

Grace OPC Adult Sunday School Class Teaching Notes			
Year:	3 of 4		Date: 4/13/2008
Quarter:	1 of 4	Theology	
Lesson Title:	Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day		
Lesson Purpose:	To Study Chapter 21, paragraph 6 of the Confession on this subject.		

1. Introduction

We are studying Chapter 21 of the Confession – what is the topic?

What did we see last week?

The ordinary and extraordinary elements of public worship. What are they?

Ordinary

- Reading the Scriptures.
- The sound preaching of the Word.
- The careful and reverent hearing of the Word:
- The singing of psalms and hymns.
- The administration and worthy reception of the sacraments.

Extraordinary

- Religious oaths
- Vows
- Solemn fastings
- Thanksgiving days:

The overall tone of worship is reverence in the use of all of these elements.

How many church councils, assemblies, meetings did it take to decide these would be good things to do in worship? None – though it may have taken quite a few to recognize that these are the elements of worship prescribed in Scripture.

Today we come to the subject of the place for worship, the direction of worship and the necessity for public worship.

Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the Gospel, either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calleth thereunto.

2. The Place of Worship

In the Old Testament, worship was tied to a specific place. Where?

Wherever God was specially present was holy ground

Exodus 3:4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." **5** Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Joshua 5:13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" **14** He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" **15** The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Where was God especially present in the wilderness, and as Israel entered Canaan?

First in the Tabernacle,

Exodus 29:43 "I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. 44 "I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me.

Leviticus 16:2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

Then the Temple.

Deuteronomy 12:10 "When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security, **11 then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD. 12 "And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God,** you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

2 Chronicles 7:12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. **13** "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, **14** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. **15** "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. **16** "For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

It was the place of God's dwelling among His people

So has there been a change under the New Covenant?

Jesus indicates that there has

John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

Where is the temple of God now?

Where is the place He has chosen to put His name?

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **20** having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, **21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**

1 Peter 2: 4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, **5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

It is the Church! We are God's dwelling place, We are the holy ground!

No building is special any more – the people are!

Why did the framers mention this? Are there any who still believe that specific places are holy?

Do we ever fall into that trap ourselves?

If we call this room, "The Sanctuary", what does that mean?

If we call this building "The House of God"

If we call this building "The Church"

Where is the sanctuary of God? Where is The House of God? Where is the Church?

It is God's blood-bought children!

Do we offend God if we fail to recognize the glory of what He has done in us?

3. The Direction of Worship

In the Old Testament, there are indications that people away from Jerusalem had to pray and worship towards it

1 Kings 8:29 that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.

1 Kings 8:44 "When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name,

1 Kings 8:48 if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name;

God's Name was there – His special dwelling among His people.

What about now? In which direction should we pray now?

Are there still those who believe that worship must be directed somewhere on earth?

The tomb of David guide in Jerusalem:

- *When Jerusalem was occupied and Jews couldn't get to the Western Wall of the Temple, they came here and prayed in that direction*
- *Muslims come here and pray towards Mecca*
- *Christians come here and pray upwards....*

Because the upper room is on the floor above!!

We are God's special dwelling – there is no earthly direction to our worship

Our worship rises to heaven!

4. God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth

The logical outworking of what we have been seeing is that we may worship God wherever we are and in no particular earthly direction

Our worship ascends heavenwards and is made acceptable in Christ Jesus

Malachi 1:11 "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts.

1 Timothy 2:8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

John 4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. **24** "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Our worship is to be spiritual – in spirit

No longer (largely) in visible, tangible signs and symbols (though our flesh loves these things)

We have the spiritual reality to which those things pointed

It is not to be carnal, fleshly. Not full of pomp and show and fine earthly buildings

We are to understand what has happened to us in the New Covenant and to worship in the light of that Truth.

All our worship is to be "In Truth" – Biblical, according to God's Word of Truth

We are to worship everywhere but Scripture still guides and directs us here.

Where are the places where Scripture particularly enjoins our worship?

5. Daily Family Worship

There was always a place for family worship in the Old Covenant

Deuteronomy 6:6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. **7** "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

This continues in the New Covenant

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Acts 10: 1 Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, **2** a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually.

How often should we do this?

Matthew 6:11 'Give us this day our daily bread.

How often would a prayer like this have to be offered for it to make sense?

Every day!

6. Private worship

Matthew 6:6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

Our Savior does not say "if you pray", but "when"

7. Public assemblies

Are we still to meet together under the New Covenant?

We have every indication that gatherings of God's people continued from the Old Covenant into the New – and were frequent and joyful events!

It was Jesus' custom

Luke 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

The missionaries continued it

Acts 13:42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

The early church gathered continually

Acts 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

We are commanded not to forsake the assemblies of the church

Hebrews 10:25 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.

There can be legitimate reasons for absence but....

Some get into this as a habit.

Think on this – God is present among His people when they gather for worship

The One Who to us is the dearest and most glorious being

The One Who has loved us with an everlasting love

The One Who sent His Son to the cross for our redemption

Who desired to bring us into a relationship with Him as His children

He is present to receive us and to bless us

His temple is here. There is no earthly architecture that can come close to this for glory and majesty!

What would cause us to forsake the assembly of the Church as a habit?

Do we lose sight of the spiritual realities here?

This isn't supposed to be a burden for us but a blessing!

Let's examine our hearts and our desires and be careful!

Next week we will go on, God willing, to look particularly at our use of the Lord's Day