



**THE INSTITUTE FOR
WORSHIP STUDIES**

**Learning To Worship
With All Your Heart (VI):
A Study In The
Biblical Foundations
Of Christian Worship**

Temple and Synagogue Forms Of Worship

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REVIEW

WEEK 1 - Worship and Deed

Worship is a celebration of God's mighty deeds, especially of salvation, culminating in Jesus Christ.

- God speaks and acts;
- We respond.

WEEK 2 - Worship and Covenant

- God speaks/acts in context of Covenant:

"I will be their God and they shall be my people."

- "No covenant, no worship"

WEEK 3 - Biblical Directives In Worship

How does the Word of God shape our worship?

Adiaphora vs Regulative Principle

Worship themes: Attitude, Obedience, Leadership, Offering,
Relationship, Activity, Noise, Music.

WEEK 4 - Biblical Directives In Worship

- Sense of Awe in worship; the transcendence vs imminence of God
- Names of God (Father, Son & Spirit)
 - what they mean
 - how we use them in worship

WEEK 5 - Old Testament Forms And Structures

- Preparing, coming, teaching, meeting, living
- Gates, Outer Courts, Holy Place, Holy of Holies

QUESTIONS?

PUSHING AHEAD

Onward, then, to the last of our six-week series:

1. The event of worship - recollecting God's deeds
2. Covenant and Sacrifice in worship
3. Biblical directives in worship
4. The Awesome One we worship - a study of His names
5. Old Testament Forms And Structures
6. Temple & Synagogue Forms Of Worship

TEMPLE WORSHIP

STRUCTURE

- no comments here; very similar to that of the tabernacle in function and form. Recall the movement through gates, outer court, holy place, holy of holies.

FESTIVALS

1. Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover (Ex 12:21-27; Deut 16:1-8)
First in the liturgical calendar, it reenacted deliverance from slavery. The sacrifice of the lamb and the blood ritual symbolized substitutionary sacrifice. It became a place of ritual teaching. It proclaimed grace.
2. Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Ex 23:6; Num 26-31; Deut 16:9-12)
It signified the end of the barley harvest - hence **Pentacost**, 50 days after beginning of this harvest. A time of rejoicing, bringing firstfruits of thanksgiving. Later the giving of the Law @ Sinai became connected; giving covenant renewal overtones.
3. Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33-43; Num 29:12-40; Deut 16:13-17)
Part of the fall harvest celebration, dramatizing dependence on God. Also recalled the peoples' travels through the wilderness.
4. Feast of Trumpets *Rosh Hashanah* (Lev 23:24-25; Num 29:1-6)
Blowing the *shofar* marked beginning of new religious year. A solemn Sabbath Day. Reading of the Torah and giving gifts to the poor were customs instituted by Ezra (Neh 8:9).
5. Day of Atonement *Yom Kippur* (Lev 16)
The national day of repentance and sacrifice for sin. The only required fast in Mosaic legislation. On this day the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the nation. The scapegoat ceremony happened here. It was a day of great sorrow for sin.

Of these, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles were **pilgrimage** festivals. Israelite males were required to appear before God at the central sanctuary. The temple's construction consolidated this practice.

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

In addition to sacrifices, **incense** offerings were made by the priests. It was offered every morning and evening, as well as on Day of Atonement. A special recipe was used that only could be used for worship. The cloud of smoke was a symbolic shield protecting worshippers from contact with the holy (Lev 16:13). It also came to be understood as representing the upward movement of the prayers of the people (Ps 141:2; Rev 8:3-5).

Tithing, giving a tenth of the agricultural produce, livestock, merchandise and the like to the priests was an ancient practice throughout Middle East. However, it was very specific and comprehensive in Israel. It was motivated by love for the Lord (Deut 14:23-29).

Other activities included ritual purification, outward penitential rites.

Artistic response was detailed. Playing of musical instruments (4000 Levites organized into minstrel groups - 1 Chron 15:16; 16:42; 23:5; 25:6-7); Singers formed an integral component of Temple worship (2 Chron 5:11-14; Neh 12:27-47). Dance is seen as antithesis of mourning (Ps 30:11; Lam 5:15); used also in context of military heralding victory (Ex 15:20; 1 Sam 18:6); in religious festivals (Judg. 21:16-24; 2 Sam 6:14); and in regular temple worship (Ps 87:7). Other forms included building memorials, the architectural beauty of the temple; religious reenactments like Passover.

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

TEMPLE FUNCTIONS

The temple took over the tabernacle's role as central holy place for sacrifice.

It also became the house of prayer (1 Ki 8:27-54). Aliens and foreigners now also could find a place to worship (1 Ki 8:41-43). All hebrews now prayed facing towards the temple (1 Ki 8:35).

It also symbolized covenant obedience throughout the affairs of life (1 Ki 8:56-61); a witness to God's sovereignty over all creation (1 Ki 8:41-43).

It's permanence symbolized God's enduring faithfulness, as well has His holy transcendence (1 Ki 8:27-30).

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP

Synagogue worship was structured around praise, prayer, and Torah

The Torah replaces sacrifice as central element of worship.

PRAISE - talmud: "men should always praise and then pray."

PRAY - Prayers had a number of sections, each ending with a blessing. By time of Christ there were a series of seven of these for Sabbath worship.

TORAH - portions of Pentateuch and Prophets were read on regular basis. Any male member of the congregation could be invited to read from "Law and the Prophets" and comment on them (eg Jesus in Luke 4).

Synagogue influenced Christian worship in large measure because that's where the first churches were founded.

Influence included:

- focus on prayer and instruction of Scripture (Acts 2:42)
- early believers used reading, chanting and singing Psalms (praise, prayer and scripture as central three themes)

Many liturgical forms were carried from Synagogue to Christian congregations. It is NOT so that the Church began as a blank slate!

specific liturgical elements include:

- call to worship - often a psalmic blessing
- affirmation of faith - similar to *shema*
- extensive reading of scripture
- prayers that included praise, thanksgiving, intercession, petition
- liturgical confession
- liturgical use of "amen"
- parallels between Passover Feast and Communion
- parallels between Jewish *Chaburah* (weekly social meal) and agape feast of early church.
- alms collections and monetary offering,
- liturgical benedictions
- lay leadership and congregational participation

The Synagogue as worship centre is an inter-Testamental institution. It also is one which sees no divine regulation about the architecture or the liturgy.... which, for people from a "Regulative Principle" heritage would perhaps make us wonder about how appropriate it is.

Consider it compared to sacrifice-centred worship of the Temple. Which fits better from a Christian point of view?

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

SOME PROPOSALS RE WORSHIP:

1. Ps 15; Ps 24:3-6 focus on the need to prepare as we enter worship - part of that worship is preparation of the mind - a growing understanding of this weekly event

2. Yahweh prescribed the form of OT sanctuaries, the priesthood, the liturgies and the festivals that occurred within them ==> we worship on HIS terms, not ours!

With our North American preoccupation on fulfilling consumer needs, let us focus on keeping God at the centre of worship - His will, His way.

3. The Sanctuary created an architectural and artistic sense of God's sovereignty, holiness, majesty and glory. Awe, reverence and mystery were central to worship - contrasted to our day of informality and collegiality. The sense of mystery (we DON'T know it all!) and transcendence (we DON'T control God) is needed in our worship.

4. Worship architecture led OT worshipers through a series of movements from the mundane events of life into holy space and eventually into the very presence of God; step by step. As these steps led through washing and sacrifice, thence into communion of meal and incense sacrificial prayers in the light of Torah there was a focus on God's covenant work and faithfulness. So we need to keep the washing and sacrifice of Christ front and centre - no communion outside of Him.

5. OT worship was very participatory, and aimed at the whole person (body, mind, emotion). This challenges us to move beyond worship as a "spectator sport" and ensure that we ALL act in the event of worship. There was activity and there was movement by the worshiper. It was NOT sedentary (couch potato worship).

6. OT Worship was also very sensory - the aesthetic was very important; beauty mattered. As did sign and symbol. All of which challenges the austerity of Reformational worship. It developed out of two forces:

a. anti-Rome backlash

b. Enlightenment exaltation of the mind, with almost Platonic negation of the senses. Reason was king. Being wary of the pitfalls of symbol, we need to see the power of it which God sought to utilize.

7. OT worship related to all of life - the code of conduct and purity extended out from the sanctuary into the countryside. So our worship: let's not allow our worship to be fragmented from the rest of life! cf Romans 12:1

8. OT worship was built around a seasonal cycle of festivals, as much as through the weekly Sabbath celebration. This rhythm kept the Covenant relationship in context of life.

Let us focus deliberately on, and work with, the festival calendar that keeps the Christian story before us:

Advent - expecting Immanuel

Christmas - Christ is with us

Epiphany - Christ is revealed to the world

Lent - the suffering of Christ

Holy Week - the passion of Christ

Easter - the Resurrection

Pentecost - the work of the Spirit in the Church