

This morning we are going to begin a 6 part series on worship. Today we will be talk general aspects about worship itself and in the following weeks we will take a look at the 5 things that are a part of public worship which are: teaching or preaching, the Lord's Supper, prayer, giving, and singing.

NO. 1 WORSHIP IS TIME BOUND. The first thing I want to point about worship it's structured in that it has a beginning and an end. Worship to God is something we do as a specific act at a specific time. This is true in both the OT and the NT.

First let's look at an example from the OT. *Genesis 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* Now in context Abraham was following God's instructions and was going to sacrifice his son to God. We learn later that was just a test of faith and God did not allow his son to truly be sacrificed. But notice that Abraham was going to worship and that he would return, which means that his worship to God would have a beginning and it would have an ending. When he returned this specific act of worship would be done.

Now in the NT when Paul was giving his defense before Felix the governor in Acts 24 he says this, *Acts 24:11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.* Paul wanted the Felix to know that he was doing no wrong and certainly didn't have enough time to stir up a great deal of trouble. But the thing I want to point is that Paul went to Jerusalem to worship. Just as Abraham, Paul's worship would have beginning and an end.

In the OT, God designated the Sabbath day, which would be our Saturday, as a special day the children of Israel were to rest from their labors and worship and honor God. But today under the new covenant the first day of the week is a special day set aside for Christians to gather together to as the spiritual body of Christ to bring honor and glory to God and specifically worship Him. The reason why the first day of the week is special is because Jesus Christ overcame the grave that day proving that he truly is our Messiah. Just as the Sabbath day was to be observed every Saturday; the first day of the week is observed every Sunday by Christians as the Lord's day.

We can see the importance of this from, *Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: (25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.* In this passage the writer is stating the importance of Christians to assembly with one another. Notice the command is not to forsake the assembling. The fact that we are to gather together indicates that we have a specific time and place that we will meet which means worship to God has a beginning and end.

We have several other passages that show that the first day of the week is the special day that Christians assemble with one another for the specific purpose of worshipping God. *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. (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.* We will have complete lesson on giving latter so all I want to point out now is that Paul wanted to let the churches know that on the first day of the week when they came together that were to give as they had prospered.

Acts 20:6-7 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. (7) And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. Now according to Acts 20:16, Paul was in a hurry to get Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. Yet we see him staying at Troas for 7 days; WHY? Apparently he stayed for the purpose of worshipping.

But, notice when the disciples came together to break bread (i.e. to partake of the Lords Supper), it was on the first day of the week. Now if every day was the same and it didn't really matter when they gave or when they took the Lords supper they could of easily assembled on another day of the week which would have expedited his departure. But, that's not what happens here because the partaking of the Lords supper and the giving of their means was to take place on the first day of the week. Hopefully you can see that worship to God has a beginning and an end and for the Christian it is to be on every first day of the week.

Now the reason why I am stressing that worship has a beginning and an end is because there is teaching that says

all of life is worship to God. Now while it is true that your life should be a spiritual relationship with God every day, this is far from the worship that we find in scripture. For one thing that passage in Heb 10:25 speaks of us assembling ourselves together collectively as a group.

But certainly when we as Christians are not in public worship we are still to show reverence and serve God in our behavior. This goes back to the fact that we are servants to God. Rightly did Paul say that living the Christian life is our “reasonable service.” ***Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*** Let us understand that there is a difference between specific worship to God and daily service and praise.

NO. 2 PURPOSE: Now let’s take a look at what David has to say about purpose of worshiping God. ***Psalms 122:1-4 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. (2) Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.(3) Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:***

Even though David was under Mosaic Law, his words here capture the very essence of what worship of God is all about. Notice he was full of joy when it was time for him to go to the house of the Lord and notice in v2 they were standing within the gates ready and waiting with all kinds of anticipation to begin worship to God. Now I want you to think about this for second; how many of us have this mentality. Do we arrive at the building early with anticipation of worshipping God or do we just allow ourselves enough time to make it just as services begin. When we do this, any little unplanned delay can cause us to be late for worship to God. Let’s be prepared so that we can make it to worship before it begins.

David goes on to say the reason why he was so glad to be at the house of the lord is to praise him and to thank Him. ***(4) Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.***

Notice the focus is on God and nothing else. You see when we come together the primary reason for it is to worship God. Worship is not a social hour. Now yes we can have good fellowship with one another and enjoy each

other's company, but this is just "by product" of our primary purpose. And yes we encourage and admonish one another by our presence; but that's not the primary purpose of gathering together. I have heard other say they come to worship so they can recharge their batteries and while agree that this is an effect that we can walk away with, that is still a by-product of the primary purpose. If we come to worship just for entertainment or to be social, then we have missed the entire purpose for worship. Worship is for others. You come here to encourage and build up others, and you come here to worship and praise God. You did not come here for what you get out of it. It's not about you, but others. We have talked about time and purpose of worship let's now look at the method of worship.

NO. 3 METHOD: In John 4 we find Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman by the well. He revealed to her that he knew some things about her private life that led her to conclude that he was a prophet of God. *John 4:19-24 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. (20) Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* She perceived that Jesus was prophet and wanted to understand more about worship. Jesus doesn't disappoint her because he tells of a time when people will worship God in spirit and in truth.

(21) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. (22) Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. (23) 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. (24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Now he was talking about how Christians would worship God in the church. Our key verse that we want to focus in on is 24. Notice when we worship God we MUST worship IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH. These 2 elements must be in place for true worship to occur. When we worship in spirit this means we are worshipping from sincere heart. Our thoughts are upon God We must also worship God is truth which is the word God. *John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*

Now putting this all together our worship to God must come from a sincere heart and be regulated after the

pattern set forth in God's Word. It is to be our authority and our guide. Since we have a guide to go by Peter writes *1 Peter 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* Our authority for what we do in public worship must come from the word of God. If God allowed us to worship anyway we wanted to it would end up in confusion and Paul told the Corinthians. *1 Cor. 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

So for our worship to be pleasing and acceptable to God, it must be in spirit and in truth. With that said, let us understand that everything and anything done in the name of worship is not acceptable worship. It is certainly possible to offer "vain worship. There is right way to worship that there is also a wrong way to worship.

We can see in action in Mark 7. The Pharisees were questioning Jesus why his disciples were eating without washing their hands. In response, Jesus talks about tradition and how they were imposing tradition as binding law. In Jesus' argument he addresses the matter of worship. Notice Jesus response. *Mark 7:6-8 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. (not worshiping in spirit) (7) Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (8) For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, ... (not worshiping in truth)*

Here we see that these Pharisees had taken it upon themselves to corrupt the word of God by making their own tradition take the place of Gods way. Notice Jesus says that there were worshiping God in vain. This kind of worship is not acceptable to God. So, we must be careful of how we worship. If a church does things in their worship that is not regulating by scripture, then their worship will be considered vain worship and He will not accept it.

Paul expands on this type of self-imposed religion. *Colossians 2:20-22 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ... (22) after the commandments and doctrines of men?* Paul makes it clear that no one is to invent the own religion and as Christians we should not allow ourselves to be deceived by man and take part in man-made doctrines. This idea of teaching for

doctrines the commandments of men should strike fear in those that have brought into their worship innovative practices that are not supported by scripture.

Another kind of vain worship is ignorant worship. We can see example of this in Acts 17. Here we read how these people had all kind idols that they were worshipping. There was one idol with the inscription “to the unknown God.” *Acts 17:22-23 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. (23) For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.* Paul took the opportunity here to explain to the people who the true and only God was so that they could render proper worship.

On another occasion, Paul wrote to the Romans and addressed this matter of ignorant worship. *Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* We don't have any valid excuses today for worshiping God in ignorance because we have God's written word that we can read and understand. Worshiping out of ignorance is vain, unacceptable worship.

Our final example of vain worship comes from what the soldiers did to Jesus before he crucified. *Mark 15:19-20 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. (20) And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.* Although not stated specifically as vain worship, I suggest that when men make light or fun of our Lord and/or his will during worship, that is vain worship. There are many who do this today by not taking worship seriously. Many are inconsistent in attending worship and often when they do they are on texting on their cell phones or playing with a nearby baby. Worship is not a serious or reverent time to them.

Worship is something that the Christian does. Are you a Christian? Invitation