

## Synopsis

The structure of worship has changed throughout history. How do we understand these changes, and how does it apply to our current ecclesial worship?

## Introduction

Each generation has had to deal with the subject of the purpose of gender and our roles. Biblical examples have provided us with God's template for life and worship that we must follow. If we come to a different conclusion to that provided by examples in scripture, or to our historical practice, it indicates one of the following:

1. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women were based on the culture in Biblical times, and not intended to be followed today.  
**Implications:** God, and those he appointed, were powerless to work against the culture of the day and had to compromise.
2. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women have been misunderstood and misapplied; there is a better interpretation that needs to be implemented.  
**Implications:** God was unable to clearly reveal his instructions to the faithful throughout the generations. Or we are simply better at understanding God now.
3. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women have been purposely corrupted by many throughout history for their own personal gain.  
**Implications:** This indicates that all those who have done so will be condemned.

This is the second of the three arguments made to introduce change in formal worship, in respect to the role of gender.

1. Equality between women and men is to be achieved through these changes. Equality represents an unbiased approach to roles regardless of gender. Men are not better than women, thus limiting what women can do is chauvinistic and unequal.
2. [The structure of worship has changed throughout history and should change again. Part of this argument is an observation of certain inconsistent historical and current examples. Our religious worship should not reflect the cultural chauvinistic practices of the past.](#)
3. Competency based worship is a better use of our membership. We should have the 'best' person to do each role regardless of gender. God has given us talents; we should use them to their fullest.

We covered the 1<sup>st</sup> last week. Tonight, we will cover the second. Next week we'll cover the last argument. After which, we will apply the principles we have discovered and reviewed to several relevant topics.

What does the Bible teach concerning the structure of our formal worship?

## Summary of Fundamental Principles

### Class One – Biblical Fundamentals

We covered three fundamental principles that guide our study of gender roles.

## Gender Roles – Inspired Formal Worship

1. The whole scripture is inspired
2. In the Beginning – Intelligent Design
3. What it means to be “In Christ”

## Class Two – Biblical Equality

In our prior class we covered the topic of equality.

1. Biblical Equality vs Worldly Equality
2. Life is not fair, neither do we want it to be
3. Is equality something to be grasped for?

## Class Three – Inspired Formal Worship

Tonight, we will cover the following three points.

1. Formal worship is inspired by God
2. Consequences to incorrect service
3. Worship is a manifestation of our relationship and understanding

## Formal Worship is Inspired by God

Just as the Bible is the inspired Word of God, written down by men inspired by His holy spirit, so too we will see is the structure of worship required to serve Him. Formal worship, and perhaps all forms of worship are prescribed by God. Our worship of Him, is not of our own devising. In fact, worship of God is not something we naturally or intuitively would ever come to the correct conclusion.

In our first class we concluded that it's not only important to understand God inspired the Bible, but also, He is able to clearly manifest Himself to us. So that we are without excuse (Rom 1:20). Is God a wise and capable God or not? Our God is great, he has created all things (Isa 44:24; Jer 10:12). He called Israel out of Egypt (Deu 10:17-21). He has showed himself to us (called us out of the world), therefore we should keep his commandments (Deu 4:32-40).

Inspired means, that God has provided it. It isn't man made.

The implementation or outward manifestation of those principles through formal worship has changed over time. However, this change was directed by God, not man. There are several significant structural changes throughout history that can be grouped as following; before Egypt, Law of Moses (Exodus, Judges), Temple period, Captivity, Return and the 1st Century Ecclesia. Each of these time periods were guided through inspiration. God sent fathers, leaders, judges, prophets, kings, teachers, and apostles so that each generation would know how to live.

God expected Esau to offer a prescribed sacrifice. Instead, he offered the fruit of his own labour (Gen 4:4-6).

God called Abram out of Ur, so that he might walk with him through the promised land. Abram could not remain in Ur, or negotiate a more reasonable journey. God's calling required an appropriate response.

The tabernacle was divinely inspired. It was the center of the camp (Exo 26:30). It wasn't designed by man, and it was built only through God's provision and inspiration to specific individuals. Worship within was guarded and only the family of Levi had access.

God's divinely inspired formal worship is consistent for all parties, natural born and strangers. One law for all (Exo 12:49). God's divinely inspired formal worship was also exclusive, it required both spiritual and physical adherence (Exo 29:33). Therefore, formal worship was both inclusive and exclusive at the same time.

God demands to be worshipped in the place with which He chooses. The tabernacle, then the temple. Everyone was expected to make the trip for the feast days. Instead, they choose to worship in their own high places, which of course quickly led to corruption (Deu 12:5-8, 11-14, 18-21 cp 1Kin 3:3; 2Kin 15:35).

The final formal inspired form of worship is the 1<sup>st</sup> century ecclesia - weekly remembrance (Luk 22:19; 1Cor 11:24-34 cp Act 20:7). Centred on Christ. Preaching the gospel. Keeping the word pure. Separation from the world. Dealing with immoral behaviour, and false doctrine. We have no other inspired options (Act 2:42-47).

Jesus highlights there is a right type of worship to the Samaritan woman. God chooses where and how he will be worshipped; man does not decide (Joh 4:21-24).

Only the male Levite could minister in the tabernacle. Only the male High Priest could enter the holy place once a year. A woman by their nature was unclean once a month and unable to participate in normal life. Women were never allowed into the tabernacle, nor the inner court of the temple; they could only gather at the door (Exo 38:8). What is God teaching us? Why would he formally place barriers in worship and service based on family tree and gender?

Formal worship was never meant to provide a platform for the glorification of the flesh. Rather it provides a structure that gives glory to God and condemns the flesh. This means there must be an outward visible expression of spiritual principles, our faith is visible through works (Jam 2:20). Works are therefore governed by faith. Faith only comes from the hearing and understanding of the Word (Rom 10:17). Our worship must express these principles of redemption and condemnation together. Our worship must reflect the natural and spiritual principles that God is teaching us in His word.

Formal worship of God changed over time and different historical settings. However, it was always divinely inspired, directed, commanded. There was no ambiguity, or mystery surrounding it. God always provided a structure, and teachers. Formal worship is not accidental, nor is it our structure. It must express Godly principles both in the letter and the spirit.

**5 minutes for discussion**

**Clarification questions? Does God rule in the Kingdoms of men? Does he set up whomsoever He will? If he does, what are the implications for his beloved son and his bride? What are the implications for the house that He is building?**

## Consequences to Incorrect Service

What's the big deal? Surely an earnest and willing heart is what God's truly interested. Surely if I have a skill, it must be a talent God wants me to use?

We've already considered the Levitical order and structure. God was explicit in how He would be worshipped. It wasn't arbitrary, nor was it influenced by human innovation. It was divinely prescribed.

Nadab and Abihu were the older sons of Aaron. They were divinely appointed as priests. However, when they offered strange incense God struck them dead (Lev 10:1-3). God makes an interesting statement as explanation, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me". We see similar language used to express the need to keep God's commandments regarding those who are associated with the holy things (Lev 22:2-3, 7-10). The implication is that God's calling to us to draw near to Him (to sanctify Him) comes with explicit responsibilities.

Sanctification means to openly be declared or manifested. Glorification means to be honoured or promoted. In other words, our actions must express God's glory and not our own. Our actions must be in accordance with what God has commanded.

God expected his rules to be kept. He doesn't express these rules like a tyrant, He is a loving father. He is teaching us how we must behave to inherit eternal life. The rules are for our good and are required.

Even in matters which are not explicitly related to formal worship required diligence. Consider the general activity associated with the Sabbath. God demanded the Children of Israel to keep the Sabbath, without exception. The man picking up sticks was stoned (Num 15:32-36). Our God does not change, this principle remains true today. How do we understand this same principle now that Christ has fulfilled the whole Law? Is the Sabbath a by-gone commandment, no longer relevant? Or are the principles of the Sabbath just as critical to our lives today? The Sabbath taught God understands we must work for our 'selves', but he expected a weekly observation where we stop working for our 'selves' and focus on the needs of others.

Consider Uzziah the king. By all accounts he was a godly king. Yet when he attempted to go beyond his role, God struck him with leprosy (2Chr 26:4 cp 16-21). He grasped for the role of the High Priest. He thought he was the Messiah. Is there a similar lesson to be understood in our weekly remembrance of Jesus Christ and the roles we play in the memorial feast?

Paul when writing to the Corinthians addresses improper participation in the emblems (1Cor 11:26-34). The result is condemnation to death. No different than under the Law of Moses. They were not remembering Jesus Christ correctly. They were not worshipping God in the appointed way.

The Jews had incorrectly changed the Law of Moses into a list of customs and rules. They had not learned the lesson David understood (Psa 51:16). While offerings were required, God was truly interested in the character of the heart. This highlights the challenges our nature presents upon our worship of God. We lean towards the works of the law. We become lawyers and as such structure our worship as such. Or we lean towards the works without law, we become libertarians and as such structure our worship as such. One has the appearance of holiness in ritual through constraints. While the other holiness in accessibility through freedom from constraints. Both are truly works of the flesh, both lead to destruction.

Mankind's wisdom always leads to death. It corrupts and destroys (1Cor 1:18-31). Even when well intended, humanism is as vile as paganism. Understanding this principle is critical to a correct implementation of worship. Just as Esau was condemned to be ruled over by sin if he choose to worship his own way, so too will we. Our form of worship must be directed by inspiration, as such our form of worship will reflect God's character and condemn our own.

**5 minutes for discussion**

**Clarification questions? The consequences of incorrect worship highlight destructive outcome. What does this teach us both about God's judgements, and natural outcome of human wisdom?**

## Worship is a Manifestation of Our Relationship and Understanding

The purpose of worship is not for God, although it should give him glory. God does not need it. Worship is for us, and for others who observe us. Our worship when observed must reflect Godly principles, it must give glory to God. It should never give glory to the flesh.

Symbols and patterns are very important to God, but they are not for him, they are for us. God was not interested in the blood of bulls and goats (Mic 6:6-8), yet he demanded such offerings beginning in creation.

When we worship, the things we do are a manifestation of our relationship with God and our understanding of God. For example, if we understood our God demanded retribution for our sin through donations. Our relationship with Him would be based on the amount of money we donate. Of course, this is not who God is, and therefore our donations are something we do without drawing any attention to them (Mat 6:3-4).

God had fully manifested, revealed himself in his son Jesus. Therefore, there is no further revelation, no further inspiration (Col 1:24-29 cp 1Tim 3:16). There is no other gospel which by we may be saved (Gal 1:8-9). Our worship then is based on an understanding of this revelation. Our relationship to God is expressed directly in our relationship to his son. What are the principles and examples that Jesus gave the 1<sup>st</sup> century ecclesia for correct worship? We are explicitly told that the mystery of Jesus has been fully revealed (Rom 16:25-27).

Do we believe the revealed spirit of Christ is expressed correctly in the 1<sup>st</sup> century ecclesia? Would there be a new revealed and inspired way to worship God? Is Jesus the good wine saved for last? Or does God have a better wine of which we will partake (Joh 2:9-11)? If we believe God will reveal Himself in yet another way, to more perfectly reflect his character and purpose, we are fools. We have essentially rejected his beloved son.

Remembering God's commandments and keeping them must be a part of our outward behaviour. To turn from it is termed harlotry (Num 15:37-41).

True inspired worship continues to teach the same eternal principles that have been expressed since the beginning of creation (Mal 3:6). Just as God's Word condemns our nature, so too must our worship. How is this achieved if we promote a form of worship that does not follow Jesus' example?

Our walk to the Kingdom requires physical manifestation of divine principles. Spiritual principles never change. They lead to eternal life, and perhaps can be expressed as the source of eternal life. The grave

could not hold Jesus, because he was perfect (Act 2:24). Understanding these principles is required for us to correctly manifest them.

Scripture is very clear; we must be in Christ (1Cor 2:15-16; Rom 3:24; 8:2; 1Cor 1:2; 2Cor 2:14; 5:17; Gal 3:28; 6:15). What does this mean? How do we manifest this form of relationship with Christ? Christ is the head; we are the body (Col 1:15-23; Eph 4:12-16). We see this form of relationship in marriage (Eph 5:22-33). Marriage is then a physical/literal manifestation of the same principles. Men represent the head; women represent the body. As an ecclesia we are representing a single body, or bride. We are not presenting ourselves individually.

The 1<sup>st</sup> century ecclesia was given the inspired fully revealed requirements for worship. Men and women had clearly defined roles within the ecclesia. These roles were consistent with eternal principles. These roles provided a physical/outward manifestation of our understanding, and relationship with Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father.

The purpose of this class is to establish the fundamental principle of Inspired worship. However, there are several great passages that provide the rules for formal worship. These will be looked at in more detail in the following classes. What needs to be clearly understood is that the structure of formal worship in the 1<sup>st</sup> century ecclesia was not the result of cultural influence, patriarchal society, chauvinistic ideals. 1<sup>st</sup> century ecclesial worship was guided by divine inspiration and the fully revealed son of God.

- Jesus chose 12 male disciples (Luk 12:13)
- Matthias chosen to replace Judas (Act 1:12-26)
- Seven men chosen to tend to the physical needs of the ecclesia (Act 6:1-7)
- Bishop/Superintendent (1Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-16)
- Deacon/Teacher (1Tim 3:8-13)
- Head coverings (1Cor 11:2-16)
- The Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:17-34)
- There are no inspired written works by women, all records are from inspired men
- These all are consistent with the role of the Old Testament priesthood

#### 5 minutes for discussion

**Clarification questions? The structure of worship is directed by God. Do rituals provide a spiritual atmosphere? Does our gender play a role in divinely appointed worship? How do we go beyond the outward keeping of the rituals?**

## Conclusion

In this class we have learnt the following three principles.

1. Formal worship is inspired by God
2. Consequences to incorrect service
3. Worship is a manifestation of our relationship and understanding

The implications are both simple and profound. It is God who structures our worship of Him. There is no other way. It is not conceived through human ingenuity, sincerity, or wisdom. In fact, our own natural inclinations will always lead us to the wrong conclusions. Formal worship will give God glory and

at the same time clearly condemn our own nature. If we choose to ignore or choose our own way of worship, it will always result in condemnation. In certain cases, it will result in dramatic death by God. Our worship must be based on an understanding of the principles found within God's word, and it must outwardly manifest our relationship with Jesus Christ. This outward showing is a necessary component in our worship, as it provides for us a format by which we express our intimate relationship with Jesus.

Recall the argument being made for change is as follows.

The structure of worship has changed throughout history and should change again. Part of this argument is an observation of certain inconsistent historical and current examples. Our religious worship should not reflect the cultural chauvinistic practices of the past.

I ask then if the argument being made for change in the roles of gender in respect to worship is according to Godly wisdom?