

# The Heart of Worship

by Keith Malcomson

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*True worship is about giving homage and reverence to God, and submitting and yielding to Him with a heart of holiness, obedience, and humility.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:5, 2 Samuel 12:20, Job 1:20, Daniel 3:17, Matthew 15:22, John 4:22, Revelation 11:15

**Topics:** "True Worship", "Spiritual Humility"

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## Description

Keith Malcomson emphasizes the importance of true worship, contrasting it with the contemporary worship culture that lacks depth and true submission to God. He highlights examples of true worship from the Bible, such as Job's response to tragedy, David's submission in times of grief, Abraham's obedience in sacrificing his son, and the humility displayed by individuals like the woman washing Jesus' feet. True worship involves acknowledging God's nature, attributes, and claims, and it will be tested in times of trial and fire, revealing its authenticity.

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## Transcript

In recent decades, worship 'concerts' have become very popular; concerts where a famous worship leader or group gather thousands, if not tens of thousands, of young believers to worship. In this environment these young people raise their hands, shout, dance, sing and weep and this is pronounced to be true contemporary worship. Sadly my own experience is that most of these young worshippers don't even know who or what they are worshipping (Jn.4:22). At these events God's Word plays little or no part at all. These young worshippers can participate in 'worship' without sin being dealt with in their lives or acknowledging the absolute Lordship of Christ in their hearts.

In recent decades worship has also come to be defined in a very set way. Praise is thought to be a more upbeat, enthusiastic singing unto God whereas worship is deeper, quieter and more focused. Worship is now thought to be a contrast to praise.

Worship is marked by feelings and emotions and is predominantly confined to an hour's gathering on a Sunday morning where all singing is led by instruments and a worship leader. Some go further by saying that worship is a constant act, not confined to an hour here and there, but extended into all areas of life in private, in home, car, and work. Those who say the latter are at least getting closer to its true meaning.

There is a great and desperate need for us to define worship clearly once more in this generation. The actual meaning of the word worship in Old and New Testament usage means: to crouch, bow down or be

prostrate on the ground; it means to give homage, reverence and submission. In olden times the act of prostrating one-self before a King was an act of utter submission to the king in order that he may do with you whatsoever he desired. It was also an act of humility; the person was abasing themselves by putting themselves in the dust.

Our English word simply means to show or acknowledge the worth of something. There are at least five different Greek words for the act of worship "yet no clear statement of definition is given" (Vine). We must look at the various incidences of its use in order to fully understand its meaning. Mr Vine States concerning these: "worship . . . may be regarded as the direct acknowledgement to God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgement."

Let us look at examples of true worship in God's Word:

Job 1:20: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped . . ."

We all know well the story of this righteous godly man called Job, who in one day lost all of his ten children, 1,000 oxen, 500 asses, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels and all but 4 of his many servants who came to him bearing all this bad news. What was his response? "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped". This was and is a true act of worship. He did not blame or curse God; he did not grow bitter, angry or vengeful, and did not cast aside his integrity in following after the Lord as a faithful servant.

This was not an emotional, ecstatic, happy act of worship. This was an act of humbling and utter submission to a sovereign God. Job did not like this news and he most certainly was not happy or joyful in heart. This was the worst day of his life. He did not understand why this had happened. He was, no doubt, in utter confusion; he was heart-broken and as a result eventually despaired of life itself. But he immediately 'fell down and worshipped.' This is true worship. This is the heart of worship.

When the child of David's adultery to Bathsheba was born, Nathan the prophet prophesied that 'the child shall surely die.' And so the 'LORD struck the child and it was very sick.' As a result David sought the Lord in prayer and fasting asking for the life of his son. He lay all night on his face upon the earth before the Lord. No one could console him or make him eat. He continued like this until the seventh day when his son died. Because of the grief shown by David, his servants were scared to tell him about the death of his son. But when he perceived and received the news: "Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat." (II Sam.12:20).

Again this was a true act of worship, of submission and of yielding unto God. After this act of worship David went and comforted Bathsheba his wife. True worship will be tested to its very core at such times. Either we will find that worship is just a high feeling which we enjoy and live on or else we will find that it is a submitted heart to God no matter what happens.

In Genesis 22:5, Abraham says to his servant, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham had been commanded by the Lord to go to the mount and sacrifice the most precious thing he had upon the altar, his only begotten son Isaac. This was

an act of true worship; he would lay his son on the altar in obedience unto God. This was all carried out in absolute faith yet with no understanding as to why this was required or what would be the outcome. Whatever would happen he was going to worship on that hilltop.

Some years later when Abraham sent his servant to seek for a wife for Isaac, after a long journey he stood by a well and prayed that the Lord would guide him in the choice. When he finally found Rebekah and could see the guiding hand of God in all things we are told that he 'bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of his master Abraham, which had led me in the right way.' When all was finally agreed and Rebekah was released to go with him to be Isaac's wife that we are told: "he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth." (Gen 24:26, 48, 52). Worship is a response to the goodness and guidance of God.

Jesus Christ when dealing with the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands and who was presently living with a man who was not her husband, taught her to be a worshipper. That involved probing her heart, revealing her sin, and bringing her to Him as her one and only source for life itself. He said to her: "true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (Jn.4:23-24).

The heart of worship is holiness unto the Lord. Again and again in Scripture we read concerning worshipping the Lord in the "beauty of holiness." Holiness is a very beautiful and acceptable thing unto the Lord. Our worship must be adorned with holiness or else it will not be acceptable unto God. (I Chron.16:29; II Chron.20:21; Ps.29:2; 96:9; 99:9). Obedience is true heart worship.

The place of true worship is at the footstool of the Lord, at His very feet. While Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the Pharisee a woman from the city, who was a renowned sinner, entered the home bringing with her an alabaster box of ointment: "And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." This is an absolute perfect picture of worship. He forgave this woman who had come in repentance and out of heartfelt love did worship at His feet.

When the risen Christ met the two Mary's coming from the empty tomb: "they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." (Ps.99:5; 132:7; Lk.7:38; Mt.28:9). True worship will be marked by humility. So much contemporary worship is a mere show of the flesh, and of the skill and pride of man. True worship is clothed in humility and utter adoration of Christ where man disappears into the background leaving Christ to be glorified. There will be no boasting in the flesh of man where true worship is found.

In the days of Christ's earthly ministry, those who came to Him in a desperate situation and who came with a true heart of worship, were always answered in miraculous ways. "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" and praise God, Christ cleansed him (Mt.8:2). "While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live", Christ went and she was raised to life (Mt.9:18).

A woman of Canaan came unto Christ crying: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Christ did not answer her; his disciples desired that she be sent away. He then tested her heart further, but she persisted: "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." He did help; her daughter was made whole that very hour (Mt.15:22-28). These miraculous deliverances came to individuals who came in faith worshipping amidst distressing

circumstances.

True worship is found in the crucible of fire where it is tested as to its type. All worship will one day be tested by God's fire and will be revealed as to its true nature. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who accompanied Daniel in Babylon were faced with either maintaining true worship to the true God in an uncompromising way and so being thrown in a fiery furnace, or, of yielding and compromising by momentarily bowing down to the image and going free from the fire. Their response to the King was: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan.3:17-18).

This type of worship found in the Old and New Testaments is a far cry from what we see paraded, promoted, marketed and enjoyed in our own day. Sad to say contemporary worship is mostly ignorant of the true heart of worship and of a true knowledge of the God Himself. When such worshippers are tested by fire, trials, great troubles and temptations little of any worth is found.

However, there is coming a day when the: "kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.11:15). Every knee will bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Isa.45:23; Rom.14:11; Php.2:10). All nations will come and worship before Him (Ps.22:27; 66:4; 72:11; 86:9; Rev.15:4). What a day when all nations will humble themselves, yield themselves, submit themselves and prostrate themselves before His holy throne. Praise God.

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