



Basic Bible Course

by Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

The WORK and WORSHIP of the CHURCH



Lesson Twenty-five

INTRODUCTION: Having IDENTIFIED the “CHURCH” you read about in the New Testament in Lesson 24 we come now to a study of the WORK and WORSHIP of that church as revealed therein. That MANY ERRORS have crept into church work and worship across the centuries is at once apparent to any careful student of the New Testament. In order to discover afresh what God recorded IN THE BEGINNING, let us FORGET what MEN have written and RETURN TO THE NEW TESTAMENT for a NEW LOOK...

- I. A CAREFUL STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES REDUCES ALL CHURCH WORK TO THREE PHASES, I.E., 1) EVANGELIZATION 2) EDIFICATION and 3) GLORIFICATION.
 - A. The church authorized by the New Testament is supposed to EVANGELIZE the WORLD.
 1. From 1 Timothy 3:15 we learn that the CHURCH is the “pillar and ground” (i.e., support) of the truth.
 2. Ephesians 3:8-10 shows the wisdom of God is to be made known “by the CHURCH.”
 3. The Great Commission shows the EXTENT of this evangelism.
 - a. “ALL NATIONS” to be taught (Mat. 28:19).
 - b. “ALL THE WORLD” and “EVERY CREATURE” to be preached to (Mark 16:15).
 - c. “ALL NATIONS” to hear preaching (Luke 24:47).
 4. That the church in the beginning took this commission seriously is evident from the following Scriptures:
 - a. Paul said, “their sound went into ALL THE EARTH, and their words unto the ENDS OF THE WORLD” (Rom. 10:18).
 - b. The gospel was “preached to EVERY CREATURE WHICH IS UNDER HEAVEN” in the first century of the church, i.e., when Paul was still alive (Col. 1:23).
 - B. The church revealed in the New Testament is supposed to EDIFY itself, i.e., build itself up.
 1. After persons were taught and baptized, Matthew 28:20 shows they were to be FURTHER taught “to OBSERVE ALL THINGS” commanded by Jesus Christ.
 2. After the persecutions of Acts 8 and 9 were finished, the church had rest from strife and was “EDIFIED” (Acts 9:31).

3. Paul instructed the church at Rome to follow after “things wherewith one may EDIFY another” (Rom. 14:19).
 4. In edifying, each Christian was to seek not his own, but every man ANOTHER’S wealth (1 Cor. 10:23-24).
 5. In Christianity, ALL THINGS were to be done unto edifying (1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Cor. 12:19).
 6. The purpose of “edifying” the body of Christ (i.e., church) was to help us all to come:
 - a. In the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.
 - b. Unto a perfect man.
 - c. Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).
- C. The church in the New Testament is supposed to “GLORIFY” God.
1. Jesus said, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye BEAR MUCH FRUIT; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8).
 - a. Some of the fruit we bear are “fruit of the spirit,” i.e., love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - b. “Good works” (Mat. 5:16; Gal. 6:10).
 - c. Those who bear no fruit are hewn down and cast into the fire (Mat. 7:19).
 2. The church also glorifies God through WORSHIP.
 - a. Acts 2:42 shows that after the first converts were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47), they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
 - b. Verse 47 says they also PRAISED God.

NOTE: Since ALL activities in the church as taught in the New Testament fall into the foregoing three main categories, ANY activities in the church today must come under ONE OR MORE OF THESE CATEGORIES, in order to be SCRIPTURAL. That is, they must either 1) EVANGELIZE sinners, 2) EDIFY Christians or 3) GLORIFY God. Any activity not inclusive under one or the other of these headings is not according to the oracles of God, therefore sinful (1 Pet. 4:11).

II. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AS PRACTICED BY THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Note: A PART of the WORK of the church, as we have seen already, is Christian WORSHIP. At the very outset the church Jesus built began by those who were BAPTIZED (v. 41) CONTINUING STEADFASTLY “in the APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE and FELLOWSHIP...BREAKING OF BREAD, and in PRAYERS” (v. 42); also PRAISING God” (v. 47)—Acts 2...Let us consider these items one by one:

- A. The “APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE,” i.e., teaching (v. 42).
NOTE: Nowadays we commonly hear people say, “I don’t BELIEVE in DOCTRINAL sermons.” In the beginning of the church that JESUS built it was not so. The SAME ONES who “GLADLY RECEIVED” the Word were “BAPTIZED” (v. 41) and “CONTINUED STEADFASTLY in the apostles’ DOCTRINE” (v. 42). How could this be done?
1. By continuing to HEAR what the apostles were teaching, just as they had been doing. (See v. 37 and 41).
 2. By letting this teaching govern and mold their lives (Jam. 1:22-25).
- B. “And FELLOWSHIP” (i.e., sharing, v. 42).
NOTE: Often people say, “I can be a GOOD CHRISTIAN WITHOUT GOING TO CHURCH.” No doubt these people are HONEST—but HONESTLY MISTAKEN! Fellowship, sharing or joint-participation was PART OF Christianity from the very beginning (1 John 1:7).

1. Christians had shared in hearing the word (Acts 2:41).
 2. They had shared in being baptized (Acts 2:41).
 3. They had shared in being “added” to the church (vv. 41, 47).
 4. Once in the church, they just KEPT RIGHT ON SHARING:
 - a. In religious experiences (vv. 43-46).
 - b. In support of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:7-14).
 - c. In helping one another (Acts 2:45; 4:34-35).
 - d. In doing good to others (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Gal. 6:10).
- C. “And in BREAKING OF BREAD” (i.e., the Lord’s supper). (Acts 2:42).
- NOTE: TWO DIFFERENT KINDS of BREAD-BREAKING are mentioned in the New Testament. ONE kind is THE LORD’S SUPPER, which was observed on THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK (Acts 20:7). ANOTHER kind evidently was JUST A COMMON MEAL, also called “BREAKING BREAD” (Acts 2:46), NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE LORD’S SUPPER. Since people had to eat every day, this COMMON-MEAL, BREAD BREAKING was done FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE. The FORMER was identified with “FRUIT OF THE VINE” (Mat. 26); the LATTER with “MEAT” (Acts 2:46). Since no MEAT was in THE LORD’S SUPPER, this latter bread-breaking manifestly could not be that.**
1. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper “breaking of bread” as a MEMORIAL before His death (Mat. 26:26-29).
 - a. It was not to be observed until in His kingdom (v. 29).
 2. After Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection, he commissioned his apostles to teach, baptize and teach those baptized to “observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Mat. 28:20).
- NOTE: However, since the LORD’S SUPPER was NOT TO BE OBSERVED UNTIL JESUS COULD DRINK IT NEW with His disciples in His FATHER’S KINGDOM, they had to WAIT until the KINGDOM should come. We have learned that the KINGDOM should come WITH POWER (Mark 9:1). Jesus told His apostles to tarry (i.e., wait) in Jerusalem until they should be endued WITH POWER FROM ONE HIGH. The “POWER” came on Pentecost in Acts 2. Thus THE LORD’S SUPPER could BEGIN TO BE OBSERVED. Hence, from Acts 2:42, we learn that they “continued steadfastly...in BREAKING OF BREAD.”**
3. The first mention of this breaking of bread after Jesus introduced it in Matthew 26 is on Pentecost (Acts 2:42).
- NOTE: PENTECOST was on “THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.” The word literally means 50 DAYS—and PENTECOST WAS THE 50th DAY AFTER JESUS AROSE FROM THE DEAD “in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK” (Mat. 28:1). Seven weeks later (i.e., on the 50th day) on Pentecost, AGAIN on the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK a) the HOLY SPIRIT was given, b) the FIRST GOSPEL SERMON was preached, c) the FIRST CONVERTS were made to the church, and d) the LORD’S SUPPER BEGAN TO BE OBSERVED for the FIRST TIME in the CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.**
4. Historians tell us (and Acts 20:7 bears it out) that in the beginning of the church the disciples came together “upon the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK” to break bread.
- D. “And in PRAYERS” (Acts 2:42).
1. Jesus had given a model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, saying, “AFTER THIS MANNER therefore pray ye.”

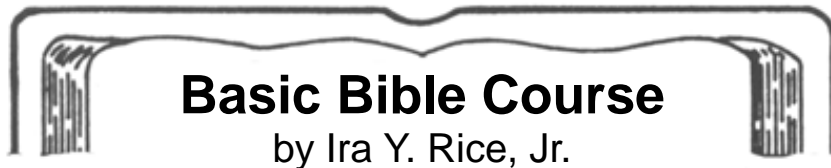
NOTE: Jesus did NOT tell His disciples to pray this prayer OVER AND OVER AGAIN as is the practice of some. In fact, in verse 7, that is what He told them NOT to do. “But when ye pray,” Jesus said, “use NOT VAIN REPETITIONS, as the HEATHEN do: for they think that they shall be heard for their MUCH SPEAKING. Be NOT ye therefore like unto them.” Well, if we repeat this prayer over and over, is that not what Jesus said NOT DO? If He did not want us to use it for “VAIN REPETITIONS” and “MUCH SPEAKING,” then why did He give it? He gave it as a MODEL so we might fashion OUR prayers LIKE that. “AFTER THIS MANNER,” said He, “therefore pray ye.”

2. Prayers included
 - a. Thanksgivings (Col. 3:17).
 - b. Requests (Acts 7:59).
 - c. Intercessions (Acts 7:60; 12:5).
 3. Prayed continually (1 The. 5:17).
- E. “PRAISING GOD” (Acts 2:47).
1. By testifying (Acts 3:12-26; 8:25; 11:18, etc.).
 2. By praying (Eph. 3:14-21).
 3. By singing (Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15).

NOTE: To WORSHIP means to REVERENCE, to PAY RELIGIOUS HOMAGE to a person or object. The PLACE of worship is IMMATERIAL (John 4:21): GOD IS A SPIRIT: and they that worship Him must worship Him in SPIRIT and in TRUTH (John 4:20-24). However, Christians must ASSEMBLE WITH GOD’S PEOPLE (Mat. 18:20; Heb. 10:25). We cannot rise above the object of our adoration. Reason teaches us WE SHOULD NOT WORSHIP what is INFERIOR to ourselves. The heathen bows before a god of his own making; even many so-called Christians worship material things. WE SHOULD NOT WORSHIP our EQUAL. It is unbecoming for a CREATURE to worship a CREATURE. Some, like Cornelius, worship the PREACHER (Acts 10:25). RATHER we should worship our SUPERIOR, our FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN (Mat. 6:9). Why? He is our CREATOR. How becoming for the CREATURE to ADORE HIS MAKER! He SEEKS it (John 4:23). Such worship HELPS TO MAKE US LIKE HIM (2 Cor. 3:18).

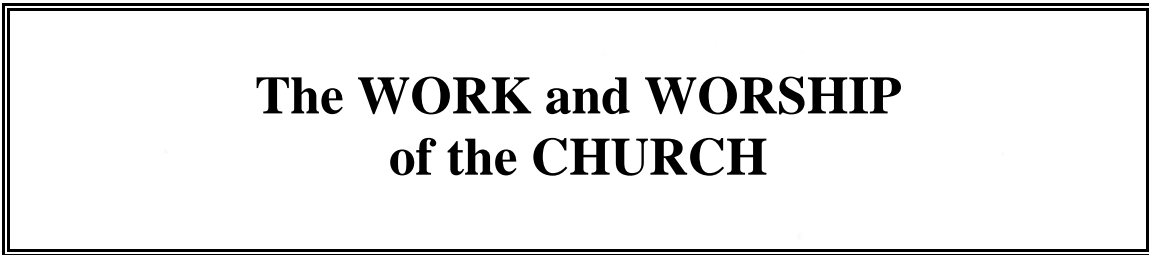
WORSHIP is NOT AN END IN ITSELF, but rather a MEANS to an end. We must be very careful, therefore, to please HIM who is the ONLY RIGHTFUL OBJECT of our worship. NOT ALL worship is ACCEPTABLE before God. Matthew 15:9 shows that those who worship, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN, worship “IN VAIN!” For God to ACCEPT our worship we must not only worship “IN SPIRIT” (i.e., sincerely) but “IN TRUTH” (i.e., ACCORDING TO HIS WORD) (John 4:24; 17:17).

Think how different modern-day “CHURCHES” have grown from “THE CHURCH” you read about in the New Testament. Rather than being the SPIRITUAL institution God intended His church to be, most DENOMINATIONAL churches are SPIRITLESS, TRUTHLESS, CHRISTLESS—little more than SOCIAL CLUBS where the OBJECT seems to be to WORSHIP THEIR OWN IDEAS RATHER THAN GOD, to PLEASE THEMSELVES rather than FOLLOW GOD’S WILL. Rather than continuing steadfastly in the “apostles’ doctrine,” HUMAN CREEDS have TAKEN ITS PLACE; rather than the intimate SHARING (fellowship) of the early church, DENOMINATIONAL LINES have been drawn; rather than BREAKING OF BREAD “upon the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,” it is MONTHLY, QUARTERLY, YEARLY—or NEVER; instead of SINGING it is PLAYING. Why? WHY?



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Questions on Lesson Twenty-Five

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

E-MAIL _____

REFERENCE NO. _____

GRADE _____

1. How many general categories of church work do we find in the Scriptures? _____ Name them:

2. To what extent does the New Testament teach Jesus' disciples to EVANGELIZE?

3. After people are TAUGHT and BAPTIZED what MORE does the Great Commission require to be done? _____
4. For what purpose (or purposes) must the body of Christ be EDIFIED? _____

5. List two ways through which the church GLORIFIES God: _____

6. If a church activity is not inclusive within the categories of EVANGELIZATION, EDIFICATION and GLORIFICATION is said activity Scriptural or un-Scriptural? _____
7. From your own study of the New Testament, have you discovered any other phases or categories of church work not inclusive under one or the other of these three headings? _____ If so, what?

8. What did those do on Pentecost, who gladly received the Word? _____
To what were they added? _____
9. List five things connected with church WORK and WORSHIP those "added" on Pentecost did following their baptism. _____

10. Define "apostles DOCTRINE": _____
11. List two ways they could have continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine:

12. What does "fellowship" mean? _____
13. Can a child of God continue faithfully without sharing Christianity with others? (1 John 1:7)

14. List four things early Christian shared AFTER their baptism: _____

15. How many kinds of bread-breaking are listed in the New Testament? _____ Identify them:

- 16. WHEN did the disciples come together to break bread in the New Testament? (Acts 20:7)

- 17. How many “first days” does EACH WEEK have? _____
- 18. If we follow the New Testament example, will we break bread (i.e., observe the Lord’s supper) weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, when we feel like it, or how often? _____
- 19. In praying, are we to repeat what is popularly known as “the Lord’s prayer” over and over again? _____ If yes, why? _____
- 20. List three ways in which PRAISE may be offered to God: _____

- 21. Where does the New Testament authorize the use of instrumental music in connection with Christian worship? _____

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION? _____

