

# ***Teaching Sound Doctrine***

## **The Worship of the Lord's Church as God Would Have It Part 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When God created man (Gen. 1), He placed within man certain needs. We immediately recognize the need for air, water, and food. There are other needs that are often overlooked: love, community, purpose or direction in life, creativity (putting something back into the world), etc. Among those needs is the need to worship. God created man with a worshiping nature. As such, we observe man worshiping God from the very beginning. We also notice that some worship was pleasing to God and some was not respected by Him.

Cain and Abel offered sacrifices unto God (offering worship to Him). God had respect to Abel's offering but not Cain's (Gen. 4:1-5). As God reveals to the Israelites His Law, He reveals how to properly worship Him. God also reveals that if they worship idols or graven images their worship would be sin. Jesus said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mat. 4:10). Therefore, we **must** learn what worship pleases God so we may be accepted and not rejected of Him.

### **TYPES OF WORSHIP**

The Jews of Jesus day were transgressing God's commands by substituting their traditions for the Word of God. Jesus informed them: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:9). By teaching man's will instead of God's Word their worship was valueless, worthless, or fruitless. Here is a worship which had no value with God.

When Paul was in Athens, he saw the city completely given over to idolatry. They had built altars to every god they could image. Fearful they might have left one out and thus to appease him, they built one to the unknown god. As Paul sees this, he declares, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23). They were worshiping, but they were not worshiping the only true God. They needed to be instructed concerning Him, which Paul undertook to do. This ignorant worship was not, and is not, acceptable to God.

Paul mentions another type of worship in writing to the Colossian brethren. "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Col. 2:23). This is worship which one chooses to do for himself. It is a worship which

one devises and prescribes for himself, worshiping in a way which pleases self and not God. This worship is generally contrary to that revealed within the pages of God's revealed Word, and is, thus, not acceptable to Him.

While the preceding types of worship are rejected by God, Jesus discusses the type of worship which is pleasing and acceptable to Him. The Samaritan woman perceived that Jesus was a prophet, so she asked him about the place of worship.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24).

Jesus establishes three great truths concerning acceptable worship today. He also indicates that there would be a change in our worship; Jesus knew that He was ushering in a New Covenant and we would no longer be under the Old.

### TRUE WORSHIP

Our worship, to be valid in God's sight, **must** meet these three requirements. Our worship must be directed to the Father. As God spoke to the Israelites, He began the Ten Commandments by saying,

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me (Ex. 20:3-5).

God was teaching them that He was the proper object of worship. As Jesus was tempted by Satan, Satan tried to get Him to "fall down and worship me" (Mat. 4:9). "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mat. 4:10). Anytime anyone changes the object of our worship, he commits sin and makes that worship an abomination.

Second, our worship **must** be *in spirit*. We must possess the proper attitude in our worship to God. Often the prophets of old condemned the Israelites because they went through the proper motions of worship but they did not have their heart involved in it. They had the externals of God's religion but not the internal. So, today we must possess the proper internal attitude of the heart for our worship to be pleasing to God. It is my humble opinion that we have a great deal of difficulty in this respect today. We come to services to worship God but allow mundane things to creep into our minds choking out spiritual matters.

We, thus, sing songs without ever thinking about what we are saying. We pray, often using the same expressions without giving it any thought, so it is no longer from our heart. Many never hear the sermon because they are talking, taking a nap, passing notes, making faces at the baby that is close by, etc. When we partake of the Supper of our Lord, we fail to remember the sacrifice He made and allow our minds to wander from the memorial service. We like the Jews of old are going through the externals of our religious service, but without the proper spirit.

Third, our worship **must** be *in truth*. Jesus, in His high priestly prayer recorded by John, prayed: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Thus, when Jesus speaks of our worship being in truth, He has reference to it being according to the Word of God—the Bible. God has authorized certain acts by which we can worship Him today. Realizing, as mentioned previously, we are under the New Testament, those actions God commanded under the Old are no longer authorized. Today, we must look to the New Testament for our authorization. God has authorized for our worship today: singing, prayer, the contribution, Lord’s Supper, and the preaching. To deviate from that which God has prescribed (as did the Jews in Mat. 15) makes our worship vain. The remaining portion of these lessons will be dealing with that which God has authorized in our worship to Him.