

WHEN THE SAINTS MEET

"I was glad when they said unto me. Let us into the house of the Lord." (Psa. 122:1)

It is now your happy privilege as a child of God to be able to worship the heavenly Father. And since it is your desire to give him the best and the most complete worship of which you are capable, this lesson will be of special interest to you for it was designed to aid you in achieving this high objective.

WHAT IT MEANS TO WORSHIP

Rather than giving a precise definition of what worship is, the Bible describes worship as it should be and as it should not be. It will however, help in our understanding of what true worship is if we know something about the word itself.

The principal Old Testament word for worship is the Hebrew word "shahah" - which means to "bow down" or to "prostrate" - indicating reverence and honor. The principal New Testament word is "proskuneo." which means to "kiss the ground toward" indicating affection and adoration. And the word "worship" itself comes from an Anglo Saxon word "worth-ship" which denotes the worth of an object.

Therefore, we could combine each of these ideas contained in these three words and say that when we worship God we are recognizing and declaring his worth to us (worth-ship) in a spirit of reverence (shahah) and love (proskuneo.)

THE WORTH-SHIP OF GOD

There are many reasons why God is worthy of our worship. Notice some of them.

GOD IS:

1. OMNI-POTENT: meaning that he is ALL POWER.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."
(Gen. 1:1)

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." (Psa. 19:1)

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3)

"God... hath done whatever he pleased." (Psa. 135:6)

Jesus said, "With God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26)

YES:

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11)

GOD IS:

2. OMNISCIENT: meaning that he has ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

"Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." (Psa. 147:5)

"The Lord is a God of Knowledge." (1 Sam.2:3)

"The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." (1 Chr. 28:9)

"O the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33)

"O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." (Psa. 92:5)

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." (Psa. 139:6)

GOD IS:

3. OMNIPRESENT: meaning that he is EVERYWHERE AT ONCE.

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13)

"For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all goings." (Job 34:21)

"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Jer. 23:23)

GOD IS:

4. LOVE: (1 John 4:8)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." (John 3:16)

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

"We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." (Psa. 48:9)

GOD IS:

5. THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE AND GOODNESS:

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father." (James 1:17)

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" (Psa. 116:12)

As we think of the great "Worth-ship" of our heavenly Father, it causes us to rejoice and to sing with the Psalmist:

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." (Psa. 48:1)

GOD'S PLAN

God has always had a plan for man in worship. For you and me he has given two expressions in the Scriptures to guide us in the preparation and practice of our own worship to him.

I. "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Cor. 14:40)

This directive simply means that God wants our worship to be conducted in a proper manner and without confusion.

II. "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

Here we find two directives for our own worship. It must be in spirit and in truth. The word "spirit" refers to the attitude and disposition of the worshiper's heart and mind. God wants our worship to be sincere. The spirit of sincerity, reverence, adoration, and love is what God seeks in worship. It should be a visible expression of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, body and mind. (See Psa. 89:7 & Heb. 12:28) But, sincerity alone in worship is not enough. Christ said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9) Worship is void when it is not done according to the will of God. Man must never substitute his will for God's will. It is God whom we worship, and it is God who says how we are to worship.

WHEN THE SAINTS MEET

And now, for the next few moments, I want to invite you to come with me to a worship service. The place is the city of Jerusalem. The day is the first day of the week (Sunday) - the time is A.D. 55. We have inquired about the church and have learned how to reach the place where they are assembled. As we draw near - the worship is just beginning.

Music is a vital part of worship in the New Testament church. So vital that God has - by example of early Christians and by direct command, told us what kind of music we must use in our worship to him. It is to be SINGING.

The apostle Paul instructed: "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... Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Col.3:16 & Eph. 5:19) "A cappella" singing is the only music used in the New Testament church. God did not intend for the singing in worship to be accompanied by mechanical music. For further study of this item of worship as God intended it to be, be sure and read the added comments at the end of this scrip.

No worship would be complete without PRAYER. Now is the time when the children of God approach the throne of their Father together and unite their hearts in thanksgiving and praise, and supplication. It is a time in worship when the barriers of pride are broken down and sins are confessed and forgiveness is sought. The New Testament church is a praying church. God's "spiritual house" is to be a house of prayer. (For further study see (Acts 2:42; 4:31; 11:5; 12:12; 1 Cor. 14:15)

The early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching." (Acts 2:42) At this point in the worship God speaks. He speaks through his word the Bible. And faithful Christians take great delight in hearing his will read and taught for they remember that it was because of God's word that they are saved. (Rom. 1:16) And so, reverently and with thanksgiving of heart they listen to the "good news" preached and heed the message of God's will for their lives. (Acts 20:28)

The sermon has ended. And now several men have gathered around a table. The congregation is preparing to observe the Lord's Supper, so called because the Lord instituted it for his kingdom. (1 Cor. 11:20) The record reads:

"That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying. This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:23-25)

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic feast of the greatest event in all history. The bread symbolizes the broken body of Christ on the cross, and the fruit of the vine symbolizes the blood that he shed there. Each time that we partake of these two elements it brings to our remembrance what happened that day on the hill of Calvary. The apostle Paul explains further:

"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes." (1 Cor. 11:26)

Here we see that two things are proclaimed when we gather around the Lord's table:

1. We show the Lord's death - We proclaim to the world, as well as remind

ourselves, that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world.
2. We also proclaim the fact that Jesus is coming back. It is a constant reminder to us who are his disciples that he has promised to return and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also.

THE PROPER MANNER

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

The admonition of these words is that we must partake of the Lord's Supper in the RIGHT MANNER. It must not be done lightly and without thought, but we must prepare our hearts and minds with adoration and reverence "discerning the Lord's body" for if we fail to do so we shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

The Lord's Supper was observed by the New Testament Christians on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7 & 1 Cor. 16:1,21) And since every week has a first day, the early Christians observed the Lord's Supper the first day of every week.

Now the observance of the Lord's Supper has ended and one of the leaders is leading the congregation in a special prayer of thanksgiving to God for the blessing he has bestowed. The people are preparing their hearts and minds for another act of worship, that being the act of GIVING.

"Upon the first day of the let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." (1 Cor. 16:2)

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7)

When we engage in this part of the worship we are simply bringing a gift of the blessings which God has blessed us with; symbolizing the fact that we have consecrated the fruit of our labors to God who made them possible. Notice that we are instructed to do this every first day of the week, and that we are to plan our giving. "Let each man do according as he hath purposed." Also we are to give according to how we have prospered. If we prosper more we are to give more.

Giving is to be an act of worship that we do with the spirit of cheerfulness and gladness of heart, for it is a joy and delight for the child of God to give to the Father.

The worship period is ending and what you have just listened to and observed through your mind's eye are the five avenues of Worship which God has ordained through command and example in the New Testament. (Singing, Pray-

ing, Teaching, Lord's Supper, Giving) At this point it will be well to remember the words of the apostle Paul, "Keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you." (1 Cor. 11:2).

REVERENCE IN WORSHIP

"God is greatly to be feared in all the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Psa. 89:7)

If you could have actually seen the worship service a moment ago, you would have been impressed not only with the simplicity of the service, but with the atmosphere of deep reverence. The assembly of worship is a sacred time. Imagine that you are walking into a room and there, sitting before you, were God and Christ. What would you do? What would you say? How would you act? Well, you see, this is what happens when you enter into a worship period. You step into the presence of God and Christ. Jesus said:

"Where two or three are together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20)

GOD IS PRESENT - CHRIST IS PRESENT

Feed your mind with this thought each time you enter into a worship service: "I am in the presence of God and Christ." Repeat it to yourself several times at the beginning of the worship and several times during the service. "I am in the presence of God and Christ."

Here is a good suggestion by a certain disciple of Christ and passed on to me several years ago. Write down on a sheet of paper these following verses and carry them to worship with you. Before the worship begins read them over to yourself slowly and thoughtfully.

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:28,29)

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isa. 26:3)

"I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee." (1 Chr. 29:17,18)

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

We should always prepare to meet our God in worship. This preparation should begin at home, the average individual, or family, rushing around on Sunday morning trying to get physically ready to go to worship. But it should be worked into the schedule so that each one can get spiritually ready as well. This may mean getting up in the morning thirty minutes earlier in order to have the necessary time, but those who do so have found that this is the key that unlocks the door to a day of meaningful and inspiring worship.

Here are two suggestions that we urge you to follow this Sunday in preparing yourself to meet God.

1. Just before leaving get everyone together for a brief devotional period. Read from the Psalms or some other inspirational material (the booklet Power for Today would be good.) Pray, asking God to help each of you to worship him in the proper manner.

2. Then, when you arrive at the church building, before leaving the car, remind yourself and those with you of the reason why you have come. Simply say, "Let us remind ourselves that we have come here for the purpose of worshipping God in spirit and in truth."

The suggestions made to you on this recording concerning worship are not based upon mere theory. They are practical suggestions that work. And you will find that after you have followed them for a few times that you are carrying a different heart and mind to worship - a heart and mind that are focused upon God. And when you bring God into focus all the insignificant things around you disappear.

"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, O Lord, will I seek." (Psa. 27:8)

ACTION PAGE
FOR
WHEN THE SAINTS MEET

1. SCRIPTURE READING FOR THIS WEEK.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23,24)

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (1 Chr. 16:29)

2. To help me grow in my worship to the heavenly Father I will set aside a certain amount of time each day for a brief period of private worship with my family - or alone. (This could be the same time you set aside for your daily Bible study.)

DAY:	TIME:
SUNDAY	
.....	
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SATURDAY

3. I want always for God to know of my great love for him. I want him to know that I have consecrated the fruit of my labors to his service. Therefore, I plan to give as he prospers me each week. I purpose to give \$..... per week, and to increase this amount cheerfully when I prosper more.

4. Suggestion: To help awaken yourself to the fact of the presence of God, speak of "going to worship," rather than "going to church." This will help make yourself conscious of what you are actually going to do - worship God.

