

# Bible Questions and Answers

(By Robert C. Veil, Jr.)

Question: What is worship?

Answer: The first place the word “worship” appears in the New Testament is Matthew 2:2: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” There is a footnote in the American Standard Version which defines “worship” as an “act of reverence paid” to God. That definition sums up the meaning of the word.

Notice that worship involves two things: 1) An *action*; and 2) An *attitude* (of reverence). That means that in order to worship God effectively, we must not only do what God commands us to do, but we must perform such acts in the proper spirit or attitude of humility, respect and awe [reverence].

Jesus himself confirmed this definition of worship in John 4. There, during a fascinating conversation with a Samaritan woman, the subject turned to worship. She commented about the proper place for worship: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship,” (Jn. 4:20). Jesus then taught her that in the Christian Age, the place would not matter. “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father,” (4:21). He then made this remarkable statement: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth,” (4:24).

To worship God “in spirit” involves the proper attitude [reverence]. To worship him “in truth” requires the proper acts of worship, the actions which God himself authorizes. In order to determine what those acts of worship are, we need only look to the Scriptures themselves. We can see what worship is in the teaching of Jesus, and in the actions of the early church as they followed him.

*Praying* is an act of worship. Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the Father, (Mt. 6:9ff). The early church continued “stedfastly” in prayers, (Acts 2:42). *Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs* is another avenue by which we worship. “Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord,” (Eph. 5:19). Jesus had sung hymns with his disciples, (see Mt. 26:30). The *preaching and teaching* of God’s word is a part of Christian worship, (2 Tim. 4:2). Partaking of the *Lord’s supper* and *giving* are also acts of worship to God, (see 1 Cor. 11:23-29; 16:1-2). All of these actions are authorized avenues by which we can acceptably approach God in worship.

We can be thankful that God sets forth in full detail how we may acceptably worship him. And as we come to know more about God and his great love for mankind, especially in giving his only son as a sacrifice for our sins, we naturally want to praise and worship God at every opportunity. We may do so in the manner he has authorized, and thus be assured that we are pleasing to him.

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