

## Church of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Lesson 8

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- I hope you've enjoyed our study so far
  - Daniel 2:44 – *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”*
    - This statement was made during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon
    - And we can see the awesomeness of God, because we're still here today
    - And the church will still be in existence 1000 years from now if the Lord doesn't come back before then
  - Though society has advanced by 2000 years since the church was established, we're still the same church
  - Because God made it perfectly and it will endure forever
- Last week, we started the section of the study that I've categorized as the acts of worship of the church
  - Specifically the institution of the Lord's Supper and how this is still a requirement today, because Jesus established it
  - And He never put an end to it
  - And we need a constant reminder of His love for us in the form of His death, burial, and resurrection
- This week we will continue discussing the instructed acts of worship of the church, but we focus on singing
  - Singing can be an emotional thing
  - So just like everything else, we need to be careful that we are doing this emotional act of worship in the way that God instructed
  - John 4:24 – *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*
  - Through our worship amongst other areas of life (the way we live in general for instance) – we should demonstrate that we love the Lord
  - So emotion is certainly involved, but we've got to get the truth part right as well
  - Peter said of Paul's writings – *“as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”* (2 Peter 3:16)
    - As with everything else in the worship service, we must get this right
- Just a brief recap
  - Lessons 1-4: foundational information of the church
    - Christ is the king, the head
    - The church is His kingdom (Ephesians 1 & Ephesians 5)
    - We are but servants in Christ's kingdom (Philippians 2, Mark 10)
    - There is 1 church (Galatians 1)
      - Anything else is division and not the church our Lord established (1 Corinthians 1)
    - And we reiterated how we become a member of the church by looking at an example from Acts 8

- Lessons 5-6: organization of the church
  - The eldership – how they are to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28)
  - The deacons – how they are to serve in the church via assignments given to them by the eldership (Acts 6)
  - The qualifications for each – not just any person can serve in these roles (1 Timothy 3)
- Now we've moved into the acts of worship of the church
  - Last week – the Lord's Supper
  - This week – singing
- Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16-17
  - We're going to talk more about these passages in more detail later
  - But first notice – both of these say **sing** and that's all they say
    - The Bible says **sing** – nothing else, respect that
  - The next 4 charts come from Rob Whitacre's *Evangelism Visualized*
    - Chart 8 – the law of exclusion
      - That which is specifically stated excludes all other
      - He told us to **sing – psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs**
      - All else is excluded by the fact that God did not authorize anything else
    - Chart 9 – the law is a book of do's
    - Chart 10 – a practical example
      - Imagine you are caught speeding going 85MPH
      - And you tell the officer "the sign simply said that 65MPH is the speed limit, it does not say I can't go 85MPH"
      - You're going to get a ticket – the fact that the sign only authorizes 65MPH excludes the fact that it is ok to go 85MPH
    - Chart 12 – a Biblical example
      - Genesis 6:14 – "*Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.*"
      - What would have happened if Noah would not have respected that and used some other material? The ark would have sunk
      - What if Noah would have said "God didn't tell me I couldn't use some other material" – do you think God would have accepted that?
  - So we are to **sing**, no musical instruments are authorized
    - But David used the harp as many will say
      - David lived under the old law
      - We do not (Romans 7)
      - The perfect law of liberty that we live under says **sing** – we must respect that
- Some references to singing in the New Testament and how they relate to the church today
  - Matthew 26:30 – "*And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*"
    - When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, before He and those with Him went to the Mount of Olives, they sang a hymn

- So based on other Scriptures, we are to partake of the Lord's Supper every week – logic dictates that we must also sing every week (at least)
  - Romans 15:9 – *“and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: ‘For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.’”*
    - Our singing is intended to glorify God
    - We are singing to God
    - That's the point of our worship to Him – to show Him that we love Him
    - Singing is a part of that according to Romans 15
  - 1 Corinthians 14:15 – *“...I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with understanding.”*
    - It is imperative that we sing with emotion (as we started out, singing is emotional – we must worship in spirit John 4:24), but that we also understand what we're singing (we must also worship in truth John 4:24)
      - “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning”
      - Are we singing about a physical lighthouse that we must upkeep? Certainly not
      - By letting His light shine through us – we can bring souls to Christ
      - *“Let the lower lights be burning! Send a gleam across the wave! Some poor fainting, struggling seaman You may rescue, you may save.”*
  - Hebrews 2:12 – *“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”*
  - Hebrews 13:15 – *“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.”*
  - Acts 16:25 – *“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”*
    - Paul and Silas were imprisoned, but they were still worshipping the Lord
    - In the form of prayer and in the form of song
    - Their singing was directed to God, but the prisoners were benefitting from this as evident from reading the rest of the chapter
  - So in summary, singing is a part of worship – we are instructed to do so, we have examples of doing so
    - We are to understand what we're singing, it is directed to God, but it also edifies the brethren
- Let's finish by examining the purpose of our singing in a little more detail
- **Genesis 4:3-8**
- Abel offered of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering (vs 4)
  - Cain offered of the fruit of the ground that he worked – no indication that this was amongst the best of the soil or the vegetation – whatever the specific details of Cain's offering, God was not pleased with Cain nor his offering (vs 3 & 5)
  - As a result, God said something interesting to Cain in vs 7
    - *“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. **And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.**”*

- Hebrews 12:1 says to lay aside the sin that so easily entangles
    - Galatians 6:1 describes sin as something that can ensnare us – almost as a hunting trap would ensnare whatever animal you may be hunting
    - James 1:14-15 describes sin as luring and enticing – and that it brings forth death if we allow it to fully grow
    - 1 John 2:15-17 describes sin as lusts of the flesh, eyes, and the pride of life
  - Now unfortunately for Cain, he was not able to rule over sin’s desire for him as he killed Abel in vs 8
  - But notice what God says: sin’s desire is to have us. But we should rule over it, not vice versa
  - Romans 6:11-14 puts it this way
    - *“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”*
    - If I could summarize Romans 6 for you – choose to be a slave of righteousness, not sin
    - Let righteousness rule in you, not sin
- But some may say that all of this has nothing to do with singing
- But Godly singing does have an implication in these passages
  - God says in Genesis and Romans that sin desires us, but we must be in charge
  - Did you ever think of the song service as a way of doing that?
- I’d like to turn your attention back to Ephesians 5:1-21 and Colossians 3:1-17
  - Ephesians 5:7-21
  - Colossians 3:5-17
    - We’ll look at both of these accounts here, but isn’t it wonderful that in a book pertaining to the supremacy of Christ (Colossians) and the beauty of the bride of Christ (Ephesians), singing is mentioned as a way to keep the darkness away as it is used to admonish one another
    - Our singing is directed to God and is also for our edification, our admonishment, our benefit
  - Ephesians 5
    - Gives contrast between good and evil (light and darkness – righteousness and sin if you put it in Romans 6 terms)
    - Vs 3-6 describe darkness
    - Vs 7 tells us not to become partners with that
    - Vs 8 commands us to walk as children of light
    - Starting in vs 11 – we can see some more direct comparisons
      - Have no part with unfruitful works (negative), expose them (positive) (vs 11)
      - Do not walk as unwise (negative), but as wise (positive) (vs 15)

- Make the best use of time (positive), the days are evil (negative) (vs 16)
    - Do not be foolish (negative), understand the will of the Lord (positive) (vs 17)
    - Do not be drunk (filled) with wine (negative), but be filled with the Spirit (positive) (vs 18)
  - How are we to do this? Live wisely, not foolishly. Be filled with the Spirit vs wine, etc.
  - *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God”* (vs 19-21)
  - The first reason we are given is to address one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord
  - Singing is one of the things that will help keep us in the light, and therefore will keep us from falling into the darkness
  - What a blessing it is to be able to sing to the Lord and admonish the brethren by doing so
- Colossians 3
  - More of the same
  - Vs 16 says to *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”*
    - It goes on to say that we do this in part by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
- So both Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 teaches us that as we’re singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, not only are we teaching and admonishing those around us, but we are utilizing a very valuable tool in order to help us keep dominion over sin
- Let me make 3 main points about our singing
- Point 1 - Our singing should let others know that we have a mind for God and His Word (Psalm 1:1-3)
  - Psalms – greek word “psalmois” – a sacred song or hymn
    - 2 Samuel 22 – David speaks words to God in song
    - Psalm 18:3 is an example of a Psalm (I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from my enemies)
    - As is Psalm 148 and Psalm 121
      - Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord – from the heavens praise His name
      - I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord.
    - But these are not exclusive to passages from the Psalms
    - Matthew 6:33, 7:7-8 – *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.....Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”*
  - Often times, these types of songs are verbatim from Scripture and put to music
  - By singing Psalms, we show that our minds are centered on God and His word

- Isaiah 1:18 – *“Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”*
  - This verse starts with God saying – man, let us reason together
  - Your sins are as scarlet, they are red like crimson. But I will make them white as snow, like wool
  - But only if you are obedient (vs 19)
  - If you are disobedient, you will be devoured (vs 20)
  - When I sing this song, I’m saying that I believe this is true
  - And if I believe this is true, then what choice do I have but to be obedient lest I be devoured – if not in this life, then certainly in the next
  - This deal that God makes with us is a deal that you cannot afford to pass up
- I appreciate songs like this that come directly from God’s word
- They remind us how important God’s Word is to us – it is the very center of our lives
- In a world full of darkness, God and His Word are the only constants
  - Isaiah 40:8 – *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”*
- Point 2 - Our singing should show that we desire to praise God
  - Hebrews 13:15 – *“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”*
  - If we are busy praising God with our lips, we will not have time to venture into the darkness
  - Hymns – greek word “hymnois” – a song of praise
    - Matthew 26:30 – shortly before Jesus would be betrayed and ultimately, crucified, He and His disciples sang a hymn
      - An excellent example that proves that it is always an appropriate time to praise God – even in the form of singing a hymn
      - Shows us that when we’re in the face of temptation, singing can be a good method to get us through temptation
    - Acts 16:25 – Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God as they were imprisoned in Philippi
      - Not only did the other prisoners hear them, this verse tells us that they were listening
      - This singing was directed to God, but also benefited man
    - Exodus 15:1-21 – Moses and the Israelites sang to the Lord after crossing the Red Sea
    - Romans 15:9 – singing is used to glorify God for His mercy
  - If there ever was a being worthy to be praised in the form of song, it is God
  - He is the utmost excellence and He is complete holiness (Revelation 4:8)
    - This verse was translated for some reason as holy 3 times, but the actually text uses holy 9 times to describe that God is truly complete holiness
  - Is this not what we acknowledge when we sing hymns like Holy, Holy, Holy?
  - What a blessing it is to sing praises to our Lord
  - When we sing this song, we are acknowledging the ultimate supremacy and holiness of God Almighty

- Point 3 - Our desire is for God to be known in us (2 Corinthians 4:8-12)
  - Galatians 2:20 – *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*
  - Spiritual songs – greek word “pneumatikais odais” – capable of possessing wisdom, song = songs of wisdom
  - When others look at me, I want them to see Christ, and I want this to be seen in my singing
  - 1 Peter 2:21 – *“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”*
    - Philippians 2:1-11 – we are to all have the same mind (vs 2) and that mind should be the mind of Christ (vs 5)
      - To not be selfish (vs 3)
      - Look to the interest of others (vs 4)
      - And humble ourselves as Christ did (vs 6 – 11)
      - The world sometimes looks at humility, obedience, and submission as weakness
      - But it is an honor to submit to the Almighty God
      - What did you do to save yourself (Colossians 1:12-14)? This verse tells us that God did everything
      - Where were you when God laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4)? That was God also
      - Show your submission to God in every way and do not be ashamed of it (Romans 12:1, 1:16) – including in your singing
    - Romans 7:15-24 – we see Paul’s struggle here (which is ours too)
      - Constantly waging war with himself over his fleshly desires and his spiritual desires
      - His conclusion: *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*
        - Paul thanks God that we do not have to live like this eternally
        - He delivered us from this body of death (vs 24)
    - This makes it quite fitting that Paul would write in 2 Timothy 4:8 – *“Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”*
      - This of course, comes right before Paul warns Timothy of a man named Alexander the metal worker (vs 14-15) – he did Paul a great deal of harm (what exactly, we do not know, but it was enough to make Paul want to warn Timothy of him)
      - But Paul is saying here, it doesn’t matter what Alexander or any man does to me, because what can man truly do to me eternally? (Hebrews 13:6)
      - A sentiment that we also admit when we sing It is well with my soul
  - In conclusion, singing reminds me that that I am one in need of God
  - Singing will help us stay away from the darkness described in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3

- Singing is certainly part of the worship of the church
- And we must do so in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)