

WORSHIP

by Ron Boatwright

Boatwright's study of biblical principles of worship, examining what Scripture teaches about the proper elements, attitudes, and practices of Christian worship both in public assembly and private devotion.

25 Chapters

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00: Preface

Preface This course "Are You Worshipping God In Spirit And In Truth" is written with the hope of helping us to worship God in the way acceptable to Him. Jesus says in John 4:24, "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The reason I have used such a large number of scriptures throughout this course is to point to what God has said on how He is to be worshipped, and not what I say. Please pay close attention to the scriptures that are quoted herein, since it is God speaking to us through the scriptures. For us to worship God in spirit and in truth we must make sure we are following all His directions as given in the Bible.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible, Copyright © by Thomas Nelson Inc. I have bolded certain words and phrases for emphasis. All scripture quotations are in red. This course is divided into twenty-four (24) lessons. After each lesson you are asked to answer several interactive multiple choice and true-false questions concerning what you have just studied. The correct answer is found in the scripture reference that is listed with the questions. Click on the answer of your choice and a dialog box will appear telling you if your answer is correct or wrong and why. It is my hope and prayer that the scriptures pointed out in this course will help you to worship God in spirit and in truth. If you have any questions or comments, please E-mail me at ron@netbiblestudy.net

Ron Boatwright

01: The Purpose of Our Worship of God

The Purpose Of Our Worship Of God The purpose of our worship is to glorify, honor, praise, exalt, and please God. Our worship must show our adoration and loyalty to God for His grace in providing us with the way to escape the bondage of sin, so we can have the salvation He so much wants to give us. The nature of the worship God demands is the prostration of our souls before Him in humble and contrite submission. James 4:6; James 4:10 tells us, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up". Our worship to God is a very humble and reverent action.

Jesus says in John 4:23-24, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It doesn't say we can worship God anyway we want, but we "must worship Him in spirit and in truth". The word "must" makes it absolute. There is no other way we can worship God and be acceptable to Him. The word "must", according to Webster, expresses "an obligation, a requirement, a necessity, a certainty, and something that must be done". When "must" is used it means that it is not optional. Here the word "must" is expressing that in spirit and in truth is the only way to acceptably worship God.

God seeks true worshippers, and He identifies them as those who "worship Him in spirit and in truth". Worshipping God in spirit means that it must be done from the heart. Worshipping God in truth means that it must be done according as God has specified in the Bible. Worshipping God in spirit and in truth is a serious matter which must not be taken lightly. If we have any regard for our own souls, we will want to make sure we are worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

Since God is the object of our worship, He and He alone has the right to determine how we are to worship Him. We read in Jeremiah 10:23, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." We are not granted the option of directing our own ways in religion. God is the One who we look to for guidance and direction in our lives. Our very best in worship is due God and is prescribed by Him in the Bible. The worship God has prescribed is the only way we can be pleasing to Him in this life and finally attain everlasting life with Him in eternity. The Christian's worship is of the greatest importance.

Worship is a time when we pay deep, sincere, awesome respect, love, and fear to the one who created us. Acts 17:24-25 says, "God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives life, breath, and all things."

God is the one who holds our eternal destiny in His hands. Php 2:12 tells us to, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Our salvation is a very serious matter and will not happen by accident. We must work it out "with fear and trembling". Our salvation depends on whether our worship is pleasing to God or not. On the Day of Judgment it will be too late to make any corrections.

Worship should cause us to reflect on the majesty and graciousness of God and Christ, contrasted to our own unworthiness. God does not have to have our worship, but we must worship Him to please Him. Our singing, praying, studying His word, giving, and communion are designed by God to bring us closer to Him and to cause us to think more like He thinks, thus becoming more like Him. James 4:8 tells us to, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Our worship not only honors and magnifies God, but it is also for our own edification and strength. Worship helps us develop a God-like and Christ-like character. We become like unto those we admire and worship. When we worship God we tend to value what God values and gradually take on the characteristics and qualities of God, but never to His level. As Php 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ." How do we take on the mind of Christ? In Romans 12:2 we read, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." We renew our mind as we study and meditate on God's word and worship Him. When we worship God we develop such traits as forgiveness, tenderness, justice, righteousness, purity, kindness, and love. All of this is preparing us for eternal life in heaven with God and Christ. As we are told in Colossians 3:2 to, "Set your mind on things above, and not on things on the earth."

02: Worshipping God In Spirit

Worshipping God In Spirit

Worshipping God "in spirit" means with reverence, attentiveness, and having the right purpose of honoring God, while understanding what we are doing. Hebrews 12:28-29 says, "Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." Our worship must glorify God. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." In order to worship God in the right spirit, we must take time before worship to make ready our hearts and emotions so we will be in the proper frame of mind. We should not have to rush or hurry to worship, arriving late but should always plan to be there early enough so we can be in a worshipful attitude and spirit. Our mind must be ready, attentive, and alert.

Concerning the Lord's Supper, we are warned in 1 Corinthians 11:27, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Our worship to God must be done in a worthy manner. It must be done in a manner that brings glory and honor to God and Christ. Continuing to read in verse 29, "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." We must control our thoughts during periods of worship and not let them wander to other things. We should never be wishing the worship service would hurry up and be over so we can get to the restaurant early and not have to stand in line. In fact we should be of the frame of mind that we are disappointed to see the worship service end. In showing reverence and respect to God, we will not be indifferent, inattentive, and taking lightly that which should be considered serious. Worship to God is holy. Our character in worship must also be holy. In 1 Peter 1:16-17 we read, "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in your conduct, because it is written, Be holy for I am holy." Slouching over, sleeping, playing with babies, squirming, unnecessary talking, and passing notes all show disrespect in worshipping God. Active participation will tend to get rid of our lack of interest and inattentiveness.

Reverence is not having a long face, folded hands, or a put on look of piety. Worship is a time of joy for us. It is a time of offering thanks, adoration, love, praying, singing praises to God, feeding on His word, and proclaiming Christ to the world in partaking of the Lord's Supper.

03: Worship Is Not For Our Entertainment

Worship Is Not For Our Entertainment

There is an erroneous idea today that the main reason we attend worship is to "get something out of the service", rather than going there to give our worship to God. This is a selfish motive on our part. This is the reason people cannot be satisfied with the worship service when their emphasis is not on the proper object of worship, God. People want to "do their own thing" in the worship of the church. What the Bible has to say about worship for many people is of little consequence as long as they are happy and feel good. We must be concerned with what God says on how He is to be worshipped instead of what we might want to offer Him. The United States has produced the most entertainment-oriented people the world has ever known. We have more forms of amusement than has ever been known to man, but we still want more. In our age everything is designed to appeal to our emotions and to entertain us. Our pleasure-mad society gives little thought about pleasing God in their worship. We seem to have forgotten our worship service is to bring glory and honor to God, and not to entertain ourselves.

Much worship today has digressed to be no more than entertainment for people. When we have choirs to sing to us and concerts to entertain us, we are not worshipping God; but we have become the spectators who are being entertained. Let us not try to call this worship. This is very disrespectful and demeaning toward God to reduce our worship of God to the entertaining of ourselves. Worship is not a spectator event. We dare not become spectators, because in worship it is God who is the spectator. People have the roles reversed. People expect divine will to conform to what seems right in their own eyes. Proverbs 12:15 says, "The way of the fool is right in his own eyes." The emphasis is how can the worship service be made more entertaining to people to please themselves and not God. The use of drama in the worship service becomes an entertaining performance with the actors receiving the praise instead of God. And because they have been entertained with a spectacular show they respond with applause (handclapping) to show their appreciation. What do you think God thinks about this perverted so called worship? Many people seem to think that God will accept anything they offer and be glad to get it.

Worship to God is holy and sacred. To pervert and corrupt it with entertainment and what we can "get out of the service" in trying to please and gratify ourselves is nothing short of blasphemy! The sacredness of true worship must not be sacrificed on altars of entertainment-oriented quartets, choirs, and other entertainment groups. We are as Hebrews 13:15 says to "Offer the sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." In worship we must be the participants, not the observers. We want to please and entertain ourselves. In Galatians 1:10 the question is asked, "Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Worship is God-centered not man-centered. When our worship is to please God instead of ourselves, then and only then will our worship be much more meaningful and spiritually uplifting to us and acceptable to God. When people seek an "emotional high" from worship and don't get it, they are disappointed and start blaming the song service, the preacher, etc. The world wants their

worship service to be "more entertaining", thus they are failing to worship God in spirit and in truth. Where in the Bible can we go to show that our worship is designed to please the worshipper. The desire to have an experience or an encounter along the lines of mysticism also gives little regard to what God says in the Bible. Our worship to God requires commitment on our part. People had rather worship Christ as a babe in a manger than Christ as their crucified savior. Their worshipping Christ as a babe in a manger requires no commitment on their part. They feel they can put Him in a box and live the rest of the year as they please. But worshipping Christ as our crucified savior requires commitment, a complete change of our life, and a willingness to do all that He says. Jesus says in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." God and Christ must be first in our lives, and this requires that we be committed to them.

04: Worshipping God In Truth

Worshipping God In Truth

Jesus says in John 4:24, "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We must worship God in truth. Since His word is truth, we must worship Him according to His word. Here the Lord is telling us that everything we do in worship, we must have God's divine approval. Truth is not arbitrary. Truth for one person is the same as truth for the next. God has not spoken in unclear ways.

God has specified in the Bible the acceptable way He is to be worshipped. He is not to be worshipped according to the evil and vain imaginations and devices of men. Whatever that is not commanded in scripture in our worship to God is forbidden if we are to worship God in truth. We dare not substitute what we want for what God has commanded if we want to please Him and go to Heaven.

There are many who think it really doesn't matter what we believe or do in religion, just as long as we are sincere and follow our conscience. But if it doesn't really matter what you believe, then it doesn't matter if you even believe at all. This is absurd. This philosophy exalts our conscience above the word of God. This makes our conscience our only guide and ignores what God says in the Bible. This philosophy originated with man and not with God. This is telling God we are going to worship Him the way we choose and we don't really care what He has to say. Every man then becomes his own authority thereby eliminating the authority of God, the Bible. This attitude must greatly hurt the one who gave His life for us.

Many people want to do what they think best and what seems right to them. We are warned not to do this in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." According to what God says we can lose our soul by doing what seems right in our own eyes. God's word is no longer our guide, but it has been replaced with creed books, disciplines, manuals, confessions, etc. Men want to do things their way and as it seems right in their own eyes. Please consider the consequences of being deceived by error. What a pity it will be to stand before the Lord on Judgment Day having been fooled into accepting the unlawful religions of the denominational world. What a terrible fate to believe error to be truth only to be lost for all of eternity. The philosophy of doing what seems right in our eyes has vastly altered the way people attempt to worship God. They rationalize that God will accept it. People can rationalize away just about anything they want if they work at it hard and long enough, and because of this people worship God in ignorance. Just as the apostle Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:23 (KJV), "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship." The average person in religious matters takes many things for granted. He finds religious groups practicing something and he decides what the majority does must be right and acceptable to God. The Bible says the majority of people are going to be eternally lost. Jesus says in Matthew 7:1-29 :13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." So we don't

want to depend on the majority to determine what is right for us and follow them. If we do we will also end up being lost in the eternal fires of Hell.

Many people never stop to ask, is it scriptural and is this what God wants? They believe that just any kind of worship they give will be acceptable to God. There are a lot of false teachings today that are being passed off as the truth. The main reason for all the religious division that we see in the world today is man will not accept God's word as final authority. Man is going to do it his own way. The Bible contains our only instructions on how to please God so we can go to heaven.

God has always told man how He is to be worshipped. God is the only one who has the right to determine how He is to be worshipped. He will only accept that which is in harmony with His prescribed will. God instructs us how to worship Him acceptably through His word in the Bible. In Ephesians 5:17 we read, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." It is wise to know what the will of the Lord is so we can do it and be pleasing to Him, if we are the least bit concerned about where we will spend eternity. We are accountable for what we believe and practice. Our eternal destiny hangs in the balance of how we treat His truth. In every age God has specified how He is to be worshipped. He says to us in 2 Peter 1:3, "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us." God in the New Testament has given to us all things we need to know that pertain to life and godliness so we can worship Him acceptably, in spirit and in truth. God has always made it plain and emphatic that the only worship that is acceptable to Him is only that which is in accordance with His will.

05: Acceptable And Unacceptable Worship

Acceptable And Unacceptable Worship

God has shown, in the Bible, His approval with those who follow His will and His displeasure and wrath with those who refuse to worship Him the way He has directed. God has always been clear about how he is to be worshipped, but man has not listened. An example of acceptable and unacceptable worship in the Old Testament is that of Cain and Abel. Cain and Abel both worshipped God. Abel did as God directed, but Cain tried to worship God the way he saw fit. We read in Genesis 4:3-5, "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering."

Why did the Lord have respect for Abel's offering and why did He reject Cain's offering? Hebrews 11:4 tells us, "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Notice Abel offered his sacrifice "by faith" but Cain did not. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So faith comes by the word of God. Abel offered his sacrifice by faith or according to the word of God. If we worship God by faith, we worship as the word of God directs.

Abel offered the firstborn of his flock "by faith" and it was accepted because his worship was according to the instructions of God. But Cain chose to ignore God's instructions and sacrificed an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Cain chose to sacrifice to God the way he saw fit. Cain did not offer his sacrifice according to God's instructions, so God rejected his sacrifice and worship, since it was not "by faith". From this example we see our worship must be "by faith", that is "by the word of God." We read in Romans 14:23, "For whatever is not from faith is sin." If our worship is not "by faith", that is it is not "by the word of God", then it "is sin". It will also be rejected just like Cain's. It is a very serious matter if God rejects our worship. If He does we are going to be lost. Many people accept from the Bible what they like and reject what they don't like. They also add other things that they like. This is not Christianity but religious anarchy. We do not have the right to "believe as we please." We must humbly submit to all that Jesus says. Anything taught or practiced by man in the field of religion which does not come from the Bible is false doctrine.

One cannot obey God without doing what God says to do, when God says to do it, how God says to do it and for the reason God says to do it. If what we do in worship is not according to the word of God, then it is vain and useless and will cause us to be eternally lost.

06: Vain Worship

Vain Worship Our Lord says in Mark 7:7, "And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." When we follow the commandments of men instead of God's instructions, our worship becomes vain. If our worship is vain, it is empty, hollow, and useless. It will do us no good. If it is vain, it would be as though we had not worshipped God at all and we will be lost. When we worship in the way "we want" then God is dishonored and insulted. When we worship the way God has told us in His word, God is honored and glorified. As we read in John 4:24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." To worship in truth is to worship as the word of God directs. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Since the word of God is truth, when we worship God in truth, we worship Him according to His word. The only way God will accept our worship is to follow His directions in the Bible.

God says in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." If we don't know what God says, we are going to be destroyed or lost for our lack of knowledge. It is sad to say but the vast majority of people are illiterate of God's word. They don't really know what the Bible says. When we don't know God's will then false doctrines will arise which will cause us to be eternally lost. When people are ignorant of God's directions on how He is to be worshipped, they wander in spiritual darkness. Our Lord says in Matthew 15:14, "And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch." We must first have a desire to know the truth of God's will and then be willing to change when we find we are wrong and are not worshipping according to His truth. Jesus says in John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Only the truth can make us free, otherwise we are still under the bondage of sin. We may be sincere in our worship, and we must be, but if we do not worship God "in truth", that is as God directs, then our worship will be vain and unacceptable to God.

Also if we try to worship God "in truth" but not "in spirit", that is not with the proper motive of honoring God and with reverence, then we are just practicing ritualism and our heart is far from it. This type of worship is also vain and unacceptable to God, for Jesus says in Matthew 15:8, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." We must worship God both in spirit and in truth.

07: We Must Give Our Best To God

We Must Give Our Best To God As we worship God, we give Him ourselves. Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethern, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service." Under the Old Testament some of the Jews were not offering their best and were condemned for it. In Malachi 1:8 we read, "And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?" Is it not just as evil today when we do not give God our best?

Under the New Testament we do not offer animal sacrifices as the Jews did under the Old Testament; but we give Him our lives in service to Him as a living sacrifice. In doing this we must give Him our all. Anything we do for God must be our very best. Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind." All our heart, soul, and mind, or in other words, our total being must be in our worship.

How do we show our love to God? Our Lord says in John 14:21, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me." We show our love to God when we keep His commandments. We do not show our love to God if we only keep the commandments we want to keep or if we add some of our own commandments. In Matthew 28:18, before Christ ascended into heaven, He was giving His apostles some last minute instructions concerning those they would baptize. Jesus said, "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Everything the Lord has commanded us is to be observed. We are to do all that God says and in the way He says to do it. Jesus says in Luke 6:46, "But why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In worship we must do all God has commanded and we must not do anything He has not authorized. Our worship must be from the heart with all reverence and sincerity. We must give Him our very best. Then and only then will we be worshipping God "in spirit and in truth". The purpose and holiness of true worship to God is a precious privilege available only to those who are obedient to the will of God.

08: We Must Only Worship God

We Must Only Worship God

Jesus said in Matthew 4:10, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve." If we worship God in spirit and in truth, we cannot worship anyone or anything else. Anything we worship, other than God, is an idol. According to Webster, an idol is "an image used as an object or instrument of worship."

God forbids us to make and worship idols. God says in Exodus 20:4-5, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." We see we are not to make any image whether it is a statue or any likeness of anything in heaven or earth to worship them. But this is done today when people worship icons. People bow down and pray to these statues and painted pictures whether they be the supposed likeness of Mary the mother of Jesus or one of the many other dead people who are called saints. This is in direct disobedience to the command of God. In 1 John 5:21 we read, "My little children, guard yourselves from idols." When I see people bowing down, burning candles, praying, and worshipping an icon image of a saint, my heart bleeds for them because they are putting their souls in jeopardy of being lost. We are warned in Colossians 2:18, "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worshipping angels." We can lose our reward in heaven if we worship someone other than God. He is the only one we are to worship because He is a jealous God. God will not allow us to worship anyone else other than Himself. Revelations 21:8 tells us that "idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." We must only worship God and our worship must be in spirit and in truth if we expect to be with Him in heaven when this life is over.

09: Role of Women in the Church

Role Of Women In The Church The Bible speaks of how women are to conduct themselves in worship. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 we read, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church, for Adam was formed first, then Eve." Why did God place these limitations on the woman? The Bible explains why women are to keep silent and why they are not permitted to speak in the worship of the church. It was because "Adam was formed first, then Eve." God could have created woman first or He could have created the man and woman simultaneously. But God's creation of the man first was to show the authority of the man and the submission of the woman. This is the way God has specified that it will be. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." God speaking to Eve in Genesis 3:16 says, "Unto the woman He said...your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you." The reason women are to be submissive and not speak in the worship of the church is God has specified that the man is the head of woman and is to rule over the woman. Many people do not approve of what God has done, but this is still God's business. As we read in Romans 9:20, "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me like this?" Who are we to question God?

Also in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 God's word to us says, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." God's word is very clear. It says it is not to be permitted. In other words it is forbidden. When we do things that are forbidden by God it is sin. It is sin which separates us from God and sin will cause us to be lost eternally. Here we see what happened when Eve took the spiritual leadership over her husband and what happened when Adam failed to exercise spiritual leadership over his wife. Because of this Satan was able to introduce sin into the world.

During the worship of the church women are not permitted by the Lord to preach, lead prayer or lead singing. This does not preclude women from singing in the worship service or teaching children in the Bible classes. But they are not to take a leading role over man in the worship service. This command of God is not hard to understand. But some still want to ignore it and do what seems right in their own eyes.

Again this does not prohibit women from teaching children in the Bible classes. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15, "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures." How was Timothy taught the scriptures? He was taught them by his mother and grandmother as we read in 2 Timothy 1:5, "When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in in you also." Women can

play a vital role in teaching children in Bible classes. Women are not inferior to men, but the difference is a matter of function as designed by God. This is the way that God chose for it to be.

God intends for women to be subordinate to men in worship. When a woman gets up before the church with men present to teach, preach, lead prayer, or lead singing, she is in violation of what God has commanded. She is perverting the worship of God. As a result of this rebellion, God is not worshipped in spirit and in truth. As we have already seen, worship becomes vain or useless when we follow the desires of men instead of what God wants. For us to ignore what God has said, on this matter or any other, is spiritual anarchy and will have horrible consequences.

10: Attendance Of Worship

Attendance Of Worship

Worship is a privilege only children of God have. There are many blessings we receive from faithful attendance in worship. God has commanded us to assemble regularly to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Hebrews 10:25-27 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation." When we forsake the assembly of the church, except for sickness or circumstances beyond our control, we are not only disobeying God, but we are robbing ourselves of all the benefits of worship which would have helped us to grow and become spiritually strong. By forsaking the assembly, we also endanger our souls because as the above verse says "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for our sins." It is bad enough for anyone to be lost, but to see one of God's children fall away is a disaster. It is heartbreaking because Christ is our only sacrifice for sin. When people reject their only sacrifice for sin there remains nothing but "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation."

It will be a sad day for those who fall away because as we continue reading in Hebrews 10:29, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" Then verse 31 concludes by saying, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It will not only be fearful but horrible beyond description when those who were once "sanctified" children of God who have turned their back on the Lord when they find themselves in eternal punishment. The sad part will be they didn't have to be there, but they became careless and indifferent with their souls. When people fall away from the Lord, it is usually not a sudden thing. They usually start by forsaking the assembly of Wednesday night Bible study. Then they start missing Sunday evening worship. Next they stop coming to Sunday morning Bible study; and then finally they stop coming to Sunday morning worship. This is the usual path of apostasy for most people who fall away. Oh, some may come back and "visit" several times a year and a few may even attend only the Sunday morning worship with little regularity. These are described in 2 Peter 2:22 as, "A dog turns to his own vomit again, and a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Some members have turned to their own vomit and are in the pigpen and can no longer smell the stench.

We are encouraged not to let this happen in Galatians 6:9, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." But for us to obtain our eternal reward we must be consistent. Our Lord says in Revelation 2:10, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Only if we remain faithful are we promised eternal life.

Some people may ask, do I have to attend Sunday night and Wednesday night services? If we really love God and Christ we will never ask such questions. Jesus says in Luke 17:10, "So

likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do." We can never on our own earn our way into heaven. It is going to take the grace of God for us to get to heaven. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all like an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags." We can never slip into heaven with a "get by" attitude. If we are trying to do as little as we can, I am sorely afraid we will be in for a great surprise on Judgment Day. It will be too late to make things right then. Our eternal fate is sealed forever when we draw our last breath. Why do people endanger and gamble with their souls? Our soul is worth more than the whole world. Our Lord says in Mark 8:36-37, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" The answers to both questions are he gains nothing but loses his soul into eternal punishment, which will be permanent because nothing will be able to get him out. The Lord is trying to give us the greatest warning of our life. We need to listen to what we are being told by our Creator before it is too late.

We should look forward with joy for the opportunity to worship God. When we worship God in spirit and in truth we can know the Lord will be there with us. Jesus says in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Do we want to miss being with the greatest guest of all, our Lord? We should look forward to attending and worshipping God, otherwise how will we be able to enjoy worshipping God in heaven?

Going to heaven must be the number one priority in our life. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." I want to "seek first the kingdom of God" by not allowing anything to hinder me from meeting with the saints and the Lord, don't you? We don't want to miss the greatest gift God will ever give which is our home in heaven. We are told in 2 Peter 1:10, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure." We need to ask ourselves, is my calling and election sure? We are told how to make it sure in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Jesus gives a parable in Luke 14:16-20; Luke 14:24 which applies quite well to our attending worship services of God. "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, come for all things are now ready. But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused. Still another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Anyone of those invited could have attended the supper if they really wanted to, but they thought other things were more important. In our day of "busy activities" it is easy to allow life's distractions to "choke out" our serving the Lord. But notice the conclusion in verse 24. "For I say unto you that none of those men who were invited shall taste My supper." Are we rejecting the Lord's invitation of our regular attendance at His worship service in His church? Are we rejecting His invitation of partaking of His supper, "the Lord's Supper", and of feasting on His word which provides us with the spiritual food we desperately need? If we reject our Lord's invitation, He says that none of us "who were invited shall taste My supper."

Please don't put your soul in jeopardy of being rejected. It just isn't worth it. This life is so short in comparison to eternity. We are told in James 4:14, "For what is your life? It is even as a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." We have got to get it right the first time. There will not be a second chance! We must look forward to every opportunity we have of worshipping God "in spirit and in truth."

11: Coming Back To The Lord

Coming Back To The Lord

There are many Christians who have wandered away from the Lord. We have so much to gain by being faithful to the Lord. Jesus says in John 14:1-3, "In My Father's house are many mansions and I go to prepare a place for you." Also we read in Revelation 21:4 concerning heaven, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Heaven will be a great place beyond our wildest dreams. There are no words that can describe how wonderful heaven will be. And it will last forever and ever, time without end. I certainly want to go there and I know you do too. By going to heaven we will not have to go to eternal punishment in Hell. Hell will be a horrible place. Jesus says in Mark 9:43-48, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." We know that our hand itself will not cause us to sin but Jesus is telling us that what ever it is in our life that is going to cause us to be lost, to correct it so we will not be eternally lost in hell.

We have so much to gain by obeying God, but we have so much to loose by not obeying Him. God wants to save us so much that as John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" to die for us. This took great love for God to do this for us. And as we read in 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." The Lord doesn't want you, me, or anyone else to be lost, and if we have wandered away He wants us to come back to Him in repentance. He has already paid the price for our sins by taking our punishment. He is eager and ready to save us. In Luke 15:11-24 Jesus tells a parable which illustrates how God longs for us to return to Him if we have wandered away in sin. The parable tells of a son who took his inheritance and went away from his father into a far country and wasted his inheritance in riotous living. He became destitute and hired out to feed pigs. He became so hungry he even wanted to eat what the pigs ate. He decided to go back to his father and hire out as one of his hired servants. Verse 20 says, "And he arose and came back to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." In this parable the father represents God. Christ gave us this parable to show how anxious God is to have us come back if we have wandered away from him in sin. God will run to us with open arms if we will only come back to Him. In James 5:19 we read, "Brethren if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." Here we see we can come back which will result in our soul being saved from an eternal death in Hell and the multitude of our sins will be covered and forgiven.

Satan wants us to believe, that once we have fallen away, there is no way back. But this is not true. In Luke 15:7 Jesus says, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one

sinner that repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." Then Jesus continues in verse 10 saying, "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." When we repent and come back all of heaven rejoices.

God only forgives those who are His children. We become a child of God when we are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins so we can be saved (Galatians 3:26-27). God's law of pardon for us after we become His children is to repent, confess our sins and to pray for our forgiveness. In 1 John 1:9 we read, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Notice it says that He will cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness. From the above scriptures we see that we first of all need to repent of our past sins and unfaithfulness to God. We need to make up our mind that we are going to give up all sinful practices for which we have been guilty and that we are going to faithfully attend the worship services of the Lord's church, the church of Christ.

Now this doesn't mean that we will never sin again. As His children we have the promise in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." This verse gives us a lot of encouragement and comfort. It tells us that we must walk in the light. In other words we must be trying our best to follow His word in our daily living. It next says that we must "have fellowship with one another". We must be in fellowship with the brethren in the local congregation of the church of Christ. If we are doing this, the verse says, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sins". The cleansing from all sins is a continuing action. But as we try to live the Christian life and commit sin from time to time, the blood of Christ will continue to cleanse us from ALL sins we commit if we repent. But for this continual cleansing of our sins to take place so we can remain saved, we must be walking in the light and having fellowship one with another.

If you have wandered away, God is waiting for you to come back to Him. He dearly wants you to come back. So please make up your mind that from this day forward you are going to give up the sin in your life and live for Him. Find a congregation of the church of Christ in your area where you plan to faithfully attend worship. Go forward during the invitation and confess that you have sinned and that you have not been faithful in your worship of God. Ask the brethren there to pray for you and tell them you want to be a member there. Become involved in the worship and the work of the church there. Then live faithfully to God the rest of your life so that you can go to heaven when this life is over. As our Lord says in Revelation 2:10 says, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

12: Our Dress In Worship

Our Dress In Worship

Even though worship is not a "dress parade", many times we become too sloppy, and revealing in the way we dress for worship. Our clothes do contribute to the emphasis we place on worship to God. This does not mean we have to wear fine and expensive clothes. But the way we dress should be in keeping with the dignity of the occasion.

Women are commanded in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation...which is proper for women professing godliness with good works." Modest clothing is the way women who are "professing godliness" dress. Certainly a woman or man whose clothing is not modest is not professing godliness by the way they dress. In this verse "moderation" suggests being restrained and "propriety" suggests conforming to what is proper in the worship of God. The wearing of lewd and revealing clothing to worship God is unthinkable, but some do it anyway. A woman who wears clothing that exposes herself to men is contributing to their sin of lust. Our Lord says in Matthew 5:28, "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." She becomes guilty of contributing to his sin of adultery, so she also becomes guilty. In our actions as well as the clothing we wear, 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Some think they have to follow the style and fashion of the world, regardless of how short and revealing clothing gets. But we are told in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world." Why? Because this world is going to be lost, and if we conform to this world we will also be lost. We are conforming to this world when we dress immodestly. We are "to keep ourselves unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Would we dress in sloppy or revealing clothes if we were attending our parent's funeral? Our Lord says in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." How should we dress to show respect for someone much greater than our parents, when we appear in the presence of our Lord to remember the death of our Saviour and to honor and worship God? He is the one who made us and who will determine our future in eternity. When we worship we are actually in the presence of the Lord. He deserves only our very best. We are told in Romans 12:1, "That you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God". Do you actually think God is pleased with us when we wear immodest clothing as we present our bodies a living sacrifice in worship to Him. Are we doing as our Lord says (Matthew 6:33), "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"? If we are wearing clothing that is immodest, how could we? Our dress should show a moderate opinion of our own value. Our dress should be pure, proper, chaste, and decent. It should not call attention to ourselves, because it is showy, sloppy or lewd.

14: Our Giving

Our Giving The way we give is an indication of our love for God. All things belong to God. God says in Psalms 50:10, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." Everything we have received has come from God. God has only loaned them to us. John 3:27 says, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from above." We can never out-give God. In Luke 6:38 we read, "Give and it shall be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." We give so the Lord's church can better carry out its mission here on earth. The world must be evangelized, and the church must be edified, and the needy must be helped.

Giving is a command of God. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we read, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper that there be no collections when I come." We see the giving here was to help the poor saints in Jerusalem. Notice also they were to make a regular collection every first day of the week.

Because of everything God has given us, including His Son to die for us, we should be anxious to give back to Him. In 2 Corinthians 8:12 we read, "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have." God expects us to give what we are able to give. How can our love for God be real unless it is expressed in our obedience and our giving? Our giving is an expression of love, and act of praise, and sacrifice to God.

How we give is an indication of where our priorities are. Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth and rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Where is your heart?

Since we can't out-give God, we should at least be liberal in our giving. As we read in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." Our giving is to be planned. We should not give because we feel we have to give. Nor should we resent that we need to give to please God. We should be glad that we can give to the Lord.

We should never try to impress other people with our giving. If we do we already have our reward. Giving needs to be a private matter. We should not seek recognition for the things we do. Jesus says in Matthew 6:1-4, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen of them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." We should seek the approval of God and not the glory of men. Our giving should not only include material possessions but we must first give ourselves to God. We are told in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethern, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." If we will first give ourselves to the Lord, we will have no problem in being liberal in our giving. Our liberal giving is part of worshipping God "in spirit and in truth."

14: Prayer

Prayer In prayer we show our total dependence on God who created all things and us and by Whom all things continue to exist. In prayer we give praise, honor, glory and reverence to His name for His greatness and goodness. We recognize Him as the source of all blessings. It is also the outpouring of our hearts desire. In Romans 10:1 the apostle Paul says, "Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved." Our prayer must come from our heart.

Prayer to God is only reserved for those who are obedient children of God. We are told in John 9:31, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him." There are people whose prayer God will not hear. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." To allow anything to separate us from the fellowship of God, so that He will not hear our prayers is a very serious matter. It is a sad situation for those who try to pray to God if God will not hear them. But it is their own fault, because they are not obedient to God. They could be obedient if they wanted to be.

Then we read Proverbs 28:9; "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." God looks with disgust at the prayer of one who is not faithfully following His will. What a pitiful situation it is for us when our prayers become disgusting to God. Could anything be more hopeless? We also read in 1 Peter 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." The Lord desires to hear the prayers of His faithful children and His eyes are watching out for them. What a great and wonderful blessing this is. When we pray to God, we must be humble and not self-righteous. Our Lord gave a parable which illustrates this requirement very well. In Luke 18:9-14 we read, "Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you that I am not like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." The attitude we have when we approach God in prayer and other worship is very important.

If we approach God with an attitude of showing great pride and arrogance in ourselves, but contempt and scorn for others, then God will despise this kind of prayer. Our prayers must be like the attitude of the tax collector. From what our Lord is trying to teach us here, when we approach our Creator in prayer we must be humble, not proud or self-assertive, but modest, unpretentious and our prayer must be from the heart. We are told in 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding." Our prayers should not be flowery and to impress

other people, because God will not be impressed with such. Jesus says in Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:7, "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Assuredly, I say they have their reward. And when you pray do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words." The only reward someone who prays a prayer like this receives is the recognition he receives from men because God will not heed his prayer. We are also warned not to use vain repetitions, such as repeating something over and over. This type of prayer makes us a hypocrite because it is pretentious. Our prayers must be asked in faith. Concerning our prayers James 1:6-7 says, "But let himask in faith, with no doubting,for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord." We must have faith in God and if we are faithful and obedient to Him then He will hear and answer our prayers, otherwise we will receive nothing. Jesus says in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." So we must have faith if we expect God to answer our prayers.

Since Jesus is our advocate or go between with God, Jesus says in John 14:13, "And whatever you askin My name,that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Our requests to God must be in the name of or by the authority of Christ.

Another requirement of God answering our prayers is we must be forgiving of others. Jesus says in Mark 11:25-26, "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." How important it is to be forgiving of others? Could the Lord be any clearer as to what will happen to us if we are not forgiving? The Lord will not forgive us. We will be eternally lost. According to Isaiah 59:2, it is our sins that "separate us" from God so we cannot go to heaven. We must develop a forgiving attitude toward all people so that God will be forgiving of us so we can go to Heaven.

How we treat others can also affect the way God hears our prayers. In 1 Peter 3:7 we read, "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life,that your prayers may not be hindered." Our prayers can be hindered by the way we treat our wife, husband, children, relatives, friends, acquaintances, or strangers.

We must pray regularly and not just when we are in trouble and need God. As 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." Also we are instructed in James 5:16, "The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." If we expect our prayer to be effective, it must be fervent and we must be righteous. In our prayers we must, with all earnest, show great feeling and intense devotion to God. The things we ask must be in accordance with God's will. 1 John 5:14 says, "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." Our requests to God must not contradict His will but must be in agreement with it. We should not ask for anything contrary to His will or for selfish things on our part. Our prayers must be "in spirit and in truth" if they are to be heard by God.

15: The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper

Christ instituted the Lord's Supper in order for us to remember the great sacrifice He made for us and that we rely on Him and His sacrifice for our salvation. He gave us this memorial so we would not forget Him and what He did for us. In Luke 22:19, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." This is done to help us remember the Lord and what He did for us. The death of our Lord was not an accident. It was in God's eternal plan of redemption for Christ to come to this earth and take our punishment for our sins by dying for us so God can now be just in saving us. In a number of places in the Old Testament, God foretells the death of His Son for us. One place is found in Isaiah 53:5-6, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and by His stripes we are healed...And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." God and Christ are loving and wonderful for what they have done for us. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 we read of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper, "The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take eat; this is My body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took 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. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." This is how we remember the great suffering which our Lord did for us. We proclaim our faith in this great and wonderful deed to the world each time we partake of the Lord's Supper. There are those who partake of only the bread and their priest partakes of the fruit of the vine. This is a perversion of the Lord's Supper. This is not doing it the way the Bible instructs. But notice each Christian is to partake of both the bread and the fruit of the vine. When we partake of the unleavened bread we picture our Lord's body hanging there, suffering in anguish and pain, taking the punishment that was rightly due us. As we drink of the fruit of the vine we envision His precious blood which was poured out for us to cleanse us from all our sins. What great love and concern God and Christ have for us! The Lord wants us to remember what He did for us every first day of the week as the church did in the first century.

We are to remember that our Lord gave up heaven to come to this earth for thirty-three years, and then died for us. We remember the humiliation of the mock trial, the crown of thorns and the terrible scourging that left His back raw and bleeding. We remember the soldiers gambling for the Lord's only earthly possession, the clothes on His back. Then we remember the nails as they were driven into His hands and feet, and the cross as it was raised and dropped into the hole.

We also remember the spirit of forgiveness of our Lord, as He was being crucified, when He said in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." We remember our Lord's loud cry of loneliness in Matthew 27:46, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" We remember as our Lord hung on the cross, how the people mocked, shamed, and made fun of Him as He was dying not only for their sins but the sins of all mankind.

We remember in Matthew 27:45, "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land", and in Matthew 27:51, "The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split." The sun refused to shine and the earth shook because of the death of the Son of God. We read in 1 Peter 2:24, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed."

We must first examine ourselves to determine whether we have the right attitude to partake of this memorial. We must put all else from our minds. We should make sure we have our minds centered on what Christ did for us. We are told in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." We must clear our minds of all other thoughts and center our minds on the sacrifice of our Lord, or otherwise as 1 Corinthians 11:29 (KJV) says, "We eat and drink damnation to ourselves."

16: Weekly Observance Of The Lord's Supper

Weekly Observance Of The Lord's Supper

Many people do not want to remember the Lord's death for us very often since they only partake of the Lord's supper monthly, quarterly, annually, or not at all. The excuse is given that they do not want to partake of it more often because it will become too common place and lose its meaning. But the very opposite is true. The Lord's Supper loses its meaning when we choose not to partake and think about it. This would be like saying that we should only pray two or three times a year, for if we prayed more often then prayer would lose its meaning. This would be absurd. Does the Lord's death really mean anything to us? But Jesus requested in Luke 22:19, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Do we really care to regularly remember the death of our Lord?

People seem to be turned off by the death of Jesus and the shedding of His blood. They don't care to remember it. But it is His blood that cleanses us from our sins. As Revelation 1:5 says, "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." They had rather remember Him as a babe in a manger than a crucified saviour. It is an insult to Jesus to celebrate His manger and then ignore His cross. Many people seem to be ashamed of the death of Jesus. Jesus says in Mark 8:38, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in His glory of His Father with His holy angels." This memorial of our Lord is called "the Lord's Supper" in 1 Corinthians 11:20 and "the Lord's table" in 1 Corinthians 10:21. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 it is referred as "the breaking of bread" and "communion". But the church in the first century met every first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper. We are told in Acts 20:7, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." Why did they come together on the first day of the week? Here we see the church in the first century came together on the first day of every week to break bread, which is the Lord's Supper. Their primary reason of coming together on the first day of the week was to partake of the Lord's Supper. We cannot be pleasing to the Lord if we observe the Lord's Supper only a few times a year or not at all. In 1 Corinthians 11:26 we are told, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." Are we really interested in proclaiming the Lord's death to the world until He comes?

People today do not seem to have a problem with the command to give on the first day of each week as found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside." One of the things they were to do when they came together was to give.

What else was the church at Corinth to do every first day of the week when they came together? In 1 Corinthians 11:20 they were condemned for making a gluttonous feast out of the Lord's Supper and were told, "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper." When did they come together in one place? Every first day of the week. What were they doing

when they came together every first day of the week? Perverting the Lord's Supper by making it into a glutinous and drunken feast. What were they supposed to be doing every first day of the week? Partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Two of the things the church at Corinth did every first day of the week was to give and partake of the Lord's Supper. Why shouldn't we be like those in the first century who assembled on the first day of every week to remember the Lord's death by partaking of the Lord's Supper? But many people seem to have a problem in seeing the importance of partaking of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week as the church in the first century did when it was under inspired apostolic guidance. When the Jews, who lived under the Old Testament, were commanded to remember the Sabbath Day, that is the seventh day of the week, to keep it holy, they kept all 52 Sabbath Days of the year holy. The first day of the week also occurs 52 times each year. When Christians today observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, they are following the Biblical example of Acts 20:7 of the disciples who came together on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper.

We also read in Acts 2:42 concerning the church at Jerusalem, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers." Again we see the first century church was steadfast or regular in the breaking of bread which is their observance of the Lord's Supper. But later men in denominational groups chose to partake of the Lord's Supper less frequently. Should we be any less regular than the church in the first century? According to what we have seen in the scriptures, we are to both give and partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. Could the Bible be any clearer concerning the Lord's Supper?

Another perversion of the Lord's Supper occurred when men introduced the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation in the Decrees of the Council of Trent, which met from 1545 to 1563 A.D. This decree devised by men stated that the bread and the fruit of the vine are converted miraculously into the literal body and blood of Jesus when we partake of it. It is sad that men would dare to pervert the Lord's Supper into such a mockery.

It is ridiculous to place literal interpretations on symbolic language. In John 15:5 Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Here Jesus is using figurative language because we know He is not a literal vine and we are not literal branches. In John 10:9 Jesus said, "I am the door." But again He uses symbolic language. Concerning the Lord's Supper Jesus said in 1 Corinthians 11:25, "this do in remembrance of Me." The Lord's Supper is designed to help us remember what the Lord did for us. And as we partake of it as 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, "you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes". We are showing the world that we believe that Jesus died for our sins.

Let's not pervert the memorial of what the Lord did for us. But as we partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week in spirit and in truth, let us steadfastly "proclaim the Lord's death till he comes" again.

17: Singing In Worship - Part One

Singing In Worship (Part 1)

Singing has a very definite place in worshipping God in spirit and in truth. We glorify God in our singing praises to His name. There are only nine scriptures in the New Testament which specify the kind of music in the worship of the church that God wishes in order for us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. They are as follows: (1) Matthew 26:30, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives"; (2) Acts 16:25, "But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God"; (3) Romans 15:9, "For this reason I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name"; (4) 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding"; (5) Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"; (6) 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"; (7) Hebrews 2:12, "In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You"; (8) Hebrews 13:15, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"; (9) James 5:13, "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing psalms." All without exception specify only singing. Mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church are not mentioned in the above scriptures or anywhere else in the New Testament because God has not authorized them. Those who do not respect God's word do not respect God.

God has commanded us to sing. That means each one of us. When people just sit through the song service and never attempt to sing they are not obeying God. Or when people just sit and listen to a choir sing they are not obeying God's command to sing. They are not "offering the fruit of our lips". Can someone else worship for us? I think not. There is no Biblical authority for a choir. Congregational A Capella singing is the only kind of music divinely authorized by the Lord for Christian worship. If we follow only what God has authorized in our singing in worship, then the whole congregation will sing without mechanical instruments of music.

18: Singing In Worship - Part Two

Singing In Worship (Part 2)

There are two different kinds of music: vocal and instrumental. God has spoken in the New Testament concerning the kind of music we must use if we expect to worship Him in spirit and in truth, and that is singing. Singing is the limit of God's command. God nowhere in the New Testament authorized mechanical instruments of music to be used in worship of the church. A mechanical instrument of music cannot worship God. Only with our voices can we sing praises to God. God does not wish to be worshipped with a lifeless instrument.

People today may think that it makes no difference if they add mechanical instruments of music in worshipping God. In the Old Testament we have the example of Nadab and Abihu who were presumptuous in their thinking that it made no difference. In Leviticus 10:1-2 (NIV) we read, "Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to His command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died before the Lord." In Leviticus 16:12-13 God commanded, "Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar" of burnt offering to burn the incense in the tabernacle. But Nadab and Abihu decided to do it their own way and get the coals of fire somewhere else. They offered unauthorized fire. They died a horrible death because they did something God did not authorize. They were presumptuous. God will not tolerate substitutes for His divine way. God is very particular about the way He wants things done. Just as Nadab and Abihu offered unauthorized fire, is there any excuse for us to offer unauthorized mechanical instrumental music to the Lord?

According to Webster, presumptuous means, "to take upon oneself without permission or authority, taking too much for granted, showing overconfidence, arrogance." Being presumptuous as far as God is concerned is a sin. Psalms 19:13 says, "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression." So we see we can also be guilty of presumptuous sins when we "take upon ourselves without permission or authority" of God and add mechanical instruments of music to our worship. We may not think it will make any difference, but Nadab and Abihu thought the same thing. In speaking of people who are displeasing to God, 2 Peter 2:10 says, "They are presumptuous, self-willed."

Some may say, "The Bible does not say not to use mechanical instruments of music in worship." But again are we permitted to be so presumptuous? If so we could add anything else without His authority. The Bible tells us we are to use the bread and the fruit of the vine in commemorating the Lord's Supper. But the Bible does not say we can't also use chocolate cake and milk. Of course it doesn't. It would be absurd if we tried to use it. But it is just as absurd when we try to use the same type of reasoning to justify the use of instrumental music in worship. When God gives a command to do something, does He have to say, but don't do this, and don't do this, etc.? No. When God tells us what He wants done, He expects us to do it that way. God's commands are both inclusive

and exclusive. His commands include everything He specifies and they exclude everything He has not authorized. But trying to confine ourselves to what God has authorized is very important if we expect to please Him and go to heaven.

If we add mechanical instruments of music to the worship of God then we have added to God's word. In the closing words of the New Testament we are warned not to add to His word. In Revelation 22:18, "If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book." We do not have the right to add to God's word. When God says something in the Bible He means it and He will keep His promises. In the sixth chapter of Genesis we have the example of Noah who was pleasing to God. In Genesis 6:14 we read that Noah was told by God to, "Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark and cover it inside and outside with pitch." In the verses that follow God continues to give Noah the details of construction. Then we read in Genesis 6:22, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." God specified the ark was to be built of gopherwood. Did Noah use gopherwood as God had specified? Yes, Noah did "according to all that God commanded him." Would Noah have obeyed God if he had added pine or oak along with gopherwood? No. He would have disobeyed God by doing something God had not authorized. Do we disobey God when we add mechanical instruments of music, which God has not authorized to our worship to Him? Yes we do. The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship does make a difference, because God has never permitted man to devise the plan or means for his worship of God. This is very serious, because we will lose our souls through presumptuous sins just as Nadab and Abihu lost their lives through their presumptuous sins. Judgment Day will be too late to find out that we were wrong to use unauthorized mechanical instruments of music to worship God.

19: Singing In Worship - Part Three

Singing In Worship (Part 3) In Ephesians 5:19 we read, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Also we read in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Here we see in our singing, we are to speak, teach, and admonish one another. This is what God expects us to do when we sing. But can a mechanical instrument of music speak, teach, or admonish as God wishes us to do when we sing? Of course it can not. A mechanical instrument of music cannot accomplish anything God has commanded when we sing to Him in worship. Here we see that when we sing, we are "to sing with grace in your hearts" and "make melody in your heart." The melody God wants is to come from the human heart and not from lifeless mechanical musical instruments. The mechanical instrument does not have a heart from which it can worship God. In 1 Corinthians 14:15 we read, "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also." Not only does an instrument not have a heart, but it also does not have a spirit with which to understand. Then why use it? It is only because people like it.

It is sad to say but people are more interested in pleasing themselves, than pleasing God. They are not using the instrument to please God, because God has not authorized its use in worship to Him. God has only told us to sing. People like the sound of a piano, organ, or a band. They like to be entertained. This is what they want. They don't really care what God has authorized. People are on very dangerous ground when they take this attitude. Please respect what God wants and has authorized in His word, because this is the only way we will be able to please Him and go to Heaven.

We read in 2 John 1:9, "Whosoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God." To go beyond the doctrine of Christ is to do that for which we have no authority. We can not practice instrumental music by the authority of Christ, because Christ has nowhere authorized it, and because of this we will not have God.

Some people say "I like instrumental music in worship." If this is the case then what "I like" becomes the authority and not God. When man becomes his own authority then each worshipper can introduce anything he likes with no regard to what God has said. It becomes: "I like it, I want it, and I am going to have it." Their feelings take precedence over everything else. What God says becomes meaningless when we allow our emotions and feelings to become our guide. Many people seem to think they are wiser than God and believe that instrumental music is more pleasing to God because it seems to be more pleasing to them. In Proverbs 28:26 we read, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." The Bible is our only authority in matters of religion; not our opinions, emotions, conscience, or human feelings. In Colossians 3:16-17 we read, "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. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." In verse 16 we are told to sing. In the very next verse

we are told, "whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Notice it says to "do all". Everything we do in religion is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. To "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" means that we must do everything by His authority. We can certainly sing by the authority of the Lord. But where would we go in the New Testament for authority for instrumental music in the worship of the church? It just isn't there. In Romans 10:17 we read, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." So we see that faith comes from the word of God. Then we see in Romans 14:23, "For whatever is not from faith is sin." Therefore if we believe and practice something religiously that is not authorized by the Bible it is sin. Worshipping in a manner not authorized in God's word is sinful. Worshipping God with the mechanical instrument of music is not authorized in the Bible so it is sinful. But do people really care?

20: Singing In Worship - Part Four

Singing In Worship (Part 4)

Since Christ never authorized mechanical instruments of music in the New Testament to be used in worship of the church, we might ask, when did man "take it upon himself" to start using them in trying to worship God? It is a historical fact according to early church history, no mechanical instruments of music were ever used in church worship until about the year 670 A.D. At this time the church at Rome introduced an organ which produced such disturbances that it was removed. It was not until about 775 A.D. that it was introduced again, but this time it was kept, even with many people objecting. The instrument was not accepted by many churches for many years.

Even in the 13th century Thomas Aquinas, a noted Catholic scholar, wrote against its use. This showed that even by the 13th century the instrument had not gained full acceptance. Men wanted to have it their way with no regard to what God had specified. This was a departure from the faith and practice of what God has authorized. Those who have respect for the word of God should wonder why the use of mechanical instruments of music was totally unknown in the worship of the church for the first six hundred years after the New Testament was written. The word "A Capella" means singing without instrumental accompaniment. It actually means, "as done in the chapel." For the first 600 years of the church "as done in the chapel" meant singing in worship of the church without instrumental accompaniment. This is the way the early church worshipped. Why shouldn't we also worship this way? When people can find no authority for the use of the mechanical instrument of music in the New Testament, they try to go to the Old Testament for their justification. But we are no longer under the Old Testament. The Old Testament is still of great benefit for us today, because without it the New Testament would be difficult to understand. Romans 15:4 tells us, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." But we do not go to the Old Testament for instructions of how to be justified and to worship God. If we did we would be worshipping in the temple in Jerusalem, burning daily animal sacrifices, and the many other requirements of the Old Law. Our Lord has made the Old Testament obsolete. As we read in Hebrews 8:13, "A new covenant, He has made the first old." He has taken it away as we see in Hebrews 10:9, "He takes away the first that He may establish the second." In the Old Testament's place Christ has replaced it with the New Testament as we continue to read in Hebrews 9:15-16 (KJV), "And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament...For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." Christ's will, the New Testament, is now in effect.

We are no longer under the Old Testament because in Colossians 2:14 concerning the Old Testament we read that Jesus, "has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." In Romans 7:6 we read, "But now we have been delivered from the law." And then in Galatians 3:24-25, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor." In speaking of the Old Testament,

Galatians 5:4 (KJV) says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law;ye are fallen from grace." Here God is telling us we will fall from grace if we try to justify what we do by the Old Testament. Unless we want to fall from God's grace let's not use the Old Testament to try to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in our worship to God.

Singing in worship to God is for the purpose of honoring God and teaching one another. Singing is what pleases God. Singing without the instrument of music shows our respect of God and what He says in His word when He specifies our heart as the instrument where the melody is to be made. If we love and respect God we will do everything He says and in the way He says to do it. We will not change, substitute, or add to what He says. We must only sing if we want to worship God "in spirit and in truth."

21: Preaching In Worship

Preaching In Worship When God's word is preached and taught, God is honored and glorified. During the preaching of a sermon, the hearers feast on the word of God. 1 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Corinthians 1:23 says, "It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe...but we preach Christ crucified." The preaching of Christ crucified is pleasing to God, but is foolishness to many people. It is only by this kind of preaching and teaching that man will be saved. The kind of preaching God wants is not always pleasant to hear, but it is for our own good. As we read in 2 Timothy 4:2-4, "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap to them teachers; and they will turn their ears from hearing the truth." The kind of preaching God wants must convince, rebuke, and exhort. We must be careful that we do not turn our ears from hearing the truth by having someone preach what sounds good to us, but contradicts what God says in the Bible.

Much of the preaching today does not teach God's word, but mainly tells stories of humor. There is no Bible doctrine taught that might upset someone, but only things that tickle people's ears to make them feel good and comfortable in order to keep them coming back. Their souls are starving for the truth. Because of this they will be lost because only the truth can make us free. No man has the right to pass off as truth things that contradict the Bible, but many do. All you have to do is look around at all the many different doctrines which are being taught. Do all these differing doctrines come from God's word? Absolutely not. In Jeremiah 5:31 God says, "The prophets prophesy falsely; and my people love to have it so." Why do people desire to be taught falsely? Because they are not interested in what God has to say. The reason for all the religious division we see in the world today is people will not accept all that God says in the Bible as final authority. They have become their own authority.

Jesus says in John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Only by believing and obeying the truth can we be made free from sin. But what is the truth? Jesus says in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth." The word of God is the only truth that will make us free so we can go to heaven. The word of men cannot make us free, but will cause us to be lost.

All things preached must come from the word of God. We are told in 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God." The pulpits of our land ring out with what speakers personally think and believe. But how do we know whether a preacher is preaching from God's word or from his own opinion? We must do as the church at Berea did concerning the apostle Paul's preaching in Acts 17:11, they "searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." But many men today, as they did in the first century, are preaching a perverted gospel. In Galatians 1:6-8 we read, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him that called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you

and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." One who preaches a perverted gospel is to be accursed. A perverted gospel will not only cause the one preaching it to be lost but those who are listening to it will also be lost. Jesus says in Matthew 15:14, "And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." This becomes very serious.

Mankind has always sought to glorify himself. In Psalms 111:9 (KJV) in describing God we read, "Holy and reverend is His name." "Reverend" refers to God and no one else. Do we want to take a quality of praise which is applied only to the name of God and apply it to our own name? How presumptuous can we be? When men use the word "Reverend" in front of their name, they are taking glory and honor that belongs only to God and are trying to apply it to themselves. They might as well also call themselves God.

Men try to glorify themselves with other names. Jesus in speaking in a spiritual sense says in Matthew 23:9, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for one is your Father, He who is in heaven." Why do men in seeking to glorify themselves continue to ignore what the Lord says? Why do men want to refer to themselves as Father so and so? They want to receive glory that only belongs to God. King Herod in Acts chapter 12 took glory upon himself which belonged to God and we read in verse 23, "And immediately the angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God, and he was eaten by worms and died." Today God does not immediately deal with sin as he did then, but will deal with it in the Judgment. Claiming glory that only belongs to God is a very serious matter. But why do men do it today? Also the classification of "clergy" and "laity" is foreign to the word of God. It is another invention of man. We are warned in Romans 12:3 that a person is, "Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think."

Sometimes a preacher is held up on a "pedestal" and idolized. When some preachers leave a congregation, whether he is relieved of his job or whether he leaves because he has a job with another congregation, some people become devastated. It seems their world has fallen in around them. Because of this some will even quit the Lord or go elsewhere. We should never idolize a man. This is wrong. We are to only worship God. Jesus says in Matthew 4:10, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."

God is pleased only when we are fully obedient to His will. When His will and only His will is preached, we then "worship Him in spirit and in truth."

22: We Must Worship The Lord In His Church

We Must Worship The Lord In His Church The Lord is to be glorified by the worship He receives in His church. In Ephesians 3:21 we read, "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus." But how many churches does the Lord have? Jesus says in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build My church." The word "My" shows possession and that the church belongs to Jesus. How many churches did He say He was going to build? He said, "I will build My church". The word church is singular not plural. The Lord only promised to build His one church. In Ephesians 4:4-6 there are seven ones listed: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Just as there is only one God and only one Lord we also see there is only one body. The Bible says there is only one body; so what is this one body? In Ephesians 1:21-22 we find out what this one body is, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body." Here we see that the Bible says the church is the body. So if there is only one body and the one body is the church, then there can only be one church that belongs to the Lord. In Colossians 1:18 in speaking of Christ, we read, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He may have the preeminence." Here again we see that the body (singular) is the church (singular). Again the Bible tells us that the Lord has only one church. We also see that in all things Christ is to have the preeminence. For Christ to have the preeminence in all things, we must follow Christ in all things and not follow man. If we follow men in some things then Christ does not have the preeminence in all things.

Since Christ only built His one church, we need to ask where did all these other churches come from? The only answer is they were built by men, so men could "attend the church of their choice", and not God's choice. We read in Ephesians 5:23, "Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body." Christ is only the saviour of His one body, His one church. In the Lord's scheme of redemption, He has only planned to have one church. He is going to only save His one church.

Since we have seen in the Bible that the one body is the one church which the Lord built, and that Christ has only promised to save His one body, His one church, then what is going to happen to the hundreds of different kinds of other churches we see in existence today? Again let us let God answer this question. In Matthew 15:13 Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted." What will happen to all those churches that God did not plant? They will be rooted up. This is what God has said He will do. This is frightening. I want to make sure I am in the Lord's church, the only one He is going to save. In Psalms 127:1 we read, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." This is a sad but serious situation; one that concerns me greatly and causes me much grief and sorrow to see honest people, who are honestly mistaken, laboring in vain. This is a tragedy. The Bible says that 1) Christ is "the head of His church" (Ephesians 5:23).

2) The church is "subject unto Christ" (Ephesians 5:24).

3) He is the "saviour of" His church (Ephesians 5:23).

4) He "loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25).

5) He "gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

6) He "sanctified and cleansed it" (Ephesians 5:26).

7) He "nourishes and cherishes it" (Ephesians 5:29).

8) He is the founder and builder of it (Matthew 16:18).

9) He is the foundation of it (1 Corinthians 3:11).

10) "He purchased it with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

11) He calls it "My church" (Matthew 16:18). Is it any wonder it is referred to as the church of Christ (Romans 16:16)? The one church that Christ purchased with His own blood belongs to Him and the name it wears must honor Him. We read in Romans 16:16, "The churches of Christ greet you." This name glorifies and honors Christ, the one who built it. Other names honor and glorify John the Baptist, Martin Luther, the day of Pentecost, the apostles, Rome, Antioch, Nazareth, the Greeks, the Russians, the methodical way of doing things, Christians, the free will, being primitive, southern, missionary, general, the seventh day, science, catholic which means universal, the advent, and the list goes on and on. Even by their names they do not claim to be Christ's one church. Why can't we give the glory and honor to God and Christ where the honor belongs?

Today we hear the sincere but mistaken plea to "attend the church of your choice." Why not attend the church of God's choice, the only one that Jesus "purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28)? The church of Christ is the only one the Lord is going to save. Christ did not shed His blood to purchase any denomination. One cannot be saved by being a member of a denomination.

Any church claiming to be the only church Jesus bought with His own blood should be able to prove from the Bible they are that church of the Bible. Can the church which you are a member prove that it is the one and only church the Lord built? If you can't then you will be laboring in vain if you stay in it. This may sound harsh. I say this with sincerity and sadness, but it will really be harsh if you are lost in eternity. We must wake up because this concerns the welfare of our souls and where we will spend eternity. People too long have ignored what the Lord has said in the Bible.

23: Only The Saved Are In The Lord's Church

Only The Saved Are In The Lord's Church In order to be in the one church the Lord established, those added to it by the Lord must be saved according to His requirements. In Acts 2:47 we read, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." The Lord only adds the saved to His church. There are no unsaved people in His church. The Lord makes no mistakes. We are not saved just because we think or say we are. We are saved only when we have done what God has said we must do. Jesus says in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father which is in heaven." We must do God's will, not man's will, to go to heaven.

According to the Bible, who are the saved? Jesus is quite clear as to who the saved are. Jesus says in Mark 16:16, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." A person has to have help to misunderstand what the Lord says here. Here we see the Bible says we must believe and be baptized in order to be saved. This is what Jesus says. But men have tried to change what the Lord has said. Men today say that all you have to do is "to accept Christ as your personal Saviour" and you will be saved. This may sound good and impressive, but this is false. Where in the Bible are you told that all you have to do to be saved is "to accept Christ as your personal Saviour"? It is not there. Men say that one does not have to be baptized to be saved, because they say you are saved before you are baptized. Who are you going to follow men or Christ? Do not allow the different doctrines of men to blind or confuse you concerning your salvation. You too much to loose. And also Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:21, "The like figure baptism does now save us." Only when we have obeyed the Lord's command to be baptized will we be saved. These scriptures will be the only standard of judgment on Judgment Day, and not what we think or what men say. Jesus says in John 12:48, "The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." Are you putting your trust and confidence in what men say or what God has said in the Bible? You will have to make the choice whether you are going to follow God's word or man's word.

Also in order to be the church which Jesus built, the church must worship God and Christ according to the way They have specified. We are told in Ephesians 5:17, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." It is very unwise not to find out and understand what the will of the Lord is. The vast majority of people do not know what the will of the Lord is. All you have to do is look around and see all of the differing doctrines that are being taught in all the differing churches. Are they understanding and following the will of God? Absolutely not. If they were there would only be the one church which Christ established, the church of Christ. This is a pitiful condition of which people should be ashamed, but they are not.

If you are not worshipping God and Christ the way They have specified in the Bible then your worship is vain. Our Lord says in Mark 7:7, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Have you been following the commandments of men and only some of what God says in the Bible? If you have this is vain. Jesus says in Matthew 23:20, "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." We must observe all the Lord has

commanded us and only what the Lord has commanded us. Is your worship vain? If it is then it will do you no good and you will be lost eternally.

Each congregation of the Lord's church is autonomous. The church that Jesus built does not have a central earthly headquarters. There is no Biblical authority for an earthly headquarters. Christ is the only head over His church. As we read in Ephesians 1:22, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church." The church is not to be overseen by a pope, patriarch, president, cardinals, association, convention, synod or any other organization that man has come up with.

Each autonomous congregation of the Lord's church is to be overseen by a group of elders. In Acts 14:23 we read, "So when they had appointed elders in every church." Notice there is to be a plurality of elders in every church or congregation. This is the way the Lord set up His church. But what does the Lord intend for the elders to do in His church? In Acts 20:28 the apostle Paul was talking to the elders from the church at Ephesus and told them, "Therefore take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." The church the Lord built is to be overseen by a group of elders. The qualifications of elders who are to oversee each congregation of the Lord's church are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:3-9. Is the church you belong to overseen by a plurality of elders? If not, why not? Or is your church overseen by the preacher? If it is to be the Lord's church and has men who qualify, each congregation is to be overseen by a plurality of elders.

If we really accept the Bible as our only authority, we will want to worship God only as He has specified. We must reject human traditions and doctrines such as creed books, catechisms, manuals, articles of faith, confessions of faith, the book of Mormon, the Koran, constitutions, disciplines and other guidelines which men have written, all of which produce new and differing religious doctrines.

We are warned in Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." It would be a tragedy to find out on Judgment Day we have been cheated of our eternal reward in heaven; but it will be too late then. These differing doctrines have caused the many departures from the New Testament teaching concerning Christ and His church.

24: Worship Summary

Worship Summary The purpose of our worship is to glorify God. Our worship to God is very important. If we expect to please God, so we can go to heaven when this life is over, we "must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Worship requires that we be an active participant and not a spectator. We must not pervert the worship of God by our being entertained by choirs, concerts, and other entertainment groups. Our worship is to be holy and sacred, because it is God we are suppose to be worshipping. We must approach God with humility and godly fear in showing Him reverence and respect by worshipping Him in the way He has specified in the Bible. To worship God the way we see fit is disrespectful to Him. Anything God has specified for us to do that we leave out is displeasing to Him, and anything we add that he has not authorized is also displeasing to Him. It is quite evident that many people are trying to worship God after the will of men. When you look around, you can see the many different things done in the worship of many differing churches which are not in accordance with God's will. They are following the commandments of men. As we see in Mark 7:7 our Lord said, "And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." It is sad when people allow their worship to become vain.

Today there are over 400 different denominations with many different plans of salvation, practicing different kinds of worship, teaching different doctrines, and wearing different names which are unheard of and unknown in the Bible. Is this what God wants? A denomination must have a man made creed, confession of faith, manual, discipline, catechism, and such like in order to exist. Each conflicting doctrine, which each denomination has produced, contradicts the scriptures. If people would follow what the Bible says, and only what the Bible says, then there would only be one church, the church of Christ.

We have also seen that we must worship and only serve God, and not some idol or icon. God has commanded women not to teach or take a leading role over men in the church. We must regularly attend worship of the church; and the way we dress must be modest. In our worship we offer prayers to God. We have seen that God only hears those who are obedient to His will. Our giving is an indication of our love for God. We are not to give to be seen of men.

We are to remember our Lord's death in partaking of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week as the church in the first century did. When we partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, we not only remember the great sacrifice the Lord made for us, but we proclaim the Lord's death to the world until He comes again. As we worship in spirit and in truth, we are to sing praises to God. We are to do the singing ourselves and not have a choir to sing to us. God has only authorized singing. Man has perverted the worship of God by adding mechanical instruments of music, because man likes them. When God's word is preached, God is glorified. Only God's will must be preached. If one is preaching man's will, he is preaching a perverted gospel. The Bible must be the final and only source of spiritual authority for all that we teach and practice. The Lord is to be worshipped and glorified in His one church, the one He built and purchased with His own blood. He is the saviour of only His one church. People are laboring in vain if they are not in that

one church.

Only saved people are in the Lord's church. We are saved only after we have done the will of God and not man's will. A more complete discussion of what we must do to be saved entitled "Are You Really Sure Of Your Eternal Salvation?" can be found on the following web site: <http://www.netbiblestudy.net> <<http://www.geocities.com/internetbiblestudy>>

God must be worshipped in His church only as He has specified otherwise it will be vain and useless. The Lord has specified that each congregation of His church is to be overseen by a group of elders, who meet His qualifications. Are you worshipping in the church of Christ, the one He bought with His own blood? Please don't wait until the Day of Judgment to find out how wrong you are. Don't allow someone to cheat you of your reward in heaven.

Please think seriously about the things pointed out in this writing, particularly the scriptures which have been quoted. Do not allow anyone or anything to cause you to vainly worship God by participating in worship that follows the commandments of men instead of God. If our worship to God is vain we will lose our souls. We will not be able to go to heaven, but we will have to spend forever and ever in eternal punishment. I wonder if many people really believe there is going to be an eternal punishment in the fires of Hell. But as the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." We will all stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment and give an answer as to how we have obeyed Him. But on that day, as we are told in Matthew 7:13-14, only few will be saved and the majority of people will be lost. Such a tragedy! Our Lord says in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Going to heaven has got to be our first priority in our life or we probably will not make it. We will not accidentally end up in Heaven. Heaven is too great and glorious to miss. It will be beyond our greatest expectations. There is no way to visualize how wonderful it will be. Don't you want to go there? Please don't miss it. If we miss heaven the only other place for us is eternal punishment, which is horrible and beyond description.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 sums up everything quite well, "What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commands of the Lord and His statutes." This is what God requires of us, both in our obedience and worship of Him. We must worship God in spirit and in truth, if we really want to go to heaven. This has been written because I deeply care for your soul. If there is any thing that I can do to help you to become a Christian and to help you locate a congregation of the Lord's church in your area that worships God "in spirit and in truth" please let me know by E-mail at ron@netbiblestudy.net . If you have a comment or if you have bible questions that you would like a Bible answer, please also let me know by E-mail.

I deeply care, please E-mail me.

Ron Boatwright

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