

Understanding Worship – Part Eleven

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Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Presented by Jeanne Alley

1).

Psalm 27:6

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

a). In past weeks in our study on worship we came to see that worship has nothing to do per se with the singing of a particular type of song, but should really be understood as a continual process of faithful obedience to that which God has said in His word.

b). Scripture though is replete with examples of song and music, of which our opening scripture is one of hundreds, so the question that remains for us is this: 'If worship is not about singing, then what is the purpose of singing and music within the church setting?'

c). And this will be the subject of our message this morning.

2). If we go to the first mention of singing in scripture we find it in –

Exodus 15:1

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! 2 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

a). And here we find Israel, following their redemption from Egypt, after crossing the Red Sea and seeing the destruction of the Egyptians, singing about that which God had just accomplished for them.

b). Their song then is in response to their deliverance and cannot be separated from the purpose for that deliverance – their inheritance within the Theocratic Kingdom in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

c). We see then a song of joy, of praise and of exaltation as the plans and purposes of God are in the process of being brought to fruition within their midst.

3). Although not the first time that singing is mentioned in scripture we can go to another event that precedes Israel coming out of Egypt, where singing can be seen within a parallel context -

Job 38:4

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

a). Our scripture here in Job takes us back to that place in eternity past recorded in -

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

b). This is at a time before the fall of Satan, when Satan himself would be one of the morning stars who sang together, with other angels, the sons of God shouting for joy.

c). And the reason for their singing and their shouting? Well scripture does not say, but contextually perhaps it's because of God's creation of the heavens and the earth, as His plans and purposes, not only for this earth but also for the universe, are set in motion.

d). What we see in both these examples is singing as a means of praising God in direct response to issues surrounding His plans and purposes for this earth and the heavens above this earth. In particular, all things surrounding man.

4). And then at the conclusion of the events that begin to unfold in Job and Exodus, we find singing once again -

Revelation 5:8

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed them to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made them kings and priests to our God; And they shall reign on the earth."

a). Here, as the concluding events of God's plans and purposes begin with the Lamb taking the scroll, the song once again has to do with God's purpose with regards to man

and the heavens and the earth, meaning *rulership* – particularly, the change in the government of the earth from the heavens.

b). And again in –

Revelation 15:1

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. 2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

c). And here we have come full circle.

d). Isaiah 44:22

I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you." 23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, And glorified Himself in Israel.

e). Not only would we see here in Isaiah the rejoicing through singing and shouting of the natural creation released from bondage at the beginning of the Third Day, as mentioned in –

Romans 8:19

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

f). But also, through the symbolism of the heavens, earth, mountains and trees the rejoicing of rulers and nations as the promised blessings of God are set to be realized through a restored Israel.

5). During His earthly ministry we also have recorded the Lord Himself singing –

a). **Matthew 26:30**

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

b). This is on the night of the last supper, just before Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives where he is to be betrayed.

c). And although it is part of Jewish tradition to sing a psalm at the conclusion of Passover, we cannot help but note the proximity of this song to the event that will make possible the taking of the scroll recorded in Revelation Chapter 5.

d). We also see Him jumping, leaping and shouting for joy – again within the same context –

Luke 10:19

"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 22 "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father...

6). And so, what might we concluded from all this? Song is a medium for expressing both thanks and praise to God –

Psalm 147:1

Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. 2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. 3 He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds. 4 He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. 5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. 6 The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground. 7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God,

a). Thanksgiving for what He has already done, and praise for who He is and what He is still to do in the future.

b). We have much to give thanks for – not only our eternal salvation, but especially His opening up of His Word that we may understand the great and precious promises with regards to our inheritance – the salvation of our souls.

c). And we have much to praise Him for as we consider the future fulfillment of His plans for us as we become joint heirs with Christ, adopted as first born sons and part of the Bride.

7). Within our Psalm 147 scripture we find the following definitions for the words 'thanksgiving' and 'praise':

a) thanksgiving = Hebrew - 'todaw' = which means an extension of the hand, i.e. (by implication) avowal, or (usually) adoration; specifically, a choir of worshippers:--confession, (sacrifice of) praise, thanks(-giving, offering).

b). Praise = Hebrew - 'zamar' = a primitive root (perhaps ident. with 2168 through the idea of striking with the fingers); which means to touch the strings or parts of a musical instrument, i.e. play upon it; to make music, accompanied by the voice; hence to celebrate in song and music:--give praise, sing forth praises, psalms.

8). There are a number of Hebrew words that are translated 'praise', of which 'zamar' is one. There is one word that is of particular interest to us, which is the word, 'halal'.

a). **Psalm 44:8**

In God we boast <halal> all the day long, and praise <yadah> thy name for ever.

b). 'Halal' is a primitive root which means to be clear (orig. of sound, but usually of color); to shine; hence, to make a show, to boast; and thus to be (clamorously) foolish; to rave; causatively, to celebrate; also to stultify:--(make) boast (self), celebrate, commend, (deal, make), fool(-ish, -ly), glory, give (light), be (make, feign self) mad (against), give in marriage, (sing, be worthy of) praise, rage, renowned, shine.

c). It is from the word 'halal' that we get the word 'halalujah' -

Psalm 111:1

Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. {Praise ye...: Heb. Hallelujah}

d). The phrase 'halalu-jah' is in fact a command, literally meaning, 'all of you must praise Jah - God'.

e). This means that there is a command given to the people of God to praise God, in the same way that there is an imperative for us to give thanks.

f). These two things then are not optional for us and should therefore become a natural part of the time we spend in song - doing so would be an act of faithful obedience and

in being faithfully obedient our song of praise and thanksgiving would become an act of worship.

9). Note what we see in –

Hebrews 13:14

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. 15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

a). The phrase ‘the sacrifice of praise’ is found in only one other place in scripture, in –

Jeremiah 33:11

‘...the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: "Praise the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His mercy endures forever" -and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first,' says the LORD.

b). And in both of these scriptures we see the sacrifice of praise given in connection with the coming Kingdom of Christ, again giving us an unmistakable motivation for praising God. Again we can see that song is in response to God’s purposes for the 7th Day.

c). And with regards to this, especially with regards to our Hebrews scripture, we would want to ask why giving praise would be a sacrifice?

d). Sacrifice, as we have seen many times before, has to do with death, and in relation to ourselves this would be the death of our flesh –

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

e). We had seen in respect of worship that worship could only be offered through the death of the flesh – our faithful obedience to the word can only be accomplished apart from our sin nature. Only as we are in complete submission to the will of God.

f). Would the same be true of our praise?

g). The answer would be yes, but we would need to see this from two different angles.

h). Firstly, we will remember that revelation of the word of the Kingdom is only something that comes from above. Peter comes to mind as an example of what this looks like -

Matthew 16:17

Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

i). This is a work of the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth - truth that can only be spiritually discerned by those who are eternally saved -

1Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1Corinthians 2:13

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

j). Therefore it is through our spirit alone, as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand the truth of God's word about the King and His coming Kingdom, never through our flesh.

k). And then as a result of this revelation of the truth, which comes entirely through the work of the Spirit, we are then able to praise God - our flesh, the natural wisdom we possess, is put in the place of death, allowing the wisdom of God to have the preeminence and out of this sacrifice comes our praise. Just as with Israel being delivered from Egypt with a Kingdom in view, so with us as we see in the spirit our deliverance from this world with a Kingdom in view - so one facet of our response to this will be praise and thanksgiving through song.

l). Secondly, we will recall in our Hebrews 13 scripture just now the link between the sacrifice of praise and the giving of thanks - and according to the scriptures -

1Thessalonians 5:18

...in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

m). What is the will of God for us? - giving thanks in everything - everything.

n). And how is this done? - In Christ Jesus.

o). So then, regardless of our circumstances, regardless of our feelings, regardless of our mental condition, we are, in every circumstance, at all times, to continually give thanks - holding fast to these scriptures that say -

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

1Peter 1:9

...receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.

p). It is not difficult for us to see how giving thanks in everything can be a sacrifice, when every particle of our flesh wants to do anything but give thanks because of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

q). And so, as opportunity is given to us during our time of song to praise God, which we will remember we are commanded to do, and to give thanks, which is the will of God for us - we will I hope begin to realize that the tight lip and the stony face is not a scriptural option.

r). This is not a question of our comfort level or our talent, but once again an issue of our faithful obedience as we look to the hope that is set before us.

s). The issue of praise and thanksgiving through song is never about performance or about our relationship with those around us - it is rather about our relationship with God on a one to one basis that takes place within a corporate setting on a Sunday morning.

t). Now this is not the only time we would give thanks and praise, as we will throughout the week find opportunity to do both these things, even singing when no one else is around - but for the purpose of our study we are going to concentrate on our corporate setting.

10). And so, if we briefly summarize all that we have so far looked at, we will realize that we give praise to God because of what He has already done, what He is at present doing and what He has promised to do yet future - all with regards to the coming Kingdom of Christ - so incredible are these that we would have to have an extremely hardened heart not to see them, nor to praise Him for them.

a). Likewise with our thanksgiving, given all that God has made possible it would be churlish of us to say the least not to express our gratitude for the fact that God has made it possible for us to be a part of His eternal plans and purposes.

11). As we keep all these things in mind let us spend a while looking at some of the other words translated 'praise' and 'thanksgiving' to see if they will help shed light on what these two things would look like for us within our corporate setting.

a). Psalm 63:3

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.

i/ Here we see the use of the lips in praise.

ii/ Praise = Hebrew - shabach = a primitive root; properly, to address in a loud tone, i.e. (specifically) loud; figuratively, to pacify (as if by words):--commend, glory, keep in, praise, still, triumph. 'Shabach' goes in two directions - praising and calming.

The verb occurs 11 times in the OT, 8 of these have to do with speaking a word of praise. The other 3 speak either about calming a tumultuous sea or about hushing up things within one's heart. There appears to be a connection between praising with words and soothing with words.

b). Psalm 100:4

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

i/ Praise = Hebrew - tehillah = from 1984[halal]; laudation; specifically (concretely) a hymn:--praise. The Hebrew title of the Book of Psalms is 'Tehillim'[plural form] - Literally the Book of Praises.

c). Ephesians 1:4

...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

i/ Praise = Greek - epainos = from 1909 and the base of 134; laudation; concretely, a commendable thing:--praise. 'Epainos' expresses not only praise for what God does for us, but also for who He is.

d). 1Chronicles 16:7

On that day David first delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the LORD: 8 Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!

i/ Here we can clearly see a song specifically written for the purpose of giving thanks to the Lord.

ii/ Thanks – Hebrew – yadah = a primitive root; used only as denominative from 3027; literally, to use (i.e. hold out) the hand; physically, to throw (a stone, an arrow) at or away; especially to revere or worship (with extended hands); intensively, to bemoan (by wringing the hands):--cast (out), (make) confess(-ion), praise, shoot, (give) thank(-ful, -s, -sgiving).

iii/'Yadah' is an important word for praise or thanks and occurs more than 100 times in the OT, more than half of these in the Book of Psalms. The origin of the word is 'yad' = hand – which developed into the verb 'yadah' suggesting outstretched hands as a means of praise and thanks.

e). John 6:11

And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.

Colossians 1:3

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

i/ Thanks = Greek – eucharisteo = from 2170; to be grateful, i.e. (actively) to express gratitude (towards); specially, to say grace at a meal:--(give) thank(-ful, -s). From 'eu' = well and 'charizomai' = to give freely.

ii/11 of the 39 appearances of this word in the NT refer to the partaking of the Lord's Supper, while 28 occurrences describe the praise words given to the Godhead. During the 2nd century 'Eucharist' became the generic term for the Lord's Supper.

f). Psalm 95:1

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

i/ Thanksgiving = Hebrew - towdah = from 3034[yadah]; properly, an extension of the hand, i.e. (by implication) avowal, or (usually) adoration; specifically, a choir of worshippers:--confession, (sacrifice of) praise, thanks(- giving, offering). 'Towdah' appears more than 30 times in the OT, a dozen of these in the Psalms - 'Towdah' is translated, 'sacrifice of praise' in Jeremiah 33:11.

12). So what might we conclude from these? Simply this, praise and thanksgiving are both audible and may be accompanied by music and the lifting of the hands. They are an imperative for us and should be given by each of us individually within a personal and a corporate setting.

a). The idea that praise and thanksgiving can be silent and internal is not found in scripture.

b). So, are we scripturally correct to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving during our corporate service time? Absolutely.

c). Would it be scripturally correct to lift our hands while doing so? Absolutely.

d). Will this require us to have to die to self? Well if singing and the lifting of hands is not what we want to do, then yes - it will be the sacrifice of praise. But this is no different than putting to death our flesh in any other area of our life. This is not impossible.

e). Finally, one last scripture to finish this morning -

Luke 19:37

Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, 38 saying: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." 40 But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

f). Israel as a nation did not cry out in rejoicing, praise and thanksgiving with a view to the King and His Kingdom - we are those stones - let's not be found wanting.