

The Due Order:

A Study in the Implications of Biblical
Worship

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Introduction

This book has caused me great conflict, sorrow, and joy. The subject of worship is one of great consequence. The principle presented is simple enough: God gets to define and set limitations on worship. “The Due Order” is a term taken from I Chronicles 15 and implies that there is a right way in offering up service to God. Considering the son of Adam, Cain, is enough to prove the point. He offered his offering before his brother and was rejected because it wasn’t the right offering nor was it done in the right spirit.

The pages that follow were originally written several years ago and have only been lightly revised in the effort to make the work more readable to a wider audience. I am thankful that, after many years, I can return to these pages and find that my mind has not changed because the God who wrote the Scriptures studied does not change. There are few things that I am certain of in this life, but I know beyond any doubt that God deserves and demands to be worshipped in a way that transcends culture, preference, or feeling.

My prayer is that you will go through this study with me with a mind open to receiving the Scriptures. I hope that, by the end of the book, you will 1) still be reading and 2) will be making the true worship of God through Christ the chief pursuit of your life.

For Christ,

John Spurgeon Huggins
2025

Chapter One: The Subtlety of Satan

Satan's strategies never change. Sure, the devices of temptation and sin might look different than they appeared thousands of years ago, but rest assured, the tactics are the same. Conduct is much easier to change than character. A few quick observations will verify that Satan is still playing the same old game.

Take the first words we find him speaking for example. "... And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?" (Genesis 3:1) First, we note that he approached the woman when she was by herself. Satan works the most havoc when we are isolated. Eve did not receive the command directly from God as Adam did, but as a command from her husband. This is important because, at his core, Satan hates the communication of truth.

From this observation we see that Satan attacks our knowledge (and subsequent teaching) of Scripture and attempts to sow seeds of doubt in regards to the commandment of God. Any Bible-believing Christian can expect to have his or her knowledge of the Word of God challenged and we had better be sure that the commands we receive line up with the commandments God dispensed in His Word. Adam had the task of instructing his wife concerning the command of God and we, in like manner, have the holy duty of making disciples of all nations and "teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20) If we want to be able to defend ourselves and biblical truth we must have the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" firmly in our hands and the "helmet of salvation" covering our minds. (Ephesians 6:13-17)

Satan also seeks to call into question the legitimacy of the command of God by saying "hath God said?" It's almost as if he asked Eve if she was certain that it was God who was issuing the

commands. We must not only know what the Word of God teaches but we must also be thoroughly convinced that it is the very Word of God and that it is completely without fault and without error. We are sure to fall into the snare of the enemy if we are wavering in our commitment to this truth. We must be firm in our conviction that the Scriptures were given by divine inspiration or else we will be pliable in the hands of the enemy.

A third comment can be made concerning the way Satan worded the commandment. “Ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?” Notice how restrictive Satan made the commandment sound. “God has made trees that are good and then commanded you not to eat from them?! Is that really what God has commanded you?” Well, no, that wasn’t what God commanded. Yes, God did place a restriction in His command, but his actual command was “Of *every* tree of the garden thou mayest *freely* eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17, emphasis added) Notice the deception of the adversary here. By rewording the command, he made it seem as though God was withholding something good from them. When you consider the actual command of God you will notice that the only thing God was keeping from Adam and Eve was death.

Critics of the Bible are quick to accuse the commandments of God as being harsh, joyless, or arbitrary. Even though God does command us in such a way that limits the “free expression of the flesh,” it is because the flesh wants to choose for itself without the true knowledge of what is actually good. The flesh thinks it will be satisfied with an abundance of food, drink, riotous living, unbridled sexual desires, and the constant consuming of mindless entertainment. What God instructs seems awfully limiting to the desires of the flesh because God demands out of us sober-mindedness, self-discipline, self-denial, giving of self and substance to others, and other things the world does not see as enjoyable. When we view the commandments of God through spiritual eyes, though,

we see He only limits those things that would bring us death and dissatisfaction in life and that He promotes the free, proper worship of Himself. As the apostle states, “his commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3) Satan seeks to make things that are intended for our benefit seem overbearing and overly restrictive.

Worship and music exist in Heaven. Even before Satan's fall we find references to musical instruments. In the lamentation of the Prince of Tyre (a city that was situated just north of Israel), Ezekiel begins to pull the curtains back on the true culprit of wickedness. Beginning in Ezekiel 28:11, this passage describes someone who could not be a normal earthly prince. The Scripture describes this character as having been “full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty” and furthermore states that he had “been in Eden the garden of God.” No humans aside from Adam and Eve were ever in Eden. Furthermore, Eden was lost to man several thousand years before the time of Ezekiel's writing. When we view this passage of scripture with spiritual understanding, we see that it is clearly talking about Satan before pride entered his heart and he rebelled against God. The prophet describes him as “the anointed cherub” and says “thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Right in the middle of this passage in Ezekiel we find a fascinating statement: “the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.” Tabrets and pipes refer to musical instruments. Not only did music and musical instruments exist before the fall of Satan, but because the word “workmanship” means “occupation or business,” we see that Satan was entrusted with the business of music in Heaven before his fall.

Knowing that Satan, the father of lies and deception, was a chief musician in Heaven certainly gives us reason to believe that he places a high priority on the corruption of music. We can draw further evidence in the fact that the first musical instruments on earth came

from the wicked line of Cain. Jubal was “the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” (Genesis 4:21) Someone might say to these things that if Satan has been set on corrupting music since its earthly beginnings, then we should just avoid music outright. This argument, however, cannot be used for the complete abstinence of all music because Satan only seeks to corrupt things that are valuable. We do not say that since he seeks to pervert truth that we will abandon it. Instead, we should say that since Satan seeks to pervert music, we will defend it. After all, music did not cease to exist in heaven after the fall of Satan as we see the worship of God and the use of musical instruments in Revelation 4 and 5.

Bringing the lessons learned from these two biblical accounts together, we see that Satan seeks to attack anything that God intends for His glory and our good. We also discover Satan’s tactics against us: our knowledge of the commandments of God, our faith that the commandment comes from God, and our understanding of the commandment’s purpose. Music is heavenly in its nature and exists in its purest form for the purpose of worshipping God. Having these principles in hand, let us make some practical applications.

First, music is not about us. To think that music, something that is eternal and heavenly, should solely be used for entertainment and frivolity is sinful. It is not “my music” just as much as it is not “my body,” “my Bible,” or “my church.” We are guilty of claiming too much for ourselves. My music ought to be God’s music; my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; my Bible ought to be viewed as God’s Word; my church is the Bride of Christ. The sooner we realize that we “are dead” and our lives are “hid with Christ in God” the better. (Colossians 3:3) To offer up things based on personal preference when we are commanded to crucify our wills and desires to God is folly and only serves to feed the flesh in its rebellion against God. Understand, Christian, that there are biblical principles regarding music and worship and remember that, when the flesh strives against

the acceptance of these principles, we are called to the holy duty of mortifying our members upon the earth (Colossians 3:5).

Secondly, remember that the commandments of God are not restrictive in their intent. God is not wanting to withhold some good thing from you, but He wants you to be able to freely enjoy that which is best. There were many times where I unsuccessfully “gave up” music that I enjoyed for a season but eventually came back to because I found no joy outside of the sensual sounds that fancied my heart. I only found success when I realized that what God commanded me to give up was actually causing spiritual death and that what God offered instead was full of life and fellowship with Him. I struggled because I thought those things were valuable to me but, when I saw that they held no true profit, the sacrifice became a joyful thing. Satan wants you to think music that misses the standard of Biblical worship is so good for you and that anyone who tells you differently just wants to lord their opinions over you for no good reason. The truth is so far removed from this lie! Oh, brothers and sisters, if we could see the joy that could be had in the joyful obedience and compliance to the command of God and say with the Psalmist “O how I love thy law!” (Psalm 119:97)

Thirdly, consider how much truth is found in Satan’s lies. He quoted scripture to the Lord Jesus while tempting Him to sin. (Matthew 4:1-11) The greatest threat to the church is not found in the wickedness of the world but in the hidden wickedness of professing Christians. It is naïve, at best, to think that every song that comes on the radio that claims to be Christian is true worship. It is our duty as Christians to hate even “the garment spotted by the flesh.” (Jude 23) One aspect of pure religion is to keep oneself “unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27) Discernment and a righteous judgment are essential for a Christian to have if we hope to worship God rightly. These things can only be given to us as we trust the Holy Spirit to teach us through the Word of God. If we lack wisdom, we need to

ask God (James 1:5), but make sure we are asking Him with an open Bible in hand. Forgetting that there are “false apostles” and “deceitful workers” who transform “themselves into the apostles of Christ” is dangerous enough, but the Scripture continues with this word of warning: “And no marvel: for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” (II Corinthians 11:13-14) Just because something appears to be biblical at first glance is no cause for us to abandon a thorough examination of it and to make sure that we aren’t being fed with partial truths and a feel-good belief that lacks the full counsel of the Word of God. Our worship is commanded to be beautiful and holy before God (Psalm 96:9) without corruption from our cunning adversary.

More applications can be made but I trust the Holy Spirit to help in that work. For now, I pray that I have set forth sufficient evidence to convince you that the subject of music and, specifically, of the worship of God, is a subject worth our consideration and time because our adversary devotes much time to its corruption. May the Lord teach us to receive the commandments of God freely and joyfully without any input from the father of lies and to help us freely abandon everything that fails to pursue God after the due order.

Chapter 2: What is Worship

To keep us on the same page, I will first provide some definitions of the term “worship.” Our words and the meaning behind those words matter greatly. In giving instructions on how to find redemption in Christ and how to maintain fellowship with Him, God took tremendous care in choosing His words well. He has said what is necessary for us and now it is up to us to read, understand and apply His Word to our lives (with the help of the Holy Spirit, of course). To undertake this duty without a proper definition of key words would be foolish. It is also important to find definitions that reflect what the words meant at the time of translation. The meanings of words frequently change over time and so we must be sure that we truly understand what the Lord wants us to understand when we read His Word. God wants to be understood so that He can be properly worshipped.

There are few better examples of ambiguous and changing definitions than that of the word “worship.” Today the term is used to reference both religious music and our organized meeting times. We call the Sunday morning service a “worship service” and the musicians are called the “worship team.” The issue with this is that when we take this definition of “worship” and try to interpret Scripture using it, confusion ensues. We may be able to apply this definition in John 4, when Jesus lays down three principles for God-pleasing worship, but it will prove problematic for passages such as Genesis 22:5.

Genesis 22:5 is the first mention of the word “worship” in the English Bible. This is important because, many times, the first time something is mentioned gives us the clearest picture of the true nature of that thing, so it would be worth our time to more closely examine this passage.

Abraham, a man who God had called out to follow Him, was old when his son Isaac was born. He and his wife were both well past the point of having children, but God promised them a son. After many years of waiting, God delivered on His promise but in Genesis 22, we see God offer a test to Abraham. In verse 2, God says to Abraham, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” The next morning Abraham takes Isaac, some wood, and two young men and goes to the place where God had commanded him. They traveled for three days until they arrived at the appointed place and Abraham, instructing the young men to stay behind, told them “I and the lad will go yonder and *worship*, and come again to you.” (emphasis added) Abraham knew that God had commanded him to sacrifice Isaac and the word that Abraham chose to describe this sacrifice was “worship.”

From this we might note four things about worship. First, that it is a voluntary submission to the commands of God. Secondly, worship stems from faith in God. Thirdly, worship is hopeful meaning that it is anticipating something from the Lord. Finally, worship disciplines us. It teaches us about the God we serve. Allow me to explain these principles in the direct context of this account in Genesis 22.

Abraham worshipped God by willingly taking his son to the altar and binding him there. He did not complain or fight against God. He was willing to do exactly what God had commanded him. He quietly and faithfully submitted to the commands of God.

Abraham was able to worship God in this way because he trusted God. He trusted that God had good reason in commanding him to sacrifice Isaac and even though he didn't understand the reason himself, the fact that God had a reason was good enough for Abraham. Not only this, but Abraham trusted that God was going to fulfill his promises to him completely. Isaac was the son through whom God would give Abraham a nation and a heritage. If he killed Isaac on the altar, he believed that God would have to raise Isaac from

the dead because God cannot lie. (Hebrews 11:17-19) He worshipped because he believed and loved God.

Through this story of Abraham, we also find that worship is hopeful. We see Abraham telling his young servants that both he and Isaac would return. Because Abraham trusted that God would either provide a different sacrifice or that God would raise Isaac from the dead, he knew that Isaac was coming off the mountain with him. True worship, because it stems from faith, is hopeful that God will be pleased to fulfill all the promises He has covenanted with us. How God was going to do all of this was a mystery to Abraham when he instructed his servants to stand still, but he knew that God was going to work it all out.

Finally, we learn that worship is educational. Through worship God instructs us about Himself—His character and His attributes. By the end of Abraham’s worship, God taught Abraham of His faithfulness, His mercy, and His grace and, through reading this account today, we see a clear picture of the substitutionary death of Christ and learn of Him. These four principles of worship – voluntary obedience, trust, hope, and discipleship – are present in every true act of worship.

Though Genesis 22 is the first mention of the English term “worship,” we see the same Hebrew word that it is translated from occur twice before. In those places, Genesis 18:2 and Genesis 19:1, we see it translated as “bowed himself toward the ground.” Though we see the nature of worship perfectly illustrated in the context of Abraham offering up Isaac, the technical definition of worship is reflected in these two previous occasions. The word literally means “to bow down.” This definition is reflected in the New Testament where the expression of worship often involves falling or bowing down. The Old Testament is even more clear in this imagery. The evident truth is that “worship” biblically means a submission of self in preference to another.

What this teaches us is that worship is less about the songs that we sing and more about the heart we possess towards God. Do we submit to Him even when He calls upon us to sacrifice something very precious to us? Do we trust Him unquestionably in our service to Him? Do we truly expect Him to do what He said He will do? Are we looking for the Lord to impart to us some knowledge and experience of the Divine nature? Are we humbled before His sight?

A common and more literal definition of “worship” can be found by pulling out its root word: Worth. This comes from the Old English “weorthscipe” or “worth-ship”. We can then further define worship as “ascribing worth to God and esteeming Him above all others.” This is an acceptable definition if we truly believe it. We cannot lift Him up without lowering ourselves. We cannot ascribe worth to Him while regarding His commandments as optional. If He truly is a pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46) then we will bankrupt ourselves in order to esteem Him and obtain some knowledge of Him.

“Worship,” whether in the context of music or the performance of our duties to God, is not about us. Our likes, interests, and even culture have no bearing on what is right. As we have already mentioned in the chapter previous, God’s commands often go against what seems good to the flesh because God knows better than we do. Choosing worship that suits us cannot be called Biblical worship. Biblical worship is hard. Biblical worship doesn’t always make sense. Biblical worship makes much of Jesus and little of self. Biblical worship denies the flesh its interests, emotions, and desires. Biblical worship trusts that God knows best. Biblical worship teaches us something about God. Biblical worship, above all, must be biblical. It must get its meaning from scripture. Consequently, the flesh will always fight against biblical worship because “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Romans 8:7) Worship that is popular will hardly be Spiritual for this reason. It is our responsibility to let God define worship because, after all, isn’t He the One we are supposed to worship?

Chapter 3: What Would Jesus Do

Now that we have biblically defined worship as the submission of self in order to exalt the Lord, we can begin to examine the characteristics of worship. For this sacred task we look to our Savior to be a guide. Worship belongs to Him to define and to govern because, as it is proclaimed to Him in Heavenly worship, “thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)

To see the Savior’s principles of worship, we turn to John chapter 4. Here we see Jesus having a conversation with a woman of Samaria. The Samaritans had similar beliefs to the Jews but differed on a few things. One of those differences comes up in this conversation. The woman says to Jesus, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” (John 4:20) The term “worship” here is referring to the place where men gather for the task of religious duty and sacrifice. The woman was asking Jesus where the right place of worship was. Jesus’s response was perfectly composed and calculated to drive at the issue of her heart.

“Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” (John 4:21) This first part of Jesus’s response teaches us that the outward appearances, locations, and ceremonies matter less than who we are worshipping, and that Jesus came to make it possible for us to worship God wherever we are. Don’t take my statement as an excuse to forsake the assembly of the saints (Hebrews 10:25) or the importance of how our public services are structured. It is still very important that we meet together for the sake of worship, but if we are not engaged in worship in our homes then we will not be truly worshipping in the church house. It is also essential that he prefaces this truth with the

call for belief. “Woman, believe me.” If only we would simply trust Him and allow Him to mold our hearts as well as our public meetings.

The true principles of worship are found in the next statements. “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (John 4:22-23) The two obvious principles are those of “spirit” and “truth.” I would contest that there is a third principle of “knowledge” that is referenced in verse 22.

Adding the principle of “knowledge” even before those of “spirit” and “truth” is vital to the proper worship of God. Without the knowledge of who we are worshipping it is impossible to get worship right. Most music performed in churches today is calculated to engage the senses. We want people to feel the presence of God so we sing songs that drive at the emotions. The issue, however, is that in all of our emotions and feelings, we often lose sight of exactly who it is we are worshipping. For example, we sing songs that speak about the wonderful comfort and promise of heaven. However, we sing about it in such a way that brings attention to the pearly gates and the street of gold. We talk about mansions and being set free from the pain of disease and sorrow. We delight in being liberated from this corruptible body. These things are very good because they are part of God’s perfect Heaven, but they are not the primary part of why we should be looking forward to Heaven. It is easy to get caught up in singing about the joys of Heaven and miss the King of Glory, the Lord Jesus, who made access to all these things possible through the shedding of His own blood. In an effort to make people feel the comforts of Heaven we have neglected the greatest joy of Heaven—our Savior is there and we will be able to serve and fellowship with Him free from the restraints of sin because He died for us!

It is true that we cannot praise who God is without also praising Him for what He has done, but it is very possible, and dangerous, to

praise what He has done without praising Him for who He is. If we are to worship God according to the due order, we must keep first things first: “worship the Father.” When we are engaged in service to the Lord, we ought to keep it at the forefront of our minds that we are doing it for the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. We are giving up ourselves for the One who gave His only begotten Son. We are singing for the very One who is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory. We lay ourselves down because He is worthy to be lifted up. Do not lose the clear vision and knowledge of who it is that we are to worship. True worship is intentional, deliberate, and directed.

We’ll apply this principle a little more directly in just a moment but let us look at the two clear principles given in John 4 on how we are to worship the Father.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24) This verse is precious to me. The Lord used this verse in my conversion as a 7-year-old boy. I didn’t understand the principles as I do now, but the Lord used this verse to give me “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14) I’d like to expound these principles by telling my testimony of salvation.

I was raised in a Bible-believing church. I was taught from a young age the importance of studying and memorizing scripture. As a result of consistent gospel exposure and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit began to reprove me of my sin and emptiness before God at a very early age. Desperation flooded my soul and for many consecutive nights, I went to my mother looking for a way to be saved. She would share the gospel with me, then we would pray, but nothing changed. I thought, “maybe if I sing ‘Amazing Grace’ loud enough and with enough feeling then maybe God will accept me!” All that did was annoy my brothers! I struggled for months.

My mother, who was just living a superficial religious life at the time and was a stranger herself to God's grace, was surely growing weary of my questions. On March 10, 1999, I looked at her through the rear-view mirror of our car and asked, "How can I be saved?" She shared the gospel with me, and I prayed again. Still, nothing changed. Frustrated, I asked her, a woman who was lost and undone herself, "But how do you know?" I had trusted the truths of the Gospel and asked God to forgive my wretched heart, but there was no assurance in my heart that God had heard me. Then I heard a loose quotation of John 4:24.

"John, I don't know what to tell you but that God's a Spirit, and if you're gonna worship Him, you've got to do it in spirit and in truth." At the time, I couldn't explain it (still can't), but it was as if an overwhelming burden in the pit of my stomach was replaced with an unspeakable joy. I began to laugh "from my belly," as my mother put it to me some time ago when we were revisiting the moment. She looked back in the mirror into my eyes and heard my laughter and knew that something real had taken hold of me.

Looking back on that moment, the same joy floods my soul. If I were to explain it now, having had several decades of God's merciful teachings and dealings with me to help, I would say that it was on that day that true worship began in my soul. It was in that moment that I began to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. I literally had the Holy Spirit of God enter into me and He cast out all the guilt, fear, and despondency of mind that plagued my existence.

The term "spirit" refers to the life and breath of God. Going all the way back to Genesis 2 you see the principle, as it pertains to man, displayed. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) Without the breath of God, man would be lifeless. It is the Spirit that animates man. In a sense, "spirit" refers to the life force and essence of man. It is that part of man that is capable of fellowship with God. When man sinned, that fellowship with God

was broken rendering us spiritually dead. If we are to worship God the way He demands and deserves to be worshipped, we must be animated by His Spirit to make us able to commune with Him. In short, we must be born again. True worship is the submission of self in its entirety to God. As Samuel Stennett wrote “To Him I owe my life and breath and all the joys I have...” or again as Isaac Watts wrote “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” True worship is complete worship. It is the submission of the very life of man to God.

Worship must also be done according to truth. The word truth can have multiple applications. One definition of truth is “sincerity,” that is “the quality of being free from pretense, deceit, or hypocrisy.” From this definition, we can conclude that worship must be genuine. There must not be any deceit in worship. The second meaning of truth is doctrinal. Jesus says that He is the truth and that no man can access the Father except through Him. (John 14:6) Jesus also prays for our sanctification and says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) Worship must be done in accordance with the character of Jesus Christ who was found to be completely free of any guile or deceit, (I Peter 2:22) and in compliance to the written Word of God. Taking the time to ensure that our worship is in line with scripture is not effort wasted. If we want to honor God, we need to honor His Word. The scripture says “thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” (Psalm 138:2)

These two definitions of “truth” complement one another in a beautiful and majestic way. There must be no hidden agendas with truth and real truth can only be found in the Word of God as it expounds to us the person of Jesus Christ. Consider then the music of the present day. How many songs are written with hidden agendas? The music industry is just that: an industry. Record labels are not concerned about the true worship of God. They are concerned with publicity, reception, and sales of their products. Many songs written

today take liberties with scripture and will emphasize certain aspects of the truth while missing the whole truth because the whole truth wouldn't sell. Take sickness, tribulations and hardships as an example of this. Artists emphasize the healing power of God and the removal of our tribulations and hardships for a brighter, easier day. We forget that the teachings of Christ demand that we "take up our cross daily" and "deny ourselves." (Luke 9:23) We fail to praise God for the sickness and difficulties. We fail to ask God for hardship if hardship is what we need to grow in Him. (Romans 5:3-5) Few songs carry the tone of the third verse found in Elizabeth Prentiss's "More Love to Thee."

*Let sorrow do its work, send grief or pain;
Sweet are Thy messengers, sweet their refrain,
When they can say with me, 'More love, O Christ, to Thee;
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!*

True worship seeks to be in line with complete Bible doctrine and teaching. It seeks to root out any hidden agendas that might seek convenience or relief from having to perform some 'unfavorable' religious duty. It freely yields up everything that it has and will ever have for the service of God. It must be driven by a spiritual awakening, caused by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that causes man to say, "Give me breath, Lord, that I may spend it for Thy service!" That is, as simply as I know to put it, what it means to worship in spirit and in truth.

Worship must also be according to knowledge. All true worship is done in spirit and in truth, but it is very possible to misappropriate true worship. The world is engaged in true worship every day. With all they are and all they have they pursue after what makes the flesh happy. They make no apologies for their wickedness, and they know

that many of their deeds have less than favorable consequences, but they still openly and brazenly pursue pleasure. This is true worship, but it is not appropriate worship. The only appropriate worship is the worship of God through Jesus Christ as He defines it: worship of the Father in spirit and in truth.

Chapter 4: The Word of Christ

In encouraging the church at Colossi to engage in God-honoring singing, the Apostle Paul said, “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.” (Colossians 3:16)

Much should be made of this passage of Scripture in the effort to understand Biblical Worship. It must first be noted that true worship begins with an indwelling understanding and knowledge of the word of Christ. This is the only occasion in Scripture that you find the exact phrasing “word of Christ” and it is in the context of music. When engaging in the singing of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” we ought to possess a mind that has heard and received the words of Christ.

Secondly, worship stems from meditation. The term “meditation” is another word that has been redefined in a negative way. Biblical meditation refers to actively thinking and pondering on the things of God. The Eastern religions view meditation as an emptying of the mind whereas the Bible teaches that meditation is the filling of the mind. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you...” Let the word of Christ take up residence in your mind. Think on the truths of Scripture and let your mind take its shelter in the safe-haven of Christ. It is one thing to hear and receive the words of Christ, but it is quite another thing to intentionally treasure these words and give them a permanent dwelling in your mind. (Psalm 104:33-34)

Thirdly, worship must be done “in all wisdom” and that wisdom must be received from God. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God...” (James 1:5) Receiving the words of God and then intentionally pondering the truths received will foster true wisdom which will equip us for true worship. “I will praise thee with

uprightness of heart, *when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*” (Psalm 119:7, emphasis added) This is a process that is ongoing in the life of the believer. God knows this and prescribes a remedy for this in the form of biblical worship! Real, God-honoring worship teaches us to worship God even better.

Paul then calls us to teach and admonish one another with “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...” The songs that we sing ought to be teaching us more about the nature and commandments of God as well as warning us about the vanity and frivolity of worldly amusements. The question ought to be asked of every song that we sing, “what is this song teaching me about the commandment and character of God?” If that question is difficult to be answered, then that song should be discarded from our worship especially if it contains no practical warning to abandon the world for the sake of Christ.

Fourthly, worship, in the context of music, should be carefully selected for the specific moment at hand. This principle requires a little bit of digging to see, but it is there. First, we see that the purpose of the songs we sing are to “teach and admonish” us. What is it that we need to learn or be warned from? This requires some discernment to properly prescribe. There were psalms that were written for specific occasions, and, in the same manner, there ought to be songs we go to for certain circumstances to teach us what we need to learn.

For instance, in the moment of doubt when the cares of the world press in on us and it seems that there is no hope, we might sing a song that comforts us concerning the effectual love and promises of God. One of my favorites to resort back to is “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood” by William Cowper. This song is a song of testimony that centers itself on the redemptive work of Christ (and specially enriched to me because of my “poor lisping, stammering tongue”).

When I need to remind myself that Jesus is the good shepherd who pursued after me when I was lost and undone, I turn to “The

Ninety and Nine.” When I am struggling with the idea of surrendering something precious to me for the cause of Christ and my flesh wants to hold on to its pleasures and charms, I sing “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” When I need to comfort myself concerning the joy of Heaven I might sing “My Savior First of All.” There are songs that are appropriate to certain situations that can be used in a powerful way to turn our eyes to the Lord Jesus in times of distress or temptation.

Further emphasizing this point of the appropriateness of certain songs at certain times is the usage of the terms “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” The term “psalm” refers to a song that has musical accompaniment. This indicates that, contrary to the ways of the world, music that honors God doesn’t always have to have accompaniment because the emphasis should be on the message the words are conveying. The term “hymn” refers to a song of celebration. This tells us not every song has to be a celebration. While these have their place in our service towards God, we should also be readily using songs intended to convict and challenge us. The individual tasked with leading the people of God in song has a very important job indeed.

Our fifth principle comes from the term “spiritual songs.” Worship ought to be spiritual. If I may again emphasize the truth that the flesh is striving against the spirit. (Galatians 5:17) “Friendship of the world is enmity with God.” (James 4:4) The song that is used in biblical worship cannot be freely used in the places of the world. The world hates God and fights against anything that looks like Him. If our music, however, has more of us in it than the word of Christ, then it will be tolerable by the world. Brethren, the music of God should be distinct from the music of the world! There should be something about it that repels the natural man.

The Spirit often works in opposition to the natural impulses and desires of man. What charges the emotions of the flesh does not

follow the movements of the Spirit. The Spirit employs the mundane just as often as He uses the extraordinary. He speaks through the still, small voice as well as with the sound of a mighty rushing wind. (I Kings 19:12-13, Acts 2:1-3) We have come to expect that the manifestations and the moving of the Spirit are going to be recognized by our senses and emotions, but many times the Spirit speaks to us only when we are still and intentionally looking and listening for Him. We ought to be willing to lay aside emotional music when it is not Spiritual and ask God to teach us to savor the things of God and not the things of man. (Matthew 16:23)

Additionally in our passage, Paul calls us to sing “with grace in your hearts...” Grace is a divine attribute. It is the saving attribute. “For by grace are ye saved through faith...” (Ephesians 2:8) Grace is claimed and appropriated to us when we believe God. Why did Noah find grace in the eyes of God? Why did Abraham receive the promise of God? Why did God choose David to be King over Israel? Why did God choose Paul to be an apostle and write the very words we are examining? They all believed God. They had faith and, as a result of their faith, they were given grace (don’t forget that even our faith is a gift of God). This grace is sufficient for us in times of trial. (II Corinthians 12:9) Our singing and our service should be so saturated with grace because we so readily and completely believe God that the act of worship is not only pleasing to us but also pleasing to the God that we worship.

The final principle is that we worship the one true God. We once again emphasize that true worship is the worship of God according to His demands and desires and not ours. The concluding words in this verse are “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” He continues in stating that “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:17) The nature of worship is one that is to God through God. If we are not careful, we will enter into the church house and be disappointed if the songs don’t appeal to us. Often

complaints are heard such as, “I didn’t like that song.” “I didn’t understand that song.” “I wanted to hear _____ sung.” “I enjoyed so and so’s special.” Though it is nice when what we desire is what God desires, I fear that we have too much of an “I” problem. Worship is not about me or you. Worship is about God. When we gather together to sing, we need to remember that we are not the audience we seek to please but, rather, God is the recipient of our praise and service. We sing to lift Him up and to submit ourselves to Him. We sing to learn more of Him. We sing, so as to say with John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30) Our service to God-whether that is in singing, giving, working, praying, or thinking-is to be a service done to God, for God, and through God.

Chapter 5: Consequences

In this chapter I hope to use examples from the Scriptures to stress how seriously God takes the issue of His holiness and submission to His commands. We will draw conclusions based upon these accounts and apply them to the principles of worship that we have already established.

It is a fascinating study to seek out times where the Lord, in perfect justice, smote someone as a result of their sin before Him. It is clearly taught that God dealt with former generations with such exactness, with no leniency for disobedience, to provide us with an example. Speaking about the wicked and disobedient generation in the wilderness, the Lord says, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition...” (I Corinthians 10:11) The Scripture speaks in the same way concerning Sodom and Gomorrah in II Peter 2:6. It would serve us well to consider the examples that God has left for us if we too would escape judgment.

Lot's Wife

The first example we will consider comes from the nineteenth chapter of Genesis. We start here not only because it is among the earliest examples of God's judgment on an individual but also because of the words of Christ to “remember Lot's wife.” (Luke 17:32) This account is taken from the context of God's judgment on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We would benefit from a complete examination of the sins of these cities which led to their destruction, but we will limit ourselves to the sin of Lot's wife.

The angels of the Lord who came to pronounce judgment on the cities instructed Lot to gather his family and flee before fire fell from heaven. They were commanded to, literally, run for their lives and to not look back. “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee... escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” (Genesis 19:17) However, when the sounds of destruction reached their ears and the flashes of light cast shadows about them, Lot’s wife “looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” (Genesis 19:26)

The sin of looking back as judgment fell on Sodom may not seem to us as something worthy of death, but there are several reasons for such a strict judgment that we might be able to apply to our study concerning worship. First, in looking back we see a deliberate defiance to God’s command. “Look not behind thee” and no matter how justifiable her reasons, Lot’s wife disobeyed. We are responsible for what we know. If Lot’s wife had not have been commanded so plainly the consequence of her sin might not have been so severe. It was sin, first and foremost, because it was disobedience.

Secondly, this sin was a sin of affection. To our flesh this glance back may seem somewhat justified. In reading the account we know that Lot had multiple sons-in-law (which indicates daughters who were married) in addition to the two daughters that were still in his house. (Genesis 19:12-14) This means that, in leaving Sodom to its destruction, Lot and his wife were leaving at least two daughters with their families behind. This was a very difficult command to keep but it is the command of Christ. “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26) Christ is teaching that the love that we have for him should so outweigh our affections for this world that, if He commanded it, we should be willing to forsake all in order to follow Him. We have already seen this displayed in Abraham’s willingness to offer up his son, Isaac, to the Lord. This is also what God has done for us in giving His only begotten Son to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. What God

required of Lot and his wife was nothing less than what God Himself has done for us.

True worship is very costly. We are called to crucify ourselves and our affections in order to follow Christ. In looking back on what we leave behind we lose sight of what we gain. This brings us to our third observation from Lot's wife: her sin distracted her from being saved. The path Lot's family was taking to be delivered from the judgment of Sodom was a treacherous one. There were, no doubt, many obstacles in their way as they journeyed to the mountain. They were also making the trip at night which multiplied the danger. Vigilance was required if they were going to be delivered unscathed. They had to watch for obstacles and enemies who may have been lurking in the night. This is a picture of our walk with God after fleeing the city of destruction.

As a Christian, we may be certain that we will not be destroyed with the world, but we should remain vigilant because many foes still lay ahead of us. There is an enemy within us and there are adversaries around us. We need to be in a state of constant awareness if we hope to escape. In looking back longingly at all the things we leave behind, whether they be things of earthly pleasure or relationships forsaken for the cause of winning Christ, we take our eyes off the Deliverer and esteem the folly that we are called to forsake as being more precious than the One who calls us to leave all and follow Him.

In summary, the sin of Lot's wife is that she knowingly disobeyed God, she failed to forsake her affections so that she may gain salvation, and she lost her focus on the path ahead. From this example we learn that we are called to forsake the ways of the world and the former life to please God. Isaac was precious to Abraham, but he was still willing to lay him on the altar. Lot's wife had friends, family, and a way of life in Sodom and these things were very dear to her. In looking back, however, she not only lost those things, but she lost any hope of living under the provision and shelter of God. When we

refuse to surrender our way of life, culture, musical preferences, etc. to Christ and forsake all, we cannot truly please Him. “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that *forsaketh not all that he hath*, he *cannot* be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33, emphasis added) Are you willing to forsake the ways of the world and the connections you have in order to win Christ? He will not be a supplement to you. He does not want to reign over part of your life but all. He is not worthy of half-hearted service but complete surrender. Fanny Crosby got the heart of worship when she penned “Take the World, but Give Me Jesus.” Forsaking all, let us follow Him.

Onan

The second example we will consider is that of Judah’s son, Onan. This record is not one that we can cover comfortably but it is in Scripture and as such, is profitable to us. This account is found in Genesis 38:1-10.

Onan was Judah’s second son and had an older brother named Er. There is not a lot known about Er other than the fact that he was “wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.” This happened before his wife, Tamar, bore him a son. Back in those days it was the practice of the younger brother to take his older brother’s widow to be his wife and father a child for the sake of the older brother. This practice seems odd to us today, but it was not without reason.

First, in doing this, the younger brother preserved the honor of his older brother. It was a shameful thing to not have an heir and so this practice helped to keep shame from the older brother’s legacy. This also was a sacrificial act. The younger brother gave up his firstborn son for the love and respect he had for his older brother. Third, this practice kept the widow from being a widow. Though this

seems strange to us, it was a noble practice back in those days and was the responsibility and duty of the younger brother to comply.

Before I continue let me just state that the next few paragraphs may come across as crude or crass, but that is not the intention here. This is an uncomfortable topic, but it is impossible to rightly understand this passage without speaking very plainly.

Onan was instructed to “go in unto thy brother’s wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.” (Genesis 38:8) He knew it was his responsibility to take care of his brother’s widow and produce an heir for his brother. He “knew that the seed should not be his,” that is that the child conceived would be his brother’s in all respects, but we quickly see Onan’s selfishness in verses 9-10. “It came to pass, that when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.” Onan didn’t want to father a child for his brother. He could have raised his complaint and refused to marry his brother’s wife, but he didn’t do that. Instead, he went in and had intercourse with her but refused to give his sperm to her but instead “spilled it on the ground.” The sin of Onan was so great before the Lord that He “slew him also.”

This complicated story gives us some principles concerning the nature of sin and what kind of service God rejects. The first principle is the same as the first in the previous example. Onan disobeyed the command given to Him. The Word of God is the final authority and all sin “is the transgression of the law.” (I John 3:4) The second principle seen, however, is that Onan was selfish. He was not willing to give his seed for the sake of his brother. Again, this custom is strange to us, but it was established so that the honor and line of the older brother could continue. Onan was unwilling to give that to his brother. When we make the goal of worship the lifting up of self and not the lifting up of our elder brother, Christ, we cease from true worship.

The third principle to consider is that of pleasure. We see Onan go in to lay with Tamar, yet he withholds his seed from her. Why would he bother to go into her in the first place? We might conclude that he was happy to have sex with her because it was pleasurable, but when it came to the point of giving what was required, he refused to commit. If he had fathered a child for his brother, he would have had to provide for and protect this child as his own. The moment of pleasure was palatable, but the lifetime of responsibility was repulsive to him. How often do we do this in our service to God? We may go to church when it is convenient or easy and tithe when we are in a time of abundance. We sing when we find the song enjoyable. We pray only when we have needs that must be met. We often find ourselves performing our duties only when there is pleasure to be found in them. May we recognize this as sin and refuse to have part in it anymore.

Finally, just as we all do, Onan thought his sin could be hidden. As already mentioned, he could have refused the commandment publicly and said, “no, I will not raise a son for my brother. I will not take my brother’s wife.” Onan knew that this would be an open defiance to God and his family. Instead, Onan chose to privately defy the commandment given to him. He thought that if the thing was hidden from the eyes of his father that he could get away with his selfish act. The issue is that God sees what is done in secret. Private sin is just as deadly as public sin (if not more so). The thoughts and intents of his heart were readily discerned by God who, seeing Onan’s disobedience, smote him. When we worship, it needs to be with the inner man as well as the outer appearances. Our worship needs to be in the living room of our homes as well as in the sanctuary of the church house. May we be true, genuine, and consistent in our pursuit of true worship.

Nadab and Abihu

Continuing through the Bible account, we find the record of Nadab and Abihu's "strange fire" before the Lord in Leviticus 10. In order to understand this, we have to have a proper view of God's holiness.

God's holiness is His chief attribute. Holiness does not mean a moral purity or sinlessness as we commonly believe today. Holiness, in its true definition, refers to uniqueness. "There is none holy as the LORD: For there is none beside thee: Neither is there any rock like our God." (I Samuel 2:2) "Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee..." (II Samuel 7:22) "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; Neither are there any works like unto thy works." (Psalm 86:8) "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; Thou art great, and thy name is great in might." (Jeremiah 10:6)

All other attributes of God fall under the description of His holiness. He is holy in the fact that He is morally pure and sinless. He is holy in His strength, wisdom, love, judgment, etc. He is completely unlike us in our fallen state. Though we were made in His image, we have corrupted ourselves with sin and gone astray. As a result, we cannot have fellowship with Him unless He provides a way for us to approach Him in holiness.

This is what the book of Leviticus is about. On Mount Sinai, Moses received instructions for the tabernacle. God was preparing to meet with His people. The tabernacle was to be built on exact specifications and with specific materials. The tabernacle was to be the place where the physical presence, or glory, of the Lord rested among His people. The book of Exodus details for us these instructions and tells us that the people built the tabernacle exactly as they had been commanded. "So Moses finished the work. Then a

cloud covered the tent of the congregations, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory filled the tabernacle.” (Exodus 40: 33b-35)

The tabernacle had been completed, but entrance into the tabernacle was impossible. God’s people still could not go in and perform any service unto the Lord because He was Holy. Leviticus begins with God calling to Moses from the tabernacle and providing instructions to the Israelites on exactly how, when, and who should make sacrifices unto Him. Leviticus is filled with the blood of various animals and tedious duties and ceremonies. These were given to make a way for sinful man to have communion and fellowship with the Holy God. Hindsight grants us the knowledge that all of these sacrifices are a foreshadow of Christ, but they played an essential role for the Israelite people before the time of Christ was fully come.

Leviticus can be a difficult book for us to read, especially in our modern times, but taking time to understand this book is profitable for us. In it we learn of the many steps the Lord required to prepare ourselves for worship. Nothing in this book was a suggestion – they were commands from God. If we come into the presence of the Holy God without the blood of an appropriate sacrifice covering our sins, our sinfulness makes the presence of God lethal. God must judge sin. It isn’t optional to Him. He has provided a covering for us but if we choose to forsake that covering then the consequence is severe.

Now, Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was appointed to be the High Priest and his children were supposed to perform the duties of priests. Nine chapters of instruction had already been given up to this point. The seriousness of the matter should be obvious, but apparently not to Nadab and Abihu.

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered

strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” (Leviticus 10:1-2)

It is difficult to navigate this passage without some degree of speculation about the intentions of Nadab and Abihu. Some suppose that they were malicious and rebellious. I, personally, don’t believe this is the case. I don’t think they were “thumbing their nose,” so to speak, towards God and saying, “we will do what we want.” There are a few somewhat better theories, in my opinion. Either way, the conclusion will remain the same.

First, it might be easy to think that Nadab and Abihu, having received all these instructions about exactly how they are supposed to perform their duties, might have been overwhelmed about the magnitude of their responsibilities and wanted to “practice,” as it were. They take their censers, fire, and incense and go into the tabernacle to try to figure some things out. They approach God, then, at a time and in a way that they had not been commanded and are met with a swift and sudden death.

Another thought is that Nadab and Abihu wanted to offer their own offering to the Lord. Perhaps they wanted to show the measure of their love and gratitude towards the Lord, so they gathered their equipment together and went to offer their service to God. Again, they approached God on their terms and not by God’s instructions and were quickly judged for their sin. (The best way to show gratitude towards the Lord is obedience. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15))

Consideration of the next command from God might also help us understand the sin of Nadab and Abihu. “And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die...” (Leviticus 10:8-9) It is supposed, then, that the sons of Aaron

were drunk when they entered into the tabernacle. The use of intoxicating drink has been fiercely debated throughout history, but a clear look at Bible teaching tells us that the deceptions and dangers of strong drink are not to be underestimated. (Proverbs 20:1, Isaiah 28:7, Hosea 4:11) The performance of our duties before God should be done with a clear mind and a humble heart.

For these, or any other motives, the principle remains the same. Worship, that is our religious submission and service to God, must be performed based upon God's commands and provision, not ours. The Word of God on this matter is found in the third verse of this chapter: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." If we are to approach God, it must be on His terms or else it is sin.

Korah

Moses was God's chosen servant to lead the children of Israel out of bondage. It seems, however, that the people were not always happy with God's decision. The number of times that the people complained against the leadership of Moses were many. He endured stiff complaints even from his own brother and sister. In Numbers 16, however, we find the account of a would-be revolt against Moses's authority. Two hundred and fifty "princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown" revolted against Moses being led by four men. Korah, a Levite, was the chief spokesman for this revolt.

We've already considered somewhat the role of the priests in the previous section. The priests were sons of Aaron and were instructed about the actual sacrifices and services that were to be rendered in the tabernacle. They were the ones performing those duties and they were the only ones allowed to do so. Levites, on the other hand, were descendants of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, Abraham's

grandson. All priests were descendants of Levi as well, but not every descendant of Levi was a priest, only the descendants of Aaron. Only the priests were allowed to touch and do certain things in the tabernacle. Their duties were very great and sometimes overwhelming. The Levites were instructed to help in the less important duties in the tabernacle such as cleaning and carrying things. Knowing this distinction between priests and Levites is very important.

Moses was appointed to be a leader over the people in general. God spoke directly to Him and gave him instructions to pass along to the people. Korah and his company were obviously jealous of this for in verse three he said to Moses and Aaron, the High Priest, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?”

Unlike Nadab and Abihu, we don’t have to speculate about what the heart of Korah looked like. He was envious, selfish, and rebellious. He didn’t like the fact that Moses and Aaron were authority figures over him. He considered himself just as holy and just as close to God as the man who communed with God for 40 days on Mount Sinai with no food or water. Moses had to wear a veil over his face because of his time spent in personal fellowship with God and, yet Korah thought himself just as qualified as the man God chose for Himself. Korah and his company were commanded to take their censers, put fire and incense in them, and go to the tabernacle and let God choose who He would have minister before Him. God answered profoundly by opening up the ground underneath these men and swallowing them up into the earth.

The sin of Korah needs little help applying. When we disregard God’s chosen way of authority and think that we can do whatever service we like regardless of whether or not God has called us or whether or not we are even qualified for the job, we fall into the sin of Korah. Despising authority is sin, whether that be whatever thrones

or kingdoms we are subject to, within the home (i.e., the husband being the head and children submitted to the parents), or within the confines of religious service (i.e., The Word of God and the pastor of the local church).

In the context of worship, though, there is a principle to be seen which we will elaborate on in the coming chapters. Not everybody can do everything. Moses's response to Korah was "ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." (Numbers 16:7) The Levites were called to an office of service. The other tribes couldn't come into the inner courts of the tabernacle. Only the High Priest, once a year, could come into the innermost part of the tabernacle. God made many provisions about who is to perform each ritual, when they can do it, and in what ways they should do so. We seem to have the mentality today that anyone who can sing or play an instrument should. Even though we don't have the divisions of priests, Levites, and "others" that we see in Leviticus, there are still certain jobs that must be done in a certain way by people who meet certain requirements. To oppose this order is to oppose God.

Uzziah (also known as Azariah)

One of the most perplexing accounts, when taken by itself, is that of II Kings 15:1-6. The Bible records for us the legacy of King Azariah (known elsewhere in Scripture as Uzziah). Verse 3 says "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done..." Verse 5 opens with "And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death..." Why would God smite a good king like this? We find the answer in II Chronicles 26.

Uzziah was a young man when he became king, and he reigned for a long time. II Chronicles 26:5 gives us a key piece of information.

“And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.” The way that the scripture is worded indicates to us that, so long as the prophet Zechariah was alive, Uzziah did what was right and sought the Lord. When Uzziah did what was right and sought the Lord, God blessed him. But what happened after Zechariah died and after Uzziah had received so many blessings from God?

“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” (II Chronicles 26:16) Uzziah seems to fall into the same sin of Korah. He looked upon his own blessings and saw how God had favored him and, so, he went into the temple to offer service unto God in a way that was not accepted. He took upon himself the duty of the priest.

Now, Uzziah’s intention could have been noble in that he wanted to offer to God a service of thanksgiving for the blessings he had received, but he, through pride, disobeyed the command of God. He went into a place that was forbidden to him, and he attempted a service that was not his to perform. The priest, Azariah, went in after him with 80 other men to withstand the king. They said in verse 18, “It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou has trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.”

The verses following detail his judgment. “Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out

from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD...”

There are a few things to note from this example left for our admonition. First, Uzziah got to the place where he thought he had something to give God. Up until this point Uzziah was content to humble himself before God and look for God to bestow what was needed. He stopped thinking of himself as needy and started thinking that he could be a blessing to God. Too many worship services err from the truth in this regard. We think that God will be pleased with how well we can sing, how much money we can put in the offering, how attentive we can be during the sermon. These things are pleasing to God only when they are accompanied by a broken and needy heart.

Secondly, Uzziah thought that his status made him welcomed in God’s presence. He was the honorable king with many mighty victories won in battle. He was beloved by the nation. Surely God would accept his offering because of who he was! Wrong. God is not a respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34) He doesn’t care how honorable you may be in the world because He is the King of Kings, worthy of all honor and praise.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Uzziah refused to be humbled. Humility is a prerequisite to the blessing of God. (James 4:6, 10; 1 Peter 5:6) He could not accept that he had sinned. I find it fascinating that the account is that he was struck with leprosy “while he was wroth with the priests.” It gives the clear picture that if he had humbled himself and accepted fault, he might have been forgiven for his transgression and allowed to remain king. Instead, he got angry. “How dare these priests chasten me? Don’t they know who I am?” As his anger burned against the very men who were attempting to see God’s Word honored and help him avoid judgment, that is when we see the Lord strike him with leprosy.

The application is apparent. Worship ought to be done in accordance to God's prescribed order and way. When sin is revealed in our hearts, the flesh wants to get angry with the spokesman of truth, but we need to humble ourselves and submit to God's way. The worst judgment of all for Uzziah was not the leprosy and it was not losing the throne. The worst judgment was that "he was cut off from the house of the LORD." Because of his sin, he could no longer have fellowship with God. He refused to be humbled at the appropriate time and so God humbled him and cut him off. May we not be so stuck in our habits that, when we are rebuked, we become angry at God for demanding conformity to His command. Again, it is God who we are to be worshipping, so God gets to define exactly how He is to be worshipped.

Ananias and Sapphira

The final example that we will consider in this chapter comes from the New Testament. Many falsely believe the God of the Old Testament is somehow different than the God of the New Testament. God Himself says, "I am the Lord, I change not..." (Malachi 3:6) The account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 reminds us that God's demands for obedience and submission have not changed and that He is very much the same holy God that He has always been.

Before this point in the Bible account, Jesus had been crucified, buried, and resurrected. He spent 40 days with His disciples before ascending into Heaven in the opening verses of the book of Acts. Immediately before His ascension, He instructed His disciples to "wait for the promise of the Father." (Acts 1:5) Ten days later, at the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on the believers in Jerusalem, Peter proclaims the Lordship of Christ and calls for those present to repent. Several thousand believe on the name of Christ and

are baptized. We learn that the believers in Jerusalem met together every day and submitted themselves to the teaching and instruction of the Apostles. They “had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” (Acts 2:44-45)

After a bit of trouble falls on Peter and John in Acts 3 and 4, they returned to the rest of the Apostles in Jerusalem and a revitalized generosity and compassion sparked in the church. Again, the scripture reminds us that “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:24-25) We even see one man in particular sell what was certainly a large piece of land and brought the money before the apostles. It is after this that the account is given of Ananias and Sapphira.

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 5:1-2) The sin was simple: they sold land, kept some money for themselves but pretended as if they had donated everything to the church. Going in first, Ananias was reprimanded by Peter and, having heard the rebuke, “fell down, and gave up the ghost.” His body was carried out and buried and three hours later Sapphira, not knowing her husband was dead and their sin was known, comes into the church. Peter asked her how much she sold the land for, and she confirmed the false amount. She was then rebuked and also fell dead before the Apostles.

This sin of Ananias and Sapphira has serious implications on us today. First, our service to God must be genuine. God will not be mocked by our pretenses. He sees into our hearts and knows our true motives. He will reject our false worship. Secondly, their service was all about a show. True worship is most pure when it is most private.

If our public show doesn't match our private service then our worship is falsely rooted. Thirdly, we may also surmise that Ananias and Sapphira only sold their land because others had done the same thing. It is hardly possible that they took time to pray over what they should do regarding the matter but instead did something that someone else had already done. True worship, like fire, spreads to others around us, but it does not seek to imitate for the sake of imitation. It's likely that their service was rooted more in envy than love and service towards God. They, like the Pharisees, wanted their acts of service to be seen and applauded by man. (Matthew 6:3) They wanted people to know exactly how much they donated and how integral they were to the ministry of the church. What they forgot is that God needs nothing from us. He doesn't need our land, our money, our songs, our focus, or our attention. He deserves all of that and more. He demands what is right, but He doesn't *need* us. They also forgot that, when we do things for the sake of being seen, we have no reward from God. The only reward we have is the empty praise of man for services done for selfish reasons. Our service to God needs to stem from those principles already stated: Knowledge, Spirit, and Truth. Any guile, envy, selfishness, emotion, flesh, or pride will be rejected by God.

Conclusion:

Having taken the time to consider these examples made for us, it is very possible to lose sight of our purpose in doing so. I want to deeply impress upon your mind exactly how serious this matter of worship is. All of these men and women who were smitten by God were dealt with according to God's perfect justice. None of these deserved anything better than they received because they all, without exception, willingly and knowingly chose their own methods and desires over the clearly expressed purpose and commands of God.

Lot's wife perished because she cherished what she was commanded to forsake more than the salvation of her soul. Onan was slain because he only performed his duty to his brother inasmuch as it was pleasurable to him. Nadab and Abihu were consumed with fire because they tried to approach God on their own terms. Korah and his men were swallowed into the earth because they refused the authority of God's man and refused to submit to the Divine order God has prescribed. Uzziah was smitten with leprosy because he refused to humble himself when rebuked about his defiance to God's order. Ananias and Sapphira fell before the Apostles because they were secretly keeping back something for themselves.

Very quickly allow me to apply some things to the specific issue of music and what we call "worship" today.

We fall into the error of Lot's wife when we refuse to leave behind the elements of worldly influences and instrumentation in spiritual music. Nothing can be both 'spiritual' and worldly' and, so, when we change the mode of music to better 'engage' and 'relate' to people who are strangers to Christ, we must ask ourselves if our worship is truly 'spiritual' or if it still has the stench of Sodom on it. May we consider Lot's wife and ask the Lord to help us leave the world behind in our pursuit of a life that pleases God.

Onan made his responsibilities all about himself and, when he couldn't benefit from them, refused to perform them. In the same way, we fall into sin when we pick and choose what songs we sing in church based solely on the personal preferences of men. It is a common thing today for people to abandon a church for another based solely on whether or not they like the 'worship.' Duty is duty and our duty, like Onan's, is not about us. We sing for the honor of Another. If we only sing when the music pleases our senses and emotions, we sin the sin of Onan. Ask the Lord to make your delight to honor Him even, and especially, when it's costly.

Nadab and Abihu abandoned their orders for one reason or another. They thought that they could enter into God's presence on their own terms and, in the same way, many churches today think that they can waltz into the presence of a Holy God without any regard to what the Bible teaches. The Lord has made His commandments abundantly clear and accessible to us. There is no excuse for our total abandonment of Biblical principles for the sake of offering up strange fire to the Lord. Instead let us take the time to consider the character and holiness of the God we seek to worship before we open our mouths.

Korah and Uzziah both sinned in taking responsibilities upon themselves that they were neither qualified nor called to do. Only the priests were allowed to burn incense and offer sacrifices to God. Korah supposed that the whole congregation was holy, so they were all qualified to do what the priests did. Uzziah went into the temple and burned incense before the Lord in spite of the fact that he was neither a priest nor even a Levite. These examples will be better understood as we progress into what exactly is meant by "The Due Order," but for now, let us remember that not everybody that can sing should lead in singing. It seems today that the only requirements placed upon individuals before becoming part of a "worship team" have everything to do with musical ability and nothing to do with piety and respect towards the things of God. True worship must follow God's order.

Ananias and Sapphira leave to us the example of consecration and honesty. All of us have issues that we are dealing with. None of us have perfectly consecrated ourselves to God as we ought. The sin in this case was less that they kept something back and more that they made it seem as though they gave everything while knowingly and subtly reserving some for themselves. The knowing deception is the issue, and, in my experience, this is the case in far too many of the supposed "Christian" songs out there. We are commanded to

examine everything that claims to be of God and yet, when it comes to music, we seem to be willing to accept anything that sounds good. Have we taken the time to examine the lyrics of the song and compare them to the Word of God? Have we considered the character of the person writing the song? Do they truly believe what they wrote? Is there any consistency to their lifestyle or do they go from writing about worldly things to writing about how spiritual they are and how desperate they are for God? Do they deny key doctrines of the Bible such as the Virgin Birth, the trinity, the vicarious death of Christ, the resurrection, second coming, eternal judgment, or Biblical marriage? Or do we simply accept the offering as though it truly is from God and sing the song that is spotted by the flesh and the world? My friend, our worship needs to be consistent. It needs to be genuine. It needs to be pure. Make a thorough examination on the thing being offered and make sure that it is free from the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

The last example we will consider will be the subject of the next several pages. For now, may we reflect on the examples left for our admonition, or warning, and may we ask the Lord to help us to offer a worship that will be pleasing in His eyes.

Chapter 6: The Due Order

Having laid the foundation in the previous chapters of what Biblical worship is, how Satan seeks to pervert it, how Jesus demands we render it, the requirements, specifically, for Christian Music, and the consequences for disobedience, we can now turn our attention to the passages of Scripture that inspired this work.

In studying out the various examples left for our admonition, I found an interesting exception to the general rule established. In every case that we dealt with in the last chapter, the sin was so great before the Lord, if nothing else, because it was a deliberate, conscious defiance to the established order of God. Lot's wife, Onan, Nadab and Abihu, Korah, Uzziah, and Ananias and Sapphira all perished because they knew the demand of God and willingly chose to disobey. This statement is not entirely true of the example found in I Chronicles chapter 13.

The scene is set: David has become King over Israel. After a brief period of unrest, all 12 tribes have finally acknowledged God's man. David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), earnestly seeks the blessing of God's presence and counsel. David gathers all the leaders of Israel together and says, "let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul." (I Chronicles 13:3) The people agree, and the news is published that the ark of the Testimony of God was returning to the tabernacle. Excitement filled the air as the musicians played, the singers sang, and the ark was paraded through the roads of Israel. People came from near and far to see this momentous occasion. The ark represented something greater than a gold-plated box with religious artifacts inside of it. The ark was the place that God told Moses "there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat." (Exodus

25:22) Having the ark back was a literal picture of having the blessing and presence of God.

“And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put for his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.” (I Chronicles 13:7-10)

Uzza sinned before the Lord because he touched the ark of God which was forbidden. God’s judgment was no less perfect or righteous in the case of Uzza as it was in the case of Korah, but Uzza’s death should have never happened because, if David had instructed the people differently, Uzza would have never had any reason to be within touching distance of the ark. Uzza died because of his own sin but also because of the sin of others.

The sins that lead up to Uzza’s death deals directly with our study into the true nature of Biblical worship and music. A closer study contrasting the failed attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem in I Chronicles 13 and the successful venture in I Chronicles 15 gives us insight into the type of service that God rejects versus the type of service that God honors. The differences between the two passages provide clear applications to many of the principles we have already established.

How to Prepare for Worship

The first key difference that should be noted is in how the people prepared for the service. In I Chronicles 13 David, having been

declared as the King over all of Israel (the nation was divided for some time), wants to ensure a sense of unity among the people. He “consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.” (verse 1) In verse 2 he says to them, “If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God,” let us go get the ark. Notice that, in preparation for bringing the ark of God back to Jerusalem, David took counsel from the people.

Contrast this to I Chronicles 15 where David “prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.” (verse 1) Instead of jumping through political hoops to make sure the people were okay with bringing the ark back, he ordered that the tabernacle should be erected and a place prepared for the ark. The question, then, must be asked, “where were they going to put the ark if they succeeded in chapter 13?” David had made sure the people were agreeable, but he had no place set up for the ark to go.

Furthermore, in verse 2 of chapter 15, David said, “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.” David, instead of consulting the people’s thoughts on the matter, inquired of the Word of God at how the ark should be transported. The former attempt was a failed attempt primarily because of how the ark was transported. David sought to correct that, and he did so by going to God’s declared order.

Thirdly, we do see David gathering the people together in verse 3, but it is not to hear their opinions on whether they should serve God or how they should do so. He gathered the people together “to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.” The principle here given is that we should prepare a place for God to meet with us before we call the people together.

Finally, David gathered the Priests and Levites together to instruct them on how their service should be rendered. He made it very clear

to them that, before they lifted a finger to serve God, they were to sanctify themselves. (I Chronicles 15:12) He laid the blame for the rejected service in chapter 13 on the fact that the people were not sanctified unto the Lord. “For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, *for that we sought him not after the due order.*” (I Chronicles 15:13, emphasis added)

To “sanctify” is to “set aside.” It is a conscious, intentional, thought-out decision on our behalf to worship God. Some may disagree with my statement there and cite the spontaneous “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We must remember that, ten days before Pentecost, a hundred and twenty people began meeting to pray and prepare themselves to receive the promise of the Father. The outpouring of the Spirit may seem spontaneous, but it was the result of God’s people separating themselves to the Lord.

The Priests and Levites, depending on certain circumstances, had to cleanse themselves ceremonially by taking a bath at least a day before they had to serve. In some cases, multiple days had to expire before service could be offered to the Lord. The people had to go back and consider if they had been exposed to anything that would have made them “unclean” before God and, if so, take the necessary steps to cleanse themselves. It was a tedious task that required a thorough examination of self. We would do well, even though the ceremonial law is done away with through Christ, to take time and ensure that we are truly “set aside” for the purpose of serving God.

Before coming to church, have you made a place for the Lord to meet with you? Have you, as the Levites and Priests were commanded, sanctified yourself unto the duty of public worship? Do you put critical thought into the state of your soul? Do you take inventory of what sins might be hindering you from serving God as He deserves and demands to be served? Or, as is the case in most church-goers, do you enjoy the things of the world on the evening before public worship is supposed to happen? Do you go to bed late and get up late? Do you rush to church and then, as soon as the service

is “finally” over, do you rush back home so that you can finish out your day as you please? How you prepare yourself for worship is the first and most crucial step in serving God after “The Due Order.”

Bearing the Burden of Holiness

The second way in which David corrected the people has already briefly been mentioned, namely in how the ark itself was transported. In the first service, the ark was placed on a new cart and two men “drove” the cart. These men were instructed with leading the oxen that pulled the cart. This was not the way the ark was supposed to be transported. God had made provisions that, even though no man was to ever touch the ark itself, the ark could be safely transported by hand. On either side of the ark there were rings with staves (or rods) running through them. These staves were permanently fixed to the ark so that four Levites could carry it from each corner. The Levites, then, only ever touched the rods and not the ark itself.

There are many reasons why God ordered things this way. We will consider only a couple. The first is obvious to us: if God’s people had transported the ark after the prescribed method, Uzza would not have died. Because the oxen stumbled, the ark was in danger of falling to the ground. Instinctively, Uzza put his hand out to keep the ark from falling and therefore touched the holy object. This would not have happened if the Levites were carrying the ark. Driving the ark on a cart exposed the ark to unnecessary risk. If the Levites had been carrying it, it would have been far less likely for the ark to have fallen in this type of danger. Even if one or two men stumbled, if the other men were watching and careful, the ark would still be held upright. In placing the ark on a cart, the people sinned.

Secondly, placing the ark on a cart gave in to the flesh. It made the duty convenient and easy which, as we considered in the example of Abraham, are not attributes that describe true worship. God's prescribed method was hard. It placed an immense burden on the shoulders of four men. We must remember, though, that it is the duty of God's people to bear the burden of holiness in a world that is filled with darkness and sin. We are called to be "ambassadors for Christ" (II Corinthians 5:20) and that is no easy task. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 1:16) When we seek to make worship convenient, we leave off from seeking true worship.

There is a fascinating passage in Exodus regarding the garments of the High Priest. There was a headpiece that was supposed to bear the writing "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" upon it. The Lord says to Moses, concerning this headpiece, "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may *bear the iniquity of the holy things...*" (Exodus 28:38, emphasis added) The term "iniquity" almost always is used in reference to sin but the term, in its definition, has more to do with "punishment" or "judgment" than with sin itself. The High Priest was to bear the "iniquity" of the holy things. This means that the High Priest wore this headpiece as a constant reminder of the perfect judgment of God and of the holiness of God. In performing the duties of priest, he was reminded that, if he failed, the Lord's perfect judgment was the consequence. We seem to have lost this burden of responsibility today.

We seem to think that since salvation is offered to us as the free gift of God that it costs us nothing. This statement is very dangerous. Though salvation truly is based on the merit of Christ alone, the demand of Christ is still for us to deny self and follow Him. (Luke 9:23) As stated in a previous chapter, if Christ is the Pearl of great price to us, we will bankrupt ourselves to have more of Him though He makes Himself freely available to us.

Consider it this way: there are 24 hours in a day. That means there are 1,440 minutes in a day. No one has more and no one has less. One

person esteems the pursuit of wealth as being most precious. That person will not be satisfied with working an eight-hour day. That person may work upwards to twelve or even fourteen hours a day. That person might eat their food in a rush and only sleep five or six hours a night. They forsake friendships and time with their families. They don't watch movies or play games. They are completely dedicated to what is precious to them. The etymology of the word "worship" is from the Old English "weorthscipe." "Worth," obviously meaning "value" and "ship," meaning "to give." The person in the example given obviously ascribes value to work and the pursuit of riches. Because of this, they give of themselves in order to obtain it.

So, then, for a Christian, even though salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, if we truly value Christ, we will give everything we have in the pursuit of Him. We will lay aside friendships for Christ. We will abandon worldly pursuits and entertainment for Him. We will give our time for Him. Those 1,440 minutes become very precious to us because it means that there is only a finite amount of time that we can spend in the pursuit of the God we so intrinsically value above all else.

Worship, then, is going to be costly if it is going to be genuine. We will have to, as it were, bear the burden of fellowship with God. The wonderful truth of this is that, even though we must bear the burden, we do not bear it alone. We have other ministers to help us as we bear the weight of holiness. The Lord Himself helps us if we follow His order. "God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD." (1 Chronicles 15:25) Christ Himself helps us. "Take my yoke upon you... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:29a & 30) A "yoke" was the device placed upon a PAIR of oxen when they were being worked. A yoke indicates cooperation. Christ calls it "my" yoke. This means that, when we take His yoke upon us, He is on the other side. When we resolve to follow

His order, He Himself comes alongside us to help us. Furthermore, the Spirit of God helps us to bear this burden of Holiness. He is rightly called the Comforter. (John 14) The term “comforter” means “one called in for support.” We have other helpers, too. Obviously, the preserved, inspired, and written Word of God brings us much needed support. In fact, it is through the Word that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit help us. Also, we have our brothers and sisters in Christ to help bear the burden of holiness in our generation. We are not alone for we are called to “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

This last observation raises another truth about the true worship of God. While true worship is innately personal, the public worship of God should be done in unity. The four Levites that carried the ark were singular in their purpose. When one fell, they held the burden until the fallen brother could get back up. They moved as a unit. It was essential for each individual Levite to have done his duty in sanctifying himself before the Lord, but they also had the responsibility and joy of working together in the worship of God. When we come into the place of public worship, if we have done our due diligence before the Lord to ensure that our heart is truly prepared, what a joy it is to lift our voices together in the singing of the praises of God! It should be a delight to pray together, give together, rejoice together, mourn together, listen to the proclaimed Word together, confess our sins together, embrace Christ together and serve Him together. True worship is seen when we bear the burden of holiness both individually and collectively.

Music in Worship

Not only was there a change made in the way the people prepared themselves as well as in the way the ark was transported, but the third major difference between these two texts is how the musical service

was performed. There are three key areas that we will concern ourselves with: who led the music, the instrumentation used, and what songs were sung.

Worship Leaders

“And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing...” (I Chronicles 13:8) “And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful.” (I Chronicles 15:22) If there were anyone who could be rightly called a “leader” of the music in the first occasion it might be David. “David and all Israel played...” On the other hand, in the second service, an individual “was for song,” meaning that he was the one who led the people in regards to music. He is later described as the “master of the song.” “Master” is in reference to his position, meaning “chief, prince, or ruler.”

David was very emotional and passionate in chapter 13. He had every reason to be. God had finally brought him to the place of promise. He was anointed King as a young boy but, after many difficult years, he was now in the place to realize that calling. He was very passionate in his religious pursuits. He was very devout. He wanted to see the Lord honored again. He wanted to see God bless Israel. All of these things are admirable. However, when it came time to do things “after the due order,” he withdrew himself from the place of musicianship and a man, Chenaniah, was placed as the leader of the song.

Chenaniah is only mentioned here, in I Chronicles 15, and once in I Chronicles 26. What we need to know about him is found in the text already referred to. First, he was “chief of the Levites.” He was a man who understood the Law of God and the demands that God

places on His people. He knew the consequences of offering God “strange fire” like Nadab and Abihu offered. He knew not only the principles of what was right, but he also knew the practice of how to perform that which was right. This made him qualified to lead the people because he understood the Word of God. Also, he was a man who was faithful in his responsibilities. He was “chief” of the Levites. He was an older man who had proven himself reliable. He could be counted on to do what was right. He wasn’t like the firstborn of Jacob, “unstable as water,” (Genesis 49:4), but was trustworthy. This is confirmed in I Chronicles 26:29 as we see Chenaniah being placed over “outward business over Israel.”

Secondly, we find that Chenaniah was “skilful.” The term, here, means “discerning.” It means to “discern, observe, perceive, or understand.” While it is true that proficiency in music requires the ability to discern between sounds and tones, my belief is that “skilful” is referring to Chenaniah’s character and not just his ability. He was a man of discernment. He was a man who observed things and considered the true nature of them. He was a thinking man.

These characteristics marked Chenaniah as a man uniquely qualified to lead the people of God in music. Contrast with many “worship teams” we see today, and we will note a clear difference. Much of the music being sung today is led by young people. This is not to say that young people have no place in the church, but that music ought to be led by a man who has a clear understanding of the Word of God, has proven himself reliable and trustworthy in the performance of his duties, and has the discernment necessary to see through Satan’s imitations so that he may lead people to the right praise of God.

We can take this principle and apply it further. At first, “David and all Israel played before God.” In I Chronicles 15:16, however, we see that “David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers with instruments of musick...” Not only was the “master of the song” a Levite, but everyone who played music and

led in singing was a Levite, as well. The first service was one of chaotic freedom. Everyone sang and played with all their might before God. In the accepted service, the Levites were the ones who led the music in every aspect. In short, the first service was led by passionate people, but the second service was led by spiritually minded people. This distinction cannot be stressed enough.

Instrumentation Matters

The second major alteration to music is found in the instrumentation. We can restate the fact that the music that was accepted was led by people who had knowledge of and was submitted to the Biblical order (Levites), but we can also note a difference in the actual instruments being used.

I Chronicles 13:8 lists the instruments being used as “harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.” The Levites were appointed to lead “with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.” (I Chronicles 15:16) Later, as the ark actually makes its way to the tabernacle, there is the mention of the Levites using trumpets (verse 24) as well as mention of cornets being used by the people of Israel in general (verse 28).

The omission of “timbrels” might not seem that important, but I would assert that everything in the Bible is important. As far as I understand, there were two types of “timbrels.” There was something that would resemble a small, handheld snare drum as well as something very similar to a tambourine. I’m not going to try to justify the reason for the omission, but I do know that there was a reason because everything God does is with a purpose.

If you study out the order of music in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, you will see that there were only four types of instruments permitted in the public worship of God. Other instruments were freely used at celebrations, feasts, and outside of the tabernacle, but, in the public worship of God, there were only four instruments: psalteries, harps, trumpets, and cymbals. Psalteries and harps were stringed instruments played by either striking or plucking the strings. There were various types of psalteries and harps, as is seen in many of the notes above individual Psalms, but these two instruments made up most of the musical instrumentation in the public worship of God. The use of trumpets and cymbals were mainly employed for the purpose of gathering people together or marking special moments. Leviticus 23 and 25 tell us of some of these special occasions.

The principle given in this is that, in the context of the public worship of God, there ought to be some limitation of the types of instruments being played. Above all, we need to make sure that the song we are singing does not lose its influence over us because of excessive instrumentation.

I love music. I love orchestras and bands. There is something overwhelming and emotional about loud, diverse and proficient instrumentation to a song. This is exactly the issue here. Listening to music has a profound impact on our being. Take, for instance, David playing to sooth the spirit of Saul. (I Samuel 16) Another use of grand instrumentation is found in Daniel 3 as Nebuchadnezzar demands the people worship his image after they hear the sound of music. Music has immense sway over our emotions and, knowing this, God intentionally limits the amount of instrumentation that is to be used in public worship so that our worship is rooted in doctrine and adoration, not emotion.

I won't dare to try to apply this principle in specific ways. I would only make an appeal to churches to consider that the measure of our worship is not in how loud, skillful, or diverse our musicianship is, but

rather by the measure of our submission to God in mind, body, and spirit as well as the clear communication of Bible truth in song.

What We Sing

In the rejected service there seemed to be no order: David and all Israel played and sang with all their might. In the accepted service, there was a man who was “instructed about the song.” The word “instructed” means to “discipline” or “admonish.” Two things we observe from this statement. First, we see the severity of the duty. He was instructed, disciplined, or admonished about his duty before the Lord. The word translated here as “song” literally means “burden.” Of course, the translators understood what was meant in the context and they translated the word correctly, but it is interesting to note that the entire process of singing before the Lord in this particular passage had a weight attached to it: he had to get the song right.

Secondly, we see the singularity of the duty. He was instructed about “the song.” Even if there were multiple songs being sung, it was a singular message being presented. The people weren’t free to choose the songs that they liked but, rather, the song that met the standard for what was appropriate. We’ve already considered this, somewhat, in our examination of Colossians 3:16. The use of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” indicates that there are some occasions where a song is inappropriate and discernment needs to be had in choosing what songs to sing and when.

We will consider the content of the songs we should sing in a little more depth in a later chapter, but, for now, let us reflect on the principles seen and the outcome of true worship.

First, we notice that, in order for us to truly worship God, our hearts need to be prepared. We need to sanctify ourselves, search the

scriptures, and confess our sins before we can meet with God. Secondly, we considered the burden of true worship. Worship is not convenient and the flesh will always look for ways to get out of difficulty. May we deny self and take up our cross, which to us is the ark of God, the place where God meets with us in justice and mercy through His Son, and follow Him. Finally, in the context of music itself, may we submit ourselves to the order of God and seek for men of discernment, Biblical knowledge, and faithfulness to lead us in simple, yet spiritual, worship that is timely and appropriate before God and, may we do all this, with fear and trembling, yet with joy, knowing Who it is that we are worshipping.

The outcome of these two services speak for themselves. In I Chronicles 13, there was no order and a man was killed as a result. In I Chronicles 15, the people returned to the Law of God and “God helped the Levites.” (verse 26)

It is worth observing the distance travelled on both occasions. The ark was less than ten miles away from Jerusalem when the procession began in chapter 13. They traveled until Uzza died and called that place “Perez-Uzza.” The exact location of “Perez-Uzza” is unknown, but scholars generally agree on the approximate location. “Perez-Uzza” is a location west of Jerusalem and likely within a kilometer of David’s destination. This means that the passionate service was able to carry the ark several miles but fell short of arriving at the goal, much like Moses who was able to bring the people of God to Jordan but was forbidden from going in. It is not unlikely that, from the spot of Uzza’s death, they might have been able to see glimpses of intended destination. How sad it is to be so close and yet miss the mark! Many people, in their well-intentioned, emotional, passionate services come so close to true worship but miss out on the blessing of arriving safely in the presence of the Holy God. If we are to travel that last kilometer and find ourselves resting in the presence of God, we are going to have to seek him after the due order.

Chapter 7: The Role of Emotions in Worship

Before we examine the content of the message to be sung, there is one final observation from I Chronicles 13 and 15 that deserves its own chapter. I have spent a great deal of effort raising concerns over emotionalism in worship. We considered the way that Satan manipulates emotions, the submission of natural emotions in Abraham's act of worship in Genesis 22, and several other examples of how that true worship is the submission of emotion in preference to truth. I would be in great error, though, if I did not take the time to consider the proper use of emotions in worship.

In our previous texts we found that the rejected service was one that was led, primarily, by feeling and the perception of what was right. David took counsel from the people concerning their opinion on the matter. David and all Israel played "with all their might" before the Lord with as many instruments as they could lay hold of. The streets were lined with people rejoicing at the return of the ark of God. The excitement was palpable, but the service was despised by God.

The accepted service was driven by doctrine (Bible teaching) instead of emotion. When the right service was performed by the right people in the right attitude, "God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD." (I Chronicles 15:26) We find a description of the scene in the following verses as they arrive in Jerusalem. "Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps."

The term "shouting" is used in scripture to describe the alarm of battle as well as the blasting of the trumpets on the days of atonement and jubilee. It is also rendered in Psalm 89:15 as "the joyful sound." This, coupled with David's dancing in I Chronicles 15:29, tells us that

the service that God accepted wound up being a very emotional, exciting, and passionate service as well.

We are emotional creatures by God's perfect design. Our emotions have been perverted by sin and pride, but we were created with the capability of expressing our innermost thoughts and feelings. For the Christian, it is a struggle to regulate our emotions and ensure that we are in control over them instead of them having control over us. Sensations of joy, frustration, sorrow, and desire can be good if we submit them to the law of God and channel them through the appropriate avenues. Jesus expressed all these emotions, and he did "always those things that please [the Father]." (John 8:29)

In I Chronicles 15 we find the right use of emotions in worship. They are neither the means nor the end of true worship, but rather one of several by-products of true worship. The means of worship, as we have discussed, is the submission of self to God. The end, or goal, of worship is to exalt and bring praise and adoration to God. When we worship, utilizing the correct means and aiming for the proper goal, the Lord reveals Himself to us, teaching us more of Himself and proving to us His faithfulness, mercy, and goodness. The only way that we can spiritually benefit from worship is by making it all about Him.

The result, then, of true worship in us is a heightened awareness of the person and attributes of God because we have set our heart to honoring Him above all else. The scripture says, in Psalm 22:3, that the Lord "inhabitest the praises of Israel." When we set our adoration upon Him, He makes his dwelling in our minds and hearts. The effect of this on a person is profound.

A sense of humility should overpower the true worshipper. The awareness of who God is, in all His power, wisdom, and purity, will make us keenly aware of our weakness, ignorance, and defilement. We will have no choice but to acknowledge ourselves as being completely unworthy, in our own merit, to have any entrance into His presence.

Following this, though, we should learn of the mercies of God displayed through the cross of Christ. Seeing, then, the sufficiency of this Savior and His perfect redemption, we should, by faith, see ourselves as the object of His affection and, having been made clean through His blood, recognize that we have been given free access to the Father through Christ. It is only through this redemption that Christ can say of us “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” (Song of Solomon 4:7)

If we have entered into this fellowship with God by faith, the Spirit of God is at work to enable us with the ability of expressing our love, gratitude, admiration, and submission to the Lord. When we engage in true worship, the Lord floods our mind with the knowledge of Himself and floods our souls with purified emotions that can be expressed unto God in a way that is most pleasing to Him. David’s dance, for example, was not some sensual dance, as some might suggest, but rather, as the word it is translated from would indicate, was a leaping or “whirling” for joy. The expression and feeling of emotion was a natural by-product of the stimulation of David’s mind towards the faithfulness and goodness of God.

Timothy was exhorted to “stir up the gift of God” that was in him (II Timothy 1:6). This “stirring up” was not a stirring of emotions, but a reminder of Timothy’s calling. Paul had reminded him of his godly heritage passed down to him through a godly mother and grandmother. He exhorted Timothy to remember when Paul had laid hands on him, teaching and training him in the ministry. This “stirring up” of the gift of God was one that had to begin with the remembering of certain truths.

In like manner, when we come together to “stir up” the church of God, we ought to engage the mind first. The emotions will naturally follow the mind if we set ourselves to think about heavenly things. Far too often, though, it seems that our worship is directed so that the emotions will be stirred. We sing upbeat songs that make people want

to tap their foot or clap their hands. We endlessly repeat phrases that make people enter an almost trance-like state. We cut out all the music and sing a refrain without accompaniment with the hopes that it will impact the emotions of those who hear. We manipulate people to get a calculated response and, when it all finished, the people walk away thinking they have been in the presence of God, but they are really none the better for their time in church. If we do not come away more aware of the person of Christ and more submitted to Him, then we have not been “stirred up” in the right way.

In short, emotions are necessary, given to us by God, but we are called upon to submit our emotions to the Lord. Paul said that he counted “all things but loss for *the excellency of the KNOWLEDGE* of Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Philippians 3:8, emphasis added) The knowledge of Christ Jesus must come first in our pursuits. If our worship, however, begins with the regenerated mind, seeking to lift up, adore, and honor Him, then the emotions that naturally come will be pure and acceptable before God. A heightened emotional sense, then, is not the reason why we worship nor is it what makes our worship acceptable, but it is one of our responses to true worship when it is done.

Chapter 8: Heavenly Worship

When considering biblical examples of songs used in worship, it would be obvious to head to the divinely inspired book of Psalms. This book is surely what Paul had in mind when he instructed people to sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” It is a collection of 150 doctrinally perfect songs where we may observe the highest standard of worship on earth. Full of anger, lament, jealousy, fear, joy, praise, and thanksgiving, the Psalms capture what worship looks like while we are still struggling with sin in a fallen world. However, we will no longer contend with many of these things in Heaven, where we will be free from the curse of sin. So rather than turn to the Psalms, I will point you to Revelation 4 and 5 where we receive a glimpse of Heavenly worship.

Turning to Revelation, we find John gazing into the throne room before the judgment of God is unleashed upon the earth. He sees the throne and the One seated thereon. Situated around the throne were 24 “elders” and 4 “beasts.” The elders represent the church in the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles of Christ. The beasts are angels and beyond the beasts and elders are a host of angels.

The first song is found in verse 8 of chapter 4. “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” This is the song of eternal praise. It speaks of God’s chief attribute: holiness and elevates and emphasizes that attribute by the third degree, repeating it again and again. In calling Him “Lord God Almighty” we acknowledge his authority, nobility, supremacy, and power. His eternal and unchangeable nature is observed from the phrase “which was, and is, and is to come.” These words may be few, but they hold

enough doctrine to keep a man in awe of the Lord for a thousand lifetimes.

The second song, found in verses 9 through 11, directly follows the first. “And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for they pleasure they are and were created.”

The true nature of worship is here seen in submission and humility. The elders, hearing the praise of God, fall before Him and cast their crowns before the throne. It is important that, even if we sing the exact same words as the elders, if we do not possess the same attitude our worship will be rejected.

As the elders cast away the sign of nobility and honor from their own head they declare “Thou art worthy, O Lord.” We have already learned that giving worth is what worship is all about and it is impossible to truly give worth to someone else without giving up our own crowns.

The declaration is made of God’s worthiness to “receive glory and honour and power.” This is a fantastic thing to consider because God already possesses all glory, honour, and power. Glory speaks to the divine manifestation. Glory refers to the literal presence of God seen resting on the ark of the covenant and in the temple. Glory, in its greatest example, is Christ incarnate. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). It is the literal presence of God. The term has the idea of “weight” behind it. In other words, “glory” speaks to the reality of God’s person. No amount of singing or service can increase the reality of who God is or the splendor of His holy presence. “Honour” means “price” or

“value.” God’s value cannot be increased even in the singing of a thousand songs. “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” (Psalm 50:10) We would do well to remember that He owns the forest and the hills, too. How do you increase the value of the one who says “the earth is mine?” (Psalm 24:1) “Power” obviously refers to the might of God. He created everything out of nothing. Christ says, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matthew 28:18) What power can we weak creatures give Him?

Understanding these things, we may then ask, “who can give to God the things He already possesses?” The answer to this is “no one.” We have nothing that God is in need of. So, then, what is the meaning of the song?

Simply put, when the elders sang, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power,” it was less an effort to give to God and more an emptying of self. I may not be able to give God any more glory than He already has, but I can seek to decrease myself for His sure increase. (John 3:30) I cannot increase God’s value, but I can increase my perception of His value and, thus, devalue myself. I cannot hope to make the God who created all things any more powerful, but I can confess my own weakness and profess His strength. May I state again that, in order to lift Him up, we must lower ourselves.

While some more seasoned and wise in the Word might disagree with my application, it is my deeply held conviction that this song, as well as all true songs of worship, contain the message of God’s greatness and our frailty. As the hymnist, Elisabeth Clephane, states, “And from my smitten heart with tears these wonders I confess – The wonders of His glorious love, and my own worthlessness.” It is only when we empty ourselves that we can see the fullness of His glory, honor, and power and begin to worship Him properly.

The final part of this song ascribes the reason for our humility and His exaltation. “For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” When we view God as the One to whom we owe everything, we can begin true worship, but not before that realization is made. Much of the emphasis in our music today seems to be in how God serves us. He forgives us, heals us, delivers us, gives us a home in heaven, etc. True worship may mention these things, as we will see in a moment, but it has Christ as its focus. We must be careful to understand that we exist for Him and not the other way around.

In chapter 5 we find a sealed book that no man is able to open. A strong angel proclaimed “with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.” (Revelation 5:2-3) The book was the beginning of the judgments of God upon the earth and, if no man were able to open it, the earth could not be judged. Consequently, John “wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” (verses 4-5) These verses may not contain a song, as such, but it does introduce the Captain of our Salvation into the account here. The Lord Jesus enters the scene to rightfully take the book and loose the judgment of God upon the earth.

Having taken the book from the One upon the throne, “the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.” (verse 8) Observing Christ, they again fall down before the Lord, this time equipped with instruments of praise. They each one had harps to play and golden vials filled with the prayer of the saints. Worship without prayer is as useless as worship without humility. Having the appropriate instruments of praise, “they sung a

new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” (verses 9 and 10)

Though equipped with musical instruments, the Word still describes the song not as something being played, but as words being stated. “They sung a new song, *saying*...” The emphasis of true worship should fall on the words being sung because those words ought to be filled with the adoration and exaltation of Christ.

The actual words of the song tell of the worth of Christ (Thou art worthy), His authority in judgment (to take the book, and to open the seals thereof), His redemption of the church through His vicarious death (for thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood...), His mercy in extending the call of salvation to all men (out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation), the justification and priesthood of the believer through Christ (and hast made us unto our God kings and priests), and the promotion of the believer through Christ (and we shall reign on the earth). Our music should reflect as many of these attributes as possible so that our worship might follow the pattern of Heavenly worship.

Having made this proclamation of the worthiness of Christ, the host of angels watching then join in and they say “with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (verse 12) Even the angels, who never have sinned, must confess their lowliness and Christ’s intrinsic value. This confession is also made “with a loud voice” so that it is an unashamed worship.

After this declaration, the scripture says that “every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour,

and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (verse 13) Now every creature joins in the adoration of the Lamb of God and ascribes blessing, honour, glory and power to the One upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

The last three proclamations of God’s glory come in quick succession to each other. The elders worship, then the angels worship, and then the creatures worship. We can then assert that true worship spreads from one to another. When our worship gets right, we provide a clear example to those around us of the true service and praise of God so that they might see the glory of the Lord in and through us and glorify Him. (Matthew 5:16)

Out of all the examples found in Revelation 4 and 5, we find the common theme of exalting the greatness of God through the willing and deliberate humiliation of self and by the recognition of Christ’s work upon the cross. This, in short, describes the content of Godly music. Even when the song mentioned the believer’s exaltation, it was done in such a way to ascribe all the credit and glory to Jesus who reconciles us to God through His blood. May we do a thorough examination of the songs that we sing to ensure that the content of their message is the clear communication of the value of Christ. “More, more about Jesus.”

Chapter 9: The Worship of Christ

The life of Christ was one of singular purpose: pleasing the Father. The first recorded words of Christ contain the phrase, “I must be about my Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49) The record is made concerning Christ that He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:7-8)

These are deep waters that we tread, but there is written here an account of the greatest worship ever made. In fact, it is only through Jesus’s worship (submission to and exaltation of) the Father that we may worship God. All true worship must conform to the picture Christ paints for us.

We see here Christ’s voluntary submission of self. He “made himself of no reputation.” Many modern translations render this as “emptied himself,” but that translation falls short of solid Bible doctrine. Christ was still the sinless Son of God even when He walked among men. He never laid aside or emptied Himself of His deity and never ceased to be the treasure of Heaven and Earth. He did, however, make “himself of no reputation.” That is, He was willing to take on the “form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” even though He was still God. This was a submission of His will, form, His attitude, and even His very life to the Father.

We know Christ experienced bodily demands while He walked the earth, but we see Christ deny His own will in preference for the Father’s. This is shown from His fasting in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 4:2) to the prayer in the Garden right before His crucifixion of “not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:39) His body endured the same aches, pains, and

demands for food, water, and sleep that ours do, but in all these things He submitted Himself to the will of the Father.

Furthermore, Christ submitted His form to the Father. The invisible God became flesh and took upon earthly form. (John 1:14) In doing this, Christ limited Himself to one body. The very being who created the laws of space and time submitted Himself to those laws for a period. He submitted Himself, again, to the needs of the flesh: food, water, shelter, sleep, etc. Above this, He took upon Himself, “the form of a servant.” He did not just put on the robe of flesh, but He put on the robe of a low-class, poor servant. His early years, no doubt, were spent learning the trade of Joseph, His mother’s husband. He spent a considerable amount of time building things for other people, fetching tools and materials for Joseph, or maybe doing errands for Mary. He chose not to be born into an affluent home. He chose to be born in such a way that He had no crib to be laid in. He submitted His form in such a way that would please His Father.

In life He was submitted to the will of the Father and, in death, this same submission is found. “Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” The statement here is ineffable. How can we describe the death of Christ? “In him was life.” (John 1:4) He is the immortal God, the creator of life itself. He cannot be killed but, rather, willingly chose to die. (John 10:17-18) Contrary to modern thought, death does not mean “cease to exist,” but means “separation from life.” If you cut a tree down you do not say that the tree is still alive even though it may still have green foliage on it. The tree has been severed from the root and, thus, has died. The death of Christ was not Him ceasing to be, but it was a voluntary separation from the Father. He had been in perfect communion with the Father from the very beginning of creation and had never stepped outside of that fellowship. At Calvary, Christ took upon Himself the very sin of mankind and willingly chose to step out of fellowship with the Father for a period of time.

This act of love and perfect justice is amplified by the type of death that it was: “even the death of the cross.” In the law it was

written “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” (Galatians 3:13) As a result, Christ not only submitted His life and His fellowship with the Father, but He exchanged that life with a curse. He was “made a curse for us” so that He might be the one who has “redeemed us from the curse of the law.” (Galatians 3:13) It is not only that Jesus submitted His very fellowship with the Father, but that He did so in the most awful, painful, and shameful way possible. He literally was made a curse for us and “it pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isaiah 53:10) and to lay “on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6) He submitted His very life to the Father so that He may redeem us to Himself.

In all these things we find the attitude of His service. It was an attitude of quiet, confident, compassionate, and joyful surrender. “He was oppressed, and afflicted, Yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, So he openeth not his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7-8) “He shall not cry, nor lift up, Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.” (Isaiah 42:2) We see through these prophecies and the fulfillment of them in the Gospels that, even though Christ was being called upon to surrender literally everything to the Father, He did so without complaining or raising an argument.

Also in Isaiah 42, we find the scripture says “He shall not fail nor be discouraged.” (Isaiah 42:4) He did not lose hope in the plan of the Father. He was confident that He would have the strength necessary to complete what He was called to do.

Furthermore, in the same text, we find the words “A bruised reed shall he not break, And the smoking flax shall he not quench.” (Isaiah 42:3) He did not get defensive or retaliate against His attackers. “...when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.” (I Peter 2:23) In fact, we find His cry to be “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) The

compassion of Christ was never lost even when the demand for service and sacrifice was greatest.

Finally, we observe that He did all these things “for the joy that was set before him.” (Hebrews 12:2) There was obvious sorrow in the heart of Christ. There was much pain in His body. His mind was wearied, but, in spite of all these things, He knew that the sacrifice pleased the Father and, so, endured through the pain for the hope of joy. It is for this reason that we are commanded to “count it all joy” when we are tried, persecuted, and hated. (James 1:2, Matthew 5:10-12) It is because Jesus Himself counted the cross as an instrument of joy and an opportunity to glorify the Father.

So, as we ask the Lord to help us be influenced by Christ’s worship on the cross, may we remember that our service to God is to be a complete, voluntary surrender. It is a desire to glorify God even if it means pain, poverty, or persecution. It means that your service to Him should be without complaining, without discouragement, without selfishness, and without bitterness.

Far too many times I find myself serving in deed but not in disposition. I may do the things I am required to do, but I fail to let the mind of Christ indwell me. I think of the hardships and not the joy that awaits. I sulk over my troubles and my difficulties and fail to see the needs of others around me. I lose sight that God has a purpose in it all and fall into discouragement and despondency of mind. I look for a friendly ear to rehearse my hard times to instead of bearing it quietly and patiently. In short, I find the example of Christ’s worship a hard example to follow. I am thankful, as noted in chapters previous, that I am not called to bear this burden alone. Christ Himself goes before me, walks beside me, and travels behind me.

My friend, I may be presenting a work on the modern concept of “worship” and, specifically Biblical music, but do not lose sight of the fact that it is impossible to approach the Father without the blood of Christ applied to your life. You cannot worship the Father except

through submission to His Son. Christ died for you. He submitted Himself to the pains of betrayal, suffering, and even death so that you might be reconciled to the Father. For these things, God not only raised Jesus from the dead, but also has “given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-10)

The truth is that God demands that we worship the Son. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, And ye perish from the way, When his wrath is kindled but a little.” (Psalm 2:12) “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well please; hear ye him.” (Matthew 17:5) Every knee WILL bow. Every tongue WILL confess. Every creature WILL worship Him. The question is, will you worship Him now? Will you voluntarily submit yourself to Him? Will you humble yourself to serve Him even though it’s hard? Will you seek him “after the due order?”