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What is biblical worship

Answer A theology of worship is a doctrine concerning the worship of God; a biblical theology of worship bases its teaching on what the Bible alone says. Just as a biblical soteriology is based on the Bible's overall teaching concerning salvation, a biblical theology of worship is based on the Bible's overall teaching concerning the worship and adoration of God. Having a biblical theology of worship is important. Not everything that is called "worship" is actually worship, a lesson learned in the very beginning; both Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to the Lord, but "The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor" (Genesis 4:4-5). What was Cain's problem (besides jealousy, stubbornness, and murderous rage)? He lacked a proper theology of worship. Cain brought an unacceptable sacrifice to the Lord and demanded that the Lord be pleased. The church that does not operate under the biblical theology of worship is in danger of failing to give God glory and failing to offer worship that is pleasing to Him. Worship is as misunderstood a doctrine as any other within the church. Contrary to popular belief, worship does not begin and end with the singing portion of our church services. Worship is also not limited to bowing in reverence before God. To begin with, worship is determined by God Himself, not by our sincerity, pious feelings, or musical skill. Hebrews 12:28 says we must "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (NKJV). The Greek word translated "serve" here is a form of a Greek root for worship and is used 21 times in the New Testament in the context of service and worship. Another form of the word worship is the Greek word *thrapeuo*—from which we get the English word *therapy*—and this is most often translated "heal" in reference to the healing of others. In the New Testament, this word is seen in many passages involving Jesus' healings. Other Greek words translated "worship" are *proskuneo*, meaning "paying homage" (1 Corinthians 14:25); *sebazomai*, meaning "to render religious honor" (Romans 1:25); and *sebomai*, meaning "to revere or adore" (Acts 16:14). We see a form of the word *sebomai* used by Jesus in reference to vain, hypocritical worship of God (Matthew 15:9), implying that sometimes what we call "worship of God" is something else entirely. A biblical theology of worship is concerned with the true worship of God. True biblical worship must be reverent (Hebrews 12:28). We must understand who is being worshiped. God is holy, just, perfect, powerful, loving, etc. We are sinners saved by grace coming before a holy God on the basis of our Redeemer. There is no room for pride in adoration (see Luke 18:9-14). Also, worship must be "in truth," that is, our worship must be properly informed (John 4:24). Unless we have accurate knowledge of the God we worship, there is no worshipping in truth. Those who wish to worship biblically must worship God as He is revealed in Scripture. Unbiblical views of God must be rejected. A biblical theology of worship recognizes that worship involves more than externals. God sees the heart: "These people come . . . honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught" (Isaiah 29:13). Worship is not about ritual or artistry, although ritual and art can be valid expressions of worship. Worship is not about expressing ourselves, although David's "dancing before the LORD with all his might" was an act of true worship (2 Samuel 6:14). Worship is not about music, although music is often used by worshippers. True worship is about God. We reverence and honor and adore Him, not simply because of what He does for us but for who He is. A biblical theology of worship will result in worship that produces a change of heart. The worshiper will have an ever greater desire to love and obey the Lord. Worship and service go hand in hand: worship of God shows love and love of God shows worship. Jesus said those who love Him will keep His commands (John 14:15). If we say we love and worship Him, but do not obey Him, our worship is worthless. A biblical theology of worship leads to the conviction that worship is a lifestyle, not a moment in time (see 1 Corinthians 10:31). Our lives are to be dedicated to the worship and service of God. Worship is to be more than a temporary, experience-oriented activity on Sunday, after which we revert to a "normal" life the rest of the week. True worship is constant, inner praise to the God of Scripture, expressed in prayer, in song, in service, in giving, and in living. Worship [N] [E]FJ Christianity is the transformation of rebels into worshippers of God, then it is imperative for the Christian to know and understand what constitutes biblical worship. One may always consult Webster's Dictionary for the precise meaning of worship (adore, idolize, esteem worthy, reverence, homage, etc.). Yet truly defining worship proves more difficult because it is both an attitude and an act.Worship Ancient and Modern. Both the Old and New Testaments admit the possibility of false worship, usually associated with idolatrous cults and gross misconduct (Deut 7:3-6). For example, the Canaanites practiced ritual prostitution and animal sacrifice under the guise of worship to gods like Molech and Baal (Lev 18:6-30 ; 20:1-5), while Paul found idol had changed in the practice of idolatrous worship in Greek Corinth of the first century a.d. (1 Cor 6:12-20 ; 10:14-22). The psalmist recognized the folly of such false worship, noting that those who make idols will be like them (Psalm 115:2-8). The prophets, too, warned against idolatry, a fatal attraction for the people of God (Eze 14:3-7). Sadly, the biting sarcasm of these divine messengers, who decried images with plastered eyes that had to be nailed to shelves to prevent them from toppling over, fell on deaf ears — as dead as those of the idols they had fashioned (Isa 41:5-7). In the end, of course, these "stumbling blocks" of wood, stone, and precious metal overlay could not save Israel (Isa 44:17).The antidote Jesus commended us in his discourse with the Samaritan woman remains the best preventive against false worship (John 4:23-24). All true worshippers must worship God in "spirit and in truth." That is, true worship takes place on the inside, in the heart or spirit of the worshiper (cf. Psalm 45:1, 103:1-2). Worship pleasing to God must be unfeigned and transparent, offered with a humble and pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4 ; Isa 66:2).But this is not enough. Worship "in truth" connects the heart or spirit of worship with the truth about God and his work of redemption as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. David understood the importance of worshiping in truth and the necessary linkage between "truth" and the Word of God when he wrote, "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear [i.e., worship] your name" (Psalm 86:11 . cf. Psalm 145:18). Here both the Old and New Covenants agree! The true worship of God is essentially inner, a matter of the heart and spirit rooted in the knowledge of and obedience to the revealed Word of God.The Bible also warns of more insidious forms of false worship, namely, religious syncretism and religious hypocrisy. Religious syncretism is a process of assimilation that incorporates elements of one religion into another. As a result, the basic tenets and character of both religions are fundamentally altered. For the Hebrews during Old Testament times this religious syncretism usually involved the union of Mosaic Yahwism and Canaanite Baalism. The prophet Elijah chided the people for attempting to "waver between two opinions" (1 Kings 18:21), and the subsequent contest on Mount Carmel between the prophet of God and the prophets of Baal demonstrated the superiority of Yahweh's religion. In the New Testament Jesus took issue with those who mixed faith and materialism when he declared, "you cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt 6:24); Paul continually battled those who preached a different gospel, one that perverted justification by faith in Christ by blending the teachings of Judaism and Christianity (Gal 3:1-14).Hypocrisy is a pseudo-pietism that pays "lip-service" to covenant keeping and social justice (Jer 2:2), and exhibits all the external trappings of true worship of God. However, this worship is "godless," based as it is on rules formulated by human teachers (Isa 29:13). Additionally, this false piety is also lawlessness, in that it multiplies sacrifices while it tramples the poor (Amos 5:11 Amos 5:21-24). The impious and insincere nature of this worship is further characterized by a consistent pattern of infidelity to Yahweh's covenant (Jer 12:10). Much later, Jesus described religious hypocrisy as both "play-acting" (Matthew 6:2 Matthew 6:5 Matthew 6:16) and godlessness (worshippers who were outwardly pious but inwardly profane, Matt 23:13-29). Nonetheless, their end is the same in either covenant: the pseudo-pious or hypocritical worshiper is rejected and judged severely by almighty God (Jer 14:11-12 ; Matt 23:35).Worship in the Old Testament. The study of the Old Testament worship is important for at least two reasons. First, the Old Testament Scriptures are part of the Christian canon, which means these documents are valuable for the Christian church as divinely inspired revelation of God and authoritative for the life of the church at least in theological principle, if not in literal teaching. Second, the life of the Israelite nation depicted in the accounts of the Old Testament provides the pattern for public worship found in both Judaism and Christianity.The God of Israel. The object of veneration in the Old Testament was the God of creation (Gen 1:1-2), the God of covenant revelation (Gen 12:1-3), and the God of redemptive Acts in history (Exod 20:2-3). This God, Yahweh, merited the worship and devotion of the Hebrew people both for who he is and for what he does.The God of the Old Testament is utterly holy and thus transcendent, inaccessible, mysterious, and inscrutable (Psalm 99:3-9). But if this alone were true about God, why worship such a terrible and awesome deity? Happily, this same God is also the "Holy One among you" (Hosea 11:9), a God who at once dwells "in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit" (Isa 57:15). God merits worship because in his imminent presence he is able to answer those who call upon him and forgive their wrongdoings (Psalm 99:8). It was this intimate presence of a holy God that prompted heartfelt praise and worship (Psalm 99:3) and the keen desire for holy living among the people of Israel (Lev 19:2).And yet, this was not enough if God was not sovereign in all of creation. The sovereignty of God indicates his absolute authority and power over all creation for the purpose of accomplishing his divine will. The God of Israel alone rules forever (Exod 15:18) and accomplishes his sovereign plan among the nations (Isa 44:27). Otherwise the Hebrews would have been little better than the rest of the nations the Rabshakeh of Assyria chided, "Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?" (Isa 36:18). All this, and the holiness of God, and the sovereignty of God, make him a unique divine being. For the prophet Isaiah, the uniqueness of God constituted a call to worship the Lord as King and Redeemer of Israel (44:6-8 ; 45:20-23).Despite the majesty and perfection of God's person and character, Hebrew worship would have been misplaced if it were impotent to act, to intervene in the experiences of life on behalf of his worshippers. Hence, the activity of God in human history served as both a basis for Hebrew worship and justification of the worship of the particular God, Yahweh. Among all the deeds of God recorded in the Old Testament two are foundational to the idea of Hebrew worship. First is the activity of God in creating new relationships with Israel (and others) by yoking himself through covenant promise ("I will be your God") and covenant stipulation ("you will be my people") to establish a worshipping community in holiness. The second was the event of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, God's redemption of Israel (Psalms 77:13 Psalms 77:15) designed to prompt worship on the part of those who witnessed or later heard about Yahweh's dealings with the Egyptians (Exod 18:10-12).Hebrew Anthropology. While Hebrew anthropology affirms the individual is comprised of distinguishable physical and spiritual elements, there is no systematic distinction between the material and the immaterial, the physical and the spiritual in the Old Testament. According to the pattern of ancient Hebrew thought, a human being is an indivisible totality or unity. Thus, it is the whole person, not just the immaterial essence of an individual, which blesses the holy name of the Lord in worship (Psalm 103:1).This understanding of the synthetic nature and constitution of humanity by the ancient Hebrews is remarkably relevant for contemporary Christianity. The holistic emphasis of Hebrew anthropology affirms persons created in the image of God as indivisible units, thus rendering the traditional antithesis of the physical and the spiritual dimensions of human beings also helpful in establishing false dichotomies between the "sacred" and "secular," meaning work, play, and worship are all sacred activities under the rule of a sovereign God. Recognition of the integrative unity of humanness permits a "whole person" response to God in worship, instilling the freedom to worship God with intellect, emotions, personality, senses, and body. Finally, Hebrew anthropology fosters the notion of corporate identity or the sense of belonging to the organic unity of humanity. This means the privatized worship of the individual finds its completion in the public worship of the larger worshipping community (cf. Heb 10:25).The Practice of Worship. Worship during the patriarchal period was either an expression of praise and thanksgiving prompted by a theophany (the visible or auditory manifestation of God to human beings) or the act of obedience to some divine directive (e.g., Abram "obeying" the command of God to sojourn in Canaan, Gen 12:4). Often this expression of worship took the form of altar building (Gen 33:20) and sometimes combined prayer (Gen 26:25) or animal sacrifice (Gen 31:54 ; 46:1). Other expressions of patriarchal worship included the erection of stone pillars and the pouring of drink offerings (drink offering, Genesis 28:18 Genesis 28:22), taking of vows in response to divine revelation (Gen 28:20 ; 31:13), ritual purification (Gen 35:2), the rite of circumcision as a sign of covenant obedience (Gen 17:9-14), and prayers of praise and thanksgiving (Gen 12:8 ; 13:4), petition (Gen 24:12 ; 25:21), and intercession (Gen 18:22-33 ; 20:7).The Book of Job confirms much of this assessment of pre-Mosaic religion among the Hebrews. The date of the literature of Job notwithstanding, the cultural and historical background of Job's testing certainly reflect the patriarchal age. Like the Hebrew patriarchs, Job is cast in the role of priest for his clan as head of the family and offers sacrifices on their behalf (1:5). Confession and repentance (4:26), and petition and intercessory prayer (6:8-9 ; 42:8-9) were routine activities for Job as a blameless and upright man. Even the internal attitude of worship represented by the "fear of God" (2:3) and the lifestyle response of obedience as seen in Job's oath of clearance (chap. 31) parallel the patriarchal worship experience.The Mosaic period (ca. 1400; 1100 b.c.) is widely recognized as the formative era in which the Israelite history and worship. Hebrew religious consciousness and worship practice was largely shaped by the dramatic events of the exodus from Egypt. Likewise, the covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai was the vehicle by which God established Israel as his "treasured possession" (Exod 19:5). The divine law attached to the Sinai treaty became the instrument that both molded and preserved Israel's identity as the people of God and chartered Israel as a theocratic kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6). Whereas the events of the exodus from Egypt bonded Israel together as a worshipping community, the covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai resulted in a "constitution" that created the nation of Israel (cf. Deut 4:32-40).This covenant legislation enacted at Mount Sinai prohibited the Hebrews from attempting to represent Yahweh's likeness with an image (Exod 20:3-4). The question of the existence of other gods was not an issue. The Hebrews acknowledged the existence of foreign deities. The sole task of the Hebrews was to worship their God, Yahweh, and serve him alone.The Old Testament celebrates the Passover and exodus as both the supreme act of divine judgment and divine deliverance in Hebrew history (Exod 6:6 ; 15:13 ; Deut 7:8). As such it furnished the seedbed for the growth and development of the Israelite theological language of redemption. Specifically, the purpose of the Passover animal sacrifice was didactic in that the enactment of the ritual of atonement was designed to instruct the Israelites in the principles of God's holiness and his unique role as Redeemer, human sinfulness, substitutionary death to cover human transgression, and the need for repentance leading to cleansing and renewed fellowship within the community and with Yahweh. The Passover ceremony and the exodus event exalted the covenant God, Yahweh, who redeemed Israel from the foe (Psalm 78:12). They also stood as a perpetual reminder to the successive generations of Hebrews that redemption leads inevitably to the worship of Yahweh (Exod 15:18).The legal code forming the basis of the Sinai covenant also formally organized Hebrew worship. Mosaic Law legitimized and standardized the media or form and the institutions of Israelite worship of Yahweh. Worship as recitation for the ancient Hebrews included liturgical responses like "Amen!" 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