

# Worship the Father in Spirit *and* in Truth

Yunus Ciptawilangga, MBA

---



## Worship the Father in spirit and in truth

*Jn4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

The two verses above very clearly emphasize that the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.  
And also that the Father desired such worshippers.

As children of God, we certainly should have the desire to be able to worship God the Father as He pleases, which is to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

What is it like to worship the Father in spirit and in truth ?

If we want to obtain the explanation to this issue we need to read from verse 20 :

*Jn4:20 Our fathers **worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.**"*  
*21"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*  
*22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.*  
*23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*  
*24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must **worship him in spirit and in truth.**"*

From the verses above it is clear that there are 3 types of worship, namely :

1. Worship in this mountain
2. Worship in Jerusalem
3. Worship in spirit and in truth

## 1. Worship in the mountain :

Worship in the mountain here is the worship carried out in the mountain near the town of Sychar,

*Jn 4:5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called **Sychar**, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.*

which Jacob gave to his son Joseph long ago.

*Ge 48:22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.*

Worship in the mountain is a form of worship prior to the existence of the Law.

*Ge 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.*

When the LORD God appeared to Abram, then Abram worshiped God by building an altar on that spot.

The Lord Jesus said to the woman, “*Ye worship ye know not what*”, because by further study we will find that when Abram built the altar for the LORD God he then did not know the LORD yet. Abram knew and called upon the name of LORD sometime later as exposed in the next verse.

*Ge 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon **the name of the LORD**.*

Similarly, Isaac, son of Abram too knew God after God appeared to him, even though he had earlier prayed to the LORD for his wife Rebekah who was barren.

*Ge 25:21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*

*Ge 26:24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, **I am the God of Abraham thy father:** fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.*

*25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.*

From the above explanations we learn that in the time prior to the Law, anyone who built an altar and put offerings on it would be considered as worshipping God, whether the person had already known God or not. And the offerings they gave did not follow any certain ritual or regulation, and needed not be done in a certain place. This means that it could be done by anyone, at any time, and in any place.

## **2. Worship in Jerusalem**

After the LORD God gave the Law to Moses, He then set up an ordinance of worship and a place to worship God.

The ordinance of worship was explained in detail and expounded by Moses to the Israelites written in the Book of Leviticus.

Beside the ordinance of worship, the LORD God also set up a special place for the Israelites to worship Him, which is the Tabernacle as described in Ex 25:8-9 :

*8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of **the tabernacle**, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*

Furthermore, God did not only appoint the tabernacle as a special place for the people of Israel to worship Him, but He also appointed the place/city for the Israelites to carry out their worship.

*Dt 12: 9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.*

*10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;*

*11 **Then there shall be a place which the LORD** your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD.*

Sometime later, during the era of kings, King David committed a great sin against God because He commanded to take a census of Israel:

*1Ch 21:2 And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.*

*1Ch 21:7 And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.*

As a result of that sin, David was offered to choose what punishment he would like to receive and David chose the pestilence.

So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel and killed seventy thousand people.

But when God sent His angel to Jerusalem to destroy, God then told him to stop the destruction while the angel was standing near the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Next :

*1 Ch 21:18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.*

*19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.*

*1 Ch 21:26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.*

*27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.*

*28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.*

When David saw that God answered his prayer and received offerings in the threshing floor of Ornan, he then appointed it as the place to build the altar (of the burnt offering for Israel) and the house of the LORD God.

*1 Ch 22:1 Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.*

On this threshing floor of Ornan, the Temple of God was later built by Solomon, David's son.

So based on the Law, God then ordained a worship order and the Temple of God in Jerusalem as a place for the Israelites to worship God.

There were 4 Israelite festive occasions to be celebrated in the Temple of God in Jerusalem: the Feast of Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Pentecost, and Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah).

The celebration of those festive days prevailed in Jerusalem even unto the days of the Lord Jesus and the apostles as described in the verses below :

- *Lk2:41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.*
- *Jn7:2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.*
- *Ac20:16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.*
- *Jn10:22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.*

### **3. Worship in spirit and in truth**

Worship in spirit and in truth is the kind of worship described by the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, "***But the hour cometh, and now is, when***

*the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Jn 4:23.*

What does it mean to worship in spirit and in truth ?

Worship in spirit is explained in the next verse “**God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.**”

It means that since God is a Spirit not bound to time nor place, **so we have to worship God without being bound to time nor place**, or we must worship God at any time in any place.

Then what is the meaning of worship in truth ?

The Bible very clearly explains that the truth is the Word of God, because there is no other truth.

*2Sa 7:28 And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and **thy words be true**, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.*

*Jn17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth.***

**So, worship the Father in spirit and in truth is applying the Word of God in every second of our lives wherever we are.**

That is the true essence of worshipping God !

Worship God in the New Testament is not based on some ritual or ceremony or worship regulations, nor on the place.

Worship the Father in spirit and in truth comprises our entire life, from the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to sleep at night. All our activities, behaviour, speech, even what we think and what is in our hearts !

As a husband :

How we treat our wives –that is adoration, that is our worship.

As a father:

What we do and how we act as our responsibility towards our children,-  
-that is our worship.

As a child:

Our attitude towards our parents and how we carry out our duties –  
that is our adoration, that is our worship.

As a businessman:

How we run our business-- that is our worship.

As an employer:

How we treat our employees—that is our worship.

As a citizen:

How we carry out all our obligations to our country -- that is  
our worship.

So it is clear that in the New Testament to worship God is not just some  
rituals done in the house of worship, synagogue or in the church, but  
applying the Word of God throughout our lives.

The Apostle Paul explained this in great detail in his letters to the church  
at Ephesus and at Colosse. In his letters, the Apostle Paul not only  
explained the concept, but he also described in detail what we ought to  
do as a husband, wife, father, son/daughter, employer, employee, and so  
on.

That is why the Apostle Paul stated in his letter to the church at Rome :

*Ro 12:1 Beseech you therefore, brethren, by thy mercies of God, that ye  
present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is  
your reasonable service.*

The Apostle Paul emphasized that true worship or reasonable service  
included:

- **Our bodies:** which means our whole life, our bodies, our  
behaviour, our words, our minds, and even what is in our hearts.



- **A living sacrifice:** what God wants is not a burnt offering nor to make our bodies as burnt offerings, but He wants us to surrender our whole life to Him, every second of our lives as long as we are given the breath of life. So obviously it is not just when we are in the place of worship, in the church, or among fellow believers.
- **Holy :** a holy life throughout our entire lives, which involves our behaviour, actions or deed, speech, mind and whatever is in our hearts.
- **Acceptable unto God:** that is a life in accordance with the Word of God, because only such is pleasing to God “*But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*”  
*Acts 10:35*

If we study further, we would see that the following verses are actually additional explanations of the Apostle Paul about what he meant earlier in verse 1 :

*Ro 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

*2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*

*3 For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

*4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office,*

*5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

*6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.*

*7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

*8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

- 9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*
- 10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*
- 11 *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*
- 12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*
- 13 *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*
- 14 *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*
- 15 *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*
- 16 *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*
- 17 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*
- 18 *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*
- 19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*
- 20 *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*
- 21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

So if we study the verses which contain the explanations of verse 1, we will be able to see easily that most of those verses are not directly related to the worship regulations but are some fundamentals of the Word of God for our relationship with our fellow man in our daily lives. From the above explanations, we understand that true worship is not just what we do in a place of worship or in a church, but whatever we do every second of our lives, wherever we are, in accordance with God's Word. Hence that is indeed true worship, the reasonable service which God expects from us.

To better explain this, the Apostle Paul further elucidated :

*1 Co9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

Through this verse the Apostle Paul meant to clarify that we should not be disqualified or rejected, not only by God but by the people around us too, because they see the difference between what we do in the place of worship or in our service and what we do outside or in our daily lives.

The apostle Paul reminds us as not to be rejected or cast away by the people around us, because of what we say or preach on the pulpit contrasts with what we do in our daily lives.

Do not let people say of us, "Well, on the pulpit you look so good and saintly, while at home your behaviour is malicious".

Do not let people say of us, "In the church you sing 'Holy, Holy', but outside the church the same lips utter vulgar words, profanities and blasphemies."

Do not let people say of us "A very diligent churchgoer, frequently say 'Thank God, praise God', but would never pay his debt."

So the Apostle Paul explained that he trained his body and brought it into complete subjection so as not to be rejected. This means that he trained his words, his behaviour, his mind in order to control them fully so that whatever he did would be in accordance with the Word of God.

*Php1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

From the above three types of worship we can see that there are some fundamental differences, such as :

### **1. Worship prior to the Law:**

Worship Regulations : None

Place of Worship : Not determined

God's Relationship with Man : Creator and His creation.

Hence prior to the Law, whoever built an altar, from any nation, either they knew God or not, the offerings laid upon the altar were considered as a form of worship.

## 2. Worship according to the Law :

Worship Regulations : Prescribed in Detail  
Place of Worship : Determined by the Lord  
God's Relationship with Man : The Lord God and His Chosen People.

In the time after the existence of the Law, worshiping God was recognized or accepted only when conducted in accordance with the worship regulations and at a designated place where the Lord God specifically chose the nation of Israel as His chosen people.

## 3. Worship in the New Testament :

Worship Regulations : The Entire Word of God  
Place of Worship : Wherever We Are  
God's Relationship with Man : The Lord God and His Redeemed People.

Today to worship God in spirit and in truth bears the meaning that the worship is to be done by us as His redeemed people, every second of our lives, wherever we are positioned. As we live according to the Word of God, that is our worship of God.

In the worship prior to the Law, we learned that the worship of God at that time seemed to be done very freely because there are no worship regulations to follow, and offering sacrifices on the altar was done only once in a while.

While at the time of the enactment of the Law the worship of God is done following clear prescribed worship regulations, and at specific times appointed by God Himself.

The question is why we, now living in an age of God's grace according to the New Testament, are required to worship every second of our lives by way of applying all God 's laws/God's Word ?

When we study the verses below:

***Jn 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."***

21 *Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*  
22 *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.*  
23 *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*  
24 *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must **worship him in spirit and in truth.**"*

The two types of worship first mentioned, which is prior to the Law and during the enactment of the Law, the worship **is done unto God** :

*Jn 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."*

This is seen more clearly in the Good News Bible Translation, 1992 : . . .

*Jn 4:20 "My Samaritan ancestors **worshiped God** on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we should **worship God.**"*

While the third type of worship is the worship in the New Testament, which is the worship **unto the Father**:

*Jn 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, **worship the Father.***  
23 *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship the Father** in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

We certainly understand that as believers, we not only have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, but are also adopted as children of God and may call Him Abba, Father.

*Jn 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;*

*Ro 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!"*

## Why does the worship unto the Father demand our whole life ?

There are at least two reasons :

As "children of God" we are **called after the name of our (heavenly) Father, God.**

How often are we reminded by our earthly father to take care of his good name and not bring shame on it.

Similarly, as children of God, we are responsible to keep the good name of our Father, **and not bring shame on the name of our Father.** And the Lord God has given clear instructions through His Word of how we should behave in this world.

- Just like our earthly father, who does not want his children to be good and obedient only when they are at home, but **he wants us to behave well wherever we are.**

Even so God our heavenly Father does not want us to be good only when we are in the house of God, the church, but He wants us to live according to His Word wherever we are.

Just as someone who is adopted into a noble family or becomes a member of a royal family, then the consequence is that the person ought to conform himself/herself to the values and standards of the noble family. So we too as (adopted) "children of God" ought to conform our lives, our habits, our words, and our mindset according to God's standards.

*Ro 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*