enter before His presence.

God's People Cleanse Themselves. *"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully." (Psalm 24:3-4)* They make every effort to address issues of personal sin **BEFORE** coming to worship in His presence.

God's People Come in Reverence and Restraint. *"Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2)* They come to listen more than to speak, to revere rather than be personally exalted; they are not seeking for themselves to speak to God so much as seeking what God has to say to them.

God's People Come with Humility of Heart. *"For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,' declares the Lord. 'But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.'" (Isaiah 66:2)* They respond to His

Word, allowing their heart and behavior to be changed according to His ways and path, revealed to the heart rightly prepared for His presence.

Music can be used as a tool to accomplish some of these things, but music is not necessary for **ANY** of them to be successfully accomplished. In fact, the unrest and dissension you may feel regarding the subject of music as defined today may have to do with the Spirit testifying to *your* spirit that some or all of the above characteristics of biblical worship are missing or misapplied. So rare, it seems, are those that are taught to come prepared to worship rather than just come and be presented with someone's concept of worship. This is why the argument that "Church services should be professionally executed like a television show" are completely wrong.

Consecrate yourself, cleanse yourself, come in reverence and restraint, and come in humility of heart to listen and be edified in **ALL** the activities of the body so that you may engage in biblical worship; and so hear what God has to say to you.

In His Love,

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