

Banner of Truth

"The truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

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A Medley of Matters about Worship

The most exalted privilege granted unto lowly man by God is that of worshipping him. We should reciprocate by offering him the most acceptable worship possible.

Offering him the kingdoms of the world and their glory, the Devil tempted Jesus saying, "fall down and worship me" (Matt 4:10). The Savior's response shows *whom* we are to worship: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). He revealed *how* we are to worship when He said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Let us thank God that all who would worship acceptably have the divine instructions as to the who and the how of worship. This information, if respected and followed would rule out and do away with most of the worship which people today engage. People must know these two things and we in the church also need to have a better understanding of them.

What Is Worship? Before proceeding we need to give attention to the definition of worship of God as revealed in his word. In most instances it is not good to take for granted that people fully understand Bible words or terms, even though they

may be quite commonly used. This is certainly true with regard to this important word.

According to *Vine's*, *proskuneo* is "the most frequent word rendered worship." He defines it: "to make obeisance, do reverence to (from *pros*, towards, and *kuneo*, to kiss)." *Thayer* has a very similar definition. A common definition, which I believe is a very good one is, "acts of reverence paid to God by man." There is no question that true worship involves the greatest degree of reverence and respect that man can offer. We shall emphasize this during the course of our discussion, and as we consider the five "acts" of worship in which the church is to engage. There is no end to the things done as worship by various peoples of the world, but we thank God that his word gives us true directions and instructions for acceptable worship.

I. THE HISTORY OF WORSHIP

By The History of Worship we mean things which are recorded in God's word and also some things which are a matter of uninspired history. This will be brief, due to the fact that we intend to give →

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1131 Hickory Grove Rd., Almo KY 42020

Elders:

Jimmy Lockhart (270) 753-4460; Mike Smith
(270) 437-4616; Marlin Pierce (270) 759-9649

Preacher:

Virgil Hale (270) 767-0625

Editor

Walter W. Pigg (270) 753-3675

164 Coles Campground Rd., Murray, KY
42071

Assistant Editor:

Alan Adams (850) 937-2460

1653 Pine Lane Dr., Cantonment, FL 32533

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a considerable amount of attention to the five acts of worship in which New Testament Christians are to engage, and ways by which this worship can be improved and made more acceptable to God.

The first acts of worship referred to in the Old Testament are those of Cain and Abel as recorded in Genesis 4. Cain and Abel both brought an "offering unto the Lord." Cain brought the "fruit of the ground" but Abel "also brought of the firstlings of his flock" (vv. 3, 4). The Lord had respect to Abel and his offering but to Cain's offering "he had not respect." We know the rest of the story: Cain's "countenance fell" leading finally to his murdering his brother, Abel.

There is a great lesson to be learned about worship from this example of Cain and Abel. Though several details about this worship are not given, we learn from The Book of Hebrews an essential ingredient: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he

obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4).

The lesson to be learned is that Abel's sacrifice was offered by *faith*. Herein is set forth a principle which is as valid today as it was in the time of Cain and Abel; that is, that our worship must be based and justified on the basis of faith. Since our faith is to be derived from the hearing of God's word (Rom. 10:17), it is evident that Abel followed God's instructions, but Cain did not. The Lord emphasizes the same principle when he said of acceptable worship: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jno. 4:24).

To worship God "in truth" demands that there be authority from God's word, the truth, for that which is done as worship. This unchangeable rule must be observed today, just as in the time of Christ, if worship is to be acceptable.

Old Testament history reveals a many things about worship which are no longer in effect. Since they are not included in the New Testament (the new covenant), it is wrong to engage in those things in our time. In the Old Testament we find that people offered animal sacrifices, burned incense, and so on. Mechanical instruments of music are also mentioned, and some today contend that this justifies the use of such now. But their mention in the Old Testament no more authorizes them than does the mention of animal sacrifices and incense authorize them as New Testament worship.

Worship In Secular History. This includes so many things that we could use this entire issue of BOT and not nearly cover them all. Therefore, we shall just note the tip of the garment, so to speak.

While in other countries I have observed a number of things involved in their worship. In Hinduism there are so many things that it would be impossible to come up with any uniformity in describing their worship. They worship three primary gods and many lesser ones. They have "fire walkers," and some flagellate themselves in various ways. The multitudes of Buddhists in various countries have their distinctive and several objects and methods of worship. Islam is the fastest growing

religion in the world and also in the U.S. They worship a god that teaches them to kill those who are not of their religion. The Tibetans have their “prayer wheels” by which they send up prayers. We have some from many pagan religions here in our country. The Roman Catholics revere so-called “saints,” have images, “holy water,” and a great many things which are not according to “truth” as set forth in John 4:24. People have sacrificed children and other humans to false gods. All of this has to do with worship that is false and unacceptable to God.

It is not our purpose to spend much time on the subject of pagan religions and their worship. Since God’s word reveals to us the truth concerning worship which is acceptable to Him, we may know that all other is false. Before proceeding to discuss the five acts of New Testament worship, we do want to call attention to another matter concerning worship.

An Innate Desire to Worship. There is much evidence to suggest that God created man with such a desire; that is, a “built-in” longing to worship some higher power. When Paul healed the impotent man the people said, “the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men, And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius...” (Acts 14:8-12). The first of the ten commandments was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). But biblical history records the fact that the people often violated this commandment. The Israelites went “a whoring after their gods” (Ex. 34:16). Idolatry constituted a serious problem with people from early on.

That people have an innate desire to worship something is seen in the fact that history reveals that just about all people in the course of human history have worshipped something. But the tragic thing about this desire to worship is that the vast majority of people have most of the time worshipped something or someone other than the true God. Needless to say that this worship is false and therefore vain, or worthless. Not only is it worthless, it results in the eternal condemnation of those who engage in it.

Why This Study of Worship? There are quite a

number of reasons, since worship is an integral part of serving the true God. But one of the primary reasons we should seriously study the subject of worship is that in too many cases our concept or understanding of true worship has changed during the past few decades; therefore, we need to know all that we can about this essential relationship with God. Not only has our concept of worship within the church changed in many instances, but we are now living in a time and society the likes of which we have never seen. I have reference to the many efforts in society to banish virtually every vestige of God and godly influence. This is happening in the political arena as well as with the materialistic progressives. When a society goes bankrupt in the spiritual realm, it will have an adverse effect upon worship.

The worship of many of the man-made religions has gone farther and farther from the divine pattern. Even religions which claim to be of the “Christian Religion,” are now teaching and practicing many things which have never had nor ever will have God’s approval. As the affinity for these religions increases with many of our brethren, their influence within the church will be seen as well. “Ignorant worship” is as much with us today as it was in the time of Paul. Speaking to the Athenians, who “spent their time in nothing else but, either to tell, or hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21), he said, “I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship...” (vs. 23). During my many years as a christian, I have not seen such an increase in “ignorant worship” as I have seen within the past few years.

This being said, we are now ready to begin a rather detailed study of the five acts of worship in which christians are to engage. Those five acts are: 1) The teaching and or hearing of God’s word; 2) the giving of our material means, or contribution; 3) prayer; 4) a cappella singing; and, 5) the Lord’s Supper. We shall consider this list as given, though there is no order set forth in the New Testament. In my earlier years as a Christian, these items were generally accepted as God-approved worship; but with some, things have changed. Our study of →

these five acts of worship will focus primarily on our corporate worship and those who lead us in these acts.

II. THE TEACHING/HEARING OF GOD'S WORD

When God's word is spoken to us and we thus hear God speaking to us, this is indeed an act of reverence paid to God by man. In this act of worship there should be a continued desire or yearning. The apostle Peter puts it this way: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). The supply of this "sincere milk" will never run dry for those who desire it. If the appetite wanes, so does the spiritual growth which is necessary for spiritual maturity.

There are a number of areas where improvement could be made in this act of worship. Opportunity implies responsibility, and this is true when it comes to teaching/hearing God's word. Our Bible classes and worship assemblies afford great opportunities, yet there is evidence of an irresponsible lack of desire for God's word. From the *hearing* perspective, our Bible classes to often reveal little time and interest in study; and, our preaching regularly caters to hearers who prefer pabulum to meat. From the *teaching* perspective, it is all too common to have Bible class teachers who are ill prepared or know little about what they are trying to teach; and, preachers often mount the podium with no focus, no point, and little Bible. Contributing to the general problem are elders when they are not capable of feeding the flock or being able "by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). Compared to a few decades ago, there seems to be a dearth of serious Bible students.

A paramount concern of leaders is that the flock be fed unpolluted feed; that is, that which is not in harmony with the truth. In some instances error is preached or taught and not one word is heard by way of correction or refutation. In the case of teaching children, there is now more emphasis upon fun and games rather than actually learning meaningful things from God's word. We see signs of this among adults as well.

When God's word is altered or perverted, teaching/hearing is no longer a true act of worship. Paul

speaks of those who "would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:7), and pronounces "anathema" upon those who pervert it (v. 8). Christ's response to the Scribes and Pharisees who came questioning Him was, "in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Another way by which the teaching/hearing of God's word ceases to be true worship, is in the use of some of the modern versions, which do not actually set forth the truth accurately.

There are also efforts to reduce the important time spent in teaching/hearing God's word. Vacation Bible Schools have been cut down to the point that some are even less than one day. Back when the church was growing, gospel meetings were often a week or even more, but now are short or shorter. A meeting for a whole week is almost unheard of. In the Banner of Truth lectures here in Murray, where the seventh will be conducted this year, only a very few of the people who could attend will do so. Some congregations will not have even one person in attendance; yet, in four days some twenty-eight Bible lessons will be presented by about eighteen speakers. These speakers, many of whom started during a time when there was a continued learning from God's word, represent well over a hundred years' experience in preaching and teaching.

There is no doubt that teaching/hearing of God's word is important; it is equally doubtless that we have much room for improvement in this area. We show disrespect for God's word when we engage in distractions as God's word is being read. Many think nothing of coming into the auditorium or classroom when God's word is being read, apparently not stopping to think that when God's word is being read, that is God speaking to us. There seems to be a tendency to divorce God from his word when he speaks. When God came down to speak with Moses on mount Sinai (Exodus 19) it was an awesome matter indeed. In our time, it is no less an awesome thing when God speaks to us through His word.

III. THE GIVING OF OUR MATERIAL MEANS

The first time the giving of material means is mentioned in God's word is the case of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). Such giving is showing reverence ↴

to God; it is thus an act of worship. We will focus primarily on giving as taught in the New Testament, but we first want to consider some things from the Old Testament. While we no longer live under the Old Testament, there are things we can learn from it, which may help us to be more appreciative of what is taught in the New Testament. Paul said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...” (Rom. 15:4). This would certainly include the subject of giving.

Under the Old Testament, God severely condemned people for failure to give as commanded. If such was the case then, it stands to reason that God would be displeased with our failure to give as commanded in our time. In Malachi chapter one, the Jews are rebuked for their unacceptable offerings. Malachi asks: “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil, and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil” (Mal. 1:8)? They viewed their worship as “a weariness” and brought before God that “which was torn, and the lame, and the sick” (v. 13).

Under the law of Moses, the sacrifices were to be the best rather than the worst or culls. The Passover lamb was to be the best. In principle, we are to follow the same rule under the Law of Christ. Though we are amenable to the laws of animal sacrifices and tithing, we are taught some important things about our giving. As to the amount we are to give, the Lord could not have been more understanding; we are to give as we have been prospered (I Cor. 16:1-2). Although we are not told what percentage of our incomes we are to give, our giving says something about us. In telling the Corinthians to abound in the “grace” of giving, Paul said it was to “prove the sincerity of your love” (2 Cor. 8:8). If we are truly sincere in our love, our giving will be greater than it would be if we are lukewarm and half hearted.

Paul sets forth some important aspects relative to giving in 2 Corinthians 9:7. We are not to give “grudgingly, or of necessity.” It is also interesting to note that we are to give as we “purpose” in our heart. He then tells us that “God loveth a cheerful giver.” Paul clearly teaches the need for planned or purposed giving: “Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many” (v. 2). Our giving should be planned and proportionate to how we prosper. In other

words, we personally plan to give a certain amount based upon our prospering a certain amount.

Unplanned or unpurposed giving is essentially haphazard giving. Having first taken care of what they deem most important, some seem to give on the basis of what is left over. Giving based on this principle is tantamount to shortchanging the Lord. Giving is either planned or unplanned. I doubt that there would be exceptions to the general rule that the amount of “planned giving” will be greater than the amount of “unplanned giving.”

Our worship by giving, has room for improvement. When compared with other religious groups, we are often pretty far down the list. What others give is not the way by which we determine what to give, but it does some times show that those who uphold and practice error give more than those of us who have the truth. It is typically true that where a good amount of teaching is done on giving the contribution has shown a good increase. We need to be taught on this aspect of worship as well as on the others. Of course, we know that teaching doesn’t always bring desired results, but we have the responsibility to declare the whole counsel of God regardless of the results produced. I recall preaching on this sensitive subject of giving at a congregation forty years ago. A dollar was worth much more then than now. But one brother, who was serving at the Lord’s Table, made a comment about my lesson on giving. His comment was words of the following order. “Brother Pigg’s lesson on giving was good; and to show what it meant to me, I’m doubling my contribution.” He then proceeded to stroke two one dollar bills and drop them in the collection plate.

Our giving is much better than it used to be, but there is room for improvement. And when and if the “sincerity of our love,” improves, our giving will. In my early days of preaching, when I was still in school, I had an invitation to preach in a place perhaps a hundred miles from Henderson, TN. When I preached morning and evening, as I recall it, I was given the entire contribution for that day. To the best of my memory that was \$4.35. It is true that I may not have been worth that, and even though that would have bought seventeen gallons of gas at that time, my family and I did not have much left over after expenses. →

IV. PRAYER AS PUBLIC WORSHIP

In the Bible, the subject of prayer is extensive. There are many outstanding examples of prayer recorded in the Old Testament. One is that of Daniel, who in spite of the decree that forbade prayer, Daniel “went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:8-10). This a great example of belief in prayer. Another one is that of Elias, who “prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (Jas. 5:17).

The New Testament is no less replete with examples. From Christ’s command to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44), prayer is mentioned and discussed many times. We know that it was and is an integral part of worship of the true and living God. As to the habit and routine of prayer, Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17). Speaking to God through prayer is indeed an act of reverence paid to God by man.

Christ sets forth the model prayer, often (and I think erroneously) referred to as “The Lord’s prayer” (Matt. 6:9-13). In Luke’s account it is said that a disciple said, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Lk. 11:1). That *model* prayer is a general pattern as to what our prayers should be. Another great prayer pattern, which may more aptly be called the Lord’s prayer, is recorded in John chapter seventeen.

We shall now set forth some conditions for acceptable prayer, and then some things which hinder God-approved prayer. By observing these things we trust that we may put forth an effort to make our worship in prayer more acceptable and in keeping with the teaching of Christ. We begin by suggesting:

One must be a Christian. The privilege of prayer is granted to those who are Christians. Whereas all Christians have the privilege of prayer, in corporate worship only men are to lead public prayers. The New Testament clearly teaches that those outside of Christ are not qualified to pray to the Father. Such people cannot truly address God as their “Father,” because He isn’t their Father. In addition to being a child of God, one is to be a righteous person. Peter says, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his

ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (I Pet. 3:12). “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16). The understanding of the blind man, which was healed by Christ was: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, an doeth his will, him he heareth” (Jno. 9:31). This was not an inspired man speaking, but his expressed understanding was not refuted. Is this not what Peter said in what we noted above? Another bit of evidence that one must be a Christian to offer acceptable prayer, is the fact that prayer is a “spiritual blessing,” and “all spiritual blessings” are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Prayer must be in faith. With regard to praying for wisdom, James said, “let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with wind and tossed. ...let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord” (Jas. 1:5-7).

Prayer should be unselfish. James said, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon lusts [pleasures]” (Jas. 4:3). We should not pray for that which in no way contributes to our spiritual well-being, rather to our hurt.

Prayer is to be in harmony with God’s will. It is not in harmony with God’s will to pray for that which God opposes. For example, we should not pray for God to supply the needs of a person who is too lazy to work. God’s law is that if one will not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:10). In Christ’s agony in the garden, He prayed, “Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). When He prayed the second time he prayed, “thy will be done.”

Things Which May Hinder Acceptable Prayer. Just as there are things which contribute to acceptable prayer as worship, there are things which may hinder the same. These are things which, if we are truly engaging in prayer as worship, we will try to avoid. Talking to God is a most exalted privilege and we should be thankful for it and try to make it as acceptable as possible. Let us note the following—

Failure to address God in prayer. In the model prayer, God is first addressed and as “our Father.” Sometimes those who lead public prayer quit

addressing God and start addressing the audience. When the leader begins to talk to the audience about God in the third person, he is no longer speaking to God. Some times the leader may even begin to quote what God's word says in some place. This must be directed to the audience, since God knows what his word says. Our minds should never be allowed to wander in prayer and let us forget that we are talking to God, an exalted privilege of God's people..

Long speaking is not necessary. One thing which stands out about the Lord's model prayer is its brevity. Yet it covers important areas. Christ said the hearers think "that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7). It does not take long for one to sincerely pour out his heart to God in praise and thanksgiving as well as making requests for blessings. I recall some teenagers who would jokingly guess how long a certain person would pray. They, of course, should not have been doing that, but neither should prayer leaders distract from the act by overly verbose prayers. In some instances the prayer leader appears to be presenting a lesson to the audience instead of communing with God.

High sounding and flowery words detract from simplicity and sincerity. Some times the prayer leader may use a different language to what is common to him. The vocabulary changes and seldom used flowery words are employed. There is no indication that I know of that suggests the Lord is impressed with this type of speaking neither do we find the prayers that are recorded in God's word to be characterized by such. It some times appears that there is an effort to impress the hearers and not the Lord.

Prayer of the leader should be loud enough for people to hear. Some people, including myself, don't hear as well as we used to. When the leader speaks so low that it can't be heard by some, they can't in truth say "Amen."

Trite expressions should be avoided. Of course we use some expressions more than once, but as much as possible we should exhibit the freshness and sincerity which comes from one pouring out his heart to God in unrehearsed language..

Unfaithful brethren should not lead the public prayer. When those who are known to be unfaithful are used to lead prayer, or for that matter other acts in

the assembly, a dangerous message is taught: being faithful to the Lord does not really matter that much. I have actually known people who advocated using unfaithful brethren in the services alleging that it might cause them to be faithful. This is nonsense.

Having discussed three acts of worship, let us consider a fourth.

V. WORSHIP IN SONG

Singing, when in harmony with God's word is indeed an act of worship. As in the other acts of worship, there is room for improvement in singing. We are thankful that we do not have to be exceptionally good singers for it to be acceptable. Singing is to a degree a matter of natural ability. Some are more gifted than others with the ability to sing; but it is reasonable to assume that some of us can learn to sing better if we really wish to do so. That being the case, should we not make an effort to improve?

The New Testament clearly teaches that singing is authorized worship. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Paul makes a very similar statement in 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."

It is a matter of fact that New Testament teaches a cappella singing; there is no biblical authority for the use of a mechanical instrument of music in worship. As faith comes from hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17), one may not "by faith" worship God with instruments of music, as God's word—in this case the New Testament—says "nothing" (cf. Heb 7:14) about it.

From Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, we note two things: 1) making melody in our hearts to the Lord, and 2) teaching and admonishing one another. This is act of worship involves mutuality, since teaching and admonishing one another is involved. The teaching and admonishing, of course, must be that which God's approves and not just something which pleases man. In more recent years there has been a tendency to direct our singing in the direction of what people want to hear, rather than that which praises God and encourages one another in their true worship of God. →

Let us consider some things which contribute to acceptable singing. We can improve in our participation in each of these acts; singing is no exception. Some of these improvement are pointed out in God's word; and, some things fall into the category of judgment, albeit reasonable judgment.

Sing scriptural songs. God has not only given us some inspired songs (e.g. The Psalms), but has also given us the truth and the ability to compose scriptural lyrics. We have liberty to decide what hymns to sing, but this decision should be based only on that which is in harmony with God's word. Some songs, even popular ones, teach things that are not true; we should avoid such songs. As we noted earlier, singing should not only offer praise to God but also should teach truths by which we admonish one another.

Song leaders should prepare. Since singing is an act of worship, it makes sense that the one directing singing should do the best job possible. A failure to do this is seen in a number of ways. A song leader should ideally select his songs beforehand. He should study those songs as to what message they carry and how they are to be sung. When a song leader begins to thumb through the song book, hesitating here and there, it makes people think he has not made preparation for this serious act of worship.

Song leaders should try to learn how to sing. The song books which we use give information as to how a song should be sung. A leader should at least acquaint himself with the rudiments of music. One can soon learn the difference between a quarter note and a half note. One can learn the pitch in which a song is to be properly sung.

When the leader fails to hit the right tune top side or bottom, the worship in song suffers. God's word doesn't supply us with the melody for our songs, but sincerity in purpose should compel us to do this act, like all that we are to do, "decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

The timing and pitch of a song should be proper. If there is anything which tends to dampen the spirits of worship, it is songs which are too slow and too low. My dad used to use an expression: "Like dead lice falling off a mule." I think he meant by that the mule was dead, and the lice couldn't survive. Songs, even if they are written to be sung slowly, can and

should be sung with some life in them. We some times sing the song, "In the Morning of Joy," as if it were "In the Mourning of Joy." This song should convey a spirit of happiness and a great and positive outlook.

Songs should be sung as written. Unless there is so good reason to do otherwise, the leader should not make changes in how a song is sung; otherwise, he may draw undue attention to himself. We certainly do not want to appear to be showing off. Outside of coming up with a better one and having good reason to do so, it is best to follow the author's arrangement.

Avoid jazzed-up songs. I know this is an area of judgment, but in my judgment many of the songs we use are not conducive to a spirit of worship; they rather appeal to the desires of the singers. When people prefer the jazzed-up melody of songs, one wonders if their mind is on the thought of praising God, or that of pleasing self. It has been, and seems more so today, that in worship less attention is given to God

We should not sing a lie. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves singing things which are as false as can be. We sing, "we'll work till Jesus comes," and then hardly turn a hand to do anything. This example can be multiplied by many things we say in song.

Faithful brethren who can sing, should do so. Since singing is an act of worship, those who could sing but fail to do so, are saying no to the opportunity to engage in God-approved worship.

Singing is the act of worship which has been most subjected to innovations and aberrations. We now have "Praise teams," "Singing groups," such as *A Cappella* and a variety of others. That which is now called "Progressive worship," is surely an affront to God in more ways than one.

Much more could be said about singing as an act of worship, but we must move on to the fifth act of worship as noted earlier.

VI. THE LORD'S SUPPER AS WORSHIP

This act of worship has been left until the last, not because it is less important. It is by all means very important and involves our emotions in a very effective way. But there is the idea with some that the Lord's Supper is about the only act of worship that is important. About forty years, a brother who lived two or three miles from the church building said he would, †

if necessary, crawl to the building to take the Lord's Supper. He would not, however, ride, walk or crawl to attend the evening worship services. His excuse was that we just had "Too much preaching." Evidently he considered the Lord's Supper as just about the only act of worship in which we should engage. Over the years, I have known those who would come to the church building on Sunday morning, the Lord's Supper, and then cut out, forsaking the other acts of worship.

Christians, though generally recognizing it as worship, do not always treat the Lord's Supper with the respect it deserves. Years later, the apostle Paul refers back to the night Jesus instituted the Supper explaining that after Jesus had given thanks he said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Christ then took the cup, and when he had supped, said: "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24-25). Paul adds, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (v. 26).

Surely the Lord's Supper should will touch our hearts. We should focus on what it is all about. There has never been such an example of love and sacrifice for the benefit of sinful man as that demonstrated by our Lord when he gave his all for man. Observing the Lord's Supper should be a most solemn and serious matter with us. Let us offer some suggestions which would result in a more meaningful observance of the world's greatest memorial. Its importance to the early Christians is seen in the fact that they observed it upon the first day of, the first day of every week, every week having a first day.

Our minds should be directed to the importance of this memorial. I have over the years seen the Lord's Supper observed in quite a number of places with some incidental differences. In a gospel meeting in one place, the brethren took about fifteen minutes in observing the Lord's Supper with several brethren making comments. Whereas I could not say that was wrong, it did mean that I had to go overtime to finish my lesson. Perhaps prudence would suggest a more orderly and seemly arrangement. Then, of course, there are times when people seem to "race" through the Supper. I would suggest neither extreme.

It is my belief that efforts should be made to draw the minds of the worshippers to what is taking place in the observance of the Supper. I can remember the first place I preached more than once, and how one of the brethren at the observance of the Lord's Supper, stood up and said, "All who want to take of this stand up. We know what this is fer." Though perhaps a bit blunt, he did at least call attention to the Lord's supper.

It is not uncommon for brethren sometimes to go to the table, position themselves, and not say a word until someone starts offering a prayer. In such a case, though I would know what the purpose of the Lord's Supper is, were I a visitor who did not know what the Lord's Supper is about, I would not know what was taking place. Even for one who is familiar with the Lord's Supper, it is good to be reminded of what we are doing. My mind should be drawn to this most serious and sacred act of worship.

Some times the contribution is mentioned just before the plates are passed, when not one word was said about the Lord's Supper. This could lead to a ritual, where an act is carried out but without the hearts of the individuals involved. Before I obeyed the gospel, I once attended a Catholic service and did not understand what was going on. A bell would ring and people would do automatically go through certain motions.

It is refreshing when an account of the Lord's Supper is read in preparation for the observance. Paul list of important facts in First Corinthians chapter eleven can serve as a good reminder of what it is all about.

The Lord's Supper should be a high priority. Christ said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33). This certainly includes the Lord's Supper as an act of worship. But some times it is relegated to a matter of convenience. This is seen when brethren decide to do something they consider more important than worshipping God, such as visiting friends or relatives, or other things. Then, as a matter of convenience they take the Lord's Supper on Sunday evening.

Distractions should be avoided. Quietness and reverence should prevail. Children should be taught to be quiet, and adults should avoid speaking to others, writing notes, or things that interfere with serious thinking. Some times people cause a distraction →

by coming into the auditorium when the Supper is being observed, as well as at other inconvenient times.

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

It would be easy to devote the entire issue of the paper to each of these acts of worship, but that is not our intention. We simply want to hit some high points, trusting that it will give us something to think about, in making our worship to God more acceptable. We have attempted to call attention our need to worship God in the most acceptable manner possible. It is my hope that the discussion will encourage more study as to what worship should be.

The opportunity to worship God is an awesome matter, for which we should ever be thankful. We should both be thankful that God has revealed to us the *who* and the *how* of worship. As in all manner of serving God we should aspire to be as pleasing as possible. We should be also be thankful that God has provided us with so much information to be successful in that endeavor.

I have over the years seen many encouraging things, but also seen some discouraging things. One thing that deeply disturbs me is the attitude toward worship exhibited by many. The serious attitude which should exist is often lacking. The very core of serving God acceptably involves worship. If we falter in our worship, we have faltered in serving God in general. There is a very noticeable tendency now in worship to focus more upon what is pleasing to man than what is pleasing to God. This can render our worship vain. It also accounts for the present drift into entertainment in lieu of worship. People often seem not to be pleased with what God wants, rather what they want; and, the leadership often goes along and/or encourages this.

We would particularly appreciate our readers' response and thoughts on this general area of discussion. I am deeply concerned about our worship in general, and if I am off course in this I want to know where and how. If these things make sense, then they need to be emphasized. The changes which have occurred over the past fifty years have seldom resulted in raising the level of respect for the Lord's will, but more often than not have contributed to disrespect.

May the Lord bless us as we endeavor to worship Him acceptably.

—Editor

Banner of Truth Lectures

June 25-28, 2007

Theme: The Urgent Need for and Basis of Optimism within the Lord's Church

Place: The third floor theater of the Curris Center on the Murray State University Campus in Murray, Kentucky.

Schedule: Seven lessons each day for four days beginning at 10:00 a.m. and the last lesson at 8:00 p.m.

Speakers are now being selected and subjects will soon be assigned. This is an opportunity to profit from the knowledge and experience of eighteen or twenty speakers who represent hundreds of years of study and experience.

For those who live within traveling distance of Murray, KY, this is an opportunity to engage in a spiritual feast, which is needed in every place today. Preachers, elders, and others within congregations have the opportunity to encourage members to get a spiritual boost by attending this event as much as possible.

Motel rates are reasonable, and places to eat are numerous. To many, the period of fellowship enjoyed by fellow brethren makes the trip worthwhile.

We encourage you to ask for more information if needed. We will soon be able to announce speakers and subjects.

The 7th Annual Banner of Truth Lectures are for all who love the truth.

—Editor

Does Christ Approve of “Drinking in Moderation”?

Some, even christians, approve of what they are wont to call “Drinking in Moderation.” By this, they mean that which is not extreme or excessive, notwithstanding the fact that these terms are relative. In the following discussion we shall respond to one who takes the following position: “Finally, I cannot say that Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation.” His effort to justify his position is set forth under the following heading which appeared in the *Murray Ledger & Times* (January 12, 2007, page 9A)—

What would Jesus say about drinking in today’s times?

By Richard Youngblood,
Minister at
University Church of Christ

Brother Youngblood sets forth a question followed by his answer, both of which are reproduced between the broken lines.

Question: Since Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast (*John 2:1-11*), does this mean that he would approve of drinking of alcoholic beverages?”

Answer: While I have a strong inclination to answer with a simple and direct “No,” I have to admit that the answer to this question is not that easy. Let’s first examine the Biblical evidence; then we can draw some conclusions.

Jesus well knew that throughout the Old Testament wine is both praised and condemned. At times it is an accepted part of life, a source of joy and blessing. (*Ecclesiastes 10:19; Isaiah 55:1; Genesis 14:18; Judges 19:19; I Samuel 16:20*). At other times wine and other strong drinks are spoken against (*Proverbs 23:29-35; Isaiah 28:7-8*).

The wise man of the *Proverbs* said,. “Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (*Proverb 20:1*). The prophet Isaiah warned: “Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. . . . Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks” (*Isaiah 5:11 and 22*).

Until well after New Testament times and the life of Jesus on earth, there was little water that was completely safe to drink. Methods for preventing fermentation were not well

known. Thus, the apostle warned, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and frequent illnesses” (*I Timothy 5:23*).

From the above, I conclude that under the circumstances in existence in the ancient world, wine taken in moderation was acceptable; but drunkenness was never acceptable (*Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:21*). However conditions are very different in our modern world.

We do not have the same problems with impure water and fermentations as the people of the ancient world did. We have safe and healthy alternative beverages for social events as well as home use that do not have the potential for intoxication or addiction.

There is a great difference between driving a donkey cart and driving a modern high-powered machine under the influence of alcohol. Hundreds of thousands of lives are lost every year in America because of alcohol related accidents on an off our highways.

Finally, I cannot say that Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation; but in view of the above evidence, I do believe he would discourage it in our modern world. After all Jesus also taught his followers to be like salt that preserves the earth from the rottenness of decay, and he wanted them to be a shining light on a hill leading others to glorify God (*Matthew 5:13-16*).

We need to ask how does the use of alcoholic beverages in our world today bring glory to God? I don’t think it does.

I pray that we will prayerfully consider what we have said here. I do not use alcoholic beverages socially or recreationally at any level, and I continue to discourage others from doing so.

I believe that is what Jesus would do.

Brother Youngblood’s article raises a number of serious questions; and we are concerned whether his “conclusions” are based on “Biblical evidence” as he suggests? Does God’s word and its authority actually change due to changes in the world? Will Richard’s position encourage some, who might not have done otherwise, to drink in what he calls “moderation”?

Our brother implies that whenever “wine” is mentioned it is intoxicating, it contains alcohol. Note that he says “wine and other strong drinks.” He errs greatly when he fails to point out the well-known fact that wine, as referred to in God’s word, is a generic term which includes both alcoholic and nonalcoholic types; the context is left to determine the difference. →

The most often used words for wine in Hebrew and Greek are: *yayin* in the Hebrew, and *oinos* in the Greek. Both terms can be used for wine that is intoxicating and wine that is not. To suggest that every time the word wine is used that it refers to an intoxicant is simply not according to facts. Brother Richard does not at all bring out this information in his widely publicized article.

Another matter that needs to be considered is, What does “Moderation” mean? To one person it would mean one thing and to another it might mean something considerably different. The word is not defined by objective truth, but it is rather determined by the subjectivism of the individual. Even the person imbibing alcoholic beverage would be at a loss to describe “moderation.” After the first drink, one’s definition is likely to change. The idea of moderation presents a real problem. If I were to start drinking, how would I know when to stop to keep it in the bounds of moderation? Could brother Youngblood, were present, tell me when I go beyond “moderation”?

In Bible times, there were a number of methods for preserving grape juice, or “wine,” as it is referred to in the Bible. There are a variety of references one may use to study Bible “wines.” Anyway, the bottom line is that sometimes “wine” in the Bible is grape juice.

Our brother refers to Paul’s instruction to Timothy to “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” [KJV], and leaves the impression that this is authority for everyone to drink wine. The statement to Timothy is one specific instruction to one person, to use a “little wine” for medicinal purposes. First, there is no way to prove that the wine under consideration here was alcoholic; and, second, it is a horrible assumption to extrapolate from this passage and say, “in the ancient world, wine taken in moderation was acceptable.” Furthermore, where is even one instance in the Bible of drinking intoxicating wine authorized by God? In contrast, you can find a number of instances where the drinking intoxicating wine is unequivocally condemned.

Does God’s word change in its meaning along with change in the world, in this case “our modern world”? If it does, that means that God’s word now does not mean what it did in the first century. I will affirm that God’s word today means what it did when it was given. It was all-sufficient then (2

Tim. 3:16-17) and is all-sufficient today.

That brother Youngblood believes differently appears from his example of a “donkey cart” and a “modern high-powered machine.” In other words, a man driving a donkey cart would not be subject to the same law with regard to drinking, as would the driver of an automobile. This would suggest that God did not set forth His law for all time, but that it would change with the change of times. There are those who believe that very thing, but they are wrong, dead wrong. Imagine applying this reasoning to places in India and others I have visited; it would mean that those driving the ox carts would still be at liberty to use wine in moderation, but it would be different with those driving automobiles.

If our brother does not believe “Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation,” why does he believe He would “discourage it in our modern world”? Furthermore, if Jesus would not condemn drinking in moderation, why would doing so set a bad example as per Matthew 5:13-16?

Richard asks, “We need to ask how does the use of alcoholic beverages in our world today bring glory to God?” He responds, “I don’t think it does.” That is entirely too weak. In view of all that God’s word has to say about the use of alcoholic beverages, we can, based on the truth, say: *I know* using alcoholic beverages in our world today does not bring glory to God.

Brother Richard hopes that those reading his article will “prayerfully consider what I have said here.” They should, but they need to consider what is said as it relates to what God’s word says. The idea that God’s word changes as the world changes is a very dangerous idea. The faith which was “once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3, ASV), is unchangeable. People are accountable for conforming to it, not vice versa (Rom. 12:1-2).

The position that Richard Youngblood has advocated in the *Ledger and Times* — drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation is not condemned by Christ — is not good. We should be deeply concerned as to the influence this position can have upon people, especially our young people. If we encouraged such, and cause even one person to become a drunkard, that otherwise would not have. We are not without guilt. All drunkards started with their first drink —*Editor*

Baptism and its Relationship to Salvation

We first need to define the terms *baptism* and *salvation*. This is due to the fact that there is so much misunderstanding relative to the use of these important words. Baptism, as it is used in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16), means a “burial” (Rom. 6:3-4), and is for those who are capable of “believing” (Mk. 16:16). It is also for those who have “repented” (Acts 2:38). Salvation, as we are using the word in this discussion, has reference to the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38) which were committed before baptism. After one has been “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), it is not needful to be baptized again in order to have the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins for the scripturally baptized believer is promised upon the confession of those sins (I Jno. 1:7-9).

The only way to learn the relation of baptism to salvation is to go to the only source of truth on this subject, the word of God, by which we will be judged (Jno. 12:48). It is imperative that we rely upon this divine truth rather than the teachings of men, which are varied and conflicting. We shall note only a few instances where the word baptism is used in the New Testament, but let us point out that there is no difficulty in seeing the connection between baptism and salvation in these references, providing we accept what the Scriptures clearly say.

In the Great Commission as recorded by Mark (16:15-16), the relationship between baptism and salvation is stated plainly: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” To say that belief is necessary to salvation but that baptism is not necessary, is to reject the Lord’s inspired word. In Acts 2:38, those asking, “what shall we do?” were told: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....” To say that repentance is essential to having one’s sins forgiven, but that baptism is not essential, is to reject the inspired words of the apostle. Saul, later Paul, was told to go into the city and it would be told him what he “must do” (Ac 9:6). When there, he was told: “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

That salvation is inseparably connect with baptism is

shown from the fact that it is through baptism that one gets “into Christ.” Paul says plainly that one gets into Christ, where salvation is found. He says plainly that people are “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). He equally plainly tells us that salvation is “in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:10). If salvation is found in Christ (and it is), and if one gets into Christ through baptism (and one does), it is giving God’s word the lie to say that salvation may be had without scriptural baptism.

[This is a portion of an article from the *Sunny View Reminder*, August 1, 1981] —Editor

Lipscomb Continues Her Drift

An article in *The Tennessean*, Jan. 24, 07, is entitled: **Lipscomb hosts father-daughter conference**. The following are several selective, representative quotations—

On Saturday, Feb. 10, Lipscomb University will host a done-day conference for Nashville fathers and daughters.

The Father-Daughter Summit, held from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., will feature worship, break-out sessions, talks by the founder of Promise Keepers, and activities for each father and daughter pair.

Lipscomb University’s Family and Consumer Sciences Department sponsors the summit, which is in its second year.

So many people who came said to us, We hope you will do this again. And men who didn’t get a chance to go called me to say, When will the next one be held, John Conger, chairman of the Lipscomb Family and Consumer Sciences Department and a minister at Hillsboro Church of Christ, said in a recent news release.

Founding president of Promise Keepers Randy Phillips will speak, along with his 18-year old daughter, Kimberly Phillips.

Other speakers include CEO of the National Center for Fathering, Carey Casey; Jeanett Charles, who founded Divine Alternatives for Dads Services, or DADS; and Doug Webster, a minister who authored *Dear Dad and Dear Mom*, based on interviews with kids about their dads.

...the price is \$99 in advance and \$109 at the door.

If one has kept up with the happenings at Lipscomb for the past several years, there is little cause to be surprised at activities which are announced nowadays. →

The Revelations of Time and Space

One of the first things to catch my attention in the article was the announced speakers. Of the several speakers mentioned, nothing is said as to their religious affiliations. Doug Webster is said to be “a minister.” Carey Casey, in other information about the event, “is said to have “worked years as a pastor in the inner city of Chicago.”

It doesn't appear that these speakers are New Testament Christians. Being a “minister” and a “pastor” doesn't mean being a true Christian. We do know something about Randy Phillips, the founder of Promise Keepers.

The Promise Keepers are a religious group consisting of a conglomeration of denominational people, who support a wide variety of error. A few years back some of our brethren went after this error in a big way. The organization was a promoter of error in its beginning, and if anything has changed, I haven't heard about.

It is not a highly uncommon thing now for our brethren to join up in fellowship with denominational people, even to the extent of having those people teach our people. This has happened at a number of places, as if those people have truth that we don't know about and need to be taught by those in error.

A friend from Nashville summarized the Lipscomb event in an excellent way:

What gets me is that ‘Christian Parents’ are sending their children to these schools (dens of false teaching) and the kids go home thinking all is well because they learned at the feet of scholars. The Promise Keepers believe all is well with any religion and that same idea is streaming from Lipscomb and other schools daily.”

As history reveals, that “our schools” have been at times a detriment to the cause of Christ. We are now seeing some of the very same that happened quite a long time ago. Why can't brethren see this? It almost has to be one of the two following reasons: One, they simply don't know any better. Two, they know what they are doing and have chosen this course for some reason or other. The second reason is much worse than the first. Think on these things. —Editor

We often cite Genesis 1:1 pointing out the incidental reference to the five fundamentals of reality: Time (“beginning”); Force (“God”); Energy (“created”); Space (“heavens”); Matter (“earth”). Two on the list frequently remind us of our limitations: time and space.

Here, there, now and then, are easily spelled, pronounced and enunciated; yet, this quartet can be downright complicating, demanding, and even ornery. It is little wonder that Paul includes God's being “manifested in the flesh” as part of the “mystery of godliness,” which mystery he said is “great” (1Tim 3:16). Try wrapping your mind around the idea of the infinite eternal God occupying flesh where he—shall we say—experienced “here” and “there,” and “now” and “then.” The “mystery” is indeed “great”; and, as per the way you and I will live our lives, and thereby be judged, so also are the concepts of time and space great

Here and *there*: not a day passes that we do not make choices about these two adverbs. Given the nature of here and there and my inherent limitations, when I choose one, I exclude the other. And, when I choose one to the exclusion of the other, this implies that I have my reasons—obligation, pleasure/displeasure, profit, and so on—for counting *here* superior to *there*, or vice versa. James, albeit from a different perspective, talked about *superior* here as opposed to *inferior* there. This is in his comments about sinful respect of persons whereby one might say to one visitor, “sit thou here,” and to another “stand thou there” (Jam 2.3). In another words, their prejudices implied that “here” in such a case was superior to “there.” This is not the only instance in which we imply our prejudices.

When the church—the local church of which you/I are/am a member—meets or gathers at its regular times for Bible study or worship; for gospel meetings; VBS; lectureships; work days; door-knocking, each of us —Continued on P. 16

Lite Preachers and *Lite* Preaching

The Book of Zephaniah is almost hot to the touch. He opens hard and fast with words of judgment upon Judah. Unlike her sister to the north, Judah had known not only faithful prophets, but also great reformer kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah. It was in “the days of Josiah” Zephaniah proclaimed, “the day of Jehovah is at hand” (1:7), which theme thereafter dominates the book. Corruption, impiety, cruelty, and so on were so rampant as to have obscured Josiah’s valiant efforts and years’ long work at cleaning house. It’s a recurring biblical theme: Spurned opportunity and advantage stoke the fire of the “fierce anger of Jehovah” (2:2).

Having judged the “nations” (2:14), this pointed preacher now turns his attention to the sins of “the oppressing city,” Jerusalem (3:1). “Her princes...her judges...her prophets” (3:4-5); none, it seems, escaped censure. We are particularly concerned here with his description of her preachers, the prophets. They, he said, “are light and treacherous persons.”

The word “light” translates the Hebrew word *pachaz*, which means, “to be wanton, be reckless, be frothy.” It primarily is used to describe the rolling, bubbling motion of boiling water (*Gesenius*, p. 671-2); which is why Jacob described his son Reuben as “boiling over as water” (Genesis 49:4; KJV, “unstable as water”). Inspiration’s chosen Hebrew word, and our translation “light” well describe a class of Old Testament preachers who were driven by their passions and desires, not truth; who were reckless in their application of God’s Word and in their choice of what they would and would not preach; who were frothy, air-headed and convictionless.

Lite preaching was a stench then, and is no less so today. We have so many *lite* preachers among us. They will say—or, not say—anything; they will perform, for a buck, like those Abimelech hired for seventy pieces of silver: “vain and light fellows” (Jdg 9:4).

Our *lite* preachers are reckless with the Bible. They promote such puerile and false notions as: grace rules out law, and law grace; preach the man, not the plan; unity in diversity; restoration of pure New Testament

religion is only a goal to be pursued never achieved, and so on. These are they who, despite the fact that the Lord, “who has authority over all flesh” (John 17:2), has said “whosoever...except” with regard to divorce and remarriage, would apply His teaching to less than those to whom He applied it, or take exception to the Lord’s use of “except.” Such *lite* preachers are dangerous in that “they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. (Isaiah 9:16).

Our *lite* preachers are also frothy. In the absence of substance, they seek to impress their audiences with dramatic, theatrical bombast. Cappuccino comes to mind here. The pretentious name notwithstanding, and even if you sip with a protruding pinkie, it’s still just really strong coffee with a frothy milk head. Shooting steam into cool milk makes that milk head. Like our *lite* preachers, it spews and bubbles inside a nice little head. You can even sprinkle cinnamon on the froth for taste and looks. And, like our *lite* preachers, that head of froth is about 99% hot air. Rather than serious study and conviction, they’ve discovered it’s easier to poof up and dress up ignorance.

Our *lite* preachers are also the ones who spend their waking hours majoring in the latest *who* is doing *what* to *whom*. They are *pachaz*: wanton, reckless, and frothy. These cappuccino heads spew, they froth and they swell. They give lip service to the “whole counsel of God” all the while limiting the concept to whatever happens to be their latest cause or team of preference. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees embracing one another, these *lite* ones can also easily embrace what was once outrageous and anathema. *Lite* people can seamlessly switch from confederate to enemy and back again. *Lite* preachers live by the latest roster, rather than by personal study, conclusion and conviction.

Because we want health and vitality, we focus on *lite* varieties of foods and dishes. That may be all well and good for our physical health, but these *lite* preachers and their *lite* preaching are simply sapping and will ultimately destroy the congregations they influence. The “fierce anger of Jehovah” awaits the *lite*. —AA

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Continued from P. 13— is faced with this matter of space. We will either be “here” or contrarily “there.” What will our reasons be for determining the one to be superior to the other?

Then there is time, that stuff about which we are to be “circumspect” and which we are to “redeem...” (Eph 5.15, 16). There “was an evening and there was a morning, one day” (Gen 1.5ff). Here is where it all got started. Each of those “days” is the same length, twenty-four hours; and 365 of them make up one year. Generally speaking, somewhere between “three-score” and “four-score” of these years, and our affairs in this world are over (cf. Ps 90.10).

Count up all of your home church’s activities, and add up the total numbers of hours in a year’s time. Using either days or hours as your measure, put that figure over the number of days or hours in a year. Divide the bottom number into the top number. This is the percentage of your life you spend doing church stuff assuming you are always “here.”

People can be adept and subtle at cloaking their prejudices, and true feelings. A smile, a wink, sometimes belies a knife in the back given the chance; but, time and space refuse to be fooled. Our prejudice in favor of *here* over *there* when we choose to be in a place other than where the church meets and/or works will stand in bold relief against our absence. *Here* sometimes, as far as our choices are concerned, boldly says, “I do not like *there*.”

Our preference, our prejudice, for self, or —God forbid—sin, over God and his Will is measured by *now* and *then*. Heaven-bound people realize the necessity of subordinating now to then; whereas too many like to talk about then, but live only for now.

Time and space; friend or foe? They can be either; they are revealing; and, they will surely figure in our judgment. —AA

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EDITOR’S EMAIL: wpiggbot@myshadetree.com
ELECTRONIC BOT: *Via David Lemmons’ website*
BOT.LemmonsAid.net
DAVID’S LEMMONSAID E-MAIL:
LemmonsAid-Subscribe@YahooGroups.com
EMAIL: dlemmons@netscape.com