

Understanding Worship – Part 12

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

Throughout the past few months we have been studying what 'worship' means *scripturally*. Most of us have always used the term to describe a style of music or the time of singing on a Sunday morning. We have learned that 'worship' – specifically the "true worshippers" mentioned in John 4:24 who God is seeking to worship Him "in spirit and truth" – is best understood as being synonymous with *faithful obedience*. Last week we began to look at how music fits in with the idea of 'worship' and what God says about it. This week we will continue to study that as we wrap up this series on "Understanding Worship."

Let's begin with a passage from the Psalms –

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.

- We learned that song and music within Scripture are directly connected to the realization of the plans and purposes of God, whether purposes accomplished in the past or purposes that remain yet future--all with regards to the coming 7th Day. And song and music are used to give both praise and thanksgiving in response to the revelation of these purposes.
- Songs express both praise and thanksgiving, and both of these are imperatives for us.
- This is expressed with regards to praise through the Hebrew word, 'halalujah', which literally means, 'all of you must praise God' –

Psalm 111:1

Praise the LORD! [halalujah] I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, In the
assembly of the upright and in the congregation.

- And with regards to thanksgiving we see this –

1Thessalonians 5:18

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

- We concluded that songs of praise and thanksgiving are not optional for us but rather could, *and should*, be a part of our corporate service time on a Sunday morning.

2). The words that we find translated 'praise' and 'thanksgiving' reveal to us what is involved in the giving of praise and thanksgiving –

- 'todaw' – an extension of the hand
- 'zamar' – to strike or touch the parts of a musical instrument
- 'halal' – to be clamorously foolish
- 'shabach' – in a loud tone
- 'tehillah' – a hymn of praise
- 'epainos' – praise for what God does and for who He is
- 'yadah' – to hold out the hand
- 'eucharisteo' – to express gratitude
- 'towdah' – sacrifice of praise

3). Praise, and even thanksgiving for that matter, is a sacrifice for us –

Hebrews 13:14-15

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.

- It is a sacrifice because it is not dependent upon our circumstances, our feelings, or our mental condition, but on our faithful obedience to the commands of God as we recognize and remember all that He has done for us and made possible for us as we make the journey from spiritual immaturity to spiritual maturity.
- Our praise and thanksgiving in a corporate setting is not about our horizontal relationship with those around us – “What is everyone else doing?” – Nor about our comfort level or talent. Rather, it is about our vertical relationship with God – “What would be the scriptural way for me to respond to all that God has done for me?”
- To praise and give thanks audibly, even loudly, accompanied by the raising of our hands will probably require the death of our flesh, but this would really be no different to dealing with our flesh in any other area of our life.
- And the giving of praise and thanksgiving after this fashion will inevitably engage our emotions...and this is perfectly OK.
- Remember that we read about Jesus *rejoicing in the spirit* and that the sons of God *shouted for joy*.

4). Now this week we need to add another dimension to praise and thanksgiving.

- As we think about our corporate gathering on a Sunday, we will remember that Scripture gives us a command to gather together and a stated purpose for doing so –

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

- We are to gather together for the purpose of stirring up love and good works and for exhorting one another – and the stirring up and exhorting should happen *so much more* as we see the Day approaching.
 - ‘Stir up’ is the Greek word ‘paroxusmos,’ which comes from a words which means ‘to sharpen alongside.’
 - ‘Exhort’ is the Greek word ‘parakaleo,’ which means ‘to call near, invite, invoke (by imploration, or consolation), beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, pray.’
- In this scripture then we can see that our corporate gathering is a time when we will encourage one another with regards to the race of the faith. We will encourage one another to continue to run, *not to turn away*, and *not to become complacent*. We will encourage one another to love, according to 1 Corinthians 13, and to continue to produce good works – works that are done through the death of the flesh. And this is something we do **for each other**.
- And we can see clearly here that we have a corporate responsibility in this to one another. Our service time is not an occasion whereby we come just to be a recipient, but rather an occasion whereby we are an active participant. I hope you can see this.

5). As we look at this we would see that it would be impossible to separate these actions in Hebrews 10 (*to stir up one another to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, exhorting one another*) from our purpose to grow to maturity found in –

Ephesians 4:11-16

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by

what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- Verse 16 gives us commentary on our Hebrews 10 scripture, and vice versa.
- Now given the nature of our praise and thanksgiving, with its focus on the King and His coming Kingdom and our going on to maturity, we can see how both praise and thanksgiving could help us in our stirring up and exhortation of one another.
- There is, however, something more that we need to add to these two. And in order to do this we need to look at two interrelated scriptures –

Ephesians 5:18-20

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

And –

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

6). We have noted in past studies that ‘being filled with the Spirit’ and ‘letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom’ are one and the same thing.

- So we are therefore looking at the word of the Kingdom, things surrounding the Christ, the Son of the living God, and His purposes for the 7th Day.
- This is the ‘all truth’ that the Holy Spirit alone guides us into, and is only ever brought forth from above as a result of our proper engagement with the written Word, which is the living Word. This is the only process by which we are continually filled with the Spirit.
- In our Ephesians 5 scripture we see that as a consequence of being continually filled with the Spirit, we are to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.
 - ‘Psalms’ is the Greek word ‘psalmos,’ which means a set piece of music, i.e. a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a "psalm"); collectively, the book of the Psalms:--psalm.

- 'Hymns' is the Greek word 'humnos,' which means to celebrate; a "hymn" or religious ode (one of the Psalms):--hymn.
- The spiritual part of 'spiritual songs' probably needs little explanation – we are obviously dealing with things apart from the carnal (fleshly) and given the context of being continually filled with the Spirit, the spiritual song would have to be that directly connected to the word of Christ. It would be a song in direct alignment with the scriptures, or the singing of the scriptures themselves, which are themselves Spirit –

John 6:63

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

- And the word 'song' is the Greek word 'ode,' which means a chant or "ode" (the general term for any words sung) -song.
- All three of these words are interrelated, and all have to do with singing accompanied by music.

7). Our Colossians scripture then adds something more to that found in Ephesians - "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..."

- We have here teaching and admonishing.
 - 'Teaching' is the Greek word, 'didasko,' which means to teach...
 - And 'admonishing' is the Greek word 'noutheteo,' which means to put in mind, i.e. (by implication) to caution or reprove gently:--admonish, warn.
- And so as a result of being continually filled with the Spirit we are to sing to one another within our corporate setting in order that teaching can take place. We are also to sing to one another so as to gently reprove (to warn) one another. And all of this must be with a view to the Kingdom. And both of these, as with praise and thanksgiving, are imperatives for us.
- And inevitably, in order to teach or to warn one another, whatever we sing should be in correct alignment with scripture.
- Just as our praise and thanksgiving have their focus on the outworking of God's plans and purposes for the Millennial Kingdom, so must our songs of teaching and admonition...and both these aspects of song are in accord with the stated purpose for our

gathering ourselves together, as seen in Hebrews 10 (*to stir up one another to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, exhorting one another...*)

8). We can then see from a scriptural standpoint that our time of song on a Sunday morning will have to have two facets:

1. whereby we can offer our praise and thanksgiving...
2. and should involve teaching and admonition.
 - Both dimensions will have as their focus the coming Kingdom of Christ and the promises with respect to that Kingdom.
 - And our songs must be able to teach (probably by reinforcement) the truth, and to challenge us to continue in a life of faithful obedience -

Ecclesiastes 7:5

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools.

- As we accomplish the praise, thanksgiving, teaching and admonition in faithful obedience to what scripture teaches about them, our time of song **does indeed become an act of worship**. And we would be worshipping in spirit and truth. Which is exactly what God is looking for -

John 4:23

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

9). Another aspect to this is that our service on a Sunday morning shouldn't be viewed as being separated into different parts, like, "this is the prayer, this is the singing, this is the message." Instead, view it as a time together, a whole experience, where we all work together in unity of purpose and unity of spirit. We gather together AND worship God (*faithfully obey God*) TOGETHER ...that's it!

- And again, our Sunday service is not to be something we attend as an observer, but something we attend as an *active participant* with each of us having a significant role to play. In this sense, we should not see our attendance at our corporate gathering as optional, or of little consequence, but of paramount importance for the sake of our brothers and sisters. It does matter for their sakes whether we are here or not -

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

- This may be a large jump for us to make in our thinking at this moment, but let's at least allow for the possibility that your presence here on a Sunday morning is no less important than the person giving the message up front here–

Romans 15:14

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

10). Now having realized the necessity for our songs to be in alignment with scripture, we will also realize that this places a responsibility on those who choose the songs for Sunday morning to make sure that each song is *scripturally correct*.

- If we would not accept a message that was not scripturally correct, then we should not accept a song either. And we should realize that as most contemporary songs come out of the Laodecian church at the end of this dispensation (songs which are the consequence of the leaven placed in the three measures of meal, corrupting the prophetic word), we would need to give these songs close scrutiny.
- We can no longer sing songs just because we “like” them, or they have a nice beat. They have to fit within scriptural criteria.
- You know, it would be better not to sing at all than to sing that which is not truth.

11). I really love the song, ‘These Are the Days of Elijah.’ It’s a great song to sing...but the reality is, this song is just plain wrong scripturally.

The song goes like this –

These are the days of Elijah,
Declaring the word of the Lord:
And these are the days of Your servant Moses,
Righteousness being restored.
And though these are days of great trial,
Of famine and darkness and sword,
Still, we are the voice in the desert crying
'Prepare ye the way of the Lord!'

*Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.*

These are the days of Ezekiel,
The dry bones becoming as flesh;
And these are the days of Your servant David,
Rebuilding a temple of praise.
These are the days of the harvest,
The fields are as white in Your world,
And we are the labourers in Your vineyard,
Declaring the word of the Lord!

*There's no God like Jehovah.
There's no God like Jehovah!*

Let's explore the accuracy of this song, from a scriptural standpoint –

- The scripture says in Malachi –

Malachi 4:5

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

- And the truth of what is stated in Malachi is confirmed by the Lord as recorded by Matthew –

Matthew 17:11

Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.

- Both of these scriptures speak prophetically of an event that is to be witnessed exclusively by Israel in connection with events during the Time of Jacob's Trouble.
- *These are not those days, nor is the church or anyone in the church to be seen in any way connected with this prophecy.* Christians are not the voice in the desert crying, 'prepare ye the way of the Lord'. Most have a complete misunderstanding of the way of the Lord anyway.
- (And again, going back to the song, "Days of Elijah") Nor are these the days of Ezekiel –

Ezekiel 37:4

Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!

- Again we are dealing with events that involve Israel alone in relation to the nation's restoration at the conclusion of the Tribulation. The dry bones did not start coming together in 1948, nor are they coming together even now... nor can this scripture be used in respect of the church, even though most of the church, with regards to its engagement with the word of the Kingdom, is dead and dry.
- Nor are these "the days of David" -

Amos 9:11

"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old;

- On what 'day' will this happen? And who does the scripture relate to? The church is not and cannot rebuild the tabernacle of David...such a notion is scripturally ridiculous.
- As for the 'days of Moses' (from the same song) with "righteousness being restored," I am not sure where that phrase comes from, but two things we can know for certain...1. These are not the days of Moses, and 2. Righteousness (faithful obedience with regards to receiving an inheritance in the land of promise) is not being restored- neither with regards to Israel and the earthly portion of the Kingdom, or with regards to the church at large and the heavenly portion of the Kingdom. That is a time yet future.
- As for Jesus coming on the clouds -

Mark 13:26

"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

- Although it is a scriptural fact that we shall at the resurrection/rapture meet Him in the clouds, this is something we shall neither see be aware of until it happens.
- And the year of Jubilee is again something that pertains to Israel alone - there is no year of Jubilee for the church.
- As sad as it is for those of us who like this song, it is pretty obvious that we should give careful consideration relative to singing that song.

- If we were to rewrite the words or write different words to the same music that would be OK – but we wouldn't be singing "The days of Elijah" any more.

12). Do we need to be this careful in the scrutiny of the songs we sing? You may ask what the big deal is...a song is just a song, lighten up! But have you noticed how songs seem to stick in our heads soooo easily? Because of this, we cannot have the scripturally incorrect words of a song filling our thinking in the place of the truth of scripture.

- Here's an example...who knows the song from Micah 6:8? *He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of thee...but to do justice...and to love mercy...and to walk humbly with your God.*
- Now there's a good song to get stuck in your head.
- Here's one that gets stuck, but really shouldn't... the song says this...*holy holy is the lord almighty... who was and is and is to come* (that's a great part)...*we lay our crowns before you....* Now wait a minute, we don't lay our crowns before God's throne, we keep our crowns! Why would I want to be singing (in my head) something that is completely opposite to what God's Word says?

Our focus needs to be on the Word of God...*always.*

13). And so, as we conclude this message for this morning it should be clear to us what the purpose of music and singing is within our context here on a Sunday morning.

- We need to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving because giving praise and thanks is an imperative within scripture. And we need to sing songs that *give* praise and thanks... rather than songs that *talk about* giving it.
- We need to sing songs that will continue to teach us the truth of scripture, and songs that will challenge us through rebuke and warning...as these also are an imperative within scripture.
- And the singing of songs after this fashion is a significant part of the ministry we have to one another for the edifying of the body.
- We will probably have to search for songs containing scriptural truth, because the style of the music and the catchiness of the tune really are secondary to the words.
- All that we have looked at in the last few weeks concerning music will no doubt be a challenge to us, but we might rejoice that this is the time when we can, with the right heart and mind, embrace those challenges with an air of excitement.