
Worshiping The Lord



In The Beauty Of Holiness

Gene Taylor

Preface

God has always desired and demanded the worship of His people. Today, He expects no less from those who are in the church of His Son. He has clearly stated those expectations and demands in Scripture.

As Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4), He spoke of worship and revealed the principal doctrine which would guide those who would worship under His rule: "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 4:24)

For worship to please God, if He is to accept it, one must know, understand, and apply the principles of this text and all others in the New Testament that pertain to worship. That is why this study is being presented. In it you will explore the inspired Scriptures to see how to properly worship God and what you must do in order to be a true worshiper before Him. David, the psalmist, in Psalm 29:2, said, "Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; **Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**" (Emphasis mine—GT)

I hope that at the end of your study not only will you be able to give God the worship due Him but will also be one who is clothed in the beauty of holiness so that your worship will not be rejected.

Gene Taylor
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Lesson One: The Need for This Study

Even though it is a wonderful blessing, worship is also a great responsibility. Sadly, much of the worship offered in the name of Christ never ascends higher than the roof of the building the worshipers are in because of problems— with the worshipers, their practices and attitudes, or a combination of these items.

Such problems abound in the denominations of men. They engage in many unauthorized practices in their services. Their members have not submitted to the commands of the gospel for the cleansing of their souls, thus, they are still polluted by their sins which makes acceptable worship impossible.

While such is sad, it is even more depressing to think that among those who have obeyed God's plan of salvation and have been added to His church (Acts 2:47), many problems with worship exist. Unauthorized practices, improper attitudes, and faulty solutions to problems in worship have all added to the dilemma that exists in many local churches. What dilemma? Even though they gather in the name of Christ to worship God, in reality, not much worshipping is done for their worship is not true.

Unauthorized Practices

Some seek to offer worship whose basis is not the word of God but the mind of man. A sure way to make worship meaningless is to include the traditions, doctrines, and creeds of men in it. That is exactly what the Pharisees had done in the time of Jesus. He spoke of them in Matthew 15:9 when He said, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." In spite of this proclamation, many people still include practices in their worship which originate with man. Thus, their worship is vain.

Others include in worship things once authorized under the Old Law, the law given to the children of Israel through Moses. The things of the Law of Moses are no longer acceptable expressions of worship. Such practices as dancing, playing musical instruments, and offering animal sacrifices, though once acceptable practices under the Old Law, are no longer pleasing to God because that law is no longer in effect. Jesus fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17). He took it "out of the way, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:14) Following His death on the cross, He instituted His law, the gospel (Romans 1:16)—the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), the New Testament (Hebrews 9:16-17). His blood ratified a new covenant between God and man (Matthew 26:28). Since all authority is religion now resides in Him (Matthew 28:18), all things, including worship, must be done in His name, i.e., by His authority (Colossians 3:17). Those in the New Testament who wanted to bind things from the Old Law were quickly rebuked and emphatically told they had "fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4)

Improper Attitudes

Unauthorized practices, though, are not the only problem with worship today. A larger problem, especially among those who claim to be following the New Testament order, is that of improper attitudes toward worship. Included in it is formalism.

Formalism exists when worshipers just superficially go through the outward form of ritual and practice in worship with neither sincerity nor genuine feeling from the heart about what is being done. The Jews under the Old Law had this problem. As seen in Micah 6:6-8, they were not neglecting worship, at least not the outward actions of it but their hearts were not in what they were doing. Therefore, their worship was unacceptable because it was not real, alive, and heartfelt.

At times, the church today suffers from this problem. Sometimes people only mouth the words to the song being sung or they might sleep through the sermon. Some daydream constantly while others give attention to such things as nail-filing, playing with children, writing notes, balancing checkbooks, etc.

Another improper attitude is apathy. It, at times, seems to be rampant at worship services. Some are at services only out of a sense of duty — they feel they have to be there. Others are present only because of tradition. They are not really converted to Christ but they have attended the “Church of Christ” all their lives and have become members of it because of their parents. Their attendance is more out of respect for Mom and Dad than reverence for the Lord. They have been “churched,” not converted to Christ. Worship holds neither blessings nor thrills for them. Rather, it is a routine or an ordeal through which they must go (see Isaiah 29:13). They are apathetic. As a matter of fact, they are downright **pathetic** and are to be pitied if they cannot be taught to repent. How tragic it is when one who claims to be His child derives no joy from serving and worshiping God.

Others are outrageously hypocritical. While they are with other Christians at services, they pose as pious, devoted children of God but on the job and at home they are as worldly as can be. It is difficult to understand the thinking of one who loves the world and its allurements but wants the respectability of being righteous. If one expects his worship to ever be acceptable to God, he must conduct himself in accordance with the will of God. He must live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11-12).

Others have an irreverent attitude which makes their worship unacceptable. They misbehave in services, joke and “cut up,” disrupt the services, etc. These actions have no place in worship assemblies. An attitude of reverence must always be manifested when one approaches God in worship.

A typical service with such improper attitudes is ably described in the following article written by Bill Hall. It is entitled “This Is Worship???” It is from the bulletin of the 77th Street church of Christ, Birmingham, Alabama when Morris Norman edited it.

“It’s Sunday morning, beginning date for a series of meetings. The preacher walks to the pulpit to begin his lesson. 11:15: Sermon begins. 11:20: Introduction completed. 11:21: It begins to rain. Men go outside to roll up car windows. Preacher hopes someone rolls his up, too. 11:24: Men begin to return. 11:25: Last man sits down. ‘Maybe everybody can listen to the sermon now,’ preacher thinks. 11:26: Point number two begins. Preacher hopes this one goes better than the first point. 11:28: Little Julie runs across aisle to sit with Grandma. Bobby is passed over the pew to Aunt Lillian. 11:29: Man gets up from front seat, walks between preacher and table and out a side door. Preacher wonders where he’s going. Everybody else wonders. All eyes are on him. 11:32: Man returns with glass of water, which he places on pulpit stand. He thought the preacher might be thirsty. Preacher thanks him. 11:34: Point number three begins. Preacher’s sure nobody listened to second point. 11:35: Little Sammy jumps up to go to restroom...grins at everybody as he goes by. 11:37: Little Sammy returns, which reminds little Jill that she needs to go. She’s the timid kind; head ducked as she walks back. Isn’t she cute?	11:39: Jill returns, and now it’s Joe’s turn. This continues to end of service. 11:40: Point number four begins. Preacher feels that if he can just get this point across, at least his effort won’t be wasted. 11:42: Young people in the back are in a state of hysterics over brother Smith’s snoring. Parents nervously turn around with threatening stares. Young people go through facial contortions trying to straighten up. Preacher almost loses his composure. How did brother Smith go to sleep in the first place with all the commotion going on? 11:45: Preacher begins conclusion. Everybody grabs for a song book. All babies are returned to their mothers. Little Johnny drops a quarter that he forgot to contribute. It rolls all the way to the front. Seems like it won’t ever get there. Little Susan gets tickled and laughs out loud. Embarrassed mother pops Susan. Laughter turns to mourning. 11:50: Invitation song begins. “In the closing prayer, the congregation thanks the Lord that they have been able to worship (?) Him and to hear His word discussed. They all assure the preacher that they enjoyed the sermon. But none of the compliments can lift the dejected spirits of the poor preacher, who really is just anxious to get away to find a bit of peace and quiet. And—How terrible the thought!—God observed it all.” - Bill Hall
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Faulty Solutions

Problems in worship caused by improper practices and attitudes have spawned another problem area—faulty solutions. Seeing the problems which exist, some have opted for the “quick fix” instead of getting to the crux of those problems. They treat the symptoms in a superficial manner while never attempting to get to the real “disease.”

Seeing cold formalism they, in an effort to make worship more meaningful and the atmosphere more reverent, react by dimming the lights, holding hands and/or swaying as they pray, etc.

In order to cure apathy they resort to such things as spontaneous worship and/or changing the order of worship just for effect hoping to develop in the worshipers more zeal and enthusiasm.

Emotionalism, a false stirring of emotions based not on love for the Lord and His word but on externals which prey on the emotions, is often employed. Witnessing, testimonials, and other acts designed not to deepen faith and love but to incite emotions are used to try to overcome a lack of fervor.

The problems with these solutions is that they do not, nor can they, solve the real problems because they do not reach to the heart of those problems. Only true conversion to the Lord by totally submitting to Him and His word will solve the problems of worship. That is why a study of His word is essential. One must know it and obediently apply it by conforming his practices and attitudes to it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, such a study as this is needed in order to know the will of God and apply it to worship to make the worshipers and their worship acceptable to God and to find some real solutions to any problems that might exist in worship.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the worship of denominations not acceptable to God?
2. What, according to Jesus, makes worship vain? Why?
3. Why is it wrong to use the Old Law as a basis for something practiced in worship today?
4. What is formalism? What are some things it causes?
5. What was Israel’s problem in Micah 6:6-8? What solution was suggested to them? What application of the passage can be made today?
6. What are some causes of apathy in worship? What are some cures for it?
7. As it applies to worship, what are some results of hypocritical church members?
8. What is reverence? Why is irreverence so distasteful?
9. What is emotionalism? How does it differ from emotion? What is wrong with it?
10. If there are problems with worship, what, generally, are the sources of those problems?

Lesson Two: Worship Defined

To properly understand any study, a comprehensive definition of its topic and the words used to express it is needed. Since ideas are communicated with words, one must know their meanings if he is going to correctly understand their message. Therefore, in order to properly comprehend God's message in the Bible, one must seek valid definitions to the words His inspired writers employed in writing it.

To rightly understand what God expects of him and to know what it truly is, one must define "worship" as God used it. He just cannot go to a modern English dictionary where it is defined as an "act of paying divine honors to a deity; religious reverence and homage, adoration, or reverence paid to God." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 1352) This definition, while generally used in our society, is not sufficient to completely define "worship" as it is used by the inspired writers of the New Testament.

For example, in the King James Version of the Bible our English word "worship" is used to translate six different Greek words which appear in the original text. The word, as it is used today, does not always convey the meaning of those different terms.

To fully define "worship," one must consider and examine those Greek words and come to an understanding of their usage. When he does, he will find they have three basic meanings:

- To make obeisance, do reverence to, suggesting an action performed indicative of the worshiper's reverence for the one being worshiped.
- An attitude of reverence or piety.
- Any service we perform in our lives in obedience to God's will and in relation to His nature.

Definition One

Proskuneo is the most frequently used Greek word for worship. It is found sixty times in the New Testament. It literally means "to kiss the hand to (toward) one, in token of reverence" (Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 548) and "to make obeisance, do reverence to" (W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 1258).

This word probably comes closest to meaning the same thing that we do when we use our English word "worship" for, generally, when we speak of worshiping, we have in mind some particular act being performed – singing, praying, observing the Lord's Supper, etc. – and this is just about what this Greek term means as it is used in the New Testament. In the New Testament it is used:

- To denote an act of homage or reverence paid to God. (Matthew 4:10; John 4:23-24; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 7:11)
- Of an act of homage or reverence rendered to Jesus. (Matthew 2:2,8,11; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9; John 9:39; Hebrews 1:6)
- To refer to homage paid to a man. (Matthew 18:26)
- To refer to homage paid to the dragon. (Revelation 13:4)
- To refer to homage paid to demons. (Revelation 9:20)
- To refer to homage paid to idols. (Acts 7:43)

Nearly all of these passages indicate some definite acts being performed which demonstrated the worshiper's reverence for the one being worshiped. The literal meaning of the word, "to kiss the hand toward one," correlates very well with its use in Scripture (see Matthew 28:9 and Revelation 4:10). A fine gospel preacher, the late Franklin T. Puckett, noted that when he wrote ("In the House of God," *Vanguard Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Feb. 24, 1977, pp. 1,14):

"That word, 'worship,' is the English term that is used to translate several different Greek words, but perhaps the Greek word most often rendered 'worship' in the English is the word 'proskuneo.' This may not mean much at first but when we break it down into its parts, we get a beautiful picture: the preposition 'pros' means 'to, in the direction of, toward' and the verb 'kuneo' means 'to kiss, to show devotion, manifesting love, throwing a kiss toward' the Father above. Have you ever had your little son or daughter 'blow a kiss' toward you as you leave for work? You understand perfectly that this is an act of love, a gesture of devotion."

Definition Two

The meaning of "an attitude of reverence or piety" is inherent in three of the Greek words translated "worship." These words do not necessarily include any particular action being performed.

Sebomai means "to revere" and stresses "the feeling of awe or devotion" (Vine, 1258-1259). Lydia (Acts 16:14) and Titus Justus (Acts 18:7) are said to be ones "who worshiped God." Rather than describing an act they did in obeisance, it seems to relate their attitude of reverence toward God. This same word is used by Jesus in Matthew 15:9 where He calls in question the reverence of men who teach their doctrine in place of the doctrine of God saying that such a practice makes their worship "vain."

Sebazomai appears only in Romans 1:25. It is very similar to *sebomai* because the attitude of the worshiper again seems to be the predominant thought. It means "to fear, be afraid, to honor religiously, to worship." (Thayer, 572)

Eusebeo means to "act piously toward." (Vine, 1259) It is used in Acts 17:23. It generally reflects the attitude of the worshiper rather than an action being performed.

Definition Three

The last two of these six Greek words express the idea of service. Generally, they include all we do in obedience to God and are not necessarily limited to the idea of what we normally think of as worship. A better translation of them, as is done in some places in the American Standard Version and some other later translations, would be "serve, do service to." In a sense, all obedient service is to God's glory and is, in effect, worshiping Him.

Latreuo means "to serve for hire, to serve, to minister to, to render religious service or homage, to worship." (Thayer, 372) It is found in Philippians 3:3; Acts 7:42; Acts 24:14; and Hebrews 10:2.

Therapeuo means "to serve, do service to." (Vine, 1259) It is used in Acts 17:25.

A Summary

As W.E. Vine summarizes his definitions of these words, he thus summarizes "worship" as it is used in the New Testament:

"A consideration of these verbs shows that worship is not confined to praise; broadly it may be regarded as the direct acknowledgment of God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by a deed done in such acknowledgment." (1259)

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the definition of words so important especially in relation to a study of the Bible?
2. Why does one need to consider the Greek language when trying to understand the New Testament?
3. Why is a current dictionary definition of the English word “worship” incapable of defining the term as it is used in the New Testament?
4. What three basic definitions for “worship” can be derived from the Greek words translated “worship” in our English Bible?
5. Why is the Greek word *proskuneo* closer to our usage of “worship” today than the other Greek terms listed in this lesson?
6. How can worship be considered “a gesture of devotion?”
7. Why did Jesus call the Jews in question in Matthew 15:9? What was the outcome of what they were doing? Why?
8. What has fear to do with worship since worship seems to be based on love?
9. What is the difference between service and worship?
10. Using your own words, give a good working definition for “worship.”

Lesson Three: Reasons for Worship

From the dawn of time down to this very day, God has always desired and commanded man to worship Him. The fact that He has commanded worship should be sufficient reason for it. Yet, there are reasons other than mere response to command for man to actively and fervently worship His God.

If one is worshiping only because it is commanded, such worship will not be all it should be because it is difficult to do anything properly when it is done out of a sense of duty. God only desires worship from one who is properly motivated by all the reasons the Scriptures present for worship. This lesson will consider some of those reasons.

To Express Love and Thanksgiving to God

Worship, by its nature and design, is an expression of love and devotion. Love for God, for what He is and what He has done for man, should motivate one to worship Him. 1 John 4:9 states, "We love Him because He first loved us." To know God and His love is to be filled with love and thanksgiving for Him. (2 Corinthians 9:15) Worship provides a means of expression for that thanksgiving and love. Psalm 95:1-3 shows how Israel, under the Old Law, used worship to express their thanksgiving to God.

Franklin T. Puckett wrote ("In the House of God," *Vanguard Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Feb. 24, 1977, p. 14):

"So when Christians come together to worship the Lord,... they express their love and devotion. It is a beautiful and holy hour, and no man can truly understand its significance and meaning without being exalted and uplifted by the experience."

In the following chart, several qualities of God are listed which should cause people to worship Him.

Qualities Of God Which Should Prompt Mankind To Worship Him

Omnipotence. There are no limits to the power of God (Jer. 32:17,27). With only the power of His spoken word He created the heavens and earth, parted the Red Sea, healed diseased people, and raised men from the dead.

Omnipresence. God can be in every place at the same time (Psalm 139:7-12). There is no place one can be and not have God present.

Holiness. He is perfectly holy, untainted by sin (Isa. 1:4, 5:19,24). It is against His nature to be otherwise. He stands forth

as all that is good, righteous, and wholesome, worthy to be praised and adored.

He Is Love. 1 John 4:8. Because He is a God of love He provides for both physical and spiritual needs. His love is so great He allowed His Son to die to save sinful man (John 3:16) and so deep He graciously revealed "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3) so that by the death of His Son man could be saved.

(Author Unknown)

To Express One's Desire to Submit to the Will of God

God has commanded His children to assemble to worship Him (Hebrews 10:24-25). Such assembling shows one's willingness to be submissive to His will. Obedience to God's will is necessary for one to please Him. (Matthew 7:21)

God's will is always best for everyone anyway. He has never demanded anything which was not for man's ultimate good. Worshiping God in the manner in which He prescribes shows one's desire to have His will accomplished in his own life and in all the world.

To Keep Saved

Every worship assembly should strengthen the bond between the Christian and his God and allow him to draw nearer to the Lord. When you consider what God wants His saints to do when they come together for worship you realize those assemblies are a major portion of His provisions to keep them saved. In the singing of praises to Him, the participants give and get instruction, encouragement, and admonition from one another. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) Prayer, while directed to God, also edifies and strengthens those who "amen" it. Those who heed and apply the teaching received from the word of God during the assembly cannot help but be more of what God would have them to be.

To Seize the Opportunity to Learn

The Christian should always be learning of Christ and His word. (Matthew 11:28; 2 Peter 1:5; James 1:21) While it is true that much of the Christian's learning is to be done on his own, the worship assemblies provide opportunities for such learning. It was the practice of God's people under the Old Law to assemble to hear and learn His word. (Nehemiah 8:1-8) There is much to be gained when the children of God gather to study His word and to praise Him in worship.

To Provide Christians a Source of Strength

While Jesus is the primary source of strength for the Christian (Philippians 4:13), a good deal of strength can be drawn from those whose lives are Christ-like. (Romans 1:12) God intended for His people to be together so that they could derive strength from one another in order to keep strong in the faith. Jefferson David Tant, writing on this matter, said ("Why Assemble Together," *Vanguard Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 18, Sept. 22, 1977, p. 413):

"Faith left to itself often grows cold, as does the ember in the fireplace when removed from others. But when the ember is moved back in company with others, it begins to glow anew...one who does not come regularly will be easily discouraged, easily turned aside, and the more likely to fall away."

To Edify Others

The Bible plainly teaches that Christians have the responsibility to edify one another. (Romans 14:19) They are to:

- Do things which edify others in Christ. (Romans 14:19)
- Bear one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
- Encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak. (1 Thes. 5:14)
- Lift up hands that hang down. (Hebrews 12:12)

Since much of what is done during public worship assemblies has been designed by the Lord to edify, one should always participate wholeheartedly so that he might edify others, not discourage them.

To Set a Good Example for Those Outside of Christ

When those who are outside of Christ see the Christian's desire to be like Jesus, his dedication to Him, and his devoted attendance to worship services, they cannot help but be impressed. His faithful attendance to worship shows that his Lord means more to him than any earthly thing. Others can be won to Christ by the good example and strong influence of a dedicated and devoted worshiper.

Discussion Questions

1. Why has God always commanded mankind to worship Him?
2. Why, in one sense, is the command to worship reason enough for worship? Why, in another sense, are other valid reasons for worship needed?
3. How is worship related to love? How is it related to fear?
4. Why is worship due God?
5. How does worship show one's willingness to submit to the will of God?
6. How do God's commands to worship work to keep the Christian saved?
7. Since all Christians individually have the responsibility to study and learn the word of God, why do they need to study and worship in collective assemblies?
8. What are some ways in which Christians can be sources of strength to one another especially in the area of worship?
9. What does "edify" mean? How can Christians edify one another in worship?
10. Why is the example that Christians set before others so important, not only in attendance to worship assemblies but also in actions while there?

Lesson Four: The Sabbath

Confusion exists among many people as to the Sabbath and its meaning today. Some feel they are to worship on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. Others believe the Sabbath should be observed but that it has been changed to the first day of the week. Some acknowledge Sabbath-keeping to have been abolished along with the rest of the law of Moses and that now, under the law of Christ, the first day of the week has a significance all its own and bears no relationship to the Sabbath in any way.

With such diverse views it is not surprising that people are confused about the day for worship. In order to clear this confusion and to come to an understanding of truth, we must go to God's word, the Bible, and see what it says in relation to both the Sabbath and the first day of the week.

The Sabbath Was for Israel

Shortly following their exodus from Egypt, God instituted the Sabbath for the Israelites, His chosen people under the Old Law. It is first mentioned in Exodus 16:23 in connection with the manna God sent to feed the children of Israel while they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. The command to keep the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8). God had not required its observance, as some suppose, at the time of the creation of the world. There is no record of such a command or any example of anyone observing it prior to the time of Moses and the Israelites.

Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath so that they would remember that while in Egypt they had no rest but that God had delivered them from their bondage and given them rest. (Deuteronomy 5:15) It was to be a sign between them and God so that they would never forget that it was He who had delivered them and sanctified them as a people for His possession. (Exodus 31:13-17)

Since it was a sign between Israel and God, a memorial of an event peculiar to the Jewish nation and a part of the covenant between them and God, it is proper to conclude that God intended Israel, and only Israel, to keep it. If Jew and Gentile alike were to have observed it, then it would have had no particular significance to the Jews. Also, it would have made no sense for the Gentiles to have kept it. Its observance would have no real meaning to them — they were never delivered from Egyptian bondage. No Gentile was ever under obligation to keep the Sabbath or any other command contained in the law given to Israel through Moses.

Though the Sabbath had no significance to the Gentiles, to the Jews, though, the Sabbath had great meaning. They were to strictly observe it.

- They were not to work. (Exodus 31:13-17; 20:8-11; 23:9-12; 34:21)
- They were not to gather, bake, or boil any food. (Exodus 16:23-26)
- No fire was to be kindled (Exodus 35:1-3) and no sticks could be gathered for a fire (Numbers 16:32-35).
- They were not to buy or sell. (Nehemiah 13:15-21)
- They could bear no burden. (Jeremiah 17:21-22)
- They were to travel only a "Sabbath Day's journey." (Matthew 24:20)
- There was to be a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:3) and the priests were to sacrifice two lambs of the first year without spot and blemish and two-tenths of an ephah of flour mingled with oil (Numbers 28:9-10).

It is interesting to note that none of those who would bind the observance of the Sabbath today desire to keep it in its entirety as it was commanded. To attempt to keep any portion of it today, though, puts one under obligation to keep all aspects of it including its prohibitions against work and travel and even its animal sacrifices. To keep the Old Law in one point makes one responsible to keep all of it. (Galatians 5:3) To try to be justified by the Old Law today causes one to fall from grace. (Galatians 5:4)

Sabbath Observance Ceased

The observance of the Sabbath was to cease. As Jesus fulfilled the Old Law (Matthew 5:17), it was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross. (Galatians 5:1-4; Colossians 2:14) Jesus took it out of the way so that He could establish His new law (Hebrews 8:13), the “perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). Since He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), all must obey the law of Christ. It does not include any command to keep the Sabbath. Therefore, to keep the Sabbath today is to act without divine authority.

Ceremonial Law versus Moral Law

Many who would bind the Sabbath today say that only the “ceremonial law” or the “law of Moses” was fulfilled and abolished by Jesus. They contend that the “moral law,” or the “law of God,” the Ten Commandments, continues to be authoritative. The Bible, though, makes no distinction between the “law of Moses” and the “moral law.” There is none to be made because none exists. For example, Ezra 7:6 says God had given “the law of Moses” while 2 Chronicles 34:14 states that the “law of the Lord” was “given by Moses.”

The Old Law, in its entirety, has been taken out of the way and is not to be observed by anyone today. Nobody is to be judged in regards to “food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths” for those things were but “a shadow of things to come.” (Colossians 2:16-17) As a matter of fact, when one seeks to bind things of the Old Law and observe them today, he severs any relationship he might have with Christ and falls from grace. (Galatians 5:4)

The Sabbath Rest

The only “Sabbath rest” remaining for the children of God is the rest awaiting them in heaven (Hebrews 4:9). It is a time when they may “rest from their labors” (Revelation 14:13).

The following chart contains a number of facts about the Sabbath. It was compiled by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and originally appeared in the *Gospel Advocate* of April 16, 1931. The only possible conclusion one who honestly considers its information can reach is that the Sabbath is no longer binding and is not to be observed in any way under the law of Christ.

What The Bible Says About The Seventh-Day Sabbath

1. That the covenant which included the Sabbath commandment was made with Israel only. (Ex. 20:2; Deut. 5:15)
2. That Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath because they had been delivered from the serfdom of Egypt. (Deut. 5:15)

3. That in giving them the Sabbath, God used the same day upon which He had rested, or ceased the work of creation. (Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:8-11; Ex. 31:17)
 4. That the Sabbath was not given, or made known, until the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. (Neh. 9:13-14; Ezek. 20:10-12)
 5. That the Sabbath was a sign between God and the children of Israel. (Ex. 31:17; Ezek. 20:12,20)
(NOTE: If all nations were commanded to keep the Sabbath, how could it have been a sign between God and one nation?)
 6. That the old covenant made with Israel when they came out of Egypt, which included the Ten Commandments (I Kings 8:9,21), would be abrogated (Jer. 31:31) and superseded by the new covenant (Heb. 8:6-13; 10:9).
 7. That the law which was "written and engraven on tables of stone" was done away by Christ. (2 Cor. 3:6-14)
 8. That the law of "the handwriting of ordinances" was "nailed to the cross," and the Sabbath therefore, no longer binding upon even the Jews themselves. (Col. 2:14-16)
 9. That Hosea, the prophet, declared the Sabbath, with all other Jewish observances, would cease when the Gentiles should become the people of God. (Hos. 2:11,23)
 10. That the apostle Paul declared the Sabbath, with all other Jewish observances, did cease at the cross, and that we should let no man judge us respecting them. (Col. 2:14-16)
 11. That Christians are expressly said to be delivered from the law containing the Ten Commandments. (Rom. 7:4,6-7)
 12. That those who would be justified by the law given at Sinai are severed from Christ and fallen from grace. (Gal. 4:24-31; 5:1,4)
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Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the various views that people have toward the Sabbath and its observance today?
2. When was the observance of the Sabbath first commanded? To whom was the command given?
3. Why did God command the observance of the Sabbath?
4. Why would it be futile for the Gentiles to observe the Sabbath?
5. Is there any difference between the "law of Moses" and the "law of God" as it pertains to the body of commandments given to the children of Israel? Explain.
6. What were some things Israel had to do to observe the Sabbath?
7. Why is one not to keep the Sabbath today?
8. What are some consequences of binding Sabbath observance as law today?
9. Why are those who want to bind observance of the Sabbath today hypocritical in relation to their practice in connection with it?
10. What "Sabbath" remains for the child of God?

Lesson Five: The Lord's Day - The First Day of the Week

While writing the book of Revelation, the apostle John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day..." (Revelation 1:10) That lets us know that there is a certain day which is of special significance to the Lord and His followers. It is the first day of the week. A study of the New Testament shows why.

As learned in the previous lesson, the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, has no special place in the law of Christ, the gospel. With the fulfillment and passing of the Old Law, the law given through Moses to the children of Israel, all of its commandments and statutes are no longer binding. (Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13) Under the new law established by Jesus (Hebrews 9:16-17; James 1:25), the day which was to become His day, the first day of the week, took on great significance. In relation to Christ and His kingdom, it was a day of special events and beginnings.

The Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus came forth from the grave on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-9) in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. (Psalm 16:10) No act is more crucial in the religion of Christ than His resurrection for by it:

- He was shown to be the Son of God with power. (Rom. 1:4)
- He triumphed over sin and death. (Rom. 6:4-10)
- He conquered Satan. (Hebrews 2:14)
- He was empowered to grant hope and victory to mankind. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

God had prefigured the celebration of Christ arising from the dead on the first day of the week in the sacrifice of the first fruits that Israel had to observe under the Old Law. (Leviticus 23:11) The priests were to offer this sacrifice on the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week. Since it prefigured the resurrection of Jesus, it emphasized the first day of the week as being noteworthy to those who would serve Him.

The Fulness of the Gospel Preached

The gospel was preached in its fulness for the first time on the first day of the week recorded in Acts 2 in fulfillment of prophecies found in Isaiah 2:1-4 and Joel 2:28-30. Thus began the work of the great commission Jesus had given His disciples when He told them to take the gospel to the whole world. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) The Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1) always occurred on the first day of the week. (Leviticus 23:15-16) The initial respondents to the gospel, three thousand who gladly received the message preached by the apostle Peter (Acts 2:41), were granted salvation and became the first people to be in the kingdom and part of the church. (Acts 2:47)

The Church a Reality

The promise Jesus had made to build His church (Matthew 16:18) began to be realized upon the first day of the week. With the establishment of His rule and the creation of His church, His new covenant which would govern those who would comprise His church went into effect. (Hebrews 9:16-17)

A Day of Beginnings

There were other “beginnings” on the first day of the week which further establish its significance. There was the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting the world of sin. (John 16:7-8; Acts 2:37) The first remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38), the initial announcement that Jesus had been seated on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:29-35), and the beginning of the High Priesthood of Jesus (Hebrews 7:11-17) all took place on the first day of the week recorded in Acts 2. Later, the apostle Peter would refer to that day as “the beginning.” (Acts 11:15)

Actually, it is rather ironic how the day of worship under the law of Christ is noted as a day of beginning while the Sabbath, the day of worship under the Old Law, was a day which emphasized endings. The Sabbath marked the end of the creation of the world by God and how He rested the seventh day (Exodus 20:10-11) and the end of the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt and how they had rest from their servitude (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The Post-Resurrection Meetings With His Disciples

The first day of the week is also significant because on it the Lord met with His disciples during the time of His resurrection and ascension. At least on two occasions, once without Thomas present (John 20:19-24) and once with him there (John 20:26), Jesus assembled with them.

The Day of Worship

The first day of the week is also when the first century church, under the guidance of the apostles, assembled for worship. (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2) It is evident they met on a regular basis (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 11:17,20) and that those meetings were not to be neglected (Hebrews 10:24-25).

It is not only evident that they regularly assembled but also that their assembling on the first day of the week was primarily to partake of the Lord’s Supper. (Acts 20:7) The apostle Paul prolonged his stay in the city of Troas so that he could “break bread,” eat the Lord’s Supper, with the church there (Acts 20:6). He fully expected them to be meeting for that purpose on that day. It seems clear, then, since Paul, an apostle who was guided by the Holy Spirit into “all truth” (John 16:13), expected the church to be assembling that day that it is the will of God for the church today to assemble on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord’s Supper in commemoration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and to offer their expressions of love and devotion in worship unto Him. The example of the activities of the church in Troas under the guidance of an apostle serves as a sure and proper authority for us today. We can be assured we are pleasing God by following their example.

A more fitting day for worshipping the Lord and remembering His great sacrifice could not be found—the day He came forth from the grave. That day is the first day of the week, the Lord’s day.

McClintock and Strong offer the following summary of the facts about the first day of the week and its significance as the Lord’s day (“The Lord’s Day,” *Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. V, p. 508):

“The results of our examination of the principal writers of the two centuries after the death of St. John may be thus summed up. The Lord’s day (a name which has now come out more prominently, and is connected more explicitly with our Lord’s resurrection than before) existed during these two centuries as a part and parcel of apostolical, and so of scriptural Christianity. It was never defended, for it was never impugned, or at least, only impugned as other things received from the apostles were. It was never con-founded with the Sabbath, but carefully distinguished from it...”

No Other Conclusion Possible: The First Day of the Week Is the Day of Worship for the Christian

The following chart presents several noteworthy facts about the first day of the week. It, like the chart in the previous lesson, was compiled by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. It also originally appeared in the April 16, 1931 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*. When one considers its teachings and those of Scripture, no other conclusion can be reached but that the first day of the week, the Lord's day, is the day of worship for the Christian.

What The Bible Says About The First Day Of The Week

1. That Jesus Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week. (Mark 16:1-9)
 2. That on the first day of the week He was thus declared to be the Son of God. (Rom. 1:4)
 3. That He met with His disciples each first day of the week between His resurrection and His ascension. (John 20:1,19,26)
 4. Pentecost came on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15). Hence, all the events of the second chapter of Acts—the birthday of the church—took place on the first day of the week (Acts 2:1).
 5. That the Holy Spirit imbued the apostles on the first day of the week and began His mission of conversion. (Acts 2:1-4)
 6. That the first gospel sermon proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God was preached on the first day of the week. (Acts 2:22-36)
 7. That three thousand souls—the first fruits of the gospel harvest (Lev. 23:17)—were added to the church which began on that Pentecost—the first day of the week. (Acts 2:41,47)
 8. That the church assembled on the first day of the week to break bread—to observe the Lord's Supper and other items of New Testament worship. (Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42; I Cor. 16:2; I Cor. 11:23,33; Heb. 10:25).
 9. That in the New Testament we have the following things: (1) a new covenant; (2) a new institution—the church; (3) a new set of ordinances—commandments (I Cor. 11:2; 14:37); (4) a new feast—the Lord's Supper; (5) a new day—the first day of the week; (6) a new word to express the new day—Kuriakos, "Lord's day," a word which was never used before (Revelation 1:10).
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Discussion Questions

1. What was the significance of the Sabbath under the law of Moses?
2. In the Old Law, what was the sacrifice of the first fruits? What meaning, if any, does it have today?
3. Upon what day of the week was Jesus raised from the dead? Why is this so pivotal an event?
4. Upon what day of the week was the gospel initially proclaimed in its fullness? Summarize its message.

5. Upon what day of the week was the rule of Christ established? Upon what day of the week did the church belonging to Christ come into existence? Where is Christ's rule expressed? What prophecies were fulfilled by the establishment of His church and His rule?
6. What was Pentecost? Upon what day of the week did it always occur? Why did the apostle Peter refer to the Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 as "the beginning?"
7. Upon what day of the week did the first century church assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper and offer worship to God? Why does this seem so appropriate a day to meet for such purposes?
8. Why did the apostle Paul prolong his stay in Troas? What can be inferred from his actions?
9. Why is "the Lord's day" a fitting way to describe the first day of the week?
10. Since the first day of the week is "the Lord's day," what should one do or not do on it? (Consider other aspects of the day other than assembling for worship.)

Lesson Six: Assembling for Worship

Worship has great meaning to those who are in Jesus. Therefore, they eagerly long for those occasions when they can assemble with their brethren to offer worship to their Lord.

The Practice of the Early Church

From its inception, the church has assembled on a regular basis. The infant church in Jerusalem continued steadfastly in worship. (Acts 2:42) The church in Corinth, in spite of their abuses, still regularly met for worship. (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 16:1-2)

The Need to Assemble

While what is done in worship assemblies could, in reality, be done by an individual in his own home, God, in His wisdom, saw the need for His children to assemble with one another. His plan does not allow any of His saints to remain independent and aloof. He understood that by assembling together to sing, pray, lay by in store, study His word, and partake of the Lord's Supper, His children would be strengthened. Therefore, He commands them to not forsake assembling with one another. (Hebrews 10:24-25) Rather, they are to anticipate those assemblies so that they can stimulate one another to greater love for the Lord, dedication to His cause, and activity in His service.

The command to assemble, though, is not to be the Christian's primary motive for gathering with his brethren. Remember, worship is an expression of one's love for and devotion to God. Thus it should be one's desire to express his love and praise, not his sense of duty to command, that motivates him to assemble.

It is hard to understand, then, why one who claims to be a Christian and to love God would seek to absent himself as much as he possibly can from assemblies of the church. Flimsy excuses and improper questions (Such as: "Do I have to attend on Sunday night to be faithful?") show that such an individual is really not committed to Christ.

The Sins Involved When One Forsakes Worship Assemblies

When one willfully forsakes the worship assemblies of the saints, he involves himself in a number of sins. When one chooses to absent himself from worship, he:

- Sins willfully. (Hebrews 10:25-26)
- Trods under foot the Son of God. (Hebrews 10:29)
- Counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. (Hebrews 10:25-29)
- Does despite unto the Spirit of Grace. (Hebrews 10:29)
- Forsakes, on the Lord's Day, the appointment he has with the Lord to commune with Him in the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. 10:16)
- Forsakes being with the Lord in the assembly. (Matt. 18:20)
- Denies his allegiance to Christ, that which he confessed before being baptized. (Acts 8:37)
- Neglects worship that God seeks. (John 4:23; Acts 20:7)

Every child of God needs to understand the full ramifications of willful absenteeism from worship services. He needs to know the consequences of willfully disregarding the will of God. (See James 4:17 and Hebrews 10:26-27)

Attendance at Assemblies: A Barometer of Faithfulness

While attendance at assemblies is not the only measure of faithfulness, it is a barometer of it. If one lacks the determination to assemble in the Lord's presence (Matthew 18:20) with those who are His disciples, he usually has already forsaken many other, if not all, religious activities. His major problem is not lack of attendance. It is a heart which has grown cold or has been filled with carnal things and ways. It is like a person who has a fever. The fever is not the source of the problem. It is but a symptom of some type of infection that needs to be treated.

The Danger of Overemphasis

On the other hand, we must be careful not to overemphasize attendance in that regard. We must realize that though assembling is required, there is more to being a faithful Christian than just being present at all services of the church. If we are not careful, we will develop a false sense of security thinking that all is well with our souls just because we attended services. We could be regular attenders who have neglected to do the good works Christ wants us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Influence on Others

One cannot overestimate, though, the untold influence for good he can have on others by seeking the kingdom of God first (Matthew 6:33) and by making attendance at worship services one of his highest priorities. Conversely, one's influence for evil is just as great when he fails to attend as he should. Consider the following anonymous article entitled, "And So the Story Goes..."

"We are going to start attending the services of the church just as soon as the baby gets old enough to take out..."

"Yes, we promised to attend church services as soon as the baby was a little older, but because she cries and makes a lot of noise she has to be taken out too often. I don't want to disturb other people. Then, too, I can't get anything out of the services with her acting as she does. We'll get started a little later.

"Preacher, I know you think that we are awful. But we are not coming to church because Jennie just will not go to her Bible class. If we force her to go she will disturb the whole class. Why do you think she is so different from other children?"

"I wish the preacher or elders would talk to our Jennie. She is running with the wrong crowd and I'm afraid she is going to get into trouble..."

"Well, Jennie finally married a man that can give her the better things of life. This is her third husband. She just couldn't get along with the first two. I had high hopes for a while that he would become a member of the church, but the preacher there preached a sermon on marriage, divorce, and remarriage and that made them angry. He swears they will never attend again..."

"And so the story goes..."

Discussion Questions

1. How does the church today know to assemble for worship on the first day of the week?
2. For what purpose(s) are Christians to assemble for worship?

3. Why should the command to assemble not be the primary motive for the Christian to attend worship services?
4. How does attendance serve as a guage of faithfulness? What, in that regard, does it represent?
5. How can attendance be overemphasized? What are some dangers attendant to overemphasizing it?
6. Why does lack of attendance show a lack of commitment to Christ?
7. What does it mean to “forsake the assembling?”
8. Does one sin when he willfully absents himself from one assembly of the saints for worship on the first day of the week? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. Does the command to assemble include:
 - a. The Sunday night assemblies?
 - b. The Wednesday night assemblies?
10. What is to be the Christian’s attitude toward the assembling of the church?

Lesson Seven: Worshiping in Spirit

In His discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Jesus made her uncomfortable because He told her of the immoral nature of her multiple marriages. (John 4:1-18) To divert His attention from her life, she sought to change the subject by mentioning the differences of the Samaritans and Jews as to the place of worship. (John 4:19-20) In response, Jesus told her, and us, that in His kingdom the lives, attitudes, and actions of the participants in worship would be important. No geographical location would have any particular significance. (John 4:21-24)

In His response to that woman, Jesus stated a principle which, even today, guides worshipers in His kingdom. He said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (v. 24) To be acceptable to God, worship must be offered in accordance with this principle. It must be given "in spirit and truth." This lesson will examine the concept of worshiping "in spirit." The next lesson will consider worshiping in "truth."

The Proper Attitude in Worship

To "worship in spirit" is to worship with the proper attitude. This is consistent with all that God expects of His children. Since their obedience to all His commands must be from the heart for Him to be pleased (Romans 6:17-18), it is only logical that He also desires their worship to be from the heart. One cannot just "go through the motions" of worship and expect God to be pleased and accept what is offered. Many examples appear in Scripture where God rejected the worship of His people because, although supposedly worshipping Him, their worship was not from the heart. One such example is in Malachi 1:6-14.

The Lesson of Malachi 1:6-14

In Malachi 1:6-14, the Jews had not ceased to worship. They were still performing the actions commanded by the law of Moses but they were doing them with an improper attitude. Worship had become a "weariness" to them. (v. 13) They thought they were doing what God wanted but He told them He had no "pleasure" in them or their worship and that He would not accept their offerings. (v. 10) Why? Their worship was not genuine. It lacked the right attitude.

Worship: An Expression of Love and Devotion

Since worship is to be an expression of the love and devotion in one's heart for God, if there is no genuine love, no real devotion, there can be no true worship. Worship offered from an empty heart and with an improper attitude has always been offensive to God.

The prophet Samuel told Saul, Israel's first king, when Saul had disobeyed God's order to destroy the Amalekites and all their possessions in order to have animals to sacrifice, that "to obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22) God could never have accepted Saul's sacrifice because it was offered with an improper attitude—Saul was exalting himself not God. If he had genuinely wanted to express his love for God, he would have obeyed Him. (See John 14:15)

A Spirit of Obedience

For one's worship to be accepted by God, he must have a spirit of obedience. Since an attitude of humble obedience ought to characterize each Christian every day of his life, it should carry over to his

worship. If there is no desire to obey God on a daily basis and conform one's life to His will, that lack of desire will manifest itself in worship and it will become a "weariness" to him as it did to those Jews in the time of Malachi. Can God's view of one, if that is his attitude, be any better than it was of those Jews whom Malachi addressed?

A Spirit of Holiness

In order for his worship to be acceptable, one's life must be holy. (Psalm 24:4; 1 Timothy 2:8) Psalm 29:2 says, "Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." To be holy is to be set apart from sin. It is to be like the Father and Son (1 Peter 1:15-16). Keith Sharp, writing on the "Worship of the Church" (*Truth Magazine*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, Jan. 3, 1980), said,

"God does not require that you possess a beautiful voice in order to sing His praises, but He does command that you possess a beautiful life. One cannot live a sinful life and offer holy worship unto God."

A Spirit of Sincerity

Worshipping in spirit also involves an attitude of sincerity. Worship should be given out of a genuine desire to please God. Those to whom worship has become a chore, who worship out of a sense of duty, cannot possibly be worshipping in the proper spirit. David had great joy because of the opportunity he had to worship. In Psalm 122:1 he said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" Worship services should be viewed as moments of joy, not hours of toil and drudgery.

A Spirit of Edification

Worshipping in spirit is to be edifying. Those who assemble for worship are to provoke others unto love and good works. (Hebrews 10:24-25) In worship services, all things are to be done unto edifying. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

A Spirit of Order

Order is necessary for one to worship in spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:40 commands that "...all things be done decently and in order." Earlier in that chapter, verse 33 says, "...God is not the author of confusion but of peace." Since He is not the author of confusion, God is not pleased with it in worship. That is evident from the context of this fourteenth chapter. While we must be careful not to allow our worship services to become so regimented that they become cold, formalistic, and stilted, at the same time we must guard against such abuses of order as casualness and spontaneous worship.

A Spirit of Understanding

Worshipping in spirit must include understanding. (1 Corinthians 14:14-15) If one does not understand what he is doing or why he is doing it, it does him no good to do it. Worshipping without understanding causes one to fall prey to many dangers. One who sings without understanding can be singing a lie or affirming something which is contrary to Biblical teaching. One who "amens" a prayer he has not heard or understood may be giving his assent to that which is in opposition to the will of God.

The Goal of Worship

Worshipping in spirit has the goal to please God, not man. (Galatians 1:10) Worship is designed to praise God and to instruct and strengthen man. It was not given to entertain man yet many feel they must be entertained by it. Such an attitude leads to several abuses.

- Songs are chosen with an emphasis on the beauty of the music and its arrangement rather than on the words and their meaning.
- Sermons are preached which stress levity and brevity rather than the needs of the hearers.
- Prayers are offered in eloquent phrasings to impress those present rather than to humbly approach the throne of God.

While we should rejoice at the blessings derived from worshiping in spirit, we must never forget its God-given goal is not to entertain us but to strengthen and edify us; to exalt, glorify, and magnify God; and to celebrate our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to worship in spirit?
2. Define attitude. Why are attitudes important in all phases of the religion of Christ? Why are they important in worship?
3. What does it mean to worship from the heart? Why does God always seem to stress that man's actions be from the heart? (See Romans 6:17-18)
4. Why was the worship of the Jews in the time of Malachi not acceptable to God? What application, if any, can be made today of their situation?
5. What did Samuel mean when he told Saul that "to obey is better than sacrifice?" (I Samuel 15:22)
6. Why is a spirit of obedience necessary to worshiping in spirit? What are some results of such a spirit?
7. Why is an attitude of reverence so important to proper worship?
8. Can one worship in spirit and remain aloof from his brethren? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. Give the importance of each of the following as it pertains to worshiping in spirit.
 - a. Holiness.
 - b. Sincerity.
 - c. Order.
 - d. Understanding.
10. Whom is worship designed to please? What are some consequences when the motive in worship is pleasing men?

Lesson Eight: Worshiping in Truth

In the latter portion of John 4:24, Jesus said that true worshipers must worship the Father in “truth.” “Truth,” as defined by Scripture, is the “word” of God. (John 17:17) *Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines it as “true teaching or faith... divine reality, revelation.” To worship “in truth,” then, is to do so according to the faith revealed in Scripture. (See Jude 3; Galatians 1:11-12)

Worship: God Has Always Commanded How

God has always revealed to man how He wants him to worship. In Patriarchal times, for example, Abel’s sacrifice was accepted by God while his brother Cain’s was rejected (Genesis 4:4-5) because Abel offered “by faith” (Hebrews 11:4) and Cain did not. Since faith comes by hearing the word (Romans 10:17), we can surmise that Abel heeded instructions God had given on how to worship while Cain did not.

In His law to the children of Israel, God spelled out, in great detail, how they were to worship. He specified the place of worship, the priests to perform it, the feasts and sacrifices to be included in it, and all things essential to accomplishing what He wanted. He left nothing to their determination. Those who tried to alter His pattern were severely punished. When Nadab and Abihu, priests who were to burn incense in the tabernacle, used fire other than that which God had specified, the fire came forth from the altar and killed them. (Leviticus 10:1-2)

The New Testament: The Standard for Worship Today

Since Jesus Christ now possesses “all authority” (Matthew 28:18) and since all things are to be done in His “name” (Colossians 3:17), i.e., by His authority, our standard for worship must be His gospel, the New Testament Scriptures where the Father speaks through Him. (Hebrews 1:1-2) For worship to be acceptable to God, it must be offered in the manner prescribed by Jesus in the New Testament. No one is at liberty to change what He has said in it.

Changes Are Not Acceptable

No one has the right to add anything to worship that is not found in the New Testament. Worship becomes vain when it includes practices and doctrines which have their origin with men. In Matthew 15:8-9, Jesus said, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” God does not accept anything in worship that does not originate with Him.

Neither is it within the rights of anyone to eliminate anything God has commanded for worship. All things He has included in worship have purpose or else God would not have commanded them to be done in the first place. Therefore, to omit anything He has included would be to thwart the purpose of God.

The Old Testament: No Authority Today

Since the New Testament, God’s revelation through Jesus Christ, is the present source of authority for worship and its practices, the Old Testament cannot authorize any practice for worship today. Though it had served as the authority for the worship of Israel before the law of Christ went into effect, it no longer can because Christ, having fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17), made it obsolete. (Colossians 2:14)

What Are We to Do?

Since our practices in worship are to come from the New Testament, what does it authorize? What does it say one is to do to properly express his worship to God?

The actions of the first century church under the guidance of the apostles show they worshiped God acceptably by assembling on the first day of the week to:

- Partake of the Lord's Supper. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-27)
- Pray to the Father. (1 Cor. 14:15; 1 Tim. 2:8)
- Sing praises to God. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:15)
- Contribute of their means to the Lord. (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
- Give and receive instruction in the word of God. (Acts 20:7)

Nothing else is authorized. Nothing else is to be done.

To worship "in truth," one must do those things the first century church did. He must do those things, and only those things, authorized by the New Testament.

Discussion Questions

1. What is truth in relation to worship?
2. What gives God the right to command worship and to specify how He is to be worshiped?
3. Where does true worship originate? Explain.
4. Why was Abel's worship acceptable to God while Cain's was not?
5. Who were Nadab and Abihu? Why were they destroyed by fire?
6. Why is the New Testament our source of authority for what is done in worship today?
7. What are some consequences when one adds to worship those practices and doctrines which originate with men?
8. Why should nothing be eliminated from that which God has commanded to be done in worshiping Him?
9. Why is the Old Testament not an acceptable source for practices in worship?
10. What has God commanded people to do in order to express worship to Him today?

Lesson Nine: The Lord's Supper

The physical life of Jesus was nearing its end. In just a few short hours He would be betrayed, unjustly tried and condemned, and then delivered up to die—executed without cause on a Roman cross by an unruly mob who thirsted for His death. It was in the shadow of these events that He assembled with His disciples in a humble upper room to partake of the Passover feast. During its observance, He instituted the greatest memorial the world has ever known or ever will know. He then commanded it to be observed when His kingdom was established. That memorial is the Lord's Supper.

All other memorials pale in comparison to it because it is the only one authorized by the Lord Himself. It alone has been given His approval as a memorial to His sacrificial death.

It would be impossible to find a more appropriate memorial. Yet, it is simple in its composition. Had it been left to man, he, no doubt, would have devised some ostentatious ceremony or erected a grand edifice as a memorial to Christ's death but the Savior simply used the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine from the Passover meal and linked them forever with Him and His wondrous sacrifice by saying, "This do...in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:23, 25)

How fitting it was that the Lord instituted His Supper during the Passover for it had prefigured the sacrifice of Jesus. The Passover was the feast which commemorated God's deliverance of the Israelites from bondage and death in Egypt. It had served as a shadow of Jesus, our "Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7), and the freedom from the bondage of sin and the sentence of death for sin that He provides for all those who will be obedient to His gospel.

The Purpose of the Supper

The Supper allows the disciples of Jesus to remember Him and His sacrificial death. But, as with so many things given by God, while its primary purpose is to be a memorial, several other purposes are served when it is observed.

By partaking of the Lord's Supper, participants proclaim Christ's death until He returns. (1 Cor. 11:26) It is an expression of their faith in Him and His promise to return and gather His followers to Him. (1 Cor. 15:24)

Observing the Supper causes Christians to share in the body and blood of Christ—communing with Him and sharing with all other disciples in being part of the one body. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 the apostle Paul wrote, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."

Participation in this memorial observance shows recognition of the "new covenant" God made with man through the blood of Christ. (Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25) The old covenant was fulfilled by Jesus (Matt. 5:17) and taken out of the way so that the new one made through Him could be established. (Heb. 8:13) To be valid and to have the power to remit sin (Heb. 9:15-22), it had to be established, dedicated, and sanctified by His blood. Since it is the only covenant dedicated with the precious blood of the Son of God, it is superior to all others.

The Time and Frequency of Its Observance

The Lord commanded His disciples to partake of the Supper in His kingdom to serve all of the above purposes. That is exactly what the early Christians did. While under the guidance of the apostles, who

were being led into all truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), the first century church assembled on the first day of the week to observe it. (Acts 20:7) Such passages as Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-26, along with 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, show them assembling to partake of it on a regular basis. Since the account of the practice of the church in Troas found in Acts 20 is the only reference to time and/or frequency of observance in reference to the Lord's Supper, we must conclude that it was observed then, and is to be observed now, on every first day of the week. While some churches take it only monthly, quarterly, or annually, those who desire to observe it in an authorized manner must do it every first day of the week.

J.W. McGarvey, commenting on the frequency of observance, wrote in his *Original Commentary on Acts*, page 247,

"It is very generally admitted, even among parties who do not observe the practice themselves, that the apostolic Churches broke the loaf weekly; but it is still made a question whether, in the absence of an express commandment, this example is binding upon us. This question is likely to be determined differently by two different classes of men. Those who are disposed to follow chiefly the guide of their own judgment, or of their denominational customs, will feel little influenced by such a precedent. But to those who are determined that the very slightest indication of the divine will shall govern them, the question must present itself in this way: 'We are commanded to do this in memory of Jesus. We are not told, in definite terms, how often it shall be done; but we find that the apostles established the custom of meeting every Lord's day for this purpose. This is an inspired precedent, and with it we must comply. We can come to no other conclusion without assuming an ability to judge of this matter with more wisdom than did the apostle.'"

The Manner of Observance

The manner of observance, the way one partakes of the Supper, is important. As in all other aspects of worship, it must be done "in spirit and truth." (John 4:24) To partake "in truth" involves having:

- The proper elements— unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. (Matt. 26:26-28)
- The proper place—in the assembly of the church. (1 Cor. 11:18)
- The proper time of observance—the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7)

To partake "in spirit" speaks of the attitude one has in participating. Each individual Christian is to:

- "Prove himself." (1 Cor. 11:28) He is to examine his life and his motives for partaking.
- Be cognizant of his fellow Christians. (1 Cor. 11:33; 10:16-17) He must regard the "like precious faith" of each one (2 Pet. 1:1) and
- Rightly "discern" the Lord's body. (1 Cor. 11:29-31) He must acknowledge the purpose of the Supper, the Lord who died, and the church He purchased with His blood. (Acts 20:28)

The church at Corinth, whom Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 11, had abused the Supper in many ways. They had made it a drunken, common meal. They had manifested no regard for one another and had totally lost sight of the Supper's purpose and the manner in which it was to be observed. Because of their abuses, they stood condemned. (1 Cor. 11:31) Their worship could not be acceptable while such abuses continued (1 Cor. 11:20) just as our worship will be rejected if we abuse or alter the Supper, its purposes, and/or manner of observance in any way.

The attitude one should have toward the Supper and its observance is thoughtfully stated in the following anonymous article:

The Lord's Supper: When I Come to the Table

"I come, not because I am worthy; not for any righteousness of mine, for I have sinned and fallen short of what, by God's help, I might have been.

"I come, not that there is any magic in partaking of the symbols for Christ's body and blood.

"But I come, because Christ bids me come. It is His table and He invites me.

"I come, because it is a memorial to Him — as oft as it is done in remembrance of Him. And when I remember Him — His life, His sufferings, death, burial and resurrection— I find myself humbling myself in His presence and bowing before Him in worship.

"I come, because here is portrayed Christian self-denial, and I am taught very forcibly the virtues of sacrifice on behalf of another, sacrifice which has salvation in it.

"I come, because here I have the opportunity to acknowledge my unworthiness and to make a new start.

"I come, because here I find comfort and peace.

"I come, because I rise from this place with new strength, courage and power, to live for Him who died for me."

The Lord's Supper: Love and Worship Expressed

Participation in the Lord's Supper allows the Christian to express his love for and worship to God. Derrel Shaw once wrote:

"Surely then, to use some well-known and well-used words, we need to let our minds go back to the scenes of Calvary. And as we contemplate the events upon which the sun refused to shine, we do have thoughts of sadness as we discern His body (see 1 Cor. 11:29) and as we try to imagine the burden He bore and the suffering He experienced for us.

"But let us consider ALL factors involved and rejoice that He NOW LIVES and is alive forevermore (Rev. 1:18). He reigns as King Supreme; He intercedes for us; He is our advocate and our friend; He knows our works, and HE IS COMING! How rich is His mercy and how wonderful are His promises. As we commune with Him in the Supper we long to be freed from the shackles of life on this terrestrial sphere, to be with Him and to serve Him without hindrances we now know...In awe we consider the sinless life which qualified Him to be the perfect sacrifice; in reverence and love we accept the benefits He can now bestow; and in joy we eat and drink with Him in the kingdom of God."

Discussion Questions

1. Who instituted the Lord's Supper? On what occasion was it established?
2. What link is there, if any, between the Passover of the Old Law and the Lord's Supper?
3. What is the primary purpose of the Lord's Supper? What other purposes does it serve?

4. In what way(s) is the Lord's Supper a "communion?"
5. How does the observance of the Supper proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again?
6. What relationship does the blood of Jesus have to the "new covenant" between God and man?
7. What are the elements of the Lord's Supper? How do you know they are the authorized elements? What would be the consequences of using anything other than the authorized elements?
8. Answer the following questions as they pertain to the Lord's Supper citing Scriptures as they apply.
 - a. When is the Supper to be observed?
 - b. How often (with what frequency) is the Supper to be observed?
 - c. Where is the Supper to be observed?
9. What does it mean to partake of the Supper in a worthy manner? (See 1 Corinthians 11:27)
10. What is involved for one to partake of the Lord's Supper:
 - a. In truth?
 - b. In spirit?

Lesson Ten: Singing Praise to God

Singing is a vital part of the Christian's worship to his God. Like all other expressions of worship, it is a way of showing devotion and praise to Him.

Commanded to Sing

The New Testament commands Christians to sing when they are assembled for worship. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) Under the guidance of the inspired apostles, the first century church, as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:26, included singing in their worship assemblies. But singing, when it is motivated merely by response to command, is difficult. When the Judeans were in captivity in Babylon, even though their captors required them to sing, they could not (Psalm 137:1-4). While God does require Christians to sing, at the same time He, as with all other things He commands, gives them good reason for doing it.

Reasons for Singing

- To praise God. The Bible reveals the qualities and character of God. It tells of His mercy, love, and grace. When one who has a good and honest heart understands the being and love of God, he seeks to praise Him. A realization of the blessings and promises He provides prompt admiration and devotion which flow from the lips of the devoted disciple of Christ. (Hebrews 13:15) Knowing God should cause one to glorify Him. (Romans 1:21)
- To teach and admonish one another. (Col. 3:16) Those things which God commands Christians to do in worship always benefit the worshipers. Singing is no exception. He has designed it not only to praise Him but also to instruct, warn, and exhort His children.

Since Christians are to teach and admonish one another by it, the emphasis of music in worship is not to be on the beauty of the melodies of the songs but rather on their words. Professional singers, special choirs, and/or groups of talented soloists and singers may enhance the sound to the people who are present but do nothing to improve it in the ears of God. Singing in worship was not designed to entertain man but to teach and admonish him. Since all are to teach, all are to sing.

If teaching and admonishing are to take place, the songs must have understandable words uttered by those singing. (See I Cor. 14:15) The words to the songs sung in worship must emphasize God, His will, and how people must conform to that will.

Analyzing Ephesians 5:18-19

In order to fully understand the purposes of singing and the Christian's responsibilities in it, it is necessary to analyze Ephesians 5:18-19. These verses read, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

- "Be filled with the Spirit." The Holy Spirit produces emotions in the hearts of people by the word He has revealed. A parallel passage, Colossians 3:16, shows such to be the case when it says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." The emotions of admiration, love, and gratitude are stirred within a person when he perceives the Divine attributes, works, and blessings the word reveals. The natural response is to sing praise.
- "Speaking." As stated earlier, the words are to be the most important part of the singing. Therefore, they should be sung distinctly with meaning and genuine emotion.

- “To one another.” All those assembled are to take an active part in singing. If one does not sing, he cannot teach or admonish another.
- “Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Not just any songs are to be sung in worship. God has restricted the singing of the church to three types of songs.
 - Psalms. The inspired songs of David and the early church (1 Cor. 14:26); musical settings of inspired words.
 - Hymns. Uninspired songs of praise to God and Christ.
 - Spiritual songs. Uninspired songs of teaching, sacred narrative, etc.; songs of teaching and admonition.
- “Singing and making melody in your heart.” “Singing” is the external act of the body. “Making melody” is the action of the heart. Both are essential for one’s singing to be acceptable because true worship must be offered from the heart. One cannot just mouth the words of a song. He must truly believe and mean what he is saying.
- “To the Lord.” Remember, all worship is directed to God so no matter whether one is a great musician or a poor one, his singing pleases God if it is from the heart and in accordance with truth. The singing of one of His holy children is a “joyful noise” to God. (Psalm 66:1)

Why No Instruments?

True worship originates with God. In the New Testament, our authority in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18; Col. 3:17; Heb. 1:1-2), God nowhere speaks of praising Him with an instrument of music. Since He has specified singing, no one is at liberty to act upon God’s silence and assume that He will accept instrumental music in worship seeing that He did not forbid it. When God specifies what He wants in a matter, everything else is excluded but what He has specified. In relation to music in worship, He has specified singing, therefore, every other kind of music, including instrumental music, is to be excluded.

Some want to justify the use of instruments in worship as aids to the singing. But aids are only to expedite the execution of a command without altering it or that which it produces. When one makes music on an instrument, he is producing another kind of music other than singing. When a church uses such authorized aids as songbooks, song leaders, and/or tuning forks or pitch pipes, the end result is still singing. But when it uses a piano, organ, or some other instrument of music, the result is now both singing and playing.

Including instrumental music in worship violates several Scriptural principles. Playing an instrument in worship:

- Is not authorized by Jesus in His word. It is not mentioned in connection with worship in the New Testament. The silence of the Scriptures authorizes nothing. Our practices must come from that which God has spoken.
- Cannot be done by faith. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10:17) Since it cannot be found in the word of God revealed by Jesus Christ, the New Testament, it cannot be done by faith.
- Causes one to go beyond the doctrine of Christ. Going beyond it severs any relationship one might have with the Father and Son. (2 John 9)
- Assumes that God desires it. Nothing in His word proves God wants it. Just because we may like it is no proof. To act presumptuously is to sin greatly. (Psa. 19:13)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you know that singing is to be included in the worship which God wants from His children when they have assembled to worship Him?
2. Why is it difficult to sing if one's lone motivation is submission to command?
3. What are some reasons for Christians to worship by singing?
4. What is to be the main emphasis in the church's singing? Why?
5. What are some dangers when one overemphasizes the beauty of the music?
6. Why is it necessary to "be filled with the Spirit" in order to properly worship in song?
7. What types of songs are Christians to sing in worship? Define each.
8. What are some reasons to exclude instrumental music from the worship of the church?
9. How are song books valid aids to music in worship while pianos are not?
10. What are some of its essential elements if the church's singing is to be done in spirit and truth?

Lesson Eleven: Prayer in Worship

The opportunity to pray, to communicate directly with God, is one of the greatest blessings the Christian enjoys. It is evident that Divinity places a great deal of emphasis on prayer and its power. While on the earth, Jesus prayed often both showing and instructing His disciples that they ought to be people who pray.

Prayer in Worship

Even though the individual Christian is to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), the saints are also to pray when they assemble for worship. The apostle Paul instructed the church at Corinth how to properly pray in their assemblies. (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). The apostles and early church, when together, prayed. (Acts 2:42; 4:24-31; 12:5,12)

Prayer as Worship

But what makes prayer worship? Since worship is an expression of love for and devotion to God, prayer which recognizes Him; which appeals to His love, mercy, grace, and power; and which shows a reliance on Him and the need to communicate with Him; is surely worship. It exalts God as the object of our praise, the recipient of our love, and the source of all blessings. In turn, God displays His providential care and love for His children by hearing and answering their prayers. (1 John 5:14-15; Matthew 7:7-11)

Prayer Defined

Prayer is the general term for addressing God. Since it is possible for His children to talk to Him, He asks them to call upon Him often. (Luke 18:1-8; Ephesians 6:17-18; 1 Timothy 2:1-3)

It is the privilege and duty of the righteous. (James 5:16) The model prayer given by Jesus in Matthew 6 shows that prayer was designed for children of God. (v. 9) Only those who are trying to live righteously have their prayers heard and approved. (1 Peter 3:10-12)

Prayer is asking, seeking, and knocking with the assurance that the Father is ready, willing, and able to respond. (Matt. 7:7-11)

Prayer is an act of faith. (Luke 18:1-8; Jas. 1:5-7) By praying to God, one shows he believes that He is real, that He loves His children, and that He hears and answers their prayers. (John 9:31; 1 John 5:13-15)

Prayer is an expression of worship because praise, an integral part of worship, is a major component of prayer (Matt. 6:9). The very fact His children seek Him in it and pray that His will be done demonstrates their respect and love for God thus worshiping Him in prayer.

The Elements of Prayer

As stated above, prayer involves adoration and praise. It eulogizes God (Acts 2:47; Matt. 6:9). Prayer includes petitions, pleas for ones needs. (1 John 5:15) These can be such things as supplications (Eph. 6:18; Philippians 4:6), confession of sins, and pleas for forgiveness (1 John 1:9-2:2).

Another essential of prayer is thanksgiving for blessings received from God. (Phil. 4:6) Intercessions, pleas for others, are also an element of prayer. (1 Tim. 2:1)

Prayer's Components: Things for Which to Pray

- Forgiveness of sins. (1 John 2:1-2; Acts 8:22-24)
- Wisdom. (Jas. 1:5)
- The daily necessities of life. (Matt. 6:11)
- The sick. (Jas. 5:13-14; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10)
- Protection from temptation. (Matt. 26:41)
- Deliverance from evil. (Matt. 6:13; 2 Pet. 2:9)
- Enemies. (Matt. 5:44)
- The lost. (Romans 10:1)
- All men (1 Tim. 2:1-2) including those in “high places.”
- The people of God— all the saints in all the world. (Eph. 6:18)
- The effectual working of the word of God— for an abundant harvest (Luke 10:2), for those who preach (Eph. 6:19-20), and for the free course of the word. (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; cf. Eph. 6:18-20)

Blessings Derived from Prayer

- Peace that passes understanding. (Phil. 4:6-7)
- Help in time of temptation. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- Wisdom. (Jas. 1:5)
- Physical necessities. (Matt. 6:33)
- Healing. (Jas. 5:16)
- Forgiveness. (Matt. 6:12)
- Help with prayer. (Rom. 8:26-27)

Hindrances to Prayer

Since prayers can be hindered by many things, Christians must constantly be on guard against those things which would hinder their prayers. Such things as lack of faith (Jas. 1:5-7), wickedness (Psalm 66:18), selfishness (Jas. 4:3; Luke 18:9-14), improper attitudes toward others (Matt. 6:14-15; 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 3:7), and the substitution of prayer for obedience can all hinder the prayers of the church and its members.

Acceptable Prayer

For the prayers of the church to be acceptable, attention must be given to several essentials which allow God to accept them.

Some things, though, which some believe to be essential, in reality are not. These would include such things as a particular body posture while praying (kneeling, etc.), “King James” English, solemn looks, pious tones, flowery language, and “vain repetitions.” (Matt. 6:7) None of these necessarily make a prayer acceptable. On the other hand, if they are being done as a display of piety before others, they might hinder prayers from being heard.

Essentials of prayers which are acceptable to God include the following.

- A disposition of reverence. (Matt. 6:9)
- Faith and trust (Jas. 1:5-7) and sincerity. (Matt. 6:5-6)
- A heart filled with thanksgiving (Eph. 5:20) for blessings both material (1 Tim. 4:3-4; Acts 27:35) and spiritual (Eph. 1:3).

- Humility. (Luke 18:9-14)
- A forgiving spirit. (Matt. 6:14-15)
- Obedience to God's will. (1 John 3:22; 5:14; 1 Pet. 3:10-12)
- Offered through Jesus and in His name. It must be done by His authority (Colossians 3:17) because He is Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), High Priest (Heb. 8:1-2), and Advocate (1 John 2:1-2) between God and His children.
- The proper motive. (Jas. 1:5-7) Selfishness causes prayers to be rejected.

Conclusion: The Power of Prayer

Prayer "avails much" (Jas. 5:16) because when His children pray in an acceptable manner, God hears and answers. It supplies the church with a powerful asset and a wonderful blessing. May the church never underestimate or forget the power of prayer. May those who comprise it always "pray and not lose heart." (Luke 18:1)

Discussion Questions

1. What is prayer?
2. Cite some instances in the life of Jesus which show how important prayer was to Him.
3. In what way(s) is prayer worship?
4. What authority is there for prayer to be included in the worship of the church?
5. Give the elements of prayer. Define each.
6. What are some things for which the church is to pray?
7. What are some blessings derived from prayer?
8. What are some things which could hinder the prayers of the church?
9. Why are the following not essential to acceptable prayer?
 - a. A specific posture.
 - b. Olde English.
 - c. Vain repetitions.
10. What are some essentials of an acceptable prayer?

Lesson Twelve: Laying By in Store

Everything we are and have that is good, even life itself, is a gift from God. All physical blessings, including our abilities and opportunities for prosperity, are given by Him. The spiritual blessings we enjoy as His children, including salvation, are His special gift to us. Therefore, we owe something to Him who has given us all that is good. (James 1:17)

In reality, though, God does not need anything we have. (Psalm 50:10-12) Yet, He calls upon us to give because we need to give. To satisfy that need, He has determined for us to give of our means to support the work of the church. Though He could have chosen to accomplish that work in several ways, He purposed for us not only to do it but also to support it by our freewill offerings. He gave clear instructions that each Christian is to “lay by in store.” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

“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.” (King James Version)

In this passage the apostle Paul gave instructions to the church in Corinth, as he had to the churches of Galatia, to “lay by in store” on the first day of the week as each person had prospered. No other method for financing the work of the Lord is mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. Rummage and bake sales, carnivals, car washes, bingo games, and all other business enterprises designed to generate income are without Scriptural authority and are displeasing to God.

The giving enjoined by this passage was to be done on a regular basis—on each first day of the week while the church was assembled. The amount given was to be based on the amount received or the prosperity of the individual.

Authority for a Church Treasury

1 Corinthians 16:1-2, along with other passages in the New Testament, authorizes a local church to have a common fund or treasury. While some may feel there is no authority for one, the following examples from the inspired word show God has authorized it.

While Jesus was upon the earth, His twelve disciples had a common purse out of which purchases were made on behalf of the group. (John 12:6; 13:29)

The church at Jerusalem had a common fund composed of the money the disciples “laid at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 2:45; 4:34,37; 5:2) The incident with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:4) shows that the property and the funds derived from the sale of it belonged to and was under the control of the individual. When those funds, though, were “laid at the apostles’ feet,” they no longer belonged to the individual. They became part of a common fund, a treasury.

Churches paid wages to preachers. (2 Corinthians 11:8; Philippians 4:10-18) For a church to be able to pay wages, it would have to act in its collective capacity having a common fund.

Finally, Paul’s instructions to the church in Corinth plainly incorporate the idea of a common fund, a church treasury.

No Tithe Commanded

Some today feel that a person is to tithe, i.e., give one-tenth of their income to the Lord. But such a practice is not founded upon the New Testament or the authority of Christ, the one with all authority. (Matthew 28:18) It is based upon Old Testament law and practice.

Under the law of Moses, the children of Israel were to give a tenth of all they had in order to support the priestly tribe of Levi. (Numbers 18:21) This tenth was called a tithe. (Leviticus 27:32) It was not reckoned from net profit but was determined from gross increase. (Lev. 27:30) Abraham, prior to the Mosaic law, gave tithes to Melchizedek the priest. (Hebrews 7:4-5) Nowhere in the New Testament, though, are Christians commanded to tithe.

Yet, while tithing is not commanded, it does give one cause to reflect. If God commanded tithing of physical Israel, will He be pleased with less from spiritual Israel, the church?

What Giving Accomplishes

As seen earlier, God, in reality, needs no money from us. What He desires is the gift of heart which produces the giving. Still, our giving accomplishes many things. They include the following.

- We prove our willingness to obey God's commands. By obeying the command to "lay by in store," we manifest our belief in His will as our guide and demonstrate our desire to put Him and His will first in our lives.
- We prove the sincerity of our love. (2 Cor. 8:7-8) Jesus said that love is demonstrated by obedience to His commands. (John 14:15)
- We show our appreciation to God for all He has given us as blessings. (Jas. 1:17)
- Our giving makes us happier and causes our own blessings to increase. (Acts 20:35; Malachi 3:8-10)
- We enable the church to do its divinely appointed work. Since the freewill offering of its members is the only source of revenue for the local church, and since doing the Lord's work requires funding, little, if anything, could be done without our giving. The more we give, therefore, the more can be done.
- We lay up treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-21) Putting the Lord first in our lives helps us to keep focusing on the spiritual aspects of life and to remember that the only thing we can truly get out of life is what we give to the Lord of ourselves, our abilities, and our means.

Why Some Fail to Give

In light of the above considerations, it is difficult to comprehend why some who claim to be Christians do not give as they should. Possibly, one or more of the following "reasons" might explain why.

- They lack teaching. They do not know what the Bible says about giving.
- They are rebelling against God and His will. Knowing His will, they refuse to do it.
- They lack faith. Faith is demonstrated by works. (Jas. 2:18)
- They lack interest in the cause of Christ and the work of the church.
- They love money. Remember, the love of money caused some to "stray from the faith" because it is the "root of all kinds of evil." (1 Timothy 6:10)
- They have spent their money on their own pleasures. They have overextended themselves and Christ's cause is the first to suffer.

How We Are to Give

The New Testament teaches us how we are to give and the spirit we are to have in giving.

- We must be willing to give. (2 Cor. 8:3, 11-12; 9:7) We must have a readiness of mind that will cause us to give cheerfully.
- We must give ourselves to the Lord. (2 Cor. 8:5) Those who have done so are not likely to be stingy with money.
- We must give as we have prospered. (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
- We are to give cheerfully. (2 Cor. 9:7) Someone once said, "This does not mean that giving makes us happy, but...happiness makes us give."
- We are to give liberally. (2 Cor. 9:6) Since God has liberally blessed us, we should be liberal in our giving. We must remember God's law of sowing and reaping—if we sow in abundance, we will reap in abundance. (Galatians 6:7-8)
- We must purpose our giving in our hearts. (2 Cor. 9:7) Our giving should not be erratic. We must determine how and what amount we should give.

How to Determine How Much to Give

There are several factors to take into consideration when determining how much to give to the Lord.

The amount given:

- Depends on income—"as he may prosper." (1 Cor. 16:1-2) The greater one's income, the more he should give. It is determined by what one has. (2 Cor. 8:12)
- Depends on the need. When a crisis threatened the Jerusalem church, that special need demanded special giving. (Acts 4:32-35) Though they did not ordinarily sell their houses and possessions to be able to give, the hunger of the brethren demanded it.
- Is established by priority. How important is the Lord and His cause to you in relation to luxuries, recreation, etc.? Spiritual things are to come first. (Matt. 6:33)
- Is not determined by tithing. As stated earlier, this was an Old Testament precept and is not part of the law of Christ.

Give to Grow Spiritually

Bob Buchanon, in writing on giving ("Planned and Purposed," *What the Bible Teaches*, Vol. IV, No. 10, Oct. 1981) said,

"The right kind of giving helps us to grow spiritually. It is a mistake to think that the primary purpose of giving is to meet a budget. Giving as an act of worship deals with the heart and not with the hand. It helps us to grow and develop as children of God."

Discussion Questions

1. How is giving of one's means an expression of worship?
2. What authority, if any, is there for:
 - a. Laying by in store on the first day of the week?
 - b. A local church to have a treasury?

3. Is there any authority for a church to engage in any money-making efforts such as car washes, raffles, rummage sales, etc.? Explain.
4. What is tithing? Why are we not to practice it today?
5. What, do you think, are some reasons we are commanded to give?
6. What are some results of our giving?
7. List and discuss some reasons why some members of the church fail to give as they should.
8. In what manner are church members to give?
9. What are some considerations to which one must give attention when determining the amount he is to give?
10. In light of the fact that the free-will offering of its members is to be the source of the church's funds:
 - a. Can a church receive interest on money in its bank accounts? Explain.
 - b. Can a church sell its building or property for a profit? Explain.

Lesson Thirteen: Instruction in the Word of God

In speaking of the one who is “blessed,” Psalm 1:1-3 says, “Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.”

The “blessed” one delights in the law of the Lord. It is his primary focus. He meditates on it day and night. It is a source of refreshment and life to him. He is as a tree planted by a river because his life becomes fruitful and productive. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described such a person as one who will “hunger and thirst for righteousness” in a desire to be filled. (Matthew 5:6). One of his greatest blessings is to receive and share instruction in the word of God. Learning and teaching God’s law are activities he eagerly anticipates and thoroughly enjoys. Therefore, he values those times when saints assemble for study and worship because he knows he will be with people who, like him, respect and adore God’s word.

Instruction in the Word of God: A Part of Worship

As seen in the New Testament, proclamation of the word of God was part of the worship of the first century church. In Acts 20:7, when the church at Troas assembled for worship, the apostle Paul preached to them. In 1 Corinthians 14, even with the presence of spiritual gifts, instruction in God’s word was a central part of their assemblies.

In Spirit and Truth

As with the other expressions of worship, instruction in God’s word must be given and received “in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24) To receive or give instruction “in truth,” one must have God’s word as his only source for it is “truth.” (John 17:17) One who proclaims a message to those assembled for worship must “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11), i.e., he must allow his message to rest upon and be in accordance with the revealed will of God. There is no room in any pulpit for speculation, opinion, or the ideas and philosophies of men for such makes worship vain. (Matt. 15:9)

For worshipers to receive instruction “in spirit,” they must have the same noble attitude of the Bereans who, in Acts 17:10-11, examined the Scriptures to see whether or not the message spoken by the apostle Paul was truth. They must be discerning hearers, alert to anyone who would teach anything other than the “oracles of God.” One who blindly follows false teaching is without excuse. Jesus said, “...if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” (Matt. 15:14) No one must allow anything other than the word of God to be taught during worship assemblies.

As previously noted, the spirit of the worshipers is of vital importance. The proper manner for the one giving instruction, and for those receiving it, is illustrated in a number of Biblical passages. The first is Nehemiah 8:1-8.

After their return from Babylonian captivity, the people of Judah set about to restore worship to god in His holy city, Jerusalem. In Nehemiah 8, they asked Ezra the scribe to read the law of God to them. He assembled all the people, opened the book before them, and then read distinctly from it to make sure they understood its message. They, in turn, willingly assembled. They stood when the book was opened—a show of reverence. Standing from daybreak to midday, they praised God for His word

and then fell on their faces worshiping Him. Whether proclaiming the word or receiving its instruction, we should have the same willingness to assemble, the same reverence and respect, and the same praise for God.

Another example of the proper attitude toward the proclamation of God's word is found in Acts 10:33. The apostle Peter had been summoned to preach the message of God to Cornelius. Cornelius told him of his family's willingness to hear the gospel of Christ. Cornelius' attitude, a model for all to follow, caused him to:

- Send for one who knew God's word.
- Be present to hear what was proclaimed.
- Realize God was present.
- Be ready to hear all things God had commanded.

The Teacher's Responsibility

A teacher's responsibilities are great. (James 3:1) In the first place, he must know that portion of God's word he is attempting to proclaim. He has to be aware of his listeners' needs and their level of comprehension. He must never inject his own whims or opinions into his message. He must proclaim the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), i.e., he cannot delete any portion of Scripture because someone might find it offensive. He should not tickle "itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:1-4) by just speaking those things people want to hear and not the things they need to hear. He must equally and evenly apply the word to all showing no partiality to any one at any time. (1 Timothy 5:21)

The best advice one who would teach others can receive is found in 1 Timothy 4:16 where the apostle Paul told Timothy to "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." One who teaches must first apply the word to self. (Romans 2:21-22) Since teachers are to be "faithful" (2 Tim. 2:2), no one should desire to teach unless he is striving to be faithful in all aspects of his life.

The Hearers' Responsibilities

Even though the teacher's responsibilities are great, those of his hearers are of equal magnitude. The Bible places a great deal of emphasis on hearing the word. An oft-used expression in Scripture is, "he who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. 11:15; Luke 8:8) It also emphasizes what kind of hearers we should be. The good hearer:

- Has a good and honest heart. (Luke 8:15)
- Allows the word to "prick" his heart. (Acts 2:37)
- Gladly receives the word. (Acts 2:40)
- Receives the word with meekness. (Jas. 1:21)
- Is a discerning hearer. (Acts 17:11)
- Is an eager hearer. (Matt. 5:6; Acts 10:33)
- Desires to hear and know all the word. (Acts 10:33)
- Desires only the word of God. (Matt. 15:9)

Discussion Questions

1. How does instruction in the word of God qualify as worship?

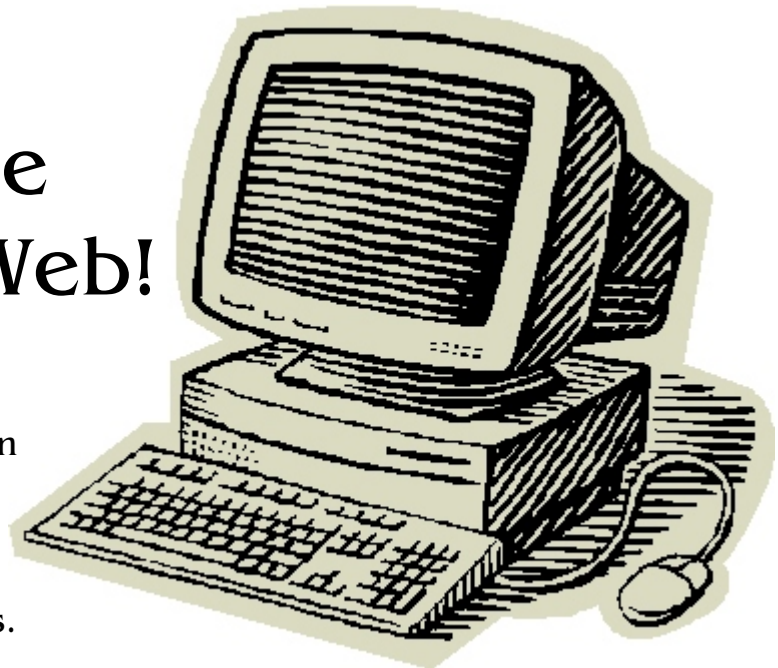
2. In what ways did the first century church emphasize the word of God in:
 - a. Their daily lives?
 - b. Their worship assemblies?
3. What does it mean to “speak as the oracles of God?”
4. Why is it dangerous to teach the commandments of men as doctrine?
5. What happens to the one who:
 - a. Follows a false teacher? (Matt. 15:14)
 - b. Does not abide in the “traditions” received from the apostles? (2 Thes. 3:6,14)
 - c. Walks contrary to the doctrine received from the apostles? (Rom. 16:17-18)
 - d. Extends the right hand of fellowship to a false teacher? (2 John 9-11)
6. What principles can be learned from Nehemiah 8 as it applies to:
 - a. The one who teaches the word of God?
 - b. Those who are hearers of the word?
7. Analyze Acts 10:33 as it applies to teachers and hearers of the word and the attitudes each is to have.
8. Why are the responsibilities of a teacher of God’s word so great?
9. What application is one who teaches the word to make of I Timothy 4:16?
10. What traits of the good hearer do each of the following Scriptures reveal? Explain each.
 - a. Luke 8:15.
 - b. Acts 2:37.
 - c. Acts 2:41.
 - d. Acts 10:33.
 - e. Acts 17:11.
 - f. James 1:21.
 - g. Matthew 15:9.

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