

Understanding Acceptable Worship

SCRIPTURE READING: John 4:21-26

INTRODUCTION.

I. ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP IS BASED ON GOD'S WORD.

- A. We must seek to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.
 - 1. Jesus said this is what God the Father desires. (John 4:19-24)
 - 2. Consider the history of the Israelites.
 - a. God warned Israel not to add to nor take away from His commandments. (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 5-6)
 - b. God also warned Israel against worshiping false gods. (Deuteronomy 4:15-19)
 - c. However, time and time again, Israel offered up a worship that was not acceptable to the Lord.
 - 1) Aaron built a golden calf for the people to worship. (Exodus 32)
 - 2) Nadab and Abihu offered "*a strange fire*" to the Lord. (Leviticus 10:1-3)
 - 3) King Saul presumptuously offered a burnt offering, violating God's laws since he was not a priest. (1 Samuel 13)
 - 4) Sometimes Israel's worship was pure hypocrisy. Their ungodliness caused the Lord to reject their offerings and sacrifices. (Isaiah 1:10-15; Amos 5:21-24)
 - 3. Under the New Covenant of Christ, true worshippers worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.
 - a. We seek the instructions and guidance from God's word.

- 1) God's word equips us for "*every good work*" which includes worshiping the Lord. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- 2) God's word gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)
- b. Under the New Covenant, God's instructions regarding worship should be written on our hearts. (cf. Hebrews 8:10)
 - 1) "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*"

II. ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP BEGINS IN THE HEART.

- A. Our worship must begin in the heart; it must be in spirit and truth. (cf. John 4:24)
 1. Our hearts must be focused on worshiping the Lord.
 - a. Solomon wrote, "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*" (Proverbs 4:23)
 - b. The Lord said Israel had "*removed their hearts far from Me.*" (Isaiah 29:13) Jesus applied this same statement to the scribes and Pharisees. (Matthew 15:7-9)
 - c. When we remove our hearts from God, we stop worshiping Him in spirit and in truth.
 2. Our hearts must be filled with reverence and awe for Him whom we worship.
 - a. Consider the throne room scene in Revelation 4 and 5.
 - 1) The worship offered to the Almighty God. (Revelation 4:9-11)
 - 2) The worship offered to the Lamb, Jesus the King. (Revelation 5:11-13)
 - b. Let our hearts bow in humility and reverence before the Lord.

- 1) David wrote, *"Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."* (Psalms 95:6-7)
 - 2) We should be "soul-kneeling" before the great Creator. We, the creation, should stand in awe of the Creator.
- B. Our hearts should produce the "fruit of our lips."
1. *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."* (Hebrews 13:15)
 2. Jesus said, *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."* (John 7:38)
 3. Jesus also said, *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things..."* (Matthew 12:35)
 4. The *"fruit of our lips"* will be seen in...
 - a. Scriptural songs, hymns, & spiritual songs.
 - b. Prayers offered to the Lord.
 - c. Hearing and studying God's word.
 - d. Proclaiming Jesus' death through the Lord's Supper.
 - e. Laying by in store to help in the work of the local church.
 5. Let us give glory to the Lord from our hearts and our lips. (1 Chronicles 16:28-30)
 6. Proper worship of God must begin within our hearts and flow outwardly.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Acceptable worship...
1. Is based on God's word, the Bible.
 2. Begins in the heart and flows outwardly in obedience.
- B. Is your worship acceptable to the Lord?
1. As Paul wrote, *"But let a man examine himself..."* (1 Corinthians 11:28)
 2. Each of us must examine ourselves to make certain our hearts are right with God and that the worship we offer up is pleasing to Him.

- C. In the next lesson, we will continue this study by looking at more aspects of acceptable worship.

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