

Free! Take one!

That They all May Be One



John 17:21

Chapter three
New Testament Worship

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Jesus warned, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). Jesus warned again, “*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9). Satan has tricked many people into thinking that any form of religion is pleasing to God. That is simply not true.

Satan’s Propaganda

Many people have fallen for Satan’s propaganda. He has deceived countless souls with catchy slogans like *Just be sincere* and *Attend the church of your choice*. People fail to understand that they must attend the church of Jesus’ choice. Jesus warned, “*Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*” (Matthew 7:22,23). This Bible warning is crystal clear, yet many people ignore it. They put their faith in Satan’s slogans and trust his word. They believe that all they have to do is *just be sincere* and *attend the church of their choice*. These people are victims of Satan’s propaganda.

God does require us to be sincere, but He also requires us to be doctrinally correct. Jesus referred to doctrinal correctness in the warning

of Matthew 7:21-23 when he said, “...but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Those who enter heaven are those who actually do the will of the Father. Just because people prophesy, cast out demons, and work wonders in the name of Jesus does not prove that they are pleasing the Father. To please God we must do His will without adding to it or taking away from it (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:15; II Thessalonians 2:15; Revelation 22:18,19). People who make or accept changes to the Bible are not doing the will of God. They are doing the will of whoever made the changes. Ultimately they are victims of Satan’s deceit. Sadly, most of them won’t realize their tragic mistake until it is too late.

Who Do We Aim to Please?

In our effort to restore New Testament Christianity and develop unity, we focus upon pleasing God first. If we stand together but remain in error, then we have failed. Our practice must first please God. Unfortunately, many have changed their focus to pleasing man. Their assemblies are designed to entertain the audience. This strategy gains the quick approval of most people, but it does not gain God’s approval.

The church at Sardis was a church that had the approval of men, but Jesus told them, “*I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead*” (Revelation 3:1). Men praised the church of Sardis. They thought that the church of Sardis was on fire for God, but Jesus condemned them. The church at Sardis had forgotten that man’s approval does not assure that God will also be pleased. To please God we must practice what His Word reveals, not what pleases men (See also Lev. 10:1-3).

The Greatest Respect

When we worship God the way He said, then we are showing Him our love. Our total surrender is an expression of our love, loyalty, and respect. Jesus taught, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”* (John 14:15, see also John 14:21,23; 15:10,14). When we leave things exactly the way He designed, that is when we love and honor God the most.

Men are being arrogant when they think that they can improve on God's design. They are also being disrespectful and unloving. Yet, Satan has somehow convinced many people that they can ignore the Bible and change Christianity in any way they want to suit themselves (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:15; Revelation 22:18,19). Some are so arrogant that they claim to know that God's wanted certain changes made, but Paul taught, *“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in Him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God”* (I Corinthians 2:11). It is interesting to note that all of those who claim to know the mind of God, they don't agree among themselves about what God wants. Obviously, someone is wrong.

Instead of trying to find a special message amidst all the contradictory claims of these false prophets, we have chosen to stick with the written word. If God has not authorized a particular practice through His written Word, then we don't presume to practice it. We conform ourselves to God's word, we don't change the word to conform to us. We encourage the attitude of David when he said, *“Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression”* (Psalm 19:13, see also Numbers 15:30; Deuteronomy 17:12,13; 18:20).

New Testament Worship

When we restore worship to its original elements, the result is a simple religious service. Our worship service only has five elements: prayer, preaching, giving, the Lord's Supper, and singing. When this simple worship is compared to the big programs that many churches have today, then some people think that we are a little different, and that's OK. We don't mind if some folks think we are different as long as we are building on a solid *book, chapter, and verse* foundation. We gladly invite others to come be different with us.

Let's briefly consider each of the five elements and also look at some changes that men have made over the years. Keep in mind that our goal is to build on a solid *book, chapter, and verse* foundation. We want to be loyal and true to the Word of God. We are not interested in defending pet ideas, family traditions, or denominational practices. We want to be sure of heaven. We don't want to take chances with our eternity, your eternity, or the eternity of our loved ones.

Prayer

Christians are to pray in everything. Paul said, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*" (Philippians 4:6,7). Paul also taught that Christians are to pray for everyone, "*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is*

good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (I Timothy 2:1-3).

This simple pattern of prayer has been twisted and changed by man over the years. Some teach that people should pray for great wealth and riches even though James said, *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures"* (James 4:3). They ignore James 4:3 and tell their members to pray for money, worldly possessions, and material pleasures. This kind of praying is wrong. It goes far beyond what Jesus taught when he told us to pray, *"give us this day our daily bread"* (Matthew 6:11).

Some groups teach their members to use ritualistic repetitions even though Jesus said, *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words"* (Matthew 6:7).

Some religious groups actually teach their members to pray to the dead even though the Bible says, *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (I Timothy 2:5).

Making changes to prayer is wrong. In our effort to build on a solid *book, chapter, and verse foundation* we reject all forms and practices in prayer that cannot be clearly verified by the Bible. We simply will not gamble with our eternity and the eternity of our loved ones. We won't gamble with your eternity either.

Preaching

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (II Timothy 4:2).

When we look in the Bible we see that preaching is a time of serious teaching. It is a time to boldly proclaim the truth. That kind of preaching is often unpopular. Stephen was killed because of that kind of preaching (Acts 7:54-60).

The simple pattern of Bible preaching has been changed by many. Some groups have made women preachers even though God said, *"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence"* (I Timothy 2:12).

Some have changed the Bible pattern by requiring their preachers be single. Paul warned us about this when he said, *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth"* (I Timothy 4:1-3).

Some religious groups allow politicians to deliver political speeches during the worship service while others use the worship service to entertain the audience with musical programs and plays. They do all these things never realizing that they are the fulfillment of prophecy. Paul said the day would come when people, *"...will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desire, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (II Timothy 4:3,4).

Making changes to God's design is wrong. We do not wish anyone

any harm, but we cannot give them a nod of approval when they are in direct and obvious violation of Bible teachings. The apostle John wrote, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds”* (II John 9-11). When people make changes such as these, then they force us to choose between them and God. We choose God.

Giving

“Now concerning the collection for the saints... On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (I Corinthians 16:1,2).

“Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (I Corinthians 9:14).

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (II Corinthians 9:6,7).

In the Bible a collection was taken on the first day of the week. This collection served two purposes. It was used to help Christians that were in need and to support teaching. No other uses for the collection are authorized. This simple Bible pattern has also been changed by man over the years.

For example, the New Testament does not have a tithe system like the Old Testament. No man today has the right to set an amount that another person should give. In the New Testament the amount of your contribution is between you and God based on your individual ability. Some people don't like this aspect of the New Testament and have changed it by adding a tithe system. This is wrong.

Some religious groups have changed God's simple pattern by using high pressure techniques that badger members into giving more and more. Some groups organize fund raising events, sales, carnivals, and other promotions to get more and more money out of their members. The New Testament says nothing at all about such methods. These things have been added and violate the Bible pattern. Paul wrote, *"Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it"* (Galatians 3:15). John wrote, *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Revelation 22:18,19). In our effort to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent, we follow only the practice of a voluntary contribution as recorded in the New Testament.

The Bible only mentions using the collection to help needy saints and to support teaching the Gospel. Many groups today have added other expenditures to God's design. Great amounts of money are spent on entertainment and recreational facilities, equipment, and events. Adding

these things to God's pattern is wrong. These are not authorized by the Bible and therefore constitute a misappropriation of funds. In our effort to be true to the Bible pattern, we use the Lord's money for only the two purposes recorded in the New Testament. Our members, of course, are free to spend their own money as they desire.

Lord's Supper

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:19,20).

"Now, on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7).

God's Plan of Salvation

Hear the Gospel: Romans 10:14-17

Believe: John 3:16; Hebrews 11:6

Repent: Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30,31

Confess: Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32,33

Be united with Christ in baptism: Romans 6:3-5

None of the above steps save in and of themselves. It is the grace of God that appointed these as steps leading to the saving blood of Jesus. To get to the saving blood each step must be taken just as it is presented in the Bible. These steps only have value because God's grace has so granted. Without God's grace these steps would be worthless. Have you followed these steps to the saving blood of Jesus?

In Bible times Christians met on Sunday to observe the Lord's Supper. This practice has also been changed over the years. Today, many groups have reduced their observance of the Lord's Supper to a quarterly, semi annual, or even an annual event (It's interesting to note that they have not reduced taking the collection to a quarterly event).

Some groups have abandoned the Bible pattern and changed the day on which they partake of the Lord's Supper. Some observe it on multiple days throughout the week.

Some groups do not let all their members partake but rather regulate which members can partake of the Lord's Supper. The Bible says absolutely nothing about such a selective system for observing the Lord's Supper.

Some groups, though few in number, have gone to such extremes that they have actually changed the elements of the Lord's Supper. They no longer use the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread. They think themselves to be enlightened but actually they are condemned (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:15; II Thessalonian 2:15; Revelation 22:18,19).

These changes are wrong and we reject them. Our desire is to respect the simplicity of the Gospel and observe the Lord's Supper in the humble manner revealed in the Bible.

Singing

"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name”
(Hebrews 13:15).

In the New Testament and for over 600 years to follow, Christians sang *a cappella*. Musical instruments were not added to Christian worship services until sometime around 650 AD. Man grew discontent and refused to respect the pattern set by the apostle (II Thessalonians 2:15). They chose to indulge their own desires and added instrumental music.

Many modern groups focus more on entertaining the audience than worshipping God in their singing. Quartets, choirs, and other groups put on a show to keep the audience entertained. Some modern churches spend thousands and thousands of dollars on musical instruments, special sounds systems, and special theatre type lighting. Some of their members use the church as a stepping stone to a career in secular (non-religious) music. They go from singing praises to singing about things that real Christians would flee (II Timothy 2:22).

When we look to the New Testament seeking authority for these modern changes, we find none. We find no such use of instrumental music and entertainment recorded in the New Testament. These additions are a direct violation of Galatians 3:15 and Revelation 22:18,19 (these two verses are given on page 9 of this booklet).

The error of adding instrumental music to Christian worship is easily seen when we read II Thessalonians 2:15, where Paul said, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”* The point is simple. Christianity began

a cappella. It remained *a cappella* for several hundred years. Paul told us to hold the traditions that we had received. One of those traditions was singing *a cappella*. If we follow Paul's teaching, then *a cappella* is the choice we will make. If we are truly interested in restoring New Testament Christianity, then *a cappella* is the choice we will make.

Returning to *a cappella* singing is one of the most difficult changes for many people to make. They want their musical instruments. They want

YOU ARE INVITED

Come visit with us, look us over, and ask any questions that you have about the church of Christ.

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their entertainment. They forget that worship was designed by God to please God, not to please man. Our duty is to offer to God what God has asked for, not what we presume He would like. Making changes in God's design for worship is wrong (see Leviticus 10:1-3).

In our search for common ground we have chosen to stand as squarely upon the scriptures as we can. This means returning to the original *a cappella* way of singing. We will not take a risk with our eternity and the eternity of our loved ones by allowing a man-made change into our worship service. We won't take a risk with your eternity either.

The Popular Choice

Sadly, most people will refuse to give up the various man-made changes that have crept into religion. Most people find much pleasure in these changes. Consequently, they insist on worshipping God in the manner that pleases themselves.

We have chosen to eliminate the man-made changes. We practice only those things that are authorized by the Bible. This means that we are different from most modern day religious groups. However, our desire is not to be like modern groups, but rather, to be the church that Jesus built. We want to be certain that we are heaven bound.

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COMING NEXT CHAPTER

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John 17:21



Chapter four
Instrumental music

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