

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* Hebrews 12:12-13

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## THE SINGING MEN AND THE SINGING WOMEN

*Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women.*

*Ezra 2:65*

Ezra (as well as Nehemiah) speaks here of those who were returned from the Babylonian captivity. Specifically they were those of Jewish descent who desired to be numbered among the true worshippers of GOD who nonetheless could not prove their genealogy, since some had taken wives of the heathen cities into which they were taken. Among them were two hundred and forty five who were designated as “*singing men and singing women.*” (see Neh.7:67)

There is controversy among “bible scholars” (whatever that is) as to whether or not these “singers” were merely minstrels (singers and musicians) who were available for entertainment (at weddings, funerals, etc.) or musicians whose talent to sing and play upon instruments were used in the corporate worship of the children of Israel in some fashion. It appears to me that the latter is probably a more accurate description of their duties especially in examining I Chronicles 25:5-7 and II Chronicles 35:25.

One thing is certain and that is that these musicians were set apart in some fashion among the children of Israel and are specifically mentioned on several occasions. It is consistent with the Old Testament practices to have a certain people who were ordained and appointed to carry out the acts of public worship among the Jews. This is seen most clearly in the fact that only one tribe of the children of Israel were appointed to be priests and bearers of the Ark. (the Levites)

That same basic notion still exists today among a great number of those who gather themselves together as Christian “worshippers”. It is very common to find the idea that there is a certain “class” or “tribe” (if you will) who alone are appointed and qualified to be leaders of New Testament worship. Most often this class or segment of “leaders” are designated as the “clergy” in order to distinguish them from the rank and file Christians who are often referred to as the “laity” which simply means the people. This is the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. (see Rev 2:6,15)

Some “denominations” recoil at using these terms but nonetheless promote the same idea by their insistence that elders (pastors) and deacons, occupy some sort of special status among the sons of GOD who are gathered together in local assemblies. There is no doubt that these offices exist in the NT church, but it is also clear that these are callings of servitude and not lordship.

The LORD clearly told the woman at the well the only fashion in which the worship of the New Covenant could be carried out. “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh 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)

The worship of the New Testament is not that which is hedged about by prescribed outlines nor led and dictated by particular individuals. The children of GOD have no HEAD but CHRIST since HE has, “*made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.*” (Rev 1:6). “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the*

*praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1Pet 2:9) “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:17-18)*

Some are of the opinion that the office of pastor is one which allows them to basically dictate what is and is not to be done when the church assembles. In most cases these pastors even prevent anyone other than themselves from addressing the congregation or at least would not allow it without their “permission”. This is done under the guise of protecting the flock but quite often is but a stifling of the gifts which the LORD has richly bestowed on HIS church. *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” (1Cor 12:4-7)*

The role of the pastor(s) is primarily to serve the church by being an example to the flock. They are charged with being diligent to teach and to warn as those who must give an account of those souls put in their charge. They are not in any wise to do so as lords over GOD’s heritage, nor dictators of her practice. The church of JESUS CHRIST is HIS property, HE has not “left” it in the hands of any except the HOLY GHOST whom HE has left to be our GUIDE into all truth. Is this not a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer 31:33-34)*

True New Testament worship is that which is led by the SPIRIT of GOD, not by those who would usurp the authority of the church itself by preventing the free operation of those gifts which the LORD HIMSELF has given to the body. *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Eph 4:12-16)*

True New Testament worship is that which centers in the PERSON and work of JESUS CHRIST. As Paul told the Corinthians, *“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (1Cor 12:3)* and then testified of the place of all of our glorying, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal 6:14)*

True New Testament worship is according to the order which is established by the SPIRIT of GOD, not the whims of men who claim to be prophets nor those with itching ears who desire to exalt men with oratorical skills. *“For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” (1Co 14:31-33)*

True New Testament worship is that which delights in the liberty which we have been given by CHRIST and is directed by HIM, of whom the LORD said, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” (John 16:13-15)*

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