

## HOW CAN YOU RECOGNIZE TRUE WORSHIP?

In Part 10 of the “*Good News From God*” brochure, published by the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of Pennsylvania, the Society poses four questions: (1) Is there only one true religion? (2) What did Jesus say about false Christians? (3) How can you recognize true worshippers? and (4) Can you identify true religion?

It is very important for all of us to be able to recognize true worship and true religion. Otherwise, we will not be able to truly benefit ourselves in the way the Father wants us to, or be fit for the Father’s purpose. As Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman:

“[T]he hour is coming, and it is now, when the **true worshipers** will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, **the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him**. God is a Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship with spirit and truth.” – *John 4:23-24*

Unfortunately, true worship and true religion have been grossly misunderstood. As a result, rather than being a facility to promote brotherly love and unity, the search for true worship and true religion has resulted in divisions and condemnation. It has given rise to the ideas of religious superiority and clergy/laity distinctions, rather than spiritual equality and divine fraternity.

We believe a return to the proper understanding of true worship and true religion, as demonstrated and explained by Jesus Christ, will heal the division, unify the children of God, and reverse the gross stagnation of the true good news of the Kingdom.

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### 1. Is there only one true religion?

Yes! It is the religion of Jesus! Not a religion **about** Jesus, but the religion **of** Jesus – the religion Jesus himself practiced of selfless service to mankind and wholesouled devotion to the Father. Remember, while he is our Creator and the son of God (*Colossians 1:15-16*), he also lived among us as a human son of man.

“So the Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth.” – *John 1:14*

As a son of man, Jesus was obliged to worship the Father in the way a man worships Him. So, one may ask: What religion was Jesus? For that is the religion we should want to belong to.

We know that he was not Baptist, Lutheran, Jehovah’s Witness, Catholic, or any other denomination. Such religions are **offshoots** and **derivatives** of Jesus’ religion. They are various expressions of how Jesus’ religion is understood by some. Even the whole of Christianity is preceded and superceded by Jesus’ religion of ‘spiritual and true worship.’ Do we get the sense of that?

Each of these denominations is an attempt at understanding and practicing the religion of Jesus. Yet, for the most part, they are religions **about** Jesus. In other words, instead of looking to how Jesus worshipped, they focus on worshipping Jesus. They promote his divinity – his miracle working – and overlook his humanity – his faithfulness, his loyalty, his complete trust in the Father.

As our Creator, Jesus does accept our petitions – our prayers for help. But he does so in order to equip us to better worship the Father:

“Most truly I say to you, He that exercises faith in me, that one also will do the works that I do; and he will do works greater than these, because I am going my way to the Father. Also, **whatever it is that you ask in my name, I will do this, in order that the Father may be glorified in connection with the Son.** If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.” – *John 14:12-14*

But he himself does not want to be worshipped. When Satan tempted Jesus to seek worship for himself:

“Jesus said to him: ‘Go away, Satan! For it is written, “**It is Jehovah your God you must worship,** and it is to him **alone** you must render sacred service.’”” – *Matthew 4:10*

How unfortunate that many have sacrificed Jesus of Nazareth to even the wonderful concept of the glorified Christ. The humanity of Jesus must not be taken away from struggling man. Both aspects of our Creator must be given equal honor. He belongs to us, just as we belong to him.

Jesus of Nazareth was a religious man who, by faith, achieved the knowing and the doing of the will of God, which is to uplift and serve mankind. The people heard him gladly because he was one of them, an unpretentious layman. Yes, the world's greatest religious teacher was indeed a layman! At his baptism, the Father acknowledged:

“This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” – *Matthew 3:17*

If we are to be approved, we must to follow his example of faith.

“And whoever does not accept his torture stake and follow after me is not worthy of me.” – *Matthew 10:38*

To ‘follow Jesus’ means to personally share his religious faith and to enter into the spirit of his life of unselfish service of man. It should not be the aim of kingdom believers literally to imitate the outward life of Jesus in the flesh, but rather to share his faith; to trust God as he trusted God; and to believe in men as he believed in men.

Through his life example, he demonstrated true worship and true religion. In speaking to the apostle Thomas:

“Jesus said to him: ‘**I am the way** and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” – *John 14:6*

Thus, one of the most important things in human living is to find out what Jesus himself believed, to discover his ideals, and to strive for the achievement of his exalted life purpose. Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it.

“This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” – *John 17:3*

That, dear brothers and sisters, is true worship and true religion!

For further discussion, please see **The Faith and Religion of Jesus, Worshipping with Spirit and Truth**, and **Who Is Jesus Christ?**

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## **2. What did Jesus say about false Christians?**

Jesus did not say one word about ‘false Christians,’ nor in any of his teachings did he ever condemn the sheep. The only people Jesus ever condemned were ‘false teachers’ – those who took it upon themselves to be religious teachers of men, but who were **intentionally** misleading them. He said:

“Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheep’s covering, but **inside they are ravenous wolves**. By their fruits you will recognize them. Never do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, do they? Likewise every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit; a good tree cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. Every tree not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire. Really, then, by their fruits you will recognize those [men].” – *Matthew 7:15-20*

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** because you shut up the kingdom of the heavens before men; for you yourselves do not go in, neither do you permit those on their way in to go in.” – *Matthew 23:13*

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** because you give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These things it was binding to do, yet not to disregard the other things. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat but gulp down the camel!” – *Matthew 23:23-24*

Jesus never condemned people for being mistaken or misled; though he did warn them of the dangers of blindly following after men:

“Then the disciples came up and said to him: ‘Do you know that the Pharisees stumbled at hearing what you said?’ In reply he said: ‘Every plant that my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. Let them be. Blind guides is what they are. **If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.**’” – *Matthew 15:13-14*

When Jesus saw those who were misled, instead of ridiculing or reviling, he felt pity for them, and sought to help them by sharing the good news of the Kingdom:

“On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples: ‘Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.’” – *Matthew 9:36-38*

As followers of Jesus, and sharers in his religion, we should respond to people who we believe are being misled in the same manner as Jesus did – with a sincere desire to help them – not condemn them as false brothers.

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### 3. How can you recognize true worshippers?

One might think that there are certain acts or certain doctrines that identify true worshippers. One might have a list of such things and decide to measure others by these standards. However, in many cases, the list of so-called ‘identifying marks’ do not necessarily mean the bearers of these ‘marks’ are true worshippers.

For example, people can respect the Bible, honor God’s name, preach about the kingdom, avoid entanglements with the world, and love members of their own religion. These are fine and honorable acts. Yet a person can perform all of these acts, and still not be worshipping ‘with spirit and truth.’ (*John 4:23-24*)

For the most part, these are social acts – acts that placate our fellow believers. But they are not necessarily acts of true worship and genuine religion. We are reminded of what Jesus said to the Jews of his day, quoting from the prophet Isaiah:

“This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines.” – *Matthew 15:8-9*

True worship is heartfelt communion with the Father. It is a wholesouled consecration to doing the divine will. And it is summed up in these two commandments:

“‘You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. The second, like it, is this, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments the whole Law hangs, and the Prophets.” – *Matthew 22:37-40*

True worshippers are identified by their fruits. (*Matthew 7:16-20*) If they are truly worshipping with spirit, they will exhibit the fruitage of the spirit.

“[T]he fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.” – *Galatians 5:22-23*

And if they are worshipping with truth, they will be true to what they believe, not hypocritical. The life they live in private is the life they live in public. And they will be hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and thus open to a constant refining of their faith.

Foremost, they will be imitating Jesus and practicing his religion of wholesouled dedication to the Father and to the doing of his will.

“Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men, for you know that it is from Jehovah you will receive the due reward of the inheritance. Slave for the Master, Christ.” – *Colossians 3:23-24*

In essence, true worshippers recognize the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, they teach the same message of entry into the Kingdom of the Heavens as Jesus taught, and they follow the Christ ‘wherever he goes.’ (*Revelation 14:4*)

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#### 4. Can you identify the true religion?

If you can understand the above factors, you can identify the true religion. It is the religion Jesus practiced of selfless service to mankind and wholesouled devotion to the Father.

Today, all Christian denominations are seeking to follow Christ to the best of their ability. Some have more true **facts** in their belief system than do others. But **all** of them are **offshoots** and **derivatives** of the true religion of Jesus.

What is now needed is a turning to the religion **of** Jesus instead of practicing a religion **about** Jesus. True religion today must adopt the same beliefs and teachings that Jesus himself held nearly 2000 years ago. Doctrines may be refined, and facts may be updated, but true worship and true religion remain unchanged.

To the extent that our doctrines need refinement, true worshippers are open to that refinement. They know that coming to an accurate knowledge of truth is a gradual process – and some are further along in the process than are others. For this reason, Jesus counseled:

“Stop judging that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged; and with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you. Why then, do you look at the straw in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Allow me to extract the straw from your eye’; when, look! a rafter is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First extract the rafter from your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to extract the straw from your brother’s eye.” – *Matthew 7:1-5*

He also counseled:

“Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and everyone seeking finds, and to everyone knocking it will be opened.” – **Matthew 7:7-8**

That being the case, true worshippers must be humble and understand that they do not know it all. They will need to make progressive adjustments in their beliefs, though their heartfelt worship and selfless religion will remain unchanged and steadfast.

True worshippers are willing to make those adjustments. They have a keen desire to please the Father and are willing to be molded by the Spirit of Truth, knowing that there is always more to learn:

“I have many things yet to say to you, but you are not able to bear them at present. However, when that one arrives, the spirit of the truth, he will **guide you** into all the truth, for he will not speak of his own impulse, but what things he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things coming.” – **John 16:12-13**

So, as long as there is breath in our bodies, there is an opportunity to turn to true worship and to the true religion of Jesus Christ. When we do, we will be able to identify **ourselves** as true worshippers of the Father who practice the true religion of brotherly love and selfless service to mankind, no matter what offshoot or derivative we are associated with.

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We welcome your comments.

***“Elaia Luchnia”***