

Are “Sacraments” from God?

Barry O’Dell

It is not uncommon in religious discussions to hear the word “*sacrament*.” The Catholic church defines this term as, “outward signs of inward grace, instituted by Christ for our sanctification.” It was during the Council of Trent (1545-1563) that the Roman Catholic church “solemnly defined” that there were seven sacraments. According to newadvent.org, these sacraments had been adopted prior to Trent, but after this time they were “properly so called.” It is taught that there are seven sacraments (*holy ordinances*) - baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, holy orders, extreme unction, and marriage - that were instituted by Christ. It is interesting, however, to know that originally there were supposedly only two sacraments - baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Two questions: (1) Where, in the pages of the New Testament of Christ, can it be found that Christ “ordained” any sacraments at all? (2) Why stop at seven? Why not have eight or nine sacraments? Another word we hear used in connection with the idea of *sacraments* is *rite* which means, “a religious or other solemn ceremony or act.” While *sacraments* and *rites* are spoken of by religious people and groups today, the seven things mentioned above are never identified as such in the Bible.

Another noteworthy point to mention is that a periodical dealing with the “seven sacraments” states unequivocally that to change the number of them will cause one to be anathema (cursed). However, the word of God informs us that those who change the content of the gospel will be cursed. Paul wrote, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:6-9). A man or a group of men does not have the authority to alter the word of God (Pro. 30:5-6). God, through the written word, has revealed all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). We do not need the Council of Trent or the papacy to reveal some new information to us. While their tradition teaches that the popes are successors of Peter, the so-called original father of the church, the word of God teaches something completely different. During the first century an inspired man of God wrote, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude

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3). The word *once* is translated from a Greek term (ἄπαξ) which indicates that something was done one time, never to be done again. The same word is used in Hebrews 9:28 stating that Jesus was offered *once* for the sins of many. The faith, i.e. the gospel, was delivered one time - never to be done again or to be altered over time.

According to the website newadvent.org there have been twenty-one ecumenical councils. The first was held in AD 325 in Nicaea (Turkey) and the last was held from 1962-1965 in Saint Peter’s Basilica. During this 1,600 year period, church organization and dogma has changed dramatically from the simple, straight-forward pattern found in the pages of the New Covenant. If God’s word provides “all things that pertain to life and godliness” and if *the faith* was “once for all delivered” during the first century AD, what are we to make of the changes that followed? It is a blatant contradiction of the Bible for any group to teach that they have received further revelation from God. The worship and service of the Lord’s church is to be directed by the word of God, not the votes of men. God’s people are to walk by the same rule (κανων) or standard of measure (Phil. 3:16). However, if it is constantly changing over time by various meetings, how can it be consistently followed? Thankfully, we have the *breathed out by God* scriptures “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Our faith is to be in the power of God, not the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 2:1-5). *Sacraments*, as they are called, are not from God. They have evolved over time at the hands of fallible men who have taken it upon themselves to “pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7).

You Think Music's A Sin!

Article by Jon Mitchell - carolinamesseger.wordpress.com

I love music. Just ask my little girls. They'd be more than happy to tell you how Daddy loves to pretend the car's steering wheel is a microphone at his own little concert inside his head while he's driving and blasting his music. Yes, I love music. I'm very glad music is not inherently sinful in God's sight. The charge that we in churches of Christ think music is sinful comes from those who have a misunderstanding of biblical authority in the area of worship. In the denominational world, instrumental musical accompaniment to singing in worship is widely accepted. Some accept it simply because others around them do so, not giving thought to whether God is pleased with the practice. Others assume God is pleased with the practice simply because they themselves approve of it, thus making their worship to Him the **"will worship"** (KJV) or **"self-made religion"** (ESV) warned of by Paul in Colossians 2:23. Others seek to find biblical approval for it by appealing the instrumental accompaniment in worship during Old Testament times (1 Chr. 13:8; 15:16; 23:5; 2 Chr. 7:6; 29:25-30; Ps. 150:3-5; etc.), ignoring that the Old Testament laws and practices were taken out of the way at the cross and replaced with Christ's New Testament (Rom. 7:1-4; Gal. 3:23-25; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:13-17; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:1-17). Under the New Testament, our Lord commanded us to **"worship in spirit and truth"** (John 4:23-24). Since God's Word is truth (John 17:17), we must worship according to God's Word, the Scriptures. In the New Testament, the only music commanded of Christians in their worship to God is singing.

Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn on the night He was betrayed (Matt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26). Paul and Silas sang hymns to God while in prison (Acts 16:25). Singing is mentioned throughout the rest of the New Testament: in an Old Testament quote encouraging the Christian to praise God (Rom. 15:9), in the context of giving instruction concerning the worship assemblies (1 Cor. 14:15, 26), instructing Christians to speak to each other (an indication that they were assembled to worship) in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs via singing and making melody with their hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), in an Old Testament quote citing how Christ also is singing in the midst of our assemblies (Heb. 2:12), how our spiritual sacrifices to God include **"the fruit of our lips"** (Heb. 13:15), and how the individual Christian who finds themselves happy during their daily lives should sing praises to God (James 5:13). Unlike the Old Testament, there is no mention of instrumental accompaniment.

Historically, such did not arrive in worship of professed Christians until centuries after the church began.

Perusing the above passages shows how the music commanded in the New Testament emphasized the *spiritual*, not the *physical*. We are commanded to be **"making melody to the Lord with (our) heart"** (Eph. 5:19). **"Making melody"** comes from the Greek term *psallo*, which has multiple definitions that include the playing of instrumental accompaniment. However, listed among these definitions is this: "to touch the chords of the human heart, that is, to sing, to celebrate with human praise." As with any word that has multiple definitions, one must examine the context of how it is used in order to determine its meaning. In Ephesians 5:19, the inspired writer specifically says that one *"psallos"* (**"makes melody with"**) their **"heart."** The heart is the instrument God wants played in our worship to Him as prescribed in the New Testament.

The contrast between New Testament and Old Testament musical worship is striking. When one reads the psalms of David, making melody referred to the playing of physical instruments. Yet in the New Testament, the instrument with which one makes melody is our hearts. As cited earlier, Old Testament music was usually performed by a professional choir or band, with the emphasis on how it sounded to the human ear...the

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physical side of man. Yet New Testament music is sung by all Christians instead of a select few which make up a choir (unlike common denominational practice, sadly), and the melody is made with one's heart...the spiritual side of man (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). A recent convert out of denominationalism told me just last week how she has noticed the difference and has been spiritually edified by it. Therefore, churches of Christ in no way despise music. What the faithful among us despise is lack of biblical authority for how we worship (Col. 3:16-17), because we worship and praise a heavenly Father who gave His only begotten Son to die a humiliating, agonizing death to save us from hell. We are bought with that price (Acts 20:28). We belong to Him. In the covenant He shed His blood to purchase (Matt. 26:28), He told us how to worship Him musically. We simply offer Him no more than that. Worship in spirit and truth is not a show put on by entertainers to entertain the masses sitting in the pews. It is offering to the Lord who saves us praise and adoration in accordance with His will. That last phrase - "in accordance with His will" - is the key. If it's not in accordance to His will, how can it truly praise and adore Him?

The Lord's Supper

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The Scriptural thought behind "observance" is one of "watching," being "vigil." We must be awake and sober. **THE BASIS** - The Messianic memorial had an origin (Gen. 3:15). It was to have a designated time of appearance and practice (Gal. 4:4). For it is intertwined with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Birth from the mind of God, and conveyed through the agency of prophets (Luke 24:44). A coming Messiah would free mankind from the bondage of their sins. This orchestrated system of intelligence, would be rendered null without the purpose of salvation to all who "ask, seek, and knock" (Mt. 7:7). Christ came and fulfilled His ministry, and this gave birth to a new age which would have a new Law (Gal. 6:2). And this stewardship was transitioned into authority through His death, burial, and resurrection, nailing former ordinances to the cross (Col. 2:14). The memorial which was to be instituted would be a blessing for all citizens of His kingdom. An outward action declaring "**ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.**"

THE PURPOSE - "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). Jesus of Nazareth had predestined from His genesis, the forgiveness of sins to all who love Him (Jn. 14:15; Mt. 1:21). Because of this good news, we trust in Him. And therein, our individual accountable selves are to be in proper worship (Jn. 4:24). The emblem of "agape" was shed on a cruel Roman cross. For this reason, we are set free from lawlessness through His blood (Mt. 26:28). In this irrefutable endeavor, we are privy to the partaking of the supper. This meal instituted and administered by the great "I AM" and His Son the Christ our Savior. If it were not for this pivotal moment in history (accomplished through His might) we would be forevermore lost. A tragic and most detestable thought (1 Cor. 15:14).

The purpose behind the practice we so traditionally declare, is to have Christians remember the death of He who gave Himself willfully. For He "**was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed**" (Is. 53:5). We are feeble creatures, petty and forgetful. We spend our days tampered with worldly influence and temptation. God in His infinite knowledge and power, from His mind, knew He would command finite man to remember the passing of His Son through the New Covenant.

The uniting factor found in the source of this nourishment allows us to share with the Lord and our brethren according to First Corinthians 10:16-17. We must understand the purpose of this remembrance, and the fact that it is not a common "snack," but a specific moment of worship as noted in First Corinthians 11:20-22. To partake of bread and wine is to amplify the sacrifice in our minds, the most important memory (1 Cor. 11:23-24). This commemoration proclaims our Master till He returns (1 Cor. 11:25). The impetus of this repast is such that it must be done in a worthy manner, or else we find ourselves heaped in judgment (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

TIME & FREQUENCY - It's only natural we move along to display the time in which partaking of the Lord's Supper is practiced. We can trust that if God made certain to establish the basis of the feast, and its purpose, He will also reveal the day in which we must revisit the cross. The significance is profound, for it extends depth and accuracy in God's ability to know all things. He planned it from a system of pattern already weaned throughout the ages, in His people. The memory of deliverance from Egypt. The

tradition of the Passover. This program of intelligence tailored a faithful spotlight, paving the way for a more mature worship.

Interesting to note - Jesus was murdered and buried on Friday and

resurrected on Sunday (Luke 23-24). This day was no serendipity. The unit of chronological measure, and God ordained architecture was orderly. His guidance leaves no stone unturned. We are given precise terms and conditions of obedience. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were to remember the Passover. They were given specific instruction. And so, now under the New Covenant we can investigate the recorded accounts of our fellow brethren in the first century. For we learn from these, the authoritative fashion in which they partook. Evidence indicates a weekly observance (Acts 20:7).

CONCLUSION

We are to partake together every Sunday when willing and able. We are to consume in good faith, love, and unity. We are to take of the bread first, and then the cup. We are to remember the death of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. And as long as we do this, we declare His truth to a dying world till He returns. This application is to be executed eagerly and with tenacity of conviction. Observance of the Lord's supper.

"The memorial which was to be instituted would be a blessing for all citizens of His kingdom."

Check out some of this author's work on
www.addedsouls.com

Biblical Worship

- **Lord's Supper** (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-24); **Prayer** (Acts 12:5; Phil. 4:6-7)
- **Vocal music only** (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15); **Giving** (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
- **Preaching** (Acts 2:42; 20:7)

The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:3); Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Begun in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18); Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Body of Christ and Christ alone is the Head and Savior (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23)
- Added to the church today just as in the 1st century (Acts 2:41, 47)

Salvation

- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)



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