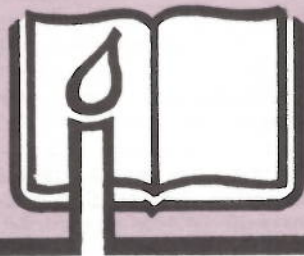


STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



The Church—Its Worship And Financing

Lesson 26

Paul once wrote, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (II Cor. 11:3.) This simplicity is clearly evident in the worship and financing of the primitive church which are to be studied in this lesson.

Worship Of The Church

The early church regularly assembled for worship on the first day of the week or Sunday. We are told, "And upon the **first day of the week**; when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." (Acts 20:7.) Again, "Upon the **first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (I Cor. 16:2.) The Jews worshipped on the sabbath, or seventh day. Since it was easy to get a crowd to which he might speak, we find Paul teaching these non-Christians on this day. However, when the church assembled for the purpose of worship it was on the first day, not the seventh, that they met. On the first day Christ arose from the grave and perhaps for this reason John calls it the "Lord's day". (Rev. 1:10.)



The Jewish sabbath was abolished as a day of worship. In Colossians 2:14 we are informed that Christ in His death blotted out the Law of Moses. Two verses later Paul specifies some of those things that the cross removed and says, "Let no man therefore judge you in . . . a sabbath day." (Col. 2:16—A.S.V.) Those who insist that we must worship on the seventh day are judging us with respect to that which has been removed.

True worship is two-fold. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24.) For worship to be acceptable it must be from the heart (in spirit) and in the way prescribed by the Lord (in truth).

Worship from the heart cannot be mechanical. The uttering of the words of a prayer or the singing of the sentiments of a song do not constitute true worship unless the worshipper actually enters with his mind and spirit into that which he is doing.

An idea of the worship of the early church can be found in Acts 2:42. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Let us carefully examine these items of worship.

As previously noted in Acts 20:7, the early Christians broke bread on the

first day of the week. This breaking of bread is elsewhere called the "Lord's supper" or "communion", but is never described as a "sacrament". The use of the definite article in the expression "**the** first day of the week" clearly implies that Christians partook of the Lord's supper **every** first day. To the Jews the command "Remember **the** sabbath day to keep it holy" meant every sabbath. In fact, it appears that the Lord's day worship was built around this memorial supper instituted by Christ on the night of His betrayal. In the supper they ate the bread, representing the crucified body of Christ, and drank the fruit of the vine (grape), emblematic of His shed blood. This simple meal was designed to focus their attention on the sacrifice of Christ.

The New Testament church continued stedfastly in prayer. Regarding public prayer Paul wrote the Corinthians, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." (I Cor. 14:15.) It is through prayer that we may draw close to God by thanking Him for His blessings, praising Him for His goodness, and petitioning Him for those things of which we are needful.

The worship of the church included presentation of the apostles' doctrine by teaching, preaching, and Scripture reading. For example, Paul used the assembly at Troas (Acts 20:7) as an opportunity to preach God's word. Such teaching did not include politics or economics, but those things which pertain to the salvation of our souls.

In their assemblies the early Christians sang psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. (Col. 3:16.) Such singing was to praise God and edify man. In the primitive church the emphasis was placed upon singing from the **heart** rather than upon the mechanics of singing. Thus we read, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody **in your heart** to the Lord." (Eph. 5:19.) The music in the early church was entirely vocal. Although instruments of music were common in the first century, they were not used in the primitive church. The first use of instruments of music among professed Christians was about 670 A. D. It was several hundred years later before they were generally used in the public worship of the medieval church. It is clear that instrumental music was intentionally omitted from the worship since instruments were in common use for other purposes at that time.

Financing The Lord's Work

The worship assembly of the early church was also the occasion of Christians giving financially to the Lord. Every worthwhile work requires money. This was true in the early church. There were needy to be cared for; there were preachers to be supported in their proclamation of the gospel. In contrast to some methods used today, the primitive church did not resort to high pressure money raising schemes. Rather, each disciple gave to the church in accordance with his ability. Christians were taught that they were to consecrate themselves wholly to the Lord. (II Cor. 8:1-5.) Since they had done so, they willingly and liberally gave to the Lord's work.

Several principles guided the giving of early Christians. In gathering a contribution for the poor Christians in Jerusalem Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as **God hath prospered him**, that there be no gatherings when I come." (I Cor. 16:2.) The amount was to be determined by their **prosperity**, not by a fixed percent as was true of the Jews under the Law of Moses when they gave a tithe. If Christians truly give as they are prospered this will often require that they give more than a tenth.

Again, giving was to be **purposeful** and **cheerful**. We read, "Every man according as **he purposeth in his heart**, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; **for God loveth a cheerful giver.**" (II Cor. 9:7.) One who gives as he purposes



will plan his contribution in advance. And if he truly loves the Lord he will find it easy to give cheerfully. His giving will be based on love rather than duty.

If the church employed any other means of raising money than freewill offerings it is not mentioned in the Bible. Some uses to which this money was put will be discussed in the next lesson.

“Seek and Ye Shall Find”

Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

- a b c 1. The early church worshipped every: (a) first day of the week; (b) Tuesday; (c) sabbath.
- a b c 2. True worship must be in: (a) pomp and ceremony; (b) spirit and truth; (c) shouting and great emotion.
- a b c 3. The Lord's supper is also called: (a) sacrament; (b) communion; (c) eucharist.
- a b c 4. The early church continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and: (a) chanting; (b) candle lighting; (c) prayers.
- a b c 5. Early Christians were instructed to sing psalms, hymns, and: (a) love songs; (b) patriotic songs; (c) spiritual songs.
- a b c 6. That which was preached was: (a) the apostles' doctrine; (b) politics; (c) economics.
- a b c 7. Money was raised by: (a) pie suppers; (b) assessment; (c) free-will offerings.
- a b c 8. Christians were to give: (a) fixed percent; (b) as prospered; (c) as little as they could get by with.

Fill in blanks in the scriptures pertaining to scriptural giving:

1. II Cor. 9:6, 7 — “But this I say, He which soweth shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his, so let him give; not, or of for God loveth a giver.”
2. I Cor. 16:2 — “Upon the day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath him, that there be no when I come.”
3. Luke 6:38 — “Give, and it shall be unto you; good measure, down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

Read the discussion of the Lord's supper in I Cor. 11:20-29. Write true or false before each statement:

- 1. The Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's supper several days before he was betrayed.
- 2. He said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."
- 3. He also said that they should partake of the cup in remembrance of Him.
- 4. As often as Christians eat the bread and drink the cup they shew the Lord's death till He come.
- 5. If a person partakes of the Lord's supper unworthily it doesn't make any difference.
- 6. Each man is to examine himself.

Before each quotation regarding singing, write the scripture location in which it is found. Scriptures used are: Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 14:15; James 5:13, Rom. 15:9:

- 1. "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms."
- 2. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
- 3. "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."
- 4. "For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles and sing unto thy name."
- 5. "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Name.....

Grade.....

Address.....

Date.....

City.....

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