

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Casual Attitudes Toward Worship

By Mark Mayberry

While the casualness of modern society is reflected in people’s dress and demeanor, Christians should manifest respect and reverence in times of worship.

Introduction

Jesus often referred to wedding feasts or marriage suppers in His parables (Matt. 22:2ff; 25:1ff; Luke 12:35ff; 14:7ff; etc.). Christ is the bridegroom (Matt. 9:14-15; John 3:25-30), and the church is His bride (Eph. 5:22-33). She must keep herself free from all defilement (2 Cor. 11:1-3). Heaven is portrayed as the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).

In a secondary sense, the imagery of a wedding feast also has application to the assembly of the saints. The words and warnings of Jesus have both immediate and long-term relevance.

Being Inexcusably Absent

Many have a casual attitude toward forsaking the assembly. As it is an honor to be invited to a wedding, so also it is an honor for us to assemble with the saints. Jesus referred to those who callously rejected the king’s invitation to attend the wedding feast of his son (Matt. 22:1-10). In like manner, many foolishly forsake the assembling of the saints, not recognizing the benefits and blessings, and also the duties and demands of such occasions (Heb. 10:19-25).

“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:19-25).

Being Perpetually Late

Many have a casual attitude toward when they arrive at the assembly. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13). Five were wise (bringing sufficient reserves) and five were foolish (lacking enough oil). When the bridegroom tarried, the foolish virgins had to depart and buy more oil for their lamps. Those who were ready entered with the bridegroom. Afterward, the door was shut. When the foolish virgins arrived late, they desired admission, saying, *“Lord, lord, open up for us!”*

Why were the foolish bridesmaids denied admission? Obviously, they were not sufficiently prepared, nor had they anticipated unforeseen complications. Additionally, their late arrival would have been an unwelcome distraction to the celebration of the wedding feast. Just as we need to be ready for the Lord’s return, so also we need to be ready to take part in the Bible classes and the worship (Luke 12:35-40).

A basic rule of life is, “Be On Time!” In business, one hears, “If you are five minutes early, you are ten

minutes late.” What does this mean? If you’re early, you’re on time; if you’re on time, you’re late; if you are late, you are a disturbance and a distraction. Edification cannot occur amid distractions (1 Cor. 14:26-33).

“What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:26-33).

Being Inappropriately Dressed

Many have a casual attitude toward how they are dressed in the assembly. Jesus taught His disciples the dangers inherent in treating a holy occasion as though it had no significance. In the aforementioned parable of the wedding feast, recorded in Matthew 22:1-14, the king looked over the dinner guests and saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes (v. 11). He asked, ***“Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?”*** The man was speechless (v. 12). As punishment, he was bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, in that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 13). While seeking to balance our comments with the teaching of James 2:1-7, which contrasts the differing attitudes men sometimes show toward the rich and the poor, the elders of the Adoue Street congregation (where I labor) encourage the members to dress appropriately, especially those men who take an active role in leading in worship, waiting on the Lord’s table, etc. Remember, our clothing makes a statement about our assessment of self, and also reflects our view of the Christian assembly, and the associated activities of worship (cf. Ps. 45:13-15; Zech. 3:1-5).

“My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?” (Jas. 2:1-7).

Being Offensively Irreverent

Moving beyond the marriage feast metaphor, we also note similar manifestations. Many have a casual attitude toward the worship that is offered to God during the assembly. Like cynics from the days of Malachi, they say, ***“The table of the Lord is to be despised,”*** and disdainfully sniff, ***“My, how tiresome it is!”*** Yet, all the while, they offer less than their best, i.e., the blind, the lame, the sick and the stolen (Mal. 1:6-14). Today, similar scoffers ridicule the songs, the prayers, observing the Lord’s supper, the offering, and last but not least, the preaching. Warning against this spirit, Jude spoke of those men who defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile angelic majesties and the things which they do not understand (Jude 8-13).

“Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever” (Jude 8-13).

Being Obnoxiously Petty

Many have a casual attitude toward others during the assembly. Disciples at Corinth corrupted the Lord's supper, changing it from a spiritual memorial to a common meal, one in which they showed penurious partiality: ***"Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry, and another is drunk"*** (1 Cor. 11:17-22).

The Corinthians also evidenced jealousy, strife and a party spirit (1 Cor. 3:1-9). However, such conduct is incompatible with the self-sacrificial spirit of heavenly wisdom (Jas. 3:13-18).

"But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you" (1 Cor. 11:17-22).

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor. 3:1-9).

"Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (Jas. 3:13-18).

Being Defiantly Disobedient

Many have a casual attitude toward the divine pattern that governs the assembly. Offering strange fire to the Lord, Nadab and Abihu did not distinguish between the holy and the profane, and as a result, forfeited their lives (Lev. 10:1-11). In like manner, Uzziah the king disregarded the divine restrictions on priestly service, incurring the rebuke of Azariah and the wrath of God; as a result, he was cursed with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-23). Refusing to go beyond what is written, let us abide in the doctrine of Christ, and thus respect the authority of our Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 John 8-11).

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matt. 28:18-20).

"Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who

gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds” (2 John 8-11).

Conclusion

Many take a casual approach to God, evidencing indifference to their spiritual obligations. Are you inexcusably absent from the assembly of the saints, or perpetually late to periods of Bible study and worship? When you attend, are you appropriately or inappropriately dressed? What about your attitude and actions? Are you offensively irreverent, obnoxiously petty, or defiantly disobedient? If so, make correction while there is time and opportunity. God’s warning to Aaron remains relevant today: It is what the Lord spoke, saying, **“By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored”** (Lev. 10:3). – *Truth Magazine*, December 2022. ■

Distinctive Preaching

By James Hahn

For some time, I and others, have expressed concern about the kind of preaching that is being done in many places today. In expressing this concern, I have frequently said that much of the preaching that is being done today could be done in any denominational church without any change and it would be accepted.

Some have interpreted this concern as saying that our “difference from denominations” is the measuring stick for our preaching. No one that I know who has expressed this concern over the lack of distinctive preaching has suggested that this is the measuring stick for our preaching nor have they lamented over the lack of “church of Christ” doctrine in the preaching being done. In fact, the men I have heard expressing concern over the kind of preaching being done have been the ones who have spoken out against the denominational concept of the church and are the ones who emphasize the distinctive message of God’s word. They are the ones insisting that the word of God is the only standard of authority and that we must respect that authority. When this kind of preaching is done on a regular basis you will be teaching men and women what they must do to be saved; that Christ is THE way and that He is THE Savior of THE church (Acts 2:38; Jn. 14:6; Eph. 5:25).

We are not talking about lessons from time to time that may deal with some Bible character or lessons from his life. We are talking about a compromising spirit on the part of far too many who will not preach what the word of God teaches on the plan of salvation, the church, the work of the church, the worship of the church, the organization of the church or the truth on many other moral and doctrinal issues.

I am ready to affirm that when we preach the gospel in its purity and completeness that teaching will not be accepted by denominationalists, not because we have sought to “offend the denominations,” But because it is the truth. Brethren, don’t be deceived into thinking that the willingness of denominations to accept certain lessons you may preach is an indication of their “closeness to the truth.” That acceptance is based on the fact that the particular lesson may be something with which they agree. For example, I could go to a Baptist Church and preach a lesson showing from the scriptures that baptism is an immersion and every word I say be true and be accepted by them but that would not mean they were “close to the truth” on what the Bible teaches concerning baptism. They still deny the truth on baptism and its purpose.

We need to realize that when we seem to be closer to the denominations than we used to be it is not due to the denominations coming closer to the truth; it is due to our leaving the truth. It is a shame when men are criticized and misrepresented when they make an appeal to get back to preaching that will convict men and women of their sins and teach them what they must do to be saved. This kind of preaching will not be accepted by the denominations, but it will be pleasing to God and that’s what is of real importance. ■

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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