

The Characteristics of Worship: Part 1

- I. Introduction. There are three characteristics of worship: elements; forms; circumstances.
  - A. Elements. Acts of worship commanded by God. By definition, then, since the Regulative Principle of Worship is the Scriptural principle dealing with what God commands us to do in worship, it must apply to at least the elements of worship.
  - B. Forms. Specific and exact content of the elements. (We won't likely begin on the forms tonight. But just as a preliminary guess, would you say the RPW applies to forms, or not?)
  - C. Circumstances. T. David Gordon: "Those considerations regarding how, when, where, and in what amount to perform the elements." (Will reiterate and expand when we study these.) (Does the RPW apply to circumstances?)
- II. Elements (Part 1).
  - A. Guidelines for Determining the Elements.
    1. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, vol. I, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), 368: "The Scriptures are the only rule for worship, as truly as they are the only rule for the Church in any other department of her duties. And the Scriptures are sufficient for that purpose; for they contain a directory for worship, \*either expressly inculcated\*, or \*justly to be inferred\* from its statements sufficient for the guidance of the Church in every necessary part of worship."
    2. John Frame contrasts two principles: 1). To determine from the NT what Christians did in their meetings; or 2). To determine the Scriptural basis, the theological reason, for including certain activities as elements of worship.
      - a. However, this is a false alternative; we must use both methods, plus a refinement.

- b. WCF teaches that the things that are necessary for worship are “either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture” (I:6). Essentially same as Bannerman wrote above.
  - 3. 3 guidelines more specifically articulated by James Bannerman elsewhere.
    - a. Explicit commands of Scripture: e.g., 2 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 5:19.
    - b. NT examples: e.g., Acts 2:42.
    - c. Theological inference: e.g., benediction and baptism.
- B. A Preliminary Application: How did the NT incorporate OT worship?
- 1. OT worship was carried out in 2 places: temple, synagogue.
  - 2. Some elements were exclusive to the temple and to priestly worship. They were fulfilled by Christ, thus not continued in the NT church.
    - a. Sacrifices.
    - b. Typical acts.
    - c. Special levitical acts.
  - 3. Synagogue worship is the NT pattern, established by Christ’s use of the synagogue.
    - a. Elements in the synagogue: reading of Scripture; preaching of Scripture; prayer; singing of God’s praises by psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; confession; benediction.
    - b. NT texts for the above for inclusion in the NT church’s worship: Jn. 4:21-24; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15, 16; Acts 2:42 ff.; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2.

### III. Conclusion.

- A. There will be areas in which people differ, though they are committed to the RPW.