

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Four Kinds of Worship

(Jerry Fite)

Man is capable of worshipping anything. From bowing down before a small figurine or lifting up adoring hands toward a rock star, ancient and modern people have engaged in some form of worship. Time passes and fame wanes, but worship persists in the hearts of young and old.

The Greek word (*proskyneo*), translated “worship” most often in our New Testament, literally means “to kiss towards.” Originally, the word denoted a subservient dog “kissing the hands” of his or her master. The Devil offered our Lord all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down and worship him (*Matthew 4:9*). Jesus rebuffed Satan by telling him, “*Get thee hence, Satan for it is written, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve’*” (*Matthew 4:10*). Reverential devotion and wonderous awe fill the heart of the worshipper. But as Jesus’ encounter with the Devil reveals, worship can be misguided.

We can engage in “**VAIN WORSHIP.**” We can draw near to God as professing worshippers, but it can be vain or empty in its effect before God. It is the worship of hypocrites. Jesus addressed such worshippers in His

day declaring, “*Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, ‘This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men’*” (*Matthew 15:7-9*).

God commanded children to honor their father and mother (*Exodus 20:12*). But such honor manifested in taking care of the needs of parents, who once took care of them, was being neglected by religious Jews in Jesus’ day. Neglecting parents was the result of following the doctrine of man called “*Corban*” – *that which is ‘Given to God’* (cf. *Mark 7:11-12*). It is always misguided worship when our heart is willing to ignore God’s commands while simultaneously thinking we are honoring God with a gift. It is always vain worship, no matter how much devotion we utter with our lips.

We also can be caught up in “appearances” called **WILL-WORSHIP.** People can look like they are truly devoted to God by depriving themselves of food, drink, or other lawful pleasures, thus treating their physical body with severity. Paul warns that such things “...*have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship,*

and humility, and severity to the body, but are not any value against the indulgence of the flesh” (*Colossians 2:23*). Will-worship is manifesting awe for self, not God. “Voluntary humility” can clothe the bodies of those who from within lower their worship to the fleshly mindset of “worshipping of angels” instead of God (*Colossians 2:18*.)

People can also practice “**IGNORANT WORSHIP.**” Entering ancient Athens, Paul was provoked by the many idolatrous objects of worship filling the city. He found a place to begin his teaching of the one true God by acknowledging the altar inscribed with “**TO AN UNKNOWN GOD**” (*Acts 17:23*). Paul declared, “*What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.*” He proceeded to teach them and us today that there is only one true God who is our Creator and Provider of life. (*Acts 17:24-28*).

Jesus points us to “**GOD-SEEKING WORSHIP**” God is “a spirit” Jesus declares, and we, created in His image, “must worship” Him “in spirit and truth.” (*John 4:23-24*). Our spirits, filled with reverence and awe, worship God according to the pattern revealed in the truth of the Gospel. Such worship is a “**MUST!**”