

# BIBLICAL WORSHIP

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**In Isaiah 29**, the Israelites engage in outward expressions of praise while their hearts are distant from God. They revere God out of obligation rather than a genuine personal connection, and despite their efforts to follow the rules and sing songs, they have lost sight of the true essence of worship.

In response, God steps in, He promises to reveal His wisdom and perform extraordinary deeds. Through these acts, He intends to show His attributes to the people, prompting them to worship Him not out of obligation, but out of an irresistible draw towards His greatness. As they behold His characteristics, they are naturally moved to worship Him with genuine hearts.

Even now, Thousands of years later, worship still remains the same - a heartfelt response, while encountering God's deeds in one's life. When we truly understand God's heart and motivations, it inherently compels us to respond with deep reverence, awe, and an earnest longing for a real connection with Him. It proves that true worship is born out of an intimate encounter with characteristics of God.

But it is rather unfortunate that much like the Israelites, we can also easily find ourselves in the mere observance of rules and rituals, forgetting the true reason for worship.

We should remind ourselves of the vital importance of allowing our worship to flow from a heartfelt engagement with God's character, rather than becoming ensnared in external routines.

Our journey ahead will involve a deep dive into the history, evolution, and significance of worship. We will explore every mention of the word "worship" chronologically in the bible, its role in human existence, the many forms it has taken, and the various reasons God was worshiped.

We will also look at the examples set by those who have worshiped in the past, to draw inspiration from.

Our final goal is to understand the core reasons driving our worship today, to discover what constitutes true and acceptable worship, and to present God our highest form of praise.

## Obedience:

The term "worship" makes its first appearance in Genesis 22:5. In this intricate passage, God subjects Abraham to the ultimate test by instructing him to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. This test can be viewed as a means for God to evaluate whether Abraham's love for Him surpassed his love for Isaac.

Abraham's response is truly extraordinary. He exhibits profound reverence and complete submission to God's will. Despite the heart-wrenching nature of the request, Abraham willingly obeys God's instructions, showcasing his unwavering allegiance to the divine command.

Although God stops him right before the act of sacrifice, Abraham's readiness to prioritize God's will over his own desires, even when faced with such a daunting task, is a testament to his faith. It is crucial to understand that Abraham's act of worship was not about sacrificing Isaac. It was about sacrificing his own will and desires. Abraham was prepared to give up the most precious thing in his life because he loved God more than anything else.

When instructing his servants, Abraham says, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I are going over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." When he stated, "we will go there and worship," it can be understood that Abraham's characteristic love for God, which resulted in obedience, and subsequently in sacrifice, constituted worship in his view. Thus, Abraham's obedience is portrayed as an act of worship.

Hence, right when he began the process of sacrificing his son, his worship was already complete, prompting God to intervene and stop him. Hence, we understand that obedience is a form of worship.

The intention behind obedience is equally important; it is plausible to obey God without truly worshipping Him. For example, a person might obey God due to fear of punishment or with the aim of gaining God's favor. But in Abraham's case, obedience was a direct result of his Love, hence the story of Abraham serves as an early example of worship—one driven by love, submission, and faith in God, even in the most challenging circumstances.

## Acknowledgement :

We see the second mention of "worship" In Genesis 24, this is a compelling example of worship through acknowledgment.

Here, Abraham's servant embarks on a challenging mission to find a wife for Isaac in a foreign land, among people he doesn't know. As he realizes that God's hand has guided his journey, he humbly recognizes God's active role in his endeavor. This profound recognition moves him to offer heartfelt prayers and praise, not only acknowledging God's characteristics but also giving credit to Him for orchestrating the situation.

This form of worship stems from a sincere grasp and a genuine understanding of God's involvement and attributes. It results in a heartfelt response of devotion. Through acknowledging God's dynamic presence and qualities in our lives, this worship becomes a channel for forging a deeper connection with Him.

Genuine acknowledgment of God involves recognizing His wisdom, which far surpasses our own. It's a humble understanding that we may not always understand His ways, especially when difficulties arise. Acknowledgement means offering thanksgiving not only for the good things but also for the trials, knowing that God's plan and purpose are beyond our full understanding. It's a recognition that His guidance and presence are constant, whether in times of joy or adversity, and it stems from a place of humility, trust, and gratitude.

This humble recognition leads us to attribute both positive outcomes and challenges to His providence. It's a constant reminder that we are not in complete control, and by acknowledging His involvement and praising Him for it, we express a profound form of worship.

## Communal worship:

Up until this point, worship had been predominantly an individual practice. However, a significant shift is observed in Exodus 33:10, where, among the children of Israel, each man worships God at his own tent, at the same time.

This is a special moment in human's worship journey, emphasizing that worship is not only confined to personal endeavors but can be a shared and communal experience.

While the communal worship signifies a shift towards a shared experience, it's true that worship remains deeply personal and individual. Each person's relationship with God is unique, and the communal aspect doesn't diminish the importance of private worship. Communal worship simply adds another layer of connection, where individuals can collectively express their devotion and reverence.

It's noteworthy that they all stood and engaged in worship, standing together was a new way to honor God, marking a departure from previous instances of bowing. Although bowing down demonstrates more humility than standing, this act is also classified as worship.

We can see communal worship in several passages as well, as in 2 Chronicles 29:27–30, Psalm 95 and Exo 24.

## Rules:

As worship continues to evolve, we witness the emergence of more structured approaches. Scriptures emphasize the importance of disciplined worship within a group setting.

A prime illustration of this phenomenon occurs in 2 Samuel, where the establishment of the ark of the covenant solidifies worship predominantly within the house of the Lord.

King David's worship in this context sets the groundwork for a centralized place of worship—the eventual temple in Jerusalem.

A parallel concept materializes in 2 Chronicles 32:12, as King Hezekiah's decision to centralize worship by dismantling high places and altars reinforces the significance of worship at a single altar.

This shift towards centralized worship underscores prescribed methods and specific practices like offering sacrifices, solidifying the correlation between devotion and deliberate actions.

However, the evolution towards centralization and formality does not negate the importance of spontaneous and individual acts of worship. From what we've seen so far, Structured worship as a community fosters unity and order, whereas personal worship offers an unfiltered and heartfelt connection with God.

## Burning sacrifices:

Burning a sacrifice for forgiveness of one's sin requires them to recognise their imperfections and humbly seek God, acknowledging that God is perfect and without sin.

In 2 Chronicles 32:12, we first see sacrifice as a form of worship. This verse echoes Hezekiah's directive to consolidate worship before a single altar and engage in the burning of sacrifices. This practice not only symbolized worship and devotion but also conveyed a deeper message about the balance between God's mercy, justice and it has many complex layers of significance, ranging from seeking forgiveness of sins to demonstrating devotion and recognizing human imperfections.

The valuable sacrifice underscores the seriousness of transgressions and serves as a reminder that actions have consequences. By offering a sacrifice, individuals acknowledged their wrongdoing and sought to make amends. The sacrifices teach that while God is willing to forgive, it is not free and comes with a price. This illustrates that forgiveness involves a recognition of the cost of sin and the need for reconciliation.

While God's mercy offers forgiveness to those who repent, His justice necessitates a payment for wrongdoing. The sacrifices bridge this gap, allowing for the restoration of the relationship between humans and God while upholding the integrity of divine justice.

The act also reflects a dependence on God and a recognition of His provision. By offering something valuable, individuals demonstrated their reliance on God's grace and acknowledged that their possessions were gifts from Him. Offering sacrifices also foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Hence, the practice of offering sacrifices in the Old Testament, when done for the right reasons, is a form of worship that strikes a balance between many complex attributes of God.

## **Praising God in personal prayer:**

Amidst the progression towards more structured practices, even as the formalities of burning sacrifices and communal gatherings gained prominence, an intimate connection between the individual and God is always classified as an act of worship

In 1 Kings 1:47-48, King David's seemingly simple act speaks volumes. Here, as he bows on his bed, pouring out his heart in prayerful praise, we witness an ad-hoc worship in its most intimate form. This moment accentuates the potency of personal worship—where an individual's sincere response, whether woven into formal rituals or whispered in private communion with God, carries equal weight.

This highlights a beautiful truth: that while communal expressions of worship hold significance, the genuine dialogues and moments of praise shared with God in solitude are equally cherished by the divine.

## **Two types of worship becomes evident:**

Two types of worship — adhoc/spontaneous/private and formal/structured/communal worship—can be solidified by examining the examples and trends we've observed in the evolution of worship throughout history.

We've witnessed instances of ad hoc worship in the spontaneous acts of individuals like Abraham, Abraham's servant and King David. These were personal expressions of devotion driven by their unique experiences and relationships with the Divine. Similarly, the acknowledgment of God's involvement in our lives, is a spontaneous response to God's presence.

These moments of worship arise organically, prompted by personal experiences, gratitude, or a desire to connect with the Divine. As we have observed, Ad hoc worship can happen at any time, in any place, and in various forms, such as heartfelt prayers, songs, or expressions of gratitude. It's a deeply personal way of engaging with God without the constraints of formal structure.

Conversely, the progression towards structured and communal worship is evident when we see instances of Worship by groups of people, such as Hezekiah during the establishment of a central place of worship and the prescribed rituals of burning sacrifices, and the introduction of specific locations and formal procedures. The examples of King David worshipping in the house of the Lord and King Hezekiah's directive to worship at a single altar reflect this more structured and communal approach.

While ad hoc worship might initially sound more personal due to its spontaneous nature, worshipping in a community can also be deeply heartfelt and meaningful. The key lies in the fact that the personal aspect of worship isn't diminished in a communal setting. In fact, communal worship can amplify the sense of connection, unity, and shared devotion among believers.

In summary, the journey of worship's evolution reflects a dynamic interplay between ad hoc and more structured. Individuals throughout history have engaged in both spontaneous, personal expressions of devotion and organized, communal practices.

## Coexistence of two types of worship:

2 Chronicles 29:27–30 is a very interesting passage, it vividly illustrates the coexistence of ad hoc and communal worship within a structured setting.

Hezekiah's order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar, accompanied by singing to the LORD, with the instruments playing, with the whole assembly bowing down marks the structured and intentional aspect of worship. This structured worship, guided by the king's command, reflects the collective dedication to honor God.

Amid this structured worship, we witness spontaneous and heartfelt elements. The assembly, moved by the moment, kneels down and worships as the offerings are completed. This personal and spontaneous response emerges naturally from the hearts of the people, even within the framework of structured worship.

This scene showcases how the two types of worship can seamlessly complement each other, resulting in a more profound and meaningful encounter with the Divine.

## Songs and Instruments:

The only passage that actually has the words worship and instruments in a single context is 2 Chronicles 29:27–30, We will look at each verse, and dissect each component.

27 Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel.

28 The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the musicians played and the trumpets sounded. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed.

29 When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshiped.

30 King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to praise the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness and bowed down and worshiped.

According to verse 30, it becomes evident that singing genuine praises to God is worshiping Him. However, it is important to differentiate the intention behind the act. Singing in this context isn't about showcasing personal vocal talents; rather, it's an authentic expression of reverence and thanksgiving.

In verse 28, the addition of instruments is noticeable. It is vital to recognize that the congregation worshiped while the music played, complementing the singing. It is portrayed here as an accompaniment to other acts of worship, rather than an independent form of worship.

Music is not an independent part of worship according to this verse. If it were, we would have encountered scripture indicating, "The entire assembly worshiped, together with the musicians playing trumpets." However, the text reveals, "The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the musicians played." Thus, playing music accompanied those who were already worshiping.

There are many other places where music is mentioned as a form of praise, we will see the role of music in communal worship in later sections (page 18)

Solely according to this verse, solitary actions like praying or offering sacrifices are considered worship and music alone is not classified as an act of worship.



## Giving offerings:

We see another form of worship in Isaiah 19:21 “They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings” this verse solidifies that giving to the lord was a form of worship. Be it either sacrifice, or grain offerings. The act of giving signified devotion, humility, and a profound recognition of the divine's sovereignty. These offerings conveyed that our dependency wasn't on our possessions, but on God, the ultimate owner of all things. This perspective underlined our reverence and dependence on the divine. Through these offerings, worshipers exhibited their understanding of divine providence and their role as stewards of blessings received.

It is important to note that a portion of the offering was dedicated to be burnt as a sacrifice directly to God. This act was a powerful display of relinquishing something precious as an act of worship. Concurrently, another portion was designated for the priests in the temple—a tangible demonstration of sharing with those who served God.

## Praise and worship:

The terms "praise" and "worship" are commonly used and can sometimes be difficult to distinguish. Praise is an expression of gratitude, arising from experiencing the actions and attributes of God, it involves vocalizing and confessing with one's mouth, expressing admiration. This expression often takes the form of singing, prayer, or verbal acknowledgment.

However, it's important to note that praise can be rendered to someone with various intentions, not always purely out of devotion or spiritual connection, and praising someone with insincere motives is not considered worship.

On the other hand, "worship" is a deeper and more comprehensive term. It involves a profound sense of reverence, submission, and adoration. Worship often encompasses various actions, aimed at acknowledging the divine's supreme nature and aligning oneself with its will.

This act of giving praise to God is prominently seen in the Old Testament. Interestingly, it can manifest both individually, when a single person praises God, and communally, when a multitude does so at the same time. This underlines that while praise is often personal, it can also be a collective act within a community of believers, as evident in instances of group praise recorded in the Psalms and other scriptures.

The praise and worship found in the Old Testament serve as a foundational framework and a source of inspiration for our worship today. They showcase how people in ancient times approached God and expressed their reverence. However, as believers in the modern context, we're not bound to replicate these practices precisely. Instead, we derive principles, understanding, and spiritual insights from the Old Testament worship to guide our worship in a way that is relevant and meaningful to our lives and relationship with God.

## The Ultimate and highest form of Worship ever seen:

Till now, we have seen all the instances of the word “worship” displayed before the establishment of church, in the old testament.

But, there is only one best display of worship mankind has ever seen. It consists of many elements like sacrifice, obedience, humility, giving, acknowledgement of God's supreme wisdom, His mercy, and His justice and many more all at once, done for the best of intention.

Yes, that highest form of worship couldn't be anything else - it's seen on the cross. Here, Jesus Himself becomes a self-sacrifice. His act of willingly giving Himself up goes beyond any other form of worship, serving as the ultimate demonstration of surrender to God the Father.

In this remarkable act, Jesus embodies the very essence of worship. His obedience to the Father showcases a profound understanding of the importance of God's purpose over his own life. By willingly taking on the sins of humanity, Jesus acknowledges the gravity of human transgressions and the need for reconciliation, thus encompassing both the concept of recognition and atonement.

Hence, this act becomes the highest form of worship, symbolizing an unwavering commitment to God's greater design and the salvation of humanity.

This act serves as an eternal reminder that worship is not just about outward expressions, but about a heartfelt, sacrificial offering of oneself for the glory and purpose of God.

It serves as an example for believers to understand the depth of worship and to aspire to a level of commitment and surrender that transcends mere rituals, echoing the sentiment expressed in Romans 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

## New covenant, higher standard:

Throughout our journey of exploration, we've delved into the heart of worship—its core lies in encountering the attributes of God and responding with heartfelt praise.

We've observed worship's evolution from spontaneous expressions to structured practices, encompassing offerings, sacrifices and communal gatherings.

Although that worship was acceptable, it was only a shadow of what was to come in the future. The same idea is explained in the book of Hebrews

Hebrews 9:9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Hebrews 10:2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

Yes, Worship in the Old Testament guided humanity through ritualistic expressions and communal acts, each a stepping stone leading to the ultimate revelation - The true worship—in a realm that surpasses all - Worship in spirit and in truth.

This transformation is captured in John 4:23, when Jesus says: "But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth."

Here, worship transcends mere outward gestures, soaring into the realm of the truth and spirit. The worshipers of the New Testament aren't confined by rituals; they engage with God's Spirit and embrace divine truth as the foundation of their worship. John 4 marks the inception of this new era, inviting us to immerse ourselves in a worship that's sincere, genuine, and deeply rooted in the essence of God.

Yet, the New Testament unfolds a realm of worship that's even more profound. Here, the glory of God's plan takes center stage—the sacrifice of Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the intimate relationship as sons with God become superior motivations.

As we venture further, we delve into these motivations and doctrine of worship. In the New Covenant, God's grandeur is unveiled, His divine plan is manifested, and His closeness is tangibly felt. Worship is now an overflow of gratitude for God's astounding grace and love.

In this journey, we'll explore how these motivations redefine worship, enriching its essence with deeper understanding and heartfelt devotion. The New Testament presents an exalted form of worship, fueled by an intimate connection with God and a profound acknowledgment of His glorious attributes.

## Jesus is worthy of worship:

Jesus is unquestionably worthy of worship. According to John 1, Jesus is God, embodying divine attributes. Throughout the New Testament, numerous instances reveal people worshipping Jesus Christ. See passages such as [Matthew 14:33](#), [John 9:38](#), [John 20:28](#), [John 4:24](#)

In all of these instances, people are moved to worship Jesus due to witnessing his miraculous acts or recognizing his divine characteristics, they are awe struck by them, and are compelled to bow down and offer him praise. In other words, by observing his behavior, they were compelled to worship him.

The disciples and people who encountered Jesus were not merely acknowledging a remarkable teacher or healer; they were recognizing the very nature of God in human form. Their response of worship was a natural outcome of witnessing his divine power, authority, and the transformational impact of his presence.

It is to be noted that all of these instances were ad-hoc and spontaneous and were not done as a structured communal event.

Jesus' acceptance of worship is indeed noteworthy. In all of these instances, Jesus did not stop anyone from worshipping Him, which can be understood as an implicit affirmation of his divine identity.

Even today, after 2000 years since Jesus is resurrected, when his disciples recognise His role in their salvation, and fall on their knees and genuinely thank him for what he's done, this spontaneous act undoubtedly qualifies as an act of personal adhoc worship.

Yes, He deserves to be worshiped, and He wont stop anyone from worshipping Him today, just like those days while in the flesh, it is certainly not wrong to worship Him. And those who want to express their gratitude to Him should not be stopped.

But He never asked to be worshiped in the first place!

All of those instances Jesus was worshiped were spontaneous and ad-hoc, and they were not the same communal and formal worship services that is asked of christians today. We can offer our praises to Jesus by spontaneous and genuine thankfulness in our personal prayers, personal songs, but not in a formal, communal setting since Jesus himself taught that we are to worship God the Father.

While worshipping him in adhoc instances is appreciated, worshipping only Jesus in a structured practice, ultimately disobeys his direct commands to worship God the Father

In all the instances when Jesus taught about worship, his emphasis consistently remained on worshipping God the Father alone, which we will see in the next segment.

## God the Father is to be worshiped:

In John 4:21, Jesus speaks to a woman, affirming that worship will be directed to the Father. It becomes even more straightforward in John 4:23 "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.", Matthew 6:9: "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

It's clear that though Jesus is deserving of worship, He taught to worship God the Father.

This is demonstrated in the early Christian community as well. For instance,

Romans 15:6: "That together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Colossians 1:3: "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."

Philippians 4:20 declares the everlasting glory of "our God and Father."

Revelation 4:11 magnifies the Father, acknowledging His worthiness to receive glory, honor, and power due to His role as the Creator of all things.

Revelation 14:7, a call resounds to honor and revere God who created the heavens, the earth, and the sea.

In these verses, the consistent message is that God the Father is to be worshiped and honored. While recognizing the divinity of Jesus, the New Testament underscores the central role of the Father in worship.

## Worshiping The Father naturally extends to worshiping Jesus as well:

When we engage in worship directed towards God the Father, we are not only acknowledging His sovereignty and surrendering ourselves to His divine will but also demonstrating our affection and dedication to Him. In this act, we inherently extend our worship to Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the one who has revealed the Father to us. He is the one who has made it possible for us to have a relationship with the Father.

The observance of the Lord's Supper in the worship also holds a pivotal role in our faith journey. This practice serves as a reminder of Jesus Christ's sacrificial offering for our salvation. In partaking of communion, we symbolically share in the body and blood of Jesus, fostering an intimate union with Him and receiving His abundant grace and pardon. Through the act of

commemorating Jesus in the Lord's Supper, we inherently engage in worship directed towards Him. Our participation reflects an acknowledgment of His selfless sacrifice and an acknowledgment of His boundless love for us. Additionally, this practice serves as an expression of our sincere gratitude for the unparalleled gift He has bestowed upon us.

Genuinely worshiping God the Father necessitates worshiping Jesus Christ also, as He is the conduit through which we attain understanding and closeness with the divine. Truly, the worship of both is an integral component of our Christian faith, a harmonious expression of devotion to the Creator and to the Savior.

## What compels Christians to worship the Father today?

The quality of worship is always directly proportional to its motivating factor, which is a fundamental reason the worship in the new testament is far superior to the old testament.

In the old testament, although the worship was pleasing and acceptable by God, the reasons they worshiped Him pales in comparison to the reasons we worship Him today

To mention a few of those motivating factors:

### 1. Sacrifice of Jesus:

Romans 5:8: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

1 Peter 1:18-19: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

### 2. Intimate Relationship as Sons with God/ Fatherly Love:

Galatians 4:6-7: "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

Romans 8:14-15: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"

1 John 4:10: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

### 3. God's Mercy:

Titus 3:5: "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

### 4. Forgiveness and Redemption:

Ephesians 1:7: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."

Colossians 2:13-14: "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

### 5. Gift of the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 1:13-14: "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

Acts 2:38: "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

## 6. Promise of the Kingdom:

Hebrews 12:28 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe"

2 Peter 1:11: "For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

These are the few personal motivations, which elevates our relationship with God, showing us what God has truly sacrificed for us in ultimate magnitude, causing christians today to Worship God in Truth and in spirit.

## Doctrine for communal worship:

In the New Testament, while there are no commands directed at our actions and rules in ad hoc and spontaneous forms of worship, there certainly are many for communal worship.

1 Corinthians 14:40 sets a structure for our communal worship today. This verse is part of Paul's instructions regarding the use of spiritual gifts and orderly worship in the Corinthian church. It conveys the idea that worship gatherings should be characterized by decency and orderliness, suggesting a certain level of organization and discipline in worship practices.

Now we will see how the formal worship service is supposed to be performed. We will look at how the early christians practiced them:

### 1. All should gather:

These verses below make it clear that it is expected of christians to come together as a church.

Although it is not explicit, It is logical that this is when we are supposed to worship in a formal setting, when all the saints are gathered together.

According to these verses, when believers come together, they engage in various forms of worship and edification, such as hymns, lessons, revelations, and tongues. This suggests that congregational meetings provide an opportunity for worship and spiritual growth.

- a. 1 Corinthians 11:18: "For, in the first place, when you come together as a church..."
- b. 1 Corinthians 14:26: "What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up."



- c. Hebrews 10:25: "Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
- d. 1 Corinthians 5:4: "When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus..."

## 2. First day of the week:

These verses below indicate that the early Christians gathered on the first day of the week to perform different acts of worship, such as breaking bread, and collecting offerings.

Additionally, Sunday holds significance in Christian tradition as the day of the Lord's resurrection, making it a fitting day for communal worship and reflection on this pivotal event.

- a. Acts 20:7: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight."
- b. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week

If the whole church gathered together, all at the same time, canceling their appointments and commitments, often when they are in danger of being martyred when identified as Christians. It is safe to assume that they gathered to do the absolutely essential, yet extremely important act of communal worship, for nothing else is that important. Otherwise why would they?

Hence, Sunday worship has continued in Christian churches, honoring not only the example set by the early church but also the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which holds central importance in Christian faith.

## 3. Things the early church did (acts of worship):

- a. Prayer with thanksgiving-
  - i. Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Every situation certainly includes worship too, hence we pray in the worship

- ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing."
- iii. Ephesians 6:18: "Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints."
- iv. Colossians 4:2: "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."

b. Read bible / preach the scriptures -

- i. Acts 20:7: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight."
- ii. 1 Timothy 4:13: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching."
- iii. 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

c. Lord's supper -

- i. Acts 20:7: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight."
- ii. Acts 2:42: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."
- iii. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: "Do this in remembrance of me"

d. Songs -

- i. Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord."
- ii. Colossians 3:16: "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."
- iii. James 5:13: "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise."

e. Giving -

- i. 1 Corinthians 16:2: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come."
- ii. 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
- iii. 1 Chronicles 29:14: "But who am I, and what are my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you."

#### 4. Things that are not asked in worship -

1. Fasting: While fasting is not specifically required as part of regular worship, some Christians choose to incorporate fasting as a spiritual discipline to draw closer to God, seek guidance, or show humility and self-control.
  2. Posture During Worship: While kneeling and standing are mentioned, the New Testament doesn't dictate specific postures for worship.
  3. Anointing with Oil: (James 5:14) a practice for healing, but it's not a common part of every Christian worship service.
  4. Responsive Readings: Some engage in responsive readings where the congregation reads aloud together in response to a leader or Scripture passage. This practice enhances the communal aspect of worship.
  5. Dress Code: While the New Testament does mention modesty and appropriate attire, it doesn't prescribe specific dress codes for worship.
  6. Specific Order of Worship: While the New Testament provides guidelines for worship elements, it doesn't outline a rigid order of service.
  7. Clapping and Raising Hands: While the Bible does mention clapping (Psalm 47:1) and lifting hands in praise (Psalm 63:4), it neither explicitly mandates these actions in every worship service, nor we see it being done in worship gatherings of the early church
  8. Spontaneous Prayers and Testimonies: While structured prayers and readings from Scripture are common in worship, some individuals and communities incorporate spontaneous prayers and personal testimonies.
9. Music - While music was indeed used in the Old Testament as an accompaniment to singing, it was not considered an independent form of worship. There are several instances which display the use of music while praising the Lord, a few of them are:

Psalm 150, this chapter celebrates the praise of the Lord with various musical instruments. However, when it emphasizes, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord," the focus is moved from instruments to living beings, as they are the ones capable of offering genuine praise and worship.

Also, in the old testament, in chapters like Psalm 33, 71, 98, 81, 144, 149, we see the use of musical instruments in "praising" God, However, these passages neither state that music alone is sufficient to worship God, nor do not mandate the use of music in "communal worship" for the new testament.

In the New Testament, in all the places (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, 2 Chronicles 29:27–30), we only see a constant emphasis on singing praises to God, and none of them actually require musical instruments.

See Ephesians 5:19 - "speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord." Here, the verse doesn't

mention "play instruments and make music", but it reveals "sing and make music," emphasizing that **in the New Testament, the way of making music in worship is through singing.**

It is wrong to justify instrument use in worship only because it was used in the Old Testament, since in the Old Testament worship practices were highly ceremonial and symbolic, with various rituals, sacrifices, and regulations. With the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the New Covenant, there was a significant shift in the understanding of worship. Jesus emphasized worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), highlighting the internal and spiritual nature of worship over external forms and rituals.

The apostles and early Christians, as seen in the New Testament, engaged in communal worship that was characterized by prayer, the reading of Scripture, the breaking of bread (communion), and the preaching of the Word. Musical instruments are noticeably absent from these descriptions.

The absence of musical instruments in communal worship also helps maintain a focus on God and prevents distractions that might arise from showcasing individual talents, thereby preserving the purity and centrality of worship.

While some individuals may use musical instruments to genuinely try to praise God, this practice is ultimately not an example set by the early church or the disciples, as there are no instances of church using musical instruments during worship.

Consequently, the use of musical instruments in worship services is a tradition of man, and no tradition of man should be taught as the commandment of God, therefore it should not be enforced as a practice in communal worship.

But in private adhoc worship, since there are no strict rules or guidelines, individuals should have the freedom to use whatever means, including instruments, that helps them connect with God. Hence, the choice of using music in private adhoc worship may be left to the discretion of the individual.

10. Dance: Dance is mentioned in several instances in the Bible as a form of praise (Psalm 149:3, Psalm 150:4), but it's not a required practice in Christian worship services.

This practice in worship services is also a tradition of man, it was never performed by the new testament church, therefore it should not be enforced as a practice in communal worship.

King David and many more danced to praise in the Old Testament in many instances, all of them were spontaneous, as an expression of their instant happiness. and none of them were choreographed.

If dance should be included in communal worship, it should take on a structured and choreographed form, since all things must be done in order. However, this structured approach might seem to contrast with the spontaneous and heartfelt nature of genuine expression. Maintaining this balance is impossible.

Even today, when someone genuinely expresses their emotions in dance form, as a response to God's goodness, it is definitely considered a form of praise, but this should also be left for private worship, and should not be enforced as a practice in communal worship

1 Corinthians 14:40 (ESV): "But all things should be done decently and in order."

It becomes impossible for worship to be in order if we have simultaneous prayers and testimonies and dance, which leads to a lack of focus.

To avoid this Some churches have a designated time for open prayers and testimonies, ensuring that individuals take turns and avoid overlapping. Others might have guidelines to follow to maintain clarity and a sense of order, trying to enhance the worship experience.

But, since it is neither asked explicitly, nor a practice of the early church, many choose to just do what the Lord requires of them without adding anything from their own wisdom. This approach seeks to honor God's Word while avoiding potential distractions.

It requires humility to understand that doing just what the lord asks is sufficient. Everytime when we simply don't just do what the lord asks and use our own wisdom, bad things happen, yes, even if the intention is right in our own eyes. We see numerous examples, like Uzzah and the Ark (2 Samuel 6), Peter Rebuking Jesus (Matthew 16), Job's Friends. Hence, it is better to just do what the Lord asks.

Even if someone's intentions are good, straying from divine commandments could lead to unintended consequences or departures from the intended path set by religious teachings. John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commands."

## Final Thoughts - Worship!

In our exploration of worship, we have attempted to draw inspiration from the past and present, aligning our worship with the grand narrative of God's interactions with humanity.

We've embarked on a chronological journey through its evolution—unveiling the diverse aspects, methods, and expressions that have shaped this profound practice. Yet, amidst this journey, we must not get lost in the practices and rules, although they are important, they should

not not be the only thing in our minds during worship, but pause to consider Isaiah 29—a reminder that worship should be fueled by our perspective of God's workings.

As we stand on the threshold of the New Testament, we possess a panoramic view of God's revelation—the culmination of worship's evolution. Our worship should reflect this profound understanding. No longer confined to shadows or incomplete revelations, we worship with a full comprehension of the Creator and His redemptive plan.

Hence, this is worship - “A reflection of God's amazing attributes, risen from a heart that has been touched by the greatness of His love, mercy and wisdom”

The more we delve into His Word and recognize His workings in our lives, the more our worship is enriched with authenticity and depth. Hence, we are prompted to proactively engage with God's workings—both in the Scriptures and in our daily lives.

By actively seeking to learn about Him, understand His character, and observe His actions, we find an endless wellspring of inspiration for our worship. Let our actions be a testament to this revelation!

For further questions or thoughts on this topic  
feel free to contact me at [pavan.2chro714@gmail.com](mailto:pavan.2chro714@gmail.com)