

UPON THE ROCK

July 2001

Volume 4 Issue 7



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WORSHIP IN SPIRIT?

Patrick Morrison

Man has within him an innate desire to worship something. All people of all nations from time immemorial have worshipped someone or something. Even the atheistic humanist worships, albeit he worships man, placing man in a position that only God can rightfully occupy. Man will either worship the creature, or the Creator, but man will worship, whether he realizes it or not. When man chooses to worship anything other than the true and living God, or when man loses focus on the reason for worship, he is left unfulfilled. I remember Tom Holland once saying that the hardest thing for man to do is truly to worship God according to His will. That is not to say that God is at fault for making true worship difficult, nor is it to say that true worship cannot be attained by those who seek to laud and extol the Almighty. It takes great effort, particularly mental effort, to worship the God of heaven, and this is especially difficult considering the many distractions and desires within man which would keep him from the proper mindset for worship. Fortunately, God has not left us without guidance in regard to true worship. The Bible records, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). True worship is directed toward the true and living God, with the right attitude, and according to divine truth. What does it mean to worship in spirit? The answer to that question can be found in the context of John 4.

To set the context, Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Shechem (Sychar). After a brief discussion with the Christ concerning her life, the Samaritan woman realizes that He is indeed a prophet (vs.19). She then turns the discussion to worship, particularly

to the debate between whether God should be worshipped in Mt. Gerizim (as the Samaritans believed and taught) or in Jerusalem (as the Jews believed and taught) (vs.20). Herein lies a key to understanding the idea of worship conducted in spirit and in truth. The Jews and the Samaritans (not inclusive of all Jews and all Samaritans, but for the most part) were so engrossed with the thought of where God was to be worshipped that they neglected the manner in which God was to be worshipped. Although the place of worship in Old Testament times was important (Jesus states that the Jews were correct in worshipping in Jerusalem—vs.22), it was not the only component of proper worship.

God has always desired worship directed toward Him as He commands, coupled with a proper attitude (see Joshua 24:14). However, the Jews came to look upon worship as mere externals, and as such they focused the greater attention on the where and the what while neglecting the how and the why. For example, the Jews so wanted to be correct in their giving that they even tithed garden herbs (Matthew 23:23), yet they were guilty of neglecting the weightier matters of the law such as mercy, justice, and faith. God's own people were convinced that if they but followed the proper procedure which God had set forth for worship, then it mattered not the spirit with which the offering was made (see Malachi 1:7,8, 12-14).

There is great danger even today among God's people of adopting a similar attitude toward worship. When Christians begin to look upon worship as a song, a prayer, another song, the Lord's supper, another song, the sermon, invitation song, closing song, and closing prayer, we may lose sight of what true worship really is. No doubt there are many of the Israel of God today (the church), who, like Israel of old, view worship as a weariness. This is displayed in the paltry sums that are given to finance the work of the church, as if tossing a few dollars into the collection plate on the first day of the week fulfills my obligation to worship God in giving. It is reflected in the attitude of those who sit idly by as the God of heaven is being extolled in song, as if singing praises to God is an optional matter. It is seen in the faces of those who catch up on their sleep, or who pass notes, or who talk with their neighbors, as the word of God is being proclaimed, as if there will be some other standard by which man will be judged at the last day. There is indeed grave danger in adopting an attitude toward worship akin to the Israel of old, thinking that worship consists mainly

Mark E. Reynolds may be reached at mreyn8391@aol.com.

OUR WORSHIP TO GOD

What It Means To Worship In Spirit—Page 1

What It Means To Worship In Truth—Page 5

Worship In Song—Page 9

Worshipping God In Prayer—Page 12

Preaching—Page 20

Giving In Worship—Page 23

The Lord's Supper—Page 26

UPON THE ROCK
Mark Reynolds, editor
2411 E. Riggan Road
Muncie, IN 47303

of external acts, and that one has truly worshipped simply by engaging in these prescribed acts. This is not said to belittle the importance of following the Biblical pattern for worship, for that is one major component of worshipping in spirit and in truth. True worship is balanced by truth on the one hand, and a proper attitude of reverence and joy when one engages in worship on the other. These two ideas are not contrary one to another, but are complimentary to one another. One cannot enter into worship with the correct frame of mind unless he has the truth of God's word in his heart and on his mind. Nor can one worship according to God's pattern apart from sincerity and devotion. However, in the humble opinion of this writer, that is not all that this passage of Scripture teaches.

The passage under consideration likely falls within the same framework as other teachings of Jesus which state, "Ye hath heard that it hath been said...but I say unto you" (Matthew 5:21,27,31,38,43). In these teachings, Jesus was not revealing something new about the will of God. Rather, he was attempting to turn the people back to the original intent of God's law. The Jews were guilty of trying to live up to the letter of the law, while ignoring the spirit of the law. Jesus did not dismiss the idea that man does not have to live up to the letter of the law. He simply pointed people back to the heart of the law. John 4 is no different. The worship of the Jews had gotten to the point where they tried to follow the revealed pattern, but they ignored the fact that their attitudes and their spirits were not in harmony with God. Jesus' teaching in John 4 sought to turn man back to the spirit of the law, realizing that God desires worship according to truth out of pure, sincere, reverent, and joyful hearts.

God has always given man a way of approaching Him in proper worship. Because man is both physical and spiritual in nature, the avenues by which we worship God contain elements of both a physical and a spiritual nature. The worship conducted during the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations appealed more to the physical nature of man. Animals were slain, and then sacrificed upon the altar. Incense was burned. Musical instruments accompanied the singing of praises to God. These avenues of worship were not void of spiritual value (Hebrews 9:1), but by their very design they appealed more to the physical nature of man. The death of Christ ushered in a new covenant, and with it a new worship. The worship conducted by the

church in the Christian age appeals more to the inner man than did the worship of the Old Testament. The way in which we worship is a “new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20). The elements of worship today, while somewhat physical in nature (but much less so than the old covenant), require much more mental focus and inner discipline. Jesus was pointing out that the worship ushered in at his death would supersede that of the old law. His teaching in John 4 does not relate to worship only, but to all aspects of the old covenant in relation to that which was to be brought to pass at Christ’s death upon the cross. What does it mean to worship in spirit? It means that when we offer our worship to God, we do so with the right attitude, the right frame of mind, seeing that our spirit is in harmony with the Almighty. But we also need to recognize the great privilege that is ours in being able to offer our worship through the Son of God. We have a great High Priest through whom our worship is brought before the Heavenly Father. Every time we worship, we should realize the great blessings and privileges we enjoy under the new covenant. Worshipping God in spirit brings all these things into focus—we come before Him in reverence and joy, realizing not only the revealed will of God concerning worship, but the heart of that teaching as well, understanding the glorious advantages that are ours under the law of Christ.

Patrick Morrison may be reached at 2102 CR 93, Bankston, AL. 35542.

FREE
BIBLE STUDY COURSE
SEND YOUR REQUEST TO:
 Bible Study
 6600 W. Kilgore Ave.
 Yorktown, IN. 47396

through the body of Christ when we partake of the “feast” upon the first day of the week.

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

When one partakes of the Lord’s supper, he is to examine himself in a worthy manner (I Corinthians 11:28). The partaker must make sure that he is living in a manner that shows appreciation for the sacrifice that Christ made. The Supper is a very solemn and private matter between a Christian and the Father; a time to reflect the past and to resolve for the future.

Further, the observance of the Lord’s Supper is to be carried out weekly. Christians came together on the first day of the week to “break bread” (Acts 20:7). The Corinthian church was coming together to eat the Lord’s Supper, though they were abusing it (I Corinthians 11:17-22); instructions concerning the collection suggest their coming together was on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2).

Some believe that a weekly observance diminishes the importance of the Supper, which is why some do it monthly, quarterly, or annually. But does the frequent practice of: (1) Assembling diminish its value or importance? (2) Singing praises and offering prayers devalue their benefits? (3) Preaching and studying God’s word decrease their significance to our lives? Our spiritual lives are dependent upon the value and benefits of our Lord’s death on the cross; a weekly observance of the memorial helps us to live appreciatively and accordingly. We are commanded to partake, and have the binding example of the apostles to partake of the Supper upon the first day of the week. How many weeks have first days? Of course, all of them! That is how often we MUST partake.

Christians today should never lose sight of the significance of the Lord’s Supper. It is a constant reminder of the sacrifice Jesus paid for our sins. It is a communion or sharing of the body and blood of the Lord. It is a time for self-examination and rededication of our service to the Lord. May we always appreciate this divinely ordered part of our worship to God.

Knowing that His death was imminent, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on this very special occasion, knowing that this would be His last Passover with His disciples. The importance of properly observing the Lord's Supper should never be underestimated, nor should we ever enter into this communion without a good understanding of what it is that Jesus instituted 2,000 years ago.

THE MEANING OF THE SUPPER

First, the Lord's Supper is a memorial. Paul, in writing about this solemn supper, wrote: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That, the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body...After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:23-25). We eat the bread in memory of His body that hung on the cruel cross, and we drink the cup (the fruit of the vine) in memory of His blood. As the Passover was a memorial commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the blood of the lambs on the door post so the Supper is a memorial of our Lord's death Who makes our deliverance from the bondage of sin possible.

Second, the Lord's Supper is a proclamation. Paul further said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Corinthians 11:26). We acknowledge the fact that we believe His death was indeed for our sins, and that we do believe that He will come again to receive His church who will meet Him in the air. If we did not believe that He died for us, or that He will be coming again, why would we partake of this communion? But we do believe, and so we partake.

Third, the Lord's Supper is a communion. "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?" (I Corinthians 10:16). As we partake, we commune with the blood and body of Jesus Christ. We can appreciate all the blessings that come through the blood of Christ, and reinforce the fellowship that comes

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WORSHIP IN TRUTH?

Brandon Britton

A few months ago my family ate dinner in the home of one of the deacons here at East Hill. After dinner their twelve year old son asked me to play him in a game of chess. I had never played chess and did not know the rules, but I had always wanted to learn to play, so I agreed. For the next few minutes he gave me a "crash course" in the rules of the game. We played for over an hour and had a good time. Later, I began reading the rule book and realized we had been playing contrary to the rules. He had been incorrectly taught by a friend and in turn he taught me incorrectly. This was not done willfully or out of malice, it was simply an honest mistake. Both of us had a good time and were convinced we were playing chess, but we were not. We were playing a game that looked a lot like chess, had many of the same elements and rules as chess, and was similar to chess in most ways. However, we were playing something different. So it is in many church buildings, only the subject is much more serious and important than a game; it is worshipping God.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the TRUE worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him MUST worship him in spirit and in TRUTH" (John 4:23-24). What does it mean to worship in truth? The question itself, as well as the statement by our Lord (the true worshippers), indicates that not all worship is true or done in truth. There are several Bible examples of various types of worship: will worship (Colossians 2:23), vain worship (Matthew 15:9), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23-31) and, of course, true worship (John 4:23-24). What characteristics or actions separate one from another? What constitutes true worship as opposed to these other forms?

VAIN WORSHIP

When the Lord made this statement about vain worship, it came in the context of the Pharisee's questioning His disciples. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread" (Matthew 15:2). The disciples had

done nothing wrong. They did not sin and violate the law of Moses. They were being condemned by the Pharisees because they did not submit to the man-made traditions and rules that had been added to the law of Moses. The Pharisee's adding and binding traditions to the law was itself a violation of the law. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). This was a perfect example of the type of judging condemned by the Lord in Matthew 7:1-5. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shall thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." They were hypocritically judging the apostles, who were doing nothing wrong, when the Pharisees themselves were sinning. Because of this they were about to be judged as they had judged. The Lord questioned, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3). These self righteous hypocrites were quick to condemn others for not keeping traditions when they were guilty of ignoring God's explicit commands. This mockery of true religion prompted the Lord to quote Isaiah 29:13, "this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." He then added, "but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Vain means empty, worthless, to no purpose. Does this sound like true worship? Is this what the Father is seeking? Certainly not. What was wrong with their worship? What made it vain? It was worthless because they were teaching and obeying commandments of mortal men, instead of obeying the words of the Great I AM. No doubt they considered what they were doing to be worship. They were convinced they were worshipping, but just as I was not playing chess because I was following made up rules, they were not truly worshipping God because they followed made up rules.

Giving must be without any reluctance. It must be done cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7; cf. Deuteronomy 15:10). Fourth, giving should be planned. Each person should make a decision, his own decision, about how much he is going to give (2 Corinthians 9:7). When all these conditions are present then giving is truly an act of acceptable worship. Should any of these conditions be absent the giving is not an acceptable sacrifice in worship.

The great exemplar of giving is the gift of Jesus Christ. Every Christian who strives to worship God acceptably in giving should reflect deeply upon the giving of God and Christ. Paul's instruction on giving flows from such a reflection. As he writes urging the Corinthians to give, he exclaims "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15). He urges them to constantly think of what they had learned of the grace of Christ "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). As we seek to worship God acceptably in giving, we should fix our gaze upon the one who pioneered this great activity before us, Of Christ's giving as worship, Paul proclaimed, "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2).

It may be that giving has been considered in ways that have failed to appreciate the fact that it is worship just the same as singing, praying, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and preaching. It is crucial that giving be considered carefully as worship. Will you determine to give as you worship and worship as you give?

Tom McLemore may be reached at 504 Llanfair Dr. Selma, AL. 36701.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Mark E. Reynolds

During His last week, Jesus observed the Passover for the last time. The Passover was a Jewish feast, observed once each year, which commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-28).

So just as the offering of any sacrifice is recognized as an act of worship, giving is appropriately viewed as worship, and it is proper that it be one of the activities in which assembled Christians engage on the first day of every week.

Having established why it is only fitting that giving be a part of New Testament worship activities, we must now consider the manner in which this worship activity must be performed if it is to be acceptable as an act of worship. Sacrifices in the Old Testament were acceptable on the basis of their being offered in the prescribed manner and by individuals who were acceptable to God. This two-fold concept appears as early as Genesis 4:4, 5: ... And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.” This fundamental concept was emphasized throughout the Old Testament. The sage understood that “if one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9). The Old Testament abundantly testifies that the same was true with regard to sacrifice. The prophets often declared the sacrifices of the disobedient unacceptable (see especially Micah 6:6-8). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was still emphasizing this concept. He declared, “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23, 24).

So it is with regard to all acts of worship in the New Testament church, including giving. The apostle Paul provides an abundance of instruction about both of these aspects of giving in worship. He stresses the manner in which the gift is given and the man who is making the gift. His message is that both must be right for the gift to be a sacrifice acceptable unto God. A look at First Corinthians 16:2 combined with a survey of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, renders the following primary points. First, the giving is to be done on the first day of every week (1 Corinthians 16:2). Second, the amount of these weekly gifts is to be determined on the basis of prosperity. Giving is to be proportionate to one’s resources, “as he may prosper ... according to what a man has, not according to what he has not” (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12). Third, giving must be done by one who has a generous heart, one who is willing and ready to give. The gift must be made by one who feels no compulsion except his desire to give.

IGNORANT WORSHIP

On Mars Hill in Athens, the apostle Paul addressed a group of religious people. As he walked the streets he noticed the city was entirely given to idolatry (Acts 17:16). The sight of so many false gods and idolatrous altars stirred him up to the point that he, “disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him” (Acts 17:17). He would later tell them they were too superstitious (Acts 17:22). Why would he cause such a disturbance and disruption in this city? Why would he go to the trouble and conflict of arguing with these people? They were not like the self righteous, power hungry Pharisees. These were devout, sincere, honest people who were trying to worship, whatever it may be. They had even built an altar “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” to make sure they were worshipping everything that might possibly be God. Paul noted their devotion and proceeded to tell them of the unknown God, whom they worshipped ignorantly (Acts 17:23). They were worshipping God, but they were doing it ignorantly. They were doing something they considered worship, but they were not worshipping according to His instruction. They gave Him what they thought He would want, instead of what He wanted, so Paul told them. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at (looked beyond); but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). The fact that they were commanded to repent indicates that ignorant worship is not acceptable to God; therefore, it cannot be the true worship that the Father is seeking. No doubt they honestly and sincerely thought they were worshipping, but just as I innocently and ignorantly did not follow the rules of chess, they were not worshipping God acceptably.

TRUE WORSHIP

The Samaritan woman was confused concerning acceptable worship so the Lord helped her to understand what the Father was seeking. Likewise, so many people today are confused and disoriented concerning how the Father is to be worshipped. Our duty is to do what the Lord did, help them understand what it is the Father is seeking. True worship requires two ingredients: It must be done in (1) spirit, and in (2) truth. Just before the Lord was crucified Pilate asked Him,

“what is truth?” (John 18:38). If He had wanted to dignify this coward with an answer He could have quoted His own words recorded in John 17:17, “sanctify them through thy truth: THY WORD IS TRUTH.” Put very plainly, the definition of truth is anything God says. His words are truth. The Word of God is truth. When this concept is applied to the statement of Jesus in John 4:23-24, it becomes apparent what it means to worship the Father in truth. To worship Jehovah in truth is to worship Him according to the commandments in His Word. In the Old Testament times God gave the Jews His Words as a pattern to follow in worshipping Him (see Exodus and Leviticus). In the New Testament times God has given us His Words as a pattern to follow in worshipping Him- Humans may have many thoughts, ideas, and suggestions as to how to worship God, but if we desire our worship to be true (the kind He is seeking), we will make sure it is authorized by His Word.

Multiple billions of people are in one of the first two categories discussed. If they have been shown the truth but knowingly and willingly continue to obey the commandments of men, their worship is vain. Also those who are sincerely and honestly worshipping ignorantly (they do not know what they are doing is wrong), must be taught the truth so that they can repent.

When I thought I was playing chess I was actually following rules that had been made up. Yet what I did, I did ignorantly. When it comes to something as simple as a game this may be acceptable, but when we are talking about showing reverence to the Almighty, if it is not true it is worthless.

Brandon Britton may be reached at 509 E. Madison, Pulaski, TN. 38478.

and varied, are to be considered as given to God Himself. Therefore, it is altogether fitting that this giving be done in the worship assembly and be seen as an act of worship. This is very subtly indicated in 2 Corinthians 8:5. In this passage, Paul tells the Corinthians that the churches of Macedonia have given abundantly to help the saints. He reports, “And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” Implied here is that the Macedonians gave to the Lord in two ways, viz., in making their contributions and in giving themselves.

Second, there are several New Testament passages which characterize giving as sacrifices offered to God. In Philippians 4:18, Paul wrote, “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.” It may be gathered that the church at Philippi had made a gift for the support of the apostle in his gospel labors which was delivered by Epaphroditus. These gifts, offered on the first day of the week as the Philippian church assembled for worship, Paul describes as sacrifices offered to God. In Hebrews 13:15, 16, the writer urges, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” We may imagine the congregation assembled for worship on the Lord’s Day, offering prayers, songs, and their gifts. These are offered to God as sacrifices acceptable to him.

In 2 Corinthians 9:11-15, Paul writes concerning the giving of the church: “While you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” It should be noted that in this passage, the Greek word rendered “service” is one often used of the work of service or ministry of the priests relative to the prayers and sacrifices offered to God (see, e.g., Luke 1:23; Hebrews 8:6; 9:21).

The audience is to listen to the sermon *personally*. A man once asked Jesus, “Master, speak to my brother” (Luke 12:13). Unfortunately many listen to preaching with that same attitude. They hope the preacher will say what their brother needs to hear. But the right attitude says, “Speak to me the things that I need” The sermon is the most beneficial when it affects me personally.

CONCLUSION

What a tremendous privilege it is to hear God’s word. Most of the world will die and go to judgment, never having had that privilege. May we always listen reverently and respectfully to the word of God. “Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

Phil Grear may be reached at 2863 E. High St. Springfield, OH. 45505, or by email at grear@juno.com.

GIVING IN WORSHIP

Tom McLemore

That giving comprises one of the activities that assembled Christians are to perform is clearly established in I Corinthians 16:1,2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” What does providing for the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem have to do with worship? Why should such a collection be an activity of the church assembled for worship? It was a practical measure indeed which Paul commanded, but the significance of his directives in I Corinthians 16:1,2 goes much deeper than mere practicality. There are several reasons why this giving should be done in worship.

First, giving toward any religious end is to be viewed as giving to God himself. And while it was true that collections made at Corinth were toward benevolent ends, the giving of any funds which are to be used to finance any aspect of the work of the Lord, which today are many

WORSHIP IN SONG

Larry G. Reynolds

INTRODUCTION

The Bible gives for us today the example of Nadab and Abihu in regards to rendering worship to God, Leviticus 10:1-3. When they offered in worship something the Lord had not commanded the Lord took it as a sign of disrespect for His Holiness. This was recorded for our learning and a reminder that the purpose of worship is to give honor and praise to God. “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 150:6). “Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein” (Psalm 69:34). Peter instructs us as children of God that we live holy and consecrated lives before the Holy One who called us to be his children, I Peter 1: 14-16. It is equally important that we exalt God in our worship. This we can do by doing exactly as He instructs in His Word?

In this article we will investigate what the New Testament says about worship in song. We will notice first the emphasis the New Testament places on singing. Secondly we will notice the emphasis the New Testament places on the heart. Thirdly we will notice what history reveals about worship in song.

UPON THE ROCK is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

Mark E. Reynolds, Editor
Larry G. Reynolds, Co-Editor
Jim Witty, Printer

UPON THE ROCK
2411 E. Riggin Rd.
Muncie, IN 47303
(765) 289-5138
mreyn8391@aol.com

SINGING

The only music commanded in New Testament worship is vocal. We have the example of Jesus with His disciples in Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26 (when they had “sung a hymn”). Another example in the New Testament is where Paul and Silas were in prison singing hymns (Acts 16:25). We also have instruction from the apostles to the church as to what type of music that God requires in our worship to Him.

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;” (Ephesians 5:19). “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). Notice what the Hebrew writer says, “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12). James tells us that if we are merry to sing psalms (James 5:13). Thus we have examples, commands to sing praises to God, but there is not a single command to praise Him with musical instruments, nor a single example of Christians praising Him in that manner.

Even proponents who are for praising God with musical instruments must acknowledge that there is no prescription or support for the practice in the New Testament

WORSHIP WITH THE HEART

When Paul wrote by inspiration to the church at Ephesus he taught to sing praises to God from the heart. “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*” (Ephesians 5:19). The phrase “making melody” (PSALLONTES), in the Old Testament had reference to the playing of musical instruments. But notice that now in the New Testament the “making melody” is to be in the heart, not with mechanical instruments! A parallel passage to Ephesians 5:19 is Colossians 3:16 where we are told to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Notice again that the emphasis is spiritual. And since this music is to be

speaks to one hundred people for thirty minutes he has consumed fifty man-hours of time. Surely his audience deserves a message worth hearing. Sadly many trivialize preaching by turning it into a time of drama, skits, or comedy routines that are more designed to entertain than explain. Rather than God’s word you are more likely to hear a lecture on current events, sociology, or psychology than the saving word of God. They seem to forget that it is the “engrafted word” of God that is able to save souls (James 1:2 1).

The preacher is to help his audience to focus their attention on the great God they have assembled to worship. His preaching is to shift attention from himself to Christ. He is to help his audience express their adoration and praise to God.

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Those who sit at the feet of the preacher have their own responsibility in this vitally important act of worship.

The audience is to listen to the sermon *prayerfully*. They should be praying constantly for their attitude in receiving the word of God. They are to be praying for the preacher that he will open his “mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19).

The audience is to listen to the sermon *reverently*. Having assembled to hear the word of God, they are part of the most solemn occasion imaginable. Certainly the message from God would deserve the utmost respect.

The audience is to listen to the sermon *critically*. This is not to say that they listen with a goal of finding the mistakes made by the preacher. But they listen to every lesson with the intention of determining that which comes from God and that which does not. The Church in Berea “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). All preaching should be compared to the Bible to be sure that it truly is from God.

What does God want our preaching to be? Of all the methods He could have chosen, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Preaching is the act of a redeemed sinner telling other sinners about the redeemer. The world thinks of this method as “foolish”, but it is God’s chosen method.

PREACHING AS PART OF WORSHIP

A small boy was once asked what he thought of the worship service. He replied, “It was alright, but the commercial was too long.” Sadly, this depicts the attitude of many toward preaching. They consider it an interruption to the more “meaningful” parts of worship, such as singing and the Lord’s Supper. But preaching is a vital part of the worship we offer to God.

An incident in the Old Testament shows the importance of preaching. “And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law...So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8). They were made to understand what was read, and that is exactly what preaching is. It is making the audience to understand what God has said in his written word. Peter warned, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). It is in preaching that God’s will is made known to the audience. Preaching is not just a way to take up thirty minutes during worship, it is a time of solemn consideration of the will of God for our lives.

THE ROLE OF THE PREACHER

The preacher plays a vital role in worship. He is speaking God’s word to those gathered to hear it. His is a solemn responsibility. If he

offered “to the Lord”, we had better regard Him as Holy and offer exactly what He specified. Remember Nadab and Abihu.

When we study New Testament worship we find that all in the congregation sang the songs. (“Speaking to one another in psalms). The melody to be made in the heart affects the soul (the spiritual side of man). With emphasis not on how we sound, but that we are making true melody in our hearts to the Lord.

REFERENCES ON MUSIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Most religious organizations today use mechanical instruments in worship. However history reveals that it has not always been this way. The following are a few examples of various religious groups’ views in previous years. Catholic, “... the first Christians were of too spiritual a fiber to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice.” (Catholic Encyclopedia) Greek Orthodox, “The execution of Byzantine church music by instruments, or even the accompaniment of sacred chanting by instruments was ruled out by the Eastern Fathers as being incompatible with the pure, solemn, spiritual character of the religion of Christ” (Constantine Cavarnos, Byzantine sacred music). Presbyterian, “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing to Him.” (John Calvin, Commentary on the book of Psalms, Vol. I, p. 539). Methodist “Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.” (Adam Clarke, commentator.) Baptist: “I would as soon attempt to pray to God with machinery as to sing to Him with machinery” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

Why did these men object so strongly to instrumental music in the worship of the church? Because they properly realized that such was

a carry-over from Jewish worship. Also that it was out of harmony with the spiritual nature of New Testament worship, and that there is no Biblical authority for the use of instruments of music in worship.

Larry G. Reynolds may be contacted at 6600 W. Kilgore Ave. Yorktown, IN. 47396.

WORSHIPPING GOD IN PRAYER

James E. Farley

Terms

What is prayer? Let's notice first of all some things it is not. It is not just meditation as some of the Eastern religions suggest. There is a place for real and proper meditation upon God's Word and Way (Psalm 1), but prayer is much more than that. It is not God talking to man, but it is rather man talking to his God. It is therefore not a way of informing God about things, nor is it a way of teaching those in the assembly when a public prayer is uttered. God already knows everything (Acts 15:18). He even knows what you have need of before you ask it in prayer (Matthew 6:6-8). Men are to be taught of God through preaching and teaching the gospel, not through prayer (Matthew 28:18-20). I have even heard some, in public prayer, attempt to reprove, rebuke and exhort others in the assembly. This reminds us of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14, doesn't it? Prayer should never be a way of our serving our own selfish desires (James 4:1-4). Then there are those who use prayer as a "last recourse" only in times of disaster. They are not regular praying people, but some catastrophe comes upon them and immediately they "call on the Lord" oft-times out loud with "Oh Lord, help me!" These need a good dose of Proverbs 1:24-33.

Now let's see what the Bible says prayer is. One of the best definitions I have seen comes from Romans 10:1. Here Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Prayer then is our heart's desire expressed in words to God. Prayer is much more than just meditation, it is a matter that MUST be expressed. We must ask if we are to receive (I John 3:22;

IS PRAYER PART OF OUR "CORPORATE WORSHIP?"

In the book of Acts we read of the church of Christ assembled in worship. We read of the disciples waiting for the Day of Pentecost by prayer (Acts 1:14). The first Christians "...continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). When Peter and John returned from their encounter with the council, the church prayed (Acts 4:23-31). When Peter was arrested and put into jail, the church prayed for him (Acts 12:5). We read of the church of Christ at Antioch as a praying church (Acts 13:3). Paul wrote to the Corinthians and told them that "Amen" is the appropriate way the assembled church affirms the prayer offered to God (I Corinthians 14:13-19). Obviously this was the church in worship.

It is right and proper for the church to come together to pray in faith (James 1:5-8). To pray according to His Will (I John 5:14). To offer praise to God, making our requests known to Him through the name of Jesus the Christ (Colossians 3:17). Prayer is one of the chief characteristics of the Christian.

James E. Farley may be reached at 759 Ratliff Creek Rd. Pikeville, KY. 41502, or by email at mscoc@kymtnnet.org

PREACHING

Phil Gear

Preaching has fallen on hard times. "Don't preach to me" is the cry of many. We are told preaching turns people off. We want shorter and shorter sermons that are nothing more than inspirational talks, as suitable for the Kiwanis Club as for the church. Some would replace Bible preaching with dramas, skits, and multimedia presentations. One man opined that people are no longer satisfied to sit through a boring presentation by a man in a dark suit who quotes lengthy passages from the Bible. He insists on something more exciting, attention-grabbing, and modern.

The phrase, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” expresses thankfulness for His kingdom, the church of Christ. We are to pray that the Will of the Lord be done on earth... and in our lives...and we are to work to that end. Think of this...the Lord is “..not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Since it is the Lord’s Will that none perish and we are to pray according to His Will (I John 5:14), then it is right and proper to pray for the lost Paul did. Remember Romans 10:1-3? Should we pray that they will be saved in their sins. Absolutely NOT!!! We should pray that they will repent and we need to work toward that end in converting them to the Meek and Lowly One.

Then we are to pray for our physical needs... “Give us this day our daily bread.” We all have needs of food, clothing, housing, etc. But remember, God already knows that we have need of these things (Matthew 6:8), so don’t be overly concerned with them; don’t worry about these kinds of things (Matthew 6:25-33).

The next phrase is “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” If this does not show a real reliance upon God in spiritual matters, nothing does! Who can forgive sins but God? As we worship God in prayer, and as we ask Him to forgive us our transgressions, we must

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...” This again expresses our need for and our trust in God. He is the One who can make a way of escape for each temptation that comes before us (I Corinthians 10:13-14). We can fight against the evil one, and overcome Him by the blood of the Lamb, by the Word, and when we love not our lives even unto death (Revelation 12:11).

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” Certainly God already knows that the kingdom is His...that He has all power and glory throughout the Universe...However, He wants us to acknowledge these things as we praise and adore Him. He is the Creator...the Giver of all good and perfect gifts! (James 1:5, 17; Acts 17:25). Truly, “...in him we live, and move, and have our being...” (Acts 17:28).

John 14:13). Prayer is PRAISE offered to God (Matthew 6:9). Prayer is THANKING God for all of His wonderful gifts and blessings (Ephesians 5:20). Often prayer is CONFESSING SIN to God (James 5:16; I John 1:7-9; Luke 18:13). Prayer is PETITIONING God on behalf of others...it is supplication and intercession (Matthew 7:7-11; I Timothy 2:1-3). Prayer is worship!

PRAYER IS WORSHIP

There are eight words in the New Testament that are translated “worship”. However, the most frequently used means “to make obeisance, do reverence to. It is an act of homage or reverence...” (Vine). Vine also says that it means “to kiss toward”. Jesus had a great deal to say about worship. In John 4:23-24 He speaks of “true worshippers”. Since there is a right and a wrong way to everything, “true worshippers” implies false worshippers. Some do not worship correctly.

In John 4:23-24 the Lord expressly states that God is to be the object of our worship. “God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Men must not worship angels, nor other men (Revelation 22:8-9; Acts 10:25-26). The Lord said, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10). When we pray, we pray to God the Father through Jesus Christ who is the only mediator between God and man (Matthew 6:9; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; John 14:13; I Timothy 2:5).

In John 4:23-24 the Lord tells us that our worship must be in the correct manner – ‘in spirit’. Of course, this means that our worship must come from a deeply sincere heart. We must have the right attitude when we worship the Creator. Remember “...God is a Spirit...”, so we approach Him with a spiritual frame of mind. He allows our spirits to commune with He who is Spirit!

In John 4:23-24 the Lord says we are to worship God in the right way – “in truth”. The Word of God is Truth (John 17:17; John 8:31-32; Ephesians 1:13). God directs our worship through the verbally inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 John 9-11). God has

always told men how to worship Him (Compare Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17). He has always been displeased when men attempt to worship Him the way they want to instead of the way He has said, (Leviticus 10:1-2; Matthew 15:7-9). Such worship is “vain” and constitutes “will worship” (Colossians 2:23).

Furthermore, prayer, like all of our worship to God, must be motivated by knowledge from God’s Word. We cannot worship God ignorantly (John 4:22; Acts 17:23).

This issue of *Upon the Rock* has been made available to you courtesy of the:

East High Street Church of Christ

2863 E. High St.
Springfield, OH. 45505

SERVICES

Sunday Bible Study 9:00 am
Worship 10:00 am and 6:00 pm
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 pm

PREACHER

Phil Gear

Call us at (606) 437-4738 for more information about the church of Christ, or you may reach us at our email address:

gear@juno.com

PRAYER IS A TAUGHT SKILL

We tend to think that praying to God should be a natural thing; that it just comes naturally to those who are Christians. However, this is not the case. The Word reveals to us that once Jesus was praying, and when He finished, “...one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Prayer, like every other aspect of our religion, is a taught skill (Compare John 6:44-6). When the Lord Jesus gave the “Great Commission”, He instructed that the scope of the Commission is the world or “all nations”. Men and women are to be taught and baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He then said that these taught and baptized people should be taught “..to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..” (Matthew 28:18-20). The Lord had said, “...men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1).

Prayer is a good and right thing to do. It is a part of what a righteous man does. “...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). A righteous man is simply one who lives righteously or right (I John 3:7). How do we know what is righteous or right? It is revealed in the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). We are instructed how to live righteously through the verbally inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12). Yes, prayer is a taught skill. We are instructed about it in God’s Word.

In Luke 11 and in Matthew 6, that which is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer” should actually be better referred to as “the model prayer”, for it gives the model or the manner in which we are to pray. The Lord said, “After this manner therefore pray ye (Matthew 6:9). This is just instruction as to how to pray.

First, we are to address the Father in heaven when we pray, and we are to do so reverently. “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. It is right and proper to express openly that we hold God in awe, and that we consider Him to be someone who is Great and Holy! This is certainly praising the heavenly Father.