

An Approved Church Brings True Spiritual Worship

09-08-19 AM

The New Testament reveals that congregations have divine expectations. In Revelation 2 & 3 seven churches were examined by Jesus; two were approved, three were failing, and two failed. An approved church must have as its purpose the purposes of Christ. One of these important purposes found in the New Testament is to worship God.

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

The most instructive lesson on worship was brought by Jesus at a well in Samaria in John 4. There Jesus had a discussion with a Samaritan woman about the nature of worship. She, a Samaritan, worshipped at Mt. Gerizim, while the Jews worshipped at Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Jesus then took the conversation a totally unexpected way: God was changing the way we worshipped from the old to a new way, one which focused on Spirit and Truth.

What is worship? There is not really an easy definition in the Bible that can make this simple. Instead, we must walk through Scriptures and see what men and women did that was called worship. That journey begins in the Old Testament. There we see men coming to special places (like the tabernacle, temple or an altar) and doing a particular reverent action towards God, such as a sacrifice or offering. The Old Testament reveals that this was a sacred, special moment; when Nadab and Abihu came before God casually with unauthorized things, they were struck dead for not treating God as holy. Bringing the “right” things is important; the beginning of the Old Testament shows Cain’s failure to bring the correct things, and Malachi 1:6-8 concludes the Old Testament with the same observation. Finally, even at the well, Jesus made it clear that there was a special place to assemble for worship (John 4:21).

WHAT IS SPIRIT?

John’s Gospel defines “Spirit” for us. It is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but as Jesus said in John 6:63 *“The words that I speak to you are spirit”*. Spiritual worship is worship with the knowledge of Christ. It is contrasted throughout the Bible against the natural/carnal/worldly things. The Old worship was of physical worldly places, physical instruments, and physical sacrifices. The new worship would come from the heart, with spiritual sacrifices such as the fruit of the lips (Hebrews 13:15).

Spiritual worship required bringing the mind to worship. Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 14:10-16 when he declared that to sing with the spirit was to sing with understanding. The Holy Spirit had come to reveal all things; thus to be a man of the Spirit of God was to understand the things of God. This new worship will require all of us to understand why you do what you do and why you offer what you offer. Spiritual worship requires understanding.

WHAT IS TRUTH

John’s Gospel speaks a great deal to the subject of truth. Whether it is Pilate asking “what is truth” or Jesus declaring that He was the Truth (John 14:6), Truth is a central concept in John’s book. Jesus defines truth in John 17:17 when He declared “Your word is truth”. How is the word of Christ different that the Word of the Father? One of these is about understanding, and one of these is about authority. The Spirit brings understanding, the Word of the Father brings authority.

If we are to worship according to Truth, the authority of the Father, how do we do this? We do this by seeking out the worship that the Father desires. The Scriptures tell us what the Father desires. He desires us singing with our hearts and mouths (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). He desires that we are Praying

in unity (1 Timothy 2:1). He desires we commemorate His Son's death with communion with the Saints (1 Corinthians 11:20-34). He has commanded us to take up a collection for the work of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Finally, we see that He desires that we break the bread of life when we are together (Acts 20:7, 1 Timothy 4:13).

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE ABOUT WORSHIP

While there were things that would change in the True Spiritual worship, the overall nature of worship does not. Worship is still a particular reverent action towards God. Worship isn't just everything we do; even our spiritual service to God (Romans 12:1 – spiritual service) is not the same as what we do as a church in the assembly. The importance of reverence is still present; God is still Holy and still expects us to behave as though we are in His presence in holiness. God still expects us to bring the "right" things; we are giving God the first of our lives, and we are avoiding the worthless offerings.

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" John 4:23

An approved church is focused on the purpose of creating true spiritual worship.