

New Testament Christians and Old Testament Prayers

By Jason Patrick Hilburn

Does the Old Testament contain the pattern Christians need to follow to worship God today? Can one go back to the Old Testament and find authority to pray to Jesus, as some claim? Some have attempted to go back to the Psalms to prove that Christians may pray to Jesus, but such is a lost cause and a desperate attempt to prove a doctrine which has no solid foundation. It is reminiscent of the advocate of mechanical instruments in worship searching the Old Testament for the doctrine he so desperately desires to prove. Do true worshipers (Jn. 4:23-24) go to Psalm 66:15 and argue for the reinstatement of animal sacrifices? What proves too much actually proves nothing. Just as one should not go to the Old Testament to find out how *New Testament* Christians should offer music to God, one should also not go to the Old Testament to find out how *New Testament* Christians should offer prayer to God.

Please note that when Jesus' disciples came asking to be taught how to pray, Jesus did *not* say, "Have you not read? Did you not learn how to pray from the Psalms?" Although Jesus used the phrase "*Have ye not read?*" quite often, He did not say this regarding prayer. He taught them a new way to pray (Lk. 11:1ff; cf. Mt. 6:9ff), and later He even modified the pattern again, to take into consideration changes occurring after His death (praying to the Father in Jesus' name after Jesus became their Mediator; Jn. 16:23-24; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; Heb. 9:15). This should put to rest the idea that Christians are to follow some Old Testament pattern for prayer.

Prayer in the New Testament is different than it ever was under the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, no act of worship in the New Testament is exactly the same as similar acts of the Old Testament! For example:

- Although Christians offer music to God, there are no mechanical instruments in the New Testament pattern.
- Although Christians give, there is no tithing system in the New Testament pattern.
- Although there is preaching, the Message is different in the New Testament pattern.
- Although Christians partake of unleavened bread, it is not the Passover in the New Testament pattern.

- Although there is prayer, it is different under the New Testament pattern (approaching the Father's throne in the name of our High Priest; Heb. 7:25).

New Testament worship is *new* and different, with *new* instructions to be followed! If one must go to the *Old* Testament to try to prove that today's *New* Testament Christians may pray to Jesus, he is surely in short supply of New Testament authority.

Advocates of praying to Jesus and the Holy Spirit also try to muddy the waters between two separate acts of New Testament worship—singing and prayer, claiming that if one can sing to Jesus, he can pray to Jesus. However, the New Testament consistently distinguishes singing and prayer as two separate acts of worship (each having separate instructions), and this contrast must not be ignored (Mt. 26:26-41; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17; Jas. 5:13). Singing to the Lord Jesus is authorized (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), but prayer is to the Father "*always for all things*" (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17; Jn. 16:23; Phil. 4:6-7). A study of passages such as Ephesians 5:19-20 and Colossians 3:16-17 would clarify this.

If all Members of the Godhead can be treated the same in worship, and singing can be the same as praying, then can Christians sing to the Holy Spirit before taking communion, instead of praying to the Father? If one says such things are not authorized, he thus admits that there is a difference between singing and praying, and that it does matter Who Christians address in prayer. Christians are not taught to sing for their daily bread or sing for forgiveness, and Paul did not say, "*Finally, brethren, sing for us*" (cf. Mt. 6:11-12; Acts 8:22; 2 Th. 3:1). There is a difference!

The doctrine of praying to Jesus and the Holy Spirit rests precariously upon a foundation of misused or misunderstood passages.

- Advocates of praying to Jesus and the Holy Spirit directly apply Old Testament passages to Christians today in ways they should not be applied.
- They directly apply New Testament miraculous events to Christians today in ways they should not be applied.
- They take non-miraculous New Testament contexts that seem to be more ambiguous and attempt to make them override the clear instructions for prayer in the New Testament.
- They take greetings and salutations in New Testament epistles and call them "prayers."
- They take the words of uninspired commentators and give them precedence over

clear passages from God's Word.

- However, just as serious are their ignoring of the Godhead's roles in prayer and placing all Three Members of the Godhead on the same level of authority, alleging They are "equal in all aspects."

Most would agree that it would be wrong to teach that Jesus is the Head of God the Father; however, it is just as wrong for these men to imply that God and Jesus have the same level of authority, being equal in every way! Their unscriptural view of the Godhead seems to ignore the fact that God the Father is "*above all*," including Jesus (John 14:28; Eph. 4:4-6). Although Jesus is Divine, God the Father is the Father of Jesus, the Head of Jesus, and the God of Jesus (1 Cor. 3:23; 11:3; 15:27; Mt. 20:23; Jn. 20:17; 2 Cor. 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 1:9). Therefore, Members of the Godhead are the same in some ways, and different in some ways. Their distinctions must not be swept under the rug to uphold any doctrine! To do so is to handle the Word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2) or, at the very least, it is a failure to divide rightly the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Although no one can know their motives, it is clear that it would be advantageous for these men to keep all Three of the Godhead on the exact same level in every way, and to ignore Their separate, distinctive roles in prayer. Perhaps this could somehow allow one to pray to all Three with a clear conscience, but for them to teach publicly and repeatedly such an erroneous doctrine on the Internet, in published articles, and in books is beyond this writer's understanding.

What was the sin of Nadab and Abihu? (Lev. 10:1-3). Members of the Lord's church often use principles from this passage to argue against the use of mechanical instruments in New Testament worship, and rightfully so. However, the burning of incense under the Old Testament system was not symbolic of music, but of prayer. The tabernacle's altar of incense foreshadowed prayer to God under the New Testament pattern for worship (Heb. 8:1-5; Rev. 8:3-4). The clear New Testament pattern for prayer must be kept, lest we become as presumptuous as Nadab and Abihu. It is still the case that "*to obey is better than sacrifice*" (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

<http://www.TheBibleDomain.com>