

# Exploring for Gold

*Digging Deeper beneath the  
surface to find gold –  
God's thinking on things*

## #1

# True Worship

**What is it and does it matter?**

**“I counsel thee to buy of me  
gold tried in the fire”  
“Now if any man build upon this foundation  
[Jesus Christ] gold ...  
he shall receive a reward”**

*R. P. Amos*



One may build in the Christian life and church with wood, hay, and stubble, which are fairly quick and easy to get. To use such materials does not require as much cost, study, thinking, or work as gold, silver, and precious stones do. But of course, they won't withstand the fire at the judgment seat of Christ like gold, silver and precious stones will. (See 1Cor. 3:10-15)

## Ways of Finding Gold

**Exegesis** – We will dig deep into God's Word, both Old and New Testaments to see how He chose to reveal and explain the subject. Our goal is to see what God believes and what pleases Him.

If we discover this gold, God's direct revealed thinking, we will put it through five levels of fire to see if we truly have pure gold.

### Level 1. **EXPERIENCES** (positive results)

Some might do it differently than the given Bible truths. But they might still see positive results. Results from people being saved to numbers increasing, to things working out happily with peace. Can good results cause the different method used to be overlooked by God? Like we might be ready to discipline a child who disobeys us by not doing his homework but then gets a hundred percent on the test. So do we then withdraw the planned discipline? Does the Bible speak on things like this?

### Level 2. **EXPLANATIONS** (other's sincere opinions)

Sometimes learned sincere lovers of the Lord will have a different take for other reasons than the directly given Bible truths. Do their blessings from the Lord in other areas give us a legitimate bye to follow them in their opinion? Could it maybe come under submitting to one another, another biblical truth? Does the Bible provide counsel on this?

### Level 3. **EXHIBITS OF GRACE** (love)

God's biblical history shows He demonstrates much longsuffering and grace with His people, whom He loves, even when they fail. Could this teach us that there is an *ideal* from God but also a *reality* of real life that He understands? Does He permit other options in grace without consequences? Is the *ideal* only the goal but not the absolute? We might tell a child to hit a homerun but when he only hits a double we are still excited. Does the Bible teach in this area?

### Level 4. **EXTENUATING CONDITIONS** (mercy)

For example, the law might say the speed limit is 55mph for safety reasons. But if a person is having a heart attack, is it permissible to exceed 55mph to get them to the hospital for their safety. Wasn't the spirit or purpose of the law still done? Would not mercy come into play? Does the Bible advocate mercy at times?

### Level 5. **EXCEPTIONS** (other Scriptures)

Sometimes what looks clear from one side is balanced by seeing another true side. Such as we heard our football team scored forty points and are excited. Then we hear the other team also scored forty points. Are emotions become balanced. For example, we are to judge sinning believers in the church but we also are to love one another. Does one truth make an exception for the other? Or does the two biblical truths somehow balance each other? Does the Bible help in such dilemmas?

<b>W</b>	illingly	Rom. 12:1
<b>O</b>	fferings	1Pet. 2:5
<b>R</b>	everence	Psa.. 5:7
<b>S</b>	inging – unto the Lord	Col.. 3:16
<b>H</b>	oliness	Psa. 29:2
<b>I</b>	n Spirit and in Truth	John 4:24
<b>P</b>	raise	Psa. 138:2

# What is True Worship?

## *Exegesis of subject in Holy Scripture*

### **Basic Definition**

The main Hebrew word for worship is “shachah.” It means to bow down as the inferior in reverence and respect of the higher. Its first mention is translated that way in Genesis 18:2 when Abraham “bowed” himself toward the ground.

The main word for worship in the New Testament in Greek is “proskuneo,” which also involves bowing down. Much of the time worship is connected with someone falling or bowing down. And it also conveys kissing toward something much like a dog under his master and licking his hand in trust and adoration. There are a few other words for “worship” that are translated as worship or service.



## Usage of Worship

“Worship” is a verb (an action) in the Bible. It’s never an adjective describing something. It is more of a modern thing to use it as an adjective describing an object. Things are now referred to as a worship team, worship leader, worship meeting, worship book, or worship music, etc.

Worship finds God as its object. Using it as an adjective to describe something makes that object the focus. To make something the object of worship in a description can unwittingly begin to package and confine worship to a specific design or method. That’s why some might believe today that you can’t worship God without electricity.

But we will later see that worship in the Spirit cannot be neatly packaged into a physical box. The Lord Jesus taught that true worshipers “*must worship him in **spirit** and in truth,*” John 4:24. You see, something you can see, smell, taste, touch, or hear is not spirit but something connected with our bodily senses. Not that our senses can’t appreciate the glorious creation of God but our senses are connected with feeling and emotion. Senses can be excited, regulated, adjusted, stimulated, and even manipulated. The business, marketing and music world can tell you all about this.



## The Father Seeks True Worshipers

To be sure, God is worthy of worshiping and He seeks such: *True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in*

*truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him,”* John 4:23. In fact at the end of this age an angel will be sent, and from the midst of heaven, will preach to all the inhabitants of earth to *“fear God, and give glory to Him... worship Him,”* Rev. 14:6,7.



## **God Only is to be Worshiped**

Satan in his rebellion to be like God desires worship. In fact Lucifer offered the Son of God all the power and glory of the world’s kingdoms (for it’s his to give at the present) if Jesus would simply worship him. The Lord answered, *“Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,”* Luke 4:7,8.

This will be the very reason Satan empowers a coming world leader known as the beast or Antichrist. Through him and his deceit he will force worldwide worshipping of himself, Rev. 13. But as John was told when he fell at the feet of the revealing angel to worship before him to *“do it not”* but *“worship God,”* Rev. 22:8, 9.

Worship is to be for God only. So it shouldn’t surprise one that the Lord Jesus received worship when on earth. (See Matt. 2:11 / 8:2 / 9:18 / 14:33 / 15:25 / 20:20 / 28: 9, 17 / Mark 5:6 / Luke 24:52 / John 5:23 / 9:38).

**LEARNING MOMENT** – So our worshipping and esteem of the Son of God should be of the highest priority in our life. Thomas said to the risen Lord Jesus with the marks of the cross, *“My Lord and my God,”* John 20:28, 29.



## **There is Wrong Worship**

Not all worship is good just like not all love is good. One can love what is good but one can also love what is evil. So often when it’s said *“they are worshipping or worshipers”* it’s seen as a positive thing. But this is not necessarily so.

We read that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Also, *“neither is worshipped with men’s hands,”* Acts 17:24, 25. So anything man makes with his hands to represent God (idolatry) defames and dishonors God. For God is living and makes all things. An idol is lifeless and must be made by man - the opposite of God. (See Isaiah 40:12-31 / 44:9-20 / Jer. 10:3-17).

Idolatry (false worship - religious sin) heads the list for the world judgment at the end of this age, Rev. 9:20-21. As Psalms 81:9 says, *“There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.”*

The true God is revealed as the Creator and identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Matt. 1:2 / 22:32 / John 1:1-3 / Acts 3:13 / Eph. 3:14. All other gods are false and don’t truly exist in reality as the Ten Commandments teach, Exodus. 20:3-5.

Wrong worshiping can even be to the true God Himself. Not all worship to God is acceptable to Him. Like not all gifts people might give you are truly desired or liked. The Lord Jesus looked at the Jewish religion of His day and said, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,”* Matt. 15:8-9.

So it is possible to have exciting and loving words with beautiful melodies flowing out of our mouth being happily articulated by our lips to the true God, and yet have it not accepted by God. This is because the heart is not in it. Following man’s religious commandments (traditions) rather than having a heart for God and His Word demonstrates this. The censure of unacceptable worship even though to the true God is also taught elsewhere in the Bible, Isaiah 1:11-18 and Mark 7:5-13.

**LEARNING MOMENT** – Have not these scriptures conveyed to us that “worship” alone may not be a good activity but who and how we worship from our heart is the key.



## What is True Worship Like and Why Should We Worship the Lord?



This question is given much light in the heavenly scenes in the Revelation. At least five times you will see the twenty-four elders (with others at times) fall down before the throne of God. Their worship and praise is directly recorded. Here we see the character of true worship in observing what occupies the attention of these elders.

In all five times they fall down before God. No lifting up of hands here or rising up on a stage receiving adoring clapping, but lying low with their faces toward the ground. And in many of the times God's worth is being acknowledged. "*Thou art worthy, O Lord,*" is the cry. Thus worship has to do with "worthy," what a person is worthy to receive and why he is worthy. They are not articulating their own following or their love or even their worship of the Lord but focused only on the Lord.

Observe how this unfolds in these five falling downs of the twenty-four elders in heaven (emphasis mine).

### 1. *Worthy of glory because of creation* (Rev. 4:10-11)

The four and twenty elders **fall down** before him that sat on the throne, and **worship** him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art **worthy**, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

### 2. *Worthy of judging because of redemption.* (Rev. 5:8-10)

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders **fell down** before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art **worthy** to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and

nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

### 3. *Worthiness of the crucified Lamb (Jesus) to receive all*

(Rev. 5:12-14)

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders **fell down** and **worshipped** him that liveth for ever and ever.

### 4. *Thanksgiving for His eternalness and taking His power to rule*

(Rev. 11:16-17)

And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, **fell upon their faces**, and **worshipped** God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

### 5. *Simply agreeing with God* (Rev. 19:1-4)

... True and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth ... And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts **fell down** and **worshipped** God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

Did you notice how many total things they said about the Lord? Did you see the number of dues He was worthy to receive first in creation and then in redemption (4:11 & 5:12)?

**LEARNING MOMENT** - By God giving us a glimpse into the worshipping in heaven itself, does that not teach us what He is worthy of and what pleases Him now in our worship – we who are a people already seated in the heavenlies, Eph. 2:6?

## What produces worship?



Can worship be produced by man's designs? We see a striking example of a man trying to produce worship by music. That was the pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar. He instructed people to bow down and worship his image at the sound of music (Daniel 3:5). He demanded worship with the threat of punishment and used the emotion of music to make it happen. Is worship truly "worship" if it has to be manufactured? Where is the heart?

So what does God's Holy Scriptures show that induces worship? It might be surprising to some. Following are sixteen examples of God's people worshipping. Note the circumstances that led them to worship the Lord.

1. **Job** – when he lost his farm business, servants and children to death. (Job 1:20-21)  
“Then Job...fell down upon the ground, and **worshipped**...blessed be the Name of the LORD.”
2. **Abraham** – when God asked him to sacrifice his only promised son. (Gen. 22:4,9)  
“I and the lad will go yonder and **worship**, and come again to you... and laid him on the altar.”
3. **Servant** – when the Lord answered his prayer for a wife for Isaac. (Gen. 24:26)  
“And the man bowed down his head, and **worshipped** the LORD.”
4. **Israel** – when they heard of the Lord's Passover deliverance for them. (Ex. 12:27)  
“...sacrifice of the LORD'S passover... delivered our houses...bowed the head and **worshipped**.”
5. **Moses** – when he understood the glory and character of God. (Exo. 34:5-8)  
“And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and **worshipped**”.

6. **Joshua** – when he discovered the Lord, not him, was the captain of the armies. (Josh. 5:14)  
“Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did **worship**, and said ...  
What saith my lord?”
7. **Gideon** – when God assured him he would supernaturally defeat the enemy. (Judges 7:15)  
“When Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he **worshipped**.”
8. **King David** – when he heard his baby boy had died.  
(2Sam. 12:20)  
“Then David...changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and **worshipped**.”
9. **King David** - escaping in rejection, barefoot and betrayed by friend. (2Sam. 15:30-32)  
“When David was come to the top of the mount, where he **worshipped** God.”
10. **Solomon/Israel** – when the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. (2Chron. 7:3)  
“They bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and **worshipped**...”
11. **King Jehoshaphat** – told to stand still for the battle was the Lord’s. (2Chron. 20:18)  
“Bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all... Jerusalem... **worshipping** the LORD.”
12. **King Hezekiah** – the burnt offering was restored & the song began. (2Chron. 29:27-30)  
“And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all... bowed...and **worshipped**.”
13. **Ezra/Israel** – as they heard the Word of God proclaimed from the book. (Neh. 8:6 / 9:3)  
“And all the people answered, Amen...they bowed their heads, and **worshipped** the LORD...”

14. **A Leper** – a diseased man seeking help from the Lord Jesus.

(Matt. 8:2)

“And, behold, there came a leper and **worshipped** him, saying, Lord...”

15. **Disciples** – when they saw the stormy wind stopped by Jesus Christ. (Matt. 14:33)

“They that were in the ship came and **worshipped** him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

16. **The Women** – when they saw the resurrected Christ.

(Matt. 28:9)

“And they came and held him [Lord Jesus] by the feet, and **worshipped** him.”

**LEARNING MOMENT** – So these biblical examples teach that worship can happen in a variety of places as well as in a diversity of circumstances whether positive or negative. Worship is not dependent upon man’s orchestrated designs. True worship finds its source in the heart and the only object is the Lord Almighty Himself.

## **Is there a Congregational Place for Worship also?**



Though worship could happen in a variety of ways, there was a formal place God eventually ordained for congregational offerings. While we desire each individual child to spend time with us, there are times when we want all the children to come together in one place for special times of honor, like a birthday.

**1. Old Testament** The congregational gathering center for God’s people Israel was eventually the temple in Jerusalem. So we will read of ones that “*had come to Jerusalem for to worship,*” Acts 8:27. There was the aspect of bringing your first fruits and offerings to the priest in the place where God put His Name and His presence. There they were to “*worship before the LORD thy God,*” Deut 26:1-11.

In that sense worship had feet to it. They would walk by many pagan temples to get to God's house.

The Spirit was not yet given to all believers like we believers have today to sing, pray and worship in, Rom. 8:26, 27. Thus to a people without the Holy Spirit, God designed things in the temple to first reach the senses of His people Israel. Sight, sound, and smell were key at the glorious temple.

At the first temple dedication, the people could **smell** the many offerings, **see** the fire of glory in the golden building, and **hear** the appointed robed singers skillfully playing their instruments as melodious harmonies wafted in the air (now called a choir or praise team). In this atmosphere *“they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever,”* 2Chron. 7:1-7.

One will also see this style of OT worshiping in the temple during Hezekiah's revival. The selected singers sang and played while the people were spectators to their religious performance. The people then *“bowed their heads and worshipped,”* 2Chron. 29:25-30.

### ***A covenant change***

The Lord Jesus when on earth announced a **coming change** to worship. He taught it wouldn't be Jerusalem or any other place that would be the center of worshipping. The focus would no longer be where on earth but how and who in heaven, John 4:20-24.

**2. New Testament** The center of worship changes from Jerusalem to Jesus who is now enthroned in the *“heavenly Jerusalem,”* Heb. 12:22-24. It changes from a building with sight, sound, and smell to the Spirit living in people as His temple.

Therefore, they can now worship God in a new way; *“in spirit and in truth,”* John 4:24 / 1Cor. 3:16-17.

Emotion from our senses can be regulated, manufactured, and even manipulated. One can regulate sound by turning it up or down producing desired effects. One can produce a smell that is stinky or pleasant, which can affect our appetite. One can design sight so as to make things exciting and stimulating. And one can produce these effects apart from the Spirit. Doesn't it happen every day in the world system?

But worship in the Spirit is a dimension beyond the senses. The Holy Spirit joined with our spirit is unseen and intangible. The Spirit can't be measured, adjusted, enhanced or manufactured. In fact the Spirit intercedes with *“groanings which cannot be uttered,”* Rom. 8:26. The Spirit is beyond human creativity (the natural efforts of the flesh).

Spirit worshiping is simply a spiritual response unto the Lord from the heart for the truth of who He is, and what He did, does, and said.

We don't read in the NT of special singers ordained by David (choir or praise teams). We do read now that all believers can be filled with the Spirit, *“singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,”* Eph. 5:18-19. We no longer read of a leader of music on earth like Heman was to Israel (1Chron. 25:5-6), but the living Lord Jesus leading the church in singing and praise, Heb. 2:12.

Yet true believers are still to come together to offer up spiritual sacrifices, like praise, unto the Lord.

But the “where” in the NT is no longer one central city on earth where God alone dwells and is physically designed to excite the worshiper. As Paul the apostle, a minister of the new covenant, writes to the Corinthian church, *“with all that in **every place** call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,”* 1Cor. 1:2. And then told the church this radical truth, *“Ye are the*

*temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you,”* 1Cor. 3:16.

So the congregational gathering of the NT church is now in *many places* in many lands to learn, break bread and pray in *“the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”* By faith, from wherever they meet on earth, they enter the central headquarters, the heavenly Jerusalem where the Lord Jesus bodily sits, 1Cor. 1:9 / Heb. 12:22-24.

This gathering is called *“in the church.”* It could be meeting simply in a home, or school, or an auditorium building. And when it meets in His Name, the Lord Jesus by His Spirit is in the midst of them even if only two or three, Matt. 18:20, 1Cor. 1:2 / 3:16.

So it's not difficult to envision that *“in the church”* when the focus is simply His Word, His gospel and His Son in remembrance of Him (Lord's Supper) that true worshipping will often happen. And if one's spirit made alive by the Holy Spirit doesn't get excited over simply Him and His death for unworthy and doomed sinners, then what else is there that could possibly excite us to induce worship?

So in the aspect that the local church is to *“come together in one place”* at certain times, worship still has feet to it.

*Observation.* Wise is the church that makes an honest attempt to match the church meeting in 1Corinthians 14:23-37. That is where there is a biblically ordered way of allowing a plurality of brothers to express themselves. The Spirit filling their hearts now has a release for them to be actively involved with a biblical outlet for praying, singing, and edifying. Otherwise, it's in theory only and doesn't have the living dynamic to it. All believers must just sit there and listen or observe an arranged presentation by a few.

When that living aspect is lacking that is when there is the temptation to design something new to excite the people into *“worshipping”* arises.



In the NT it is not the “where” or the “what” that makes worship happen but the Who. For the “Who” now lives in believers’ hearts. Yet He is in the midst of His gathered church. And He also lives bodily in the heavenly Jerusalem as “*the mediator of the new covenant*” for the “*church of the firstborn,*” Gal. 4:6 / Matt. 18:20 / Heb. 12:22-24.

**LEARNING MOMENT** – If this is true, why would we need anything else besides His presence and His revealing Word with the bread and the cup pointing to His death for us to truly worship in the Spirit – from our hearts or with our lips? Does the Almighty Creator God and blessed Lord Jesus Christ our Savior pull at the strings of your heart and instrument of your tongue?

## **What do the Epistles to the Churches Teach about Worship?**



It might be a bit surprising to some since “worship” is a key topic and design of many churches today, that the church epistles have relatively little to say directly to the church about worshiping in its meeting. It could be because of what we have seen so far from Scripture that worship is not packaged nor relegated to a special setting. While worshiping doesn’t exclude the church meeting it does transcend it.

The main Greek word for worship (*proskuneo*) has only one mention concerning an actual church meeting. That is in 1 Corinthians 14:25 where it concerns an unbeliever or unlearned person who “*falling down on his face he will worship God.*” This is because the person can understand what’s being said in an orderly church meeting. The secrets of his heart are revealed and he confesses that God is indeed in the church.

That is all that is written in the instructional letters (epistles) on worshipping in a church meeting on the positive side. (See also Heb. 1:6 / 11:21 / Rev. 3:9 for other general mentions of the word).

Also there are some other Greek words translated worship or worshipping. At times they describe wrong or false worship. Such as Colossians 2:18 and 23 where man imposed bodily denials such as shaving heads, imposed abstinence from certain foods, dark clothing, not marrying, and vows of poverty, etc. These are viewed as religious humility in worshipping. But this is false and demonic (1Tim. 4:1-5), and again deals with the outward body and its senses, which does not change the human heart.

Beware of what is called worship that uses the senses to define it.

Much of the time these words are translated as “serve” not “worship.” One positive example of another Greek word (latreuo) occasionally translated “worship” is Philippians 3:3; *“For we are the circumcision, which **worship** God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”* Here the context of the flesh is referring to the natural effort of the Jewish Old Testament law’s way to produce godliness, service, and worship to God (verses 4-6) in contrast to the church now functioning in the Spirit and rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

Some translations will translate the Greek word “latreia” in Romans 12:1 (“reasonable service” in KJV) as worship. But it is translated service in the other places. Yet our fully dedicated sacrificial service offered to God and His will can indeed be out of devotional worship to the Lord.

**LEARNING MOMENT** – Is it possible, due to the lack of details given on worship in the church epistles for a NT church meeting, that today we are focusing more on worshipping “worship” than just worshipping the Lord in simple truth?

Could the current focus on worshipping via methods and music be a replacement for doctrine (truth of God in His Son and His ways)? Aren’t we to worship *“in the spirit and in **truth?**”* Can we truly worship deeply regardless of enthusiastic music apart

from knowing and appreciating the deep truth of God Himself? So is doctrine wedded to worship? (See Acts 17:22-31) Does sound triumph soundness? I have witnessed that the more saints know about the Lord and love Him, the less they need to be motivated on how to worship.

So let's close this section with an exhortation from Hebrews 1:6 concerning God's Son: "*Let all the angels of God worship Him!*"

## **Putting the teaching through the fire of other Scriptures to have pure gold**

We have given the general teaching in the Lord's Word concerning how He reveals worshipping. Now let's examine five other areas to see if we have any more of the counsel of God on this in order to be correctly balanced.

### **Level 1. EXPERIENCES (positive results)**

Some might do it differently than the given Bible truths. But they might still see positive results. Results from people being saved to numbers increasing, to things working out happily with peace. Can good results cause the different method used to be overlooked by God? Like we might be ready to discipline a child who disobeys us by not doing his homework but then gets a hundred percent on the test. So do we then withdraw the planned discipline? Does the Bible speak on things like this?

Positive results sometimes are a test from God to see if we truly love the Lord with all our heart and soul. Do we take the easy way out and judge by experiences (results determine the action) or do we dig deeper searching His absolute Word? Are we persuaded His Word is His heart? If it is, it is therefore faithful and true, and worth not compromising.

- Deuteronomy 13:1-5 teaches that a prophet or a dreamer might persuade you to serve another god. His signs and

wonders actually come to pass. Now what? It was a test from God to see where your heart is. Can anything budge you from His pure Word? Not only are you to not to follow that “successful” prophet but also the “prophet” is to be judged and removed from among you.

We shouldn't judge the message by the messenger but rather judge the messenger by the message.

- The people of Jeremiah's day made the fatal choice of going by positive experiences rather than the Word. They told Jeremiah, *“We will not hearken unto thee.”* The reason given was negative experiences when they tried God's way and positive experiences when they worshipped the false way. They said, *“...for then [worshipping the queen of heaven] had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine”* (Jer. 44:17-19).

Can you think of other Bible examples with positives results but where God still called the action wrong that might correctly apply here?

## Level 2. **EXPLANATIONS** (other's sincere opinions)

Sometimes learned sincere lovers of the Lord will have a different take for other reasons than the directly given Bible truths. Do their blessings from the Lord in other areas give us a legitimate bye to follow them in their opinion? Could it maybe come under submitting to one another, another biblical truth? Does the Bible provide counsel on this?

- In David we have an example of a godly shepherd and leader. David was a man greatly used and blessed of God; *“a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will,”* the Lord claimed (Acts 13:22). But can good men say and do wrong things?

In 1Chronicles 13 it was King David's decision to bring the ark of God home to the city of God at Jerusalem. The God that

dwells between the cherubim (His earthly throne) would now have center place among His people. The people were unified in this. There was excitement and enthusiastic singing while playing the many instruments. But the “*anger of the Lord was kindled.*” Why?

They were bringing the ark back on a nice new cart with oxen pulling it. But the Word of God said to transport it only with Levites carrying it with poles through the rings so as not to touch God’s throne, Num. 4:15 / Exo. 25:14. When the oxen stumbled and the ark started to slide off the cart, Uzza the driver, put his hand on it to hold it up. He died!

This begs the question: Does man hold the throne of God up or is it God that holds the throne of David’s house up?

But David was teachable and searched the Scriptures and admitted, “*...we sought him not after the due order.*” He then did it God’s way and the endeavor was blessed (1Chron. 15:2, 13, 15). So we learn here that good men, excitement, good motives, and unity don’t necessarily glorify the Lord apart from His ways in His Word.

As has been said, “Men at their best are still men at best.”

- King Saul is an example that worshiping God is not always indicative of spirituality (1Samuel 15). He disobeyed God’s command but still wanted to offer sacrifice unto the Lord. He was told that “*to obey is better than sacrifice*” and his dynasty would be taken from him. But he still wanted to worship. The prophet Samuel didn’t want to worship with him.

Can you find any other examples of good men used of God making mistakes that are not to be imitated?

### Level 3. **EXHIBITS OF GRACE** (love)

God’s biblical history shows He demonstrates much long suffering and grace with His people, whom He loves, even when they fail.

Could this teach us that there is an *ideal* from God but also a *reality* of real life that He understands? Does He permit other options in grace without consequences? Is the *ideal* only the goal but not the absolute? We might tell a child to hit a homerun but when he only hits a double we are still excited. Does the Bible teach in this area?

- In Leviticus 9:23-10:3, Nadab and Abihu, two priests, found out that the ideal in worshiping God was the only way. At the dedication of the tabernacle, the glory of God by fire consumed the burnt offering on the new altar. The people shouted and fell on their faces (a worshipful position). With the people low before the Lord and focused on the Lord's glory in accepting the burnt offering (a picture of Christ Jesus and His offering for our sin, Eph. 5:2) these two priests took their censers and offered strange or unauthorized fire before the Lord (a formal worshipful action).

They replaced the fire of God's glory on the sacrifice with their own fire in their censers – a sin involving worship.

They didn't disobey a specific commandment of God here, but, simply did and added something "*which He commanded them not.*" They had no authority to add to God's acceptance of the sacrifice to stir up the worshipping people. They died before the Lord with fire for a religious sin. Not that they were worshipping a false god but were adding to or improving the true God.

They were accused of not sanctifying the Lord. God was not set apart as the only authority. They were accused of not glorifying the Lord. Rather than the people on their faces before the Lord's acceptance of the burnt offering with His glory fire, it would become easy to be distracted from God's glory and fire. What would draw their attention away from the altar of sacrifice was the performance fire of the two priests waving their censers with strange (unauthorized) fire in them.

Are there any other examples where grace does not make provision to spare the earthly consequences for a sinful or unauthorized choice?

#### Level 4. **EXTENUATING CONDITIONS** (mercy)

For example, the law might say the speed limit is 55mph for safety reasons. But if a person is having a heart attack, is it permissible to exceed 55mph to get them to the hospital for their safety. Wasn't the spirit or purpose of the law still done? Would not mercy come into play? Does the Bible advocate mercy at times?

To be sure Scripture does show God's mercy at times in very difficult circumstances. The mercy does not make the action a normal thing to be repeated nor relieve the responsibility of knowing it's not right but is indeed merciful to certain unique situations.

- The Lord Jesus reminded the Pharisees that David, when fleeing from the murderous Saul, entered the house of God and ate the priestly showbread to satisfy his hunger, which was not lawful for him. Yet nothing happened to him this one time. For the Lord said, "*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*" (Matt. 12:7).
- Then there is the converted Gentile Syrian captain Naaman who was healed of his leprosy by the true God in the land of Israel. Naaman came to realize that the God of Israel was the only true God. He promised Elisha the prophet that he would no longer offer burnt offerings or sacrifice unto other gods but only unto the LORD.

However, Captain Naaman served the pagan king of Syria and when he would go back to Syria, his authority, the king, would go to the house of his god Rimmon. And Naaman would have to accompany him there. Naaman's master would lean upon Naaman for physical support in the house of Rimmon and thus Naaman would be bowing down with him. While Naaman would not be sacrificing to this false god, he did ask if he could be pardoned (admitting it was not right) for bowing down with his master. Elisha said, "*Go in peace*" (2Kings 5:18). Mercy again!

- Then there were those who were on a long journey and could not make it back to Israel to keep Passover on the date of 1/14,

the day the Lord had prescribed. The Lord responded to such. They could keep it on 2/14 in the same way. Mercy again.

But that would only work for those who could not make it because of being away or defiled (extenuating circumstances beyond their direct control). But for one who could make it and was not away or defiled no such liberty was given. They were to be cut off if they changed the pattern of God's day. A difference between "could not" and "would not." (See Numbers 9:1-14).

Can you think of any other examples of mercy for a one time or unique occasion when mercy is in order instead of the normal?

### Level 5. **EXCEPTIONS** (other Scriptures)

Sometimes what looks clear from one side is balanced by seeing another true side. Such as we heard our football team scored forty points and are excited. Then we hear the other team also scored forty points. Are emotions become balanced. For example, we are to judge sinning believers in the church but we also are to love one another. Does one truth make an exception for the other? Or does the two biblical truths somehow balance each other? Does the Bible help in such dilemmas?

- When it comes to worshipping the one true God in His way, it's difficult to find a different truth on this. Because God is a jealous God (Exo. 20:5) there are some things that just don't have an exception to them. For example, if a wife's child wanted to wear blue instead of red on Christmas day, she could make an exception for her child's preference. But if a wife's husband asked to bring home another woman to live with him also, there would be no exception here.

Isaiah. 42:8: I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Exodus. 34:14: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:



So as we conclude, does true worship really matter? It does if we care about glorifying God.

Give unto the LORD the **glory** due unto his name; **worship** the LORD in the beauty of holiness, Psa. 29:2

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and **glorify** thy name? for *thou* only art holy: for all nations shall come and **worship** before thee; for thy judgments [righteous acts] are made manifest, Rev. 15:4.

We will conclude our search for God's gold on worshiping with these verses (but you can keep digging).

Paul said to Timothy in 2Tim. 2:7:

*“Consider what I say;  
and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ said to His materialistic church  
in Rev. 3:18:

*“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,  
that thou mayest be rich...”*

How much are we willing to spend for that gold? It is pure gold. Time, popularity, being misunderstood and being labeled as legalistic might be part of the price to pay. Also, maybe smallness, money, things, pleasures, and our mind's preferred occupation might be part of the cost. Is He worth it? The Lord does promise you will be rich. Seems like a sound investment.

Grace and peace in the Lord Jesus.

R P Amos





***Other subjects being considered for  
the 'Digging for Gold' Series***

- Coverings - God's Ministry with Them
- The First Goal - the Glory of God in His Church
- Divorce and Remarriage - if the Bible was Our Only Source
- The Components and Order of the True Gospel
- Practicing the Priesthood of All Believers (no clergy-laity)
- Creation in Six Days of One Week - Why It's Important?
- Government in the Church - the Wisdom of God's Way
- The Tabernacle: a Window to Christ, His Gospel, and Church

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