

and humbly applies himself to obeying it, he has neither time nor inclination to seek out various inventions, substitutions, attractions, entertainments and organizations.

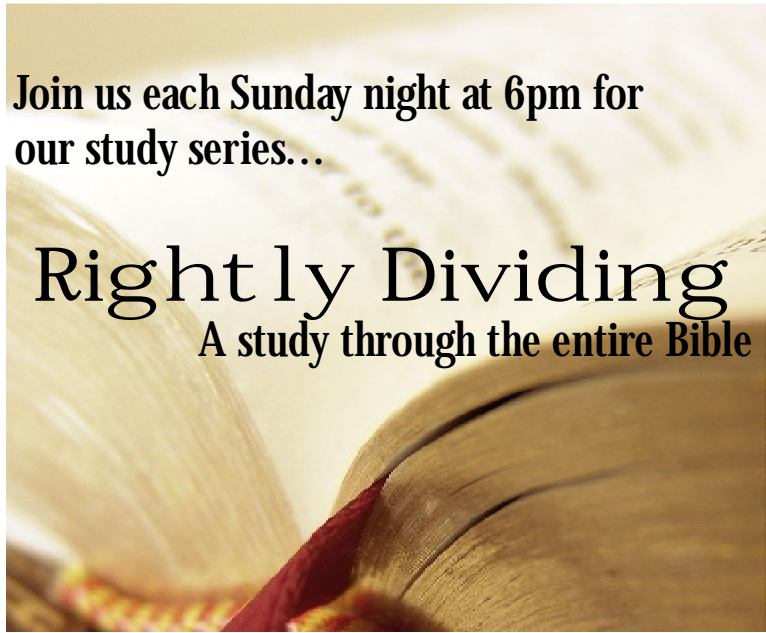
As the inspired apostle Paul wrote: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

Clem Thurman in Gospel Minutes, Vol. 57, No. 24, June 13, 2008.

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Rightly Dividing

A study through the entire Bible



NAVARRE MESSENGER

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Worship In Spirit and In Truth

"The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshiper. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jno. 4:19-24).



Jacob's Well in Sychar (c. 1900-1920)

Thus one church will add mechanical instruments of music, or various kinds of special attractions, or any other trap-pings desired to "get a crowd." It should be noted in the conversation above that Jesus contrasts both the ignorant worship of the Samaritans in their mountain and the nationalistic worship of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem with that of the new worship in His kingdom.

Both of the former were exclusive, while the latter is universal in scope, excluding no one who will worship "in spirit and in truth." Let us examine the various items suggested by the Lord and compare with other Scriptures.

The Right Object Of Worship, God: When Jesus was tempted by the devil to fall down and worship Satan, with the promise that all the kingdoms of the world would then be His, Jesus replied: "Get thee hence, Satan:

that it doesn't matter how we worship God, "if our heart is right before Him." It is sometimes argued that worship itself is simply a matter of living according to the principles laid down in the Scripture, that there is not a divine "pattern" for the public worship of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence (the argument goes), the church is left to choose for itself what it desires in the public worship.

This conversation which Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well forever shows the fallacy which many believe

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for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). The word, "worship" is defined: "Acts of rituals or ceremonies of reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God" (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary). Many seem to think that worship is an attitude of mind, but it is not. Worship is that which is done, it involves action on the part of the worshiper to devotion and loyalty to the object of worship. And, as Jesus said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

No one on earth is worthy of our reverence and devotion as is God. He is the Creator of the universe (Gen. 1:1) and we are made in His image (Gen. 1:26). God is our Father (Matt. 6:9) and our Savior (1 Tim. 2:3,4). He is omniscient, knowing all things: "And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). But God, knowing that we all were sinners, loved us anyway: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jno. 3:16). Yes, God is worthy of our worship.

The Right Authority For Our Worship: In the conversation recorded with the woman in Jno. 4, she acknowledged: "I know that Messiah cometh (He that is called Christ): when He is come, He will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am

He" (Jno. 4:25,26). Jesus thus acknowledged that no other authority was needed for true worship, but "the Messiah" -- and He admitted that was He. And He is still our authority for all things: "All authority hath been given unto Me, both in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Or, as the apostle Paul wrote it, "Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 3:17).

When Thomas questioned the Lord about "the way" they should go, Jesus replied: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one cometh unto the Father but by Me" (Jno. 14:6). And the Scripture says, "He that believeth on the Son shall have eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jno. 3:36). Because Jesus Christ has "All authority" (Matt. 28:18), we must look to Him for our authority for New Testament worship. If Jesus is not the Author of our worship, it is not authorized. If He is the Author of our worship, we can read it in His Word. It is that simple.

The Right Worshipers, Those Who Obey: This point may seem surprising at your first glance, but it is important and holds a rightful place in this discussion. Jesus says, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshiper" (Jno. 4:23). When Jesus had healed the blind man (Jno. 9), the healed man was criticized by the Pharisees for associating with "sinners." But the man replied, "We know

that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and do His Will, him He heareth" (Jno. 9:31).

The leaders of the Jews knew this to be true, for it was clearly taught in the Old Testament. But note what was involved in being a true worshiper: "Be a worshiper of God, and do His Will." Again, Jesus emphasizes "truth" as He talks about a "true worshiper." The chief point is that one must do God's Will in order to be a true worshiper, and His Will is expressed in His inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Obedience to that word is absolutely necessary if we would worship "in spirit and in truth." For Jesus prayed to God, the Father, for the apostles: "Sanctify them with Thy truth, Thy word is truth." (Jno. 17:17).

The Right Motive Of Worship -- In Spirit: -- Jesus named the right motive for worship, "In spirit." God never intended that people go through formalities of empty ritualism. Even under the Law of Moses, when Israel worshiped according to God's revealed Will, the mere empty observance of the rites and ceremonies was not God's purpose for their worship. As Jesus is pointing out, true worshipers must worship from the heart. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5,6,7) describes what the worshiper should be. The apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

The Right Acts Of Worship In

Truth: It seems odd, when we consider how God showed Israel how to worship, that under the New Testament the same God would throw out all the rules and allow man to worship in any way he pleases. Yet that is exactly what many folk insist on as their "right." If our worship is to be "in truth" -- and it is (Jno. 4:24) -- then it must be according to God's Word, for Jesus prayed to the Father, "Thy Word is truth" (Jno. 17:17). And, as noted in the very definition of the word, worship is "acts" of reverence and adoration. Worship is not something we simply feel, but something we do.

In the early church, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, Christians "came together on the first day of the week to break bread" (Acts 20:7). The apostle Paul writes of this Lord's Supper, also: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we are all partakers of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16,17). When Jesus first gave the Supper to the disciples (Matt. 26:26-28), He used the unleavened bread (of the Passover) and fruit of the vine, and He said: "This is My body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24,25).

Prayer is another part of the

public worship when Christians assemble. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). Instructions given in 1 Tim. 2:1-12 on the matter of prayer was primarily in regard to the assembly at worship. The fact that there are abundant instructions on private prayers does not remove prayer from the church assembly.

Public preaching and teaching constitute another act of worship. The Lord Himself made a difference between private and public teaching and preaching. For instance, He forbade women from publicly preaching and teaching (1 Cor. 14:33-36; 1 Tim. 2:12-15) while giving men the right to do so. Some seem to feel that anything we can do in our homes, or private lives, we can do in the worship assembly. But this is manifestly absurd, as noted above.

The contribution also takes its place among the acts of worship of the church. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1,2). Some say that the giving is a private matter, and in a sense it is. But this Scripture speaks of "the collection" and that necessitates the funds being gathered into one sum. This collection obviously was made when the church was come together "on the first day of the week" (Acts

20:7).

The singing of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" is also an act of worship. Notice: "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). That such singing is worship is clear, for it is "to the Lord." And there is no ambiguity about the "instrument" with which we "make melody." It is the heart. That this admonition was for the church assembly is manifest, in that our singing is to be "speaking one to another." That requires an assembly of people. And this letter was addressed to "the saints that are at Ephesus" (Eph. 1:1), so this was a matter for the church to obey. And just as we are not allowed, by God, to invent our own ways of worship, so we cannot invent our own ways to "make melody" by using mechanical instruments of music.

Once one admits that the early church was given definite instructions by the inspired apostles for worship in the public assemblies of the church, the objections to the requirements of that worship disappear from honest and believing hearts. It is not ours to question the wisdom of God in designing public worship, what and why it is, and how it shall be conducted, but to offer Him our praise and adoration in humble obedience to His revealed Will. And those who argue with what the Scriptures teach about our worship do not argue with us, but with God! When one is completely satisfied with the will of God