What Is Truth?
Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth

In John chapter 4 we read of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well. During the course of their conversation the woman raised the issue of where men should worship God, and Jesus replied it was not *where* we worship but *how* we worship God that is vital. It is true that our entire lives should be one of worship, but here I want to focus briefly on Christians' corporate times of worship; specifically, when we raise our voices in unison in hymns of praise to God.

True Worship (John 4:20-24):

"[T]rue worshippers shall worship [4352] **the Father in spirit and in truth** [225]**: 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** [225]**" (John 4:20-24).**

[225] = Gr. Alethia: *truth as opposite to types, emblems, or shadows.*

[4352] = Gr. Prŏskunĕō: *prostrate oneself in homage; (do reverence to, adore).*

See eg: Exodus 15:1-18, 19-21 / the Psalms / Philippians 2:5-11 / Revelation 5:9-14

"Throughout the Psalms, we are continually reminded of how good it is to worship God … When we worship, we declare the greatness of God and seek to bring our lives into line with his will" [*It is Good to Give Thanks to the Lord*].

Vain Worship (Matthew 15:8-9):

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart [2588] **is far from me. But in vain** [3155] **they do worship** [4576] **me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men** [444]**" (Matthew 15:8-9, cf. Isaiah 29:13).**

[444] = Gr. Ánthrōpos: *sinful man, whose conduct or way or nature is opposed to God.*

[2588] = Gr. Kardía: *thoughts, reasonings, understanding, will, judgment, designs, affections, love…*

[3155] = Gr. Mátēn: *useless, futile … idle, vain. Untrue, false … worthlessness, emptiness.*

[4576] = Gr. Sébomai: *adore.*

Some Examples in Scripture of Vain Worship (Matthew 15:8-9):

The Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-10; 1 Kings 12:28; 1 Corinthians 10:7):

"…thy people … have corrupted [7843] **themselves … They have turned aside** [5493] **quickly out of the way** [1870] **which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped** [7812] **it" (Exodus 32:7-8).**

[1870] = Heb. Dherekh: *mode, manner, course, way of life … worship.*

[5493] = Heb. Sūr: *to apostatize … forsake.*

[7812] = Heb. Shāchāh: *bow down, prostrate oneself as an act of respect before a superior being … especially in worshipping a deity … See Gr. Equivalent,* ***prŏskunĕō*** *(4352).*

[7843] = Heb. Shāchath: *to act wickedly.*

"[W]orship of God is often shaped by personal taste, fashions and what makes people feel most comfortable. Yet this was the principle that motivated the people of Israel to make for themselves a golden calf to use in [their] worship" [*Are You Worshipping God Your Way or His?*].

Strange Fire (Leviticus 10:1-3; Numbers 3:4, 26:61):

"And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange [2114] **fire before the LORD" / "strange fire … which [the LORD] commanded them not … the LORD spake, I will be sanctified** [6942] **in them that come nigh me" (Numbers 26:61 / Leviticus 10:1-3).**

[2114] = Heb. Zūr: *adulterous; estranged … deviating.*

[6942] = Heb. Qādash: *pure, holy, sacred, regarded as holy.*

"Even though Nadab and Abihu were the sons of Aaron the high priest, they failed when they presented their offering [worship] to God … like Cain, they thought their way was better! They had obviously taken up with a 'new thing' [strange fire] with which they thought God would be pleased" [*Strange Fire,* p.1].

See also: The Noise of Thy Songs (Ezekiel 26:13 and Amos 5:21-24).

"[I]t is vital for us to know what kind of songs are acceptable to God. This will ensure that God does not dismiss our songs in the way in which He dismissed Israel's songs during the days of Amos … We cannot worship in spirit if we do not worship in truth" [*The Noise of Our Songs,* pp.2,44].

Selling Our Birthright for a Mess of Pottage…

"[W]orship must be 'in truth' … Spirit without truth leads to a shallow, overly emotional experience that could be compared to a high" [*What Does it Mean to Worship the Lord in Spirit…?*].

"According to the Bible, we should sing *'to the Lord'* (Colossians 3:16). Be wary of music or musical styles that draw attention to the singer or musician and not to God … sacred music is not for entertainment" [*Take Heed What Ye Hear,* p.18].

"[A]ll too easily, what we do in church can be cheapened … it is so easy for it to become a performance … worship needs to be focused entirely on God" [*It is Good to Give Thanks…*].

"God is absolutely holy and anything that is not holy is burnt up in his presence (Hebrews 12:28-29)" [*Please God by Worshipping Him with Holy Fear and Awe*].

"God will not have men follow their own preferences but rather to walk by the rule He gives to them. Whatever other worship men perform to Him is in vain … Deuteronomy 12:8 condemns doing what is right in our own eyes in worship … It may be shocking to think of anything other than commanded worship as idolatry but that is the way in which the Lord Himself speaks" [*Are You Worshipping God Your Way or His?*].

So many glorious hymns of praise have been written by godly men and women in years and centuries past; let us ever sing with them *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,* never despising true and biblical worship for a mess of popular pottage.

References:

Premier Daily Bible Study, ***It is Good to Give Thanks to the Lord*,** (21 April 2022), (email on file).
James Durham, ***Are You Worshipping God Your Way or His?*,** (No Date), www.reformationscotland.org
Travers & Jewel Van Der Merwe, ***Strange Fire: The Rise of Gnosticism in the Church*,** (1995).
Reginald M.J. Oduor, ***The Noise of Our Songs: Disturbing Trends in Contemporary Gospel Music*,** (1997).
Got Questions, ***What Does it Mean to Worship the Lord in Spirit and Truth?*,** (No Date), https://www.gotquestions.org/worship-spirit-truth.html
Bryn Riplinger, ***Take Heed What Ye Hear: The Principles of Godly Music*,** (2008).
Premier DBS, ***Please God by Worshipping Him with Holy Fear and Awe*,** (10 March 2022), (email on file).

Next time, God willing, we will complete our short study with ***The Love of the Truth***.

May God bless our fellowship as we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth,
Elizabeth McDonald
26 April 2022

(This item first appeared in the May-July 2022 edition of the Frindsbury Baptist Church magazine)