

# The True Worshippers Worship The Father

By Sean Finnegan  
www.HigherGroundOnline.org

*(Scriptures taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted)*

Worship is a buzzword in Christianity today. People crave a worship experience in which they encounter God. Song leaders have been renamed worship leaders because they run the part of the service in which worship (singing songs) occurs. However, biblical worship is much more than just singing. Worship encompasses every part of our lives. Prayer, work, reading the Bible, witnessing, fellowship with other believers, and listening to teachings are all forms of worship. In order to better understand worship, consider the following definitions.

"Our English word worship' means worthship, denoting the worthiness of an individual to receive special honor in accordance with that worth. The principal biblical terms, the Hebrew *sacha* and the Greek *proskyneo* , emphasize the act of prostration, the doing of obeisance" (E.F. Harrison, *Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology*, page 560). Another definition of *proskyneo* says, "to kiss, like a dog licking a master's hand...an expression of profound reverence" (Timmanthserah Inc., Online Bible Version 8.11.01, #4352).

Who do we worship? Can humans be worshipped? What about angels? Can Jesus be worshipped? All of these questions need to be answered. The inner definition of "to worship" is to show worth or to give honor to someone. There are numerous Scriptures that talk about worshipping in many different contexts.

Genesis 18:2 - Abraham worshipped 3 foreigners (angels)

Genesis 33:3 - Jacob worshipped Esau to gain his favor

Genesis 49:8 - Jacob's children will worship Judah in submission

I Samuel 25:23 - Abigail worshipped David in desperation

II Samuel 14:4 - Woman of Tekoah worshipped the king in grief

I Kings 1:31 - Bathsheba worshipped David in gratitude

II Kings 4:37 - The Shunamite worshipped Elisha in gratitude

Esther 8:3 - Esther worshipped Ahasuerus out of respect

Matthew 18:26 - In parable, forgiven servant worships his master

Revelation 3:9 - Disobedient are forced to worship saints

The translators chose to use the words "bow down" instead of "worship" when they apply to someone other than God. This is because, in modern usage, worship is done only to God. However, as can be seen from the chart, the Hebrew and Greek words for worship are much broader. There are many different occasions for worship, but there is only One Who is worshipped as God — Yahweh, the Father.

Jesus once discussed this subject with a Samaritan lady. He had been traveling for a long while and was wearied from the journey, so he rested by the well. As he relaxed, a woman came up to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink, and a conversation began during which the topic of worship arose. The Samaritans believed that they should worship God on Mount Gerizim, while the Jews believed that they should worship in Jerusalem. The woman asked about this because she considered Jesus to be a prophet and because she sincerely wanted to understand why there was such a difference between the two. His reply convinced her that he was the Messiah.

“Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you **worship the Father**. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the **true worshippers will worship the Father** in spirit and truth; for such people the **Father seeks to be His worshippers**. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21-24).

Three times, Jesus states that worship is to be done to the Father. Then in the last sentence, he equates the Father to God. In Jesus' mind they were the same. Over and over in the Old Testament, religious worship was to be done to God only (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 6:13; 8:19; 10:20; 11:16; 13:4; 26:10; Joshua 24:14; I Samuel 7:3; Psalms 99:5,9). Jesus did not change that, but instead brought the worship of Yahweh to the next level.

Furthermore, he explains that God is spirit. "Primarily it here indicates that God is not corporeal [physical or material], and therefore needs no temple" (The Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. 1, p. 728). Jesus is making a categorical statement about God's substance in order to answer the question about where He should be worshipped. God can be worshipped anywhere because He is not limited to being in one place at a time as all men are. It is very important for us to understand whom to worship. Jesus said, "The true worshippers will worship **the Father** in spirit and truth."

One of Satan's goals is to divert the worship of Yahweh to himself. He endeavored to do this when he tempted Jesus in the beginning of his ministry. The third temptation (according to Matthew 4) was to give Jesus "...all the kingdoms of the world and their glory...if You fall down and worship me." Satan was offering Jesus a shortcut to the kingdom. In his proposition, he appears willing to fulfill Jesus' destiny without the need to die on the cross. This must have been very alluring (temptations by definition are appealing), but Jesus put his foot down. He quoted from the Old Testament, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." The worship issue was clear for Jesus. He was not about to hedge even for a moment. He would worship only the Father as God. We must do the same.

Christians are producing more songs than ever. However, many of these songs are written based on the assumption that Jesus were God, and so he would then be worshipped as God. I believe that these songs are inconsistent with Scripture. Just recently I was in a service in which I sang the words "I will give You all my worship" to the Father. Then, just two songs later, I was supposed to give it to Jesus. I stopped singing at that line in the song because it would have been dishonest to give worship to one person if I had already promised to give all of it to someone else. Would not that be cheating? As biblical unitarians we must not allow ourselves to be cast into the mold of evangelical worship. We must strive to appreciate and preserve our God's beautiful oneness (Deuteronomy 6:4). We should be proud of our God and Who He is.

The Father knows the reason for our existence. He is our Creator, and He brought mankind into being for a purpose. "All who are linked to My name, whom I have created, formed, and made for My glory...The people I formed for Myself that they might declare My praise" (Isaiah 43:7,21 JPS). Man's purpose is to glorify and praise the Father. Another text that clarifies who we are to worship can be found in the letter to the Corinthians: "Yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we *exist* through him" (I Corinthians 8:6). The Father, God, created all things. He is the source from which everything, including Jesus, originated. He is the one God, and we are able to come and worship Him through the one Lord, Jesus Christ. The Father made everything, and we experience all things through Christ. The Lord Jesus is eminently important — he is the highest exalted person in the universe next to God. Yet he himself confessed that the Father was his God. "Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God'" (John 20:17).

But what about all of those times when people came up to Jesus and "worshipped" him (Matthew 2:2,8,11; 14:33; 15:25; 18:26; 28:9,17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38)? An enlightening section of Scripture, which I believe clarifies this, can be found in the second Psalm. "**Worship Yahweh** with reverence and rejoice with trembling. **Do homage to the Son** that he not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, for his wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in him!" (Psalms 2:11 and 12). We are to worship Yahweh and do homage to the Son. The Father is the object of our religious fixation. The Son is bowed to in reverence of his position and what he has done. In fact, the words "do homage" can literally be translated "kiss." As loyal subjects falling on their knees before their king and kissing his hand, we are to come before God's appointed king — Jesus Christ. This is exactly what these people did in the references listed above. They fell down before their king or before the one who was able to perform healings, as an expression of desperation, gratitude, respect, honor, etc. They were not worshipping in our modern usage of the word; but rather, they were paying homage. If I were to see Jesus right now, I would likewise fall to the ground out of respect.

Every knee will bow to Jesus in reverence and honor (Philippians 2:10), but he is not the object of our religious worship. In fact, the next verse (11) states that everything will be done to the glory of God the Father. It is as if Jesus is in heaven with his finger pointing toward God. Let us not fixate on his finger, but let us rather take his cue and look to the "one God and Father of all Who is over all through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6) as our object of religious worship.