

Chapter VI: Worship

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Chapter VI: Worship

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. (Ps 150:3-5)

The word of God calls us to live our entire lives as an act of worship (Ro 12:1). The purpose of this chapter is to teach some of the key principles of biblical worship with music and song, stirring the reader to a deeper relationship with the Father. For many, the area of worship is dictated by their preference and comfort, but it is our desire as an eldership to let the truth of Scripture fashion and shape this expression of our relationship with the Father.

A. The Heart Of Worship

"I'll bring you more than a song, for a song in itself is not what you have desired.

*You search much deeper within, through the way things appear,
you're looking into my heart. "I'm coming back to the heart of worship,
'cos it's all about you, it's all about you, Jesus.
I'm sorry, Lord, for the things I've made it, for it's all about you Jesus!"*

(Matt Redman and Martin Smith)

We worship to the audience of 'one'. Our worship is for God and towards God not man and it's certainly not aimed at ourselves. Worship is not just a song, nor can it be reduced to a musical progression: no, it is far more than that. The very heartbeat of worship is a natural overflow of our relationship with the Father. Man would love to label and categorize it, but mere definitions cannot express the fullness of worship as God intended it. In essence, it is an expression of our ardent adoration in response to His tender love, a discovering of Him as He reveals His wonder to us. Worship is a relationship. Let us not be 'dazed' by the labels, rather let us be 'dazzled' by our Lord. And remember that we love Him and respond to Him in worship "because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). We will now study some of the expressions of worship found in the Old and New Testaments.

B. Old Testament Expressions Of Worship

There are several Hebrew words found in the Old Testament that are translated as a single English word 'praise.' Let's examine these to gain a fuller understanding of biblical worship. You will notice how they flow naturally into the New Testament.

B.1. Barak (Ps 96:2)

"To bless, to prostrate or to kneel as an act of adoration."

"But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple." (Ps 5:7) This shows a wonderful illustration of how David (who set an outstanding example of worship in the Bible) would enter the house of God to bow in adoration to his King. Examples can also be found in the New Testament, for example, Rev 4, Rev 5 and Rev 7.

B.2. Yadah (Ps 28:7)

"To revere or worship with extended hands."

A further example in the New Testament is found in 1Ti 2:8 where Paul encourages the people to "lift up holy hands" as they approach the Lord.

B.3. Towdah (Ps 50:23)

"To give a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving with extended hands."

B.4. Shabach (Ps 63:3)

"To praise in a loud tone."

Shouting is not a sign of irreverence but is welcomed by the Father. Many scriptures speak of it. As examples consider Ps 47:1 and Ps 66:1, but there are many more.

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

(Heb 5:7)

Submission and reverence are attitudes of the heart, not necessarily the silencing of the emotions or the restriction of expression.

B.5 Zamar (Ps 108:3)

"To worship on an instrument."

God has made room for a myriad of instruments with all kinds of sounds and rhythms. We see that our instruments become expressions of our hearts. The instrument of our body is surely the most important of all instruments, expressing the attitude of our heart. Ro 12:1 urges us to offer our lives as a reasonable act of worship and this incorporates all that we do. See also Ps 150.

B.6. Halal (Ps 35:18)

"To shine, to rave, to be clamorous (*noisy and loud*) and foolish. To abandon your reputation."

"David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets."
(2Sa 6:14-15)

David was someone who knew to bow low in reverence, but he also understood when to honour the Lord with passionate expressions of dance and praise. This meant that his reputation as a king would be on the line as well as his preferences. He knew it was all worth it though!

See also Ps 7 Title: "A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD " A 'shiggaion' literally means 'a wild, passionate song.'

B.7. Tehillah (Ps 22:3)

"To sing your 'halals.' The kind of worship God loves to inhabit."

B.8. Summary

There is both the stillness of bowing before the majestic King, as well as the passion and exuberance of joy as we join with Him in rejoicing (Zep 3:17). If we give ourselves to the full expression of worship and not give in to our fears and the pressures of man, we will surely enjoy and experience the breadth of life that the Father has intended for His children!

C. New Testament Expressions Of Worship

"But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises." (Heb 8:6)

We must realise that Jesus did not do away with the expressions of worship found in the Old Covenant, but rather built on them releasing a fullness that the law could not bring. In the same way that we do not do away with secondary education as we move on to university (*but rather use it as a springboard*) so previous expressions of worship remain and are still relevant, providing the foundation of greater worship.

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

We should also realise the dimension of worship that Jesus introduced. Prior to His death and resurrection, the ark of the covenant of the Lord (on which the presence and glory of God rested) was separated from the Israelites by a veil (curtain). The ark remained in the Most Holy Place' of the temple and only the high priest was allowed to enter it once a year on behalf of the people. God separated His manifest presence from the people due to their sin, for sin had to be judged in the presence of a holy God. This would have resulted in their immediate death.

The sacrifice of Jesus, atoning for man's sin, made way for all who receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour to enter freely into the presence of the Most High. Jesus tore the curtain of separation at His death opening the way to the Father! "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." (Heb 10:19-22a)

"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." (Mt 27:50- 51a) See also Mk 15:38 and Lk 23:45.

This remarkable event resulted in the provision of the fullness of worship that the Father always desired: intimacy. Prior to Jesus' work on the cross this intimacy was limited due to the pervading cloud of sin. However, all of this has changed.

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (Jn 4:23-24)

In the above quote, Jesus speaks of the worship for which the Father is searching. The Greek word here translated as 'worship' is 'proskuneo' which literally means 'to come forward to kiss,' thus expressing His heart of intimacy with His people that only Jesus could usher in. This radical intimacy surely infringes on our comforts and preferred 'personal spaces' and is something with which we must grow comfortable.

Not only did Jesus usher in radical intimacy in worship, but He also called for worship in 'truth.' 'Truth' speaks of worship from the heart and incorporates a lifestyle of adoration. Ro 12:1 is a call for a life of worship: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship." Not just on a Sunday at church meetings, but every day in every situation and with all that He has given us.

"So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." (I Pe 4:11b)

"So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (I Co 10:31)

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

The book of Revelation shows us a wonderful picture of reverence and intimacy (Rev 4-5, Rev 7, Rev 11, Rev 14), clearly demonstrating the fullness of New Testament worship.

Rev 4:8-11 reveals what worship ought to be: an increasing revelation of God when in His presence, a bowing down and laying down of 'crowns' in awe and reverence and a passionate proclamation of His majesty and might! "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power."

D. Conclusion

A W Tozer once said that we were created to worship our Father: a relationship of intimate and passionate, enthusiastic adoration. We should worship Him on His terms and in a manner worthy of His name. Let us not be found offering God second best in this area. Besides, worship is for God not us or others.

Remember that there will be no more preaching, teaching, evangelism or church-planting in heaven, for there will be no need of it. Only one thing will remain as we gaze upon the beauty of His splendour and the wonders of His mighty hand: passionate praise will pour from our lips in worship of our Great King. Let us discover its dimensions, live the lifestyle, and enjoy for worship is our eternal ministry!

Ps: Songs are not played or sung for us or our entertainment – they are for God and towards God – and so we do not criticize songs that we don't like.