

## The Worship of the Church - Part 2

Introduction: In the first part of our study we considered the requirements for acceptable worship and studied singing and prayer in worship. Now we are ready to study how the first century church under the guidance of the apostles observed the Lord's Supper, the offering, and the teaching in their church assemblies.

1. The Lord's Supper - Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:20-34.
  - A. The purposes of the Lord's Supper:
    - 1) To remember Jesus and his death for us - 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24.
    - 2) To proclaim the Lord's death until he comes - 1 Corinthians 11:26.
    - 3) To have communion or fellowship together in the body and blood of Christ - 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.
  - B. The bread and cup are not literally the body and blood of Christ but symbolize or represent them - Matthew 26:26-28.
  - C. There is danger in eating the bread and drinking the cup "unworthily" - 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. ("Unworthily" refers to the manner of partaking, not to imperfections in the one who partakes; else no one could partake. We are condemned if we partake of the elements without recognizing in memory the body and blood of Christ as he suffered for us.)
  - D. The early church ate the Lord's Supper weekly on the "first day of the week" - Acts 20:6,7; compare 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; Acts 2:42.
  - E. The elements used by Christ in the Lord's Supper, borrowed from the Passover meal, were unleavened bread (bread without yeast) and the "fruit of the vine" (a Jewish way of referring to wine or grape juice).
  - F. History and scripture show that in the early church the bread and wine were received in the context of a fellowship meal, a love feast.<sup>ⓐ</sup> At that time the Lord's Supper had not been reduced to a ceremony within the context of a worship assembly.
  
2. The offering - 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; Mark 12:41-44; Acts 2:42.
  - A. To be able to give properly, we must first give ourselves - 2 Corinthians 8:2-5.
  - B. Offerings were to be made on the first day of each week, the Christian day of special worship - 1 Corinthians 16:2.
  - C. Every Christian is to give as he or she is able - 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12; Mark 12:41-44.
  - D. Our gifts should increase as our prosperity increases - 1 Corinthians 16:2. (This is the same principle, stated in other words, as the proportionate giving of the Old Testament. What proportion of one's income should he give? Christians are not commanded a set proportion as the Jews were, since our giving is in the freedom of grace. But the question can best be answered by observing God's mind on the subject expressed in the Old

Testament law of the tithe (tenth portion). God chose this as the amount that would honor him without hurting the giver. The tithe is not a law for Christians, but it does show the mind of God about a reasonable, God-honoring proportion to give. We should count all forms of our prosperity when giving.

- E. Christians should give willingly, cheerfully, and liberally - 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:5-7.
  - F. Each person is to determine in his own heart what he will give - 2 Corinthians 9:7 - no forced giving.
  - G. The handling of church funds by church leaders should be careful and beyond reproach - 1 Corinthians 16:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 8:19-21. Witnesses, records, and regular reports are in order, and will help avoid much grief and trouble in the church.
  - H. God will bless materially the person who puts God first in giving, and will withhold prosperity from those who do not honor God financially - 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Malachi 3:7-12; Matthew 6:33; Luke 6:38.
3. Teaching God's Word - Acts 2:42; 20:7.
- A. Public teaching in church services should be done so as to help and build up both believers and unbelievers to obey God - Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Corinthians 14:23-26. This requires discipline, preparation and prayer.
  - B. Teaching must always be based on the scriptures (God's word) and not on man's wisdom - Matthew 15:9; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2:14-16.
  - C. The teacher should always be one who lives a holy life and is a good example - 1 Timothy 4:11-13; James 3:1; Matthew 23:3, 15; Romans 2:21-24.
  - D. The apostle Paul wrote that men only were to teach in public church assemblies - 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-37.
  - E. He also directed that if there were several teachers, they must speak one at a time - 1 Corinthians 14:31, 33.
  - F. The teacher should speak clearly and distinctly and loudly enough to be understood by all - 1 Corinthians 14:9.
  - G. The hearers should listen carefully and soberly, judging the teaching by the scriptures - Luke 8:18; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1; 1 Corinthians 14:29.
4. The first century church also had two other activities that while probably often practiced outside church assemblies, need to be noticed under the category of worship:
- A. Anointing of the sick by the elders - James 5:14-16.
  - B. Laying on of hands after baptism - Hebrews 6:1, 2; Acts 8:13-17; 19:5, 6; compare Acts 9:17.

Conclusion: Because of God's greatness, we should offer him our very best when we worship. Through

honoring God as we should, we are also blessed ourselves.

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## Additional Notes on Women's Role in Public Church Assemblies

1. The first and basic question that has to be answered is whether God's word distinguishes male and female roles and gives leadership to men. If it does not, there is nothing else to discuss. If the Bible does teach male leadership, then male and female roles will differ both in public and in private, such as in the family. Because Paul always bases his teaching on the creation and the fall, the writer of these notes believes the Bible does teach male leadership. Difference in roles does not mean inequality or difference in value. God and Christ have different roles (the Son submitted to the Father) but God and Christ share equally in divinity.
2. It is very difficult to apply these teachings and agree on what they mean in actual practice. Very honest followers of Christ differ widely on what they believe these teachings require of the church today. Even among Christians of the same general grouping there are still differences of opinion.
3. Some see the first century restrictions as cultural and/or local in application. However when Paul discusses the public role of women he always appeals to things said by God at the creation and the fall. He does not appeal simply to the culture of his times and he applies his teaching to all the churches.
4. Whatever our convictions on the role of women, we should not mis-apply Galatians 3:28 as often is done. The verse reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The verse is talking about salvation and acceptance by God and has nothing to do with roles. The verse also says there is neither slave nor free, yet other scriptures still distinguish and regulate the roles of Christian slaves and masters.
5. Because the interpretation and application of the scriptures on women's roles (such as 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:34,35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15) is so difficult and controversial, these cannot be salvation issues, so long as each person truly tries to understand scripture and follow his own conscience. Christians should not break fellowship over this kind of issues but should leave judgment up to God and get on with God's work.
6. In studying scripture on these issues, we should do our best to put aside bias and pressure from certain directions. Feminists have some just grievances but radical feminism is laced with hate and has little regard for scripture. At the other extreme, those wanting male dominance have often twisted scripture to oppress and subjugate women. We need to pray for strength to put aside personal biases and look objectively at the meaning of scripture, and the more so when the issue is so emotional.
7. God knows that women have often been mistreated. Seeking our "rights" is OK up to a point. Paul taught that a slave should get his freedom if he had the opportunity (1 Corinthians 7:21-23). But he also said it is not a big issue, because the Christian slave is the Lord's freedman and the free Christian is the Lord's slave. There is a higher and more important kind of freedom, that of the spirit, which believers have and no one can take from them.

Be conscientious and careful to practice what you believe is right. But also be humble and respectful and careful in your attitude toward those Bible believers who honestly differ with you. Explain your interpretations to them, but leave final judgment of disputable matters up to God (Romans 14, 15). Though God does not hold you personally accountable for everything your church does in such matters, you may find it better to work and worship in a congregation which is in general accord with what you believe scripture teaches about male and female roles.