

“Oh come, let us worship...”

A Bible Class Study in Eight Lessons

by

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“O Come Let Us Worship...”
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LESSON ONE: WORDS FOR WORSHIP

Introduction. The Old Testament uses two main Hebrew words in reference to worship to Jehovah these are generally translated “worship” or “serve” in the King James Version. The New Testament uses three main Greek words to refer to worship of God in Christ which are translated “worship” in the King James Version. In this lesson we will consider the meaning of these words.

I. *Shachah* (שָׁחָה) - “To bow down; to prostrate oneself” (Gesenius). 172 instances.

A. Bowing before the Lord.

1. Abraham’s servant, upon finding Rebekah. (Genesis 24:21-26; 52).
2. Israel, upon seeing the signs of from Moses & Aaron. (Exodus 4:30,31).
3. After the exile, when Ezra reads the law. (Nehemiah 8:5,6).

B. Worship in general.

1. Samuel’s Father, as was his custom. (I Samuel 1:1-3).
2. David, after the death of his son. (II samuel 12:16-20).

II. *Abad* (עָבַד) - “To work, serve” (Gesenius). 290 instances (5 “worshippers”; 227 “serve”).

A. Acts of worship.

1. Israel’s worship in the wilderness. (Exodus 9:1).
2. The Levites service in the tabernacle. (Numbers 18:6).

B. Service in general.

1. The requirement of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 10:12).
2. Joshua’s charge to Israel. (Joshua 24:14-16).

III. *Proskuneo* (προσκυνέω) - “1. To kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence; 2. Among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence; 3. In the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication” (Thayer). 60 instances.

A. Falling down in worship.

1. The disciples after Jesus’ resurrection. (Matthew 28:9).
2. The elders and living creatures of John’s revelation. (Revelation 5:13-14).

B. Worship in general.

1. Worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23,24).
2. The unbeliever who witnesses true worship. (I Corinthians 14:22-25).

IV. *Latreuo* (λατρεύω) - “To serve” (Thayer). 21 instances (3 “worship”; 16 “serve”).

A. Of Old Testament sacrifice. (Hebrews 10:1,2).

B. Of service in general. (II Timothy 1:3).

C. Those arrayed in white in John’s revelation. (Revelation 7:13-15).

GENERAL EQUIVALENCE		
<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>General Meaning</i>
<i>Shachah</i> (שָׁחָה)	<i>Proskuneo</i> (προσκυνέω)	<i>To Bow or Prostrate Oneself</i>
<i>Abad</i> (עָבַד)	<i>Latreuo</i> (λατρεύω)	<i>To Serve</i>

V. *Sebomai* (σέβομαι) - “To revere, to worship” (Thayer). 10 instances.

- A. Vain worship. (Matthew 15:8,9).
- B. God-fearing Jews. (Acts 13:43; 16:14; 18:7).
- C. Devout Gentiles. (Acts 17:4; 17).

Conclusion. Both the Old and New Testaments use words for worship to God which can communicate bowing in worship to God and worship in general. Both the Old and New Testaments use words for worship to God which refer to acts of worship and general service in obedience and reverence to God.

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LESSON TWO: PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP

Introduction. The Bible teaches several principles that should always characterize worship to God. In this lesson we will consider some of these principles as taught in both the Old and the New Testaments.

I. Worship to God Must Be Exclusive.

- A. “You shall not go after other gods.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; 13-15).
- B. “Him only you shall serve.” (Luke 4:5-8). The Lord appears in this text to paraphrase the text of Deuteronomy 6:13,14. Neither the Hebrew text nor the Septuagint (LXX) uses the phrase “Him only.”

II. We Must Offer the Lord Our Best in Worship to Him.

- A. The best animals were to be offered to God. (Deuteronomy 15:19-21).
- B. Leftovers were unacceptable. (Malachi 1:6-8).

III. We Must Approach God to Worship in Holiness.

- A. The Beauty of Holiness. (Psalm 96:9). “Holiness” Heb. *qodesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) “apartness, holiness, sacredness, separateness” (Gesenius).
- B. A Pure Heart. (II Timothy 2:19-22).

IV. We Must Not Approach God to Worship Him While Harboring Sin.

- A. “First be Reconciled to Your Brother.” (Matthew 5:23,24).
- B. “Let a Man Examine Himself.” (I Corinthians 11:26-32). This text is not teaching that only the “flawless” can take the Lord’s Supper, but it is teaching self-examination in preparation for worship.

V. Worship Must Be In Spirit and in Truth. (John 4:23,24).

- A. Setting the Mind on the Things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5-9).
- B. Walking in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-25).
- C. Worshipping God in the Spirit. (Philippians 3:3).
- D. “In the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” (Revelation 1:9-11). John appears to use the phrase “in the Spirit” here of a state of inspiration (i.e. receiving the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). We do not receive such inspiration in this age although we should focus on spiritual things on “the Lord’s Day.”
- E. Teaching in Truth. (Matthew 22:16).
- F. Walking in Truth. (III John 1-3).

VI. Worship Based Upon Human Tradition is Vain.

- A. “Unless the Lord Builds the House...” (Psalm 127:1).
- B. “In Vain They Worship Me.” (Matthew 15:7-9). Jesus refers in this text to Isaiah 29:13. Both the New Testament and the Septuagint (LXX) use the phrase “in vain.” This seems to be the clear inference of the Hebrew text.

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LESSON THREE: TIMES OF WORSHIP

Introduction. The Old Testament commanded specific times when the Jews were to worship God. While the New Testament does not command Sabbath and festival days there are some factors which are taught that establish times appropriate for Christians to worship.

I. Old Testament Times of Worship.

- A. The Sabbath Day. (Exodus 16:23-30; 20:8-11).
- B. Passover. (Exodus 12:1-14).
- C. There were a number of other times of worship, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. (Leviticus 23).

II. The Removal of the Old Covenant.

- A. Christ takes away the Old Covenant. (Romans 10:4; Hebrews 10:1-9).
- B. Sabbath worship is not a part of the New Covenant. (Colossians 2:13-17).
- C. Special festivals are not a part of the New Covenant.
 - 1. The denominational observances of Easter and Christmas are post-biblical innovations that were not ordained within the New Testament.

III. New Testament Times of Worship.

- A. Daily Worship. (Acts 2:46,47).
- B. The First Day of the Week. (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1,2).
 - 1. “The Lord’s Day.” (Revelation 1:9,10). This seems to refer to the first day of the week. Christian writers as early as the second century used the century referred to the first day of the week as the “Lord’s Day.”
 - 2. This is never referred to as the “Christian Sabbath.” Eternal life is referred to as a “rest” that awaits the people of God. (Hebrews 4:4-10).
- C. Home Bible study.
 - 1. Christians in the New Testament studied and worshipped together in each other’s homes at a variety of times other than just times of the assembly. (see Acts 2:46; 20:17-21).
 - 2. When a congregation is assembled as a church, there are restrictions regarding women speaking which do not apply in private studies. (I Corinthians 14:34,35; Acts 18:24-28).
- D. What about midweek assemblies?
 - 1. The example of daily worship grants to us the authority to meet together at times in addition to the Lord’s Day. (see Acts 2:46).
 - 2. The elders of a congregation can choose additional times of assembly or encourage private studies to spiritually feed the flock. (Acts 20:28).
 - 3. Members of a congregation have the responsibility to submit themselves to the guidance of the eldership. (Hebrews 13:17).

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LESSON FOUR: THE LORD’S SUPPER

Introduction. The New Testament records for us both commands and examples which illustrate how Christians worshipped God when the church first began. In this lesson we will look at the first of these: the Lord’s Supper.

I. Institution of the Memorial.

- A. Jesus institutes the memorial on Passover night, just before His prayer and arrest in the garden (Matthew 26:26-30).
- B. The synoptic Gospels each record the institution of the memorial (Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-23).
 - 1. Although the Gospel of John devotes more time to the events of Passover night than any other gospel, the Holy Spirit does not lead John to record the institution of the memorial a fourth time in the gospel (see John 13-17).
 - 2. It is generally believed that John was written later than the synoptic gospels. In many cases the Gospel appears to fill-in details that the other Gospels had not addressed, without attempting to restate things that had already been written.
- C. In the first epistle to the Corinthians Paul restates the institution of the memorial (I Corinthians 11:23-26).
 - 1. The accounts of Matthew and Mark are very similar in form and content.
 - 2. The accounts of Luke and Paul are very similar in form and content.
 - 3. All the accounts are in harmony in the events which they describe.

II. Names of the Memorial.

- A. “Blood of the new covenant” (Matthew 26:28). The fruit of the vine represents Jesus blood.
 - 1. Mosaic Law was dedicated with “the blood of the covenant” (Exodus 24:7,8).
 - 2. The Hebrew writer compares what Jesus accomplishes with the Mosaic dedication (Hebrews 9:18-26).
 - 3. The Hebrew writer teaches that a Christian’s unfaithfulness disgraces the “blood of the covenant” 10:26-29).
- B. “The breaking of the bread” (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
 - 1. There is a difference in the wording in the Greek when reference is made to the memorial as opposed to a common meal. In Acts 2:42 and 20:7 the article “the” is used. When a common meal is referred to it is not (see Acts 2:46; 20:11).
 - 2. Alexander Campbell in his translation of the book of Acts accentuated this difference with the phrase “breaking of the loaf” in contrast to simply “breaking bread.”
- C. “Communion” of the blood and body of Christ (I Corinthians 10:16).
 - 1. The word translated “communion” is the Greek word *koinonia* (κοινωνία)

meaning “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse” (Thayer).

2. When Christians engage in the memorial they are participating with Christ (Matthew 26:29).

D. “The Lord’s supper” (I Corinthians 11:20-22).

1. The word in Greek translated “Lord’s” is the word *kuriakos* (κυριακός) meaning “belonging to the Lord” (Thayer). This word is used in only two instances in the New Testament (I Corinthians 11:20 & Revelation 1:10 - “Lord’s Day”). This stands in contrast to a simple possessive, like our use of “-’s” which is found frequently in Scripture.

E. “The cup of the Lord” and the “Lord’s table” (I Corinthians 10:20,21).

1. In this passage a simple possessive like our “-’s” is used in both instances.

III. The Elements of the Memorial.

A. Unleavened bread.

1. The memorial was instituted on the Passover (Matthew 26:17, 26).

2. In accordance with the Law of Moses no leaven could be in the house at all (Exodus 12:18,19).

B. Fruit of the vine.

1. The cup is referred to as the “fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:29).

2. Some scholars believe that the restriction on leaven within the home applied equally to wine which had fermented. The word for “leaven” in the Old Testament can be used to refer to fermented wine as well.

IV. The Significance of the Observance.

A. A memorial (I Corinthians 11:2,25).

B. A proclamation of the Lord’s death (I Corinthians 11:26).

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LESSON FIVE: THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS

Introduction. The second act of worship which we shall consider, like the Lord’s Supper, is also observed only on the first day of the week: the collection for the saints. We will consider the texts which authorize its observance and some which address the manner and attitude with which it is to be observed.

I. New Testament Collections.

A. The example of the Jerusalem church.

1. After the church was established on the day of Pentecost the new Christians shared all things with one another (Acts 2:44,45). This addressed the need brought on by the great number of those who were from other places who lingered in Jerusalem (see Acts 2:5-11).
2. As the church continued in Jerusalem money from goods sold was given to the Apostles, who distributed it to those in need (Acts 4:32-37).
3. In each of these instances individual Christians sold their possessions and retained power over the proceeds prior to its contribution (see Acts 5:4). The church collectively was not engaged in the selling of goods.

B. Paul’s instructions to the church in Corinth.

1. Paul instructs the Corinthians to “lay something aside” on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:2).
2. These same instructions were given to the churches of Galatia (I Corinthians 16:1).
3. Although these collections were to address the relief that Paul was preparing to take to the saints in Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:3), this serves as the only instruction regarding when and how to observe a collection. It is clear throughout Paul’s writings that the church was charged with other financial responsibilities as well (see I Corinthians 9 & II Corinthians 8-9).

II. Principles of Giving.

A. The collection is to be offered purposefully (II Corinthians 9:7a).

1. Christians should plan their giving beforehand rather than impulsively and without thought.

B. The collection is to be offered willingly (II Corinthians 9:7b).

1. The collection for the saints is a freewill offering it is not a tithe.

C. The collection is to be offered cheerfully (II Corinthians 9:7c).

1. However much a Christian offers it should not be given with resentment.

D. The collection is individually determined by a person’s own prosperity (I Corinthians 16:2).

1. God is pleased with offerings that come from a willing heart regardless of their size (II Corinthians 8:12).

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LESSON SIX: WORSHIP IN SONG

Introduction. The third act of worship which the New Testament instructs is musical worship. In this lesson we will look at the examples and instructions regarding this type of worship in the New Testament.

I. Instructions Regarding Musical Worship.

- A. Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians.
 - 1. When the church came together, they were to sing (I Corinthians 14:26).
 - 2. Singing must be done with an understanding of what is expressed (I Corinthians 14:12-15).
- B. Paul’s instructions to the Ephesians.
 - 1. Musical worship involves “speaking” to one another (Ephesians 5:18-20). It is communication and not entertainment.
 - 2. The songs are to be “psalms” (songs from or like the Old Testament psalms); “hymns” (Gr. *hymnos ὕμνος* - a song of praise) and “spiritual songs” (songs that express spiritual truths and values). These different types of song show that the church is not restricted to only psalms or verses from scripture. They do, however, indicate that the church is to restrict itself to music which is sound (not expressing false ideas), spiritual (as opposed to patriotic or romantic) and understandable (not meaningless sounds).
 - 3. The church “makes melody in the heart.” The heart is the instrument that is played in this type of worship. No mechanical instrument is referred to.
- C. Paul’s instructions to the Colossians (Colossians 3:15-17).
 - 1. Musical worship involves “teaching and admonishing one another.” Songs in the church should be instructional. This is a collective activity. No one carries out this activity for someone else.
 - 2. Song is to be offered with “grace” (or thankfulness) in the heart.
- D. James’ instructions to the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” (referring either to Jewish Christians or to spiritual Israel - see Galatians 6:16).
 - 1. Musical worship can reflect joyous feelings within the believer’s heart (James 5:13).

II. Examples of Musical Worship.

- A. Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).
- B. Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:25). This demonstrates musical worship as a way of handling a difficult circumstance.
- C. The “new song” in heavenly worship (Revelation 5:9; 14:3).
- D. The song “of Moses and the Lamb” (Revelation 15:3). References to mechanical instruments of music in heaven do not suggest that the church on earth engaged in such worship.

III. Principles of Musical Worship.

- A. Singing is a proclamation to others of the message of Jesus (Romans 15:7-9).
- B. Jesus, in prophecy is said to sing praise to God among the congregation of His brethren (Hebrews 2:12, quoting Psalm 22:22).

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LESSON SEVEN: PRAYER

Introduction. The fourth act of worship which the New Testament instructs is prayer. This can be either private or public in nature. In this lesson we will consider what the New Testament teaches regarding worship in prayer.

I. Prayer in the New Testament Church.

- A. The church continued in prayer after its establishment on Pentecost (Acts 2:42).
- B. The church prayed for boldness (Acts 4:23-31).
- C. The Apostles devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 6:1-4).
- D. The church prayed before they appointed men to work (Acts 6:5,6; 13:1-3; 14:23).
- E. They prayed in times of trouble (Acts 12:12).
- F. Public prayer was offered in the assemblies (I Corinthians 14:13-17).
- G. Christians are to pray for one another. (James 5:16-18).

II. Principles of Prayer.

- A. It must not be to be seen by men (Matthew 6:5).
- B. It must not involve vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7a). This would address the pagan notion of the repetition of mantra-like sounds or phrases, but it also prohibits mindlessly using stock phrases and prewritten prayers. While language does limit the ways that any one idea can be expressed, we should strive to keep our prayers vibrant and earnest.
- C. We must not think that prayer has to be lengthy (Matthew 6:7b; cf. Luke 18:10-14).
- D. We should not ask amiss (James 4:2,3). “Amiss” - Gr. *kakos* (κακός) “improperly, wrongly” (Thayer). This could involve prayer for that which is wrong, but it could also include things that may not be sinful in and of themselves, if we reflect carnal values and priorities in our desire for them.
- E. We may lay all of our cares before the Lord (Philippians 4:6). Paul urges Christians to do everything in prayer. This shows us that we do not ask amiss simply by the triviality or importance of that for which we pray, but rather by the attitude with which we ask.
- F. We must be vigilant in prayer (Colossians 4:2b). “Vigilant” Gr. *gregoreo* (γρηγορέω) “give strict attention to, be cautious, active” (Thayer). Christians should avoid lapses in our prayer life. By following New Testament Christians example of prayer for all things this danger is lessened.
- G. We must pray with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6c; Colossians 4:2c).

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LESSON EIGHT: BIBLE TEACHING

Introduction. The final act of worship which the New Testament teaches is Bible teaching. In this lesson we will consider what the New Testament teaches regarding this aspect of worship.

I. Bible Teaching in the New Testament Church.

- A. Paul and Silas preaching and teaching in Antioch (Acts 15:35).
 - 1. “Preaching” Gr. *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελίζω) “to bring good news, to announce glad tidings” (Thayer).
- B. Paul’s preaching at Troas (Acts 20:7).
 - 1. “Spoke” (KJV “preached”) Gr. *dialogomai* (διαλέγομαι) “to converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss” (Thayer).
 - 2. Although the word “sermon” is not found in the Bible, in its core meaning it does refer to what is described in the New Testament. The word “sermon” comes from the Latin word *sermo* meaning “a speaking or talking with any one; talk, conversation, discourse” (Lewis & Short, p. 1679).
- C. Paul’s preaching in Ephesus (20:17-21; 25-27).
 - 1. “Preaching” (vs. 25). Gr. *kerusso* (κηρύσσω) “to proclaim after the manner of a herald” (Thayer).
- D. Preaching & spiritual gifts in Corinth.
 - 1. Two or three prophets were to teach in the church, one at a time (I Corinthians 14:26-33).
 - 2. These instructions apply directly to the teaching of those who had miraculous spiritual gifts. With the completion of the revealed word of God, these gifts passed away (I Corinthians 13:9,10).
 - 3. These instructions suggest that Bible teaching within the assembly does not have to involve only one person giving a monologue. As long as it is conducted “decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40), a number of Christian teachers can teach (one at a time).
 - 4. Teaching in the assembly must be done by Christian men (I Cor. 14:34,35).

II. The Nature of New Testament Preaching.

- A. The focus must be on the gospel of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 2:1,2).
- B. A preacher must not preach himself (II Corinthians 4:5).
 - 1. While a preacher may (like Paul) use personal experience as an illustration of the gospel, a preacher should avoid directing the focus of his words upon himself.
- C. Gospel preaching does not require eloquence or “persuasive words of human wisdom” (I Corinthians 2:4,5).
 - 1. The measure of sound preaching is the content and scriptural soundness of the message, not some human concept of a “good speaker.”
 - 2. This act of worship is participatory in that it requires that all members engage together in the consideration of and study of God’s word.
- D. Preaching must declare “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).



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