

Christian Worship
Class 5: The Elements of Worship (Pt. 1)
September 24, 2023

I. Recap from Weeks 1-4

Class 1

- Worship is what we were made for
- The true object of worship is the Triune God
- Worship is formative

Class 2: Which Worship?

- Explicit Worship (even though the Bible does commend Implicit Worship)
- Corporate Worship (even though the Bible does commend Private Worship and Family Worship)
- The Goals of Corporate Worship: The Glory of God and The Building Up of the Body of Christ

Class 3: The Source of True Worship

- Right Worship is determined by God and revealed to us in his Word—this is true of both the actions of worship and the motives of worship
- We can think of worship in terms of its content, elements, forms, and circumstances; and God's word directs us differently in each of those categories

Class 4: The Transformation of Christian Worship

- Jesus transforms worship by taking it from earth to heaven; corporate worship is a supernatural event that takes place in the very presence of God

II. Elements and Content

a. The Elements of Corporate Worship—Praying, Singing, Reading God's Word, Preaching God's Word, Sacraments, Giving of Gifts, Confessing the Faith, Taking of Vows

Acts 2:42, And they devoted themselves to [the apostles' teaching and the fellowship](#), to [the breaking of bread and the prayers](#).

Colossians 3:16-17, Let [the word of Christ](#) dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, [singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs](#), with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, [giving thanks](#) to God the Father through him.

WLC Q. 154. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?

A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances; especially [the word](#), [sacraments](#), and [prayer](#); all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation.

1. Preaching God's Word

- i. Where Scripture Prescribes Preaching: 2 Tim. 4:2, Acts 5:42

2 Timothy 4:1-2, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

- ii. What is preaching?

Nehemiah 8:8, They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

WLC Q. 159. How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?

A. They that are called to labor in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

WLC Q. 160. What is required of those that hear the word preached?

A. It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

- iii. Why is preaching a part of worship?

Hebrews 12:24-25, [But you have come...] to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

Romans 10:13-14, For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

1 Corinthians 1:21-25, ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to

those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

- iv. What is the content of our preaching?

The whole counsel of God, but more specifically we preach Christ

Colossians 1:27-29, ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

2. Reading God's Word

- i. Where Scripture Prescribes Reading God's Word: Luke 4:16-17, Acts 15:21, Col. 4:16, 1 Thess. 5:27, Rev. 1:3
- ii. Why is reading Scripture a part of worship?

WLC Q. 157. How is the Word of God to be read?

A. The holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

- iii. What do we read?

The whole counsel of God, in large chunks

We also read particularly applicable passages at certain points in the service (call to worship, assurance of pardon, benediction, etc.)

3. Praying

- i. Where Scripture Prescribes Praying: Phil. 4:6, 1 Tim. 2:1, Col. 4:2
- ii. Why is prayer a part of worship?

Worship is not just God speaking to us; it is also us speaking back to God (the dialogical principle). And the primary way we respond to God is in prayer.

iii. What kinds of prayers?

Philippians 4:4-7, ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication, Illumination, Lament, Consecration/Blessing

iv. What is the content of our prayers?

1 Timothy 2:1-3, First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.

Also, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, Paul's prayers (esp. Rom. 11:33-36; 2 Cor. 1:3-7; Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil. 1:3-6, 9-11; Col. 1:3-14; 1 Thess. 3:9-13; 2 Thess. 1:3-12; Phile. 4-7), and Jesus's prayer (Jn. 17)

Also, the prayers of the church. See the Book of Common Prayer, *The Valley of Vision, Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson

4. Singing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

i. Where Scripture Prescribes Singing: Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19; Jas. 5:13, 1 Cor. 14:15

Ephesians 5:18-21, ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

ii. Why is singing a part of worship?

"We know from experience that song has great force and vigor to arouse and inflame the hearts of men to invoke and praise God with a more vehement and ardent zeal... Wherefore that much more ought we to take care not to abuse it, for fear of fouling and contaminating it, converting it to our condemnation, when it was dedicated to our profit and welfare." – John Calvin, *Epistle to the Reader*

"The psalms do not simply *express* emotions: when sung in faith, they actually *shape* the emotions of the godly. The emotions are therefore not a problem to be solved but are part of the raw material of now-fallen humanity that can be shaped to good and noble ends. The psalms, as songs, act deeply on the emotions, for the

good of his people. It is not 'natural' to trust God in hardship, and yet the Psalms provide a way of doing just that, and enable the singers to trust better as a result of singing them. A person staring at the night sky might not know quite what to do with the mixed fear and wonder he finds in himself, and singing Psalm % will enrich his ability to respond." – C. John Collins, "Introduction to the Psalms," *ESV Study Bible*

iii. What should the content of our songs be?

- The whole counsel of God, but particularly the mighty acts of God in salvation (see Ex. 15; Rev. 5:9-10)
- Not just songs that capture the truth of Scripture, but also the songs of Scripture

Colossians 3:16-17, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...

Philippians 2:1-5, So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...

5. Sacraments

i. Where Scripture Prescribes the Sacraments: Matt. 28:19, 1 Cor. 11:23-29, Acts 2:42

ii. Why are sacraments a part of worship?

- **The Lord's supper is not simply communion with God, but also with his people** (see 1 Cor. 11:17-34 and the repeated refrain "when you come together")
- **Baptism is not simply an individual decision or personal salvation, but a person is baptized into the church** (1 Cor. 12:12-13)
- **Additionally, the sacraments do not belong to individual Christians, but were given to the church corporate and are overseen by the elders of the church** (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 14:22-25; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; cf. Mt. 16:19; Jn. 20:21-23)

WLC Q. 167. *How is baptism to be improved by us?*

A. The needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others; by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace; and by endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ; and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.

WLC Q. 171. *How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?*

A. They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

WLC Q. 172. *May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper?*

A. One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity: in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed, for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief, and labor to have his doubts resolved; and, so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's supper, that he may be further strengthened.

WLC Q. 173. *May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, be kept from it?*

A. Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

WLC Q. 174. *What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the time of the administration of it?*

A. It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, that, during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces; in judging themselves, and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fullness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

WLC Q. 175. *What is the duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper?*

A. The duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfill their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance: but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time: but, if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.

6. Offering of Gifts

- i. Num. 18:26; Prov. 3:9-10; Mk. 12:41-44; Rom. 12:1, 13; 1 Cor. 16:1-2

7. Confessing the Faith

- i. Deut. 6:4-6, Rom. 10:9-10, 1 Cor. 8:6, 15:3-4, Phil. 2:6-11, Col. 1:12-20, 2:9-15, 1 Tim. 2:5-6

8. Taking of Oaths and Vows

- i. Deut. 6:13, Neh. 10:29, 2 Cor. 1:23, Ps. 116:14, Isa. 19:21, Eccl 5:4-5