

CHAPTER FIVE THE PATTERN OF WORSHIP

The church of Christ is proven as THE church of our Lord because of its fervency in following accurately the pattern of worship described in the New Testament. We do not here imply the phrase “pattern of worship” as being some traditional “three songs, a prayer, another song and preaching” pattern, but rather the pattern of *content* described within the New Testament. The psalmist David wrote, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” (Psalms 122:1) Worship is “doing reverence, adoring.” Certainly, for the Christian worship is time to be treasured and longed for! It grants a time for members of like precious faith (2 Peter 1:1) to assemble as the family of God and jointly adore their Father in Heaven.

This lesson will deal with the contents of worship: singing, praying, study from God’s Word, communion and giving as we have been prospered. We will also discuss two opposing factors:

1. The attitude of the worshipper (worship in truth and in spirit vs. man’s idolatrous heart)
2. The two types of worship (true worship vs. vain worship)

The student should understand, with the exception of two of these items of worship, each item can be and in most cases should be a part of each day!

THE PATTERN OF WORSHIP (Outlined Lesson)

Text: John 4: 19 – 26

- I. True Worship Depends on the Attitude of the Worshipper
 - A. Psalms 111:9
 - B. Hebrews 10: 23 – 25
 - C. 1 Corinthians 11:26
- II. Two Types of Worship
 - A. True Worship
 1. John 4:23
 2. Revelation 7: 9 – 17
 - B. Vain Worship
 1. Matthew 15: 8 – 9
 2. Acts 17:23

III. The Contents of the Worship

A. Singing

1. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16
2. 1 Corinthians 14:15
3. Eleven verses of the New Testament condone singing as acceptable praise to God in song. No New Testament verse condones instrumental music in the worship within the church. Those supporting instrumental music use Old Testament scriptures in an attempt to support their theory. They find themselves with two dilemmas:
 - a. The Old Testament and its LAW was abolished (Colossians 2:14).
 - b. The CHURCH is not under the Old Testament law, but under the New Testament law of Christ.

B. Praying

1. 1 Corinthians 14:15
2. James 5:16
3. Colossians 3:16 – 17
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

C. Teaching (preaching/study)

1. Galatians 1: 6 – 9
2. 1 Timothy 4: 11 – 16

D. Communion

1. 1 Corinthians 11:20 – 29; Acts 20:7
2. Matthew 26:6 – 30

E. Giving

1. 1 Corinthians 16: 1 – 2
2. 2 Corinthians 9: 6 – 7

DISCUSSION:

Christians must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Of this there must be no misunderstanding! Christians are the only ones who can perform this worthy opportunity of reverencing God, as these are the only ones who “have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered [them].” (Romans 6:17) Christians obeyed the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Others, though undoubtedly sincere, can at best “go through the motions” of worship. Granted, they may gain something of value from singing, praying, studying and being in the company of Christians worshipping in spirit and in truth. Yet, because they do not know the truth (1 John 2:3) they cannot worship in truth. It is not our intent to discourage such souls from assembling with Christians: however, we do mean to be explicit regarding their inability to worship God in spirit and in truth until such souls are obedient to the gospel! There is no question those in need of obedience will learn from singing (Colossians 3:16), learn from study (Romans 10:17) and obviously learn from the very experience of being with those who are worshipping God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (1 Timothy 4: 12 – 16).

True worship requires a righteous attitude from the worshipper. Psalms 111:9 tells us “holy and reverend” are names belonging to God, the Father. The Hebrew writer states we must worship God the Father with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28). To have such a mind (attitude) requires we reflect the same righteous attitude as God the Father. It is impossible to worship God with such a mind when the soul (mind) is not in agreement with God’s commandments of salvation. As we mentioned in the introduction, worship means “to show reverence; to adore.” If our minds are not attuned to the things of God and His commandments, then we are not of a proper attitude to worship Him! According to the Hebrew writer, ours is a profession conducted without wavering; one in which the assembling of ourselves together is not forsaken, but exhorts one another and so much the more as we see the day of judgment approaching, (Hebrews 10:23 – 25).

There are two types of worship: the right way and the wrong way. **True** worship is one expressing the right attitude. If contains truth in every element! One might say **true** worship is true in each element of its content, and true in the completeness of all its parts. Put simply, **true worship** is that for which each part can find divine authority for its practice. One can not add to the contents or the worship as described in the New Testament. Neither can one subtract from these commands (Revelation 22:18 – 19). Each part must have the authority of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17) or it is no longer **true worship**.

Vain worship is the opposite of true worship. Jesus spoke of vain worship when He spoke concerning the attitude of the worshippers (Matthew 15:8 – 9). These were the ones who simply “went through the motions.” Please note from the context these are ones that should have known better regarding God’s Law of worship! We have mentioned non-Christians often appear to worship God; in fact, they believe they are worshipping. It is certain if their mind is of the disposition to gain knowledge, they will gain knowledge! However, one must also realize some who **know better** are guilty of vain worship. These are the hypocritical worshippers; i.e. just as vain as those who know not God and yet try to worship Him. It can be said of these hypocrites, “They’ve been to meeting, but missed the worship.”¹

Those who are sincere, but sincerely wrong in their practices are vain worshippers. Paul admits to such when speaking to the scholars at Mars Hill in Athens Greece (Acts 17). He had beheld their idols and devotions, and afterward said, “I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” (vs. 22) Noting they had an idol with the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,” Paul declared to these Athenians, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” (vs. 23) Their intentions were honorable. They had the right attitude in terms of sincerity, and dedication. Unfortunately, they had the wrong **knowledge**; i.e. they did not have the **truth**. Theirs was an ignorant (vain) worship. Notice there are

¹ The author owns a copy of an article written by the late Fred E. Dennis, of Marietta, Ohio which bears the title, “Been to Meeting, But Missed the Worship.”

two ways of pronouncing the word ignorant: ig' nor ant (meaning lacking of knowledge) or ig nor' ant (meaning having knowledge but not using the knowledge). Either way one pronounces the word, it describes vain worshippers. Likewise, one quickly notices vain worship is condemned by our Lord.

True worship contains five elements, two of which are limited by the scriptures to the first day of the week for their practice. For our study, we will examine these two elements first.

COMMUNION – Acts 20:7 – “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread ...”

The passage gives us the example and the time of the example. It is the only passage in all the New Testament telling us the day in which the disciples came together for the purpose of breaking the bread in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had given command to Corinth, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.” (1 Corinthians 11:26) Note carefully this communion is a **memorial**. Jesus commanded this be done “in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24 – 25). Note as well one cannot remember something he has never known! While several who are not Christians partake of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as often as it may be offered in their various religious practices, none of these can partake **in remembrance of Him** for they have never known Him. (1 John 2:3)

For the Christian, communion is a most solemn occasion. Though not the “most important” part of worship in the Lord’s Day (first day of the week – Revelation 1:10), it is that element of worship when the Christian purposely contemplates with great sincerity the death of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:23 – 29). The bread is a fitting memorial of His body (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19). The fruit of the vine is a fitting memorial of His shed blood (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). Taking these items must be “in remembrance of Him.” Since Christians are the only ones that know Him (1 John 2:3), Christians are able to comply with the inspired directions of Paul: “show the Lord’s death till He come;” partake of the memorial in a worthy manner; “examine himself;” “discern the Lord’s body.” (1 Corinthians 11:23 – 29) While a lengthy discussion would profit the student regarding the length of time Christians should devote to communion, and the mental requirements associated with this memorial, it is the author’s conviction a careful study of 1 Corinthians 11:23 – 29 would be of greater profit. Observing these directions and understanding this is the Lord’s memorial should create a most solemn attitude of truth and spirit within the Christian!

GIVING – 1 Corinthians 16:1 – 2; 2 Corinthians 9: 6 – 7

The passages listed above speak of a contribution made for the purpose of helping needy saints. 1 Corinthians 16:1 – 2 gives the inspired instruction that this contribution occur on the first day of the week. No other day is specified by command, example or necessary implication. Therefore, Christians do not gather this purposed collection on any other day of the week. These Corinthians had purposed in their hearts (pre-planned and determined their minds) to give as they had prospered; and Paul ordered this arrangement that there be no gatherings when he arrived (no “last minute” or “special” collections.) According to 2 Corinthians 9:6 – 11, the giver must give cheerfully, not grudgingly or of necessity. While many who are not Christians often give into the Lord’s treasury when they are assembled with Christians, there is no scriptural authority binding them to give. Again, with giving being an element of the worship to God, how can those who know not God (1 John 2:3) understand His heart in giving?

It seems vital that we examine the phrase “**as** ye have been prospered.” Many are the times we have heard men say, “Give what you prospered,” or “Only you know what you prospered,” or similar phrases. This is not true! The phrase of Scripture means, “in the **manner** ye have prospered.” God gives to us cheerfully, abundantly, without grudging and without necessity. Compare these attributes with the manner by which the Christian must give (2 Corinthians 9:6 – 7). The attitude of the worshipper is here commanded. Remember the Christian must worship in spirit and in truth. Therefore, the attitude in giving is just as critical to the reverence and godly fear of the Christian in worship with his giving as it is with communion or any other part of the worship.

The remaining three elements of the worship have no restriction as to the day in which Christians may enjoy them as they build up one another in the most holy faith (Jude 20). A careful study of the book of Acts shows the early disciples met daily (Acts 2:46). From other passages we know on other days than the first day of the week, members of the Lord’s church sang, prayed, and studied God’s Word. Doing so, they exhorted one another as they continued increasing their faithfulness to Christ and His church.

SINGING – Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16, et. al.

No doubt one of the most enjoyable aspects of worship is singing. Paul declares we teach and admonish one another with the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). In this passage, he uses three types of song: psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. A brief description of each follows:

PSALMS – song depicting the protection and comfort afforded from God the Father

HYMNS – song of praise to God the Father depicting His majesty and omnipotence.

SPIRITUAL SONGS – songs sung with enthusiasm containing words of exhortation.

Within the New Testament, eleven passages of Scripture relate singing as the acceptable means of praising God in song while teaching and admonishing one another in this action (Colossians 3:16). No New Testament passage grants authority for the use of mechanical instruments of music during this time of worship. This includes pianos, organs, brass bands, guitars, etc. Many offer the Old Testament as “proof” such items are permitted within the worship services conducted by those who are members of the church of Christ. Offering Old Testament passages presents no less than the following obstacles for such promotions:

1. The Old Testament Law was nailed to the cross of Christ and is no longer binding (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 10:1-10).
2. The church is not under the Old Testament Law but under the New Testament Law of Christ. The church uses only the New Testament as Christ’s authority for its practices (Colossians 3:17). Nothing within the New Testament suggests authority for the use of mechanical instruments of music in the church.

The eleven passages within the New Testament authorizing singing are: Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:13; James 5:13; Revelation 5:9; 14:3; 15:3. Each of these passages speak of the ability to make a joyful noise unto the Lord with the music box God gave us – our hearts combined with our voices!

PRAYER – 1 Corinthians 14:15; James 5:16; Colossians 3:16 – 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

The above passages are certainly incomplete concerning citations regarding the subject of prayer. Nonetheless, they are enough to show forth the need for prayer. Simply put, prayer is making petition to God through Christ for our desires, needs and praise to God. They are not uttered in such a way as to draw attention to the one making the prayer (Matthew 6:5), but rather made humbly and sincerely (Luke 18:1 – 14.)

TEACHING/PREACHING – Galatians 1: 6 – 9; 1 Timothy 4: 11 – 16

While teaching/preaching may be the most “time consuming” of the five items of worship, there can be no doubt regarding its value for the soul! How else are souls taught what they must do in order to please God? (Romans 10:14 – 17)

5. David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," Describe the benefits you receive from assembling with the saints (Hebrews 10:25.)