

What is Wrong with Playing Songs to God? (2)

David Halbrook

We might ask the ancient Mayans “Why did you worship by sacrificing children?”. We should ask ourselves why we worship the way we do. To you who worship God by playing songs on organs or guitars, we ask, “Why do you do that?”

Do you assume that since songs were played to God in the past, it is okay today? Psalms 149:3 says to *sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp*, and verses 6-9 say that while praise is in your mouth a *two-edged sword* should be in your hand to *execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the people; to bind their kings with chains*. Does your church do this? The psalmist wrote while under the law of Moses (read Gal. 3:23-29). Do you follow that law today?

Other people believe that since playing songs to God is not forbidden by name in the New Testament it must be okay. Is mixing apple juice with the fruit of the vine in memory of Jesus’ blood or burning incense to God acceptable worship today? Is polygamy or bestiality wrong? Do you still believe God only condemns things He specifically names?

If you have other reasons for playing songs to God, we would like to hear them. Contact us.

Editor’s Note: Last and this week’s article in *Arkansas Weekly* is also available on our website, as a single article. There is also a related lesson available on CD. If you know someone who might listen to that lesson, contact David Halbrook. Somehow, help someone to consider these things. Or, use the questions in this article to help others to think about Scriptures, beliefs, and the consequences of those beliefs.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

Our fall gospel meeting is September 9-14 (*Tuesday-Sunday*) with Ron Halbrook.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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When You Come Together

Joe R. Price

The Christians who composed local churches in the New Testament came together regularly (Acts 2:42, 46; 5:12; 20:7). Their first day of the week assemblies were marked by prayers, songs, eating the Lord’s supper, giving of their means and teaching the word of God (1 Cor. 14:15-19, 26; 16:2; Acts 20:7). They worshiped God in their assemblies and by doing so bore the fruit of edification, unity and peace (1 Cor. 14:26, 33; Acts 5:12; Col. 3:15-16). They were taught to exhort each other not to forsake their assembling together (Heb. 10:24-25).

There has arisen an inclination among some brethren to reduce the frequency of the church coming together in favor of small group meetings. We have no complaint against brethren meeting “*from house to house*”, for such arrangements provide good opportunities to study, pray and sing together (Acts 20:20). What we speak of here is an “either, or” mentality that chooses the value of small group meetings over and in place of the church coming together. Some are opting for what F. LaGard Smith terms the “spontaneous informality” he wishes to advance via house churches (*Radical Restoration*, 151-152). They see the local church assembled in one place as traditional, formal and lacking the participatory spontaneity they attribute to New Testament churches. Wishing to contrast and emphasize “small versus large”, participant versus spectator”, “active versus passive” and “personal versus impersonal”, these iconoclasts extol the virtue of small groups and house churches while casting doubt and skepticism on the worship assemblies of the saints (Smith, 153). We are not presenting a case for Christians to be inactive spectators of worship when we uphold the church assembling together to worship. These contrasts that F. LaGard Smith uses to advance his premise are harsh indictments of the hearts of Christians who come together to worship. We shall not blindly and emotionally accept his denunciations because some abuses of worship occur when a church comes together.

The local church in the New Testament came together – something that is not accomplished by breaking off into small groups scattered around a city. It will be helpful for us to consider the purposes and benefits of the church coming together, instead of concluding the church is somehow enhanced by reducing the times that it comes together “*in one place*” (1 Cor. 11:20).

If we are interested in being first-century Christians in this twenty-first century world, then what the apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth gives us a working model (pattern) to apply when we come together.

When the church comes together, what it does should be worthy of praise.

“*Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better, but for the worse*” (1 Cor. 11:17). The Corinthian church was not following Christ’s teaching concerning the Lord’s supper. They had corrupted both its purpose and the unity their assembly ought to have advanced (1 Cor. 11:18-22). Our assemblies must follow the pattern of truth for worship that has been revealed to us in the New Testament. Otherwise, we will “*come together for judgment*” and be rejected, not praised (1 Cor. 11:34).

There should be unity when the church comes together. “*For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it*” (1 Cor. 11:18). Note please that the apostle spoke here of the brethren coming together “*as a church*” (as a congregation, the whole group of saints, not scattered groups of saints throughout Corinth). Our assemblies should be marked by unity of spirit, purpose and action as we gather to worship “*in spirit and truth*” (Jno. 4:24). Our spirits should unite in praise and adoration of God Almighty. We should have the mutual purpose of giving honor to God, never turning the attention of the moment to ourselves. The worship assembly of the church is not a time for entertainment and boisterous conduct. It is a time to conduct ourselves with reverent obeisance to God (cf. Neh. 8:5). We do not read of “spontaneous informality” in the Scriptures to describe Christians worshipping together. Frankly, there is often too much informality and casualness in our assemblies, including attire and conduct. We are not at a sporting event or an entertainment venue when we come together; we are before Almighty God. The decorum of worship, not the distractions of casual spontaneity, should characterize our assemblies: “*Let all things be done decently and in order*” (1 Cor. 14:40, 27-31).

Scriptural worship must occur when the church comes together. “*When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper*” (1 Cor. 11:20, ASV). The brethren were corrupting the nature and purpose of the

Lord’s supper when they came together “*in one place*” (NKJV). The supper is not a meal that satisfies hunger, so “*eat at home*” if you are hungry (1 Cor. 11:34, 22). The Lord’s supper is not a so-called “fellowship meal” or “table fellowship” where an actual meal is eaten during which Lord's supper is eaten (Smith, 132-133). Some brethren already follow F. LaGard Smith’s “table fellowship” pattern for the Lord's supper, forsaking the Bible pattern (1 Cor. 11:21-22).

Edification is to occur when the church comes together. “*Whenever you come together...Let all things be done for edification*” (1 Cor. 14:26). Edification is not a warm feeling of fulfillment, it is the spiritual building up of the soul through learning and obeying God’s word (Acts 20:32; Eph. 4:11-12). As saints worship God their faith is strengthened. “*When you come together*” be sure to follow God’s word so that edification results.

Small groups of Christians gathering to study, to sing and to pray fill an important place in advancing spiritual growth and service. But, from this study we have seen they cannot satisfy the Biblical pattern of the church coming together to worship God on the first day of the week. [The Spirit’s Sword Vol.VII, No.11 – August 10, 2014]

Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore tree is a favorite of young children, but adults would do well to pay careful attention to this story found in Luke 19:1-10. Consider a few lessons we might learn from the man who climbed a tree.

1) Don’t let anything stop you from seeing Jesus. Too short of stature to see over the crowd, this wealthy man of influence reverted to his childhood and climbed a tree. While we are not going to see Jesus with our physical eyes, we should not allow anything to stop us from learning about Jesus. Friends, family, work, play, religious traditions, etc. may get in the way, but let’s climb whatever tree we must in order to know the Savior.

2) We must not simply be curious about Jesus. When Jesus informed Zacchaeus that He would be going home with him, the tax collector received Him joyfully. As we come to know Jesus, it is imperative that we allow Him to “come to our house” and change our lives.

3) Jesus came to “seek and save that which was lost.” If you have already been found by Jesus, serve Him with a joyous gratitude. If you are still lost, won’t you allow Him to change that? He wants to save, but He will not save you against your will.

Zacchaeus and Jesus—it’s not just a children’s song.[John R. Gibson 01/25/14 - *Christian Living*; An assortment of brief notes previously published on Facebook.]