

VII.6. Lambs to Rams: Worship

There have been many times when I have heard brethren refer to worship as “going to services”. According to Webster, the definition of service in this case is “any religious ceremony”. But is our worship to **the** God of all grace and mercy to be referenced in such a way, as though it was “**any**” religious ceremony? Do we consider it just an empty formality that we Christians go through **every** Sunday of **every** week (*Act 20:7*) and do we even ponder what we’re doing when performing the acts associated with worship? We all need to ask ourselves, out of the 168 hours we are given in each week, where our focus is for the hour plus that we meet with fellow brethren to return to God what He rightly deserves; our worship! After all, He is our audience and don’t we want to please the audience?

Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit (*Gk.4151-mental disposition*) and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship *Him* in spirit and in truth (*in the proper mindset according to inspired truth*).”

In this study we will deal with each of the five acts of worship with reference to their importance in our devotion to God and the benefits we hope to receive in return, and even how they affect the very strength of the congregation.

1.) Singing (*a Capella*)

2Ch 29:25 And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, **according to the commandment** of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: **for so was the commandment of the LORD** by his prophets. (*Emp. added*)

Specifics were given in both covenants for the guidelines concerning the type of music required under each. As in the Old

where only the priests were to perform music acceptable to God, so in the New where Christians serve as “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Since we wouldn’t mix the two Testaments where we would offer up sacrifices of animals today, why would we want to do what is not authorized when it comes to acceptable music? Why would we want to incorporate mechanical instruments of the Old Testament with what we’ve been commanded in the New, the use of only our voices?

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.* (Emp. added)

Heb 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the **sacrifice of praise** to God continually, that is, the **fruit of our lips** giving thanks to his name (*authority*). (Emp. added)

Some may say they can’t carry a tune in a bucket and others in their immediate area may concur. But isn’t it great that God sees things differently than we do? God, in our minds, must be tone deaf if He can accept such out-of-tune renderings we so often bellow out to Him. If that wasn’t the case then only the voices of gifted musicians would be able to please Him. True, God hears our voices, but He is even more in tune with the specific instrument we are all created with.

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody (*Gk.5567- to twitch or twang*) **in your heart** to the Lord; to the Lord; (Emp. added)

Col 3:16 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** (*Gk.2588- thoughts or feelings [mind]*) to the Lord. (Emp. added)

Literally: Sing with favor using our thoughts with feeling to the Lord.

Do we praise Him in our singing with awe and such thankfulness and gratitude for the grace He has bestowed on us? If our voices are raised in both awe and humility, according to truth He hears us. Mechanical instruments, clapping or other forms of manmade praise cannot ‘teach or admonish’ us. Next we need to deal with at least four aspects that pertain to our singing.

1.a.) The word of Christ.

Words are used to communicate things better than pretty much anything, whether verbally or in written form. Here, “the word of Christ” has a deeper meaning than just something we follow on a sheet of music or in a song book. His word/doctrine is to inhabit our very being with such abundance that we cannot but burst with praise to His name.

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and *in* the **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen. (*Emp. added*)

1.b.) Teaching in wisdom.

How can we teach if we have no knowledge of what we are supposed to be teaching? We are commanded to grow in knowledge and our singing is one way to test that knowledge. Ask any teacher; “Who learns the most in the class?” They’ll tell you “hands down, it is the one doing the teaching” because of the preparation it takes to know in detail what they are communicating to their students. Therefore everyone learns. And anyone who has been in the faith for very long will know which songs are scriptural and which ones are not, through our knowledge of the Bible. Our songbooks are not inspired by God so we need to be aware of the fact that some hymns might well be tools of the devil. Since we are all at different stages in our Christian walks those among us “who are spiritual” (*Gal 6:1*) are responsible to decipher the truth in our singing. And along with teaching through singing we are to caution and reprove each other according to truth.

1.c.) Admonishing in wisdom.

Sometimes certain songs can work on our consciences either by the mood of the hymn or by the wording. Such songs as “I’m Not Ashamed to Own My Lord” can convict our hearts when thinking back over the previous week of an incident where we might have had the opportunity to share the Gospel had we been a little more prepared.

1Pe 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and **be ready always** to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: *(Do others even see such hope emanating from us?) (Emp. added)*

Or when we sing “I Want To Be a Worker For the Lord”, do I really want to be a worker or is my heart just “lip-syncing” since I’m not really paying attention to the words? See how the songs we sing can admonish us? Finally, our songs are to show our gratitude to God for all the blessings we’ve received and will receive from His hand.

1.d.) With thanksgiving.

When in worship especially, our hearts need to focus on why we are assembled and our singing is an outward expression where all can demonstrate it. And in singing, all are to lift up our voices, in or out of tune matters not, with gratitude for God’s unspeakable gift so that God hears our hearts, we are all edified and everyone learns.

2. Prayer.

Prayer has been around since the fall of man (*Gen 3*).

The four “A.C.T.S.” associated with praying:

Adoration: We are to first and foremost venerate (*Webster: to worship; to look upon with feelings of deep respect*) God because of His name (*Gk.3686- authority*). Mat 6:9

Confession: John wrote that we lie when we say we have no sin in our lives that need confessed of. But “if we confess (*Gk.3670-acknowledge*) our sins, He is faithful to forgive us *our* sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (*1 Jn 1:8*). This shows our humility before God. It is also a way in which God will hear the penitent sinner.

Thanksgiving: This is acknowledging our gratitude (*Col 4:2*) for all that God has done for us. Every meal, every breath we take ultimately comes from God; not to mention what He did by giving His Son as “a propitiation through faith in His blood” (*Rom 3:25*).

Supplication: God as Father wants us to rely on Him for everything and He will take care of all our daily needs. We are to “let [our] requests be known unto God” (*Php 4:6*) but “ask in faith, nothing wavering” (*Jas 1:5-7*) and as the widow in Jesus’ example continually pleaded with the judge to avenge her of her enemy, it is not to be considered “pestering” God to ask for such things as wisdom since He is obliged to give it (*Jas 1:5*).

3. Giving.

One of the subjects that many in churches of Christ purposely avoid from the pulpit is the blessing we’ve been given to give. If we preach that our worship **must** include singing, prayer, the Lord’s supper and preaching as though they’re essential, then we need to understand that our giving is equally important. We are blessed when we give. And don’t we all want to be blessed? Notice Paul’s remarks to the elders of Ephesus.

Act 20:33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Under the O.T. system of tithing the children of Israel actually gave more than ten percent when they considered everything else

they were commanded to give. And God **challenged** them by asking them to test **Him** to see if **He** wouldn't bless them more abundantly in return if they were to lavish His storehouse with their gifts.

Mal 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove **Me** now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Emp. added)*

So what we give is to be given in faith that God will then pour out a blessing, as He has already done, so that each congregation will grow and His name be magnified in each area. And what we give should be what we've **decided** to give from our hearts long before the collection baskets are passed. It should **never** be from what we have in our pockets at the time or from whatever we have left once we pay our bills. Our contribution should be included as an item listed in our regular budgets. If we make it the most important bill we pay each time we receive our paychecks as a "first fruit" of our income, God will surely be pleased with us and will bless us in the same manner in return. God gave of His best as a sacrifice to save what is most precious to us, our souls, so we need to think about how much we give and to do so with a "cheerful heart".

2Co 9:6 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having **all sufficiency** in **all things**, may abound to **every good work**: *(Emp. added)*

It is so sad that the moment God blesses certain Christians with good jobs they think only of how they'll spend it on themselves and not even think of how they can further the work of the church in helping save the lost. Do they not understand how it took a

certain amount of funding for them to find or be introduced to the truth? Sad to say everything takes money. It takes money to support missionaries, it takes money to help certain members when they're down on their luck and just need a boost to get them through to the next paycheck, it takes money to keep the lights on and the heat and air conditioning bills paid to keep things comfortable, it takes money to support preachers because we should never think that their work is to be done for free since preachers also have relatively the same bills and overhead that every other Christian has.

1Ti 5:18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward.

And the one thing about churches of Christ; we go to the Bible for answers, even when it comes to our giving. The infant church didn't have camel washes or bake sales. Therefore all funding comes directly from the membership, not on Wednesdays or in "Sunday school" classes asking children to contribute. Our giving is to be done on each Sunday in the combined assembly and is only expected to be collected **from the brethren within the congregation.**

1Co 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 **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. (*Emp. added*)

We pattern our way of giving as the early church did according to inspiration. In this case where Paul was addressing the Corinthian brethren, he understood the way people received their pay was according to O.T. law. Each laborer received his daily income at the end of each day. One reason was so that the employers didn't hold it to collect interest and another was because his worker may have been poor and depended on a daily paycheck to get by.

Lev 19:13 ... the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee (*his employer*) all night until the morning.

Deu 24:15 At his day thou shalt give *him* his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he *is* poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

Paul was directing them to put a portion of their daily income aside in storage so that when he came there wouldn't be the confusion of collecting it. This answers the argument of why we don't collect funds throughout the week. In the churches of Christ, our growth comes from our faith in doing this according to the God inspired, apostle delivered words of truth.

4. Preaching.

On the first day of the week, one way we communicate comes from the pulpit through preaching; from proclaiming the Gospel's message, to warning against bad habits that would separate us from God's grace. To preach means (*Gk.2784*) to herald or proclaim the divine truth, especially as it pertains to the Gospel. Jesus told His disciples to deliver the same message He gave to them in this way.

Mat 10:27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

He also told them that they didn't need to prepare beforehand what they would say when they were in the precarious positions they were about to be in.

Mat 10:19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Obviously, they lived in the time of miracles when Holy Spirit was active in verifying the message that it came from God (*see VIII.1. The Age of Miracles*). But today He speaks through the written word as our “Mouthpiece”. If we aren’t speaking from the word of God we aren’t speaking the truth as it would pertain to “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (*Jude 3*). Any and everything we preach must be spoken with a “what saith the Lord” mentality on any given subject.

1Pe 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles; (*Gk.3051- utterance*) of God;... (*...as though God Himself is saying it.*)

Preaching is done to proclaim the message of salvation, to educate, to edify, to admonish and to encourage. Sometimes it steps on toes through convicting a person’s heart of sin.

Act 2:37 Now when they **heard this**, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? (*Emp. added*)

1Co 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Once the spoken word convicts the heart it then, hopefully, leads to obedience.

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name (*authority*) of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

It has been said that “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop”. If that’s true then “an unfocussed mind is his playground”. Preaching is never to be done to entertain. When we come together for worship we should always remember, we are here for a short time on Sunday where the rest of the world needs to be left outside the doors before coming in. Preachers may be dull, humdrum, boring, and monotone and whose taped sermons may be good to listen to if you can’t get to sleep at night. Even Paul said his sermons weren’t meant to entertain. But it was his Holy Spirit backed message that introduced the Gospel that was important (*1 Cor 2:4-5*). Paul even at one point bored a very tired young man to death.

Act 20:9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and **as Paul was long preaching**, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and **was taken up dead**. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. (*Emp. added*)

We aren’t in worship but maybe for the most part of an hour or so. If our attitude toward hearing the message was more like those of Troas (*Act 20:5-6*) who couldn’t wait to hear Paul deliver more about their newfound faith, it shouldn’t matter how dull or how inanimate the speaker might be today. If we’re focused on learning from the message of truth more than the messenger we might just well learn something.

2Co 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another Gospel, which ye have not accepted, **ye might well bear with him**. 5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6 But **though I be rude in speech**, yet not in

knowledge; but we have been **thoroughly made manifest** among you in all things. (*Emp. added*)

If a person is not focused or interested and “the word of the cross is folly” to them they may as well join those who are to depart this life without Christ (*1 Cor 1:18*). Paul summed up his personal understanding in preaching the resurrection.

1Co 2:1-2 For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

5. The Lord’s communion.

No one of the acts of our worship is to be considered more important than the others. The church wouldn’t exist were it not for preaching, or giving, or without our praying together for certain needs to Him Who answers or in lifting up our voices in praiseful song. And how would we ever remember the sacrifice God gave in sending Jesus to die for the sins of the world without being reminded through the act of communion?

Luk 22:19 ... this (*communion*) do (*command*) in remembrance of Me."

First, none of us are to be considered worthy outside of being in Christ. Our own self-worth is only of value once we have been clothed in Him through obedience in baptism. So when we don’t quite understand (*discern*) **why** we are partaking of the bread and cup we are then in danger of judgment.

1Co 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily (*Gk.371- irreverently*), shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine (*Gk.1381- test*) himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning (*Gk.1252- to separate thoroughly*) the Lord's body. (*which*

is why children or others who don't understand should not partake).

Paul was admonishing the Corinthian congregation for coming together for a meal, where some had and others didn't and just having communion in the midst of it all, making the Lord's supper no more important than that of a common mealtime. When others did come for the communion, the emblems they were to partake of had already been consumed. They weren't showing it the reverence it was due by making it a totally separate act. So what does it mean that we should test ourselves? Can a child test themselves before partaking of the emblems?

2Co 13:5 Examine (*Gk.3985- scrutinize*) yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove (*Gk.1381- approve*) your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Whoever doesn't understand then shouldn't partake and those who do partake anyway are in danger of judgment nonetheless. Our communion today is modeled after the pattern given to Moses to only be eaten by the O.T. priesthood in the Holy Place.

Lev 24:8 Every Sabbath he shall set it (*the bread on the table of shewbread*) in order before the LORD continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting (*"Everlasting" in this context is an associative term relating to the dispensation of the O.T. priesthood; i.e., as long as the O.T. lasted.*) covenant.⁹ And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' (*priests*); and they shall eat it in the Holy Place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.

Aaron as high priest under the O.T. partook with fellow priests on every Sabbath day just as Jesus, our High Priest (*Heb 5:10*) under the N.T., partakes with His priesthood (*Mat 26:29*), the church (*a.k.a., the N.T. holy place*) every first day of the week (*Sunday*).

1Pe 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation (*speaking to Christians*), a royal **priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should **shew forth** the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: (*Emp. added*)

Therefore, Christians are commanded (*unless physically or mentally incapacitated*) to partake of the emblems. As the O.T. priesthood did on the Sabbath day, so we do likewise on the first day of every week (*Heb 7:12*). You might ask; “But what about non-members?” “Do they understand that we do this to remember Christ’s sacrifice how He gave His body to be hung on a Roman cross and how He allowed His executioners to spill His innocent blood, all for the salvation of every person who ever existed on earth, should they so accept His gracious gift?” This is for the one leading the ‘table’ to explain clearly before offering the bread and cup that represent the body and blood of Christ.

VII.6. Questions

1. How does music in worship differ between Old and New Testaments? a) it doesn't; b) mechanical instruments weren't invented under the O.T. but are commanded under the New; c) mechanical instruments were commanded under the O.T. but the instruments under the New concern the heart.
2. True or false: The Bible authorizes specifics in our music as it pertains what instrument we use in praise to God. a) true; b) false; c) the text does not say.
3. What event in history brought about the necessity for prayer? a) the fall of man; b) the beginning of the sacrificial system; c) the giving of the Ten Commandments.
4. True or false: God hears a sinner's prayer? Explain. a) true, if the sinner is repentant; b) false, since God cannot look upon evil; c) neither a nor b.
5. What are the four acts associated with praying? a) asking, considering, thanksgiving and support; b) adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication; c) asking, consulting, talking and salutations.
6. In 2 Cor 2:2, what did Paul say was his ultimate goal in preaching? a) to preach Christ and Him crucified; b) to encourage Gentiles to convert to Christ; c) to encourage Jews to accept Jesus as Lord.
7. Which group of believers partook of a type of communion in both Testaments? a) priests; b) preachers; c) only members of the church.
8. True or false: Innocent children are biblically encouraged to partake in the communion. Explain. a) True; b) false; c) the text does not say.