

Worship

That Pleases God

“God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

John 4:24

Jerry Campbell

**WORSHIP
THAT
PLEASES GOD**

Worship and Worshipers that God Wants

Based on the story in John 4:3-42

**By
Jerry Campbell**

INTRODUCTION

My approach in this study has been to look at Scripture. I have not done research from other writers. This is not an evaluation of books on worship or a compilation of quotations from the work of others. I have only wanted to hear and probe the depths of the teaching of Jesus.

The focus of this book is the story of the meeting between Jesus Christ and the woman by the well in Samaria found in John chapter 4. Jesus gave a basic definition of worship against the background of past events and the current thinking reflected in the conversation with the woman. When I say that I want to hear the teaching of Jesus, it is my understanding that the words of the apostles and prophets in the New Testament are also the teaching of Jesus (John 14:26; 16:13-14; Ephesians 3:2-5; 2 Peter 1:16-21). When something in the conversation between Jesus and the woman touches a concept in another part of the Bible, I accept that as the teaching of Jesus as well as what is found just in the few words of Jesus in John 4. This is not an exposition of John 4, but an exploration of truths that are introduced in the story that occurs there.

I have purposely written in plain conversational style and in the first person. This has been my personal attempt to understand worship from the foundation of the teaching of Jesus and from revelation in Scripture. I have tried not to be too interested in scholarship or literary style, though I know that both have their place. For this book, my focus has just been on learning from Scripture.

Quotations are from the New American Standard Version, 1995 printing (note: in the NASV, Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are in capital letters and in quotation marks). The various versions are remarkably similar in this passage. In a few places I have used other versions and they are indicated. All citations from the Bible are in italics. Citations from John 4 appear in bold print, and bold print is also used in a few other places for emphasis.

A FOUNDATION

Jesus said, *If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me* (Luke 9:23).

Jesus also said, *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

I come to Jesus as a disciple, as a learner. Though I have my own desires and preferences, I try to deny them. I come to Jesus to learn from His teachings and to follow His example. I will try to be obedient to whatever I learn from my Lord.

It is my hope that my readers share this commitment.

PURPOSE

Two sentences come from the lips of Jesus about worship.

“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

These two sentences are the very foundation of the concept of worship for followers of Christ. I have quoted these verses hundreds of times, basically as “proof texts,” giving only superficial value to them. These words were spoken beside a well of water that led Jesus to promise that He could give ***“living water”*** and that the one who would drink it would ***“never thirst.”*** I have “drunk deeply” of these words of Christ and of the spiritual truths to which these words have led me, and my spirit has been greatly refreshed. I have a better understanding of worship than I had before.

Chapter 1

A STORY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHENCE?

The word “whence” is considered as formal or even archaic in today’s English, though it has been used in literature for hundreds of years and is thus easily understood. It is often written “from whence,” though this is redundant. A dictionary definition is, “from what place,” and it fits very well as the introductory question in our study. What is the source of the material we will study?

MY FAVORITE STORY

I begin with my personal evaluation of the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman by Jacob’s well, recorded in John 4:3-42. Through the years I have often told classes and audiences that I have a favorite book in the Bible – IT IS THE ONE I AM STUDYING NOW. Thus, when I tell you that the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is my favorite story in the Bible, you will think that is because of my current study. I have certainly enjoyed the time I have recently spent with this story. However, of all the stories in the Bible this is my favorite. Here is a beautiful blending of *all that Jesus began to do and teach* (Acts 1:1). This story not only reveals some personal characteristics of Jesus, but it also gives several basic truths that are developed in other passages. One of those very basic truths, a focus on worship, draws our attention for this study. This focus on worship must be built on the foundation of a view of the whole story. The source of our basic knowledge of worship that pleases God is this story, and more specifically, Jesus Christ.

THE NATURE OF THE STORY

This is a story made up of questions and answers. Three sentences in this story end with a question mark, followed by an answer. Three times a request is made that demands a response, and once a statement is made that actually asks for an explanation. The nature of inquiry that fills this story led me to use the method of asking simple questions to focus on worship.

WHY DID THIS STORY HAPPEN?

Jesus and His disciples had been in Judea and were on their way back to Galilee (John 4:3-4). We are told that *He had to pass through Samaria*. There were other ways to go; many Jews probably went across the Jordan to avoid going through the

land of the Samaritans. The route that Jesus and His disciples took was probably the shortest way, so the reason He *had* to go that way might have been to conserve time. It doesn't stretch our imagination too far to believe that the reason Christ *had* to go that way was to have the opportunity of teaching this woman some lessons that would be valuable, not only for her, but for His followers through the ages. I like to think that He *had* to go that way so I could learn several important lessons, especially the lessons about worship.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST IS CLEARLY SEEN

The story shows both the physical and divine nature of Jesus. *So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well* (John 4:6), a very clear expression of His humanity. The gospel of John opens with the definition of Christ as *the Word*, and His close relationship with God and His divinity are clearly stated. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God* (the Father), *and the Word was God* (nature, divinity). *He was in the beginning with God* (John 1:1-2). Later, the truth of Christ's humanity is clearly stated, *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Before His birth, the angel spoke to Joseph and quoted the prophet Isaiah, *"AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,"* and Matthew added, *which translated means, "GOD WITH US"* (Matthew 1:23).

Later, in the interview with the Samaritan woman, Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah, the one who was chosen by God (John 4:25-26). Other passages connect His being "Christ" with His being "the Son of God" (Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:1; Luke 4:41; John 11:27; 20:31). The divinity of Christ is an important and a very basic fact. The fact that Jesus lived on earth as a human being is also necessary in God's process of bringing men to Himself. The story of the meeting of Christ and the Samaritan woman is a picture in miniature of this great truth that God was living among men (Matthew 1:23). Man can know God through Jesus Christ, and Christ can present forgiven men to God. A very meaningful truth comes from this fact. *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need* (Hebrews 4:15-16). Jesus, resting and asking for a drink of water, shows His human nature. His ability to provide "*living water*" and acceptance of His identity as the Messiah show His divine nature. This fact becomes more significant when we hear Christ's words about worship – *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24). Christ and His teachings bring us "spirit to Spirit" with God; He is the link between man and God.

CHRIST AND HIS WORK ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL PEOPLES

One of the outstanding facts in this story is that Jesus acted in a very surprising way toward this woman. The surprise is clearly stated by the woman herself. *Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"* (John 4:9a). The writer of the gospel adds a comment for clarification, *For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans* (John 4:9b). Later, when they return, Christ's disciples are amazed when they see Him with this woman. *At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do you speak with her?"* (John 4:27).

There was a long history of enmity between Jews and Samaritans, especially on the part of the Jews. The Samaritans were a mixed race living in the area that had been the northern kingdom of Israel. When the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, the Samaritans offered to help, but the Jews drove them away (Ezra 4:1-3). Samaritans, especially women, were considered "unclean" because they did not keep the Old Testament laws of purification. A Jewish man simply would not touch a Samaritan woman or anything she had touched. The very idea of a Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman to supply a drink of water would have been quite surprising, yet that is exactly what Jesus did. Later in the story Jesus affirms, *"salvation is from the Jews"* (John 4:22b), but He will introduce new concepts that include all people. This foreshadows the Great Commission that instructs Christians to *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation* (Mark 16:15). Christ's concern for all people, outcasts and sinners, reaches through the ages to me, a fact for which I am deeply thankful.

JESUS WAS ALERT TO OPPORTUNITY

Jesus deserved rest; in fact, He had stayed behind at the well while the disciples went into town to buy food. Though He used this opportunity by starting the conversation around His own need of water, He was not centered on His own needs. He saw the opportunity of teaching this woman. It is easy for people to be so preoccupied with their own affairs that they miss wonderful opportunities to do good to others. Christ's personal action here well illustrates the principle of the story of the Good Samaritan that Jesus told later in His ministry (Luke 10:30-37). The priest and the Levite hurried by the man in need, but the one who was considered an outcast saw the opportunity and stopped and helped. Jesus did not pass by on the other side, but spent time to meet the needs of this woman. We can learn from the teaching and personal action of Jesus and become alert to our opportunities and use them well.

JESUS TURNED PHYSICAL CONVERSATION TO SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

Jesus got the woman's attention by asking for help. She had something He needed. We sometimes wonder how to talk to others about spiritual matters. While it is not always possible for us to find something with which others might help us, it is almost always possible to find a subject by which we can move from physical conversation to that which is spiritual. Though it is in a somewhat unusual way, this story really involves "hospitality." Though hospitality is usually done in a house, the action is sharing what one has with others. One of the very best settings for conversation is around a table while sharing food. We have a wonderful tool freely available to us as we try to share God's word with others; that tool is the skillful use of opportunity and conversation, and that can often be done through hospitality.

JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES BY HIS PERSONAL EXAMPLE

The story continues after the woman leaves. There was a very interesting conversation between Jesus and His disciples when they returned from buying food. *Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work"* (John 4:31-34). By example, Jesus taught at least two lessons through his own actions. 1. He taught the need to follow right priorities. Some things in life are more important than others, and should be acted upon first. 2. The spiritual should take priority over the physical. God's work is more important than food. Probably only a short time passed until Jesus did eat, but at this moment He had the opportunity of teaching an important lesson. It is very easy for us to make provision for the physical needs in our lives, but we also must care for the spiritual, and the spiritual must always be more important to us than that which is physical.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT URGENCY

Jesus taught His disciples another important lesson. *"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are white for harvest!"* (John 4:35). This follows right after the teaching about Christ's priority in doing *the will of* God and accomplishing *His work*. Thus, God's work is seen in this context as working in the harvest, as doing the labor it takes to bring in the harvest. Jesus had been very busy teaching the woman, and through her He taught others who would read the story. He is now teaching the lesson that this work is urgent. It is so easy to procrastinate, so easy to get involved in preparation for work and never get to the job. This reinforces the lesson taught earlier of using our opportunities.

JESUS TAUGHT THE PRINCIPLE OF SHARING IN THE WORK

Jesus continued His teaching. *“Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor”* (John 4:36-38). The harvest of souls is a cooperative work. God, through Christ has done the greatest work; those who teach and preach only cooperate with them. Christians can cooperate with preachers by remembering them in prayer. Preachers cooperate with each other by each one being faithful to God’s Word. Churches support preachers. We simply cannot list all of the ways that we work together for the harvest of souls.

Two passages are meaningful.

. . . for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” (Romans 10:13-15).

The things that you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).

SUMMARY

God’s Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, came from God to open a way for man to be redeemed and serve God. Jesus set a great example for us and He teaches us how we can be pleasing to God.

Chapter 2

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

WHY?

Our second question is WHY. There are actually two questions, and the first one is, “Why does God want people to worship Him?” The simple answer comes directly from the text, ***“the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”*** There is a sense in which all of God’s creation worship Him. Most of God’s creation praise Him simply by fulfilling their given roles; see Psalm 148. However, God’s supreme creation, people, can make the choice to not praise Him; but when they make the choice to praise Him by their obedience, God is pleased. People please God only when their worship is done ***“in spirit and in truth.”*** The Old Testament prophet Isaiah began his book with God’s indictment that the worship His people had been giving Him was not acceptable because they were disobedient. Isaiah recorded God’s words.

“So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:15-17).

Another Old Testament prophet, Hosea, recorded God’s words, ***“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings”*** (Hosea 6:6). Jesus told the woman, ***“an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”*** The apostle Paul preached about worship to pagans in the city of Athens.

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-32).

God is pleased when people worship Him by obeying His instructions.

The second question is, “Why do people worship?” The simple answer is, “Because there is a strong desire within us to do so.” We want to explore that fact.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN SHOWED A DESIRE TO WORSHIP

As we have already seen, the conversation between Jesus and the woman moved through various subjects. An interesting fact is that of the several subjects discussed in this conversation, the last one, worship, is the one that received the fullest development by Jesus. Several observations might be made. Focus on worship might have been intentional, with other subjects pointing the way. The focus on worship might be seen as a summation of the other subjects. Since worship received the greatest interest, perhaps it was the most important of the subjects discussed. This focus on worship certainly merits our careful study.

INTEREST IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS LIES JUST BENEATH THE SURFACE OF DAILY TASKS

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water (John 4:7a). Her purpose was to draw water, but at the end of the conversation, *the woman left her waterpot* (John 28a). The woman was going about her daily tasks. Much speculation has been given to why she alone came to the well, why she came at the hour she did, and if there wasn't another well closer to town. The story simply does not give every detail, but there is a very clear picture of the woman being in the midst of a chore that she probably did every day, and maybe more than once a day. However, her routine is broken by the surprise of the man at the well, and as He leads her she is very willing to talk about spiritual matters. There seems to be a natural desire within her to seek something beyond the necessary routines of life. An awareness of the need of worship lies deep within her.

THERE IS A YEARNING FOR SOMETHING BEYOND SELF

Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink" (John 4:7b). As we have already observed, the woman was amazed and questioned Jesus why He, a Jew, would ask her for a drink. *Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water"* (John 4:10). She was puzzled by what Jesus said, *"Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons and his cattle?"* (John 4:11-12). Jesus explained that He used "water" as a symbol of spiritual blessings that He could give. *"Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life"* (John 4:13-14). The woman wanted this blessing, *"Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw"* (John 4:15). Though she did not fully understand,

she had a desire for something beyond herself; she desired a blessing that could come only from a source greater than herself. This yearning finds satisfaction in worship.

EVEN A MORALLY CORRUPT PERSON CAN LONG FOR THE SPIRITUAL

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly” (John 4:16-18).

Some have speculated that the reason she came alone to the well, some distance from the city, was that she was an outcast from society because of her immoral life. However, at the end of the story, when she returns to the city, she has free access to the people and they listen to her. There is no doubt that her lifestyle was out of line with God and probably with the standards of her own society. Her immorality did not keep her from having interest in spiritual matters. In fact, her interest in spiritual truths may have been enhanced because of her recognition of her own moral failure. Perhaps she was interested in worship because she longed for a better way of life.

FOCUS ON WORSHIP

The story now focuses on worship – this is the very heart of the story. This part of the conversation will be quoted later as we explore the various parts of the answer. Here, under the question “Why do people want to worship?” the emphasis is on the fact that it is very natural for people to have an interest in worship. It is the woman who raises the subject of worship, indicating that she had an interest in it. Her question arises from her knowledge that came either from observation or previous instruction, or both. There is a natural curiosity within her about worship and she now sees an opportunity of getting answers for her questions. This story has a special beauty because the woman’s curiosity gave Jesus the opportunity of teaching about worship, and we have the opportunity of learning from what He taught her.

CONTACT WITH TRUTH CHANGES LIVES

The result of this conversation is very important. This woman accepted the truths she heard and made an immediate response. *The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (He who is called Christ); “when that one comes, He will declare all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He” (John 4:25-26).* At this time, Christ’s disciples returned and *the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” (John 4:28-29).* Because of her contact with Christ, this woman changed the course of her daily routine and shared

her experience with others. Our inquisitive minds would like to have more information about this woman; we would like to know what she did for the rest of her life. We do know that there was an immediate change and a new influence on other people who also came in contact with Jesus.

OTHER BIBLE STORIES TEACH MAN'S DESIRE TO WORSHIP

THE SECOND STORY IN THE BIBLE IS ABOUT WORSHIP

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel, and each brought a sacrifice to God. God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice and He was displeased with Cain's sacrifice. For the purpose of this chapter, focus is on the simple fact that there was a desire within these brothers to worship God. Fuller lessons in this story will be discussed in chapter six.

NOAH'S FIRST ACT ON COMING OUT OF THE ARK WAS WORSHIP

The story of Noah and the flood is very familiar. It is a story of righteous living and obedience to God. For this study our interest is at the end of the story when Noah leaves the ark.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease" (Genesis 8:20-22).

When he came out of the ark, Noah built an altar so he could worship God. It seems to be a very natural thing to do. The text suggests several offerings; perhaps this reflects a continual practice. God accepted Noah's worship and made a promise that remains meaningful for us today.

ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS BUILT ALTARS SO THEY COULD WORSHIP

The story of Abraham tells of several times that he built altars so he could worship God (Genesis 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; 22:9). This was usually done after a specific situation when Abraham wanted to honor and thank God. A description of what he did at the altars is included in some of the stories; he *called on the name of the LORD*. Abraham's dedication and obedience to God was shown in his various actions told in

these stories; that obedience was especially evident when he built an altar on which he was even willing to sacrifice his son to God. Isaac and Jacob built altars, perhaps following Abraham's good example (Genesis 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7). At times God specifically commanded this and it was done as a thankful response to God.

DAVID BUILT AN ALTAR

There is a very interesting story about King David. He had sinned against God in trusting the strength of the people rather than trusting God. He needed to atone for his sin, and God commanded him to build an altar for this purpose on the threshing floor of a man named Araunah, who wanted to give David the threshing floor, and the animals and the wood for the sacrifice. David rejected this offer with a beautiful attitude, "*No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing*" (2 Samuel 24:24). Worship brings sinful man into contact with God, and worship involves personal sacrifice.

PAGANS DESIRED TO WORSHIP IDOLS

Throughout history, even pagan people have had a desire to worship, though they have worshiped idols. The Bible is full of examples of idolatrous worship. A very good example is in Athens where the apostle Paul was stirred to preach about the living and true God, in great contrast to idolatrous worship (Acts 17:16-31). A fuller focus on idolatrous worship will occur later in our study.

NATURE CALLS US TO WORSHIP

The very nature we live in calls out for us to worship. *Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse* (Romans 1:20 RSV). *The heavens are telling the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands* (Psalm 19:1). Nature says there is something bigger and better than man and draws man to worship; however, nature does not give specific directions for worship. Psalm 19 goes on to demonstrate the need for revelation.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PICTURES WORSHIP

In the New Testament, there are various pictures of worship; ranging from the temple, to synagogues, to upper rooms, to several women worshipping beside a river in Philippi, to Paul and Silas worshipping in prison. It is very clear that people have a need and desire to worship. It is also very clear that there are various forms of worship, some of which are unacceptable to God.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Man has a natural desire to seek something bigger and better than himself. It is an almost universal truth that people recognize their own weaknesses and inadequacies and seek something that satisfies this need.

Mistakes can easily be made. Man wants to make God as he wants Him to be.

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Romans 1:21-23).

Worshippers of the true and living God may well ask why people can turn to idols. It is very easy to see that idols are made by men and have no power. There are at least two basic reasons why men accept idolatry. An unseen God seems remote; He is out there somewhere, while an idol can be seen and be present with the people. An idol is not demanding; it does what the worshiper wants it to do. These two reasons are very attractive to some.

True worship demands that man approach God as God directs him. The rest of our study will develop this truth.

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?" When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.

Psalm 42:1-5

Chapter 3

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

WHERE?

Our third question about worship is WHERE. Where do we go to worship? This was the starting point of the discussion about worship between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Her first inquiry was about the difference in the places of worship between the Samaritans and the Jews.

A QUESTION ABOUT WORSHIP

The woman led the conversation to a discussion of worship, and her interest focused on the place for worship. *“Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship”* (John 4:19-20). In current discussions of the subject of worship, it is very often stated that a Christian worships in daily living and obedience to God; and Romans 12:1-2 is given as a proof text. This is a basic truth that will be developed in some detail in chapter 7, but it is not correct to conclude that this is the only way to worship. I have heard it affirmed that there is no picture of collective worship in the New Testament, but that is simply not true. Even though worship can be done privately, the subject in this study is collective worship; it is very clear that the discussion between the woman and Christ centers on collective worship.

A place to worship is necessary; we are physical beings, so we must be somewhere to worship. It is easy to focus attention on the place of worship and to make it something of great importance.

WORSHIP BY THE PATRIARCHS

The earliest pictures of worship in the Bible, during what is often called the Patriarchal Period, usually centered on an altar. The altar was made of stones and animal sacrifice was practiced. In some of the stories it seems that the motivation to build an altar came from the worshiper as a spontaneous act. In other cases instructions came from God, including commands that no tool be used in the construction of the altar (Exodus 20:25). Preparation had to be made, and worship of the one living God was done intentionally at the altar.

PAGAN WORSHIP

Pagan worship is seen early in the Bible. It also involved specific places, such as altars, and included some form of sacrifice or specific acts directed toward an idol or

pagan god. When Israel came into the Promised Land, the Canaanites had altars to Baal and other gods. Pagan worship often sought the “high places” for their worship; and by the time of the prophets the designation “high places” had become synonymous with idolatry.

WORSHIP IN “HIGH PLACES”

The woman said, *“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain,”* a “high place,” *“and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”* Jerusalem was the highest place for many miles; the temple was built on the highest place in the city. Man has always associated mountains with being close to God. High places were also very visible and thus the people were called to those places. Throughout history, temples, cathedrals and church buildings have been built on the highest place in the area. Perhaps, as he worships, man wants to get as close to God as possible. This is a noble desire, but Christ’s teaching to the woman shows that that desire should be fulfilled spiritually, not physically.

THE JEWS WORSHIPED IN JERUSALEM

During the time Israel wandered in the wilderness, God directed them to build the tabernacle, and then later the temple was built in Jerusalem. Both the tabernacle and the temple were the place where God met with His people. With the tabernacle, God instructed Moses, *see that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain* (Hebrews 8:5, NKJV). When the temple was dedicated, King Solomon recognized a very important fact: *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”* (1 Kings 8:27). All of this was according to God’s plan; Jesus admitted, *“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews”* (John 4:22).

THE SAMARITANS WORSHIPED ON THE MOUNTAIN

Though the woman spoke of Samaritan worship first, it developed later than Hebrew worship. The Samaritans were a mixed race of the descendants of the Hebrews intermingled with foreigners. Believing the land was cursed, they brought a priest from Israel, mingling Old Testament law and paganism. They loosely used only the first five books of the Old Testament. They had built a temple on Mt. Gerizim – Jesus and the woman were probably standing at its foot and she may have pointed toward it as she spoke. During the period between the Old and the New Testaments, Jews had raided and destroyed this temple, but the Samaritans still worshiped at its ruins.

CHRIST REVEALED AN IMPORTANT TRUTH IN HIS ANSWER

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21-24).

Our first thought may be that the place of worship is unimportant. Jesus does say that true worship does not depend on the correct physical location. One might conclude, “I can worship on the creek bank just as well as in a church building.” True, but only a half-truth when it is usually stated as an excuse and not a reason for failing to be in the assembly of the saints. The context adds another very important statement. The reality is that Christ does give a specific place for worship. “Where” is not physical but spiritual; geography is not important, but attitude and submission are most important.

Jesus actually gives the place of worship. Carefully note the language: “. . . *true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit*” (chapter 6 will focus on the word “*truth*”). The place of worship is “*in spirit*.”

DEFINITION OF WORSHIP

We actually have a definition of worship in Christ’s words. Ten Greek words are translated as “worship” in the New Testament. All but two appear only a few times and are not significant to our study. One word appears 18 times and is connected with service – derived from the Old Testament idea of service in the tabernacle – our English word “liturgy” comes from this word. The most common word appears 59 times and is the word that occurs in this passage – “to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; . . . literally or figuratively prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore).” We had a dog that worshiped me; I fed her and trained her. She would sit at my feet and just watch my every move – ready to obey commands or respond to any action from me – she was attentive to my every wish.

In this passage, we have a vivid picture of the action of worship. It is “*spirit*” to “*Spirit*” – we might say, “face to face.” Worship is when man faces God, with respect and honor, but with the willingness to expose personal attitudes and actions to His will. Worship is a confrontation of God and man. The word confrontation carries something of a negative meaning for most people; it is something to be

avoided. The word simply means “face to face” and truly pictures worship, even when it demands boldness to correct faults. Worship is when man knowingly and purposely approaches God with the humble view of self that seeks forgiveness and guidance.

APPLICATION

Man has given much attention to the place of worship; there are great cathedrals in Europe and elaborate church buildings in the United States. The auditorium space in many church buildings is called “the sanctuary,” a special or even holy place set aside for worship. Great sums of money have been spent on church buildings, with much interest given to physical beauty and comfort. It certainly appears to be a strong belief that God can be glorified by the place of worship. Jesus clearly says that the place is not important, while correct actions are not only important, but necessary.

It is very easy to neglect a basic truth of Christ’s teaching; a very important word can easily be overlooked. Proper worship is not optional; Christ included the word “*must*” in this very important teaching. We must carefully hear and obey the words of Jesus. Jesus spoke of “*true worshipers*” and said, “*for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers,*” and He concluded the thought, “*those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” To be “*true worshipers*” we “*must worship in spirit and truth.*” This is the type of worship that pleases God.

Though there must be a physical place of worship, it is the spiritual place of worship that is important. To practice true worship, worshipers will meet God; they will meet God who is “*Spirit*” as they “*worship in spirit.*” Worship takes place in the innermost being of the worshiper; a good example is *singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord* (Ephesians 5:19). The only way we dare come before God is in humble obedience, exposing our lives and our current actions of worship to His guidance. This certainly seems to be a great contrast with current worship styles that are loud, physical, external, and seem to be more entertainment than what Christ required of “*true worshipers.*”

God is ever present
Worship is when we knowingly and openly turn to God to acknowledge
who He is and to let Him correct our sins and our failures

*O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.
You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my
ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it
altogether.*

*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are
there.
If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about
me;
Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The
darkness and the light are both alike to You.*

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your
works, And that my soul knows very well.*

*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of
them!
If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I
awake, I am still with You.*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.*

Selections from Psalm 139

Chapter 4

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

WHICH?

Using the question WHICH gives me the opportunity to review the biblical descriptions of the various types of worship that men may practice. “Which” in this chapter suggests choice: “Which form of worship will we choose?” There are various approaches to worship and the purpose of this question is to explore some of those approaches. Perhaps two questions arise: “On what are our choices based?” and “What choice should we make?”

A CONTRAST BETWEEN HUMAN AND GOD GUIDED WORSHIP

WORSHIP GUIDED BY HUMAN REASONING

In John chapter 4, the woman focused on worship as it came from the tradition of her people, *“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain . . .”* We need to review the historical background of the Samaritans. When Israel was divided into two kingdoms, Jeroboam introduced human religion in the northern kingdom – changing the place of worship, the feast days, and the priesthood; and most importantly, he made idols for the people to worship. His public relations statement was, *“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem”* – he tried to make worship easy and convenient (1 Kings 12:25-33). The fifth king of Israel, Omri, bought a hill in Samaria, built a city there, and the kings ruled from that city (1 Kings 16:24). The northern kingdom is known in the Old Testament as Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria. The worship there was very corrupt and human. By the time of Christ, the Samaritans had a somewhat loose allegiance to the first five books of the Old Testament, but its human base kept it a long way from pleasing God. Christ gave an evaluation of this worship, *“You worship what you do not know . . .”* – this worship was not acceptable.

GOD GIVEN WORSHIP CAN BE CORRUPTED

The woman continued her inquiry, *“and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”* The worship of the Jews had certainly originated from God’s guidance; however, by the time of Christ much teaching had been added by the rabbis. While it is true that worship was centered in Jerusalem, God’s intention had always been to capture the hearts of the people, to have them obey Him. Judaism fell far short of fulfilling this intention. Christ recognized that the Jews had access to the proper guidance – *“we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”* Jesus also recognized corruption of God’s guidance, as will be discussed later under vain worship.

CHRIST TAUGHT A CONTRASTING AND BETTER WORSHIP

The words of Christ gave a vivid contrast to traditional, human based worship, *“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:23-24). Jesus contrasted two established ways of worship with a fresh new concept of worship. The worship of the Samaritans was corrupt; and worship of the Jews had some correct practices, but was inadequate. Both of these systems of worship would be replaced with something far superior.

A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

IGNORANT WORSHIP – Acts 17:16-31

The apostle Paul was in the city of Athens and observed a *city full of idols* (Acts 17:16). He was invited to speak and based his sermon on the fact that he had *found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*. He then began to teach them about the living God (23). Ignorant worship accepted polytheism (many gods) which viewed gods in very human terms, with human feelings and emotions; a god for every situation. This reduced the idea of God to an inferior and useless level. Paul proclaimed that God is the Creator; therefore, He is not served by what man makes (24-25a) nor was He made by man’s hands (29). God is alive and gives life to humans and rules over their affairs (25b-28). Therefore, God demands and expects obedience from all people and will judge people for their actions (30-31).

IDOLATROUS WORSHIP

Idolatrous worship is ignorant worship, but we need a fuller view of the subject. It is almost incredible to Bible readers that people could replace the Living God with sticks and stones; but it is certainly true that many people have done that. It has already been suggested that the appeal of idols is their visibility, their closeness, and the fact that they are not demanding. They do what the worshipers want them to do. Many people have defended the use of images as helps and not idols; it is not only very difficult to make proper distinctions, it is almost always true that the symbols become the object of worship. There are many graphic statements about idolatry in the Bible. Just a few are included here.

Isaiah 44:12-20 pictures a man who cut down a tree and used half of it for fire and cooking, and used the other half to make his god (16-17). Isaiah concluded, *They do not know nor do they understand* (18).

What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork When he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, "Awake!" To a mute stone, "Arise!" And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, And there is no breath at all inside it. But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him (Habakkuk 2:18-20).

The idols of the nations are but silver and gold, The work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths (Psalm 135:15-17).

Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good (Jeremiah 10:5, RSV).

Idolatry is not confined to the use of physical images; it can occur in the hearts of people. God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel and said, *"these men have set up their idols in their hearts"* (Ezekiel 14:3-5). The apostle Paul discussed idolatry and gave this definition; . . . *there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords. In our culture there may be few physical idols, but there are many concepts that draw attention away from the God Paul described; . . . yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).* Jesus showed that the heart can be focused on something other than God.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Any time we ignore God and focus on people, places, or things, we are practicing idolatry. When money, popularity, possessions, pleasure, entertainment, friends, or even family become more important than God, we are practicing idolatry. Jesus commands: *"But seek first His (God) kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).*

VAIN WORSHIP

Jesus quoted a statement from Isaiah about vain religion. “*THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN*” (Matthew 15:8-9). This statement is very interesting, both in its original setting and in the circumstances in which Christ quoted it. Isaiah did his work in the time before Babylon took the southern kingdom of Judah captive. Israel had already fallen to idolatry; and Judah had had many kings who did not oppose idolatry. However, there were a few kings who made some effort to return to the Living God, but the effort was too little, too late. Isaiah’s words were actually the attitude and the words of God about these people.

Jesus found a similar situation in His day. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, proclaimed that they were following God, but their teachings contained much that was human and contrary to God’s will. Jesus used the words of Isaiah to describe such worship. The content of this message is very important. It is possible for men to believe they are worshiping God when in reality they are a very long way from God. The reason for this is very plain; they are *TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN*. This reinforces the truth that Jesus taught; “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*”

APPLICATION

There are basically only two approaches to worship, man’s way and God’s way. Man’s way has many variations, but it comes from man, from his desires, his purposes, his reasoning, his appeals to the flesh; and it includes physical action. Man’s religion is passed on from generation to generation by tradition. God’s way of worship is basically simple, “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” God’s plan of worship is “*in spirit,*” not physical; and derives its instruction, its direction, from “*truth*” and is the only way God can be worshiped. It is so very important to note the word “*must*” in Christ’s teaching on worship.

Chapter 5

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

WHO?

Our fifth question about worship is WHO. There are actually two questions here: Who is to be worshiped? Who are the worshipers?

WHO IS TO BE WORSHIPED?

Several words are used in the Bible referring to God. We will discuss only the two words that Jesus uses in the passage in John.

GOD

A simple definition can be given: God is different from man – that is why He is to be worshiped. The apostle Paul clearly defined God in his sermon in Athens, recorded in Acts 17. Paul had observed the idols throughout the city (16). He began his speech saying the people were *very religious* (22) – while this is something of a compliment, it gave Paul a direction for his thoughts. He had observed an altar *TO AN UNKNOWN GOD* and he said, “*Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you* (23). Paul listed facts about God:

God is Creator – “*God, who made the world and all things in it*” (24a).

God is Lord– “*since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything*” (24b-25a). God is above man and has authority over man. False worship fails to give God His rightful place.

God gives and sustains life – “*He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation*” (25b-26).

God is accessible – “*that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist*” (27-28a). God is pictured in the story of the prodigal son as a father who is eager to receive his wayward son, *But while he was still a long way off, his*

father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced and kissed him (Luke 15:20).

God is not physical – Jesus said, **“God is spirit”** – Paul preached, *“Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man” (29).*

God is demanding – *“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (30-31).*

FATHER

We need caution with the description of God as Father. We are attracted to the endearing nature, to the idea of closeness in this word, but we can stretch its meaning. It is a term of respect, not of opportunity for manipulation. For some it is more negative than positive because of personal experience with earthly fathers. For these reasons we need a careful biblical definition of God as father, and we have a very descriptive picture in Hebrews.

and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON DO NOT REGARD LIGHT THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY Him; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5-11).

In the worship setting, the idea of God being our Father is meaningful and instructive. We want to be close to God, but we need to be willing to follow His guidance so that our lives will be disciplined. When the word discipline is used it is very easy to focus on punishment; but though discipline may bring punishment when needed, the fuller picture is one of training, or the molding of character. Worship is a very important help in this process.

WHO ARE THE WORSHIPERS?

The Father seeks true worshipers, *“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers”* (John 4:23). The worshiper pleases God, not himself or others. God is the audience; we are the performers. Our culture and arrangements suggest that those in attendance are the audience and the leaders are the performers. Thus, it is easy to ask, “What pleases people?” “How can we attract people?” The only valid question is, “What pleases God?” It is also very easy to focus on the “performers” (leaders) and criticize their actions, while true evaluations should be made of our own obedient “performance.”

Though it seems to be ignored by many, the need to please God is such a simple, basic truth. When Barbara and I were dating, we lived 350 miles apart and saw each other about once every two months. We became engaged on one trip and I promised to give her an engagement ring on the next trip, so I had time to think about what I wanted. I liked a center diamond with smaller diamonds around it, set in white gold. I even did some shopping by myself. When it came time to actually buy the ring, I finally asked her what she wanted. She wanted something very simple, a single stone, set in gold. I not only accepted her choice, when I understood her reasons I came to like her choice. Though I had a definite opinion, my purpose was to please her, not myself. Though I may have some personal likes about music and other things that I might want in worship, I am not the one to be pleased.

WORSHIP THAT DISPLEASES GOD

There are many examples in the Bible of people who pleased themselves in worship, doing what was convenient and meaningful to them. Of course, the result was that God was displeased with them.

Cain was a farmer; Abel was a shepherd. They offered sacrifices to God; their offerings came from the convenience of what they had. God was pleased with Abel’s sacrifice, but displeased with Cain’s. The story in Genesis does not give a reason for God’s attitude, but we have help for understanding in the New Testament. Abel is listed in the “heroes of faith” in Hebrews 11:4 with this statement, *By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.* There is a supporting statement in Romans 10:17, *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.* With this information we can conclude that God had given instructions about sacrifice and Abel obeyed, but Cain did not. In 1 John 3:12, Cain is described . . . *his deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous.* Abel was a true worshiper, one that pleased God.

In Leviticus 10:1-2, there is the story of Nadab and Abihu, who so displeased God in what they did in worship that God took their lives. Some readers might say that what they did was incidental, a very minor thing; they simply got the fire they used from a source that was not authorized. It might be said that they were 99% right in their worship, BUT THEY DISPLEASED GOD because they did something *which He had not commanded them* (Leviticus 10:1); they followed their own way. They were not true worshipers, and this was not acceptable to God.

King Saul disobeyed God in several ways, and one way had to do with worship. Samuel, God's prophet, had told Saul to wait for him seven days and he would come and offer sacrifices. Saul was threatened by the Philistines and needed God's help. It was the seventh day and Samuel had not arrived as quickly as Saul wanted, so he took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice. Saul actually presented five excuses for his actions and each one of them may sound valid, but Samuel told him,

“You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure” (1 Samuel 13:13-14a).

The result was that God would seek another man to be king who would follow His commands. It is foolish to use human reasoning in worship to God.

When the kingdom was divided into the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam became king of Israel. He totally changed the structure of worship to fit his own needs and desires. His plans were those *which he had devised in his own heart*. He led Israel away from God into idolatry (1 Kings 12:25-33). Human plans do not honor God.

It might be thought that these examples are from the Old Testament; therefore, they should not be considered in a discussion about Christian worship. The New Testament is very clear about Christians using Old Testament examples to avoid problems and to learn right attitudes (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11). Three times in the book of Hebrews (2:1-4; 10:28-29; 12:25) there is a solemn warning to Christians to practice obedience because they serve a God who demanded obedience from people under the old covenant and who continues to expect obedience.

It is sometimes argued that worship styles are not “salvation issues.” Worship is an obedience issue and salvation certainly is based on obedience. The Bible is very clear in saying that worshipers must obey God, even in details.

A PROPER APPROACH TO GOD

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

1. We must approach God humbly.

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:6-8).

2. We must approach God obediently.

. . . let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).

3. We must approach God reverently.

. . . let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28b-29, RSV).

CONCLUSION

Worship must be directed to God the Father. True worship is in ***“spirit and truth.”*** Worship is not for entertainment. Worship is not to be measured by how we feel afterwards. True worshipers let God confront their lives.

Isaiah had a meaningful worship experience: Isaiah 6:1-9

In a vision he saw into heaven –

I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

He reflected on his own life and the culture around him –

Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

He was cleansed from his sin –

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

This led him to serve God in his daily life –

Then I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

God gave him a difficult task –

He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’”

Chapter 6

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

HOW?

Our sixth question about worship is HOW. What are the practices that God has ordained for our worship? We will seek answers from God so, *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming* (Ephesians 4:14).

There is a specific answer to the question “How should we worship?” in Christ’s response to the woman’s inquiry about Samaritan and Jewish worship. The answer is, ***“true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”*** (John 4:23-24). There is often great discussion about the word “truth.” When Jesus spoke of “truth,” Pilate asked, *“What is truth?”* (John 18:38). Today, in our pluralistic and permissive society, it is very commonly thought that truth is relative; something can be true for one person, but not true for another. With the Bible, often the best definition for a word comes from the context in which it occurs. Usually, we think of context as the verse before and the verse after (or a few verses each direction), but context can be much broader. In trying to define the word ***“truth”*** here in John 4:24, there is no help from the immediate context. Even though it is some distance away, there is a later time in John when Jesus used the word *“truth”* and John recorded it. So, here we have the “context” of the same speaker and the same writer. In a prayer to God and a petition about His apostles, Jesus said, *“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”* (John 17:17).

In the Introduction, I said I am not interested in the thinking of others; but here I want to quote William Hendriksen, so I must explain why. I want an objective thought from a well-known Bible scholar, outside of any subjectivity of my personal views. I quote Hendriksen’s thoughts on the two words, ***“spirit”*** and ***“truth,”*** but for this chapter I am most interested in the thoughts on ***“truth.”***

. . . such worship operates in the realm of *truth*: clear and definite knowledge of God derived from his special revelation (4:22). In such a setting, it would seem to us, worshiping *in spirit and truth* can only mean a. rendering such homage to God that the entire heart enters into the act, and b. doing this in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in his Word. William Hendriksen, (*New Testament Commentary, The Gospel of John*).

ACTS, ACTIONS, ACTIVITIES OF TRUE WORSHIP

PREACHING

The preaching of truth is very important in worship because of the fact that worship brings man and God “*spirit*” to “*Spirit*,” or face to face. God confronts man with His Word, His will; and man worships by listening and obeying.

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight (Acts 20:7).

. . . seek to abound for the edification of the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron . . . In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following (1 Timothy 4:1-2, 6).

. . . preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

“Good preaching” has often been measured by how it is accepted by the hearers. On the way home from worship, a common question may be, “How did you like the sermon?” Among preachers the question may be, “How many illustrations did you use?” or “How many stories did you have to tell to keep the audience awake?” True worship seeks “sound doctrine” that produces conviction and is achieved by encouragement, exhortation, and even rebuke, when necessary. “Good preaching” confronts worshipers with God’s will for their lives. “Good preaching” is not entertainment measured by how one feels after hearing it. The purpose of preaching is not to please people who are *wanting to have their ears tickled* (2 Timothy 4:3). Preaching may even hurt the conscience and wound the feelings of those it reproves, rebukes, and exhorts. We must measure “good preaching” by God’s standards and not by our own or by other’s standards.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Assemblies of the saints occurred for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper – *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight* (Acts 20:7). It is important to note that “break bread,” used to denote the Lord's Supper, is technically called “synecdoche,” which means “a figure of speech where a part is used for the whole.” In this case the “breaking of bread” also includes drinking the fruit of the vine. The term “break bread” obviously can refer to a common meal as it surely does in Acts 2:46 and Acts 20:11. It may be confusing to some to have this term refer to two different things; however, it is fairly easy to recognize the difference by the context, an example of which can be seen in comparing Acts 2:42, which is connected with other spiritual acts; and verse 46, which is connected with a common meal. In Acts 20, the reference of an assembly in which preaching occurred certainly identifies its use as spiritual, as the Lord's Supper.

It is possible for Christian assemblies to corrupt proper acts of worship and become displeasing. The apostle Paul introduced instructions to correct a corruption of the Lord's Supper with a very startling observation, *Your meetings do more harm than good* (1 Corinthians 11:17, NIV).

Paul corrected a problem by returning to the original pattern, *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you* (1 Corinthians 11:23). Many people have had the concept of “restoration” in which an appeal is made to turn away from current religious practices and return to the original pattern. This teaching of Paul is something of a “restoration movement” that attempts to correct an error by reviewing and returning to the original. In this case, unity was sought by bringing each person to the standard set by Christ.

In his further instructions, Paul gives the basic pattern for the practice of the Lord's Supper.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Paul gives a solemn warning. *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (1 Corinthians 11:27, ESV). No one is worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper because salvation is by grace. Paul affirmed in 1 Corinthians 1:2 that Christians are *sanctified in Christ*; that is, they have been "set apart" from the world to serve God. Because they are *in Christ*, Christians are worthy to eat the Lord's Supper. However, some do this *in an unworthy manner*, they do it improperly. Paul's purpose was to correct the manner in which the Corinthians were doing the Lord's Supper. Doing the Supper in *an unworthy manner* brings guilt to the person so doing.

Paul continues by giving instructions of how the problem can be corrected. *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself* (1 Corinthians 11:28-29, ESV). The examination of oneself is in relationship to eating and drinking correctly; to do this *in a worthy manner*. The mention of the *body* is interpreted by some to be the "church" since several times "body" and "church" are equated in the New Testament. However, that idea is not in view here, but the *body* in this context is identified in 1 Corinthians 11:24 as a part of the Supper. The idea of *discerning the body* is simply that one connects the act of eating the bread with the fact that Jesus sacrificed His body for that person.

Human reasoning suggests to some that taking the Lord's Supper every week causes it to be commonplace; therefore, it may be done monthly, quarterly, or yearly. God's truth, Scripture, brings worshipers face to face with Christ's work and sacrifice on a weekly basis – reminders that worshipers need.

See Appendix 1 for a fuller discussion of the Lord's Supper and the "first day of the week."

See Appendix 2 for a brief commentary on 1 Corinthians 11:17-33.

CONTRIBUTION

Though the need of financial support is widely accepted in churches, the means of obtaining it is often considered optional. Some churches very commonly raise money by a variety of ways, bazaars, rummage or food sales, raffles, etc. With many, the passing of collection plates in an assembly is merely an opportune time to receive money. In fact, the New Testament instructs that this be done *On the first day of every week* (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and that is because this was the time for the assembly of Christians in their local churches. The activity of giving in the New Testament was to fulfill a need that was easily seen and agreed upon as worthwhile.

There is much instruction in the New Testament about giving and it is seen as a spiritual opportunity for Christians to worship.

Giving in the New Testament is:

Regular – *On the first day of every week* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Personal – *each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come* (1 Corinthians 16:2). (Note: some might read this to say that one saves the contribution at home, but the fact that this is to be done so that a collection would not need to be made when Paul arrived to receive it, coupled with the fact of doing it on the *first day of every week*, affirms a weekly collection in the assembly.)

Based on income – *as he may prosper* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Voluntary – *of their own free will* (2 Corinthians 8:3, RSV).

Sacrificial – *For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord* (2 Corinthians 8:3).

Dedicated – *they first gave themselves to the Lord* (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Christlike – *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Planned – *Each one must do as he has purposed in his heart* (2 Corinthians 9:7a).

Cheerful – *not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Corinthians 9:7b).

Giving on the first day of the week is worship to God.

See Appendix 3 for a discussion of the use of the money given in the assembly.

PRAYER

Several times in Acts, Christians are assembled and pray together. The practice of prayer as worship is probably accepted by almost everyone. Only a few passages are quoted.

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time – Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension (1 Timothy 2:1-6, 8). See Appendix 4.

Jesus gave an example of an important attitude in prayer, “*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will*” (Matthew 26:39).

What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the mind also (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Some people have the concept that praying “together” means that everyone does his or her personal prayer in spoken voice, usually increasing the volume as time passes. This practice seems to ignore the exhortation that the apostle Paul gives in a context of assembled worship. *Let all things be done for edification – But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner* (1 Corinthians 14:26, 40). The practice of using a single man to lead the congregation in prayer is more orderly and retains the exhortation to let *the men pray* (1 Timothy 2:8). When each person in the assembly prays the same petition the leader is praying, the whole church is approaching God in beautiful unity.

SINGING

Though the act of singing is mentioned several times in the New Testament (13 times in its various forms), only two passages will be discussed because they are the fullest treatment of the subject and give a well-rounded view. These two passages are Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. See Appendix 5 for a comparison of these passages. These passages have commonly been used as “proof texts” against instrumental music in Christian worship; so they have received much attention, and various arguments have been formulated to combat the idea that they condemn the use of instruments. Very simply, the passages give positive instruction about singing, without mention of instruments; thus, the inclusion of instruments is an addition. Singing is authorized; instruments are not authorized. We have already observed the danger of additions to worship instructions.

A popular argument has been developed that says these passages are not in a context of corporate (assembled) worship. Therefore, it is argued that they are taken out of context to apply to worship services. While it is true that there is no specific mention of an assembly in these passages, this is a “quick answer” given to weaken any argument about collective worship from these passages. It is argued that these instructions are given for “private use” and nothing is said about “church services.” In fact, both letters were written to churches, not to individuals. The word “church” refers to an “assembly.” Though there are certainly instructions for individual Christian living in Ephesus and Colosse, it is also very clear that the basic messages

of both are to the church that is made up of individuals. The most important fact is that in both verses the very language itself demands community. Ephesians instructs, *speaking to one another*; and Colossians is even stronger saying, *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts (plural) to God*. The argument that these passages cannot be applied to worship assemblies ignores what the passages say and do not deal with how they would be put into practice privately. Further, whatever is taught in these passages for individuals would have to guide them in any assembled worship.

DEFINITIONS

It is important to have proper definitions of key words, especially in applying biblical teaching. A simple definition from a student dictionary defines music, “Vocal or instrumental sounds that are characterized by rhythm, melody, harmony, or some combination of these.” Very clearly, there are two basic types of music, vocal and instrumental. It has often been said, “Churches of Christ don’t use music,” and of course, that is not true. Singing is music. Since there are these two types of music, the authorization of one does not automatically include the other; instrumental music is an addition to the instruction to sing. A definition for “sing” is “to produce musical sounds with the voice.”

When defining *singing* from Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, there are several additional teachings beyond the basic definition. *Singing* must be limited to *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*; it must *teach and admonish one another*; and it must be done *with thankfulness in your hearts to God*. Often, it seems that songs are chosen more for their rhythm and melody than for their teaching and their thanksgiving to God. Leaders need to give careful attention to what the songs teach. Some songs are so intricate that many worshipers cannot sing with them. Praise is not how loud one can sing or how often one repeats a phrase about God’s greatness. Praise is much more the result of obedient hearts that have sincerely tried to speak to one another, to teach one another, and to give thanks to God. The word “wisdom” is included in Colossians 3:16 and the application of wisdom surely applies to this whole activity, including the choice of songs.

The choice of music style often seems to be driven more by the culture than by Scripture. “Christian music” that is rooted in current tastes in secular music, has almost been forced on churches. A great discussion has developed over “traditional” and “contemporary” forms of music. There are some very meaningful songs in both categories and some very poor songs in each. The criteria for singing in worship are clearly laid down in the two texts we have studied. Singing in worship is not to be what pleases us, but what pleases God.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

1. Silence must be respected – a biblical example of the application of this principle can be clearly seen in Hebrews 7:14 – **when specific instruction is given, all other possibilities are excluded.**
2. God is honored by the singing of praises with the instrument He made, the voice, and accompanied by another instrument He made, the heart or the understanding.
3. Singing comes from the heart; instrumental music very easily diverts attention to other things.
4. For centuries the church did not use instrumental music – the word acappella came from the Latin, meaning “as in the chapel (or church),” and means “without instrumental accompaniment.”
5. The question is not, “Do people enjoy instruments?” or “Can we have bigger crowds if we used instruments?” The question is very simply: “WHAT DOES GOD WANT?”
6. We can always improve our singing; but singing is not improved by instruments.

See Appendix 6 for an outline of some of the thoughts that have already been expressed. Also, see Appendix 7 for a discussion of arguments for the use of instruments.

THE UNITY OF WORSHIP

A very important observation about worship must be made from the passages that have been studied. Each of the activities of worship has a mutual nature; they are done with other Christians. This fact is most evident in the Lord’s Supper and in singing, but it can easily be seen in the other activities of worship.

The church in Corinth had a problem with the Lord’s Supper, and the apostle Paul corrected that problem in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The problem centered on the lack of concern for others. There was selfishness in fulfilling personal needs while ignoring the needs of a neighbor. The method of correction was for the worshipers to return to the original purpose and practice of the Supper. While this would be done primarily by each one examining himself, it also required the recognition of one’s neighbors and their participation in the Supper. It was a communion with Christ, but was also a communion with Christ’s disciples.

Twice in his discussion of the contribution, Paul used the word that is usually translated “fellowship” (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13). This Greek word is translated with several words in the different versions: “fellowship,” “sharing,” “participation,” “distribution,” and “contribution.” It is clear that giving is a shared or mutual act of worship.

The language that prescribes singing clearly shows that it is to be a mutual activity. In their singing, Christians are *speaking to one another* and *teaching and admonishing one another*. Certainly, God is to be praised in singing, but some of the real value of worship is what Christians do with and for each other in the singing.

The need for and value of worshipping with other Christians is clear in Hebrews 10:24, *let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds*. We need the encouragement, correction, and help that can come from others who are also committed to serving and worshipping God.

When a firm stand is taken on various aspects of worship, it appears to many as judgmental of those who have other concepts and practices. Any truth that is taught implies that contrary actions are at least dangerous, if not wrong. Practicing truth does not condemn other people. Condemnation comes from disobedience to God. Those who try to practice truth do not look for ways to mistreat others who have differing practices. However, there is a simple reality; a person who believes a practice to be contrary to the Bible can have no fellowship with those who accept that practice. It is not a question of hating those who have different practices, but a question of submission and obedience to God.

The worship of the New Testament church was simple. Christians assembled together (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20; James 2:2). Actually, the word “church” means “people who have assembled for a common purpose.” In a passage in the book of Hebrews, the writer warns Christians that they should not forsake the assembling of themselves together (Hebrews 10:25). It is very interesting to see the verses that precede this verse, as they tell of the reasons for a worship assembly. There is a list of three reasons:

1. **Draw near to God.** This is the obvious purpose of a worship assembly. Those who do this are people of faith, who have been baptized and because of the forgiveness of sins have a clean conscience (22).
2. **Hold fast the confession of hope.** Christians have hope of the resurrection from the dead and eternity with God. In worship assemblies Christians are reminded of that hope (23).
3. **Stimulate one another to love and good works.** Worship assemblies have fellowship and sharing with one another. When Christians are present in worship and are active with one another, each one is encouraged to right actions (24).

Chapter 7

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

WHEN?

Our seventh and last question about worship is WHEN. When should Christians worship God? Three answers will be given to this question. The first two are very general and deal with materials not directly related to the text we are studying, but the last answer is based solidly on the text.

WHENEVER – AT ALL TIMES

There is a sense in which all of a Christian's life is worship to God. Worship is an awareness of the presence of God, a purposeful acknowledgment of His nature and character, and a willingness to confront one's actions with His will. A Christian should live each day in this manner. The passage in Colossians about singing instructs, *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you . . . singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* It then connects that worship with daily living, *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father* (Colossians 3:16-17). The apostle Paul once wrote, *pray without ceasing* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Surely he did not mean to do nothing in life but pray, or be always on your knees in prayer; but that one should do nothing in life that would hinder prayer. One should so live that prayer can be offered at any time, in any situation.

Another teaching of Paul's is very interesting, *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship* (Romans 12:1). It is the phrase, *spiritual service of worship* that is interesting for this study. Let's look at a couple of other versions, *your reasonable service* (KJV, NKJV); *this is your spiritual act of worship* (NIV). At first glance these readings seem to be very different, so it will be helpful to get a little background about these words. The word translated *reasonable* (KJV, NKJV), and *spiritual* (NASV, NIV) speaks of the intellect or reasoning ability of man. The word *spiritual* was chosen by translators to move away from the common English definition of *reasonable* as "not extreme." The second word, *service*, gives the meaning to the passage, but it is a little hard to translate into English. It is a word that originally referred to the service of priests in the tabernacle and temple; it is service in a worship setting; thus, *service of worship* (NASV) and *spiritual act of worship* (NIV). In general terms, daily service to God can be considered as "worship"; however, one must not draw the conclusion that this is the only "worship" as the next focus will show.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

Though there is no “treatise” in the New Testament about an assembly of the church on the first day of the week, various passages clearly show that the first day of the week was the primary time of assembly of the church. Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24:1-7; John 20:1-3, 19). The church was established on the Day of Pentecost which was on the first day of the week. The church is often pictured as “gathered together,” and when a time is mentioned, it is “the first day of the week.” In 1 Corinthians 11:17, Paul begins a discussion of the Lord’s Supper and four times in that discussion he says *when you come together*; once he says, *when you meet together*; and once he says, *when you come together as a church*. The picture of an assembled church continues all the way through to 1 Corinthians 16:2, when the day on which they came together is identified as *the first day of the week*.

In an attempt to allow the Lord’s Supper on a day other than the first day of the week, some have appealed to Acts 20:7 and created some confusion. Jewish time began a new day at sundown, about 6:00 PM. It is true that in most places in the New Testament where a specific hour is mentioned, it is Jewish time; a good example is the parable of the laborers in Matthew 20:1-16. The first workers start *early in the morning*; then others are hired *the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and the eleventh hour*, no doubt corresponding to 9:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 3:00 PM, and 5:00 PM in our current system of time; many versions have footnotes affirming this. In Acts 20:7 there is this information, *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight*. Using Jewish time, this gathering would have been early on the first day of the week. On the other hand, some Bible students, and one translation (see note 1 at end of chapter), say that the Lord’s Supper was observed on Saturday evening. If Roman civil time, that was equal to our time, is applied, this meeting occurred on Sunday evening, *the first day of the week*. Even though the book of Acts obviously uses Jewish time, an example is Acts 2:15; those references are to Jewish situations. It is logical to believe that Roman civil time was used in Troas because it was in the Roman province of Asia and was not a Jewish community. The exact hours within a twenty-four hour day that were involved in the assembly in Troas is really not important. Whether it was early in the day of Jewish time, or late in the day in Roman time, what is important is that whatever specific time of day it was for those in Troas, it was on their first day of the week. Today, we cannot practice the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week and do it on Saturday, because that is the seventh day of the week in our time system. See Note 2 at end of chapter.

DURING THE CHRISTIAN AGE

Thus far our two answers to the question “When” have ignored our text in John 4, though we have discussed some interesting and important ideas. The simple answer from the text to the question of “When should Christians worship?” is “*now.*” “*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers*” (John 4:23). Christ said this in contrast to the previous practices of the Samaritans and the Jews. Something different, something new was coming into view and it would replace the old systems. This new way of worship is related to the presence of and work by the Messiah, the Christ; and Jesus, in a rare statement made to the Samaritan woman, affirms that He is the Messiah. This new way of worship that Jesus spoke of would center on Him and His work. The “*now*” is the Christian Age.

This “*now*” worship replaces man-made worship. The “*now*” is a call to worship that is directed by God, to worship that pleases Him. The “*now*” becomes “*new*” with Christ in contrast to the Old Testament worship of the Jews. This “*now*” worship doesn’t have priests, robes, candles, incense, ceremonies, and visible rituals. This “*now*” worship has a temple *not made with hands* (Hebrews 9:11); *heaven itself* (Hebrews 9:24). “*Now*” we have a High Priest who is also the sacrificial lamb. “*Now,*” we “*worship in spirit and truth.*”

A BROAD VIEW OF WORSHIP NEW, COMPARED WITH TRADITION NOW, IN THE TIME OF CHRIST

There is a passage about worship that is often overlooked. A careful study of Hebrews 10:19-25 develops a meaningful picture of worship.

BACKGROUND

The passage begins, *Therefore . . .* – the thoughts of 10:19-25 are based on what has been discussed from 1:1 to 10:18. Hebrews began with a picture of God’s communication with man; *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son* (Hebrews 1:1-2a). The book develops a picture of Jesus as High Priest and as the adequate and perfect sacrifice. The worship in the Old Testament, with the structure of the tabernacle, the high priest going into the Holy of Holies, and sacrifice for sin, has been developed in detail. The end of the picture is of Christ going into the true tabernacle, heaven. *And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption* (Hebrews 9:12). *For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands,*

a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

CHRISTIANS CAN ENTER THE HOLY PLACE – A PICTURE OF WORSHIP

Then in chapter 10, we read that by Christ we also can enter the Holy of Holies, heaven. *Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence (boldness, NKJV) to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us, through the veil. Christ's sacrifice gives us a new and living way in which we can come, spirit to Spirit, to God. We have a great priest over the house of God . . . (19-21).*

Following these thoughts, there is a very meaningful description of worship, with three important purposes outlined.

1. . . . *let us draw near* – obviously, **to God**
With a right attitude – . . . *with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, . . .*
Christ's blood has cleansed even our hearts – . . . *having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience . . .*
The baptized believer comes before God – . . . *and our bodies washed with pure water (22).*
2. *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (23).*
3. *And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works, . . . (24).*

The final statement in the paragraph identifies the fact that this is a view of worship, a picture of the assembly of the Saints – *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (25).* Though this is in the language of a command, its power is in what is accomplished by our worshiping together. When a Christian understands the purposes for, and the blessings that come from the worship assembly, there will be a strong desire to be a part of that assembly each time it occurs.

Let's review what we have just studied for emphasis.

Christians should assemble together (Hebrews 10:25). In this assembly Christians

Approach heaven (10:19-21).

Draw near to God (10:22).

Hold fast their confession of hope (10:23).

Encourage each other to do good works (10:24).

When does the disciple of Christ worship God? **NOW!** Through the New Covenant that God has made with man through Christ, we can draw near to God. Worship is done by a person who has humbled himself before God, through sincere obedience to God's word as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This person comes intentionally and openly into the presence of God, with thanksgiving and praise, and with a willingness to let God change personal actions. Worship is "*spirit*" to "*Spirit*," face to face of a person with God.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:11-16).

Worship approaches God through Jesus Christ. Worship is done by people who have obeyed God and who openly come before Him to serve Him and to be changed by Him.

Note 1: Thirty translations were checked and only one was found that had a different rendering of the Greek: *On Saturday evening we were gathered together . . .* from *Good News for Modern Man, The New Testament in Today's English Version*.

Note 2: Time in the Gospel of John simply must be a different system than the one used in the rest of the New Testament. There is a major problem between Mark's Gospel and John's Gospel in the fact that Mark says it was the "third hour" when Christ was crucified (Mark 15:25), but John says Pilate passed sentence on Him at "about the sixth hour" (John 19:14). Jesus could not have been crucified before He was sentenced. Some have cited this as a proof of contradictions in the Bible. There is a very logical explanation: the two writers were using different time systems; Mark used Jewish time; John used Roman civil time. This possibility is strengthened by knowing that John wrote much later than Mark, to a much broader audience. Accepting this idea of John's use of Roman civil time, equivalent to our current time, not only doesn't present a problem with the other times stated in John, but it actually is even more logical. There are specific times given in John 1:39; 4:6; 4:52; 19:14.

In John 1:39, at *the tenth hour*, two men go with Jesus to where He was dwelling and *remained with Him that day*. Using Roman civil time they would have come with Him at 10:00 AM, rather than 4:00 PM, which may fit better with their remaining *with Him that day*. Jesus met the woman by the well in Samaria at *about the sixth hour* (John 4:6). Jewish time would make that noon, but Roman civil time would have it at 6:00 PM, which seems more logical for Christ and the apostles to have traveled all day and paused for the day, rather than breaking up their trip at noon.

TWO OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES EXPRESS BASIC TRUTHS THAT GIVE MEANING TO CHRISTIANS WHEN PRINCIPLES FROM OUR TEXT ARE APPLIED

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Psalm 122:1). – Worship of God should bring deep and lasting joy to the Christian. The place for the Christian to meet God is *in spirit* – the physical place is unimportant.

Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). – Christians do not have a temple in Jerusalem for worship, but this attitude of approaching God with others who serve Him is very meaningful. In fact, the concept of this verse that the “*word of the LORD*” would go forth from Jerusalem is a prophecy of the preaching of the gospel. Jesus told the apostles, “*Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luke 24:46-47).

WORSHIP THAT PLEASES GOD

WHY do we worship? We have a need and strong desire within us to admire and serve something greater than ourselves.

WHERE should we worship? The physical location of worship is of little importance; worship takes place in our innermost being, “*in spirit*” – in worship we come face to face with God.

WHICH form of worship should we choose? Worship that comes from human sources is vain before God; we must choose to worship according to God’s guidance.

WHO is to be worshiped? We must worship God, the Father.

WHO is to worship? “*true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*”

HOW should we worship? We must “*worship in spirit and truth*” – our worship must obey God’s guidance.

WHEN should we worship? We must honor and serve God in our daily living; we must assemble with the saints on the first day of the week; our worship is a part of Christ’s new covenant, and we approach God in worship through Christ and the work He has done for us.

Appendix 1

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK – EVERY FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

The Lord's Supper was established at the Passover which probably was on Thursday night. However, when the church observed it, it was done on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, the full context of this passage is the assembly on the first day of the week – see 1 Corinthians 16:1).

Jesus made a very significant statement that is recorded in Matthew 26:29. He referred to the church as “the Father's kingdom” and promised to be present with us when we eat the Lord's Supper.

It is argued that there is no command to have the Lord's Supper on Sunday (the first day of the week) or to have it every Sunday. With this reasoning some are willing to practice it on other days than Sunday, and some practice it once a month or once every three months or even only once a year. The usual argument for such a practice is that doing it more often makes it commonplace or meaningless. If one concentrates on the obeying “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25); and in light of Christ being spiritually present (Matthew 26:29), it seems much more logical for a Christian to want to do it often.

Jesus gave a command to His disciples to “do this (the Lord's Supper) in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). The apostle Paul restated this as a commandment (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), saying he had received this from the Lord. When a command was obeyed by the New Testament church, the way it was done becomes a binding example to anyone trying to follow the teaching and practice of the New Testament. The New Testament church ate the Lord's Supper on “the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7). An even stronger reality is stated in First Corinthians. In Paul's instructions about the Lord's Supper (this is the fullest discussion of it in the New Testament) he spoke of the church being assembled, “When you come together” (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33). Though he covers other subjects in chapters 12-15, it is all centered on the assembled church. Then in chapter 16, Paul commands Christians to give, or participate in a “collection,” and says it is done on “the first day of the week” (1 Corinthians 16:2). That is true very simply because that is the day the church is assembled, and included in that assembly was the partaking of the Lord's Supper. The definite article “the” demands **every** week. In fact, the RSV, the ESV, the NASV, and the NIV translate this “the first day of every week.”

In Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), it is very clear that proper actions are important. For those of us who want to be the church of the New Testament we have no choice in the matter; the Lord's Supper should be eaten on every first day of every week.

Appendix 2

THE LORD'S SUPPER A Brief Study of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

First Corinthians 11:17-34 is the fullest discussion of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament, and it has many important instructions. I once did an exegesis (a detailed explanation) of this passage that filled 25 typed pages. My attempt here is to comment briefly on important concepts. To conserve space I will not include full quotations; therefore, I ask the reader to have a Bible open.

The apostle Paul wrote First Corinthians to correct problems in the church. The basic problem was division (1:10-17; 3:1-10) and that touched the Lord's Supper because they had turned it into a common meal. The participants were selfishly fulfilling their own desires, with no interest in others, and this was causing division (11:18-21). Paul worked toward correcting the problem in two ways. First, he established the fact that the Lord's Supper is not a common meal; common meals should be eaten at home (11:22, 34). Second, the basic solution was to restore the original purpose and action of the Lord's Supper (11:23-32).

Before I discuss this passage, I call attention to a statement at the beginning of the letter to the Corinthian church. Paul wrote, not just to the church in Corinth, but he also included *all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours* (1 Corinthians 1:2). These instructions apply to Christians today as much as they did to the church in Corinth.

Paul's instructions about the Lord's Supper are not his own ideas, but he received them from the Lord and he passes them on to other Christians (11:23). The focus of attention is on Christ's establishment of the Supper (11:23-26). Christians can avoid and correct problems by following the original pattern.

Paul then draws conclusions and makes applications. The one who eats *in an unworthy manner* will be *guilty* (11:27) and bring *judgment to himself* (11:29). It is important to remember the setting (context) of this passage. The focus has not been on personal characteristics, but rather on actions. There is a fact, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). No one is *worthy* to partake of the Lord's Supper, but one can do it in the correct or *worthy* way. There are two things that should be done to avoid partaking *in an unworthy manner*. The Christian must *examine himself* (11:28) as he eats. It is easy to connect this with what Paul said before about eating *in an unworthy manner*, and conclude that the examination is to see if one is worthy. However, verse 29 defines the *unworthy manner* as *if he does not judge the body rightly (not discerning the Lord's body NKJV)*, so this examination focuses more clearly on the action rather than the worthiness of the partaker. The reader now must ask, "What is meant here?" Many have suggested that this means the assembled church, *the body*, and that the *discerning* is done by unselfishly

recognizing the others around the participant. Paul does use the word *body* for the church in chapter 12, but he does not use it that way in this passage. The only place *body* appears in this discussion besides this verse (11:29) is verse 24 where Jesus speaks of the bread as His *body*. Thus, the discernment Paul is calling for is to consciously connect the bread with the body of Christ and the cup with the blood of Christ and doing that *in remembrance* of Christ. This is another focus on the correct action and purpose in eating the Supper. This is how one avoids eating and drinking *in an unworthy manner*. Paul states that failure to do this is the *reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep* (11:30). This must be understood as a spiritual, not a physical condition. Something else that is necessary to avoid *an unworthy manner* is to keep this Supper separate from a common meal and to share in a proper way with others (11:33-34).

While the institution of the Lord's Supper was done during the Passover meal, it is clearly a new and independent function. Though the elements, the bread and the fruit of the vine, were what was available at the Passover, nothing else remains of the Passover for Christians to observe.

I feel the need of making one last comment. The Lord's Supper has been viewed as a "sacrament," especially in the elaborate ceremony of the Mass in Catholicism. A dictionary definition of sacrament is, "a rite considered to have been established by Christ as a channel for grace." That means that one is blessed simply by participating. The teaching of Paul in First Corinthians clearly says that one can participate in something called the Lord's Supper and not only fail to receive a blessing but be condemned for wrong actions. Paul teaches that one is blessed in the Lord's Supper only when doing it correctly; that is, doing it in a "worthy manner," not by simply participation in a ritual.

Appendix 3

Some people have the concept that what is given on the first day of the week is the “Lord’s money” and that it must be used only for “spiritual” purposes. What is “the Lord’s money?” I believe the better concept is that ALL of a Christian’s money is the Lord’s. Concepts about “the Lord’s money” and what is “spiritual” come more from human reasoning than from Scripture. Very careful consideration must be given to the Bible and its teachings about giving, which are basically contained in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. We have correctly applied the various principles that come from these passages, but some have failed to remember the overall setting for this giving. It is easy to use very arbitrary human reasoning to make distinctions between what is “spiritual” and what is “physical.” The original use of the contribution that is discussed in 1 and 2 Corinthians was for the physical needs of the poor saints of Jerusalem, not for the preaching of the gospel (Acts 11:27-29; Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1; 9:12). In fact, Romans 15:26-27 gives a spiritual setting to this contribution for physical needs. Thus, the use of the money to supply physical needs was a spiritual action. There was agreement on a need and willingness to meet that need through the use of the contribution that had been given in the assembly. It is certainly right to exercise great care in the use of the money given in the assembly. The use of that money becomes “spiritual” when it is used to fulfill commandments and instructions of the New Testament. It is certainly true that what is given can be used for something that is at least questionable, if not wrong, and that great care should be exercised in the selection of uses for the collection.

Appendix 4

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension (1 Timothy 2:8). Two questions can arise when this verse is cited.

Does *men* in this context just refer to males? There is a Greek word that can be translated as “man” or “men,” and it is a general word that would include females. The word that is used in 1 Timothy 2:8 is in contrast to “woman” or “women”; it specifically refers to males.

Is *lifting up holy hands* a physical action or is it symbolic? How could the physical raising of hands contribute to the action of *without wrath and dissension* in the rest of the sentence? The only way that hands can be holy is for the heart, the character, and the life to be holy. *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded* (James 4:8).

Appendix 5

A COMPARISON OF EPHESIANS 5:19 AND COLOSSIANS 3:16

1. The two passages are very similar and give basic, important truths:
 - a. Both have a mutual activity among people.
 - b. Both have singing.
 - c. Both speak of three types of songs.
 - d. Both require a thankful attitude.
 - e. Both have God as the object of worship.
2. The differences are important:
 - a. Colossians exhorts that Christ's word should be in each person.
 - b. Colossians speaks of wisdom.
 - c. Ephesians has participants speaking to each other.
 - d. Colossians sharpens this definition, *teaching and admonishing one another*.
 - e. Ephesians has an interesting contrast with drunkenness (18).
 - f. Colossians has a very interesting link with daily life (17).
3. These two passages also regulate other practices:
 - a. Singing is not entertainment, but teaching one another and worship of God.
 - b. Singing is mutual, not a chorus or group.
 - c. Types of songs are prescribed.

Appendix 6

MELODY IN THE HEART

I. THE BASIC ISSUE IS RESPECT FOR GOD'S WORD.

- A. Christ respected Scripture **Matthew 4:1-11**.
1. He accepted a body of written material as authority – *it is written*.
 2. He demanded right interpretation – *it is also written*.
 3. He applied principles originally written for others – for Israel in the wilderness.
 4. He submitted His own will and needs to the written word.
- B. Paul respected Scripture **2 Timothy 3:15-4:4**.
1. Scripture produces wisdom that brings salvation 3:15.
 2. Scripture comes from God 3:16a.
 3. Scripture teaches 3:16b.
 4. Scripture produces good in man 3:17.
 5. People easily turn from Scripture to personal desires 4:1-4.
 6. (Paul's teachings and writings were "the word of God" 1 Thessalonians 2:13).
- C. Peter respected Scripture.
1. Scripture is enduring **1 Peter 1:24-25**.
 2. Man must desire God's Word **1 Peter 2:2a**.
 3. By the Word man grows into salvation **1 Peter 2:2b**.
 4. Scripture comes from God, not from man **2 Peter 1:19-21**.
 5. Scripture can be changed and distorted by man **2 Peter 3:16**.

II. GOD REGULATES WORSHIP **John 4:20-24**.

- A. Man may have traditions concerning worship.
1. Samaritans had the tradition of worship in the mountain.
 2. Jews had the tradition of worship in Jerusalem.
 3. Jesus said these traditions were not important.
 4. Our defense of singing is not based on tradition; "That is what churches of Christ have always done."
- B. God wants worshipers to honor His direction
1. Spirit = connect mind with what one does
 2. Truth = follow God's direction – ". . . worshiping in *spirit and truth* can only mean a. rendering such homage to God that the entire heart enters into the act, and b. doing this in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in his word."
William Hendriksen

III. GOD ASKS FOR SINGING, MELODY IN THE HEART.

- A. There are two very similar New Testament passages:
speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19).
Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Colossians 3:16).

1. Both have a mutual activity.
 2. Both have singing.
 3. Both speak of three types of songs.
 4. Both require a thankful attitude.
 5. Both have God as the object of worship.
- B. The differences are important.
1. Colossians exhorts that Christ's word should be in each person.
 2. Colossians speaks of wisdom.
 3. Ephesians has participants speaking to each other.
 4. Colossians sharpens this definition into *teaching and admonishing one another*.
 5. Ephesians has an interesting contrast with drunkenness (18).
 6. Colossians has a very interesting link with daily life (17).
- C. Observations:
1. Singing is mentioned in seven other places in the New Testament (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13).
 2. Silence must be respected.
 - a. A specific command rules out all other alternatives.
 - i. God gave Noah a specific command to use *gopher wood* (Genesis 6:14); the use of any other wood would have been disobedience.
 - ii. God gave a general command to *make the ark with rooms* – Noah was free to use his own wisdom about size, number and arrangement.
 - b. This principle is clearly seen in Hebrews 7:14, *For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*
 3. These two passages also regulate other practices:
 - a. Singing is not entertainment, but teaching.
 - b. Singing is mutual, not a chorus or group.
 - c. Types of songs are prescribed.

IV. GOD IS DISPLEASED WITH FALSE WORSHIP (DISOBEDIENCE).

- A. There are many examples of worship that displeased God; two examples illustrate.
1. The second recorded problem between God and man centered on pleasing and displeasing God in worship – the case of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-12).
 2. Another story shows an importance of even small details in worship to God: *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored'"* (Leviticus 10:1-3).
- B. Old Testament actions are warnings to us
- Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved* (1 Corinthians 10:6).

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:11).
Three times in Hebrews (2:1-4; 10:28-31; 12:25) God's attitude toward disobedience in the Old Testament is used as a warning to Christians.

V. ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

- A. Singing praises God with the instrument He made; musical instruments are made by man.
- B. Singing comes from the heart, with no other concerns to interfere; instrumental music diverts attention to other things.
- C. For centuries the church did not use instrumental music.
- D. The question is not, "Do people enjoy instruments?" or "Can we have bigger crowds with instruments?" The question is very simply: "WHAT DOES GOD WANT?"
- E. We can always improve our singing, but singing is not improved by instruments.

Appendix 7

ARGUMENTS FOR USING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP TO GOD WITH A BRIEF EVALUATION

All the arguments for the use of instrumental music in worship to God are “quick answers” that are designed to silence further discussion. They may contain a small amount of truth and thus are difficult to refute. They do not directly address the subject; they may contain false information; and they do not stand up to careful biblical study.

IT IS MAJESTIC AND BEAUTIFUL

There is no argument; almost all people love various forms of instrumental music. The question is not “What do **we** like in worship?” but “What does **God** want?”

IT IS NOT A “SALVATION ISSUE” – NOT A “CORE ISSUE”

The argument is that instrumental music is really unimportant as compared to the teachings about salvation (first principles, plan of salvation) – Christ might even be quoted to support this idea: “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others*” (Matthew 23:23).

However, it is an “obedience issue” and disobedience is dangerous (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48; Romans 6:16-18; Hebrews 2:1-4; 5:8-9).

It is a question of respect for Scripture; does Scripture mean what it says?

THE BIBLE DOESN'T CONDEMN IT

The New Testament doesn't authorize it.

Positive commands rule out any human additions:

This principle is very clear in Hebrews 7:14 – *For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*

It is also clear in an Old Testament example: *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them* (Leviticus 10:1).

DAVID (THE OLD TESTAMENT) USED IT

This argument would also have to demand an altar for animal sacrifice to be introduced into Christian worship – *Then Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD also began with the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David, king of Israel. While the whole assembly worshiped, the singers also sang and the trumpets sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished* (2 Chronicles 29:20-29).

The New Testament teaches against the use of Old Testament practices: *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace* (Galatians 5:4; the book of Hebrews is based on this principle).

THERE ARE HARPS IN HEAVEN (Revelation 14:2; 15:2)

There are also a street of gold, God's throne, angels, souls of dead saints, various beasts, etc., but these are not a part of Christian worship on earth.

IT IS AN AID

Definition of aid: To give help or assistance.

Instrumental music is not an aid; it is an addition, and often it is a hindrance.

The use of pitch pipes and tuning forks and song books are often connected with this argument – we use those things as aids; why not use instruments?

Pitch pipes and tuning forks produce only one tone at a time and the song leader gets the pitch from them – **THEY DO NOT ACCOMPANY SINGING OR TAKE THE PLACE OF SINGING.**

It is impossible to produce music, defined as, “elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and dynamics,” with a pitch pipe.

THE WORD “PSALLO” AT LEAST ALLOWS IT, MAYBE DEMANDS IT

This argument is difficult because it sounds “scholarly” and the average person is simply not equipped to deal with language and the meaning of the Greek word.

This word did develop through stages and many years before the New Testament it included “plucking strings,” but it clearly meant only *sing* in New Testament times.

The answer can be kept on a very simple level: all reliable translations render this Greek word as *sing* in English.

In the New Testament the *melody* is *in the heart*, not on an instrument.

IT IS AN EVANGELISTIC TOOL; WE COULD REACH MORE PEOPLE IF WE USED IT

Very simply, churches that have introduced instrumental music have caused division and people have been driven away by its introduction.

The preaching of the gospel of Christ is the only valid evangelistic tool – changing a message or practice to meet the desires of people is wrong (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

The people who are attracted by instruments bring their human appetites with them and have not sacrificed their own wills to the will of God – this creates additional problems.

IT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO USE THEIR GOD-GIVEN TALENTS

The argument is that a musician can use his talents in the worship assembly.

Must we add something to worship to use the talents of a lawyer, a doctor, a carpenter, a space scientist, etc., etc.?

A Unitarian church justified a striptease dance in a service using this very argument.

Christians submit themselves to God's will (Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).