

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA  
© ASK, December 2012 • All rights reserved • Number 12/12

Telephone: 503 292 4352

• Internet: [www.askelm.com](http://www.askelm.com) •

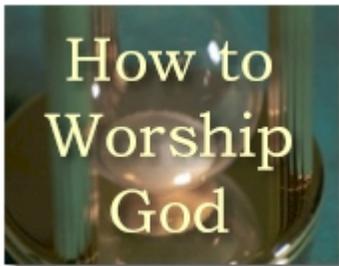
E-Mail: [askoffice@askelm.com](mailto:askoffice@askelm.com)

## How to Worship God

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., March 1975

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, December 2012

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for December 2012](#)



**NOTE: Below is an article by Dr. Ernest Martin from March 1975, less than a year after he separated himself from a high position with the Worldwide Church of God and began a term as Director of the Foundation for Biblical Research. Read and learn from this excellent teaching. David Sielaff, Editor**

Some of us may have seen an oil painting of a man and woman standing beside a wheelbarrow in the middle of a plowed field.<sup>1</sup> The man is holding his hat in hand while he bowed his head to God in prayer. The woman is clasping her hands with her head bowed. The field had produced a bountiful crop of potatoes. Although no one knows what they were saying in prayer, the man's face is evidence he is expressing a gratefulness to God for the plentiful harvest.

The man and woman are standing in the field with an expanse in the background. Other than the wheelbarrow, the pitchfork, and their clothing, little else was manufactured by man in the painting. The couple was simply praying to their God in a direct communication without the aid of any human or material mediators standing in the way of that fellowship.

This painting has a direct application in the teaching of God: **"For there is one God,**



<sup>1</sup> The 1859 painting, "The Angelus," by Jean-Francois Millet (originally titled "Prayer for the Potato Crop") shows most of the elements Dr. Martin describes, but not all. I cannot be sure this was the painting to which Dr. Martin referred. In his description he identified the man in the singular and did not mention his wife. DWS

**and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**" (1 Timothy 2:5). All men, no matter who they are, can come to God in this direct fashion. They need no material or human intermediaries of any kind. This is the teaching of the revelation of God which was given in the latest parts of the New Testament.

Now look at the painting differently, in the manner which most religious people feel the farmer should approach God. Let's say a church building could be placed in the picture with a minister standing in front.

- This minister says: "Unless this farmer and his wife are physically baptized in water, they cannot be in direct communication with God no matter how humble or holy they may appear."
- Another minister beside another church is holding communion plates. He says: "If the farmer and his wife do not take of this physical bread and wine, it is impossible for them to be in association with God no matter how submissive they seem."
- On the right of the picture is another church with a steeple and cross. Beside it is a man in priestly garb pointing to a confessional box. He says: "Unless the farmer and his wife confess their sins to me through the confessional, they have no right to pray to God."
- On the left of the picture is yet another building. A man stands near the entrance and says: "Unless this man is circumcised and they keep the Sabbath, their prayer is an abomination to God."
- There are other buildings which suddenly appear in the painting. Men are standing beside them and saying: "Unless the man and the woman are members of OUR Church, which is the only true Church of God, they cannot possibly be Christian and they cannot pray to God as their Heavenly Father."

One could go on and on and clutter the painting with more physical mediators. There could be placed hundreds of men in the foreground all holding out their hands to the farmer and his wife saying: "Unless you perform certain physical ceremonies, you cannot be in an intimate association with God — you can't possibly be a proper God-fearing people."

### *Physical Verses the Spiritual*

Over the years, mankind has effectively used the physical rituals of the Old Testament (the ones God required in ancient times) and demanded those rituals be kept by people today. They have also used the rituals in early parts of the New Testament to do the same thing. But God has now, through Jesus Christ and by communicating to us the final revelation which He has dispensed to man, done a new thing for man. He

**"... has broken down the middle wall of partition; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."**

• ***Ephesians 2:14–15***<sup>2</sup>

All physical barriers, even the ordinances of God which formerly separated human beings into one religious camp or another, have now been abolished. The enmity which those barriers inspired no longer exists because Christ has destroyed the physical barriers. In the past, a circumcised man could point to a person not circumcised and say that he could have no relationship with the true God. At one time, a baptized man could point to an unbaptized person and say he was not a Christian. Formerly, a person who kept the Sabbath could point to one not keeping it and say he was not a Christian because he did not observe the physical sign of the Sabbath. But when Christ revealed to Paul His final doctrinal utterance, He rescinded all such physical approaches to God.

<sup>2</sup> The Concordant Literal Version gives a more clearer rendering of Ephesians 2:14–15:

**"For He is our Peace, Who makes both one, and razes the central wall of the barrier (the enmity in His flesh), nullifying the law of precepts in decrees, that He should be creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace; ..."**

No longer does anyone need physical ceremonies as signs of distinction. **“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances”** (Ephesians 2:15). This **“law of commandments”** is that which God had formerly required. The ordinances separated part of the human race from other parts. And those physical ordinances inspired ENMITY — they evoked distinctions, rivalries, oppositions, self-righteousness, aristocratic airs, exclusivism, superiority complexes, favoritism, and even hostility to other human beings. The physical signs had the strong tendency to make the one observing them to imagine he was on a right wave-length with God, while those not keeping them were reckoned as being alienated from God.

Nonparticipants in those ordinances were looked on with suspicion and distrust. They were considered evil, worldly, pagan men! The natural consequence of such physical distinctions was an enmity (hatred) between those who participated and those who did not. But Christ has now come to make peace between both groups.

In His final doctrinal revelation to Paul, Christ did away with all such distinctions. Through Christ’s death, He has **“abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the laws of commandments contained in ordinances.”** Yes, even those laws God previously commanded which served as physical demarcations between His people and those who were not, are now revoked. There are no longer any discriminations, from a ceremonial point of view (with the Temple, the Priesthood, the Sacrifices, Circumcision, Baptism, or whatever).

**“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body ..., having slain the enmity thereby.”**

• *Ephesians 2:15–16*

There is no longer any need for animosity, hostility, suspicion, exclusivism, because the final doctrinal revelation of Christ shows there are no longer any physical ceremonies of a religious nature to differentiate one man from another. **“There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all”** (Colossians 3:11). Physical ceremonies which suggested that one race was pure and holy while the other was vile and reprobate, or that the members of one church group are Christians while others are not, ARE ALL ABOLISHED!

**“Blotting out the handwriting or ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”**

• *Colossians 2:14*

Further evidence is seen when Paul strengthens his argument two verses later in Colossians chapter 2, **“Let no man therefore judge you in ... the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ”** (Colossians 2:16–17).

### *All Rituals Abolished in Christ*

Christ has now done away with such ordinances — even though He formerly upheld them. But man has resisted Christ’s last doctrinal revelation to Paul. Many church groups continue to impose such ordinances.

**“Why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?”**

• *Colossians 2:20–22*

Such commandments cause division and hostility. They have always engendered enmity between various groups. Some church leaders say:

- “Don’t touch that or else you are not a Christian!”
- “If you taste that meat you are not of God!”

➤ “By handling leavened bread at certain times of the year, you are guilty of sin and estranged of God!”

What is the result of continuing with such ceremonial distinctions? It is the perpetuation of religious arrogance, exclusivism, self-righteousness, and animosity between peoples. But we should thank Christ that He invalidated all such physical ordinances which discriminate one person from another.

In God’s eyes we are like the farmer standing in his field who approached God directly, without the need of any human or material mediator. All rituals which separate men are now nullified! One thing must be understood. Christ has only abrogated physical ceremonies — not moral requirements. His repeal has nothing to do with the need for morality or for good works. A thousand times NO! Living an upright life is not only suggested in the New Testament, it is demanded. But all religious signs which formerly differentiated people in a physical sense are no longer necessary.

Look at the Sabbath as an example of a physical sign which previously distinguished the people of God from those who were not. It is found in the Ten Commandments. And while the other nine commands show a standard of morality and religious observance which is certainly proper for Christian conduct, the Sabbath command was only a sign to distinguish Israel as God’s people from other nations. It was like circumcision which was a similar sign. The Christian, however, no longer needs physical signs (either circumcision, distinctive clothing, or Sabbath keeping) to distinguish him. Christians have something else.

The positive aspects of nine commandments of the ten are emphasized in the New Testament as a norm of Christian conduct. But the physical sign of the Sabbath is not. Notice the Ten Commandments in relation to New Testament teaching.

- The duty to worship only the Lord God is the first commandment, and this same teaching is found about fifty times in the New Testament.
- Idolatry, the second command, is also denounced in the New Testament twelve times.
- Profanity, the third commandment, is censured four times.
- The fifth command to honor father and mother is commanded six times.
- Murder is condemned six times.
- Adultery, twelve times.
- Theft, six times.
- Being a false witness, four times.
- Covetousness, nine times.

But where is the physical Sabbath, even one time, commanded in the New Testament? Where is punishment threatened if one does not keep the Sabbath? No New Testament verse demands it as a sign for Christians. Some say the Sabbath was not significantly mentioned because all Jews (and those Gentiles who became Christians) naturally kept it and it was not necessary to account for it. This reasoning is weak.

The Jews were also careful to avoid any form of idolatry, and one might think it not necessary to mention it, yet the apostles constantly warned them and others against idolatry. Paul said “**Neither be you idolaters**” and “**Flee from idolatry**” (1 Corinthians 10:7, 14), but where does he say “Flee Sabbath breaking,” or “Observe the seventh day”? It does not say such a thing anywhere in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

The Sabbath in Moses’ day was a physical sign intended to distinguish the people of Israel from the Gentile nations. And it, along with circumcision, separated Israel and made them distinct. But now, through

---

<sup>3</sup> The apostle John also says “**keep yourselves from idols**” (1 John 5:21), but like Paul he says nothing about keeping the Sabbath. DWS

Christ, all physical distinctions have been abolished. All barriers have been torn down. The physical commandments which separated people one from another are now gone in Christ. There is now a new man whose existence is based on a simple, yet profound, belief in Christ.

**“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [two] one new man, so making peace.”**

• *Ephesians 2:15*

### *How to Worship God*

The painting of the man standing in the midst of his plowed field and thanking his God directly for the bountiful harvest is symbolic of mankind’s present relationship with God. There are those who demand that mankind needs human mediators to direct them to church organizations, or to the ritual of circumcision, or to baptism, to certain priests, to confessionals, to communion plates — indeed, some insist physical ceremonies are absolutely necessary to have a fellowship with God. The truth is, none of these things presently stand in the way between man and his God. All a person must presently do is to simply put his complete trust and faith in Jesus Christ. Such a person automatically has a direct one-on-one relationship with the Father, through Christ, no matter to what race or to what church group he belongs.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are Spirit. They desire a spiritual relationship with other members of their family. A Christian is a member of this spiritual family. The Apostle John quoted Jesus as saying:

**“The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”**

• *John 4:23–24*

This is like the farmer standing alone in his plowed field praying directly to his God. John also wrote: **“And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”** (1 John 1:3). This is what God requires; this is how He wants to be worshipped; not through the ritualism of past ages and dispensations, but in the spirit and the truth of our only mediator, Christ Jesus.

Ernest L. Martin, 1975

Edited by David Sielaff, December 2012

### *More on Worshipping God, by David Sielaff*

Worship is a work that you actively do in private or in public (but not in idolatrous settings or buildings, see Dr. Martin’s article, [“The Pagan Images of Christians Today”](#)). Worshipping God is not a passive activity. Surprisingly, both Christians and non-Christians can worship God. Anyone who believes that God is the Creator can worship Him. However, the efficacy of such belief is limited.<sup>4</sup> Most people who honor God do not understand the God they worship (again, John 4:20–24). You as a believer were called to fellowship with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:5–9), the living Word of God, and through Him learn about God.

Human beings should actively worship God. Worship can be done anywhere, anytime, just as prayer can be done anywhere, anytime. Thinking or meditating about God, thanking and praising God, singing about or singing to God, playing music to God, praying to God, listening to God’s word read to you, or reading God’s Word (reading aloud is great) — all can be acts of worship. Remember, reading or hearing the written Word of God communicates to your heart and mind the very thoughts of God. Then, God’s Spirit combines with your spirit (which is unique to you) to help you grow in grace and in knowledge. You are feeding and renewing the spirit of your mind with spiritual food (Ephesians 4:23; Hebrews 4:12; and 1 Peter 1:21–23). Once you believe in Christ’s resurrection, such actions of worship amass rewards for you in God’s Kingdom. These are individual acts of worship; all are things that you can do. DWS

<sup>4</sup> Evil spirits also believe in God: **“You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils [demons] also believe, and tremble”** (James 2:19). Demons do not worship God or acknowledge Him as their Sovereign. DWS