

Why do you go to church? Does it make you feel good? Is it merely out of a sense of duty? Or is it mainly social; you just love to fellowship with the saints and be with the people of God? Now there may not be anything specifically wrong with any of the above but as prime motives for attending church services they are very deficient and unscriptural. The purpose of attending church is to participate in the public worship of God. Man was created to worship and glorify God. This is man's chief purpose in life. And although this worship is often private, and can also be with the family, these by themselves, necessary and scriptural as they may be, are not enough. God requires that you assemble with His saints and publicly acknowledge and worship Him. Christ has declared, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 10:32).

But if the main purpose of attending church is to worship God and not just to feel good or to relieve our consciences, then we ought to understand a little about what worship is, and what it ought to be. If our worship is what is required, then who and how and when and where do we worship? And are these issues to be settled by men, or by the church, or by God?

The scriptures clearly teach that it is God that has decided all these matters, and has revealed His will on all these issues in His word. The first commandment, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (i.e. in my sight or before my face; Exodus 20:3) commands us who to worship. As Christ stated it in the temptation in the wilderness, "*...it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Matthew 4:10). Similarly we are commanded when to publicly worship the Lord, on Sunday, the Lord's Day, the Christian sabbath. From time immemorial when Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices at "*the end of days*" (i.e. the last day of the week, the Old Testament sabbath), to Noah's weekly sacrifices, throughout the Old Testament Hebrew theocracy, and continuing through the inspired example of the Apostolic church, we have one day in seven dedicated to the public worship of God. And as to where; we are commanded to gather with the Lord's people wherever the Lord has built His church and is gathering His people. As the Apostle Paul states it in the book of Hebrews, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*" (Hebrews 10:25).

But the most important command for our consideration is the Second Commandment. This is a commandment that many churches have

eliminated from their theology. This was accomplished by splitting the tenth commandment into two and merging the first two commandments into one so that they can avoid its implications with respect to worship. For if the First Commandment determines who we worship the Second Commandment determines how we worship. It regulates the means and modes of worship. It declares, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them*" (Exodus 20:4-5). This teaches us that God also controls how we worship and does not care to be worshipped by means of icons and images, nor in any other way not prescribed in His word. When the children of Israel in the wilderness sought to worship the Lord their God by means of an image they were severely judged, and would have been consumed in the Lord's wrath but for the intercession of Moses (Exodus 32:1-14). God takes His worship seriously and when Cain sought to approach God in worship by means of an unauthorized sacrifice God rejected him (Genesis 4:1-7). God is a great God who does not accept anything that sinful men care to offer but rather insists that we worship Him his way, according to his word, and not according to the devices and imaginations of men.

If such rules of worship seem strange to you then that ought to be food for thought. For such worship, as practiced in the American Presbyterian Church, for all its human deficiencies and imperfections, is conducted according to our best understanding of the word of God. If it seems strange to you maybe you are out of touch with God's word and his will in this matter. If the thought of such worship irks you and doesn't make you feel good maybe you ought to reexamine your motives and why you worship God at all. If it is his church and his house of prayer then whose will ought to be done there, and who ought to conform to whose will? To even ask the question is to answer it and to deny God's sovereignty in his house and to challenge Christ as the only Head of the Church is a serious sin. The problem is that the question is too rarely asked. Men presume, as Cain did, that God is only too pleased to accept anything that they care to offer Him in the way of sacrifice. And worship is only another form of sacrifice, the sacrifice of praise and of a broken and a contrite heart.

It is our desire that you prayerfully consider these things. We prayerfully invite you to worship with us, as Christ himself taught, "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a*

Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"
(John 4:23-24)