

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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Worship

Man looks at worship of God like a child at play. He thinks he can “play-like” and concoct any kind of music or drama and call his gyrations “worship to God.” He thinks that he can design his “worship” like he designs his churches—by his “choice” and go through his man-made worship each week. But God has **always** regulated man's worship to Him in His Word. He has never **left man's choice** in how, where, or when to worship Him. Our writers will look at worship in this issue of *The Gospel Preceptor* and see what **God** says **He requires** in worship. You might be surprised that God considers your worship vain.

What is Worship?

David Ray

Any human who sees and accepts the overwhelming evidence that God exists should desire to worship Him. This is true because we see Him in the beauty, complexities, and resiliency of our own human bodies He created, because we enjoy the magnificence of the world He fashioned for us as our temporary home. Because if we've read and understood His Word, we know the depth of His love for us, demonstrated visibly in His sacrificing His only Son to be the atonement for our sins (1 John 2:2).



But how do we worship Him? What does this even mean? How does a finite, earthly human worship an infinite, heavenly, omniscient, Almighty God, Who is worthy of the very best we can offer? If people would ask this **prior to** attempting to worship Him, they would be more likely to worship Him acceptably, rather than doing things their own way and assuming that “God accepts whatever I offer, as long as my heart is right” (as has been falsely believed and taught so often in the religious world). If this were true, certainly we would find it in His Word. But we do not. This leaves us with the task of

searching the New Testament to find what it is exactly that God desires to receive from His church in worship.

Our first step is to better define what worship really is. The English word is defined by Merriam-Webster's online dictionary as “to honor or show reverence for as a divine being or supernatural power.” Upon searching the New Testament for the word *worship*, the primary Greek word used by the inspired writers is *proskuneō*, which is defined by *Strong's Greek Dictionary* as “to prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore).” The image is of one who is humble before and thankful to the Almighty God for His love and provisions for us, and who falls down in submissive reverence before Him to thank Him and express adoration to Him. When we understand the meaning and application of this word, it eliminates the false idea that God will accept whatever the worshiper offers. This idea is foreign to Scripture and nothing short of insulting to God!

So, what is worship that's acceptable to God? Before a person can answer this, he must **desire** to answer this. And as long as he has the previously-stated false idea regarding worship, all he will ever be concerned with is what **he** wants in worship. It is this attitude that has led to countless innovations in what the religious world considers to be worship. Whether it's mechanical instrumental music, clapping, drama, concerts, etc., these things may please the human listener, but do they please God? Are we even concerned with whether or not they please God?

If your employer, supervisor, and coworkers intended to honor you for your many

years of selfless service, hard work, and dedication to your job and the company, how would you feel if they planned a party where everyone would attend, would eat pizza, ice cream, and drink sodas, and watch the big football game? Would you wonder why they never considered that you hate sports, never drink sodas, are lactose intolerant, and are much more comfortable in smaller groups? Did anyone consult you before planning this? Might you wonder if these people, with whom you've worked for the last thirty years, **even know you?**

God must certainly feel this way when people who claim to be His followers offer Him worship He never commanded while leaving out the worship He requires. They add all sorts of things about which He was silent (i.e., things He obviously did **not** want) and subtract anything **they** don't like! How does God feel about this?

- Isaiah 1:13 – “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” All of these things were religious actions or events God had required of the Israelites, not innovations He was categorically condemning. Yet, even **those** things were abominations to Him because of the attitudes of those offering them.
- Colossians 2:23 – In reference to the “ordinances” which were “after the commandments and doctrines of men,” Paul said, “Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship...” Maybe no verse better defines the majority of religious “worship” today than this verse does: worship of, or according to, one's own will.
- In Matthew 15:9 Jesus quotes Isaiah: “But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” There is indeed such a thing as **vain** worship—that which is useless because God does not accept it.

We must study His word in order to find what **He** wants. Then we can worship Him appropriately, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

As has always been the case in every dispensation (patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian), God lets His people know what He wants in worship to Him, and **never** says (or in any way leads us to believe) that we can offer whatever **we** want. So, back to our question: what is worship that's acceptable to God?

In John 4:24, Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.” Contextually, to worship *in spirit* implies an internal location, not external (i.e., not limited to a location such as Jerusalem or a mountain). Internal worship means that worship must be meaningful.

To worship *in truth* means it must be according to revealed truth (cf. John 17:17—“thy word is truth”). Therefore, worship must be according to what God has commanded in His word, and it must be meaningful to the worshiper (i.e., from the heart, not just going through the motions).

So, what has God revealed in His Word about what He desires and expects from His church in worship? (Emphasis is upon **His church**; we are not concerning ourselves with how the Israelites worshipped God in the Old Testament). Upon searching the New Testament to determine how the church is to worship our Creator and Savior, we find the following acts, in no particular order: **1)** prayer (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:8); **2)** singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); **3)** preaching (2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:7); **4)** the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20f; Acts 20:7); and **5)** giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). If someone enquires how we are to worship (i.e., what **God** wants), these are the actions we will provide in response. You'll notice that a piano was not mentioned (nor a guitar, drums, ukulele, bagpipes, or any other instrument). Nor did we mention skits and dramas. This doesn't mean that these things are inherently sinful, that God doesn't like them, or that His followers should never participate in them. It simply means that **they are not** authorized (i.e., God did not want them) in worship to Him. We know this because the Bible is silent on His church worshipping Him in such ways. If God had wanted these actions in our worship to Him, He is more than able to have communicated this to us. But He didn't; therefore, He did **not** want them.

God sanctioned instrumental music in the Old Testament, but is silent on it in the New. Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

This states explicitly that God, through the Scripture, would “thoroughly furnish” us for “every good work.” Therefore, we can know that, if the Scripture is silent on a particular work (e.g., the church’s worshipping with mechanical instruments of music), then we clearly have **not** been thoroughly furnished unto it! E.g., we aren't told what type(s) of mechanical instruments He wants, who is to play them (one, two, or all of us), or whether we are to sing and play together or separately. It is therefore **not** a good work and should be rejected as a form of worship, since God clearly did not want His church to worship Him in such a way.

It is the height of arrogance to think that we can offer whatever **we** want to Almighty God in worship, all the while ignoring what He has commanded. E.g., most religious groups today offer unauthorized instrumental music, while refusing to partake of the Lord’s Supper as He gave example (Acts 20:7).

What God desires in worship is exactly what He commanded. As those whose sins have been forgiven by the shed blood of Jesus, it is our desire to “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name” and to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2). This can be done **only** by showing obedience to Him and His Word and worshipping only and always in those ways He has commanded.

Is Worship for Entertaining Men?

Ron Cosby

God authorizes what He wants in worship through His Word. When an individual asserts or practices a particular religious belief, disciples ought to inquire, “Is it from heaven or men?” Our title shows we are dealing with the purpose of worship. So, we ask, “Is the purpose of worship to entertain the masses?” What Bible verse or context would give readers even a hint that God has designed worship for man’s entertainment?



Since the Bible is totally silent concerning worship as amusement, then God has not authorized such fun and games. It was quipped fifty years ago in speaking of American Christians, “We worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship.” An Internet writer gave this astute observation: “Worship is not entertainment any more than religion is a hobby.” The denominational world has built thousands of mega-churches with mega audiences expected to fill their coffers. How do you get 17,000 people to gather in one place for worship? By their actions, mega-churches have answered and they have said that “You entertain them.” However, even many in the denominational world see the fallacy of giving the people a show. The nineteenth-century preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them.” Another added,

It may not be new, but it is increasingly popular, especially in light of our entertainment-driven culture. We see this in secular songs played by worship bands to wow the crowd. It's hard to miss the value of amusement in the comedy-full but theology-empty preaching of many pulpits. Many of us have felt it in elaborate performances for the congregation to observe, but not to participate in. For some, Sunday morning more closely resembles a variety show than an offering made to God. The danger in bringing entertainment into gathered worship lies in the aim of entertainment and its work against the aim of worship.

Playing at Worship Has Brought God's Displeasure on the Practitioners.

When the children of Israel left Egypt, one of the first expressions of displeasure from God was because they, as Paul said, "rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10:7). Aaron led this worship. When men play at their worship, history teaches that they leave God.

Later, Aaron's two sons engaged in another frivolous display of worship when they offered to God that which "he had not commanded them" (Lev. 10:1-3). In their self-destructive worship to God, the Lord emphasized, "**I will be sanctified** in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." This is a clear declaration of God's mindset. It ought to stand out in our thinking every moment we are active in praise to God. Shortly after the death of his sons, God told Aaron that those lifting up His name were to "make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean (Lev. 10:10).

Over seven centuries later, in their supposed "solemn assembly," the children of Israel were displeasing to God when they served "their appetites" (Hos. 9:4-5).

Paul's thoughts to the Colossian brethren ought to be a warning to all who seek God's satisfaction (Col. 2:20-23). Paul speaks of self-chosen activities which served their own flesh; that is, their own choice and their own appetite and their own purpose. Worship is to strengthen the spirit so it can overcome the passions of the body. An hour of entertainment and amusement feeds the flesh and weakens the soul, which is the opposite of that which the Colossians accomplished with their "will-worship."

Beneficial to the Worshiper

Worship becomes beneficial to man when God's main purpose for it is met; that is, **Worship is to exalt God**. Though the main reason for worship is for God's delight, it is also clearly designed for the worshiper. What has God designed for man in worship? Entertainment or Edification? The main design of worship in relationship to man is so that he can achieve a greater knowledge, a greater understanding and a greater appreciation of God.

Put aside the playing and, as the Psalmist said, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).

Put aside the playing and seek to "Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for he is holy*. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is holy*" (Psalm 99:5, 9).

Put aside the playing and let hearts be filled with praise toward Him (Heb. 13:15). "Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of **praise to God** continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name."

Put aside the frivolity and be filled with thanksgiving.

"And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and **making melody with your heart to the Lord**; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Eph. 5:18-20, Emph RC).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing **with grace in your hearts unto God** (Col. 3:16, Emph, RC).

Singing has become a time to receive applause. Music is possibly the number one mode of entertainment in the religious world. Yet, such fun-filled delight on behalf of the flesh does not fulfill God's ascribed purpose for singing. Be not guilty of replacing the melody of the heart with the mechanism of the instrument.

Men have made it a habit of forgetting **God** (Psalm 78:4-7). History shows he needs a constant reminder. God's book of devotion and worship reminds the children of Israel to "[Tell] to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah" (vs 4). He gives the purpose of telling, "That the generation to come might know" (vs 6); and by knowing, "that they might set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God" (vs 7).

Men have made it a habit of forgetting God's **justice and righteousness**. We need David's reminder in the Psalm 73. David saw how the wicked prospered, and it sickened him to know they could get away with such unrighteousness. However, entering into worship cleared his head. Through the knowledge of the overall goals and purposes of God, he had gained a proper perspective of living. Here is a quick narration of David's observations which reminds us of the value of worship:

1. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; My steps had well nigh slipped.
2. For I was envious at the arrogant, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
3. They are not in trouble as *other* men; Neither are they plagued like *other* men.
4. For all the day long have I been plagued, And chastened every morning.
5. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, And considered their latter end.
6. But it is good for me to draw near unto God: I have made the Lord Jehovah my refuge, That I may tell of all thy works.

Men have made it a habit of forgetting God's **compassion and mercy**. The Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week is a wise prescription for recalling His great sacrifice (1 Cor. 11:26-29). Call to mind the lesson that Paul expressed to the Corinthians. The Lord's Supper is not a feast for those who are physically hungry but for those who hunger and thirst after spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 29). The Lord's Supper is not for the belly but for the soul.

In singing, we admonish and teach one another. In prayer, worshipers are reminded that we are dependent upon One Greater than ourselves. In giving, we give to the One who hath blessed us. In Bible preaching, we learn more and more of His good works and His love toward us. In the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of His compassion-filled death for our sins. We need these recollections, lest we forget.

Peter reminds brethren of their primary aim. "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for **God's** own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9, Emph, RC).

Examples of Acceptable Worship

Our first example is Abel. God is respectful toward our gift when we are respectful of His divine guidance (Heb. 11:4). "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh."

Our second example is Noah. God commanded Noah to gather clean animals to be placed in the ark. Why? They were to be used in sacrificial service (Gen. 8:20-22). What did Noah use from the ark that was placed there by God's instructions for the purpose of amusement in worship? Nothing. The land supplied the wood and the stones for the altar; and the animals he offered came from the ark. Simple. Easy. Satisfying to God.

Our third example is Abraham. Abraham offered his son on God's altar. As Isaac's father, was he entertained when he drew the knife to strike the boy dead? Not at all! His knowledge and trust in Jehovah strengthened him in his moment of faith. According to what has been revealed, the beast of burden that carried the wood for their spiritual activity did not carry any item for the purpose of amusing either Abraham or Isaac.

Our fourth example is Joshua. Joshua's heart was focused on showing reverence as he prostrated himself on the ground before the Lord (Josh. 5:13-15). He did not take off his shoes to dance and jive. God was there; it was holy ground. His shoes came off; his reverence bowed down.

Our fifth example is Hannah. Hannah's bowed head in prayer found favor in the heart of God (1 Sam. 1:9-18). Simple but effective. Sincere but powerful. Solemn but heart lifting. She was not seeking to entertain anyone, not even herself. However, she did please the Father. Why do men clamor for more this? Because they are thinking more

of self than God.

Do Christians rejoice in worship? Yes. Rejoicing and entertainment are not the same thing. Do Christians enjoy worship? Yes. Enjoyment and entertainment are not the same thing. Do Christians delight in worship? Yes. Being delighted and being entertained are not the same thing.

In worship, practitioners have amused and entertained themselves. However, they are not better for it. They have lost the capability to enjoy delighting God.

Pray that God does not say of our worship that which He said of Israel: “I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand (Mal. 1:10).

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Is Everything a Christian Does Worship?

Lee Moses

Is everything a Christian does worship? Some would answer this question with an emphatic “Yes!” They see a life given over to the Lord as a life of perpetual worship, regardless of what a person may be doing at a particular time. Some will make an exception for **sin**; that is, as long as a Christian is not sinning, he is worshipping. But if a manager is giving instructions to an employee, is he worshipping at that moment? If that manager is a Christian, some would affirm, “Yes!” If a grocery store shopper is deciding between Lucky Charms and Frosted Flakes, is he worshipping at that moment? If that shopper is a Christian, some would again affirm, “Yes!” If someone is using the restroom, is he worshipping at that very moment? If that person is a Christian, the same folks would answer, “Yes he is, and very acceptably!” This is what is sometimes known as the “All of Life is Worship” (ALW) doctrine.



On the surface, this view seems harmless enough. However, this doctrine bears grave consequences. Consider just two of these consequences:

1. If everything a Christian does is worship, then anything a Christian is permitted to do **outside** of the worship assembly is permitted **in** the worship assembly and as part of the worship activities.
2. If everything a Christian does is worship, then there is nothing particularly special about the occasions a congregation assembles for worship.

Not only are these consequences serious—both of these conclusions are false. There are certainly things permitted to a Christian outside the worship assembly which are **not** permitted in the worship assembly and as part of the worship activities: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24, emphasis LM; see article in this issue, “Man Must Have Bible Authority to Worship God Acceptably,” by Denny Wilson). And it is certainly false to suggest that there is nothing particularly special about the occasions a congregation assembles for worship—as the Hebrews writer issued a dire warning against any who might be “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25ff).

The rules of logic demand, “Any doctrine that implies a false doctrine is itself false.” Since the doctrine that everything a Christian does is worship implies the two aforementioned false doctrines, the doctrine that everything a Christian does is worship is itself false.

There are various “sugarstick” Scriptures ALW adherents use to justify their doctrine. One such passage is “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Since it is literally impossible for a Christian to offer continuous focused prayer 24 hours a day for weeks,

months, and years on end without pause, some conclude that this “prayer without ceasing” is something other than a specific act. However, the word *pray* specifically means “to petition deity,” to be translated, “pray” (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich 879). That’s pretty specific, is it not? It will not allow such interpretations as “maintain a prayerful attitude” or “live the kind of life befitting a man of prayer.” It means “pray.” That one is to “pray without ceasing” does not mean that one is to pray every minute of his life. It means that prayer is to be a regular, ongoing part of his life. Similarly, if someone decides to become physically fit, he may determine to implement an exercise regimen. If he wishes to achieve and maintain physical fitness, he will need to “exercise without ceasing.” This does not mean that he is to exercise every minute of his life; rather, exercise needs to remain a regular, ongoing part of his life. When Christians “continue steadfastly...in prayers” as did the early church (Acts 2:42), they “pray without ceasing.”

Perhaps the favorite sugarstick of the ALW bunch is Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” It seems quite a stretch to go from this passage to “every single thing you do is worship.” However, ALW advocates have misleading modern translations to aid their detrimental cause. The New International Version incorrectly renders Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is **your true and proper worship**” (emph. LM). If one’s “true and proper worship” is found in the entirety of how one lives his life, then select actions could not be set apart from the others as acts of worship. There could not even be different “levels” of worship, as some have claimed.

The Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the English Standard Version likewise render the King James Version’s and American Standard Version’s “service” as “worship.” The original word *latreia* and its related verb *latreuō* signify “work for pay, be in servitude, render cultic service” (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich 587). While this range of meaning certainly **includes** worship, it is not **limited to** worship. Jesus used this word in John 16:2: “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service [*latreia*].” Clearly, no Jew would have considered it an act of **worship** to kill a Christian, but they would have considered it an act of **service**. Thus, “service” is clearly the preferred rendering in John 16:2, just as it is in Romans 12:1. Christians need to understand the distinction between worship and service. As many a faithful Gospel preacher has correctly observed, “All worship is service, but not all service is worship.”

Some argue specifically from the word “sacrifice” in Romans 12:1—“present your bodies a living **sacrifice**.” Such people claim that “sacrifice” itself **implies** worship; therefore, the “living sacrifice” of our bodies—an ongoing event from initial obedience to the Gospel until physical death—must be worship. It is true that an allusion to worship is made in this term and in this verse. However, one must observe that this “sacrifice” is clearly **figurative**. Literally speaking, what is a “sacrifice”? It is “an **act** of slaughtering an animal or person or surrendering a possession as an offering to God or to a divine or supernatural figure” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*, emph. LM). The allusion in Rom. 12:1 is indeed to slaughtering animals as sacrifice, and the irony of the figure is that **living** sacrifices are presented rather than dead animals.

Furthermore, this says, “**Present** your bodies a living sacrifice.” While those bodies may be used in continuous service, the **presentation** of one’s body is done at a particular time, just as ancient animal sacrifices were offered at a particular time.

Twenty-four verses following this verse, the civil government is said to be “God’s minister,” specifically so when carrying out capital punishment against a deserving wrongdoer (Rom. 13:4). But is this an act of **worship**? Unless one wants to affirm that God desires human sacrifice as worship, surely it is not.

One may render the entirety of his life in **service** to God, but he is not worshipping when he is not participating in an act of worship. The word “worship” occurs 188 times in the Bible. Every time, it involves a specific act performed by one and directed to-

ward another.

Notice the words spoken when Abraham and Isaac arrived at Mount Moriah: “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Gen. 22:5). According to the ALW folks, Abraham was confused. Did he not know that he was worshipping the whole time he traveled to Mount Moriah? He should have said, “I and the lad will go yonder and continue worshipping the same way we have been for years”! No, Abraham was correct and the ALW folks are confused. Even though Abraham lived a life of faith to be emulated by Christians everywhere (Rom. 4:9-16), he only worshipped when he offered specific acts of worship.

Likewise, the Ethiopian eunuch “had come to Jerusalem for to worship” (Acts 8:27). The implication is clear that his entire life was not worship if he traveled to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of worshipping.

On one occasion, Jesus was in the household of two sisters, each engaged in different activities. One, Martha, was busily making preparations for her guests while the other, Mary, was attentively listening to Jesus as He taught. Notice the distinction Jesus made between these two sisters’ actions: “Mary hath chosen the good part” (Luke 10:42). Neither course of action was sinful. However, if Martha’s course was properly **worship**, how could it fail to be every bit as much “the good part” as Mary’s?

There is a **relationship** between holy living and acceptable worship, but they are not identical. God has always made clear that worship cannot please Him when offered by someone living an unholy life:

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight (Prov. 15:8).

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination (Prov. 28:9).

But note the distinction above between the holy living—or unholy living, as the case may be—and the acts of worship, here sacrifice and prayer.

When Satan attempted to entice Christ to worship him, our Lord responded, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). When Christ was speaking to Satan, was He worshipping him? Of course not—His very words were a refusal to render worship to him.

Make no mistake about it, many who advocate the ALW doctrine do so with ulterior motives. Some seek to make the worship assemblies less formal. One ALW advocate states of the first century church, “This first day of the week assembly was as unstructured and informal as an unplanned reunion of college friends” (Root 50-51). At times, worship assemblies in the first century **were** unstructured and informal (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26-38). However, this was displeasing to God, and the inspired apostle Paul took to task such lackadaisical attitudes toward worship. As Paul wrote, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (verse 40).

A particular goal of ALW advocates is to allow innovations in the worship, including instrumental music and expanded women’s roles. If a man may play his piano at home, why may he not play in the assemblies of the church, since both situations are equally worship? If a mother may speak at her local PTA meeting, why may she not preach during the public “worship” service, since both occasions are just as surely worship?

This is not to say that all who advocate the ALW doctrine have such goals in mind. Some perhaps honestly but erroneously have come to the conclusion that all of life is worship. Nonetheless, all who push the ALW doctrine end up pushing the church in the direction of such godlessness.

Not everything a Christian does is worship. The Bible does not teach any such thing, and the implications of this doctrine are grave. Let Christians everywhere render their lives as living sacrifices to Almighty God, and delight in every occasion to offer worship pleasing to God.

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What Day has God Authorized for Our Worship?

Gary W. Summers



“What a Difference a Day Makes,” sang Dinah Washington in 1959. She was not talking about the correct day in which people ought to worship, but that subject has been a bone of contention for the past two centuries—ever since Ellen G. White had her famous dream in 1847 about seeing a halo around the fourth commandment given by God at Mount Sinai. She immediately came to the conclusion that the Sabbath-day commandment had not been nailed to the cross. Since God does not send out visions today (1 Cor. 13; Eph. 4), what she thought she saw came from her own imagination. But putting her and her vision aside, the Christian must ask what day did God authorize for worship under our covenant?

We do not know much about worship during the patriarchal age of history prior to the Law of Moses being given. If there was a particular day of the week that Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph worshiped, it is not mentioned all throughout Genesis. The only thing that is mentioned relating to the seventh day is found in Genesis 2:2-3:

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which He had done.

However, nothing more is recorded concerning that day until the Book of Exodus. And these verses do not include any mention of man’s worship habits. Not only is the word *worship* not found, the text makes no suggestion that man should rest on that day because God did. In fact, no application for man is contained at all in these two verses. If man observed the Sabbath day from that time forward, God did not see fit to inform us of it. Furthermore, no such information is contained in any historical or poetic narrative afterward. The observance of the Sabbath is tied to Israel **after** they left Egypt.

Actually, the lack of a command about keeping the Sabbath makes sense and shows God’s foreknowledge. Had the nation of Israel been commanded to keep the Sabbath, how would they ever have survived Egypt? Can anyone imagine that the same Pharaoh that would not give them time to offer up a sacrifice in the wilderness would have been so generous as to give them one day out of seven off to rest? If they tried to keep a Sabbath commandment, they would have been beaten or killed; the only other option would have been to deliberately disobey God.

For this reason, we have no Sabbath-type of commandment in the Christian system, either. No day of rest is required for the first or the seventh day under our covenant. What would have happened in the first century if slaves who had obeyed the gospel had insisted on having a day of rest? Again, the results would have been catastrophic. The only time period where God’s people could have had a Sabbath of rest was under the Law of Moses when Israel was a theocracy.

Under The Law

Absolutely no controversy exists about what God expected **after** He delivered His people out of Egypt. God began to prepare them for the Sabbath-day commandment in connection with the manna He provided them. They were instructed to gather twice as

much manna on the sixth day and rest on the Sabbath day (Ex. 16:4-5, 22-30), which they did not quite get right the first time, but they soon obeyed the Lord in that matter. Then God spoke His holy law, and it included honoring the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11). The reader cannot help but notice how thorough the work stoppage is; verse 10 explains: “but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gate” (see also Exodus 23:12). An Israelite could not even pay a passerby to plow with his oxen on the Sabbath.

And it is amazing how many more times this prohibition against work is mentioned. Probably the passage most often quoted outside of Exodus 20:8-11 is Exodus 31:14-17:

“You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”

Notice the additional information in this text.

1. The penalty for violating the Sabbath is death.
2. It is a sign between God and the children of Israel forever.
3. It is part of a perpetual covenant.

Notice that the text does **not** say:

1. That the Sabbath was in effect from the Creation onward.
2. That it would be part of the future covenant with Christians.
3. That it was made with all nations.

Some Sabbatarians will surely point out that the word *forever* is used concerning the keeping of the Sabbath. The Hebrew word for “forever” is *olam*. It often meant “age-lasting.” Circumcision was part of an “everlasting (*olam*) covenant” (Gen. 17:13). Yet Paul wrote: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters” (1 Cor. 7:19). The Judaizing teachers insisted that Gentiles be circumcised, but they were wrong and soundly repudiated (Acts 15:1, 23-29). The Passover was an “everlasting” (*olam*) ordinance (Ex. 12:14), but today Jesus is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical system had an “everlasting (*olam*) priesthood” (Num. 25:13), but today we are all priests, and Jesus is our High Priest (1 Peter 2:5; Heb. 3:1; 4:4; et al.). The Sabbath was a part of the covenant that God made with Israel; that law has been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14; cf. Eph. 2:15). The first covenant has been replaced with the far better second covenant (Heb. 8:6-7).

As one reads through the remainder of Exodus and Leviticus, he finds more references to the Sabbath day. In Numbers 15:32-36, a man is stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And, of course, the Ten Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy 5:12-15. What is truly remarkable is that, if God intended the Sabbath day to be the day upon which Christians were to worship just as Israel had done under the Law, He failed to even give one command to do so. Someone might protest, “But there are other ways in which God authorized besides commands.” This is true, and we would do well to review them.

Bible Authority

God has always expected His commandments to be obeyed; that’s the reason He gave them. The Israelites frequently violated the first two commandments—and were eventually taken into captivity for doing so. God does not have to say, “This is a commandment you must keep” for human beings to know they must observe what He said. Jesus, for example, said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). These words appear to be more of an exhortation than a commandment, but the statement,

nevertheless, is true. We cannot logically follow God and disregard what He says to us. All statements that God makes, if they have a universal application, must be obeyed. A specific application would be God's telling Noah to build an ark or telling Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees; these are not universal. We must be able to distinguish between the universal and the specific.

Another example would be when Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show to you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31). He wrote these words when the church actually had miraculous gifts, but in that same text (1 Cor. 13), Paul reveals that the gifts were going to be done away (which is one reason love excels the gifts). So, that text has a specific, rather than a universal application.

Approved examples have also been considered a way of God authorizing a practice. We may not see a command specifically authorizing a practice, but if brethren are engaged in an activity, and there is no criticism of it, and, in fact, it appears to be enjoined, then we consider that approval sufficient authority for Christians to do the same today. Brethren in Corinth, for example, were meeting together as a church (1 Cor. 11:18). When they came together, they ate the Lord's Supper. Was that a command? Possibly. It was something they steadfastly did from the very beginning (Acts 2:42). But we safely follow their lead. They set another example, which is one we avoid at all costs—blending the Lord's Supper with a common meal (1 Cor. 11:18-29). No church anywhere makes that mistake any more. So, we feel confident in following good examples, and we reject the actions performed in a bad example.

The third method of authorizing actions is implication, which was alluded to above. We know that the church, from the very beginning, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." The doctrine that the church believed and practiced, they received from the apostles. Jesus had taught the apostles how to remember His death, and in return they taught the church what to do. We do not need a direct command in such a case because Jesus taught them, and they taught the church. They partook of the bread and the fruit of the vine when they assembled together (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

What Day is Authorized?

Is the Sabbath day the day Christians are to meet for worship? Do we have a command in the New Testament similar to, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"? No. The Sabbath day is mentioned dozens of times in Matthew-John because the Law was in effect. Jesus kept the Sabbath because He lived under the Law—even though there were times He was accused of violating it. Of course, He did not transgress that or any other commandment. But He issued no command concerning the Sabbath as part of the kingdom He would shortly be establishing.

A Sabbath's day journey is mentioned in Acts 1:12, and then nothing else concerning this day occurs until Paul's first missionary journey. In other words, no command to meet on the Sabbath can be found in the text during this time period. The reader finds no example of the church meeting on the Sabbath, and nothing implies that they did, either. But then we find no less than eight references to the Sabbath day. "Aha! See, Christians were meeting on that day!" some would argue. Were they? Let's take a look.

The first four instances are found in Acts 13:14, 27, 42, and 44. In Antioch, Paul and those with him went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Does the text say that they entered in to engage in Christian worship? It does not. They were attentive during the reading of the Law and the Prophets. They were then given an opportunity to speak a word of exhortation to the people (v. 15). Paul took advantage of the opportunity to preach Jesus to them (vv. 16-41). He did so the next Sabbath, also. Paul met with the Jews on the Sabbath for one simple reason—that's the day they had been meeting since the Law was spoken by the Lord at Mount Sinai. What other day could he hope to find them all gathered together? Paul, as a Jew, could meet with his fellow Jews. Presumably, they partook of no false worship when they prayed and listened to the Law and the prophets. But no indication is provided here that this was in any sense Christian worship. It is unlikely the Jews had the Lord's Supper.

Acts 15:21 (the fifth mention of the Sabbath) simply refers to the custom of the Jews

concerning the reading of the Law each Sabbath. The sixth occurrence describes Paul's finding of Lydia in Philippi. She and other women were meeting down at the riverside on the Sabbath. Paul took advantage of this gathering to preach the gospel. He did the same thing for three Sabbaths at a synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-2). Paul had the same opportunity in Corinth (Acts 18:4). None of these eight passages say that Christians were meeting on the Sabbath day; these were all Jews who were still keeping the Law. In fact, the only Christians in these places were the ones traveling with Paul. He was in the process of establishing churches. The reader finds no evidence in these texts that God commanded Christians to meet on the Sabbath day. No example of such an assembly exists on the seventh day, and nothing implies that our brethren in the first century did so.

Mia Ton Sabbaton

On the way home after Paul's third missionary journey, he stopped to meet with the church in Troas. He waited seven days to meet with them. Did they meet on the Sabbath? No, they met on *mia ton Sabbaton*, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Someone might want to argue that this is the Sabbath day, but the KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NAS, the ESV, and even the NIV translate the phrase as "the first day of the week." Thus, we have an example of brethren meeting on that day.

The Bible does not provide every detail that we might want. For example, the events on Pentecost began on the third hour of the morning; the sermon and the baptizing that followed undoubtedly pushed things into the afternoon. What time did they meet for worship that day, since it was the first day of the week? We do not know more than we are told in Acts 2:42. We infer that the church met thereafter on a regular basis for worship, including the Lord's Supper, but the text does not provide any details. We know from 1 Corinthians 16:2 that Paul commanded them to lay aside an offering on the first day of the week. Does anyone imagine they met on the Sabbath for worship and then returned to bring their offering the next day?

One can almost hear Sabbatarians shouting, "Two verses? That's all you've got? Two verses that mention the first day of the week and worship?" While it is true that references are few, it proves to be two more verses than anyone can find for Christians worshipping on the Sabbath day. Under the Law of Moses, the Sabbath day was mentioned prominently. In Christianity, it is not mentioned at all.

The New Covenant

While it is the case that Hebrews 4:9 mentions a rest (*sabbatismos*) for the people of God, this designation is for heaven—not worship on earth. The only other occurrence in the letters is found in Colossians 2:16, but it does not support the idea of the Sabbath day in Christianity; in fact, it is quite the opposite. It appears just two verses after the proclamation that the handwriting of requirements that was against us (the Law of Moses) God took "out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (v. 14). Therefore, Paul advised the brethren not to let anyone judge them "in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Col. 2:16-17).

Since Christians live under a new covenant, they should not be judged for not keeping the things of the old covenant. This attitude relates again to the Judaizing teachers, who insisted that Gentile Christians had to practice circumcision and keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5). The Law of Moses was no longer binding on Jewish Christians, let alone Gentile brethren. Although some may be surprised by this truth, the fact is the first covenant has been replaced (not part of it, but all of it) by the new covenant.

Besides Colossians 2:11-17, there are several other texts. Jesus has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile by abolishing the law contained in ordinances, thus making peace between them (Eph. 2:14-18). The first covenant was faulty and has been replaced by a new covenant (with a better Mediator), which was established on better promises (Heb. 8:6-7). Anyone who appeals to the first covenant as authoritative—who attempts to be justified by it (including the keeping of the Sabbath)—"is a debtor to keep the whole law" and has "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:3-4).

The first day of the week Jesus arose from the dead; so agree Matthew, Mark, Luke,

and John. Jesus appeared to His disciples the same evening of that first day of the week (John 20:19)—and a week later (John 20:26). The Day of Pentecost was the first day of the week, also; on this day the church began. Disciples met on this day to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), and Paul required the Corinthians to put an offering aside that day. What special events occurred on the Sabbath in the New Testament? What assemblies occurred on that day? The main thing that happened was that Jesus had a good rest on that day. He was buried just before the Sabbath began, and He arose after it was completed. The New Testament provides no authority for the Sabbath day being the day for Christians to meet. A day really does make a difference—not only romantically, as in the song mentioned at the outset—but spiritually, as well. Christians are authorized to meet on the first day of the week.

God's Pattern for Worship in The New Testament

Doug Post



Without the Bible we could not truly know God. We could not know how to please Him and be saved by Him. We are hopeless without God because we are unable to direct our own steps (Jer. 10:23). However, God has provided us with instructions, in the form of commands, principles, and examples found in His Word. Therefore, in order for us to properly love and serve Him, we must turn to the Scriptures to discover His Will for us.

This is how God directs our steps—by means of His Word—the Bible, and in no other way. We are completely furnished by His guidance through the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scriptures provide us with directions for conducting ourselves in our daily lives and for the worship and teaching of the church. In fact, God has furnished us with “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3) as found in the Scriptures. The Word of His grace instructs us to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Philp. 2:11-12; cf. Acts 20:32). This is our Divine guidance. What God has provided for us in Scripture is the pattern to follow.

A *pattern* is an *example*, or a *model*, and something from which a *copy* is made. Someone or something may be seen as an example or a pattern to imitate—an exemplar. Closely related to the idea of a pattern is the word *form*, which has to do with shape. A thing or a person may shape or mold another person. Therefore, there is a connection and a relationship with the meaning of the above words pertaining to following God's Pattern.

When we consider the idea of loving God, we are necessarily considering loving His Word – the Truth. Jesus speaks the Truth saying: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). Here we learn from Jesus that there is such a thing as “true worshipers,” implying there is such a thing as “false worshipers.”

Worship Involves Truth, Truth Involves Pattern

Worshipping God in “spirit and truth” is what makes the difference. Jesus had already given this Samaritan woman bad news, and some may be shocked to learn that He told the woman that she and her people were ignorant, saying to her, “You worship what you do not know” (4:22). What had she and her people been doing all this time? Quite simply, they were not offering God “true worship,” implying they were not “true worshipers.” The Samaritans had not been worshipping God correctly for centuries, worshipping at Mt. Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem. From their perspective, they drew near to God with their mouth, but, from God's perspective, they only provided “lip service (cf. Matt. 15:8). Again, worship and/or worship actions are fruitless when folks are disobedient in other areas. The Samaritan woman and her people were deficient, and it was not unkind or unloving for Jesus to say what He did to her. Worshipping is signifi-

cant, worshiping correctly does matter! While we must worship “in spirit,” in genuineness and sincerity, we must also worship God according to “truth”—His Word (John 17:17; cf. John 8:31-32).

Recognizing worship must be in accord with Truth is as vital to the Lord’s church as is Truth itself. While God’s Word is designed to regulate and control our behavior, we must submit to its authority. As finite beings, we have the proclivity to make wrong choices, often because of the desires of the heart (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23; 17:9). This is certainly true when it comes to spiritual matters, including worship. The book of Colossians demonstrates this with a case study:

In his letter to the Colossians Christians, Paul addresses a heresy that was a threat to their faith. It consisted of a variety of elements, including Judaism, Gnosticism (a pagan system claiming supernatural insight), the worship of angels; etc. One component of this philosophy, strongly condemned, was called “will-worship” (2:23). Exactly what is will-worship? J.H. Thayer notes that will-worship is, “worship which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of the faith which ought to be directed by Christ” (*Greek Lexicon*, p.168). Or, as W.E. Vine observes, will worship is “voluntarily adopted worship, whether unbidden or forbidden” (*Expository Dictionary, IV*, p.236). This New Testament admonition is totally at variance with the modern notion that worship is unregulated” (Jackson, 112).

Similarly, there are some who are willing to leave the confines of the Truth and worship God according to their own whims and desires. They are self-willed, imposing worship practices completely foreign to the New Testament of Jesus Christ. The fact is, in rejecting the Truth, they reject the pattern of the New Testament. As the church cannot be separated from Christ (and vice versa), neither can pattern from Truth (and vice versa).

While Truth is designed to regulate human behavior, it is also designed to be understood and followed. But, again, we must handle it correctly (2 Tim. 2:15). Concerning the church at Corinth, Paul said he “planted” and Apollos “watered”:

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase ... as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:6-11).

Jesus said He would build His church (Matt. 16:18). He laid the foundation, but the work continued, involving others who followed, including the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20-21; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28). The construction continues and Jesus continues building His church through the agency of His church (Eph. 3:10-11). The “blueprint” has been provided to follow, namely His Word (John 12:48; cf. 8:31-32). Following His blueprint, we can be sure we are building the way He desires. When the church began on Pentecost, the new disciples “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). They devoted themselves in acts of worship, vital to the church, and continually devoted themselves in the apostle’s doctrine (cf. 2 John 9), adhering to their inspired teaching. New Testament doctrine is the basis of the New Testament church, which is why Paul said “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2).

When it comes to preaching and teaching the Truth, we must not go to the left or to the right (Josh. 1:7) or go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). We must speak exactly as God speaks in His Word (1 Pet. 4:11), or more literally, speaking **Just as** the oracles of God.” Doing “just as” or “exactly” as the Father commanded, is what Jesus did: “but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (John 14:31, NIV). The word “exactly” derives from the Greek word *kathōs*, which is also found in 1 John 2:6: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as (*kathōs*, DP) He walked.” Since Jesus is our example in everything, we can do no less, in doing exactly as He did. Therefore, we must speak and do exactly what is taught in Scripture. The New Testament, or the faith, is the blueprint of the church for all we teach and practice.

The apostle Paul directs our minds to authority, saying: “And whatever you do in word

or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). The phrase “in word and deed” refers to teaching and practice. The word “deed” is the same word for “works,” which some declare are not essential for salvation. However, Paul specifically says we must do only authorized work, contradicting those who say work(s) are not essential for salvation. To say, on one hand, that doing only authorized work is essential, then, on the other, say the work we do must is not essential is a blatant contradiction. Paul specifically says that “whatever” we do “in word or work” that we do only all those things that are “authorized” or “in the name of the Lord.” Doing what is authorized relates back to allowing “the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16). When we allow God’s Word to rule our hearts in all spiritual matters, we will do only that which is “legislated.”

New Testament Worship

When it comes to understanding the Bible and interpretation, many folks quickly become anti-logic, anti-reason, and anti-implication, confusing rational thinking with “Rationalism”. God communicating His Will to mankind through Direct (Explicit) Statements, Examples, and Implication, is antithetical to some since the use of reason is involved. Reason is “kryptonite” to all anti-logicians. Paul reminded Timothy to “hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me” (2 Tim. 1:13), and seven verses later he says: “And the things (the pattern) which thou has heard from me...commit thou to faithful men” (2 Tim. 2:2). He taught Timothy the pattern and he intended for Timothy, and all faithful Christians, to commit the same pattern to others. This implies a perpetual pattern to be taught and followed. The pattern of sound words serve as our authority for all matters of faith and practice. The very fact Christ and the apostles are examples, inherently involve a pattern or blueprint: “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Phil. 3:17).

We know there is such a thing as ignorant worship because Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “You do not know what you worship” (4:22). In that same encounter we learn there is wrong worship since the Samaritans were worshiping God in Gerizim rather than Jerusalem. Paul told the Athenians they were ignorant, worshiping a God they did not know, and such ignorance would not be overlooked (Acts 17:23, 30). Jesus said there is such a thing as “vain worship” (Matt. 15:9), and Paul said there is such a thing called “will-worship” (Col. 2:23). Of course, we also learn there is such a thing as “true worship,” as well as “true worshipers.” Worship is either acceptable or unacceptable, but what makes the difference? Worship must be done in sincerity and genuineness of mind (“in spirit”), with a willingness to do only that which accords with God’s Word (“in truth”).

We find a clear pattern in the New Testament in its teaching and example, “in word and deed.” We can clearly see what they did and did not do. What we find lacking, is the church assembling for the purposes of offering animal sacrifices, the burning incense, having Priests mediate between man and God, and all other Old Covenant worship practices. But we do read about them coming together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), finding them praying, singing, preaching and teaching, giving, and sharing the Lord’s Supper. In one passage, alone, we find three acts of worship: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Here we find “teaching” (doctrine), the Lord’s Supper (the breaking of bread), and prayer, being offered up as acts of worship. An “act of worship” is something done, **collectively**, upon being assembled together, with the intent of paying homage or honoring God. The most common Greek word for worship is *proskuneō*, which means “to kiss the hand toward,” to do obeisance,” “to prostrate oneself,” which is closely akin to the Hebrew word, *shachah*. These terms convey the idea of bowing or prostrating oneself before a superior or before Deity. It is a sign of respect, reverence, and honor.

Worship is often viewed in the imagery of “sacrifice.” Collectively, Christians are priests and a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), and are referred to as “spiritual Israel” (Gal. 6:16)—the church of Christ. As priests and a holy nation, Christians offer up sacrifices, but these sacrifices may **not be just any kind** of sacrifice, any kind of sacrifice we

wish to offer. On the contrary, we are to “offer up spiritual sacrifices **acceptable** to God” (1 Pet. 2:5, emphasis DP). Those who do not offer acceptable sacrifices are said to be “disobedient to the word” (2:8, cf. 2:2). We get a glimpse of worship as a sacrifice from the life of Abraham. His offering up of Isaac as sacrifice was called “worship.” Here we see worship involves an act, or acts, dedicated to God. Worship, therefore, is something we do, which has a beginning point and an ending point. Some contend all we do in life is worship, but here we see that there is an obvious distinction between what is termed “worship” in the sacrifice of Isaac, with what Abraham and Isaac were doing before reaching the place God told Abraham to go (Gen. 22:2-5).

The book of Hebrews offers much regarding the imagery of sacrifice. We learn “singing” is called the “sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips” (Heb. 13:15). The absence of mechanical instruments of music is obvious in the New Testament. Ephesians 5:19 literally says, “...singing (*aeido*) and plucking (*psallo*) the strings of your heart to the Lord.” However, a good rendering is “singing and playing your heart to the Lord.” The word *aeido* means “to sing” and *psallo* means “to pluck the strings,” and when used with *aeido*, it means to play. When used alone, *psallo* could mean “sing” or “play,” depending on the context and if *aeido* was present. However, Ephesians 5:19 specifically provides the instrument to be played, the “heart,” which excludes the use of any other instrument. The Hebrews writer also tells us that acts of benevolence (giving) are also sacrifices Christians offer up to God (Heb. 13:16; cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:13; Phil. 4:18). When it comes to prayer, the Hebrews writer provides the imagery of the High priest offering up gifts and sacrifices for sins, and as such, we may approach the throne of grace with our needs and desires (Heb. 4:14-5:1). The Greek word for *prayer* is *proseuchomai*, which is a derivative of the Greek word *proskuneo*, the very word for *worship*. Therefore, when Christians either assemble or not, and prayer is offered, they are worshiping God. Of course, the Lord’s Supper is all about sacrifice, and remembering by partaking of those emblems representing His body and blood.

This, again, is an act or something that is to be done. Moreover, like the priests of old, and in sacrificial form, we are to: “draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:22-23). Finally, we are told that the Word is living and powerful, able to influence the inward man (Heb. 4:12). Paul says we are to “Preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2). The Hebrews writer speaks of the Lord’s Will, as found in the “second” Covenant, (New Covenant) is that very Will that sanctifies, along with the Sacrifice of Christ, His blood of the New Testament (Heb. 10:9-10; Matt. 26:28). It is to this covenant we are to hold and proclaim (Heb. 2:1-4). Proclaiming the good news of the New Covenant or Testament, for which Christ died (Heb. 9:15-17), is the message that brings about salvation (Rom. 1:16-17; Jas. 1:21), designed to influence the conscience or inner man, in order to effect the appropriate spiritual sacrifice of denying self, taking up one’s cross in order to follow Christ (Matt. 16:24). And so, the church of Christ comes together to worship the Lord.

Editor's Traveling, Recovery, and Preaching

September was a month of wonderful progress for recovery from my stroke that I suffered on Dec. 15, 2020. On Sept. 8 my speech therapist told me that she had done everything she could for me, and the throat doctor said the same thing. They dismissed me and for the first time since Dec. 15, 2020, I am finished with hospitals. My progress is remarkable, considering that I could not make a coherent sentence when I was brought from Oklahoma City to the Great Plains Regional Medical Center in Elk City, Okla. for rehabilitation in the first week of Feb. 2021. **God's** providence guided and blessed me through that ordeal. God does not work miracles today. If He did, He would have healed me instantaneously on Dec. 15, 2020. But He answers prayer by His providence and hundreds of people around the world prayed for me and my family and God answered their prayers. I am preaching two Sundays each month at Yukon, Oklahoma. I preached there Sunday mornings Sept. 11 and 25, and I preached for the Pioneer and Bell church in Elk City, Oklahoma on Sunday evening Sept. 18.

My wife, Sherlene, had worn glasses since she was 14 years old. On Sept. 12 and 13 she underwent surgery for cataracts and glaucoma. Her surgery was successful and the doctor told her that she does not need to wear her glasses any more. We are grateful for God's blessings that He has showered upon us through His providence.

Does God Authorize Women to Lead in Public Worship?

Don Smith

Introduction

In this day and age, it seems that the old paths have been abandoned and the past forgotten. However, God will not have it so, and He forever directs our the aim of our life back to His righteous way—if we are willing: “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jer. 6:16). We find this attitude of rebellion in modern society, in both morals and religious doctrine. Only a return to His Way will result in salvation and the hope of heaven in eternity. Of equal import, if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments and teaching on this subject (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).



Some of what causes man to abandon the will of God in various matters is ignorance of His Holy Writ. Hosea wrote:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (4:6).

Regarding whether God authorizes women to lead in public worship or not, the denominations simply do not care. They have rejected the knowledge of God. What is most alarming is that there are congregations that wear the name of the church of Christ on their buildings who seem not to care what the Bible teaches on this subject either. Perhaps some were once sound and stood on the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Perhaps they at one time required a “thus saith the Lord” for all they taught and practiced. However, for many, this seems not to be the case anymore. In this study, let us notice a pattern as a continual thread spanning from the beginning of time and through the Old Testament, to the home and the New Testament law for it, and into the scriptures that dictate the church on this subject. We will see that the pattern is uniform. With that being said, let us delve into the study of what the Bible teaches on the subject of women in leadership positions in public worship. Whether this be the first time of studying the subject, or having studied the subject many times in the past, let us be willing to examine our practices in view of what the Bible teaches on it.

Aforetime

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

A Divine Order was set out from the start. In the beginning of time, when God set forth His creation in six days, He created man on that sixth day (Gen. 1:26-27). After seeing that “it is not good that the man should be alone” (2:18), God brought forth the woman of Adam’s rib in order for Adam to have an help meet—literally a mate to him (or before him) for help. The woman was created for the man in this divine order. Moreover, upon the fall, God stated, “and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (3:16). This was the order God laid down for Adam and Eve, and all of mankind moving forward.

Taking a look at Noah, his work, and his household, some inferences can be drawn about his wife. The fact that **every** imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was **only** evil **continually** and **all** flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth (Gen. 6:5, 12), and only eight souls (Noah and his household) were saved in the midst of such evil (1 Pet. 3:20), implies that Noah’s wife must have had a very significant role in the salvation of her household. It must also be considered that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5), walked with God (Gen. 6:9), and found grace in the eyes of the Lord (v.8). He certainly had his house in order, in the order which God set forth. There

is no doubt his wife was a great help meet, working under his guidance and in accordance with his direction, contributing to the success of faithfulness in the household.

The same pattern can be found in Abraham and Sarah. Sarah revered her husband in calling him Lord (Gen. 18:12), showing her utter respect for him in his role as leader of the home. Peter, by inspiration, gives Sarah the credit for this, and she is set forth as an example for Christian women to follow (1 Pet. 3:6). It is certain that Sarah would not turn against the pattern and role set out for women. Moreover, Peter teaches that women who follow her godly example are to be called daughters of Sarah (ibid.). These examples of old teach us that God has had a certain pattern through the ages and across cultures for the role of women.

Marriage and The Home

Looking now to marriage and the home as the New Testament directs, the pattern is further outlined there. The new covenant of God teaches that within the home, the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23). Therefore, she is to submit herself to his direction for their lives, so long as such direction does not violate God's law for us today (Eph. 5:22). It can be seen that this is the same role godly wives had in their marriage relationships from the old covenant. Faithful women in the past never shirked this important duty (as far as walking in such sinfulness), and such will not do so today.

Adding to this line of thought, husbands are the head over the children as well, in seeing that they are raised appropriately and with sound teaching. Fathers are directed to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Equally, the father is to be sure not to provoke them to wrath or anger (Col. 3:21). Since the father has directives here, why does not the mother? It is due to the position of responsibility the father has as head over the wife and children.

Overall, husbands are the head over their homes. Wives and children have the God-ordained responsibility to respect that in order for the home to be in harmony with God's will. Husbands have all the forementioned responsibilities, and more, to fulfill their part under the authority of God for the home. Additionally, other matters of the home are under the husband's direction, such as finances and upkeep, though he may delegate these as his wisdom dictates. God's pattern for marriage shows that although the wife has a very important role in this institution, she is not in leadership over the husband within it.

The Church

Coming to the church, as the New Testament outlines its various aspects, a similar pattern is followed. First and foremost, Christ is the Head of the church, as it is His body (Eph. 1:19-23; Col. 1:18). He has been given all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18), and the church being His kingdom (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9), He reigns over it as its sovereign King (Rev. 17:14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-26). Everyone, therefore, is under His authority and dictates in accordance with His word (John 12:48), whether men or women. It was the same aforesaid and in the home, as man has always been under the authority of God.

However, the Lord appointed positions of leadership in the church to men. Elders are to be appointed based on qualifications the Holy Spirit set forth in the word (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; cf. Acts 20:28). Within those qualifications it is stated that an elder must be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). Since a woman can never be the husband of one wife, no matter how perverted left wing society's subjective feelings about so called "gender identity" have become, a woman, by the dictates of God's authoritative word can never hold the office of an elder, nor deacon for that matter (1 Tim. 3:12). Let us not forget, too, that there are many men who would likely never qualify for the office of an elder or deacon.

Coming to the pinnacle of our study, there are two passages from the New Testament that clearly settle our question at hand, does God authorize women to lead in public worship? The first passage comes from 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, wherein God, by the hand of Paul, sets the limitation on women leading in public worship. It states,

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto

them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

It is clear that Paul is teaching them regarding a congregational setting, as verse 33 states, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as **in all churches** of the saints,” and the context goes on to women keeping silence in the churches. Therefore, this scripture teaches a woman is not authorized to lead in public worship, as it is a shame for her to speak in such a capacity. A woman could never, with the authorization of God, preach to a mixed assembly of men and women.

The second passage is, again, from the pen of Paul, wherein from 1 Timothy 2:11-14, he teaches more on this subject. The scripture says,

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

This passage forthrightly states that a woman is to learn in silence with all subjection, and not usurp the authority of the man. By this, a woman cannot take any leadership position within the worship assembly, as it would usurp the authority of the man. Moreover, this is not limited to the culture of the time and region in which it was written, as it spans many cultures from Adam and Eve to the first century. This is certainly written for the church for all time, across all cultures, and all regions. God has simply laid it out in unmistakable language, that women have a very important role, but it does not entail the leadership positions in public worship, which are reserved for men.

Conclusion

God set out the order in 1 Corinthians 11:3, stating, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” The same pattern was followed in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, in the sense that His authority is to rule over our lives (Heb. 13:8). Although many aspects of the old law have changed (Heb. 7:12), a patterned principle pulls forward as New Testament law, that God has always been head, men lead their families in life and worship, and women honor the men in abiding by their sacred duty and important role. Why would God suddenly change everything when it comes to the church, and allow women to be in leadership positions in this sacred body? When it comes to the church, why would He depart from the pattern that has spanned from the beginning of time and through the Old Testament for the home and worship, and into the New Testament law for the home? Does it make any sense that He would suddenly change that pattern for the church and go completely contrary to everything taught on the role of women—especially in view of the New Testament scriptures that teach the forbiddance of women in leadership positions in the church?? He has not changed His way. Man has attempted to, but God’s word stands forever (Matt. 24:35). Let us be faithful in abiding by it, for His word is forever settled in heaven (Ps. 119

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The Lord's Supper in Worship

Harrell Davidson

Our Lord instituted the Supper the evening that Judas had betrayed Him. Judas had left the Passover supper before Jesus instituted it. I will be using the record of Matthew 26 which reads:



And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (vs 26-29),

as well as Mark 14:22-25. These are parallel with Luke 22 also.

The supper is never going to be completely understood or remembered without the background of the Passover record in Exodus 12 and 13. However, the Passover and the Lord's supper are not the same. The Passover was first, then the supper. In fact, the first mention of leaven in the Bible is in Exodus 12:15 and this becomes very useful to us in the partaking of the Lord's Supper in the 21st century.

The children of Israel were ordered to not have any leaven in the house (cf. Ex. 12:15). It was called the feast of "unleavened bread" in verse 17. That was the very night (1500 years later) that our Lord, with the apostles, instituted the supper. Due to the Law of Moses, which Jesus kept, there could have been no other bread available to them other than unleavened. Leaven was to be out of the house and nowhere around and if it was that person was to be cut off from Israel. There is significance in the fact that they were to have no leaven in their house during the days of unleavened bread. This signified that they had put all evil out of their houses. That is the significance of the leaven. Leavened bread denoted corruption and impurity. Every time Israel failed to realize the importance of the day of Passover, they lost their way. Every time they came back there was the instituting of these days of unleavened bread all over again.

Next, the blood had to be applied. Paul wrote, "...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). He became our paschal Lamb and that to take away the sins of the world, but the blood must be applied to our souls through being baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:4). If the blood was not applied to their door posts, their first born would die, as did the first born throughout Egypt. The blood was applied to the door lintel and the family was saved. Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper, we need to remember that Christ is our Passover. We face spiritual death and through the Cross of Christ this can be avoided.

I would like to say something about Judas who betrayed Christ (cf. Mark 14:20,21). Sometime, when you have time, study the chapters in the Old Testament that prophesy the betrayal of Christ. That is Psalms 69 and 109. Peter quotes from these in Acts 1. I had a problem understanding some things about Judas until I went back and studied those chapters. Judas belonged to a class of people. Judas was never mentioned by name in the Old Testament, but rather it was a class of people. Judas by choice allowed himself to belong to that kind of people that would betray Christ.

Let us look at something that can help in understanding the Bible. Jesus took bread and "blessed it and brake it." If we are not careful, we will read into this something that is not really there. He took the cup and gave thanks. This is exactly what "blessed" means. We need to learn to give thanks for the loaf and the fruit of the vine. That is what we learn. Years ago, I learned a lesson about this that has helped me through the years. When we are at the table let us give thanks for the loaf and the fruit of the vine. This is not to be a general prayer. Jesus had one thing in His mind at this point in time. This is not a time to pray for all the sick, and invoke God's blessings on all of us or be thankful for the day and all its blessings. Let us be specific. Jesus knew that He soon would be facing death. In view of this He still gave thanks. This tells us something

about His life and the ordeal that He was to go through.

“And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:24,25). This shows that there would be a spiritual communion beginning at Pentecost between Christ and the people. In 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17 the statement that the cup is the communion of the blood of Christ. This is what He is talking about. Hence, among other things, it denotes fellowship with Christ, God, and one another. We need to realize the meaning of those days of putting leaven out of their house, was a time to examine their own hearts to see if there was any evil that needed to be put out of their lives. It would have changed their hearts. The bread that we partake of on Sunday is that same type of bread. It is not by accident that He took unleavened bread and instituted the Lord’s Supper. This means that every time that I am about to partake of the unleavened bread there is a time that I need to make sure that I have put all the evil out of my life. Are there things in my life that ought not to be there? I need to examine my life before I even leave home. If there is something that ought not to be there, we need to ask the Lord to take that from us as we repent. Let us not forget that this bread was to show the putting away of evil and impurities. The blood of Christ recognized the doing away of the Jewish system and the beginning of a new era.

When Are we to Partake?

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.....” (Acts 20:7). There is an unmistakable allusion to the practice, which began evidently immediately after the resurrection of our Lord, of assembling on the first day of the week for religious purposes. This also shows that the Lord arose on the first day of the week, showed himself to the apostles a second time one week later on the first day of the week, that the church was founded and the Holy Spirit shed forth on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week. On the same day the disciples at Troas meet to break bread, the Corinthians meet, take collections (1 Cor. 16:2). Every week has a first day so every Lord’s Day Christians are to assemble to partake of the supper. From this we derive a spiritual benefit of partaking with our Lord on these occasions. There is **no other day** that is scriptural—has **divine authority**.

Examinations Must Take Place

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

In one sense there is no one worthy to partake of the supper and could not except by the grace and mercy of God. We must come with a pure heart as much as in us is possible. Moreover, the Supper is to be partaken of in remembrance of our Saviour (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24-25).

Here are some things for us to remember in observing the Lord’s Supper. It commemorates Calvary. What do I mean by this? The atonement—how that Christ died for our sins! It means that through what took place on Calvary we are made as one with God, reconciled with God and made friends with God because sin alienates. Being one with God we are made one with another. A recognition that without Calvary I am lost. It is a communion. This has to do with a common sharing. This means fellowship or partakers with. Paul said in chapter 10 that we are partakers of this one body. It is a common sharing that we have in Christ and this tells us that we are united. Why then in Corinth could there be division? It is a reminder of a new covenant. Notice that Christ said, “this cup is the New Testament in my blood.” It tells us that the Law of Moses has been abolished. The word new comes from a Greek word that means “new in kind and quality.” It is a covenant of kind and quality that was dedicated by a better blood. Moses’ law was dedicated by the blood of animals, but not this covenant. It demands concentration. Let a man examine himself. The mind is to concentrate on what this is about. Why examine self? What about my attitudes? Have I been guilty of causing division? How have I lived? Have I lived a penitent life? Do I keep my mind on what all this is

about? If the Corinthians had concentrated on what the Lord's Supper was all about, they would not have had the division. It is reminder of care one for another. The Lord's Supper tells us of God and Christ's love for us. While telling us this, it is a reminder that we are to love one another like Deity loved us. This means care for! How could they ignore the poor if they had understood that the Lord's Supper was a reminder that God cares and as such we ought to care. We must not ignore the fact that there is a benevolent attitude in it.

Contention, which is division, is to be avoided. When we partake of the Supper we ought to ask, "Am I contentious and have a divisive spirit?" If so then I need to repent of that. We cannot be contentious and divisive and partake of the Supper with God's approval. We would not have factions if we realized that we are all one and we cannot be contentious and be one in Christ. We cannot eat and drink worthily with this kind of spirit. I must examine my heart. We have a common aim and common goal.

Our very being around the Lord's Table should suggest that we are all living for the same purpose—a common cause. We are committed to the Lord and all that the Table signifies. Do we think that we have hand in hand and heart in heart that we are all working for a common cause? There is the common expectation that He is coming again. To partake of the Supper is to say that I believe with all my heart that He is coming back. All these things are involved partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is not just a ritual that we go through—it has meaning and purpose.

Singing in Worship

Jess Whitlock

Singing is authorized as an act of worship to God. "When they had **sung** a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). "About midnight Paul



and Silas were praying and **singing** hymns unto God..." (Acts 16:25).

"...I will **sing** with the spirit, and I will **sing** with the understanding

also." (1 Cor. 14:15). "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns

and spiritual **songs, singing** and making melody with your hearts to

the Lord." (Eph. 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in

all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and

hymns and spiritual **songs, singing** with grace in your hearts unto

God." (Col. 3:16). "In the midst of the congregation will I **sing** thy

praise" (Heb. 2:12b). "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is

any cheerful? Let him **sing** praise." (Jam. 5:13). In light of the Scrip-

ture how can anyone doubt that it is right to sing songs of praise to God? The teaching is always and only to sing!

We cannot find a command, example, necessary inference or precept in the New Testament to bring in any kind of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God the Father. No man living can find where the Gospel of Christ authorizes the addition to worship in song, the organ, piano, guitar, et al. When man adds to the singing, mechanical instruments of music, we are going beyond what God has authorized. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). When we add instrumental music to our worship, we transgress the Word of God. We have added that which God has never authorized. We no longer abide in the doctrine of Christ.

What About the Greek Word *Psallo*?

The words "making melody" in Ephesians 5:19 are from the Greek word *psallo*. This one Greek word has been in the forefront of all discussions about the addition of mechanical instruments of music into the worship of God in song. The overwhelming majority of the denominational world is in favor of adding the mechanical instruments of music to the worship to God in song. The word *psallo* does mean to "pluck, to twitch, to pull the strings": but in every instance where the word *psallo* is found, look at the scholarship:

...to twitch; to touch, strike the strings of chords of an instrument...to play on

a stringed instrument; to sing to music; in the New Testament to sing praises, Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Jam. 5:13 (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 441).

...to pluck off, pull out...the hair, to cause to vibrate by touching, to touch or strike the cord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate...to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp; in the New Testament to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song (*Thayer's Lexicon*, p. 675).

...to play on a harp, but in the New Testament, as in James 5:13, to sing a hymn" (*Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Moulton & Milligan, p. 697).

It is noteworthy that in defense of instrumental music in worship, these scholars are quoted in the first part of these definitions, until the scholars mention "in the New Testament." Then, out come the spiritual blinders! None are so blind, as those who will not see!

Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic theologian wrote: "Our church does not use musical instruments as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize." (*Bingham's Antiquities*, Vol. 2, p. 483).

Brother M.C. Kurfees stated:

...by actual count, 146 secular and 77 ecclesiastical authors...a grand total of 594 authors covering a period of 1,200 years...not a single example of *psallo*...implying the use of an instrument, but it always and everywhere meant "to chant, sing religious hymns (*Instrumental Music in the Worship*, p. 47).

Conybeare & Howson wrote:

Make melody with the music of your hearts to the Lord...let your songs be, not the drinking of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart (*Life & Epistles of Saint Paul*, pp. 714-715).

There is an instrument actually mentioned in Ephesians 5:19. "...singing and making melody in your **hearts** to God." The specified instrument is the **heart of man!** We are not under the authority of the Old Testament, but consider this: "Sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp; with the harp and the voice of melody." (Psa. 98:5). The Septuagint translation from the Hebrew into the Greek uses the word *psallo*. If the instrument of music is inherent in the word *psallo*, then why does the Psalmist mention the harp twice in that verse?

"In the Greek church the organ never came into use. But after the 8th century, it became more and more common in the Latin church; not, however, without opposition from the side of the monks." (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 1,702).

Alexander Campbell observed: "I presume to all spiritually-minded Christians, such aid (mechanical instruments of music—JLW) would be as a cowbell in a concert."

J.W. McGarvey commented: "We cannot adopt the practice (instruments of music—JLW) without abandoning the only ground upon which a restoration of New Testament Christianity can be accomplished."

The 47 scholars that translated the KJV; the 101 scholars that translated the ASV (1901); and the 130 scholars that translated the NKJV; were all in full agreement that the Greek word *adontes* is best rendered into English, by the word *sing*. If, as some claim, the mechanical instrument is inherent in the Greek word *psallo*, then the instrument of Ephesians 5:19 is a command to **each member**. In order to be consistent, if someone says that instrument is a piano, then in a church with 100 members, you must have 100 pianos! I strongly suspect they will not be consistent! The apostle Paul in poignant style announces that we are to **sing** unto the Lord and to *psallo* with the **heart**. The simplicity is seen in that the heart of man is the instrument.

Religious Notables Have Said About Mechanical Instruments in Worship:
John Calvin, the founder of the Presbyterian Church: "Musical instruments in cele-

brating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the Law.” (*Calvin’s Commentary*, 33rd Psalm).

Adam Clarke, was a Methodist theologian and scholar: “Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instrumental music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.” (*Clarke’s Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 684).

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church: “I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither seen nor heard.” (*Clarke’s Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 684).

Martin Luther, founder of the Lutheran Church: “The organ in the worship is the en-sign of Baal.” (*McClintock & Strong Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, p. 762).

Charles Spurgeon, was the greatest of Baptist preachers:

I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery...one can make melody without strings and pipes...we do not need them. Sing unto Him...this is the sweetest and best music (*Instrumental Music in the Worship*, M.C. Kurfees, p. 196).

Spurgeon preached to 10,000 every Sunday in London for over 20 years. He never allowed instrumental music with the singing, whenever he did the preaching during the worship hour.

On a personal note, I had the privilege of hearing the late brother **Guy N. Woods** in several Gospel meetings, which included his “Question and Answer” session to Bible questions. In Oklahoma he received this question: “Brother Woods, what is the difference between the piano and a song leader who uses a pitch pipe?” Brother Woods quoted a few Scriptures and then said: “The difference between the piano and the pitch pipe is that the pitch pipe has enough common sense to know when to **shut up!**”

Singing, Humming, and “Ahh-ing”?

I spent many hours with the late brother J.T. Marlin, my friend, mentor, and brother in the Lord. He once received a phone call from a sister who had visited a congregation on vacation. She explained to J.T. that when the Lord’s Supper was being observed, the song leader had the congregation to hum the tune to the hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” She asked J.T. if he thought that was acceptable. J.T. replied: “Why of course it is...” and quoted Ephesians 5:19, but after the word “songs” and before “and making melody,” J.T. purposefully added the word “humming.” The sister responded that Ephesians 5:19 did not have the word “humming.” J.T. said, “Sister, I knew that you knew Paul did not say that! So then, why are you calling me?”

Once a brother in Christ called me after he had visited another congregation. He told me they sang a few songs where the brethren were instructed to “ooh” and “ahh” during certain songs (it was printed that way in the songbook). I took a lesson from J.T. and had him look at the Scripture. “**Teaching** and **admonishing** one another...” (Col. 3:16). “**Speaking** to yourselves...” (Eph. 5:19). Humming does **not** and **cannot** teach nor admonish. Ooh-ing and Ahh-ing does not and cannot speak. Speaking involves the use of words.

The Bible is plain that we are to teach and admonish one another in song. Paul wrote: “...I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Cor. 14:15b). Intelligible words make it possible for men to sing with understanding. Humming does not and cannot do so! Oohing and Ahhing does not get the job done either.

Sing, Sang, Sung and Prayer?

The late brother J.T. Marlin once said to me. “Any doctrine that is not as old as the pages of the New Testament, is by comparison, a **new doctrine.**” (*The Gospel Journal*, ed. Dub McClish, Nov. 2004, p. 16). A preacher stated: “We have no authority to sing to Jesus.” An elder said to me: “If you sing to Jesus in first person, you are praying to Jesus.” A wise and respected Gospel preacher told me that he ran into this **new doctrine** as early as 1989. My first encounter with this “new teaching” and “new thing” (Acts 17:19, 21), was in south Texas. Dozens of congregations have experienced

sharp contention and even division over whether or not we can sing a song of praise to Jesus.

We have **no Scriptural right** to pray to Jesus, **only** To God our heavenly Father. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are parallel passages. The contexts include prayer. “Giving thanks always for all things **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** to God, even the Father.” (Eph. 5:20). “whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all **in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Col. 3:17). We sing to “one another” (Col. 3:16), but we “give thanks...to God even the Father” (Eph. 5:20). “And whatsoever ye shall ask in **My name**, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:13)

That means that singing and prayer are not the same act of worship, but two separate acts of worship. We can sing error as well as teach error. I admit that we have songs in our hymnals that directly say they are a prayer to Jesus, obviously such songs should not be sung (i.e., *Tell it To Jesus Alone, Just a Little Talk with Jesus*; etc.). Prayer is to specifically directed to the Father (Matt. 6:9). We are prohibited from taking our petitions to Jesus Christ (John 16:23). I am unable to find a single reference in the New Testament that states our singing songs of praise has been limited to the Father, or that we cannot sing a song of praise to Jesus.

Is it Acceptable to Praise Jesus?

...to the end that we should be unto the **praise** of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ...unto the **praise** of His glory (Eph. 1:12, 14c).

In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy **praise** (Heb. 2:12).

...that ye should show forth the **praises** of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9, KJV).

Is it Acceptable to Worship Jesus?

When Christ walked upon this earth, He received worship on numerous occasions (Matt. 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6, 22; Luke 24:52; John 5: 23; 9:38). Not one time did Christ refuse such worship.

And they sing a new song, saying, **Worthy** art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue...**Worthy** is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing...and the elders fell down and **worshipped** (Rev. 5:9, 12, 14b).

Is it Acceptable to Glorify Jesus?

And He taught in their synagogues, being **glorified** of all (Luke 4:15).

...but when Jesus was **glorified**, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him...the hour is come, that the Son of man should be **glorified** (John 12:16, 23).

Now is the Son of man **glorified**, and God is **glorified** in Him (John 13:31).

That the name of our Lord Jesus may be **glorified** in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:12).

We have just learned that it is acceptable and Scriptural to praise Jesus, to worship Jesus, and to glorify Jesus. Yet, some still contend that we cannot sing a song that offers praise to Jesus. What am I missing here? In my possession I have three lists of songs, on what I call **Hit Lists**. The lists are composed by elders, or preachers, or song leaders; sometimes a combination of these brethren. The song, “Amazing Grace” is found on one list, but not the other two. Sometimes a particular song is found on two of the lists. This reminds me of the creeds, manuals, dogmas of men in the denominational world. There is no consistent agreement. If a song is truly unscriptural to be sung, then why is it not found on all three **Hit Lists**? Could it be because of personal opinions held by one brother, but not another? Perhaps a refresher course in Romans chapter 11 is in order to help remedy this sad situation.

In southern Texas an elder of the church was asked about why a particular song had

been **marked** in their songbook on the basis that it was not Scriptural. A fine Christian couple confronted him after services. They showed him that the song was a portion of the Scripture that had been set to music (many such songs are found in our songbooks). He looked at the passage and looked at the songbook. In a little while he slammed the Bible down, and angrily exclaimed, “We are not here to study the Bible, we are here to study the songbook!” Was this elder (?) saying that our hymnals are of more authority than the Bible?

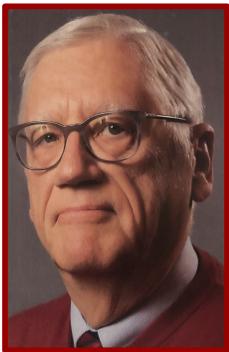
Brother Tillit S. Teddlie was a fine Gospel preacher, taught many singing workshops, published 14 church hymnals, and wrote at least 130 hymns. Some have put his song: “Worthy Art Thou” on a **Hit List!** I find that to be incredulous! The song is rooted in the words of Revelation 5:12. It states that the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is worthy “to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” It is the singing of a “new song” (Rev. 5:9). Are we ready to say that Revelation 5:9-ff. should be omitted from the Bible on the basis of being **unscriptural**? The **Hit Lists** that eliminate the song: “Worthy Art Thou” in order to be consistent, need to take the proverbial **penknife** and eliminate Revelation 5:9-12, along with hundreds of other Scriptures from the Bible!

It is hard to realize that congregations are still dividing and disrupting the local church over this **song business**. Many seem to have confused songs of praise **to** Jesus Christ with a **prayer** to Jesus Christ. The two are not second cousins! As we have noted **singing** is one act of worship, and **prayer** is another act of worship. But they are **not the same act** of worship. How long must the brotherhood be divided over things that are “**not**” matters of faith, but matters of opinion or personal preference? Brethren, let us think on these things.

May we always seek to “sing with the spirit ... and with the understanding also” (1 Cor. 14:15b). The Thessalonians were commended for “...examining the scriptures daily...” (Acts 17:11). Perhaps it is past time that we expend some effort **examining** the hymnals in our pew backs!

Preaching In Worship

Lester Kamp



Jesus was a preacher. In fact, Matthew organizes his account of the life of Jesus on earth around five sermons that Jesus preached (chapters 5-7; 10, 13, 18, 23-25). Jesus gave the “great commission” to His disciples as recorded by Mark, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:16). Luke’s inspired history of the early church, the book of Acts, includes more than a dozen sermons or parts of sermons. Clearly preaching was an important part of the life of Jesus and an important activity of the First Century church, the followers of Jesus.

Notice clearly that preaching was part of the worship of the New Testament church according to the book of Acts. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). First, note that this is an approved apostolic example of preaching as part of worship. Second, note that this preaching was part of that assembly of the church and that the sermon was directed toward all those who were present (i.e. “Paul preached to them”).

“Preaching the word” requires reproof, rebuking, exhorting and teaching (doctrine) (2 Tim. 4:2). These requirements relate to the church. Each of these is necessary to keep the church built up (edified) and guided away from error and instructed according to the guidance of God’s Word. It cannot be over-emphasized that the basis for all preaching is the Word of God. The sermons in Acts are almost entirely based on and saturated with Old Testament Scripture (note: the New Testament was not available at that time in written form). Inspired preaching in the apostolic age was “book, chapter, and verse” preaching. Preaching is not intended to be entertainment; it is not intended

to be a display of one's educational prowess; it is not to be focused on the style of delivery, dress of the proclaimer, or eloquence of his presentation. Preaching as part of worship is to be instruction from God's Word. Paul stated,

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among, save Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

Remember that when Paul gave the Corinthians inspired guidance regarding their use of miraculous spiritual gifts (miraculous spiritual gifts like the speaking in languages ended in the First Century) in their church assemblies he emphasized the importance of the understanding of the congregation. For this reason, Paul emphasized the superior value of prophesying (preaching) in these words, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). The messages (sermons) were to be understood. Sermons are to result in "edification, exhortation, and comfort."

This kind of preaching is not always acceptable to those hearing it. Paul wrote, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Paul here reminded us of two important things. 1) People will sometimes prefer to hear fables (lies) rather than sound (healthy) doctrine, the truth. This was true then, and it is certainly true today. Some people want to have their ears scratched and don't want to hear anything that might make them feel uncomfortable. 2) There are a "heap" of teachers out there and sometimes hiding in the church who are more than willing to "preach" anything the people want to hear. But, the remedy for this is not to compromise the truth, not to omit from the truth those parts which make the people feel uncomfortable, and not to water down the message; the remedy is to "preach the Word, be instant (urgent, ASV) in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). Brother Keeble used to say that this means both when people like it and when people don't like it. He was right. People's reaction should never determine what is to be preached.

Paul described his preaching in Ephesus by saying, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the (whole, ASV) counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). This is what every preacher is to do. Whenever an eldership prohibits preaching on certain subjects or certain passages of Scripture, something is terribly wrong. No preacher who desires to be pleasing to God should accept such strictures. Every congregation needs to hear everything that God has revealed in His Word. This is the only way for a person to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Certainly, preaching should be "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), but love for God, love for the lost and love for the saved would not cause a preacher to keep back "nothing that was profitable", but to "warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:20, 31) as Paul did.

Another aspect of preaching includes the recognition of the fact that within those assemblies there were (are) the "unlearned" (i.e. non-Christians) (1 Cor. 14:16). Preaching is to be evangelistic. Sinners are to be convicted of sin and then told what they need to do according to God's plan of redemption to be saved. The sinners present may also include Christians who have erred from the truth and need to be converted (Jas. 5:19-20). All these souls are lost and need to hear the gospel of Christ, the only means of salvation (Rom. 1:16). They need to know God's plan through Christ for saving them. They need to be told what they need to do to be saved (Acts 16:30). Therefore, any sermon that does not include these salvation essentials falls short because no one knows when they will have the last opportunity to obey before life is gone or our Lord returns. There is always to be an urgency in preaching! Souls are in jeopardy!

It should also be mentioned that there are two sides to preaching. When thought is given to the acts of worship that God has authorized, some tend to think that preaching is something that only the preacher does and the rest of the people present are passive. That is **not** the case. The way a person listens to the sermon is an essential part of this act of worship. Notice when Peter preached to Cornelius and his household we are told that they were present "to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts

10:33). They were there to “hear all things” that God had commanded Peter to preach. They were not there to make decisions about what part of the sermon they liked and to discard the rest. They were eager to hear all of God’s commands.

Jesus said, “Take heed, therefore, how ye hear” (Luke 8:18). Those that listen to the sermon are to be discriminating while they listen. They are to insist that what they are hearing is the “doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9-11). The listeners are to be as the Bereans who “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). This verse means: eager to learn the truth and examining what is taught to the Scripture. People are not to look at worship as something to be avoided or reluctantly endured. This includes preaching. We should not duplicate the attitude of Israel in the days of Malachi who thought of worship, “behold what a weariness it is!” (Mal. 1:13). Drawing close to God should be a joy to everyone who loves the Lord!

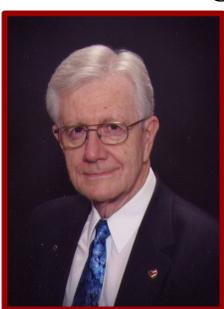
When sermons are preached those that listen should be encouraged to take notes for later reference and should be encouraged to open their Bibles and read, when possible, the Scriptures that are cited. (As a preacher, I have always loved to hear the sound of the turning of Bible pages while I preach.) After the sermon ends, more study should be given to what has been said. During the sermon should not be the only time when the searching of the Scriptures is done, but as the Bereans this should be done “daily.”

The Thessalonians should be commended here. “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thes. 2:13).

Preaching is a part of worship. Preaching requires that the Word of God is proclaimed. Preaching requires that those that hear discern the Word of God with an eagerness to learn the truth and apply that truth to their lives. Preaching should bring everyone closer to God and urge obedience to God’s Word. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And shall they hear without a preacher?...How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:14-15). “The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa. 19:9-10).

Praying in Worship

Dub McClish
Introduction



While leaving a more detailed definition to another article in these pages, we may generally define *worship* as man’s expression to God of his love, exaltation, praise, and thanksgivings. God has never left men to their own devices and innovations regarding worship. No human being has ever known one thing about what pleases God in worship apart from His revelation of this information. He revealed this information to His Old Testament chosen people through Moses, requiring them to strictly adhere to it (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; etc.). Millions of Israelites perished under God’s wrath because of their unauthorized/forbidden behaviors, many of them relating to God-ordained worship.

The Lord Jesus declared that He and His Father demand the same strict adherence concerning worship on the part of His New Testament people, Christ’s church: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24; cf. Rev. 22:18–19). Another article in this edition of *The Gospel Preceptor* fully discusses, the *worship in truth* injunction of John 4:24, meaning **according to the truth** (which Christ identified as His Father’s revealed Word [John 17:17]). Jesus stated it plainly: “But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Mat. 15:9). What we do in worship to God and His Son surely falls under the

purview of Paul's inspired command: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). This mandate proscribes the innumerable "worship" innovations.

The Bible is God's means of addressing **men** through **words** (1 Cor. 2:4, 6, 10, 13). **Prayer** is the sublime privilege God provides to His children to "make [y]our requests known unto God" by "draw[ing] near...unto the throne of grace..." by our **words** (Phi. 4:6b; Heb. 4:16; emph. DM). It involves, praise, intercessions, supplications, thanksgivings, and requests (Acts 4:24; Eph. 3:14–19; Phi. 4:6; et al.). It is one of the most significant and frequent subjects of Scripture. It is not merely a thread in the fabric of Holy Writ; it is a major pattern of that fabric. Obviously, *worship* and *prayer* are intimately related. Whether uttered in privacy, engaged in by a family in a daily devotional period, or led by some brother in a meeting of the church, prayer is innately an act of worship.

A Brief Biblical "History" of Prayer

The pre-Mosaic Biblical history preserves comparatively few instances of prayer (e.g., Abraham's intercession for Sodom [Gen. 18:23–32]). The Mosaic era, however, is rife with records of it, uttered both publicly and privately. These begin with Moses and Joshua and proceed through many of the judges, prophets, and kings, as well as "ordinary" persons (e.g., Manoah [Jud. 13:8], Hannah [1 Sam. 1:10–15], et al.). Prayers dominate the book of Psalms.

We should thus not be surprised to find that the Father's only begotten Son was a man of prayer. Although He lived and died under the Law of Moses, His examples and instructions on prayer most certainly apply to His disciples this side of the Cross. The Gospel accounts tell of His prayers in numerous and varied settings, involving both public and private occasions. He often stole away to some remote and private place to address His Father. He also prayed in the presence of others, both few and many (e.g., some or all his apostles, those gathered at Lazarus' tomb, before He fed the 5,000 and the 4,000, in the presence of those who witnessed His agony at Calvary, et al.). He not only taught His disciples **to pray** by His example; He also taught them both the way **not to** and the way **to** pray (Mat. 6:5–13; 18:10–14; etc.). He exhorted His hearers "...always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

The authority of the Law of Moses and the age it controlled ended with Jesus' death (Eph. 2:13–16; Col. 2:12–14; etc.). As prayer was a frequent activity of God's people in that obsolete era, it is no less significant in the age of the resurrected Christ and His kingdom/church. *Acts* through *Revelation* is replete with records of the saints praying. These records include examples, exhortations, and instructions, and they involve prayers uttered in private and in both large and small groups of brethren—and often involving one or more of the apostles (Acts 2:42; 4:23–31; 6:6; 9:12, 40; 12:5, 12; 13:3; 14:23; ad infinitum).

Prayer and the Church's Meetings for Worship

Undeniably, from its beginning, the church in all its locales had gatherings for worship, edification, and fellowship. These assemblies occurred at various times and for various purposes. The church in Jerusalem began meeting immediately upon its beginning, and it met daily for some time thereafter; its meetings specifically included prayer (Acts 2:41–42, 46).

The book of Acts and the epistles gradually unfold the history of the church's numerical growth and geographical spread. This history reveals that, while brethren met at various times with apostolic sanction (as indicated above), the Divinely authorized, ordered, and universally observed day of assembling for worship was "...upon the first day of the week..." The special significance of this day for the church should come as no surprise when we learn that the Lord's resurrection occurred on that day (Mat. 28:1–6; Mark 16:1–2, 9; Luke 24:1–3; John 20:1–9). Further, Pentecost, the day of the church's establishment and of its first meeting (Acts 2:1), was always "on the morrow after the Sabbath" (Lev. 23:15–16).

It is certain that prayer was a God-ordained part of those Lord's Day assemblies. The description of the first meeting of the church, as mentioned above, included the follow-

ing:

They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the, of bread and the **prayers** (Acts 2:41–42, emph. DM).

Another article in this special issue on *worship* will concentrate specifically on the Lord's Supper. However, since that sacred memorial involves prayer in the church's worship assemblies, I can't avoid giving considerable attention to it, also. If there were no further evidence that prayer was an innate part of the Lord's Day assemblies, the Christ-ordained observance of the Lord's Supper would be evidence aplenty, for it **involved prayer**. The Lord's Supper was observed by the church each Lord's Day from its beginning, as the following establishes:

1. The church's initial assembly on the first day of the week not only particularly included prayers; it also included the Lord's Supper. This fact is seen by the reference to its "...continuing stedfastly...in the breaking of bread..." (Acts 2:42). This phrase doesn't refer to a meal of physical food. All the activities of that first meeting are spiritual in nature, including "the breaking of bread," which is a synecdoche for the Lord's Supper in its entirety.

2. In instituting His Supper, Jesus prefaced the partaking of each element of the supper by the apostles with a **prayer** of thanksgiving (Mat. 26:26–27; Mark 14:22–23; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25). **Note:** The prayer-phrases, *Father, bless this bread...*, *bless this fruit of the vine*, so often heard at the Lord's Table in our assemblies, display a woeful misconception of the phrase, *Jesus took bread, and blessed* ("blessed it..." KJV) (Mat. 26:26). (The KJV contributes to this misconception by adding the impersonal pronoun *it*, absent in the Greek text.) Jesus didn't **ask** the Father's "blessing" on the bread and what it symbolizes; these most certainly already had His blessing! Verse 27 is an inspired "commentary" on the meaning of *blessed* in v. 26: "And he took a cup and **gave thanks...** (emph. DM)." Moreover, both Luke and Paul say plainly that the Lord **gave thanks** for the bread, even as He did for the fruit of the vine (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23–24). The Lord's prayers at His Table were prayers of thanksgiving—as ours should also be, following His example. Ironically, over many years, I have observed in my travels about the nation in Gospel meetings and lecture-ships that thanksgiving is seldom mentioned by those who lead prayers at the Table of the Lord.

3. The first explicit reference to the saints' meeting on the first day of the week is in Acts 20:7 in the city of Troas: "And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight." As *the breaking of bread* in the church's first assembly in Jerusalem is a synecdoche for the Lord's Supper (2:42), so it is here. It is also in a setting of spiritual activities in both instances.

4. The Corinthian church observed the Lord's Supper, although it was corrupting this sacred memorial (1 Cor. 11:17–34). By implication they were doing so on "the first day of the week." Near the close of Paul's letter to them, he wrote:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come (1 Cor. 16:1–2).

Note that he didn't order them **to meet** on the Lord's Day, only to give their money on the first day of the week, the day on which he knew that they **were already meeting**—and observing the Lord's Supper—including its **attendant prayers**. Significantly, the NASB and other versions render verse 2 above, "On the first day of every week," which the Greek text supports, and which Paul's statement implies, even without the inclusion of the word, *every*.

Conclusion

Jerusalem, Troas, and Corinth were by no means the only early churches that observed the Lord's Supper as they met every first day of the week. What Paul ordered the Corinthian church to do, he had already ordered the churches of Galatia to do (1 Cor. 16:1). Moreover, other Scriptural evidence indicates the universality of the first day of the week meetings of the apostolic churches. Paul taught the same things "...everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17; cf. 11:16; 14:33; Col. 4:16;). Prayer to our heavenly Father, in the name of His Son (Col. 3:17) was indisputably a part of every Lord's Day assembly of the saints under the direct teaching and leadership of the inspired apostles.

The early saints were a prayerful people, both individually and collectively. Any member of the Lord's church can pray by himself or herself, and we can pray in our homes or with groups of brethren on any day of the week. Our study has shown beyond doubt, however that prayer is a basic and inherent avenue of worship in the Christ-ordained/mandated worship assembly of His people each first day of the week.

Freewill Giving in Worship

Nana Yaw Aidoo

What a blessing and a privilege it is to worship God. What a wonderful blessing and a high privilege it is to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). So enamored was the Psalmist with this exalted privilege that he wrote:

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand (Psa. 95:1-7).



While it is a privilege to worship God, what some have failed to realize however is that in addition to this privilege, worship is a great responsibility. Man's responsibility in worship is to worship God just as He has prescribed. As a result of a failure of some Bible characters to realize this awesome truth they offered to God worship that was not after the "due order" (1 Chr. 15:13), with some even paying for this error with their lives (cf. Lev. 10:1-3).

Human pride resents the idea that "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Nonetheless it is still the case that just as God expected those of old to do "according to" His word on all issues so He commands that everything we teach and practice today be authorized by Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). Jesus Christ told the woman at the well that the kind of worshippers the Father seeks and will continue to seek is those who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). To worship **in spirit** is to worship in sincerity of heart and spirit (cf. Josh. 24:14; Rom. 1:9) and to worship **in truth** is to worship according to God's word, which is truth (John 17:17).

While Satan and his change agents would have us believe that merely being relevant in this world is God's desire for His children today irrespective of whether or not such relevance comes at the expense of God's word, we say with no doubt at all in our minds that whether or not we achieve relevance, the only way forward in religion is to return to "the old paths" of God's inspired word (Jer. 6:16). This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong. That being the case, we will now turn our attention to what God's word says concerning freewill giving in worship.

Did the Apostolic Church "Give" as an Expression of Worship?

There is no doubt that the early church gave of their means as an act of worship. The

inspired historian wrote:

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need (Acts 4:34-35).

While we are not obligated to sell all our property (many in the early church owned property they did not sell cf. Rom. 16:3-5; Phm. 2, 22) and bring the proceeds to the church, this account establishes beyond all reasonable doubt that giving was a part of the worship of the early church.

Moreover, we see in Paul's letters to the Corinthians evidence of giving as an expression of the worship of the early church:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Why else would Paul devote two chapters in the second epistle to the Corinthians to the subject if giving was not a part of their worship? Due to the fact that the early church gave as an expression of worship, when Johann Lorenz von Mosheim a man who has been described as an "ecclesiastical historian of great merit" studied the matter of the early church's worship he observed that, "Every Christian, who was in an opulent condition, and indeed every one, according to their circumstances, brought with them gifts, and offered them, as it were, unto the Lord" (as cited by Jackson).

There is no helping anyone who in spite of the abundance of biblical evidence and testimony of church historians contends that giving was not a part of the worship of the early church.

Giving as an Inspired Order

Having established that giving was a part of the early church's worship, let us now look at what we learn about giving from Paul's epistles to the Corinthians.

The first lesson is that giving is an order. Now concerning the collection for the saints, **as I have given order** to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

The collection was an inspired order given not just to the Corinthians but also to the Galatians. In fact, to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2). The early saints could no more dispense with this directive than they could with the directive to partake of the communion in remembrance of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-30). This order also impresses on our mind the fact that giving was the only means by which the church was authorized to finance its activities. I am aware that some have used 2 Corinthians 8:8 as "proof" that giving is not a command. However, far from saying that giving isn't a command, what the apostle is actually saying is that he is not commanding them to abound in the same manner as the Macedonian churches who gave beyond their ability (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-7). I cannot improve on these comments by Matthew Poole on 2 Corinthian 8:8:

I do not speak in an imperious way, as one that commandeth you; or rather, God hath no where given an express command as to the quantum of what you should give; but the forwardness of others makes me thus speak to you, as not being willing you should in good works come behind any churches; and that I might prove the sincerity of your love, to God, to me, and to the poor afflicted saints that are in Judea. Though God hath not directed the particular sums we should give to those that are in need, yet he hath given us general rules; That we should give as God hath prospered us, 1 Cor. 16:2; and so as there may be some equality, as the apostle speaketh, 2 Cor. 8:14. So, as the sincerity of our love to God dependeth in some measure upon the proportion of what we give at his command, so doth also the sincerity of our love to those poor members of Christ that are in want; that there may be a moderate supply for their want, from our abundance.

The “When” of Giving

Not only do we learn that we cannot do away with giving as an element of worship, we also learn how frequently we are to give. **Upon the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.

The inspired order Paul gave to the churches was that they were to ensure they gave of their means on the first day of every week. Yes, the KJV says first day of the week. However, inasmuch as every week has got a first day, then the faithful Christian should not waste their time arguing about whether or not Paul meant **every** week. When God told the Jews to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exo. 20:8), I doubt there was any Jew foolish enough to ask Moses whether or not he meant **every** Sabbath day.

One should budget his finances, therefore, so as to be able to give **each Lord’s day**. If one is ill, or away, thus unable to contribute at his local congregation, he should make provisions to leave his contribution behind or else make it up when he returns (Jackson).

The “Who” of Giving

The third lesson is that the command to give on the first day of every week was directed to the individual members of the church. Notice carefully what the apostle wrote: **let every one of you** lay by him in store as God hath prospered him. It is therefore the responsibility of each and every individual Christian to give as he or she has received from God. Every Christian in the local congregation must do his or her part. It is neither fair nor right to let the burden of the church’s finances rest on just a few men and women (2 Cor. 8:13-15). Jackson offers some helpful thoughts in this regard:

For each family income, there must be a gift. If the husband is the sole wage earner, he obviously will be the only source for a gift. If the wife has a separate income, she must contribute from that as well. When Christian teens have a job, they must give from their income. If they receive an allowance, a portion of that belongs to the Lord. If older folks are on social security, they are not exempt from this act of worship. “Each one” means “everyone” who prospers to any degree—rich or poor, young or old, male or female.

The “How Much” of Giving

In addition to what we have already learned, the apostle teaches us how much to give in order to please God. He says the Christian is to give, **as God hath prospered him**. This is what some have termed proportionate giving. What this phrase means is that the more money one makes the more he is to give. Pilgrim was right in saying that “if you are still giving what you did before your last raise(s), and if you were properly giving then, you cannot now be giving according to your prosperity” (52). The Christian who desires much blessings from God should match that energy by sowing bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6).

Concerning how much to give Brownlow makes this apt suggestion for our consideration: “Since we are stewards, perhaps each should ask, “How much shall I keep?” instead of, “How much shall I give?” (30). The reason why God couched how much the Christian is to give in this kind of language is so that whether the Christian is rich or poor, he can still obey God. It is not how much money you give but whether it is proportionate with how much you receive.

The Attitude of Giving

What should be the Christian’s attitude as far as giving of his or her means to the church is concerned? According to God’s word it should be one of thoughtfulness or purpose and cheer. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

Not only does the faithful Christian think of the church first when he or she receives his or her income (Matt. 6:33) but also he or she gives not out of grief or because he or she feels forced to give but out of joy. The Christian who appreciates that all he or she has belongs to the Lord (1 Chr. 29:14) should be glad rather than sad to give a part back to Him. Dear Christian, give until it hurts and continue to give until it no longer does.

Does 1 Cor. 16:1-2 Constitute a Pattern?

Some have suggested that Paul's charge to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16 does not constitute a pattern. Some years ago, due to work I moved from home to the central region of Ghana and consequently worshipped with the church in the town I lived in. Upon arriving I noticed among other things that these brethren were accustomed to taking a collection not only on the first day of the week but also during their midweek Bible classes. When I confronted the preacher on this issue his argument was that 1 Corinthians 16 could not be binding on the church today because there was no such order prior to 1 Corinthians 16.

This brother manifested an unfortunate ignorance of the progressive nature of Biblical revelation. We might as well argue that since we are not given qualities a man must possess before he can become an elder until 1 Timothy 3, then Paul's charge to appoint certain kind of men to the eldership isn't binding. We read of elders in Acts 11:30 but not until Paul's letter to Timothy do we see anything like qualifications for appointment to the eldership. Instead of breaking the Scriptures (John 10:35) by tearing them apart, we should seek to harmonize them.

Some have also suggested that since it was Paul's original intention to collect money for the needy saints in Jerusalem, 1 Corinthians 16 does not constitute a pattern. While it is true that helping the needy saints in Jerusalem was Paul's original intention, this was not the only reason why Paul gave this order. Giving did not begin with the Corinthian letter. Right from the beginning, the church gave as an expression of worship. "Fellowship" in Acts 2:42, includes giving (Php. 4:15) and the steadfastness with which the church engaged in **fellowship** is an indication of the regularity of this act of worship.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 teaches us two things. First, it teaches us what Paul was going to use the money for and also it reveals fully God's will on the issue of giving. The phrase *in store* in the KJV means treasury. Macknight renders 1 Corinthians 16:2 this way: "On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay somewhat by itself, putting it into the treasury." The church already had a treasury. It did not create one as a result of Paul's letter. It is as if the apostle were saying, "you already contribute to the treasury but now I order you to do it every first day of every week so that you do not make any special contributions when I come." Therefore, while it was indeed Paul's desire to collect money for the needy saints, this was not the only reason why he gave this order. From this particular situation God through the apostle revealed His will for giving for all time (John 14:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17).

Jackson was right in asking, "If the Lord **prescribed a pattern** for what we do in other acts of worship, is it reasonable to think that he left the matter of giving **entirely optional** or ambiguous?" The answer to this question is a great, big no. God has given His church a pattern for giving and 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is that pattern.

Conclusion

In Palestine the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea both have the Jordan river for a tributary. However, the Sea of Galilee is a fresh water lake with blue water, is home to about twenty different types of fishes and has trees along its banks. It is full of life, if you please. The Dead Sea on the other hand has a salt concentration that is ten times more than ocean water and thus no plants and animals can live in and around the water. It is indeed a water body that is worthy of its name.

How could these water bodies receive water from the same source, essentially be in the same region and yet have such contrasting fates? The answer is that when the Sea of Galilee receives water from the Jordan, it does not keep the water but also gives it out. The Sea of Galilee has got outlets through which the water it receives from the Jordan, goes out. It gives as much as it receives. If it receives one drop from the Jordan, it gives out one drop and if it receives two drops from the Jordan, it gives out two drops. This arrangement means the Jordan River simply passes through the Sea of Galilee. The result is that, the Sea of Galilee is healthy, vibrant, full of animal and plant life and full of beauty.

The Dead Sea on the other hand receives water from the Jordan and does not give it

out but keeps it all, because it has no outlet or means to give out. The Dead Sea is basically a container. It receives a lot of water from the Jordan but because it has no outlet to give out water, the water in the Dead Sea ends up evaporating, leaving the water body full of salt and full of minerals making it unfit for plant and animal life. Because the Dead Sea receives but does not give the result is that it cannot sustain any life and is therefore dead.

Dear Christian, think carefully about this. This phenomenon of nature is proof that if we want to enjoy the greatest blessings of a fulfilled and a fulfilling life, we must learn to abound in the grace of liberal giving. May we remember at all times the words of our Lord when he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

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Man Must Have Bible Authority to Worship God Acceptably

Denny Wilson

The Psalmist said, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Psa. 122:1). Though we are separated by about 3,000 years, the child of God should have the same mindset. We should love to go to the house of the Lord. We should love to worship God. Each Lord's Day we pour out our hearts in song, we feast on the word of God, we open our minds in prayer to the Father, we give cheerfully of our means, and we commemorate of the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in partaking of the communion. This time of worship and fellowship with God and with our brethren on the first day of the week is a highlight in the life of the Christian. Like the Psalmist, we are glad when we can go to the house of the Lord and worship God together.



When we come together as the church in one place to worship (Cf. 1 Cor. 14:23; 11:18,20) we are governed by the authority of God through His word in our worship. John records the words of Jesus in John 4:23-24, where the Lord declared, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

From our study of John 4:23-24, we learn that the object of our worship is God. There is only one God, and He is worthy of our worship. He commanded the children of Israel saying, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:2). He continued commanding them not to make grave images or idols. They were not to bow down and serve these false gods. They were not to worship anything or anyone other than the God of heaven. God would repeat this focus of worship in the retelling of the Law by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” In response to Satan after being tempted, Jesus echoed the Law stating, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). The object of our worship is God.

As Jesus taught the woman at the well and all who read the word today, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The word “must” in the passage teaches us that the following conditions of worship were requirements by God. The imperative is that our worship be done in spirit, that is with all of our heart, and it must be done in truth, that is according to the truth of

God's word. False worship is a condition of not following one of these two requirements. Our world doesn't understand the requirement of worship being done in truth. In the true Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us where truth can be found. He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Acceptable worship is offered to the Father with all of our hearts and in accordance with His word.

The New Testament is our guide in worship. Paul wrote, "And whatsoever ye do in word of deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). Saying "in the name of" is equivalent to saying "by the **authority of.**" Jesus has all authority in work and worship in the life of the Christian. The Father gave Him that authority. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). The American Standard Version uses the wording, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Jesus passed on the will of the Father to the apostles to preach and to write the word of God for the world for generations to come to read and obey. He taught them in person and after ascending to the right hand of the Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit came to help them in their work to seek and save the lost.

John records for us the work of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, or the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26, Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (Spirit – ASV), whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Going further in the discussion, Jesus said,

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify (bear witness – ASV) of me: And ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27).

When the comforter would come, He would convict the world of sin through the word (John 16:8). Jesus further explained, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit would teach them all things, bring all things to their remembrance, testify of Jesus, convict the world of sin, guide them into all truth, and show them things to come. Jesus further commanded the apostles to go to Jerusalem after His ascension where they would preach the gospel at the foundation of the church as the Holy Spirit would begin His work through them. He said,

Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:46-49).

In Acts 2, the Spirit would come, the gospel would be preached, and the souls that obeyed the authority of God, through Christ, through the Spirit, through the mouths of the apostles, would be saved, having their sins washed away. They repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of those sins (Acts 2:38). Those who were being saved were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

The apostles and inspired men would record the word of God for us so that we may know what God expects of us. Peter explains the authority of the Scriptures for us when he wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). These inspired men recorded for us the God breathed word. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The scriptures provide for us the directions of living **including how we are to worship God.** James, the brother of our Lord, wrote, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness

the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). This God breathed word can save your soul when you believe and obey it. More than that, the word of Christ will be our judge. Jesus said,

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:48-50).

God’s word, given to Jesus, given to the Spirit, given to the apostles and inspired men, recorded in the pages of the Bible, is our guide in all that we do, **including our worship**.

The Bible teaches us many lessons about authority within its pages. When God tells us to do something, deviation from His command will bring punishment upon us. Saul did not follow God’s commands with Agag.

But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly (1 Sam. 15:9).

When Saul headed home and ran into Samuel, he said, “Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the Lord” (v. 13). This is the same attitude many have in our world. They falsely believe that as long as they worship God whether they followed Biblical authority or not, that they have performed the commandment of the Lord. But Samuel would call Saul on the carpet, saying, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” (v. 14). Saul would lose the kingdom. He would be reprimanded by God through Samuel saying, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of the rams” (v. 22). It is better to be obedient and faithful than to sin and need sacrifice. In New Testament worship, the same message is true. We must worship in spirit and in truth.

There are other examples in the Bible of people who did not follow God’s commandments in worship along with the consequences of their actions that will help us in our study. Nadab and Abihu were the sons of Aaron and priests of God. They offered profane fire to the Lord that he had not commanded and lost their life for it (Lev. 10:1-10). Cain and Abel were commanded to make an offering to the Lord. Cain’s offering was not accepted while Abel’s offering was pleasing to God. Cain in his anger killed his brother (Gen. 4). There is much to learn in this historical example of the first murder, but the focus of our discussion today is how this event was impacted by true worship.

Notice Hebrews 11:4: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” God gave a command for the brothers to follow in regard to worship. We do not know what the command was from God. What we do know that Abel had the more excellent sacrifice and it proved his righteousness. He obeyed by offering a blood sacrifice, while Cain did not obey, and offered the fruit of the ground. In God’s questioning of Cain, God made it perfectly clear that the acceptance by God of the worship was based on obedience. “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Gen. 4:7).

When it comes to worship, our choice to obey the word of God will bring the reward of God while the disobedience to God’s word will bring punishment. No, God does not directly take someone’s life, like Nadab and Abihu. Even so, the consequences of the sin is still the same. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). These biblical examples teach us that our worship must be in accordance with God’s word in order to be pleasing in the sight of God and to be accepted by Him.

As we continue our discussion of worship, let us notice that only when we follow the

authority of the word will our worship be accepted. Yet, there are several ways our worship can and will be rejected. In Colossians 2:23, after discussing the need to avoid being pressured into leaving the truth for false worship, Paul wrote, “Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” Will worship is not pleasing to God. Earthly wisdom and personal desires are not the standard for worship in spirit and in truth. God is not pleased with man putting his will and his desires above the will and command He has set forth for us in His word.

Another avenue of false worship is ignorant worship. Paul, speaking to the men of Athens who wanted to hear some new thing, stood on Mar’s hill and taught about the God they did not know. He said, “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23). He proceeded to teach them about the One True God. When he was finished, some mocked him, while others procrastinated, saying “we will hear they again of this matter,” while some believed and obeyed the gospel (Acts 17:32-34). Remember our opening passage. God does not want ignorant worshippers. God is seeking true worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

A third area of false worship for our consideration is vain worship. Vain, empty, or worthless worship is involved when we do things our own way or by our own devices. After the Pharisees tried to criticize and attack Christ Jesus and the apostles for not washing their hands (a practice that the Pharisees had made a rule and expected everyone to follow), Jesus would address this very subject with these hypocrites:

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:7-9).

These evil men were only giving God lip service. In truth, they were serving themselves. They pretended to be good and holy by made up rules and demanded others to submit to their foolish ways. But this and all similar worship is in vain.

The attitude displayed in will worship, ignorant worship, and vain worship should have ended with the teaching of Jesus but it is still prevalent in our society today. Many do what they want to do rather than what God has commanded. Many do not understand what God wants us to do but instead do whatever seems right in their own eyes. Still others create their own systems and set their own will into action and all such worship is vain. God’s authority has been clearly laid out in the pages of our Bible and in particular the authority for worship in the church is found in the New Testament. We must not add to God’s word or take away from God’s word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18,19). Instead, we must be true worshippers, who worship God in spirit (with all of our heart) and in truth (in accordance with His word). Let us be a people who seek God’s will and who do it. Let us be like those noble Bereans who searched the scriptures daily with a ready mind, ready to find the truth and to do it (Acts 17:11,12).

With the Bible as our guide and our hearts focused on faithful obedience, we can be true worshippers who worship God in spirit and in truth. We can be those who submit to the authority of God in all that we do. We can have worship that is acceptable in the sight of God leading to eternal life in heaven with the Father, Jesus the Christ, the Holy Spirit, the heavenly hosts, and the saved of all generations, where we will continue to worship God in spirit and in truth for all eternity.

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