

## Study 0041

Truth as revealed in the word of God is progressive. What this means is that you don't get everything on any bible theme, all from one part of the bible. Usually, truth spans the entire bible—both Old and New Testament, and across different Books of the bible, each proceeding one, revealing more of the earlier revealed truth. This is true for every bible theme, and it is true of worship. Worship is progressively revealed in the bible, and in this study, we shall begin to look at the evolution of worship as is revealed in the bible.

Biblical worship evolved in four major eras as follows: (a) the pre-Flood era; (b) the post-Flood era; (c) the Law era; and (d) the Grace era. As we study worship in each of these eras, we shall see how worship has evolved. While the practice of worship may have changed over the years in some cases, the principles remain unchanged. Hence, our study is not necessarily a historical one, as it is one which sets forth divine principles for worship. May the Holy Spirit help us to receive understanding, in Jesus' name, Amen.

### Worship in the Pre-Flood Era

The first indication of worship in the bible, which is in the pre-Flood era, is in **Genesis 4:3-7**. In this passage of scripture, we read about the bringing of offerings to God, by the two sons of Adam—Cain and Abel. We also read about the acceptance of the offering of one son (Abel) and the rejection of the other son's offering (Cain). We can say therefore, that worship first began as recognition of God as man's Source (of provision, protection, prosperity, etc.). This recognition was then translated as an acknowledgement of God through the bringing of gifts to Him. We see further that not every act of worship is acceptable to God, thus, bringing us to infer that it is one thing to claim to worship God, it is another thing to worship God in a manner that is acceptable to Him. When we read about Cain's offering, we realize that there was nothing out of the ordinary about his offering—it was just any other offering (something he could have given to anybody), whereas, when we read about Abel's offering, we are told it was "*of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof*"—something that you give to One Who has been keeping watch over you. We read also, of God's response to Cain's reaction to God's rejection of his offering: "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" Hence, not only is a person's extraordinary gift accepted by God, a person first has to be accepted by God before his offering can be accepted by Him. We can thus summarize that (a) worship derives from recognition of Who God is to us; (b) worship involves the bringing of gifts or an offering to God; (c) Acceptable worship is when God accepts a person and then the person's gift. This third part is very crucial to the worship of JEHOVAH; that is, a person being right with God for his worship of God to be acceptable (**Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12**). Anyone who is truly right with God (that is, a righteous man) can only do right things—like bringing a right gift to God (**Matthew 7:18; 12:33**).

The next time we come across worship in the pre-Flood era is in **Genesis 4:26**, where the bible says, "*then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.*" To appreciate this simple but powerful statement about men calling upon the name of the LORD for the first time, we must look at some verses before **v.26**. In reviewing **v.9-25**, we see that Cain was cursed, and that curse permeated down his lineage. Furthermore, we see that in the lineage of Cain, men were more concerned with themselves (their achievement, their indiscretions, their self-righteousness, etc.) than with God (His existence, His deeds, His mercy, His sustenance of man, etc.). In the midst of such accursedness and self-centredness, there comes such a refreshing of men from another lineage (the lineage of Seth) who were not focusing on

themselves, but were calling upon God. And not just calling upon God, but calling upon Him by name! The portion of **v.26** we are interested in reads thus in other translations:

- “*At that time people began to worship the LORD.*” (**God’s Word**)
- “*At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.*” (**New Living Translation**)
- “*at this time men first made use of the name of the Lord in worship.*” (**Bible in Basic English**)
- “*That’s when men and women began praying and worshiping in the name of GOD.*” (**The Message**)
- “*At that time men began to call [upon God] by the name of the Lord.*” (**Amplified Bible**)

Thus, we can say that, worship is calling on the LORD by His name. From **Genesis 4:9-26**, we can see that (a) a self-centred/self-confident man cannot worship God acceptably; (b) there must be a relationship between God and the worshipper for it to be acceptable worship unto God; and (c) worship includes calling God by His name (the essence of relationship).

In **Genesis 5:22-24**, we read an extension of relationship in worship, when the bible tells us that “*Enoch walked with God*”. The same is said of Noah (**Genesis 6:9**). This statement is so profound, it epitomizes worship. We can infer from this that worship is not a bland activity, but one that involves vibrant fellowship with God! Please note that Enoch’s walk with (worship of) God was not intermittent, nor was it for a few years, rather, it was consistent, habitual, and spanned a period of 300 years, all in the midst of living a normal life. In both the instances of Enoch and Noah, we see that God was drawn to them in a very special way: Enoch was ‘spirited’ off to heaven, where he still is till date, while Noah became God’s spokesman to his generation, as well as the deliverer of all that were in the ark. What this all means is that we don’t have to abandon our God-ordained secular activities/vocation, in order to worship God acceptably. Indeed, what is required of us is that we put God first in our lives (**Matthew 6:33**), and that simply is worship. This kind of lifestyle is pleasing to God (**Hebrews 11:5**). Also, we can conclude that God is drawn in a special way to those who consistently and habitually worship Him, and they are bound to receive special favour from Him.

Putting all these together, we can say that worship is the result of our recognition of Who God is, and our acknowledgment of Him as the Source of all things (**Revelation 4:11**). Acceptable worship before God involves a person who is in right-standing with God (**Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 66:1-3; John 4:24; Joshua 24:14**) bringing an appropriate gift or an offering that honours God (**Malachi 1:6-14**). True worship is calling on the name of God, based on a personal relationship with Him (**Romans 5:1; Matthew 15:22-28**) in an enduring and vital fellowship with Him (**Romans 8:38-39; 1 John 1:1-3, 6-7**). Such worshippers of JEHOVAH can rest assured that His eternal presence is theirs!

### **EXERCISE**

Please state true or false to the statements below:

1. A man who does not know God cannot worship Him acceptably.
2. The state of a man’s heart is important in worship.
3. In worship, the gift is more important than the giver.
4. Cain’s gift was not accepted by God because it was too small.
5. Cain’s gift was not accepted by God because he was a farmer.
6. Cain’s gift was not accepted by God because his heart was not right.
7. Abel’s gift was accepted by God because it was beyond the ordinary.

8. Abel's gift was accepted by God because blood was involved.
9. Abel's gift was accepted by God because he was accepted by God.
10. Calling on the name of God signifies worship.
11. Calling on the name of God signifies prayer.
12. Calling on the name of God signifies relationship.
13. Calling on the name of God signifies dependency on God.
14. Calling on the name of God is something we do when we are in trouble.
15. Enoch enjoyed quiet strolls with God.
16. Enoch enjoyed uninterrupted fellowship with God.
17. Enoch worshipped God for 300 years.
18. After we have done our house work/office work, we then go to God; and that is how we put God first.
19. To be 'wowed' by something more than you are by God is idolatry.
20. Acceptable worship is always from a person who is in right-standing with God.