

**Re-digging the Wells of Abraham:
What We Do In Our Worship
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Introduction: We need to examine the wells of Abraham in determining our worship. Are we worshipping as God wants us to, or are we following "Church of Christ tradition"?

I. Attitude of Reverence for Authority:

- A. As in everything pertaining to God, and to the worship of God, there are basically:
 - 1. Those who believe that they can worship God absolutely any way they want to, and,
 - 2. Those who believe they must worship God only as He directs.
- B. The problem is that there is almost every shade and degree of practice between these two ends of the spectrum.
- C. Thus there are people who claim to want to worship God as He directs, but who in fact worship Him as they choose instead of as He chooses.
- D. I believe that the only true dividing line between the two basic positions on what we do in worship is what God has said in His word.
- E. If we reject that word, then we are in the group that will worship God however we want to, varying in what we do, and how far we go, purely determined by personal inclination.
- F. The entire message of the Old Testament is that God does not tolerate such behavior.
- G. This leaves us with the position that we must worship as God has directed in His word.

II. The five acts of worship:

- A. Brethren who have strongly affirmed such an attitude have often stated that there are five acts of worship: the Lord's Supper, Singing, Praying, Preaching, and Giving.
- B. Others have sought to ridicule the "five acts of worship," pointing out that there is also public Bible Reading.
- C. Nevertheless, both in the observance of the Lord's Supper and in preaching, Bible reading is an integral part of these activities, and is not meant to be excluded merely because it is not mentioned specifically.
- D. Not all of these activities are engaged in at all assemblies.
 - 1. The two activities related to specific days are the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) and giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
 - 2. The other activities are not limited to specific assembly.
 - 3. It is interesting that in the same letter all of these activities are mentioned:
 - a. Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11: 17-34).

- b. Singing (1 Cor.14:15).
 - c. Praying (1 Cor. 14:16-17).
 - d. Preaching (1 Cor. 14:4, 19, 26).
 - e. Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
- E. Though there is a sense in which everything we do as a Christian is service to God (Rom. 12:1-2), there is also a sense in which we move from non-worship activities to worship activities.
1. Solomon said, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil" (Eccl. 5:1).
 2. The Psalmist said, "I was glad then they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah" (Ps. 122:1).
 3. The whole Bible recognizes a difference between officially or formally worshiping God and serving God with one's life.
- F. There are some acts of worship that involve much more of a consciousness of I and Thou than others.
- G. Particularly true is this of Praying and Singing.
- H. Nevertheless, even with such actions as preaching and giving, the presence of God should never be far from our minds, even if we are not specifically addressing a thought to God.
- I. When all is said and done, no one cannot come up with another activity of worship authorized in scripture, but one of these five.

III. The Lord's Supper.

- A. Mosheim makes this comment: "All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship" (1:35).
- B. Scholars differ over whether the Lord's Supper was confined to a first day observance, or whether it was observed on other days as well.
- C. The fact is that our practice in the matter cannot rely on what the Christians did soon after the apostolic era.
- D. We cannot go by what Christians did when not acting under apostolic guidance.
- E. What we do know is that the Lord said to observe the Supper:
 1. "This do ye in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).
 2. He also said to eat the bread and to drink the cup (Matt. 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23).
- F. The only elements in the Lord's Supper were unleavened bread and grape juice.
 1. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, these are the only elements involved in the Lord's Supper.
- G. Time and frequency.
 1. In Acts 20:7 the disciples were gathered together to

- break bread.
- a. If we take the term "break bread" to mean to eat a common meal, it would not fit the circumstances.
 - b. Presumably the disciples ate common meals many times each week.
 - c. This "common meal" would have been in order to bring the brethren together to hear the apostle Paul preach, but then the verse would have read something like, "Upon the first day of the week, we met for a meal to hear Paul preach."
 - d. The most important thing therefore would have been the speaking of Paul.
 - e. But if all Paul needed was for the brethren to meet for a common meal, there would certainly have been no need to wait seven days, when he was already in a hurry to get to Jerusalem (20:16).
 - f. Also the idea that runners could be sent out to round up everyone for an unscheduled meeting so that they could hear Paul preach is far-fetched and simply not in the text.
 - g. It was, after all, the first day of the week.
 - (1) About that day, Philip Schaff says, "The universal and uncontradicted Sunday observance in the second century can only be explained by the fact that it had its roots in apostolic practice" (1:221).
2. Therefore, the fact is that the brethren came together, when they regularly came together, for a purpose that they regularly had, and on this occasion Paul was there and preached to them.
 3. It wasn't that Paul got there and had them meet.
 4. They were already meeting, and he participated; nor did he try to change what they were doing.
 5. Therefore we have positive apostolic authority for observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.
 6. But there is no Bible authority to do it on any other day.
 7. The evidence is that this was a set meeting.
 - a. It was on the Lord's Day as was the meeting implied in 1 Cor. 16.
 - b. Regular meetings to partake the Lord's Supper are implied in 1 Cor. 11:20.
 8. Many try to attach a common meal with the Lord's Supper.
 - a. Again, various historians point to such a practice, but they point out that such a situation was fraught with opportunities for abuse, and the practice died a natural death.
 - b. Paul taught the Corinthians not to associate a common meal with the Lord's Supper, but to do their eating at home.
 - c. The Lord's Supper was not instituted as a common meal.

- d. It was commanded as a memorial involving merely two of the elements present in the last Passover.
- H. We observe the same Lord's Supper, in the same way, and on the same day as the New Testament church did with the approval and participation of the apostle Paul.

IV. Preaching.

- A. We have spoken extensively on the subject of preaching, from Old Testament to the preaching of Jesus, to the day of Pentecost, to the other sermons recorded in the book of Acts, to the instructions of Paul to Timothy and many other examples.
- B. Some like to pick at the fact that when we worship, we are preaching to those who are already Christians.
 - 1. Paul instructions to Timothy illustrate that preaching is for Christians as well (1 Tim. 1-3; 4:6, 11-16; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1-5).
 - 2. There is the case of Paul's preaching at Troas (Acts 20).
 - 3. The instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 include a lot of preaching, whether in the form of interpreted tongue-speaking or prophesying to edify the church.
 - 4. Any church that minimizes preaching will not remain faithful long.
 - 5. We need to resist the tendency to reduce sermons to a soothing lozenge.

V. Music.

- A. Music does not mean instrumental music or vocal music. It is just music.
- B. Therefore it is in no way correct to say that merely because one opposes the use of the instrument in worship that he opposes music, or to charge a church that does not use the instrument with not having music.
- C. On what basis shall we decide this issue?
 - 1. What I like, or what sounds good to me?
 - 2. I can't sing, but I can play.
 - 3. God doesn't care.
 - a. Why would one say He does not care?
 - b. Is it because He said absolutely nothing about using the instrument in the worship of the church?
 - c. May we assume that since He hasn't said to use a Rosary in praying that He doesn't care?
 - 4. Even when one uses the instrument, he is still singing.
 - a. The same argument might be made of observing the Lord's Supper.
 - b. We could eat steak and chicken fingers with it, and we would still be taking the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.
 - c. Or we could argue that the polygamist is all right, since he has one wife; he just does not have only one

wife.

- d. Or we could pray to Zeus and Baal along with God, because we would still be praying to God.
 5. What does God say about the matter? (Col. 3:17).
 6. Only one of these bases is worthy of consideration, and that is, "What does God say?"
- D. There is an abrupt change from the Old Testament to the New Testament on this subject.
1. In the Old Testament instruments of worship were used in worship, and I believe they were used with God's approval (Psalms 149, 150).
 2. Instruments were not used in the synagogues before and after the time of Christ.
 3. They were also not used in the early church for six hundred years.
- E. What does the New Testament say about music?
1. We must carefully distinguish between music *in worship* and other uses of music. The New Testament does not address the subject of popular music except as such music would involve such principles as immorality, irreverence, railing, etc.
 2. The only kind of music practiced by Jesus and the saints of the New Testament is singing.
 3. According to Young's Analytical Concordance, there are three words translated *sing*: *ado*, *psallo*, *humneo*.
 - a. *Ado* - (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3).
 - b. *Humneo* - (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Heb. 2:12).
 - c. *Psallo* - (Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; James 5:13; translated *making melody* in Eph. 5:19).
 4. It has been argued that *Psallo* means to sing with an instrument.
 - a. If *Psallo* means to sing with an instrument, then it would have to be done with an instrument, not without one.
 - b. If *Psallo* means to sing with an instrument, then one would expect to find examples and commands abounding.
 - c. Instead, not one major translation renders any of these words "play" or "sing with an instrument."
 5. The word *Psalm* is related to *Psallo*. On the use of the term *psalm*:
 - a. A psalm could be read, quoted, and expounded (Lk. 24:44-45; Rom. 3:9-18). P. 58.
 - b. Most of the references to psalms in the New Testament are to a section of the Old Testament.
 - c. Examples:
 - (1) David saith, not playeth in the book of Psalms (Lk. 20:42).
 - (2) Written in the psalms (Lk. 24:44; Acts 13:33; Ps. 2:7).

- d. Regarding the question whether the use of an instrument inheres in the word *psalm*:
- (1) First, if the use of an instrument inheres in the word, then the psalm could not be sung without an instrument without leaving off what inheres in the word.
 - (2) The Jewish synagogue in Jesus' day read and sang psalms without instrumental accompaniment.
 - (3) Words change their meaning over time.
 - (4) The word lyric first meant of or for a lyre, a song sung to the accompaniment of a lyre, and then poetry delineating the poet's own thoughts and feelings, as opposed to epic or dramatic poetry, which details external circumstances and events (*The Century Dictionary*, 3555).
 - (5) Charles Hodge, in his commentary on Ephesians, sketched the history of the word psalm.
 - (a) A song designed to be sung with the accompaniment of instrumental music.
 - (b) Sacred poems in the book of Psalms (Acts 13:33).
 - (c) Any sacred poem similar to those in Psalms (1 Cor. 14:26), a song given by inspiration; not one of David's (p. 304).
 - (d) He also pointed out that psalms and hymns were religious, and a song was either secular or religious, thus Paul specified spiritual songs.
- e. Much the same thing happened to the Greek word *Psallo*.
- (1) In the classical period, it meant to sing with the accompaniment of an instrument.
 - (2) By the New Testament it meant "sing."

VI. Praying.

- A. Surely we would not have to prove the suitability of prayer as worship to God.
- B. Prayer being led is certainly scriptural (1 Cor. 14:16).
- C. Men are to pray in every place (1 Tim. 2:8); women are to keep silent (1 Tim. 2:9-15).
- D. Everything is to be done decently and in order.
- E. Avoid seeking to mimic charismatic gifts.

VII. Giving.

- A. Is it scriptural for the money of the saints to be placed in a common treasury?
 1. Jesus and His apostles did it (John 12:6; 13:29).
 2. The early disciples did it (Acts 4:32-35; 4:36-37; 5:2).
 3. The money from Antioch was sent to "the elders" (Acts 11:30). This meant that the money was delivered in lump sums to the elders of the individual churches to distribute as they saw fit. Thus it was put into a lump

sum by the people of Antioch, and the elders of each congregation to which money was given had a lump sum to work with.

B. Is it scriptural for the money of the saints to be given on a regular basis each Lord's Day? The answer is clearly,

"Yes."

1. The early church was commanded to do it (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

2. We might make the point that the giving of 1 Cor. 16 is not an "act of worship" comparable to singing, praying, teaching, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, because these things were done from the beginning, but the implication in 1 Corinthians 16 is that such giving was not done until Paul commanded them to do it.

3. But is one's point to discourage giving?

C. The pattern of giving includes two aspects: meeting emergency needs, and meeting planned needs.

1. In the early days of the church, when there was an emergency, there is no evidence that everyone waited until the Lord's day, nor even that it was done at a full assembly of the church (Acts 4:36-37; 5:1-2; 5:7).

2. On the other hand, when there was time to plan for needs, the way provided in scripture to do it was to lay it up week by week (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

a. It is interesting that Corinth had begun a year before, but now Paul was encouraging them to finish the work. It seems to me that the proper conclusion is that they may have been rather hit or miss about giving during that year with the result that the money was not yet together. Now Paul commands them, as he did the Galatians, to lay up their money each week upon the first day of the week.

b. Paul was not telling them what day of the week to put their money up in the sock or the jar they were keeping it in at home. The point was that no collection or gathering would have to be made when he came.

D. The things the church is authorized to do require it.

1. Not only in meeting planned needs such as we read of in connection with the poor saints in Jerusalem.

2. But think also of the implications of Paul's points regarding the support of the preaching of the gospel, especially in 1 Corinthians 9.

a. He argues the right of one who labors in the gospel to be supported on the basis of

- (1) A soldier
- (2) A farmer
- (3) A shepherd
- (4) An ox
- (5) A priest.

b. The farmer reaps and stores up. He therefore eats fresh

produce during harvest and of his stored goods during the rest of the year. The shepherd eats all during the year of the produce from his cattle or sheep. The soldier is supported by his king or master during the time he is fighting for him. The ox eats the grain while he treads it.

- c. The priest furnishes an interesting analogy. The sacrifices were offered on a regular, ongoing basis. He gained his support from the sacrifices. If those sacrifices were not offered, he was not able to serve. In Nehemiah's day the portions of the Levites had not been given, so they had fled everyone to his own field (Neh. 13:10). What did Nehemiah do? He commanded that the offerings be brought again, and "then brought all Judah the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries" (Neh. 13:12). Note he also appointed keepers over the treasuries...and their business was "to distribute unto their brethren."
- d. For the church to be able to support a man on a regular basis, there must be some form of regular income.

VIII. The bigger question may be: Is it scriptural for a church to be so dead it has nothing it needs to spend money on?

- A. Sometimes when there appears to be no need, it is because we have our eyes closed and are not wanting to meet any needs.
- B. Now some might say, what if the church has so much money laid up it does not need any more.
 - 1. A church the size of Eastside has many expenditures, and it requires a larger balance kept in the bank than would otherwise be the case.
 - 2. The money must be spent responsibly and accountably before the Lord.
- C. But when an amount of funds is kept far greater than is needed, sometimes the question needs to be asked, "Why is the money laid up instead of used up?"
- D. A church needs to be busy and active so that work is being done, and the Lord's money is being spent.
- E. Is it that there is no need, or is it that we are following an agenda of change for change's sake?

IX. Therefore, it is right for the church to take up a regular contribution and put it into a common treasury, and when a church does not do this, it will almost invariably be small and not doing much work.