

HEBREWS

Lesson 5: Service in the Church

Hebrews 13, 1 Peter 2

As we continue our study in Hebrews, we will continue to look at the two primary things that we as Christians are called to do: worship and service. As we learned in the previous lesson, Christ specifically pointed both of these out as key activities in the life of every follower.

In the previous lesson, we also observed from our examination of the Seraphs (or angels) in Isaiah's vision that the proper relationship between worship and service could be deduced from their wings. With four wings they worshipped (i.e., in humility before God as they covered their faces and their feet) and with two wings they served (flew). This perhaps indicates to us that worship can be inferred to be as twice as important as service, or should be done twice as much—or at a minimum that worshipping God is more important than service. This is something that flies in the face of many contemporary churches today, where worship is downplayed and service is elevated.

In this lesson, we will examine the priesthood—a perfect biblical example of worship and service—as we look to see what is meant by service, or serving the Lord. How can we do this? What does the Bible tell us? How can we both be a worshipper and serve God without upsetting the balance between the two? Better yet, how can we incorporate worship into our acts of service?

In both the tabernacle and the temple, we note that before the High Priest can approach God, he had to go through various steps to clean and purify himself, as well to offer an acceptable sacrifice before God.

In this lesson, we will examine some of the many duties, or acts of service, performed by the temple priests. These include, for example, lighting the lamps, keeping the sacred fire burning, covering furniture when the tabernacle was moved, burning incense, offering sacrifices, blessing the people, purifying the unclean, diagnosing leprosy, blowing the trumpets, carrying the ark, and teaching the law; these were ways that the priests served the Lord. And finally, consider this: they served both within the Temple, the inner court, and the outer court.

From this picture can you begin to see some parallels with our responsibilities in worship and service today? Can you see, for example, that when you worship God within your heart (just between you and God), you are essentially in the "inner court," and when you worship God with others, you are symbolically in the "outer court." Correspondingly then, in order to draw near to God—to enter the Holy of Holies—we must have Christ as our High Priest. This is necessary because he has already made the acceptable sacrifice and stands for you, interceding on your behalf, so that you may boldly approach God's throne. No wonder we should spend more time in worship. What a celebration! Our sins are forgiven, our debts are paid, and God is great and worthy to be praised.

Now, what is our reasonable act of service?

Let's see what we can learn in this lesson using the study questions below.

1. Read Numbers 18:7. What does it tell us about the service of a priest?

I think that if we were honest with ourselves, we would admit that serving the Lord—as the Bible defines service—is not our first priority. It is easier to serve on church committees, deacon boards, and so on, than it is to visit the sick, help the needy, and obey the government and laws of the land that God has placed over us. It is easier to criticize than to serve, easier to watch than participate, easier to fellowship with those we know well than with strangers, easier to feed on the milk than chew on the meat of the Word, and easier to keep the status quo than risk the uncertainty of change. And yet, as I once heard Derek Prince say, when we become a Christian, the life that we are to live from that moment forward can be summed up in two words: follow me. This is the true act of worship and service, i.e., following Christ.

I pray that in the weeks ahead we will focus on worship and seeking out opportunities of true service. God desires that we fellowship with Him through worship, and He has so much for us to do as priests—but we must first humble ourselves before Him.

May you feel God's strong presence in your life this week as we study His Holy Word together.

In Christ,

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