

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **EVA NGELISTIC LESSONS** **“What Is Worship?”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

We live in a world where many people think that they can worship God in just about any way they want. In fact, the motto for this type of worship might be, “If it feels good, do it.” But is that what God says about worship? What is worship? What is worship all about? Worship is a very serious matter, and the Bible does have much to say about it. Today we are going to examine what the New Testament says that Christians are to do to glorify and uplift the name of God in their worship. As we think about worship, we can understand very clearly what worship is. The Bible provides several Scriptures that describe the nature of worship. In Psalm 29:2, we are told to “give the Lord the glory due to His name.” We are to honor the name of God in the way that He has told us to. There is a passage in Psalm 95:6 that is almost a perfect description of the word “worship.” The Bible says, “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” The word for “worship” means literally to “bow down,” “to be subject to,” or “to pay honor unto.” Sometimes the illustration is that a person is bowing down (with his or her face to the ground) before a magistrate or leader. The same is true as it relates to God. He is the King, and we are to bow down as we honor and worship Him. But there is a specific way in which we are to do that. John 4:24 tells us, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” There is an alarming danger of which we must be aware in our worship. Worship can be done in either one of two extremes. If we are not careful, our worship can be solely entertainment based and man oriented. For example, I once saw an advertisement in a newspaper for a Vacation Bible School worship service. It said, “Come join us in our Vacation Bible School. There will be clowns, balloons, a circus, and if we beat last year’s attendance, our preacher will kiss a pig.” Think about that kind of worship. Is that **really** what God wants? In another example, a group was singing. The title of the song was, “Rapping with J.C. and the boys.” “J.C.,” of course, was a reference to Jesus Christ. Is that really what God wants us to do in worship? Does He want our worship to be circus and/or entertainment oriented so that we “rapping with Jesus Christ”? That is not at all what God wants us to do. That type of worship is a worship that has become solely entertainment based and man oriented. But then there also can be another extreme. Our worship may be conservative and founded upon the Bible, but it may be lifeless. In other words, it may be “biblical but boring.” It may be correct doctrinally, but it may be dead. In Revelation 2:1-4 we find a congregation that had lost its first love. The congregation was therefore told to repent do their “first works” again. Maybe the worship had become rote. Maybe their worship was in a rut, or was being done out of habit. Thus, one extreme, worship can be purely entertainment based. Yet on the other extreme, it can be dead, without life, and not from the heart. What pleases God is worship that is both in spirit (that is, from the heart) and that is according to the truth—which is exactly what Jesus taught in John 4:24.

Worship is defined as paying honor to, or glorifying, God. Even the devil knows what worship is, for in Matthew 4:9 he teaches us (as he tempts Jesus) about the nature of worship. The devil said to Jesus, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and wor-

ship me.” Even the devil knew that worship meant to pay honor to, fall down before, or to give glory to someone. Thus, true worship means that all who are a part of it must participate. Worship is not an **option**. It is not something we can do if we feel like it or if we think we might be good at it. We need to understand that **God** is the audience in our worship. **We** are **not** the audience. We are not there to be entertained. God is the audience, and we are the participants. That teaches us a very important lesson. If God is the audience, then worship is not about **us**. It is about **God**. We need to ask, “If God is the audience, and if our worship is intended to glorify Him, then how does God want us to worship Him?” It is God Who is to be glorified. It is His book, the Bible, from which we are studying. Therefore, we must ask, “What does the Lord have to say about how we are to worship Him?” As we think about worship, we also need to understand that we are the participants. God is the audience; we are the participants. John 4:24 teaches us how God expects us to worship Him. Notice what Jesus said: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Since we are the participants, worship is a “must.” We are not to be entertained during worship. I have heard people say, “I just don’t get anything out of worship.” Maybe it is because they are not putting anything **into** their worship. How alarming it is to see people who claim to be members of the Lord’s body, and who claim to love the Lord, sitting there like a lump on a log during worship doing absolutely nothing. Do you think that glorifies God? How do you think it makes God feel when He sees people (who claim to be His children) during a worship service that is designed to praise and magnify His name, sitting there doing absolutely nothing? Remember, God is the audience and we are the participants. We must worship according to God’s will.

As we think about worship, we need to ask the question, “Who should we worship in this life?” Should we worship men or anything we desire? No, absolutely not. God is the sole Object of our worship. In Exodus 20:3, God says, “You shall have no other gods besides Me.” There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), and we must worship and give glory unto Him. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 4:10 in regard to worshiping God. In response to the devil, Jesus said, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” In John 9:31, the blind man said, “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.” We worship God. Hebrews 12:28-29 tells us that we must worship Him acceptable in reverence and with godly fear. Revelation 19:10 teaches us that we must not worship angels, but that we must instead give God the glory that is due His name.

As we think about worship, we need to understand that there are certain things that men worship that they should **not** worship. For example, we should not worship departed saints. In Acts 10:25-26, Peter (a Jew) had come into the house of Cornelius (a Gentile). Cornelius was so overwhelmed at the fact that a Jew would come teach him the Gospel that he bowed down to worship Peter. But Peter said, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” A lot of people today want to worship Pete, “Mother” Teresa, or some other departed saint. Yet Peter—who was an apostle and was the one to open the doors to the kingdom in Acts 2—told Cornelius not to worship him because he was simply a man. We do not worship angels, either. Hebrews 1:6 forbids the worship of angels. We are to worship the Son of God, not merely angels—who are ministering spirits sent to minister to those who receive salvation. We also cannot worship parents, and parents cannot worship children. In Matthew 10:37, Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Nor should we worship false gods, idols, or statues. We are taught in 1 John 5:21 to abstain from idol worship.

Who, then, **should** we worship? And what should be our attitude in worship? Let's examine this for just a moment. What should be a Christian's attitude as he or she worships the God of Heaven? Let's notice again John 4:24, which says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." What attitude must a Christian have in worship? Our attitude must be spiritual in nature because New Testament worship is spiritual in its very nature. For example, 1 Peter 2:5 says that we are to offer "spiritual sacrifices" unto God. We learn in Hebrews 10:22 that we are to draw near to God with our hearts. That is how we draw near to God—through the words of the Bible and as we worship Him with our whole heart. We draw near to God with grace in our hearts (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). The Christian's worship ought to be enthusiastic. It should not be dry, dead, or boring. Our singing ought to be enthusiastic—something that encourages us (1 Cor. 14:15). We sing with the spirit and we sing with the understanding. Our giving ought to be a great joy—something that brings enthusiasm to our lives. The text of 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 teaches us that God love a cheerful giver. Preaching itself ought to be enthusiastic, because we are proclaiming the message of God. Paul said, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). Our praying ought to be done with enthusiasm, and it ought to be heartfelt. When we read the prayers of men like Daniel, Nehemiah, or Ezra, we can see the enthusiasm, the joy, and the heartfelt emotion that was involved in their prayers. Yes, they are praying for God's will to be done. But they also were praying with the right attitude. Thus, we learn that Christian worship is something that comes from the heart. The proper attitude in worship would cure a lot of things. It would cure us of singing "I will go wherever you want me to go," but never going across the road to talk to our neighbor about the Gospel. If we really had the right attitude as we sing songs about evangelism, it would motivate us to get up out of the pew and go teach someone about the Gospel. Singing "more about Jesus would I know" or "give me the Bible" would motivate us to want to be greater students of God's Word.

Now we ask a very important question: What guide do we use in our worship? What is the guide for our worship today? Is our worship to be guided by books written by men? Is it to be guided by creeds that people throughout the centuries have written? Is our worship to be guided by oral tradition? What is to be the guide for our worship today? We need to be certain that the books of men are not our authority today. We do not follow the books of men. Rather, the truth of God's Word is to be our standard in worship. John 17:17 teaches us, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 1:17 teaches us that "the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Jesus said in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Since the truth is God's Word, and since we are to worship in spirit and in truth, then we must realize that we have to worship according to the Word of God. We must use God's Book in our worship. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." There is an important passage in Colossians 3:17 that relates to what should be our guide in worship. Paul, after he had written about singing, said, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." This idea of "doing all in the name of the Lord" does not simply mean that we say "in Jesus' name" right before or right after we do something. The idea of doing something "in the name of the Lord" means that it has His approval. For example, in Acts 4:7, Peter and James were asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" They responded by saying that they had done the things they did in the name of Jesus or by His power. Thus, whatever we do in word or in deed must have the Lord's stamp of approval. We must speak only as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). We have to be people who walk by faith in the Word of God, not by feelings. The text of 1 Corinthians 5:7 teaches us that we walk by faith, not necessarily by sight. Our faith is based upon what we read in the Word

of God. Thus, what we do must be done properly by our reading of the Bible. Romans 10:17 teaches us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Think about an example of worship that we **know** did not please God. In Leviticus 10:1-2, we are told of two young priests—Nadab and Abihu—who offered “strange fire” to the Lord “which the Lord had not commanded.” As a result, fire rained down from Heaven and killed them. What did they do wrong? They offered unauthorized fire that God had not commanded. And as a result, they lost their lives for worshiping God unacceptably. There is a powerful lesson to be learned from this. If we do something that is unauthorized (that is, not found within the pages of the Bible), and if we do something that God has not commanded us (that is, God did not say to do it), then we are no different than Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2.

Thus, how should we worship God? How does God want us to worship Him? What actions does God want us to carry out in our worship? First, we know from teaching found within the New Testament that singing is an act of worship. Christians sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in their worship of God. If we are going to praise God properly, then we need to sing in the manner that God has commanded. For example, Ephesians 5:19 teaches us exactly how God wants us to sing. Paul said, “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” How does God want us to sing? We are to speak to one another. It is a reciprocal act—something that everyone does. I speak unto you, and you speak unto me, as we are all singing unto God. We speak to one another in what? We speak in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—songs that relate to spiritual things and ideas. Some of the psalms are used as songs today. Other spiritual songs have been written that glorify God and His Son. We are to sing and make melody where? We are told to “make melody in our hearts unto the Lord.” Christians are taught to sing vocally. The melody they make is not on a piano, a guitar, or an organ. Christians are to make melody in their hearts. How do we make melody in our hearts? It is by thinking about the words that we sing. Remember 1 Corinthians 14:15—“I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” Everything we read in the New Testament is notable for its silence concerning instrumental music. There is no doubt that under the Old Law, God’s people used instrumental music. But let’s understand that we are not under the Old Testament law today. Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:14-15 both teach us that the Old Law was nailed to the cross. When Jesus died, the Old Law was nailed on the cross with Him (in a sense) and “died” there. The New Law of Christ went into effect after Christ’s death (Heb. 9:15-17). That being true, we must not look to the Old Testament as an example of how to worship. Instead, we must look to the New Testament. As you read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and as you read about Christians reading in the New Testament in the first century, you will find that they did not worship with the instrument. In fact, instruments were not brought in until years after the establishment of the New Testament church. And when that happened, there was no authority for it. Let us ask: “Does it really offend God if someone brings instruments of music into worship?” Think about it this way. If God tells us that He wants something done a certain way, we need to understand that that is **all** He wants, and He does not want us to add something that we think might “be better.” Let me give you an example. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul was told to wipe out the Amalekites. He was not to leave anyone alive—from the children to the king to the animals. Saul does about 99% of what he is told to do. But as he returns from the battle, Samuel approaches him to question him about why he did not obey God fully. Saul said, “Oh, but I have!” Samuel then asks, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” Saul responded by saying, “The people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord.” Here is what Saul was told: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

and to heed than the fat of rams” (vs. 22). Saul was told, in essence, that God did not need his help, and He certainly did not need Saul to change His plans. Whatever God tells us to do is what He wants us to do. We understand this in everyday life. Say that you order a pizza, and you say that you want sausage and pepperoni on the pizza. But when the pizza arrives, although it had sausage and pepperoni on it, it also has onions and anchovies on it. You might say, “I didn’t tell you to put onions and anchovies on my pizza.” What if the pizza maker said, “Well, you didn’t tell me not to!” You would not accept the pizza. You would not pay for it, and you probably would never order from that pizza place again. Why? It is because what you ordered was exactly what you wanted. You did not want anything more. The same is true of God. When God tells us what He wants, that is all He wants—and He does not want us to add to it.

Another action of worship that we see in the New Testament is prayer. In Acts 2:42, we learn about praying as an act of worship when we read that the disciples “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” How did first-century Christians worship God? They got down on their hands and knees and prayed to God. They gave Him the glory. Prayer was done in the name of Jesus. Matthew 6:1-9 shows us an example of how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. Prayer always should be done according to the will of God (1 Jn. 5:13-16). It should be something about which we think—rather than merely a rote set of words that we say.

Another action of worship is preaching. Preaching glorifies God if it is done according to what the Scriptures teach. As we come to the idea of preaching, we need to be sure that we understand what we are to preach. We are not to preach men’s ideas, popular things of the day, or a social Gospel that makes everyone feel good. We are to preach the Word of God, which is the only thing that will save people. Notice what Paul told the young evangelist Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2—“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Here Paul encourages a young minister by telling him to preach the Word of God because it is the only thing that has the power to save a person’s soul. We do not need a lot of stories or numerous illustrations to make people feel good. Those things will not bring people closer to the cross of Christ. What is going to save people is when we preach the Bible. People need to hear what God has to say—which is the responsibility of the preacher. In 2 Chronicles 18, we read of the prophet Micaiah. He is told that other prophets had spoken “good words” to the king, and that he should do the same thing. But Micaiah responded by saying, “As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak” (vs. 13). Sadly, Balaam had this same attitude, but he did not follow through with it. In Numbers 22, Balaam said, “I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more” (vs. 18). How sad that he did not follow up on his true statement. We cannot go beyond what God says when it comes to preaching. We are to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

Another action of worship in which we find Christians involved in the New Testament is partaking of the Lord’s Supper. This is something that often is misunderstood in our religious world. What does the Bible say about the observance of the Lord’s Supper? Is it something we can do whenever we feel like it? Is it something that we should do only on Easter, at certain other times of the year, bi-monthly, or monthly? How do we partake of the Lord’s Supper? The Bible tells us exactly when Christians are to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Notice what Acts 20:7 teaches about the Lord’s Supper. The Bible says, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” Christians in the first century came together on the first day of the week for the purpose of breaking bread. In the context, there is no specific week mentioned. In fact, this is a statement

similar to the one made in Exodus 20:8 where God told His people to “remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” God did not say “Remember every Sabbath.” But the people understood it that way—because every week has a Sabbath and they knew that they were to remember it every time it came around. The same is true as it relates to the first day of the week. No specific week is mentioned in Acts 20:7, so Christians observe the Lord’s Supper on the first day of **every** week. We know that they met for the purpose of breaking bread (Acts 20:7). How often did they meet, then? The text of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 teaches that they met every first day of the week. Since the purpose of their meeting was to break bread to partake of the Lord’s Supper (one of the main things mentioned by Paul), and since they met every first day of the week, then it is obvious that we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week when we assemble to worship.

Another act of Christian worship is giving. Christians are taught to give unto God as they have been prospered. There is confusion on this matter, too. Some think that we are to tithe (give one-tenth of everything we have). But let’s look at what the Scriptures teach about giving. The passage to turn to is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 where Paul said, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” Much of the same language that is used in Acts 20:7 also is used in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. On the first day of the week we are to lay by in store. How many churches do you know that do not take up a collection every week? All of them do. Why? It is because the bills have to be paid, and in the context, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 applies. The same principle applies to the Lord’s Supper. As Christians, we are to give unto God on the first day of every week. We first must give ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8ff.). Then we must give of what we have been prospered. The text of 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 has a lot to say about giving. We are to give as we have been prospered. We are to give cheerfully. We are to have a joy in our hearts as we give back to God in view of all that God has given us. Giving is motivated by what God has given us. He gave the great sacrifice of His only son. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).

Are you worshiping God as the Bible teaches. Are you worshiping God according to His will? Or are you worshiping God according to human tradition or manmade ideas? Remember that we must do only that which is authorized within the New Testament. If your worship to God is not based upon Scripture, then you need to repent and bring your worship in line with what God wants you to do according to the New Testament. In so doing, you then can worship in spirit and in truth—which is the type of worship that will glorify and uplift the name of God. We learn in Hebrews 12:28 that we need to be grateful that we can be a part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We need to worship God with reverence and godly fear. May God help each of us in the way that He wants, and then we will know that He will be pleased with our worship.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “WHAT IS WORSHIP?”

1. According to Psalm 29:2, what is God due?
2. Psalm 95:6 provides a perfect description of the word “worship.” What is that definition?
3. According to John 4:24, how are we to worship God?
4. This lesson describes two extremes of worship. What are they?
5. According to Matthew 4:10, whom are we to worship?
6. What is the message of Exodus 20:3, and how does it pertain to worship?
7. Revelation 19:10 teaches us that we must not worship someone. Who is that someone?
8. Acts 10:25-26 also teaches us that we are not to worship someone. Who is that someone?
9. The text of 1 John 5:21 teaches us that we are not to worship something. What is that something?
10. According to 1 Peter 2:5, what are we to offer to God?
11. For what purposes, according to 2 Timothy 4:2, is preaching to be carried out?
12. According to 1 Corinthians 14:15, when we sing to God in worship, how are we to sing?
13. Who, according to Matthew 28:18, is the final authority in matters of worship?
14. In Leviticus 10:1-2, we are told of two young priests who did not worship God according to the commandments He had set forth. What were their names, and what happened to them?
15. What error did King Saul commit in regard to the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15)?
16. What is the principle found in 1 Samuel 15 regarding King Saul's error?
17. In Numbers 22:18, Balaam said, “I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.” What principle is contained in that verse that applies to worship of God?
18. How often, according to 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, did first-century Christians assemble to worship?
19. According to Acts 20:7, how often are Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper?
20. According to 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, how are Christians to give back to God?