

Contrast Between OT and NT Worship

INTRODUCTION:

1. The example of Nadab and Abihu serves as a very important example for us today in regards to rendering worship to God.

Leviticus 10:1-3: "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.' So Aaron held his peace."

a. When they offered in worship something the Lord had not commanded it was taken by the Lord as a sign of disrespect for His Holiness.

b. Such examples were written for our learning.

1 Corinthians 10:11: "Now all these things happened to them as examples [Greek = tupos (type)], and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

2. As children of God...

a. We are to be holy before the Holy One who called us.

1 Peter 1:13-16: "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

b. Therefore it is equally important that we treat God as holy! And His Word as holy!

3. I would like for us to consider what the New Testament has to say about the nature of worship in general and then apply this to our "music."

I. THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A. "TRUE" WORSHIP.

1. This is referred to by Jesus in John 4:19-24.

"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in

Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

2. This is the type of worship expected by God today ("an hour is coming, and NOW IS").

3. Since this concerns us personally, we will deal with it in more detail later.

B. "VAIN" WORSHIP.

1. This is referred to by Jesus in Matthew 15:7-9.

“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

2. This worship is the result of following traditions of men and ignoring the commands of God on a particular subject.

3. Also, when worship is not done "from the heart."

C. "IGNORANT" WORSHIP.

1. This is referred to by Paul in Acts 17:22-23.

“Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.’”

2. This is worship offered in the absence of knowledge of God's will concerning who He is and how He is to be worshipped.

D. SELF-IMPOSED WORSHIP.

1. This is referred to by Paul in Colossians 2:20-23.

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

2. The King James Version and American Standard Version say, “will

worship." The English Standard Version says, "self-made religion." The Literal Translation says, "self-imposed worship."

3. This worship is closely aligned with VAIN worship. It is the result of doing what WE like and WE think is good. But it is not taught by God in His Word (cf. Nadab & Abihu).

It should be evident, then, that not just ANY worship is acceptable to God! There are different kinds that can be offered, but only ONE is acceptable. Since God will only accept "TRUE" WORSHIP, we had better understand what is involved!

II. THE MEANING OF "TRUE" WORSHIP.

A. AS DEFINED BY JESUS "the true worshipers will worship the Father IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH" (John 4:23).

2. But what is meant by the phrase "in spirit and truth"?

3. Notice first the contrast being made by Jesus: (John 4:19-24)

"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'"

4. The Jews had been worshiping correctly by going to Jerusalem, but now the time was coming when place was not important (as it was in the Old Testament).

5. Thus the contrast is between Old Testament and New Testament worship! Somehow, Old Testament worship had not been "in spirit and truth" -- but New Testament worship would be!

6. The contrast becomes more evident now as we define what is meant to worship "in spirit and in truth."

B. WORSHIPPING GOD "IN SPIRIT".

1. Some understand this to mean "to do so with sincerity, from the heart." But this does not fit in with the idea that Jesus is making a contrast between OT and NT worship. Sincerity was required just as much under the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you

today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

Isaiah 1:10-18: "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?' says the LORD. 'I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,' says the LORD, 'though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

2. A better interpretation is that to worship in spirit means to offer "spiritual worship."

a. This is in contrast to worship that is physical or fleshly.

b. This contrast is in harmony with the context. Jesus began by saying "God is Spirit." Therefore the worship of Him is to be "spiritual" -- that is more in keeping with His nature.

c. This interpretation is in harmony with what we learn else-where about the contrast between Old Testament and New Testament worship.

From Hebrews 9:1-10 we learn that Old Testament worship consisted of FLESHLY ordinances; e.g.: A physical structure (tabernacle); special clothing for priests; lamp stands; burning of incense; instruments of music; animal sacrifice -- all of which appeal to the PHYSICAL senses. But New Testament worship is geared more toward the SPIRITUAL side of man: God's temple is spiritual, made up of Christians - 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; all Christians are priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices - 1 Peter 2:5,9; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15; our prayers are sweet incense - Revelation 5:8; our music is making melody with the HEART - Ephesians 5:19. [Please read passages!]

The physical ordinances of the Old Testament were to last until a "time of reformation" - Hebrews 9:9-10 (which has occurred with the coming of the New Covenant).

3. To "worship in spirit", then, is to offer up SPIRITUAL worship as taught in the New Testament and not the PHYSICAL as found in the Old

Testament.

C. WHAT DOES WORSHIPPING GOD IN "TRUTH" MEAN?

1. To worship according to the commands of God? (This is how it is often interpreted.)

a. Certainly we should do this -- but again, this is no contrast to what God expected in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 (these passages could be multiplied):

"Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."

b. Jesus admitted that the Jews were right in their worship (John 4:22) -- so the contrast is NOT between "TRUE" and "FALSE" worship.

2. The contrast is between that which is "TRUE" (or real), and that which had been a "SHADOW" pointing toward the true!

a. Many elements of OT worship were simply a "shadow" or "figure" of what was to come. The Tabernacle was a symbol (Hebrews 9:8-9). The Law with its worship was only a "shadow" of that which was to come (Hebrews 10:1).

b. Christ is now in the TRUE tabernacle (heaven) (Hebrews 9:11-12, 24). Therefore we should expect the worship of the TRUE to be different from that of the SHADOW.

And we have already seen that to be the case: The Old Testament worship, which was but a SHADOW, was PHYSICAL in nature -- but New Testament worship, which God now expects of "true worshipers", is according to the TRUE realities (God is Spirit, Christ in heaven) and is therefore SPIRITUAL in nature.

III. APPLYING THIS PRINCIPLE TO "MUSIC" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A. It is evident that TRUE, SPIRITUAL music in the New Testament is unlike that found in the Old Testament.

1. Also, our understanding of the kind of music to be used in the worship of the church is supported by what many historians, reformers, and scholars have said on the subject.

2. Instruments of music were NOT used in the New Testament church, or for many centuries afterward.

3. Almost all of the leaders in the Reformation Movement were opposed to

using instrument in worship to God.

4. Besides most of those who are members of "churches of Christ," there are groups among the Presbyterians, Baptists, Mennonites, etc., who do not use instruments in worship today.

B. THE ONLY MUSIC COMMANDED (OR AUTHORIZED) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS "VOCAL."

1. The example of Jesus and His disciples - Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26 (they "sung a hymn").

2. The example of Paul and Silas - Acts 16:25 ("singing hymns").

3. Romans 15:9 - "sing to Your name."

4. 1 Corinthians 14:15 - "I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."

5. Ephesians 5:19 - "singing and making melody in your heart."

6. Colossians 3:16 - "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

7. Hebrews 2:12 - "I will sing praise to You."

8. James 5:13 - "Let him sing psalms."

B. THE MUSIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT EMPHASIZED THE "SPIRITUAL."

1. Ephesians 5:19 - "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

a. "Making melody" (PSALLONTES) - In the Old Testament this had reference to the playing of musical instruments.

b. But notice that now (in the New Testament) the "making melody" is to be done "in the heart", not with mechanical instruments!

c. Notice the contrast: the heart (SPIRITUAL) vs. mechanical instruments (PHYSICAL).

2. Colossians 3:16 - "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

a. This passage is parallel to Ephesians 5:19.

b. Notice again that the emphasis is SPIRITUAL: "in your hearts to the Lord."

3. Old Testament music:

a. Performed by a professional choir.

- b. Accompanied with various mechanical instruments.
- c. EMPHASIS: How it sounds to the human ear (appealing to the PHYSICAL side of man).

4. New Testament music:

- a. Sung by all in the congregation ("speaking to one another in psalms...")
- b. The melody is to be made in the HEART, not on the HARP.
- c. EMPHASIS: How it affects the soul (the SPIRITUAL side of man).

5. Music in New Testament worship, therefore, is to be SPIRITUAL in emphasis:

- a. Sung by all.
- b. With emphasis not on how we sound, but that we are making true melody in our hearts to the Lord!

IV. REFERENCES ON MUSIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

A. THE VOICE OF HISTORY.

1. "All our sources deal amply with vocal music of the church, but they are chary with mention of any other manifestations of musical art... The development of Western music was decisively influenced by the exclusion of musical instruments from the early Christian Church." - Paul Henry Lang, MUSIC IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION, pp. 53, 54.

2. "Only singing, however, and no playing of instruments, was permitted in the early Christian Church." - Hugo Leichtentritt, MUSIC, HISTORY AND IDEAS, p. 34.

3. "There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was everywhere entirely of a vocal nature." - Emil Nauman, THE HISTORY OF MUSIC, Vol. 1, p. 177.

4. "We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part of the religious devotion of the first Christian congregations. It was, however, purely vocal." - Dr. Frederick Louis Ritter, HISTORY OF MUSIC FROM THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE PRESENT TIME, p. 28.

5. "Both the Jews in their temple service, and the Greeks in their idol worship, were accustomed to sing with the accompaniment of instrumental music. The converts to Christianity accordingly must have been familiar with this mode of singing...But it is generally admitted, that the primitive Christians employed no instrumental music in their worship." -- Lyman Coleman (Presbyterian), THE APOSTOLIC AND PRIMITIVE CHURCH, pp. 368-369.

[It may seem odd that music was entirely vocal in the early church, when instrumental music was quite common in the worship of the Jews and Gentiles. But not when you recall that the worship in the New Testament was to be spiritual in its emphasis.]

B. THE VOICE OF VARIOUS RELIGIOUS SOURCES.

1. CATHOLIC - "... the first Christians were of too spiritual a fibre to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice." -- CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA.

2. GREEK ORTHODOX - "The execution of Byzantine church music by instruments, or even the accompaniment of sacred chanting by instruments was ruled out by the Eastern Fathers as being incompatible with the pure, solemn, spiritual character of the religion of Christ." -- Constantine Cavarnos, BYZANTINE SACRED MUSIC.

3. PRESBYTERIAN - "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to Him." - JOHN CALVIN, Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol. I, p. 539.

4. METHODIST - "I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen." - JOHN WESLEY (founder).

5. METHODIST - "Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity." - ADAM CLARKE (commentator).

6. LUTHERAN - "Martin Luther called the organ an 'ensign of Baal'." - MCCLINTOCK & STRONG'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.

7. BAPTIST - "I would as soon attempt to pray to God with machinery as to sing to Him with machinery." - CHARLES H. SPURGEON

[Why did these men object so strongly to instrumental music in the worship of the church? Because they properly realized that such was a carry-over from the Jewish worship; that as such it was out of harmony with the SPIRITUAL nature of New Testament worship; that it rightfully belonged to the Old Law with its "shadows" and not the TRUE worship of the New Testament]

CONCLUSION:

1. We see that there are different types of worship, but only one is now acceptable to the Father.

2. We see that this worship is "in spirit and in truth." It is NOT the physical worship found in the Old Testament which was only a "shadow" of what was to come, BUT a spiritual worship which is the true substance of what God wants of us in worship.

3. The emphasis is not on how we feel, or what we like and desire. It is on what God has revealed in Scripture.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the New King James Bible. Please read all references in their context.