

Continuity and Discontinuity in Christian Worship

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I. Introduction: What is Worship?

Christian worship, both personal and corporate, springs from a **Spirit-illuminated understanding** of the greatness and beauty of the Triune God and of His glorious perfections and works, made known to us through his gracious self-revelation, in creation and with ultimate authority through the Scriptures, especially manifest in the gospel of the life, ministry, and accomplishments of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This, in turn, gives rise, by the Spirit, to deep and abiding **inward affections** of reverence, love, adoration, humility, contrition, gratitude, and praise for God in Christ above all else. Changed affections, then, yield renewed **outward behavior** marked by a bold, joyous, zealous, and Spirit-empowered allegiance, devotion, submission, and obedience to the Lord Christ, seeking in everything to trust God's promises in Christ, turn from sin's deceptive temptations, carry out God's will in attitudes and actions of love and righteousness toward God and man, and live all of life, in joyous obedience to the exclusive Lordship of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the praise and glory of God the Father. (Ware)

Key elements:

- Revelation and Response
- God as One and Three
- Head, Heart, Hands (and in that order!)
- Personal and Corporate
- Focused Worship Settings and All of Life

II. Old Covenant and New Covenant Worship: Continuity and Discontinuity

A. Object of Worship

Continuity—the one true and living God is worshiped in OT and NT.

Discontinuity—the triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is now known to be this one God and the Christian God who is worshiped (Matt 28:19-20); complex monotheism (i.e., Trinitarianism) replaces simple monotheism; worship becomes Christocentric (Phil 3:3) where the norm is the worship of the Son, in the power of the Spirit, to the glory of the Father.

B. Expressions of Worship

Continuity—Reverence, humility, contrition, repentance, faith, learning God's word, submission, obedience, joy, thanksgiving, prayer, care for others, singing, giving, corporate worship, and praise characterize worship in OT and NT.

Discontinuity—OT Temple worship, w/ animal sacrifices and festivals, replaced w/ NT worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24) through the finished work of Christ (Heb 7-10); Sunday replaces Sabbath worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2); baptism as the sign of the NC, not circumcision; communion, not Passover; worship of Christ explicitly; Trinitarian relation to prayer and worship.

C. Covenant Structure of Worship

Continuity—Worshiping people is a covenant people in both testaments

Discontinuity—Old covenant worship centers around the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law and obedience to that Law (Deut 10:12-13; 28:1-68), whereas new covenant worship centers around the forgiveness of sin in Christ (Jer 31:31-34), realized in believers through the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (2 Cor 3; Heb 8-10). New covenant replaces old; law of Christ replaces law of Moses (Matt 28:20; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2); law written on our hearts replaces external law (2 Cor 3:3); believers as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19) worshipping in Spirit and truth replace worship in the temple in Jerusalem (John 4:20-26).

D. Empowerment for Worship

Continuity—Command of God to hear and obey his word, in trust and hope, with heart and hand, true in both testaments.

Discontinuity—the new covenant promise of the outpouring of the Spirit to empower obedience, based on the finished work of Christ, is the new empowerment provided for worship (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27); internalized law replaces impotence of external law (Rom 8:3-4); under grace, not under law (Rom 6:14); serve in newness of the Spirit not in oldness of the letter (Rom 7:6).

E. Extent of Worship

Continuity—Worship in both testaments is designed to focus on the people of God and reach to the nations

Discontinuity—Old testament worship takes place in Israel, with the focus on the Temple, and the nations are meant to come into Israel (centripetal movement of missions—“come and see,” e.g., 1 Kings 8:41-43) and participate through circumcision and sacrifices, but new covenant worship is designed to be taken to the nations (centrifugal movement of missions—“go and tell,” e.g., Matt 28:18-20), as Christ builds his church from every tribe, tongue, people and nation (John 4:20-24; Acts 1:8; Rev 5:9-10; 7:9-10).

F. Goal of Worship

Continuity—Glory of God alone is common to both testaments as the ultimate goal of worship

Discontinuity—the new covenant specifies that the goal of worship is the praise of the Son and the accomplishment of his atoning death and resurrection, in the power of the Spirit (Phil 2:9-11; 3:3), to the glory of the Father (Eph 1:3-14; Rev 5:8-14).