

We Come To Worship

A STUDY OF CORPORATE WORSHIP FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

LESSON 2: Worship Transformed in the New Testament

New Testament worship is God-initiated, Christ-centered, New Covenant-regulated, and mediated through union with Christ.

God Still Initiates Worship

- › Although Christ fulfills the Old Testament pattern of worship, the first principle remains unchanged: God still initiates worship. The New Testament never presents worship as something devised by the Church or created by human preference.
- › Worship is still God's invitation before it is man's response. The difference is that God now gathers His people through the finished work of Christ and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - God's work in salvation is also God's work in worship (John 3:16).
 - Worship begins with God's seeking, not man's searching. God determines both the object and manner of acceptable worship (John 4:23-24, 6:44)
 - God establishes both the means of access through Christ and the gathering of His covenant people. Corporate worship exists because God has opened the way (Hebrews 10:19-25)
 - The Church did not invent its worship. God defined the ordinary means of worship through apostolic revelation (Acts 2:42).
 - God creates both the worshiping people and the place of worship. The Church itself becomes God's dwelling under the New Covenant (Ephesians 2:18-22)
 - God first calls a people to Himself before assigning them the privilege and purpose of worship (1 Peter 2:9)
- › **The New Testament preserves the same foundational reality of worship established throughout the Old Testament.**
 - God calls His people into a covenant relationship through Christ.
 - God establishes the means of access through Christ alone.
 - God gathers His Church for worship.
 - God reveals the ordinary practices of worship through the apostles.
- › Principle: **God still initiates worship through His revelation and gracious call.**
 - Corporate worship is therefore governed by Christ's Word rather than human creativity or preference.
 - God remains the initiator, the author, and the definer of true worship.

Christ, the Perfect and Final Sacrifice

- › The greatest transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament is not that sacrifice disappears, but that sacrifice reaches its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
 - Every sacrificial lamb throughout the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ, who alone would finally remove sin (John 1:29)
 - Unlike the Levitical priests, Christ did not offer the blood of another. He offered Himself, accomplishing what animal sacrifices could never achieve (Hebrews 9:11-14)
 - The continual repetition of Old Testament sacrifices demonstrated their insufficiency. Christ's single sacrifice permanently accomplished redemption, ending the sacrificial system by fulfilling its purpose (Hebrews 10:1-14).
 - Jesus fulfills the requirements of every unblemished sacrifice prescribed under the Law (1 Peter 1:18-19).
 - The language of Old Testament offerings reaches its fulfillment in Christ's voluntary self-sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2)
 - Because Christ's sacrifice is complete, Christians no longer offer sacrifices for sin but offer themselves in grateful obedience as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1)
- › One of the great themes running throughout Scripture is that God has always required sacrifice for sinful man to approach a holy God. Sin deserves death (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23), and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 9:22). Yet the blood of bulls and goats never possessed the power to remove guilt before God.
- › The sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant served several purposes.
 - They demonstrated the seriousness of sin.
 - They taught the necessity of substitution.
 - They maintained covenant fellowship between God and Israel.
 - They continually reminded God's people that a greater sacrifice was still needed.
 - Yet, every element of worship pointed beyond itself.
- › Principle: **Christ fulfilled every Old Testament sacrifice through His once-for-all offering upon the cross.**
 - The New Covenant abolishes repeated sacrifices because Christ has accomplished perfect and eternal redemption.
 - Christian worship continually remembers, proclaims, and celebrates Christ's finished sacrifice.
 - The worship of God remains sacrificial, but the sacrifice has changed from repeated offerings upon the altar to lives offered in response to Christ's perfect sacrifice, being found in Him.

New Covenant Regulated.

- › God's covenants define the relationship, the promises, the responsibilities, and the means by which God's people approach Him. Under the Old Testament, Israel worshiped according to the Mosaic Covenant, with its priesthood, sacrifices, temple, feasts, and ceremonial laws.
- › Through His death and resurrection, Jesus inaugurated the promised New Covenant. The New Covenant does not abolish God's pattern of worship; rather, it fulfills and perfects it. The covenant has changed because redemption has been accomplished.
 - The New Covenant was God's plan long before Christ came. It promised an internal transformation rather than merely external regulation (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
 - Christ's sacrificial blood establishes the covenant under which the Church now worships. Every observance of the Lord's Supper proclaims this covenant relationship (Luke 22:19-20)
 - The superiority of Christ's priesthood requires a superior covenant. Christian worship is governed by the New Covenant because Christ Himself is its mediator (Hebrews 8:6-13)
 - The New Covenant rests entirely upon Christ's atoning work rather than the repeated sacrifices of the Old Covenant (Hebrews 9:15)
 - The New Covenant brings life through the Holy Spirit, who writes God's law upon the hearts of His people rather than merely upon tablets of stone (2 Corinthians 3:4-6).
 - The ceremonial aspects of Old Testament worship have fulfilled their purpose because Christ, the substance of which they pointed, has come (Colossians 2:16-17)
- › When Jesus declared, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," He announced that the promised covenant had arrived. His death accomplished what the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could never accomplish. Consequently, the covenantal administration of worship also changed.
 - The temple, the Levitical priesthood, Animal sacrifices, and ceremonial purification give way to Christ.
- › Yet the fundamental principles remain unchanged.
 - God still establishes the covenant.
 - God still defines acceptable worship.
 - God still determines how His people approach Him.
- › Principle: **The Worship of God is New Covenant worship**
 - Christian worship is therefore regulated by the New Covenant and the apostolic teaching of Christ rather than the ceremonial regulations given to Israel.
 - The New Covenant is not a departure from God's plan but the fulfillment of His redemptive purpose, making Christ the center and substance of all true worship.

Mediated through Union with Christ

- › One truth remains unchanged: sinful people cannot approach a perfectly holy God on their own. God does not change, and His holiness is still a perfect holiness where no sin may enter His presence or be in fellowship with Him.
- › Under the New Covenant, that entire priestly system finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the perfect High Priest, the perfect sacrifice, and the perfect mediator between God and man.
 - Unlike the earthly priests, Christ ministers continually in the heavenly sanctuary, inviting His people to approach God through Him (Hebrews 4:14–16)
 - Christ's eternal priesthood completely replaces the temporary priesthood of the Old Covenant. His perfect sacrifice never needs repeating (Hebrews 7:23–27).
 - The veil separating sinful man from God's presence has been opened through Christ, granting continual access to all who belong to Him (Hebrews 10:19–22).
 - No earthly priest, saint, or religious system shares Christ's mediatorial office. He alone reconciles sinners to God (1 Timothy 2:5)
 - Christ's priesthood does not eliminate priestly ministry; rather, believers now share in a royal priesthood because they are united to Him (1 Peter 2:5, 9).
- › **Jesus Christ fulfills every aspect of the priestly ministry**
- › Every aspect of Israel's worship testified that access to God remained limited until a perfect mediator should come.
- › Jesus is the perfect High Priest who never sins.
 - He ministers in the true heavenly sanctuary.
 - He continually intercedes for His people.
 - He permanently secures their acceptance before the Father.
- › The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes that believers are "in Christ." This union with Christ is not merely a legal declaration but the foundation of all Christian worship. Because Christ possesses perfect righteousness, those united to Him share in His acceptance before the Father. We do not enter God's presence because we have become worthy in ourselves, but because we belong to the One who is perfectly worthy.
- › Principle: **A holy God still requires a holy mediator for sinful people to approach Him.**
 - Jesus Christ fulfills and perfects the entire priestly ministry of the Old Covenant.
 - Believers worship through their union with Christ, whose righteousness grants continual access to the Father.
 - Every act of Christian worship is acceptable only because it is offered through the mediation of Christ.