

Worship

Written by K B Napier
Sunday, 10 October 2010 19:12

Certain churches hold what they call '*worship*' services. This paper wishes to ask a genuine question: *what* do they mean by a '*worship*' service? Personally, as a Believer, I do not understand what exactly such a service is supposed to be, or what function it is supposed to serve. I understand the term '*worship*', but not the term '*worship service*'. (**All** '*services*' should be 'worship' services).

The term '*worship*' service has become prevalent only recently, so, in a way, it is a *fashion* statement rather than an historically-based term. This is one reason I question it. (It does not follow that a lack of historical background *necessarily* means something is invalid, but it may hold a clue).

Another problem is a very simple one: the term has no immediate understandable meaning. If it had an understandable meaning, then I would not be asking these questions! Again, the fact that I personally do not understand the meaning of '*worship*' in this context does not necessarily imply that such an observance (of a '*worship*' service) is wrong. It just means that I do not understand either the meaning given to it by men today, or its relevance to Christian life. Thus, my own ignorance of these matters could be the problem!

As always, we must go to the scriptures to see if we can find the solution. This should tell us if a '*worship*' service is valid, or if it is required, or if it is relevant. We will find no less than **nine** clearly differentiated Bible words for '*worship*'. As is usually the case for almost all Biblical words, these words themselves can be traced back to roots (that is, other words on which the 'main' words are based). Three of these 'main' words are found in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, '*worship*' usually means to bow in homage before a superior, God,

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angels, even or before *false* gods. The word can be used either literally or figuratively (therefore we may legitimately say that this word can be used to refer to one's *inner desire* toward a superior/God, etc.). Another word means to shape or form or copy. Thus one may shape oneself to be like a superior (i.e. God) - this being itself a form of '*worship*'

In the New Testament, '*worship*' can be taken **six** distinct ways, depending on context (which is always the rule when translating/interpreting). The Persians displayed profound reverence by kneeling and touching the ground with the forehead. In New Testament times a person would kneel or lay prostrate to show obedience and respect and/or to seek favour. This was done in homage to God, the risen Christ, or to angels (whether holy or demonic).

To '*worship*' also means to revere or to be devout, or to hold an opinion of someone (good or bad - although, in the New Testament, the opinion is always a good one, resulting in praise, honour, or the glorification of a person, e.g. God). The same word can also refer to the splendour of the moon and stars; the dignity, grace and excellence, etc., of God; God's majesty as Supreme Ruler and of Christ and the angels; it refers also to a glorious state, the risen Christ's state before God, and the condition of true Believers.

'*Worship*' can refer to the service of menials (that is, 'practical' worship of a superior) or, to performance of sacred services/offering of gifts; to perform the rites required by God (e.g. by priests) and those things that glorify Him.

It can mean to show piety or to act reverently, towards God, or any one/thing to whom/which, such reverence is due. Then there is another word for '*worship*', which refers to *misguided* worship. That is, worship/observances invented by men to suit their own ideas. Thus, it is not true observance, or true holiness. Such is common today in many churches, especially charismatic, pro-charismatic, mainstream Anglican, etc.

So... *which* of these words is being referred to when we talk of a '*worship*' service? Can the reader see the reasons for my genuine query and caution? Look at the meanings of the Biblical words above. None of them can adequately be taken and applied to the modern use of the term. Indeed, the true meanings of the words render the modern use nonsensical. We see that *virtually all*

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the various words refer to one's

state of heart toward God

(or toward any other superior being or object). How that can be applied to an external form e.g. a church service, I cannot tell. Hence the query.

Sometimes these services are also known as '*praise*' services, but I do not understand what exactly is meant by *that*, either. It seems

that certain valid aspects of Christian *attitude*

have somehow been taken from their context (in this case, the context is the individual's heart-desire) and re-formed into a

physical

type of meeting. But, to what purpose? The purpose is, we suppose, to glorify God, but how is this done? If the way we glorify God is not prescribed in scripture or, more importantly, it is not even

based

on scriptural example, etc., then is it valid?

This reminds us that one word for worship means to misguidedly invent a self-made, invalid obedience that is, by definition, *disobedience* and sin. I do not doubt the sincerity of those who initiate or attend *'worship'* services. Nor do I want

to denigrate them in any way

if

they are my brethren in the Lord. I simply ask what it is all supposed to mean! If

'worship'

merely consists of throwing up arms, having 'glazed eyes', and shouting 'Amen' – then, in my view, it is not worth anything.

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