**Praise God and Pass the Nachos**

*by Harry Osborne*

Have you gone to the worship services of various churches in recent years? There is an amazing variety among them. In fact, there is so much variety that one wonders how so many practices could come from people supposedly following the same book, the Bible. The obvious fact is that they do not follow the simple New Testament pattern for worship. Instead, they add to and subtract from that biblical pattern to suit their own desires.

Examples of denominational "worship" seem to be reaching a new high in lows these days. Do you remember the denominational group in California several years ago that added a drive-in window for all of their members who could not spend the time to come in for the whole service? It was a kind of "Jiffy-Prayer" booth. Now we have the “come-as-you-are” churches encouraging people to come in the shorts, halters and bikinis to “praise God.” One wonders how we could truly **praise** God while dressed in a manner that He specifically condemned (1 Tim. 2:9-10), but that is what they advertise. There are the “online churches” where you can flick on your ipad and “worship” at home and forget any assembling (cf. Heb. 10:25). You can find the same church offering “contemporary,” “traditional,” “rock” and whatever designer style its members demand. So many gimmicks have come down the line that it is impossible to list or even remember all of them.

Several years ago, while I lived in the Houston area, there was one that particularly caught my attention. As it has turned out, it was my first introduction to what has become common on Super Bowl Sunday in the denominational world. That year, the Second Baptist Church in Houston had services in their gymnasium. They erected a huge TV screen to watch the football game. During the whole thing, the deacons sold nachos, hot dogs, popcorn, and cokes while young women dressed as cheerleaders pranced around and lead cheers in the typical immodest apparel common to the cheerleading genre. At halftime the preacher, dressed in his referee uniform and called the "headlines man" for the evening, gave his abbreviated address so as not to miss too much of the action. Next Sunday, such gatherings will be common in the denominational world. In fact, it has become so common that I ran across an organization that helps churches with “guidelines to stay inside the playing field and make sure they avoid legal risks of infringement” on the NFL trademarked event. The advice they give is as follows:

**CopyrightSolver recently had a chance to speak with an NFL representative regarding the NFL’s policies for churches that want to host viewing parties on Super Bowl® Sunday.**

***CopyrightSolver:***Many Churches enjoy gathering together to watch the Super Bowl® each year, but they are unsure about necessary steps they must take in order to stay copyright compliant when doing so. What requirements must a church meet in order to host a “viewing party?”

***NFL:***A church must hold their “viewing party” in its usual place of worship and must not charge a fee for attending such viewing party.  If those requirements are met, the NFL will not object when a church has a party for its congregants to watch the Super Bowl® together.

Is this "worship" as God intended it?

Let us look at what the New Testament says about the worship of the church. In Colossians 3:17, we are reminded that we need authority for whatever we do, either in word or in deed. Let us see what that church in the New Testament did and what they were instructed to do. In this way, we can determine the full pattern regarding worship as God gave it by the inspired writers.

First, we see that the New Testament church engaged in prayer to worship God. Jesus taught the disciples that prayer was an act of worship and reverence to God (Matt. 6:9). In Colossians 4:24, the church at Colossae is enjoined to pray. The church in the book of Acts is seen praying (Acts 2:42).

Second, we see the preaching and teaching of God's word in worship. Acts 2:42 says that the early church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching." 1st Thessalonians 2:13 makes it clear that the apostles' teaching is, in fact, the word of God. When men speak "the oracles of God," it is so "God may be glorified" (1 Pet. 4:11).

Third, we see Christians in the first century singing praises to God. They were commanded to speak "one to another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Repeatedly in the New Testament, we find commands to or examples of singing in worship to God.

Fourth, we find New Testament Christians gathering on the first day of every week to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). This was in fulfillment of the command given by Christ on the night of his betrayal (Matt. 26:26-29). Paul makes clear the place and manner of partaking the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-34).

Fifth, we read of first-century Christians giving of their means upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). Paul affirms that this is an act of worship in 2 Corinthians 8:5. Christians gave to meet the needs God authorized the church to discharge jointly, but they gave only on the first day of the week.

When we have noticed those five acts of worship, we have covered completely what the New Testament calls "worship." No nacho selling, cheerleader prancing, non-infringement of copyright Super Bowl parties and so on. Just things that focus on the adoration of the God.

The term "worship" in our New Testament is defined as "to make obeisance" or "do reverence to." It is said to denote "an act of homage or reverence." Praying to God does that. Singing praises does that. Preaching God's word does that. Thinking upon Christ's death in the Lord's supper does that – as does contributing out of love for God and his cause.

Where in the world did people get the idea that these other things give homage and reverence to God? They may be things in which men like to engage, but "worship" is to please God! We please God by doing the things **He** says we ought to do.

Brethren, we also need to be very cautious about these principles. There is always some well-intentioned soul who comes along and decides that we could add "enthusiasm" into our services by various means. What lies behind the well-intentioned, but often errant suggestion that follow, is a basic misunderstanding about the nature of worship. Worship is to please God! The uplifting we derive from it ought to be a by-product of the fact that God is praised, not the other way around. I hear a multitude of brethren talking about the main purpose of worship being the energizing of ourselves and our brethren. That concept is nothing short of sectarian thinking and will lead all who follow it into the same practices we see in the denominational world! The denominations structure their services around what will excite them the most. Christians seek to worship, adore, and praise the Almighty God of heaven, receiving joy as a by-product of their service to God.