

Lesson 7: *Worship by the Church of Christ*

Religious worship in the late twentieth century reflects the whims and desire of the masses, especially appealing to youth. There is very little attention to the worship pattern of the New Testament; instead the intent is to please man rather than God with collective worship. Hence, we see dramatic presentations instead of gospel preaching, raps and orchestral performances instead of congregational a Capella singing, and personal testimonials given in the place of objective proofs. Christ demanded that worship be according to spirit and truth. Many have the former, the emotion, without even seeking the latter, scriptural authority.

Singing

One will find that sound churches of Christ use no mechanical instruments of music in their worship. Although stringed instruments were used in the Old Testament, with that law taken out of the way (Eph. 2:14-15), the church looks to the New Testament for its pattern of worship. The two main commands regarding musical worship are found in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. In both places the command is simply "to sing". There is no indication that we are also to play. Furthermore, the only instrument mentioned in relation to musical worship is the heart. Other passages dealing with musical worship include Hebrews 13:15 ("the fruit of the lips"). Truly, the words of praise reach God's ears. The plucking and poundings of mechanical instruments appeal only to men.

Giving

The tithe is another Old Testament command that is not found in the New Testament. The church has a mission which requires funding and the only example for raising money is the free will offering of the members. The command for every individual to lay by in store on the first day of the week is found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's supper consists of unleavened bread and the juice of the fruit of the vine. It is not a meal intended for nutrition, but memorial. Christ inaugurated the custom on the night he was betrayed and the Holy Spirit led the early church to adopt it as a weekly observance of Christ's death (Acts 20:7). Paul commented on and regulated the practice in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32. One is to eat worthily by examining himself and focusing upon the body and blood of the savior.

Preaching

The assembly is implicitly commanded in Hebrews 10:24-25; examples are given in Acts 20, 1 Corinthians 5, 11 and 14. It is a time for edification and teaching. The gospel should be preached by a competent teacher who speaks as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11) and does not attempt to tickle itching ears or appeal to human wisdom for authority (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Prayer

Paul commanded that men lift up holy hands of prayer everywhere in 1 Timothy 2:8. We see men leading such prayer whenever the saints are gathered. Prayer is to be for gratitude, praise and petition (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Women are forbidden to take leading roles in any of these acts of worship (1 Tim. 2:12, 1 Cor. 14:34).

1. How do we know that the church is supposed to assemble for worship?
2. What did Jesus mean by demanding worship be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24)?
3. How would modern forms of worship like dramas, puppet shows and performances fit into Christ’s condemnation of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3-9?
4. Does the church of Christ have music?
5. What is the New Testament pattern for musical worship?
6. Why is the Old Testament not an authority for instrumental music in the worship of the church?
7. What pattern for giving is in place, now that the tithe has been removed?
8. While God appreciates a cheerful giver, what two attitudes does he disdain?
9. What do the two elements of the Lord’s supper represent? When was this commemoration instituted?
10. What should the partaker be careful to observe during the communion?
11. Why is the Lord’s supper taken only on Sunday? Why does the church not observe the Sabbath?
12. What is the preacher to preach (1 Peter 4:11, 2 Tim. 4:1-5)? What is he not to do (Rom. 16:18)?
13. Why is it wrong for women to lead prayer, teach, or take any other lead in worship?