

Worshipping

God's

Way

By Buddy J. Duncan

INTRODUCTION

There is an old saying, “There is the right way, a wrong way and the Army’s way. In this book we will only be concerned with God’s way of worshipping Him. As Christians we should certainly want to worship God in a manner that is acceptable to Jehovah God.

Certainly we are aware that there are many different ways that God is being worshiped today; are they all pleasing to God? I have serious doubts that God is pleased with some of the practices that are being performed in so called “worship services” today.

Since He has informed us as to how we are to worship Him in these last days don’t you think that we should worship God as He has specified?

There are five different acts of worship that God has authorized us to do each and every time we are assembled together on the “first day of the week”. These are the items we will be concerned with!

In this writing we will be looking at the different function of worshipping and we will do so by going directly to the Word of God, giving Book, Chapter and Verse for each act of worship. But let us establish when we should worship first.

First Day of the Week

Under the Law that God gave to Moses and then Moses passed it down to the children of Israel their day of rest and worship was on the Sabbath [I.e. the seventh day of the week]. You will find a minority still worshipping on the Sabbath today; personally I am afraid to worship on the seventh day of the week because that would mean I would still be trying to keep the Old Law and the Old Law has been abolished, Jesus nail it to the cross he was forced to bear: *(Colossians 2:14) “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”* If I held to worship on the Sabbath I would be afraid of becoming an enemy to the cross of Jesus: *(Philippians 3:18) “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:”* Perhaps you may think I am taking this verse out of context; allow me to ask you this, “If you anything contrary to what the Bible says aren’t you becoming enemies of Jesus”? Another danger of attempting to live by the Old Law is if we don’t keep just one of the Laws we become guilty of all: *(James 2:10) “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”* I wonder how many who keep the Sabbath travel more than a Sabbath day’s journey to worship, can’t

we see the danger in becoming an enemy of Jesus' cross by worshiping on the seventh day of the week?

I choose to follow the example of the apostles and the early Christians; they came together on "the first day of the week": (*Acts 20:7*) "*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*" Here we find that not only did the early Christians come together on "the first day of the week" but the apostle Paul chose "the first day of the week" to preach to them. We need to consider why they met on "the first day of the week"! Might it be because it was on "the first day of the week that Christ arose from the grave? It was very early in the morning on "the first day of the week" that the disciple of Jesus found his grave empty: (*Luke 24:1*) "*Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.*" Another good point to remember is that the church was established on "the first day of the week". Acts chapter two starts out with what transpired on the day of Pentecost: (*Acts 2:1*) "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*" The very first mention of the church being established can also be found in the same chapter and on the same day: (*Acts 2:47*) "*Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" If you are thinking this does not prove anything let me remind you that the word "Pentecost" means fifty and it always came fifty days after the Passover feast, [the Passover always came on a Sabbath] which means that Pentecost coming fifty days later would be on "the first day of the week." The church could have been established on any day of the week but God chose the "first day of the week" in honor to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Personally I prefer to follow the example of the apostles and the early Christians, furthermore, I prefer to worship on the day that the church was established and also by doing this I am honoring Jesus Christ!

Now let's consider how we are to Worship.

DECENT AND ORDERLY

The very first thing that we need to establish is that our worship must be in a decent and orderly fashion: (*1 Corinthians 14:40*) "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" Paul was writing this instruction to the Corinthians because there was a lot of confusion in their worshiping God, this was during a period of time that miracles were being performed by those who had received the Holy Spirit. Now some were given the gift of speaking in tongues and a result there was con-

fusion in their worship service because more than one was speaking in tongues at the same time and no one could understand what was being said. This created mass confusion and God could not properly be worshiped.

When I am worshiping God I like to hear one person at a time to be speaking so I can understand what is being done and what the speaker is saying. If there is one speaker and others are listening that would mean that no one is shouting out arguments against what is being said. There is a time and place for that. This is what I call “decent and in order”.

Who should worship God will be our next consideration.

WHO SHOULD WORSHIP

I make no hesitation in stating that everyone should worship God. Going all the way back to Abraham you will find him building an altar and worshipping God every place he stopped in his travels. In the book of Psalms we are told that everyone should worship God: *(Psalms 22:27) “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.”* The Psalmist even went so far to say that “all nations” are to worship God: *(Psalms 86:9) “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.”* In the New Testament we read of a man who was an Ethiopian eunuch who went to Jerusalem to worship God: *(Acts 8:27) “And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,”* Finally in the book of Revelation we read that all “shall worship”: *(Revelation 13:8) “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* If you want to keep the commandments of God you will certainly worship God!

Next we should consider the different kinds of worship found in the Bible.

FALSE WORSHIP

There was and still remains those who worship God falsely. Take for instance those who worship willfully: *(Colossians 2:22-23) “Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? (23) Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”* These would be those who worship as they please or worship according to the doctrines of men and do not follow the commandments of God. Some even go so far as to worship devils:

(Revelation 9:20) "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:" If these had to be warned not to worship devils don't you think they were guilty of what they were warned? Our worship is to be directed toward God!

Jesus spoke of "vain worship": *(Matthew 15:9) "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* If we but look around us we can see the evidence of the teachings of the "doctrines of men"; we need to warn those who are teaching the doctrines of men that their worship is declared vain by Christ! Do you recall what Paul discovered at Mar's hill? He found them to be worshiping people but they did not even know who they were worshiping; *(Acts 17:22-23) "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. (23) 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."* This also Jesus would declare to be "vain worship." We are to worship no other god: *(Exodus 34:14) "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: (Psalms 81:9) "There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god."* Satan wanted Jesus to worship; but Jesus refused by quoting from the Word of God: *(Matthew 4:9-10) "And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. (10) 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."* Jesus responded to Satan with scripture and we should do the same thing!

Our worship is to be "in spirit and truth."

IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

We have a direct command to worship God "in spirit and truth": *(John 4:24) "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* Did you notice the word "must"? There are no "ifs", "ands" or "buts" about it; through His inspired Word God had given us the command to worship Him in "Spirit and truth". Since God is spirit He must be worshiped in the realm of His nature. To worship in truth is to worship in reality, and with proper knowledge concerning the truth that is found in God's Word. What is truth? John wrote that the "Spirit is truth": *(1 John 5:6) "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."* Since the Spirit was giving wit-

ness of Jesus Christ it is important to know that the Spirit is truth. Now that we have established who, when and how we should worship let us now give our attention to the acts of worship.

In John chapter four Jesus is talking to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. She is concerned with where to worship: (*John 4:20*) "*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*" In response Jesus tells her what is more important; that how we worship. Worship under the old covenant had become ceremonial; our worship is to be "in spirit and truth" not ceremonial. Jesus tells this woman that "God is a Spirit and he must be worshiped in spirit and truth".

As Christians we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our worship must be "in spirit and truth". Our first concern is to worship God "in spirit": (*Philippians 3:3*) "*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*" We must devote our souls to Him and give ourselves in service to His cause; this is exactly what Paul did: (*Romans 1:9*) "*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*" Paul told us to imitate him even as he imitated Jesus.

To worship "in truth" is to worship with all sincerity. We cannot be a hypocrite, we must worship from a true heart with the desire to please God. When we worship let us draw near to God with a true heart! What should we do when we come together on the "first day of the week" to worship?

THE ACTS OF WORSHIP

READ THE WORD

When we are assembled together one of the acts of worship is to read God's Word. This was important and was practiced under the Old Law; in fact they read all of the words of the Law: (*Joshua 8:34, 35*) "*And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. (35) There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.*" The book of Moses was read in the presence of all the people: (*Nehemiah 13:1*) "*On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;*"

It was the custom of Jesus to go to a synagogue on the Sabbath and to read from the words of Moses: *(Luke 4:16) "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read."*

As we move on in time we find that after the church was established they continued to read the prophets on the Sabbath: *(Acts 13:27) "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him."* Perhaps you are wondering why they did this on the Sabbath, let us remember they were wanting to spread the gospel to as many people as possible and on the Sabbath was the day when they would have a large audience.

The apostle Paul wanted his epistles read when they were assembled so they could understand his knowledge concerning the mystery of Christ: *(Ephesians 3:4) "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* Paul wanted his epistles read in the churches: *(Colossians 4:16) "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."* Paul even gave a strict command that his epistles be read: *(1 Thessalonians 5:27) "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."*

So, you will find us continuing to read not only the epistles; but we also may read portions of the entire Bible in our worship services today! We read from the Word of God because we have examples of the early church doing this, we are commanded to read from God's Word and how else could we make known the commandments of God?

PRAYING IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

I am aware that Jesus told us to pray in secret: *(Matthew 6:5-6) "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."* After reading this some may wonder why we pray together in worship; Jesus is referring to those who were praying on the streets just to be seen. That is why Jesus told them to pray in secret! In reality we do not pray when worshipping just to be seen or heard; we are praying for one another and for the good of the church.

Why do we pray when we worship? God speaks to us through His inspired Word; we speak to Him through prayer. When prayer is offered in worship services we tell God the desires of the entire congregation. Our prayers offered in worship services should always be on behalf of the entire congregation and not just our personal desires. Every now and then you will hear a man praying in church say, "I pray for such and such". I think they should say, "We pray for such and such". I assume that they forget that they are praying on behalf of the entire congregation.

Paul asked the brethren to pray for him and those with him: *(1 Thessalonians 5:25) "Brethren, pray for us."* *(2 Thessalonians 3:1) "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:"* The Hebrews writer requested prayer: *(Hebrews 13:18) "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."* I can think of no better place for these request to be made known than when we are assembled together in worship.

We are commanded to pray for those who have confessed their faults to us: *(James 5:16) "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* If someone comes forward and confesses sin we are obligated to pray for them. When Peter was in prison the church prayed for him: *(Acts 12:5) "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."* We commonly pray for the sick in our worship service: *(James 5:15) "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;"*

When we pray our prayers are directed toward God! We should always go to God in prayer, however, you may hear someone pray to Mary the mother of Jesus and occasionally some pray to Jesus; both of these instances is incorrect, we pray to God. Jesus did teach us to pray "in his name": *(John 14:13-14) "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."* *(John 15:16) "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."* *(John 16:23) "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."* I suppose some may be confused by these words spoken by Jesus, but he is not giving us authority to direct our prayers to him. Jesus is simply telling us to approach the Father through him, if we go to God through Jesus' name God will hear our prayers and answer them in due time if it is the Father's will. In all the above scriptures Christ's in-

structions of praying to the Father in his name is valid for us today and we should pray as Jesus has taught! Prayer is an important part of our worship!

PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Paul tells us that Jesus instituted the "Lord's Supper" the night he was betrayed: (*1 Corinthians 11:23-29*) "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: (29) *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (29) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. (27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*" Paul also gives some of the details as to how we are to partake of the Lord's Supper. But he also earlier stated that some were not partaking of this memorial to Jesus in the proper manner: (*1 Corinthians 11:20-22*) "*When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. (21) For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (22) What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*" When we partake of this memorial we should clear our minds and thoughts of everything and concentrate of the emblems and what they represent.

In the denominational world you find those who partake of the "Lord's Supper" monthly and others quarterly. In order to do it as God would have us to do is to do it weekly. When did the early church partake of the Lord's Supper? (*Acts 20:7*) "*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*" They did it on the first day of the week [which is Sunday]. Let me ask, "How many weeks have a first day; according to my calendar every week has a first day, therefore, it is the Lord's way for us to partake of the Lord's Supper every week, every first day of the week not monthly nor quarterly!"

WE WORSHIP AS WE SING

If someone who is not a member of the church visits our services there are two questions they usually ask; “Don’t you have a piano” or ““Don’t you every have music?”” The reason they normally ask these questions is caused by false teaching. It is true in the Old Testament you will find people worshiping God and using all kinds of musical instruments. But if you turn to the book of Acts and read all the history of the early church you will not find them using any musical instruments in their worship. It was hundreds of years later before the musical instrument was introduced into the worship of God. We cannot conclude that they did use the instrument in worship because they didn’t have them; they were invented during the Old Testament history.

After the church was established you will find that they only sang. We are to sing with understanding: *(1 Corinthians 14:15) “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”* When we sing people can understand the words that are being sung. I fail to understand any words when notes come from an instrument. We are to teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs: *(Colossians 3:16) “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* You might teach someone how to play an instrument by playing it yourself; but certainly you will not teach the Word of God by playing an instrument. The music that God would have us to make comes from the instrument that is commonly known as the heart: *(Ephesians 5:19) “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”*

To answer the two questions of our visitors I would say, “Yes in deed we do have music in our worship” and “The instrument that is used is the hearts of those who sing”.

WE GIVE BACK TO THE LORD

When you stop to consider all that the Lord has given us how could we ever repay Him? You cannot repay Him for the gift of salvation; nor does God expect us to repay; but He does expect us to give back a portion of what He has blessed us with.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians this concerning giving: *(1 Corinthians 16:1-2) “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. (2) Upon the first day of the week let every*

one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” Paul used the Galatians as an example to the Corinthians. This “collection for the saints” was for the saints in Jerusalem. They had been suffering persecution in Jerusalem and beside this they had also be hit hard by a famine; so Paul wanted the Corinthians to take up a collection for them and he would personally deliver what they collected to the saints at Jerusalem.

It should be noticed that this collection was to be taken up on “the first day of the week”. Now you might wonder why “the first day of the week”? Let us remember that this is the day when they would all be gathered together to worship. It could have been a matter of convenience; but since we have an apostolic command and an example of the early church taking up a collection on “the first day of the week” we continue to do so yet today.

Also in the above text Paul gives further instructions; he said they were to give as they had been “prospered”. God does not expect us to give what we do not have. We should never spend everything we are prospered on our selves. Sometimes we are of the mind set to purchase everything we see or desire and find that there is nothing left to give unto God. This surely is not within the teaching that Paul gives here. In his second epistle to the Corinthians Paul instructs them to give “not grudgingly” nor of “necessity”: (2 Corinthians 9:7) *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* We should want to give to God; but if we spend nearly all that you have on self when it comes time to give to the Lord you will do so “grudgingly”.

Let us remember it is “more blessed to give than it is to receive: (Acts 20:35) *“I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* Furthermore, it is the “cheerful giver” that God loves: (2 Corinthians 9:7) *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”*

Yes we do take up a collection when we worship on “the first day of the week” and yes it is a matter of convenience; but we also have the command of an apostle and the example of the early church doing the very same thing.

CONCLUSION

In this writing we have looked at when, how and who should worship. We even examined false worship and then we considered the acts of worship. I will conclude with a few closing remarks:

How many assembled Christians does it take constitute a church? Actually congregations come in all sizes; some are large, others are small and some are even very small. We need to remember the words of Jesus: (*Matthew 18:20*) "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" I have known of some when there was no church in their area to worship together as a family in their home. While trying to establish a church in my own area there were a few times that there was only myself and my wife in attendance for the worship service; I felt as though the Lord approved of our worship and was there in the midst of us!

Where to worship is another question that must be confronted. The most important thing that must be considered is this, the truth being taught and practiced. In most of the world you will find some large, fancy buildings and some not so large or fancy; it should be remembered that the building is not the church, the people make up the church. We are not required to worship in a building that is built especially for worship; we have biblical examples of some who met in houses: (*Romans 16:5*) "*Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.*" Some who had churches meeting in their houses are even named: (*1 Corinthians 16:19*) "*The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*" (*Philemon 1:2*) "*And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:*"

There was a time when worshipers had to worship in a specified place, of course I am referring to the Jews under the Old Law. In the days of Jesus Jerusalem was the proper place of worship; but even then worshipers could be found worshipping elsewhere: (*John 4:19-20*) "*The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. (20) Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*" Jesus told this woman that the place of worship would change: (*John 4:21*) "*Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*" If this change had not taken place we would still be required to go to Jerusalem to worship!

Generally speaking the churches of Christ are not fancy buildings with a lot of stained glass and the other things that people refer to as a beautiful church. The beauty of the church is the beauty of the Christians who worship there.

I had one uncle who always went fishing every Sunday, he often said the; "Creek bank was his church". I had another uncle who belonged to a lodge he said the, "Lodge was his church". Friends, as bad as I hate to state this they were wrong. I do believe that you can worship any place. Let's say the building where you normally worship is blown down by a powerful wind storm, there would be

nothing wrong with worshiping under a tree if that should be the only available place to assemble together with brothers and sisters in Christ. Just remember you should not choose a place to worship because there is a beautiful building there. You need to find a church where the truth is taught and God's will is being carried out!

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