

Church Planting Institute
Biblical Praise And Worship



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INTRODUCTION

The Subject of Praise and Worship is one of the most important of all Bible themes. It is also one of the most neglected. To fall short of a full appreciation and practice of pure spiritual praise and worship is to forego a vital aspect of our ultimate calling in Christ.

In recent years, God has been restoring this ministry to His people. An integral feature of the great Spiritual renewal which is sweeping the church throughout the world is the restoration of praise and worship in the Church, as prophesied by Joel. (Joel 2:21, 23, 26).

I am aware that many fine books have been published recently on this important subject. I am not under the illusion that this article will improve on what has already been said in these fine contributions.

If there is a dimension that I personally could add, it may well be that of simplicity. One of my main reasons for compiling this study is that the great majority of my readers live in emerging world and restricted access nations where these books on praise are not readily available. It is to those leaders particularly that this study is dedicated. The prayer of my heart is that its pages will help, inspire and motivate many of my readers to become praisers and worshippers of God. This is what the Father is seeking. *"Worshippers, who worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:23)

The early chapters (1-8) deal with some of the biblical references and principles of Praise and Worship. Chapters 9, 10, refer to some of the practical aspects of leading people in worship, whilst the final chapter (11) touches upon the prophetic significance of Praise and Worship.

In teaching this subject it is vital that the students become actually involved in doing and practising the various modes of biblical worship. So some of the time should be given to workshop sessions and to actual times of worship when the whole class begins to enter into times of corporate worship together employing the various scriptural ways of expressing worship. Every Christian should be at least free enough to do everything the Bible exhorts us to do, particularly in this important area of ascribing to God the worship of which He is profoundly worthy.

Gerald Rowlands.

Chapter 1

WHY SHOULD WE PRAISE THE LORD?

Psa 50:23

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." (KJV)

Whenever we offer praise to God, we glorify, (exalt, uplift, magnify) Him. We also encourage God to reveal to us His salvation. (Heb: Yeshah, the same word from which the name Jesus comes!) So, praising God, glorifies Him and produces a revelation and visitation of Jesus and His salvation.

Psa 47:6-7

*"Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: **sing praises with understanding.**"* (KJV)

Psalm 47:7 says to ..".*sing praises with understanding.*" This means that we should Praise God with a thorough understanding of exactly why and how we are praising Him. Here are some of the scriptural reasons why we should do so.

1. BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS. "*Praise ye the Lord...*"

Psa 149:1-2

"Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." (KJV)

In other words, praise Him because He is the LORD and KING. He is the ultimate authority. The highest power. The King of all kings and Lord above all lords. He was before all things and is the maker of all things. Therefore, He is greater than all things. "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised...*" (Psalm 48:1; 96:4).

2. PRAISE GLORIFIES GOD. "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me...*" (Psalm 50:23).

Surely this should be the great desire of all God's people, to glorify Him.

3. BECAUSE GOD COMMANDS US TO.

"Praise ye the Lord" *is not a suggestion or a request. It is a commandment.*

4. BLESS THE LORD FOR ALL HIS BENEFITS.

Psa 103:1-5

"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (NIV)

5. PRAISE HIM FOR HIS GOODNESS.

Psa 107:21-22

"Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy." (NIV)

6. PRAISE HIM FOR HIS MIGHTY ACTS.

Psa 150:2

"Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness." (NIV)

7. IT IS A GOOD THING TO GIVE THANKS. (Psa 92:1,2;147:1).

Psa 147:1

"Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!"
(NIV)

8. THE LORD IS WORTHY OF PRAISE. (II Sam 22:4; Psa 18:3).

Psa 18:1-3

"I love you, O LORD, my strength.

The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies." (NIV)

9. PRAISE MAGNIFIES GOD. (Psa 69:30).

Psa 69:30

"I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving." (KJV)

10. PRAISE IS COMELY! - FOR THE UPRIGHT. (Psa 33:1).

Psa 33:1-3

*"Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: **for praise is comely for the upright.***

Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." (KJV)

The old English word "comely" means proper, right, fitting, appropriate, becoming and suitable. Unfortunately some Christians seem to feel that praising God is unseemly and improper. They are concerned lest they should appear to be undignified. For some reason, they feel that this so-called dignity is the proper attitude for Christians. However, the Bible projects the opposite view. God says the garment of praise is most becoming upon them. Rejoicing in God and praising the Lord is suitable and proper for the Child of God. I would much prefer to have the approval of God than of men!

11. GOD DWELLS IN THE PRAISES OF HIS PEOPLE. (Psa 22:3).

Psa 22:3

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel. (KJV)

The Holy one of Israel inhabits our praises! If our heart is filled with praise it is also filled with God, for He inhabits our praises. This is also true of our home or church. Fill them with praises, and they are filled with God's presence. We can surround ourselves with God's presence by cultivating the attitude of praise. We shall then be more conscious of His presence than we are of problems, difficulties and adverse circumstances. There are many blessings to be experienced as a result of praising God.

Several versions say that God is actually "enthroned" on the praises of His people.

Psa 22:3

"Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel." (NIV)

12. PRAISE GENERATES POWER.

In Psalm 84 David says,

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will still be praising thee... blessed is the man whose strength is in thee....they go from strength to strength..."

The man who praises God has the Lord for his strength. He also knows the joy of the Lord through praise, and the joy of the Lord is his strength. (Neh 8:10).

13. THE PRAISING SOUL DELIGHTS HIMSELF IN THE LORD, AND GOD GIVES HIM THE DESIRES OF HIS HEART. (Psa 37:4).

Psa 37:4

"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." (NIV)

So many people say, "If only God would grant me the desires of my heart, how I would praise Him for it!" The divine order is the reverse of that. We praise Him, and delight in Him, and *then* He gives us the desires of our heart. For the praising heart has the right desires. His priorities are in order, and God then delights to grant those desires.

14. PRAISE PRECEDES VICTORY.

In II Chron 20, King Jehoshaphat led God's people into battle against their enemies. God instructed him that he should appoint singers unto the Lord. They went before the army praising God and saying, *"Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."*

Imagine an army being led by a choir! How strange to the natural mind to go into battle this way. But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are strong to the pulling down of strongholds. As we face our enemy in these days, we need to realise afresh the power of praise and go into battle with the high praises of God in our mouth. We can then expect to see the salvation of God. The people who truly learn to praise the Lord are the people who will show forth His presence and power.

1. WHO SHOULD PRAISE THE LORD?

a) All Men Everywhere. (Psa 145:21; 148:11,13; 150:6).

1 Tim 2:8

"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." (NIV)

b) All Flesh. (Psa 145:21).

Psa 145:21

"My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever." (KJV)

c) Everything That Hath Breath. (Psa 150:6).

Psa 150:6

"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD." (NIV)

d) The People Of God. (Psa 67:3,5; 78:4; 79:13).

Psa 67:3-5

"May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.

May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. Selah

May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.

e) The Righteous.

Psa 140:13

"Surely the righteous will praise your name and the upright will live before you." (NIV)

f) The Saints

Psa 145:10-11

"All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you.

They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might," (NIV)

g) The Redeemed.

Psa 107:1-2

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the LORD say this-- those he redeemed from the hand of the foe," (NIV)

h) Those That Fear The Lord. (Psa 22:23).

Psa 22:23

"Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel." (KJV)

i) Those Who Know And Believe The Truth.

1 Tim 4:3-4

"which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving," (NIV)

j) The Servants Of God (Psa 113:1-3; 134:1; 135:1).

Psa 113:1-3

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised." (KJV)

k) All His Angels

Psa 148:1-2

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts." (KJV)

1) **All Nature (Psa 148:3-10).**

2. WHEN ARE WE TO PRAISE THE LORD?

a) **From Morning Till Night.**

"From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised" (Psa 113:3).

b) **All Day Long. (Psa 71:8)**

"My mouth shall be filled with your honour and your praise all day." (Amplified Bible).

c) **As Long As We Live. (Psa 146:2)**

"While I live I will praise the Lord..."

d) **At All Times (Psa 34:1)**

..."his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

e) **In Times Of Depression. (Psa 42:11)**

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

f) **In Everything. (Eph 5:20).**

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. WHERE ARE WE TO PRAISE THE LORD?

a) **Psa:22. ...".In The Midst Of The Congregation will I praise Thee."**

b) **Psa 22:25. "My Praise Shall Be Of Thee in the great congregation..."**

c) **Psa 57:9. "I Will Praise Thee, O Lord, among the people. I will sing unto Thee among the nations."**

d) **Psa 100:4. "Enter Into His Courts with praise."**

e) **Psa 107:32. "Let Them Exalt Him also in the congregation of the people and praise him in the assembly of the elders."**

f) **Psa 108:3. "I Will Praise Thee, O Lord, among the people; and I will sing praises unto Thee among the nations."**

Chapter 2

SCRIPTURAL WAYS TO PRAISE THE LORD

Praise is primarily the expression of admiration and approval. In its fullest sense, it also includes the expression of gratitude and thanksgiving for favours received. Thus, praise and thanksgiving are frequently linked together.

However the purest forms of praise do not include thanks and gratitude. They are essentially expressions of admiration and adoration to the object of one's praise, irrespective of whether or not favours have been received. Praising God, therefore, is primarily the extolling of His person, character, attributes and perfection. It is the adoration of God, for who and what He is, rather than for anything He has done from which we have benefited. "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised...*" (Psa 145:3).

Praise is first an inner awareness of worth. It is subsequently an outward expression of that inner appreciation. It does not become praise until it finds outward expression. While it remains within the heart and mind, it is admiration. When it finds expression and becomes vocal or visible, it is then praise

SCRIPTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF PRAISE

There are many scriptural ways in which we may express our praise to God. We are now going to look at some of these. Our list may not be exhaustive. You may be able to find other ways which are equally as scriptural. I believe that God wants every Christian to be free enough in their spirit to be able to praise Him in any and all of the ways found in the Bible.

Remember that these expressions of praise are valid and acceptable only if they are truly giving expression to praise that is in our hearts and needing to be released to God. In other words, merely going through the motions, mechanically doing these various things, does not constitute praise. They are merely a means of giving expression to the admiration, thanksgiving and respect that is within us.

If you are conscious of praise within your heart that has never been given adequate expression, let me suggest that you study these various expressions. Look up the scripture references cited and prayerfully consider the context and significance, then DO whatever expression you are considering. For example, if you are studying the references to shouting, then go ahead and shout unto the Lord. You will discover a tremendous release in doing it. Something will be set free within you. A new dimension of joy will be released within, for you are being obedient to God, and you are beginning to praise Him in new ways which He has ordained for you in His Word.

Should you be teaching others these principles of praise, get them to DO each one as you teach. Don't be content to only talk about these methods of praise, have the people participate and actually do what you are teaching.

1. Praising God With The Voice.

"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long..." (Psa 71:23,24).

"That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell all of thy wondrous works." (Psa 26:7).

David was constantly speaking forth the praises of God. He would say things like, "The Lord is my strength, and my shield; My heart trusted in him and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song I will praise him." (Psa 28:7).

We should also cultivate the habit of talking about the Lord and extolling His wonderful works. Begin each day by speaking forth praise to God. Tell Him how great and wonderful He is, how you love Him and appreciate Him. Thank Him for a new day and begin to praise Him for His presence with you throughout that day. Sing a song of praise and thanksgiving to God. Employ your voice, your lips, your mouth. Make them instruments of praise. You will be surprised how quickly you will cultivate the habit of praise.

"I will bless the Lord at all times. his praise shall continually be in my mouth." (Psa 34:1).

"Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love salvation say continually, the Lord be magnified." (Psa 40:16).

"O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard" (Psa 66:8).

2. Shouting Unto God.

The verbal praise we have spoken about in the previous segment requires only conversational volume. We are speaking to God in a conversational manner, telling Him our opinion of Him and expressing our appreciation. However, there are also times when it is fitting and scriptural to raise our voices and really shout unto God. ..".*SHOUT UNTO GOD with the voice of triumph*" says David in Psalm 47:1.

Many conservative people are very adverse to shouting or making any kind of loud noise. They feel it is undignified. Some have even said, "There is no need to shout, God is not deaf!" To which we would reply, "God is not neurotic either!" There is a time and place for the joyful noise and the shout of praise and we should not be afraid to do it when that time comes.

"But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy.." (Psalm 5:11).

"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." (Psa 32:11).

"Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause" (Psa 35:27).

"Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joyand her saints shall shout aloud for joy." (Psa 132:9,16).

"Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." (Isa 12:6).

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." (Zeph 3:14).

"And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the peoplewhich when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces." (Lev 9:23,24).

"And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout so that the earth rang again." (1 Sam 4:5).

3. Singing.

..". Come before his presence with singing." (Psa 100:2).

Singing is one of the simplest and most natural responses to the wonder of God. It is a spontaneous expression of joyful emotion. It has always been a valid expression of praise amongst God's people. Immediately after the exodus from Egypt, when God had brought them safely through the Red Sea, Miriam led the children of Israel in singing the praises of God, who had so wonderfully delivered them from the hand of their enemies.

"And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." (Ex 15:21).

There are many references to singing throughout the scriptures. Here are but a few:

..".I will sing unto the Lord, I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel." (Jud 5:3).

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"Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name." (11 Sam 22:50).

"Sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works." (1 Chron 16:9).

"Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."

(11 Chron 29:30).

"I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." (Psa 7:17).

"I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High." (Psa 9:2).

"Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion...." (Psa 9:11).

"I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me" (Psa 13:6).

"Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power." (Psa 21:13).

.. "...I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." (Psa 27:6).

"Sing unto the Lord, O ye his saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. (Psa 30:4).

"Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." (Psa 33:3).

"Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding." (Psa 47:6,7).

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise" (Psa 57:7).

"But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy." (Psa 59:16,17).

"So will I sing praise unto thy name forever, so that I may daily perform my vows." (Psa 61:8).

There are many other references to singing praise to God, but these few will suffice to give some idea of the importance of singing. Singing is a sign of gladness and contentment.

It is a symptom of joy, indicating a satisfaction with one's lot in life.

It is a healthy expression of positive emotion that ministers strength to the total being.

God delights to hear us singing His praises.

A VARIETY OF SONGS

In Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16, we are exhorted to sing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ... to the Lord.

The Psalms have provided a tremendous amount of material for worship in song - from the old traditional hymns to modern choruses taken directly from them. Hymns have also provided great themes to inspire the Church and furnish her with anthems of praise.

Spiritual songs are somewhat different from either of these previous categories. They are songs given directly by the Spirit and sung spontaneously as the Spirit supplies both words and melody. These songs may be in the language of the person singing, in which case they are sung .. *"with the understanding..."* (1 Cor 14:15). At other times, the lyrics may be in "other tongues" in which case, the mind of the person is .. *"unfruitful..."* (1 Cor 14:14). The mind has no natural understanding of what is being sung, though at the same time knows intuitively that the Spirit is praising and magnifying God, frequently with the "tongues of angels." In both cases the songs are completely spontaneous and unplanned. The songs are rendered by faith. The singer, listening to the Spirit of God within his own spirit, faithfully follows the melody and words that He supplies.

PHYSICAL EXPRESSIONS OF PRAISE

In addition to verbal, audible expressions of praise, the Bible cites many ways in which we can use physical expressions in order to worship God.

1. Standing.

To stand erect is always a sign of respect. If a person of importance enters a room, those already present will stand to their feet to honour and show respect to that person. Frequently the Holy Spirit will inspire us to stand before the Lord as an act of worship and reverence. *"Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world STAND in awe of him."* (Psa 33:8).

"Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord." "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord; praise him, O ye servants of the Lord. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God." (Psa 134:1; 135:1,2).

2. Raising The Hands.

Raised hands are a universal sign of surrender. By raising our hands high before the Lord we acknowledge that we are completely surrendered to Him.

We tell Him again that we are unconditionally His.

We have no desire to rebel against Him, we have no weapons in our hands to fight against Him.

People who are NOT wholly surrendered to God have great problems in doing this, though it appears to be such a simple thing. They strongly resist this mode of worship. However, once having done it, great release comes and they are frequently able to express praise in many other ways also.

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord" (Psa 134:2).

It is also a sign of deep longing after God. *"Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle."* (Psa 28:2).

It is also symbolic of spiritual thirst after God. *"I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land."* (Psa 143:6).

3. Clapping Our Hands.

When someone does something which wins our admiration and approval and we want to let them know they have done so, we frequently put our hands together and clap. Perhaps a concert pianist plays a truly beautiful piece that the audience thoroughly enjoys, they will often break forth into spontaneous clapping. If they wish to express their approval even more obviously, they will often stand to their feet and clap their hands. We call this a standing ovation. When God is so wonderful, and has done so many glorious things that win our admiration and approval, is it so strange that we would want to applaud Him?

We are commanded to *"clap our hands unto God"* (Psalm 47:1).

It is a sign of gladness, rejoicing and approval.

4. Bowing low or kneeling.

Often when people are overcome with the sense of God's presence and glory, they will spontaneously fall on their knees or bow before God. It is a gesture of reverence and respect.

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psalm 95:6).

One day every knee will bow before Him. (Phil 2:10).

5. Falling prostrate before God.

Here is another extreme form of obeisance and worship. To fall and lie in front of someone is a sign of deepest reverence. A humbling of oneself to increase the sense of elevation of the One before whom we prostrate ourselves.

6. Dancing.

Because dancing is a highly demonstrative and perhaps somewhat emotional form of praise, it has met with a good deal of criticism and opposition. Mostly from conservative people. Because of this controversy, I have given rather more space to the consideration of this aspect of praise.

Dancing involves the use of the whole body in order to express joy, praise and worship before the Lord. The Hebrew and Greek words translating "dance" in the scriptures, have a variety of meanings, including "leaping," "skipping," "lifting up the feet," "jumping." These translations indicate something of the spontaneous, unstructured nature of such dancing. This dancing is not generally according to prescribed and programmed movements, but rather, simple, spontaneous responses of joy before the Lord.

Such incidents as that recorded in Acts 3:8 in which the previously lame man went off "*walking and leaping, and praising God.*" can now be seen in a different light. This is particularly so when we remember the integral part that dancing has always played in the worship of the children of Israel.

"Let them praise his Name in the dance..." (Psa 149:3).

"Praise him with the timbrel and dance..." (Psa 150:4).

Some Instances Of Dancing In The Bible

To Celebrate Salvation And Deliverance

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels (tambourines) and with dances." (Ex 15:20).

"And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances...." (1l Sam 6:16).

..". Michal ... saw king David dancing and playing" (1 Chron 15:29).

Jeremiah prophesied concerning the glorious restoration to come...

"Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old men together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." (Jer 31:13).

According to Lamentations 5:15, their dances had been turned to mourning when they were taken into captivity. In Jer 31:13 we see the dance was restored when they were brought out of captivity again.

In Joel 1:12 we see that drought and barrenness come upon God's people when, ..". *Joy is withered away from the sons of men."*

The joy and laughter that accompanies a return from captivity is a testimony to the heathen, that *"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."* (Psalm 126:3).

DANCING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It has been argued, by those who would oppose dancing before the Lord today, that it was purely an Old Testament phenomenon and has no place in the New Testament Church. However, it is obvious when reading the New Testament that this expression is there also.

Jesus said, *"Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven..."* (Luke 6:23).

One of the Greek words for joy that appears frequently in the New Testament is "agalliao," which means literally "to leap for joy." This is not a deep, inner type of joy, rather it is a dynamic, emotive expression of tremendous joy that makes one literally "jump for joy." Here are a few of the places where it occurs in N.T. scripture.

.. "Jesus rejoiced (agalliao) in the spirit..." (Luke 10:21).

Mary said, *"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced (agalliao) in God my Saviour."* (Luke 1:46,47).

The jailor, .. *"..rejoiced (agalliao), believing God with all his house."* (Acts 16:34).

Believers leap for joy because of the power of God unto salvation and the glorious inheritance that is reserved for them (1 Peter 1:3-7).

Right at the end of the New Testament we encounter an exhortation to *"Be glad and rejoice (agalliao - jump for joy), and give honour to him (Christ); for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"* (Rev 19:7).

When the prodigal son was restored to his father, there was music and dancing (Luke 15:25). When the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets takes place, there must also be dancing, for this is one of those things spoken by the prophets (Jer 31:13).

Some Aspects Of Scriptural Dancing

a) It is spontaneous, primitive, and unsophisticated in style.

Not a highly structured, choreographed, practised and precision mode.

It is expressed in leaping, jumping, skipping and gyrating.

It was sometimes accompanied by music from instruments.

(1 Chron 15:29; Psalm 149:3).

It was often accompanied by singing (Ex 15:20,21).

b) May be practised by an individual or as a group.

David danced before the Lord.

Miriam and ALL the women danced.

c) Is not dancing with a member of the opposite sex.

Miriam and all the women danced (Ex 15:21).

Young men and old men together (Jer 31:13).

d) No age limit on it.

Young men and old men together.

e) Singing and dancing often went together.

"Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in the dances, saying Saul slew his thousands, David his ten thousands." (1 Sam 29:5).

f) There is a right time to dance.

"A time to mourn.... and a time to dance" (Ecc 3:4).

g) God has prophesied a restoration of dancing.

*..”... and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.” (Jer 31:4).
“Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance....” (Jer 31:13).*

WARNING!!!

Dancing of a carnal nature, is also associated with backsliding, idolatry, immorality and worldliness, e.g., Ex 32:19, dancing around the golden calf.

Satan has a counterfeit for everything.

Counterfeits prove only the reality of the genuine and original.

The fact that Satan may counterfeit something does not mean that we should not practise the genuine.

7. Musical instruments

were frequently used in scripture to express praise and worship. They can also play a vital part in worship today. We are commanded to *“Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the Psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals”* (Psalm 150:3-5).

Those musicians who would offer praises on their instruments, must seek to excel in doing so. They must apply themselves to *“play skilfully”* on their instruments (Psa 33:3). This does not necessarily imply the skill of precision. It is not the offering of skilful human ability.

It is a spiritual skill, rather than natural talent.

The skill is not only in playing of the instrument but in interpreting the mood of the Spirit.

We call this *“playing in the Spirit.”*

a) David's Skilful Playing On The Harp drove the evil spirits from Saul (1 Sam 16:23).

b) Musicians Can Produce An Atmosphere conducive to the exercise of spiritual gifts.

c) 4,000 Musicians Praised The Lord

on their instruments at the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Chron 23:5). *“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung as it were a new song before the throne...”* (Rev 14:2,3)

8. Silence.

In complete contrast to the sounds of singing, musical instruments, dancing etc. is the expression of praise through silence - *..” a time to keep silent, and a time to speak”* (Ecc 3:7).

Do not be afraid of silence. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will bring a holy hush upon a congregation. In these times the silence becomes profound and eloquent. There is often a great sense of awe and reverence during such periods. One can stand (or sit) silently before God, contemplating, adoring and worshipping Him. *“Be still, and know that I am God...”* (Psalm 46:10).

9. Weeping

can also be a legitimate response of praise to God. It is not the weeping of sorrow or heartache, but of gratitude and thanksgiving. Sometimes as we meditate on the greatness and goodness of God, the only appropriate response to His goodness is to weep tears of gratitude. Do not be afraid to do this. It is not a sign of weakness. Let the tears flow. Our human reaction is often to refrain from tears. However, weeping can sometimes express the deepest longings of our being in a manner which nothing else can. It often brings a deep release and liberation. One should not be given to too much weeping as this can be a sign that something is wrong in the inner being, and in such cases there may be need for inner

healing. When Nehemiah began to read and explain the Word of God, the people wept when they heard it. Nehemiah allowed them to weep for a time, but then he interrupted their weeping and instructed them to .."*Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, ...neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength*" (Neh 8:10). Too much weeping weakens one, whereas the joy of the Lord is a source of strength.

10. **Laughter.**

There is such a thing as holy laughter, when a desire to laugh unto the Lord comes upon one. This is not a response to something humorous that someone has said. It is an expression of such heightened joy in the Lord that the only way to express it is through laughter.

The children of Israel experienced this upon their return from captivity. "*Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing...*" (Psa 126:2).

"Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man till he fill they mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing" (Job 8:20,21).

11. **Marching.**

God frequently commanded His people to march. Probably the best known instance of this was the march around Jericho (Josh 6:2-5). Israel marched in response to God's command and Jehovah brought down the walls of Jericho. Many walls still fall when God's people march in response to His direction. Walls of pride, unbelief, spiritual bondage etc. Jehoshaphat and his army marched and sang praises to God, and God delivered their enemies into their hand even though they were badly outnumbered (II Chron 20:22).

Many congregations have marched around in response to a prompting of the Spirit. Marching around a church building may have seemed, to the natural mind, to be as ridiculous as marching around Jericho. But often the results have been almost as dramatic. Walls of bondage, pride and bitterness have been brought tumbling down. This type of march has sometimes been called a "Jericho March." Others call it a "glory march."

The Bride of Christ is pictured as an army marching forward together (Song of Solomon 6:4,10).

12. **Rejoicing in the Lord**

is yet another way of praising God. When Nehemiah came into the King's presence with a sad face, the King knew immediately that something was drastically wrong (Neh 2:1). Nehemiah says, "*He had never seen me look sad before, so he asked, 'Why are you looking so sad? You aren't ill, so it must be that you are unhappy.'*" (Good News Bible).

Nehemiah was sore afraid. To come before the king with a sad face seemed to be an indication that he was unhappy in the king's service. This would be an insult to the king and would not be tolerated by him, which was why Nehemiah was afraid. He quickly began to explain the reason for his sad countenance and that it had nothing to do with the conditions under which he was serving the king. No one would dare come before the king with a sad countenance and manner, yet many Christians come before the King of kings with sad and mournful dispositions. To do so is an insult to God. It is an indication that we are far from satisfied with our lot under His rule. The proper manner in which to appear before the King is with rejoicing - thus indicating that we are delighted with our position and thankful for the honour bestowed upon us, to be servants of the King! The people of God were frequently told, "*And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God.*"

One of those places is in Deut 12:11. God was instituting a place where He could meet with them. "*Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the*

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beave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord. And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants...."

Thus God decreed that when we come into the place which He has ordained for us to meet with Him, we should come there with rejoicing. David understood this when he said, *"I will enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise..."* (Psalm 100:4).

When the children of Israel kept the Feasts of the Lord, they were to do so with rejoicing before Him (Lev 23:40). ..". *and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God..."* Rejoicing is a way of expressing thanksgiving and praise. When we give a gift to someone, their rejoicing indicates their pleasure and appreciation.

So too, when we rejoice before the Lord, we express our pleasure in Him and our appreciation of Him. It is a great pity that so many churches have instilled the idea that reverence is only solemnity, quietness and soberness. They seem to feel that to express joy and gladness is the height of irreverence. Nothing can be further from the truth. Christians should be the most joyful people in the community and their rejoicing should be obvious to all. The Church, in its meeting together, should be a celebration. It would then attract many more people, for it would more faithfully reflect the true nature of God. Instead, many modern churches often repel people by their coldness and dreariness. They are so solemn and heavy. The atmosphere is so stiff and formal. The people conduct themselves in such a false, religious and unnatural manner. It should not be so. Let us return to the spirit of rejoicing before the Lord.

There are many ways in which our rejoicing can be expressed. Singing joyful songs instead of mournful dirges, is one way. Raising our hands, clapping and dancing are some of the other means. Rejoicing in the Lord will cause us to be much more relaxed in God's presence. We need less formality and more reality! This world is a sad enough place without our adding to its sadness. Let us aim to brighten it up, for we are the light of the world.

In the New Testament, the Greek word "*agalliao*" (discussed previously - see "dancing") is translated 'rejoice!' This literally means to jump for joy, to rejoice exceedingly, to be exceeding glad, with exceeding joy. Here is an expression of joy that is free and uninhibited, spontaneous and expressive - so free that it might cause us to even skip and leap for joy, with childlike delight.

Chapter 3

HINDRANCES TO PRAISE

Even when a people are persuaded that praise is scriptural, right and proper, it is still not always easy for them to begin to praise God. Many excuses have been offered in this regard. People endeavour to explain why they cannot praise God. Some seek to excuse themselves because of their disposition or temperament. They plead shyness, or the fact that they are not "outgoing" or demonstrative.

The fact is that the Bible does not excuse anyone on any of these grounds. David says, "*Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord!*" (Psa 150:6). If you have breath, then you are to praise God!

"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence."
(Psa 115:17)

There are some definite hindrances to praise, all of which God wants us to deal with and overcome. He will not accept any of them as a valid reason to not praise Him.

1. SIN.

Sin is the first hindrance to praise. This is the basic reason why the unconverted do not praise God. It is also one reason why some Christians do not. Unconfessed sin inhibits us in the presence of God. We do not feel free, or at ease, in God's presence if we are conscious of unforgiven sin in our life.

David said, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, (if I am aware of sin in my life) the Lord will not hear me.*" Psa 66:18. Sin and iniquity separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2), and we lose whatever communion we may have previously enjoyed. The realisation of sin in our life ties our tongue before the Lord. The only thing we really feel free to speak to Him about under these circumstances is our sin.

There is an obvious answer to this hindrance. Confess the sin to God and sincerely accept His forgiveness and cleansing so that a right relationship can be restored and the flow of praise released. (1 John 1:9).

2. CONDEMNATION.

Even when we have been forgiven by the Lord, it is not always easy to accept that forgiveness completely and forgive ourselves. Many Christians remain in condemnation. Though God has freely forgiven them, they cannot forgive themselves.

This often results in a sense of unworthiness. Freedom to worship is inhibited. They tend to "hang their heads" in God's presence. The sense of God's presence tends to make them more aware of their unworthiness than of the mercy and grace of God that He has exercised towards them.

This kind of attitude often comes from being overly self-conscious instead of God-conscious. If we are constantly searching our hearts with a negative attitude,

always looking for faults and weaknesses, naturally we will find them. Nobody is perfect. This ultra-critical inspection of self is unhealthy. It focuses attention on self all the time instead of on Jesus.

The Bible entreats us to "*Look unto Jesus (who is) the author and finisher of our faith.*" (Heb. 12:2). This accomplishes at least two things. First, it gets our thoughts and attention off ourselves and on to Jesus. Second, the more we look to Jesus, think about Him, meditate on Him, occupy our thoughts with Him, the more we desire to praise Him. This is how praise begins - by looking to Jesus. Our admiration and appreciation for Him will grow continually as we do this. Our awareness of His worthiness will increase and this will promote thoughts of praise and worship to Him.

3. **WORLDLINESS.**

Oliver Cromwell once defined "worldliness" as "everything that cools my affection for Jesus Christ." Worldliness is the opposite of spirituality. It is the condition prevailing when our minds and thoughts are centred on the things of this world, rather than the things of God and His Kingdom.

Worldly minded people find praising God extremely embarrassing. It offends their carnal sense of dignity. The cure for this problem is to become more and more Christ-centred. As our awareness and appreciation of Him increases, worldliness will decrease accordingly. One of the symptoms of worldliness is an obsession about maintaining dignity and decorum - an over-consciousness of "What will people think?" - too much concern about what people's reactions will be. Our first concern as Christians, is to please the Lord. This does not always please carnal man. If we become too concerned with pleasing men and winning their approval, we shall be in danger of displeasing God.

4. **A WRONG CONCEPT OF GOD**

is frequently a strong hindrance to praise. Many have a completely negative view of God. They see Him as someone who is constantly trying to catch them in some failing so that He can condemn them, someone opposed to everything they do. They feel there is little hope of pleasing Him and enjoying His approval. They view God as an ogre who is determined to stop people from enjoying themselves in any way. How could one ever think to praise such a God as this?

Praise begins to rise in our hearts only when we gain a right concept of God. The Holy Spirit must show Him to us as He really is. Reading the Word of God is a wonderful cure for wrong concepts of God, but only if we are open and will allow the Spirit to reveal the truth to us. Many who read the Bible have their minds closed to the truth. A true awareness of God, who and what He is, will surely lead us to praise and worship.

5. **RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS.**

In Christ's day, many allowed vain traditions of men to make void the Word of God. (Matt 15:6). Unfortunately, there are many today who do the same thing. A lot of Christians have been brought up in so-called Christian traditions, that frown upon the biblical style of praise and worship. Such traditions condemn praise as

mere emotionalism. Instead of obeying the injunctions of scripture, they follow the religious traditions of men. Unfortunately the conservative traditions of the Western church have been strongly embraced and many of these traditions run contrary to biblical truth. In such cases we should determine to please God rather than man. (Gal 1:10)

Remember that "Religion represses, but **Redemption releases.**" Persons imprisoned in traditions of men frequently have wrong concepts of God too. God is an extremely negative being in their view. He is completely unemotional, stern and forbidding.

Those who believe in such a God, become like this themselves. The cure for this condition is to have courage to boldly expose our traditions to the Word of God, with an open heart and mind. Whenever the Holy Spirit reveals the error of your tradition, be willing to abandon it and embrace the Word of God instead.

6. PRIDE

is a further hindrance to the release of praise. This is a difficult problem to deal with because of our unwillingness to acknowledge pride of heart. Our very egotism will not allow us to do so! God can break such pride and release the prisoner.

Pride is so concerned with the self-image; always wanting to be well thought of; always wanting to be seen doing what is considered to be the right and proper thing.

7. FEAR OF MAN.

Proverbs 29:25 tells us "*The fear of man bringeth a snare.*" Fear of man, his thoughts and opinions, creates a real snare in which many have been caught. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom....*" (Prov 9:10). If we truly reverence the Lord, we need never be afraid of man.

We should always seek to please the Lord in all things and certainly we must praise Him in order to do this. If men do not like it, that is their problem. Never allow their opinions to inhibit you or hinder your desire and intention to give to God the praise that is due to Him.

8. SATANIC SUPPRESSION.

Finally we come to the most serious of all hindrances, a Satanically-inspired suppression of praise.

It is difficult for us to understand the deep hatred that Satan has for God, and how greatly he loathes hearing people praise God. It was Satan's deep-rooted jealousy of God that brought about his downfall. In his pride, he thinks himself greater than God. He is filled with unreasonable jealousy whenever He hears God being praised and magnified. He therefore seeks to discourage and suppress all such praise.

When a person is under the direct control of Satan or one of his demons, it has been discovered that this person cannot even speak the name of Jesus. When encouraged to do so their throat freezes. The word will just not come out. It has also been noted that when the name of Jesus is spoken in the presence of such people, the demons within them begin to rage. Satan reacts strongly to even the very mention of that Name. His victim will sometimes froth at the mouth, fall into a fit, curse and blaspheme, so violent is the reaction against the praise of God or Jesus.

COMMENT AND CONCLUSION

Whenever a Christian is aware of an aversion to praise, a sincere and honest searching of the heart should take place. He should prayerfully ask God to reveal the nature of his problem, and what it is that is restricting or blocking the flow of praise. When this has been discovered, there must come a repentance and turning away from the hindrance. The person must set his heart to be obedient to God and to give praise to Him.

If it still seems impossible to flow into praise, help should be sought from some mature and spiritually-sensitive person. It may be that there is a Satanic suppression on the life that needs to be broken. Until this has been done, the person can never serve God adequately.

An inability to praise and worship God indicates a rebellion somewhere. There is obviously a basic problem that needs to be dealt with. Keep seeking God until victory comes and rivers of praise are released from the innermost being!

Chapter 4

OFFERING THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb 13:15).

There is a distinct difference between praising God and offering the "sacrifice of praise." For a child of God, in right relationship to the Father, praise is something that should flow easily. We have so much to praise God for that whenever we think about Him there should be a spontaneous flow of praise from our hearts. Our praise usually involves thanksgiving as well and we minister to God in praise for all the blessings and benefits He has brought into our lives.

The "sacrifice of praise" is somewhat different. It does not usually flow easily and spontaneously. It is not the praise we offer because everything is going nicely and we are happy and blessed. The sacrifice of praise is something we offer to God when we do not feel like praising Him.

Everything seems to be going wrong. Our world seems to be falling apart. In these circumstances, we are praising God, not because of our circumstances but in spite of them. Our praise is not ascending because we feel great and want to give expression to our good feelings. In this situation, we are praising God by faith. We are praising Him in obedience. We are praising Him for who He is and not particularly for what He has done. This kind of praise does not come easily. It is not a cheap thing. It is costly. But it brings special delight to the heart of the Father and He loves to receive the sacrifice of praise.

1. IT IS CONTINUAL PRAISE.

David learned the secret of this. He said *"I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth"* (Psalm 34:1).

This praise is not spasmodic and erratic.

It is not "fair weather" praise.

It is not cheap, easy praise that costs nothing.

It is not sentimental praise.

It is not superficial and empty.

It is consistent. It is offered to God continually.

In the good times, and in the bad times.

When everything is fine, and when nothing seems to be going right.

In those times when "The Lord giveth."

And those times when "The Lord taketh away."

And we are enabled to say *"blessed be the Name of the Lord."* (Job 1:21).

It is praising God when the baby dies and we do not understand why.

It is praising God when sickness has struck and doctors say there is no hope.

It is praising God when you lose your job.

When you are miles from anywhere, without a jack, and your car has a flat tyre.

It is especially in those times when the heavens seem to be brass, God seems to be a million miles away. Your prayers do not seem to be heard, much less answered.

When you cannot immediately think of any reason why you would want to praise God, but you praise Him just the same, that is the sacrifice of praise.

It is the praise you offer to God when it really costs you something to do it. Your natural feelings argue against it. Your friends discourage you. Your heart is heavy, there is no spring in your stride. The devil says "What have you got to praise God for?" He says, "Nobody can be expected to praise God in this kind of situation. even God would not expect you to do it. It would be fanatical."

Nevertheless, you know, deep inside, that God is worthy to be praised. You know that He is still on the throne.

He is still the Almighty, the God of the whole Universe. He has not changed in any way. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Praise His wonderful Name!

2. IT IS AUDIBLE PRAISE.

It is the fruit of our lips. Our lips produce words. They help us to verbalise our thoughts.

So the sacrifice of praise is something we say.

Something we speak out.

Satan can hear it.

People can hear it.

We can hear it ourselves.

And, most important, God can hear it.

It was the sacrifice of praise that Paul and Silas offered to God at midnight, when they were held fast in the deepest dungeon. They had been thrown into prison for speaking about Jesus. They were not criminals. They had not committed some grievous crime. They were spreading the good news of the Kingdom and were thrown into prison for their efforts. They had been beaten with many stripes. Their backs were open and bleeding. They were sore. Their wounds were raw. Every nerve in their bodies were screaming out. Every inch of their backs was painful. Their hands and feet were chained to the wall. They could not make themselves comfortable, no matter how they tried. Now it was midnight. The time when the human spirit is at its lowest ebb; when their spirits would normally be at the depths of depression and despair. They had probably never felt less like praising God than at that very time.

But at midnight, they began to sing praises to God. They opened their mouths and began to sing forth the praises of the Lord. How this must have gladdened the heart of God. Here were two of His servants, suffering shame, pain and despair for His Name. Languishing in prison because they had done what God had told them to do. Would they curse Him? Would they deny Him? Would they say "What were we thinking about, to let ourselves get into this mess?" Would they blame Him, saying "We would not be in this trouble, were it not for God." No! A thousand times No! They began to sing His praises.

At midnight.
In the darkest hour.
When everything seemed dark and discouraging.
Suddenly the walls of the prison began to shake. Their chains became loose.

I like to think that when the Lord heard their midnight praise session, He was so thrilled that He joined in with them and shouted "Hallelujah!" so loudly that the walls of the prison began to reverberate! Those men were offering the sacrifice of praise. They were praising God despite every adversity. They were climbing right up on top of their circumstances, and shouting "Glory to God anyway!" Saints of God around the world are still offering these same kinds of sacrifices. From prison cells in many parts of this earth, where saints of God suffer for the testimony of Jesus, they are offering their sacrifices of praise to God.

3. **IT CAN BE DONE ONLY THROUGH JESUS. *"By him, therefore, let us offer..."***

Only Jesus can make this kind of offering possible. This is why Christ is so wonderfully glorified in this exercise. The Father knows full well that no person could offer praise and thanksgiving from out of that kind of situation unless the Lord was helping him. So God sees the wonder of His Son in this offering. It is the grace of His Son that has accomplished this miracle. Here is a person who previously might have cursed God in this situation, but now, because of the triumph of God's grace in his life, he is actually thanking and praising God. He is saying, "I just don't understand why this is happening, God, but I am praising you just the same." "I cannot understand why this should happen to my family and me, I cannot discern the reason or fathom the purpose, but I praise you just the same." Every time a sacrifice of praise is offered, Jesus Christ is glorified!

4. **IT IS THE GIVING OF THANKS TO HIS NAME.**

God wants to bring us into the place where we can sincerely *"Give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father."* (Eph 5:20). Notice it is not giving thanks to the Father FOR all things. That is much more difficult. First, God teaches us to give thanks unto Him IN all things. We can do this only when we really believe in the sovereignty of God. When we truly ..".*know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* (Rom 8:28).

HOW TO OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

a) **Determine beforehand that you are going to praise God** at all times and in every situation.

b) **Begin to do it right now.**

Praise God every day and all day. No matter what may arise in your day, praise God in it, for, and through it. Get into the good habit of praising God continually.

c) **If trouble should come your way,**

or you find yourself in difficulties, order yourself to praise the Lord. David said, *"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God"* (Psalm 50:23). Order yourself to praise God in that difficult situation, and God will prepare a way of deliverance for you.

d) Begin to do it by faith.

Speak out words of praise. Give vocal thanks to God by faith, even though you may not understand what you are thanking Him for. Begin to praise Him for making a way of deliverance for you. You cannot yet see the way. You do not know how God will deliver you, but you are thanking Him and praising Him just the same. You are already in victory.

e) Having once begun, continue to praise Him.

Let your praises ascend higher and higher. Let the Spirit of praise really overtake you. Shout out praise to God. Sing unto Him. Dance before Him. Glorify Him and magnify His Name. He will make a way of salvation for you.

Chapter 5

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

To praise is to speak well of. To express admiration for. To compliment. To commend. To congratulate. To applaud. To eulogise. To extol.

To worship is to express reverence, to have a sense of awe. To bow low before the object of worship. To make obeisance.

Worship is the highest form of praise. We generally commence with praise and then move on into worship.

The word 'worship' derives from the old English word 'WORTHSHIP' - to esteem the worth of, and to make a suitable response to that worthiness.

Worship is first an attitude of heart. It is the reverent occupation of the human heart with its Creator. It begins with an inner musing of the heart. A depth of meditation upon the greatness and worthiness of God. It is the savouring of admiration about God. It is an inner sense of awe and respect for the Almighty.

Second, it is an OVERFLOW of those thoughts and emotions. They flow forth spontaneously. They should not have to be pumped up, or forced out. Our cup, like David's, should "run over joyfully."

Third, it is the OUTPOURING of the soul in deep expressions of reverence, awe, wonder and adoration.

THE FIRST BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO WORSHIP

One of the principles of Bible interpretation is the "law of first mention," that states that the first biblical mention of any subject gives a clear indication of its meaning and significance wherever it may occur in the Bible. It is the key to understanding the import of that word or subject throughout the scriptures.

The first occurrence of the word worship is in Gen 22:5. Abraham, speaking to the young men who accompanied him and Isaac to Moriah, ..". *I and the lad will go yonder and worship.*" The word used here is SHACHAH (pronounced Shaw-kaw), meaning to prostrate oneself before, to bow down, to fall before in humble reverence, respect and obeisance. Let us look at some of the implications of this first mention of worship.

1. GOD COMMANDED ABRAHAM TO GO AND WORSHIP.

Praise and worship is not an option that we may decide to do or not to do according to our whim. It is a commandment of God. When the Bible says, "**PRAISE YE THE LORD**," that is not a suggestion or a request, it is a commandment. There are no exceptions made. Every child of God is commanded to praise and worship God.

2. ABRAHAM'S RESPONSE WAS ONE OF OBEDIENCE.

This obedience was essential to his covenant relationship to God. God and he had entered into a covenant that demanded Abraham's absolute obedience and total commitment to God. God was about to test the sincerity and integrity of Abraham's commitment. He was demanding the sacrifice of the very thing that Abraham held to be most precious, Isaac, the son of promise.

3. THE ACT OF WORSHIP IS A COSTLY ONE.

This act of worship would cost Abraham his very best and highest offering. It was to truly be a "*sacrifice of praise*" (Heb 13:15). A life of worship demands everything we are and have. (Rom 12:1,2). There has to be a complete surrender of our whole self to God, in order to become a true worshipper. David also understood this principle when he said, "*Shall I offer to God that which costs me nothing?*" (II Sam 24:24).

4. THE ACT OF WORSHIP IS AN ACT OF FAITH.

Every step that Abraham took that day was a step of faith. As he marched up Mount Moriah, knowing that God had demanded the offering of his well-beloved son, he knew by faith, that somehow he and Isaac would return together. (Gen 22:5).

5. THE SURRENDER OF SELF.

Not only was Abraham prepared to offer Isaac, he was also to offer to God his own plans, desires, ambitions and wishes for the future. His future was tied, inevitably, to this boy. This was the son that God had promised him - through whom all the promises of the covenant would be fulfilled. To surrender him in obedience was to surrender the prospect of all he longed to see fulfilled. He surrendered himself. We can never enter into true worship until there has been a complete surrender of our "self" to God. The self or ego will always get in the way of worship. So we must give it to God in surrender.

6. PRAISE GLORIFIES GOD.

Abraham's costly act of worship glorified God. A normal reaction would be, "How great and glorious must be the One for whom Abraham would be willing to sacrifice his well-beloved son, in order to render the worship of obedience and faith." God says, "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me..*" (Psa 50:23). Every true act of worship glorifies God.

7. THE WORSHIPPER IS ALSO BLESSED.

God's response to Abraham's act of worship indicates His great pleasure and also His desire to bless every worshipper. " because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies...because thou has obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:16-18).

The story of Mary, (John 12:3) anointing the feet of Jesus with precious ointment, is a beautiful type of worship. John tells us that afterwards she .. "...wiped his feet

with her hair..." Imagine the sweet fragrance she would have carried away in her hair. Everywhere she went people would be aware of the sweet aroma. So it is with worshippers. Their lives carry a sweet fragrance wherever they go. It is the fragrance of the presence of the Lord!

WORSHIP PORTRAYED IN THE TABERNACLE

A further principle of Bible interpretation is the "law of much mention." This principle says that the amount of treatment and space given to a particular subject indicates its importance. When we consider how much space is devoted to the description of the Tabernacle - fifty one chapters throughout the whole Bible, we realise how important this subject is. Since the primary purpose of the Tabernacle was the worship of God, we see that God is conveying to us the vital nature of worship, and the tremendous importance He attaches to it.

The first piece of Tabernacle furniture that God describes (Ex 25:22), is the ark of the covenant which was overlaid by the mercy seat. God said, .." *there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat...*" The Holy of Holies, in which the ark was located, was the place where God would meet and commune with man face to face. It was the place of worship. In the Old Covenant economy, this awesome privilege was given to the High Priest only, and that on only one day of the year, the Day of Atonement. How blessed we are, under the terms of the New Covenant, to have the privilege of continual access through the blood of Christ.

The basic teaching implicit in the Tabernacle for us Christians is that of worship. God had brought forth His people out of Egypt with a strong and mighty hand (Ex 32:11). Once their deliverance from Egypt was complete, the first thing He did was to commission Moses to build the Tabernacle. God's first desire, after our deliverance from Egypt (sin and its bondage), is to initiate us into the ministry of worship. The Tabernacle teaches us the order and progression of worship. When entering the outer court of the Tabernacle, the first item one sees is the brazen altar of sacrifice. This is where our sins and iniquities are dealt with and we receive the pardon of God.

Next came the brass laver, typical of cleansing through the water of the Word. The would-be worshipper had to come through these two experiences before reaching the curtains of the holy place.

Within the holy place stood the table of shewbread, the seven branch candlestick and the golden altar of incense. All of which have deep significance in the teaching of worship.

Ultimately, there was the Holy of Holies, that sacred and solemn meeting place which typifies the highest and purest forms of praise and worship. It is to this spot that the Spirit wants to bring us. There is a definite progression in learning the skills of worship. God wants to bring us through all the various phases until, at last, we can enter the ultimate place of sacred worship, that place within the veil with Him.

Chapter 6

MUSIC IN PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Music has always played an important role in the worship of God. Way back, in the dawn of creation, ..".*the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy*" (Job 38:7).

Hebrew music was predominantly vocal. There were very few instruments in the earliest days of their history. The human voice was the most accessible and popular instrument with which to make music.

The first biblical mention of music and song is in Genesis 31:27, and is associated with the expression of mirth. Worship in song is first mentioned in Exodus 15:1. Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord; V2, Miriam and all the women, with tambourines and dances, responded to the song of Moses.

The digging of the well at Beer was celebrated with singing (Numbers 21:17,18).

Deborah and Barak celebrated their victory in song (Judges 5:1-31). The women of Israel celebrated David's victory over Goliath in song (1 Sam 18:6,7).

4,000 Levites praised the Lord with instruments (1 Chron 23:5), when Solomon was made king over Israel.

"The children of Israel.....kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord" (II Chron 30:21).

"And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, Psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chron 15:16).

It is clear that music and singing are vitally integral to the praise and worship of God. This is portrayed all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. And so it is today. It is a vital, glorious, positive expression of praise to God.

SATAN AND MUSIC

It is also true that Satan uses music most effectively to achieve his purposes. Before his fall, Lucifer was a chief musician. Ezekiel 18:13 tells us that the *"workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou was created."* Lucifer was a master musician. He was meant to use this gift for the glory of God, but when he rebelled against Jehovah and had to be cast out of heaven, he prostituted his gift and began to use it for evil instead of good. He has done so very effectively to this day.

It was the descendants of Cain who invented both instruments of music and instruments of war (Gen 4:21,22).

When Moses returned from meeting God in the mountain, he discovered that the children of Israel had backslidden and returned to the worship of idols. They were dancing and singing around the golden calf. The sounds of their music was so confusing to the ear of Moses that he could not immediately discern the significance of the sound.

This confusion-filled type of music has the hallmark of Satan - he is a confuser. So much modern music is filled with confusion. It disturbs and deranges people.

Godly music has just the opposite effect. It is calming rather than confusing. It may stir us, but it will never cause us to lose control of our emotions. It will strengthen us, not deplete us.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, used musical instruments of various kinds to induce the worship of the golden image he had erected (Daniel 3:5-7).

Herod succumbed to the seductive music and dancing of Salome and foolishly ordered the death of John the Baptist (Matt 14:6).

The Satanically-inspired music of Babylon will finally be destroyed when the city of Babylon is cast down. The sound of her music will be heard no more (Rev.18:22).

MUSIC CAN INSPIRE THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The Holy Spirit can also use music for the glory of God and edification of people. Notice the powerful therapeutic effect that anointed music had on Saul (1 Sam 16:23). David had been anointed by God (V 13). He was a skilful musician, a gifted composer and a sweet singer. When he played and sang under the anointing of the Spirit, the evil spirit departed from Saul. He was refreshed. He was well.

When Jehoshaphat needed a prophet in a time of national crisis, he called for Elisha. The prophet called for a musician. ..". *and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him (Elisha). And he said, 'thus saith the Lord ...'* " (II Kings 3:11,15,16). The music obviously helped create an atmosphere and mood for the prophetic gift to operate.

King David appointed 4,000 men to prophecy with harps, psalteries and cymbals (1 Chron 25:1).

It was only when Israel was in captivity in Babylon that they ceased to sing and play. Their anointed music ceased and they hung their harps on the willow trees (Psalm 137).

When their Babylon captors goaded them to sing, they replied, *"How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"*

When their captivity ceased, after 70 years, they returned home with joyful singing and laughter. There was praise on their lips (Psa 126:1,2). It is only when the Church is in spiritual captivity that her anointed music ceases. When that captivity is broken and the people come into liberty once more, music, singing, praise, dancing and laughter are all restored unto her.

MUSIC AND SONG IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. **The disciples sang hymns together.** (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).
2. **Paul and Silas sang praises to God in prison.** (Acts 16:25).
3. **The Apostle Paul instructs the church in anointed singing.** They should sing:
 - a) **Psalms.** The Psalms set to music.
 - b) **Hymns.** Song of praise to God.
 - c) **Spiritual Songs.** Spontaneous songs given by the Spirit. The songs of the primitive church were praises to the Lord. Their primary objective in singing was to praise and magnify God. They did not sing for effect, or to entertain. Their singing was not man-centred. It was directed to God for His pleasure alone.

This type of anointed singing and music, directed to God in praise and worship, is very rare in the church today. But God is restoring this ministry to His people. Here are some suggestions to help you bring your community into a ministry of anointed music in praise to God.

1. **Commence each service with thanksgiving and praise in song.**
(Psa 100:4).
"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise, give thanks to him, praise his name."
2. **Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit for the right song or hymn.**
God has a theme and a message for every service. Often the right song will set the tone for that theme.
3. **Do not be afraid to sing the song more than once,**
or even a particular portion of it which seems especially anointed and blessed.
4. **Exhort the people**
to really "sing unto the Lord." Hymns are often sung because it is our tradition and custom to sing. We have a much worthier purpose than this. It is to sing unto the Lord - to direct our focus heavenward in song.
5. **Begin with songs of praise and thanksgiving.**
Allow the people to genuinely express their praises through them. Songs are not praises in themselves. They are merely vehicles through which we may express our praise. It is highly possible to sing many hymns and songs without expressing any true praise.
6. **Songs of praise will inspire the people to worship.**
We often begin with praise and then the people move progressively through various levels of praise until they move right into worship, which is the highest level of praise.
7. **Do not "rush through" the song service.**
Many ministers look on this part of the service as the "preliminaries," an irksome, but traditional, necessity. Take time to sing, praise and worship. This is a very important function of our gathering.

8. Allow opportunity for congregational participation.

Encourage spontaneous expression. Someone may lead in prayer, that may set the tone for the meeting. Another may prophesy, and the exhortation may supply the theme for the rest of the service.

9. The manifestation of the Spirit

(1 Cor 12:8-11) should find expression in believers' worship services. Do not quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19). Encourage participation and expression through these spiritual endowments. However, the appointed and anointed leader should retain spiritual authority over the service at all times.

10. All things should be done to mutual edification.

Every scriptural manifestation is legitimate and proper, but let everything that is done, and the manner in which it is done, be to the edifying of the whole gathering (1 Cor 14:26).

11. Avoid contributions that cause confusion.

"God is not the author of confusion..." (1 Cor 14:33). If the service begins to move into confusion, take charge and lead it back out of confusion. If necessary, pause and explain to the people what is happening, thus clarifying the situation. Use such times to teach the right and wrong way to do things.

12. Let everything be done as unto the Lord,

and to the glory of God. Remember the aim of every gathering is to glorify God and edify the believers.

13. Use a song book or overhead projector

so that the people can participate. Do not be afraid, at a certain point, to put down the song book or words and just worship from the heart.

14. Obviously there are certain "mechanics"

to the leading of a song service or a worship service, but you must carefully avoid becoming mechanical or too formal. Let there be an underlying freedom. Be flexible. Don't insist on keeping to the programme. Be constantly sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit and be willing to follow them. Good song leading entails much more than waving the arms, even if this is done correctly. The liberty of the Spirit and spontaneity are more important than technical correctness.

15. Seek to be hidden,

that the people may .."*see no man, but Jesus only.*" (Matt 17:8). I remember a church that I pastored for many years in Brisbane, Australia. The first time I stepped up to the pulpit, I saw some words carved into the pulpit. They confronted every person who stepped up to that pulpit to speak or minister. The words said, "*Sir, we would see Jesus*" (John 12:21). We ought always to bear this in mind. The people have not come to see you or hear you. They have come to see and hear Jesus. Our task, with the help of the Spirit, is to draw aside the veil, that every eye may see the Lord and worship before Him. This should be the ultimate aim of every servant of Christ who leads a worship service.

Chapter 7

LEADING A WORSHIP SERVICE

Congregational worship is an extremely important element of the New Testament Church. The primary calling of New Testament Christians is the worship of God. The most important functions of a church in order of priority are:-

1. **VERTICAL.** **Worshipping God.**
2. **HORIZONTAL.** **Ministry to the Body - edifying the saints**
Ministry to the world - evangelism

Every church should be a worshipping community. In the development of corporate worship, much depends on the leader of the service.

QUALITY IN LEADERS

1. LEADING WORSHIP IS A SPECIAL MINISTRY.

Not everyone has this ministry. Often the pastor does not have this particular ability. In which case, he should find someone in the congregation who does possess such a gift and be willing for that person to take the lead in this particular area.

2. THE LEADER MUST BE A WORSHIPPER.

It is essential that one who is called to lead others into worship should be skilled and adept in the worship of God. It is impossible to lead others into something unless the leader has already learned the requirements and skills of worship. This person should be free in his own spirit and able to freely praise and worship God in his personal life.

3. SPIRITUAL MATURITY.

The worship leader should be a person with experience and maturity in the things of the Spirit. His spiritual development should be equal to (and preferably superior to) the congregation that he is seeking to lead. Such maturity gives the leader a confidence and results in a sense of security in the congregation. He should be able to control his own spirit so that his personal thoughts, feelings and emotions do not intrude into the meeting. He must also be a man of faith, not only able to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit, but with faith to implement what the Spirit may be saying to the assembled saints. He should be an exhorter who can motivate and encourage the believers.

4. SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY.

The ideal leader has developed a sensitive ear for the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself will lead the service if the leader will actively move into those promptings that the Spirit will give. Worship services should be led by the Holy Spirit. However, He will always use human channels, so there must be a deep spiritual awareness in the leader. This will be conveyed to the congregation as

well. They will begin to develop the ability to hear the promptings of the Spirit and quietly and confidently move into them.

5. GENUINE HUMILITY.

A good leader will always seek to "hide behind Christ." Nothing ruins the spiritual atmosphere of a service more quickly than an egotistical leader who constantly projects himself into the meeting. The Holy Spirit loves to glorify Christ, and is totally unwilling to turn His spotlight on any human being. No flesh should glory in the sight of God. Rather than drawing the congregation's attention to himself, the leader must always seek to focus the attention of the people on Christ.

6. PRAYERFUL PREPARATION.

Prior to the service, the leader should always spend some time privately in prayer. The theme of a meeting can be discerned beforehand in this way. The spirit of the leader can be tuned to the Spirit of God and in this way the meeting can move right into God's purposes from the very commencement. There should be no such things as "preliminaries" in a worship service. The whole service, from the very first moment, is dedicated to the praise and glory of God. Too many preachers regard everything prior to their sermon as a preliminary - necessary, but unimportant. The truth is that what precedes the sermon is usually much more important, for the sermon is addressed to the people, but our worship is addressed to God Himself!

7. ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR WORSHIP.

The manner in which many "worship services" are hurried through is an insult to the majesty of God. We need to recognise the importance of corporate worship and give ample time to it. Worship time should not be wasted by needless chatter on the part of the leader. His real task is to get the congregation in tune with the Spirit of God just as quickly and sweetly as he can. Unnecessary talk and comment can detract from this purpose. When people have come to worship God and want to give themselves to Him in praise, worship and adoration, it is a sad thing when they are delayed and hindered by the very one who is ordained to lead them into such worship.

8. BE OPEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It takes real faith to lead a service into worship because such worship cannot be prescribed or programmed beforehand. Many leaders feel they must have a prescribed programme. They want to know exactly what is going to happen in a given service and just when it is going to take place. Spiritual worship demands more flexibility than this. Once the service has commenced, seek to keep quietly aware of the way the Spirit is leading. Be prepared to follow His leading step by step. He will instruct you as to just when the worship should take place. Not every service will be the same. God is a God of variety. He does not have to do the same thing every time. He has a special purpose for every gathering.

The leader must learn to discern what the purpose is and to flow along with it, as the Spirit unfolds it step by step. God can even change the order and direction of

the service while it is proceeding. A good leader will be able to discern the very songs that should be sung; how many times they should be sung; and with what kind of emphasis! Sometimes a service will be bright and full of rejoicing. At other times the Spirit may lead in a much quieter way and even into periods of silence that may be extremely profound and meaningful.

9. BE AWARE OF ALL THAT IS TRANSPIRING.

The leader should avoid closing his eyes and being "lost in worship." It is wonderfully possible to be fully involved in worship and still be aware of and sensitive to the people. The leader should have a sensitivity to the Spirit and at the same time, be exercising a gentle but definite influence over the service.

SOME SIMPLE GUIDELINES FOR LEADING WORSHIP

1. BEGIN RIGHT WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE.

Seek to make immediate contact with the congregation, right where they are. Quietly establish your leadership with them. Help them to recognise that God has ordained you to lead this service and that if they will co-operate and follow along with you, they will be led right into the Holy of Holies and have a glorious experience of worship.

2. SONG LEADING IS NOT NECESSARILY WORSHIP LEADING.

There are many good song leaders who do not have the ability to lead people into worship. However, the worship leader must be able to lead singing and then to lead further on into worship. Most often a worship service will commence with singing. The singing of appropriate songs that eulogise God and speak of His greatness, might and splendour, will help to get the people's minds off themselves and their problems and on to the Lord. Songs of praise and thanksgiving are often appropriate and suitable. Community singing is also a good way to bring the people into unity. As their voices blend, so will their minds and spirits. Once that unity has been achieved, the people may be led on into realms of worship. We begin with praise and then move on into worship.

3. ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GIVE DIRECTION.

This may come in any one of a number of ways. It may spring out of the first song that is sung. This may set the theme for the entire service. Often the Spirit will lead from one song to another, all on the same or relevant themes. If there are those present with charismatic endowments, the Spirit may use these to indicate the course the service should take. This may be communicated through a prophecy or some revelation. Sometimes the mind of the Spirit is imposed on the service in a very quiet and undramatic fashion. It is only after the gathering, when looking back, that one sees so clearly how beautifully the Spirit led, and what unity and harmony was woven into the fabric of the service.

4. AVOID INTRUSIONS AND CROSS-CURRENTS.

This is where the spiritual maturity of the leader is so necessary. He must be able to discern a new emphasis that might be introduced, that is not of the Spirit. He

must be spiritually alert to recognise such a trend. A meeting can be very subtly redirected if one is not careful and watchful. Once the Spirit has set the course and direction, be sensitive to any intrusion that may change the emphasis. The intrusion may seem quite harmless. It may come in the form of a lovely chorus that is quite scriptural in content and yet it changes completely the direction in which God is seeking to lead the people. The leader must be loving and yet firm in keeping the worship on target.

There are many ways in which he can bring the meeting back on course again. He may say directly, "Now friends, let us keep pursuing this direction which the Spirit is indicating, and let us not turn aside." He may commence another chorus that reinforces the original theme of the Spirit. There may come a further word of prophecy, directing the attention once more to the original theme. It requires faith and boldness on the part of the leader. He must exercise discretion and tact, but he must not compromise the purpose of God for that occasion. This often demands great wisdom and grace. The Holy Spirit will supply these if we trust Him implicitly.

5. RECOGNISE TRANSITION AND CHANGE.

The Holy Spirit may direct a service along any line He wishes. This frequently means that there may be a change of emphasis during the course of the service. In fact, this may happen several times. These transition periods are very important. The leader must be ahead of the people anticipating what the Spirit is wanting to do. He must give clear and firm leadership during these transitional periods, so the meeting does not begin to wander aimlessly. If a time of indecision is allowed to develop, someone may be tempted to try to give direction and a wrong note may be introduced. The leader must always remember that God has anointed and appointed him to lead the people and he is therefore responsible for doing just that. Do not rule the meeting with a heavy hand. Do not try to impose your will on the people. Keep a firm but gentle grip on the direction and progress of the worship.

6. KEEP THE PURPOSE IN MIND.

Never lose sight of the objective and purpose of the gathering. It is first to praise and glorify the Lord. Second, to edify and bless the people. Never allow the gathering to degenerate to anything less than these basic objectives.

7. "MAKE US A SYMPHONY."

One of the many fine choruses we often sing says, "Lord, make us a symphony, a symphony of worship." The Greek word "symphoneo" from which we derive symphony, means to "agree together." Jesus said, *"If any two of you shall agree together."* He used this word, 'symphoneo,' to "produce a symphony of sound." A worship service should be like a symphony. Everything should blend harmoniously together. The voices should all blend, the instruments should blend, the various parts of the service should all blend together. This is one of the basic purposes God seeks to achieve through our corporate worship, to blend us all together in a glorious harmony. In doing so, He introduces and encourages unity at the deepest levels of our being. A famous priest said, "The family that prays

together, stays together." And we might say, "The congregation that truly learns to worship together, will stay together."

8. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.

Too often today, the congregation becomes mere spectators instead of participators. Frequently we find the minister doing everything and the congregation merely watching and listening. The New Testament encourages the participation of every member. However, good solid teaching on this subject needs to be given first. God's people should be taught that He wants to hear their voices raised in worship. They must be taught how to participate, and having been taught, given opportunity to do so. Verbally encourage the people to enter in. Exhort them to lift their voices in praise. Make opportunities for them to express their praise.

9. LET EVERYTHING BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER.

Many churches use this scripture (1 Cor 14:4) as an excuse for not allowing any congregational participation. They are so intent on maintaining "decency and order" that they allow nothing to be done. This is not what the Bible says. It does NOT say, "Let nothing be done, decently and in order." It says "Let EVERYTHING be done." Let there be participation. Let there be prophecies, revelations, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. But let them be done in such a manner that there is no confusion, for God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:40).

10. SEEK TO EXCEL.

Our goal, as we learn to praise and worship God, should be to ultimately excel in these things. We should aim for progress and development in these vital areas. Such excellence will not be human excellence. It will not be the development of human talent and ability. It will not be the employment of professionals, with correctness and precision. It will be the deepening of spiritual life. It will be the sharpening of spiritual sensitivity, the growth of spiritual awareness and the ability to make a spiritual response to the promptings of the Spirit of God.

The ultimate objective of our worship is to uplift and glorify God. The more effectively we can do this, the more acceptable our praise.

Chapter 8

WORSHIP CREATES ATMOSPHERE!

Atmosphere is the pervading mood or feeling in a given place. It is created by the spiritual emanations (atmospherics) present. Our ability to discern and feel these, are inherent in our spiritual being and emotions. Spiritual atmosphere occurs when our spirit encounters the Spirit of God.

ATMOSPHERE IS INTANGIBLE

Atmosphere cannot be perceived by sight or touch. It is ethereal or spiritual in nature. It is spiritually discerned (sensed) through our spiritual antennas. The felt presence of God is conveyed in a spiritual atmosphere. Most often you can neither see nor touch it, but you can feel and sense it. To do so you must have the right attitude and spiritual sensitivity.

ATMOSPHERE IS INEVITABLE

Atmosphere is present everywhere. In some places it is more evident than in others. Some places have little atmosphere. Others have a powerful atmosphere. Some atmospheres are extremely negative. Others are dynamically positive. Every place gives off some kind of impression through it's character. Atmosphere is created largely by the furnishings, items and people assembled in a given place.

ATMOSPHERE IS LEGITIMATE

Many Christians are nervous of the idea of having an atmosphere. They mistakenly believe that it is pure emotion, of the flesh, and something to be heartily discouraged. The presence of an important person inevitably creates an atmosphere of reverence and awe. How much more ought God's presence to create a distinctive and awesome atmosphere.

There was obviously an awesome atmosphere at the dedication of Solomon's temple when God's manifest presence invaded that place.

2 Chr 7:1-3

"When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory (presence) of the LORD filled the temple.

The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory (presence) of the LORD filled it.

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

EVERY PERSON PROJECTS AN ATMOSPHERE

Every person has a unique aura that flows from their inner attitude. This creates an atmosphere which they project wherever they go. Depending on their personality and character, plus their spiritual development and maturity, (or lack thereof) they may exude any one of a number of kinds of atmospheres.

E.g.

Positive	Negative
Optimistic	Pessimistic
Inspirational	Discouraging
Radiating light	Dispensing darkness
Happy	Gloomy

PERSONAL ATMOSPHERE

a. Begins in our thought life

“For, as a man thinks in his heart, so he becomes.” Prov 23:7.

You become what you think you are.

You become what you think about.

b. Accentuated through our words

“For out of the abundance (fullness) of his heart, a man speaks.”

Whatever fills your mind and thought life, that is what you will talk about.

Whatever you talk about you will project. It will create an atmosphere within and around you.

Negative thoughts and words will create a negative atmosphere.

Positive thoughts and words will create a positive atmosphere.

Critical thoughts and words will create a critical atmosphere. Etc.

Your words will convince you. You will be what you say.

c. Inner attitudes create outer atmosphere

Whatever people carry within them they inevitably discharge into the atmosphere around them. Their inner attitudes create an aura that infiltrates their surroundings. Other people are made aware of it. They sense and feel it. If a number of people get together and begin to express their attitudes through speech or emotional emanation, they create solid mutual atmosphere which can be extremely powerful. If it happens to be a church in which they gather, they create a wrong atmosphere there. Which is why the Psalmist said, *“Enter His gates with thanksgiving. Come into his presence with singing.”* This is the correct attitude to exude when we come before God.

YOUR HOME HAS AN ATMOSPHERE

Every home has an atmosphere of its own. It is often evident from the moment one enters it. The manner in which a house is furnished creates an atmosphere. Whether the place is tidy or untidy helps to determine the atmosphere. The people (family?) in that home, powerfully affect it's atmosphere. If they are warm, relaxed and friendly, visitors may feel immediately at home. If their welcome is not so evident, visitors can hardly wait to get out again.

Many years ago, in Brisbane, Australia, I was asked to visit a family who were experiencing great trials and difficulties. This family consisted of the mother and five children all of whom were in a constant state of ill health. The children's performance at school was inexplicably poor and there seemed to be a financial curse on their family.

As I sat and conversed with the mother, a conviction deepened inside me that there was something badly wrong with the atmosphere of their house. After a brief prayer I

asked if anything dramatic and sad had ever happened in their house. It transpired that the deceased father and his brother had actually built the house. They were not registered builders yet evidently knew enough about building to erect this place in their spare time from items they had purchased cheaply from various sources.

The task had been an onerous and demanding one. Arguments and rows had punctuated the building process. Great stress was on everyone involved, including financial indebtedness to the Bank. Ultimately the stress was too great for the father who hung himself in the attic, casting a shadow of grief and despair on the whole family.

I explained to the mother that the fighting, distress and ultimate suicide had been aggravated by familiar spirits that had plagued her husband's family for some years. I strongly urged she and the children to make a sincere commitment to Christ and place themselves under His protection. I further encouraged them to trust Jesus Christ to cleanse their house of every negative, destructive spirit that resided there.

We subsequently marched through the house from room to room, singing and praying and commanding every evil spirit to leave. By the time we concluded our march every family member could sense the difference in the atmosphere. Even the rooms seemed brighter, the atmosphere was lighter, the heaviness of depression was gone. Within a few weeks their fortunes had obviously changed. The children's health and schooling improved remarkably. The atmosphere in the home and in the family members was dramatically transformed. Everyone who visited that home was immediately aware of it. The bad atmosphere had gone and a much healthier, happier one filled the place.

YOUR CHURCH BUILDING HAS AN ATMOSPHERE

Every church building has a unique atmosphere that can usually be discerned and recognised as soon as one enters. Often the age and architecture of the building greatly affects the feeling one discerns. The style and condition of the building influences the ambience some degree. The manner in which the place is decorated and furnished also has some effect. Unfortunately many architects have felt that a church building should reflect quiet solemnity, severity and gloominess which is actually a complete contrast to the Biblical image, e.g.

Psa 100:1-5

- 1 *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*
- 2 *Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*
- 3 *Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*
- 4 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*
- 5 *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*
(NIV)

Some congregations deliberately strive for a solemn and sombre atmosphere, believing this to be appropriately "sacred." They also encourage conservative and restrained behaviour in what they imagine is "The house of God." What they actually produce is an old fashioned image of religious legalism and self righteousness that has

little or no appeal to non-Christians. Nor does it encourage the Christians to enjoy and express any degree of freedom or joy.

I mentioned previously that when people come together they sub-consciously create a predominant atmosphere. If it is a wrong attitude and atmosphere, it is highly unlikely that the participants will experience God's presence.

BEGIN WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

I remember many years ago, preaching in a church in Britain. It was a bitterly cold winter's evening and the heating system in the building was not working. About three hundred people had gathered and their predominant thought was not on worship, but on how cold it was. The service began with a hymn that ought to have been a rousing and inspiring one. Unfortunately the congregation's attitude was a disgruntled one rather than a triumphant one. This was reflected in their singing, which was like a funeral dirge. Suddenly, the Pastor who was attempting to lead their worship, cried "Stop." He then began to rebuke the people for their lack of enthusiasm and to tell them they had come before God with the wrong attitude and spirit. He reminded them that the Bible says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and come into His courts with praise." To my surprise, he ordered the people to leave the building and re-enter with the right spirit. Initially they thought he was not serious, but it soon became clear that he was! With a good deal of grumbling the congregation filed out into the night air which was even colder than the atmosphere inside the building. They stood, like a herd of sheep, on the side walk while the Pastor exhorted them to come back inside with the right attitude. He stationed he and myself on either side of the entrance with instructions to only allow in those who were expressing thanks and praise to God. Slowly they began to file back in. This time they were speaking out words of thanksgiving. To the credit of that congregation, every member eventually came back in. What a meeting we had! The praise and worship erupted into a glorious awareness of God's presence and ultimately all kinds of wonders and miracles took place.

His method was probably rather drastic, but his intention was good and the result proved that it was also right.

**The atmosphere of religious restraint
in many churches
kills the true spirit of Christianity
that Jesus defined as
"Abundant Life and Fullness of Joy."**

(John 10:10; 15:11)

WHAT CREATES A SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE?

Atmospherics are the elements that create an atmosphere. A spiritual atmosphere is created when our spirit touches the Spirit of God. The emanations that are generated form the atmosphere of spiritual climate. There are certain spiritual atmospheric such as;

THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is undoubtedly the first, and indispensable factor. Without the Holy Spirit, there will not be any legitimate spiritual atmosphere. It is uniquely His presence that creates the atmosphere in which the presence of God may be experienced.

RECOGNIZING AND HONOURING THE HOLY SPIRIT

However, it is not sufficient to believe that He is present, we must also discern and honour His presence.

The good news is that He is always present wherever believers are gathered in Jesus' name.

The sad news is that those believers are often too absorbed in their own program and activities that they virtually ignore His presence.

To experience an atmosphere conducive to a miracle, we must recognise and honour the presence of the Spirit amongst us. We do this by being sensitive and obedient to His voice.

COME WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Ps 100:4

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: (tebillah; a hymn of praise) Give thanks unto him, and bless his name. (ASV)

- a. Enter His gates with thanksgiving.
- b. Come into His courts with songs of praise
- c. Bless (honour, exalt, uplift, magnify) God's Holy Name through worship.

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart

I will enter his courts with praise.

I will say this is the day that the Lord has made

I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

He has made me glad, He has made me glad

I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

TRUE REVERENCE IS RESPONDING OBEDIENTLY TO GOD'S SPIRIT

Too many churches believe that reverence of God's presence requires solemnity, silence, gravity and formality. They ignore the plain words of Scripture

2 Cor 3:17-18

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (NKJ)

POSITIVE RESPONSE

The right atmosphere begins to develop when we respond positively to the presence of the Spirit among us. Paul says (above) that the Spirit is the rightful Lord of our gatherings and that His presence releases spiritual liberty. When we honour Him as Lord of our gathering He invests the event with His liberating Spirit.

Our attitude must be firstly to genuinely invoke and invite the Holy Spirit to be the Lord of our gathering. Having done this we should then sensitively discern what He wishes to do among us. We need to humbly make contact with the Holy Spirit, recognising from the outset that He is the true Lord of our worship service. Having recognised and contacted His presence we then need to discern and follow the flow of His leading.

PRAYERFUL INTERCESSION

Public prayer is too often a formality, a prescribed part of the liturgy, rather than a genuine cry to God. The Holy Spirit will only respond to a genuine invitation that springs from the heart and includes a willingness to honour His presence and obey His voice.

MUSIC

When we truly offer praise to God, we honour Him and prepare a way (build a highway in the spirit) by which He may enter our presence and reveal His saving grace.

Psa 50:23

“He who sacrifices thank offerings honours me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.” (NIV)

What is the real objective of our musical expression? What are we truly endeavouring to achieve through our music? Are we merely following a traditionally prescribed routine, or are we genuinely seeking to provide a grand entrance for the Lord the Spirit?

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Genuine spiritual worship must be offered **“in the spirit”** and according to God’s truth.

John 4:23-24

“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.” (NIV)

Much of our corporate worship is presented to God through the medium of music, but it must be more than the mere performance of music. Worship is a path we may walk

into the presence of God. The music to which we march, is a means to that end and not the end in itself.

THE HIGH PRAISES OF GOD

Psa 149:6

“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, (NKJ)

The high praises of God are the praises that surround the throne of God in heaven. Various glorious living creatures encompass God’s throne, continuously singing and speaking anthems of praise to God and His glory. They create a dynamic atmosphere of joyful and triumphant worship in which God dwells.

Psa 22:3

“But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. (NKJ)

As the Holy spirit refines and enhances our worship, it becomes compatible with the heavenly praises on high. When this happens we begin to feel the aura of God’s presence among us.

SING TO THE WELL

Num 21:16-17

“From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it-“ (NKJ)

Israel were travelling through a wilderness, but God, in His mercy brought them to a place where arterial water was available. At Moses’ command, Israel’s leaders dug the well, while the whole congregation of Israel “sang unto the well.” Our spiritual life may become like a wilderness at times, dry and barren. But God has His wells of refreshing. We must sing to those wells until they begin to burst forth with the living water of God's presence. Like Israel, we must do it in unison. God instructed Moses, “Gather the people *together* and have them all sing to the well.” There is a well in the midst of every congregation but the leaders must dig and the congregation must sing together to release its streams of living water. It is a well of life, a well of rejoicing, a well of refreshing and a well that will water the land and produce fruitfulness.

DESPISING WORSHIP PRODUCES BARRENNESS

David’s wife Michal is a clear example of this.

2 Sam 6:20-23

“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, “How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!”

So David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the LORD.

“And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honour.”

Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.”

Her overt criticism of David's enthusiastic worship, left him unmoved. He refused to conform his worship style to the perceptions of a carnal, conservative woman who was embarrassed to be associated with uninhibited worship. David insisted that his purpose was to please God, not man and that if uninhibited worship appeared unseemly to a carnal mind, he would continue to do it nevertheless. As for Michal, her attitude ensured that she remained barren until the end of her days.

Chapter 9

WHAT ARE THE MIRACLES?

If atmosphere is conducive to miracles, what might such miracles be?

ENCOUNTERING GOD'S PRESENCE IN A PERSONAL AND INTIMATE MANNER

The miracle of our ability to sense and experience the personal presence of Christ amongst us.

Once this happens, any number of wonderful miracles may transpire.

The mystical miracle power of Christ releases a potential for all manner of wonders.

MIRACLES OF REVELATION, ENCOURAGEMENT, HEALING, AND RESTORATION

The miracle of conversion and transformation can happen.

The breaking of bondages and a release of one's spirit from imprisonment.

THE MIRACLE OF EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

Many people find it difficult to fully accept the fact of God's love for them. They often feel unworthy of such love and cannot believe that God really loves THEM so much.

In the Song of Solomon, the shepherdess is initially self conscious, shy and inhibited. She protests her unworthiness of His attention.

Song 1:6

'Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. (NKJ)

As their relationship develops and deepens, He constantly assures her of His love and admiration for her, speaking of the beauty He sees in her. Basking in the attention of His love for her, she begins to see herself as He sees her. She is encouraged to lose those inhibitions.

THE MIRACLE OF RECEIVING HIS PARDON

We really need to experience the wonder of God's loving presence in order to truly know His pardon in an experiential manner. The more we experience His presence, the more we sub-consciously know that we are truly forgiven pardoned, freely accepted and restored.

The Prodigal Son, could not believe that His father could ever restore him to the favour and privilege of sonship. He rehearsed all manner of possible scenarios, the best of which was that he might become a hired servant of his father's. But the loving father brushed aside all his protestations and generously poured the full quota of his love upon him. He fully and completely restored him to his original position of privilege. He generously killed the fatted calf, threw a huge party, put shoes on his feet and placed a ring on his finger.

THE MIRACLE OF SEEING HIS POWER AND GLORY

Psa 63:2

"I have seen you in the sanctuary (the place of worship) and beheld your power and your glory." (NIV)

It is also in the place of worship that we are able to behold and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

Psa 27:4

"One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple." (NKJ)

THE MIRACLE OF EXPERIENCING THE JOY OF THE LORD

Psa 21:6

"Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence." (NIV)

Psa 27:6

*"at his tabernacle **will I sacrifice with shouts of joy**; I will sing and make music to the LORD." (NIV)*

Psa 16:11

*"You will show me the path of life; **in Your presence is fullness of joy**; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (NKJ)*

Neh 8:10

*"This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, **for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (NIV)*

The Bible is filled with references that link joy to the presence of the Lord. During the feast of Tabernacles God commanded His people to "Rejoice for seven days before the Lord." God loves to witness our supreme joy in His presence. In fact, He has promised to augment it.

Zeph 3:17

"The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." (NIV)

ELISHA'S EXPERIENCE

II Kings 3:15-16

"But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha.

And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches." (KJV)

Confronted with the need to bring a prophetic word from God, Elisha immediately called for a musician. Whilst the harpist played, the hand (Spirit) of the Lord came upon Elisha and he was inspired with a word from God. Obviously the atmosphere fostered by the music helped to create the right atmosphere to release a genuine prophetic word from God. The anointed atmosphere helped to produce a spiritual miracle.

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

Acts 14:7-10

“And they were preaching the gospel there.

And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.”

It seems apparent, from the context of this incident, that the presentation of the Gospel by this group of missionaries, created an exciting and stimulating atmosphere. Whole cities were both stirred and divided by this phenomena. In Lystra the gathering produced an atmosphere of exciting faith conducive to the performance of miracles. The preaching of Paul created a spirit of faith and expectancy among his listeners. As Paul observed one particular man in the crowd, he could clearly see that the spirit of faith had gripped him. This encouraged Paul to shout with a loud voice *“Stand up on your feet.”* The man immediately leapt to his feet and walked. Imagine the great excitement that accompanied this mighty miracle!

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Music has always played an important role in the worship of God. Way back, in the very dawn of creation, ..”*.the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy”* (Job 38:7).

This scripture refers to a pre-history occasion. It alludes to an earliest era of the dateless past when God first created the universe. It is the oldest historic reference to music and singing. Several things emerge from it.

Music was conceived in the heart of God

Music existed before the foundation of the universe.

It was used by the “sons of God.”

It was employed in the praise of God.

It was expressed with joyful enthusiasm.

In its simplest forms music may be defined as an art form consisting of sequences of sound, organised methodically, harmoniously, and rhythmically. Such sounds are usually produced by musical instruments, human voices, or both, separately or together.

Music is a gift of God to mankind.

It is an expression of God’s essential being.

It is the language of the soul, expressing its highest aspirations.

It facilitates a more intense feeling than spoken words.

It has uplifting and healing powers.

Good music directs one’s thoughts to God.

The earliest Hebraic music was predominantly vocal. There were very few instruments in the earliest days of their history. The human voice was the most accessible and popular instrument with which to make music. However, biblical references to later periods include mention of many forms of musical instruments.

MUSIC CREATES AN ATMOSPHERE

All music creates its own atmosphere. Marketing strategists have understood this. Service industries have too. Restaurants play music conducive to relaxing and eating. Congregational attitudes are influenced by the type and tempo of music and by the lyrics.

“Spirituals” were birthed by slaves in the cotton fields of the southern states of the USA. They sang to alleviate their indignities and suffering. They sang to create an atmosphere of hopeful anticipation in the midst of their trials, to bring God’s encouragement to their hearts.

GOD’S PEOPLE USED IT TO CREATE CERTAIN ATMOSPHERES

Worship in song is mentioned in Exodus 15:1. Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord; V2, Miriam and all the women, with tambourines and dances, responded to the song of Moses. Moses and Miriam created an atmosphere of victory and triumph to minister encouragement to the bewildered Israelites.

“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: ‘I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.’” (NIV)

The digging of the well at Beer was celebrated with singing

Num 21:17-18

“Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah:” (KJV)

Deborah and Barak celebrated their victory in song (Judges 5:1-31).

The women of Israel celebrated David's victory over Goliath in song.

(1 Sam 18:6,7).

4,000 Levites praised the Lord with instruments (1 Chron 23:5), when Solomon was made king over Israel.

"The children of Israel.....kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord" (II Chron 30:21).

"And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, Psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chron 15:16).

Imagine the high drama and joyful release of witnessing 4,000 singers and musicians playing loudly and singing enthusiastically to God. What a glorious occasion that was!

MUSIC INSPIRES PROPHETIC UTTERANCE.

1 Sam 10:5

"After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.

It is clear that music and singing are vitally integral to the praise and worship of God. This is portrayed all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Music is also associated frequently with the release of spiritual gifts such as prophecy. The group of prophets employed a wide variety of musical instruments as they prophesied. Both music and prophecy create a sense of God's presence.

A GREAT VARIETY OF INSTRUMENTS WERE USED

The scriptures reveal that a great variety of musical instruments were used in Davidic praise. Psalm 150 lists all the basic families of instruments found in the modern orchestra.

Psa 150:1-6

"Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, (brass) praise him with the harp and lyre, (strings)

praise him with tambourine (percussion) and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, (woodwind)

praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD." (NIV)

It seems obvious, from such references, that music offered to God in the Old Testament, was neither sterile nor conservative. There is very obvious spontaneity, passion, life, colour and movement that identifies biblical music. Biblical worship often attracted the criticism of conservative minds that were more concerned with maintaining outward dignity, than with expressing enthusiasm. The idea taught in many churches, that the organ is the only instrument suitable for accompaniment of worship, is certainly not a biblical concept. The modern organ is often too limited and restrained to express the varied dynamics of spiritual communication. It does not afford the measure of freedom and spontaneity that the Spirit needs to adequately express His praise to God.

Worship in the Bible was frequently accompanied by a great variety and a large number of musical instruments. Percussion instruments, including drums, tambourines, cymbals and various kinds of shakers are the oldest and were frequently used to accompany songs and dances of praise. Wind instruments included trumpets, and the shofar. (rams horn)

Amongst the variety of stringed instruments were the harp and lyre. Several lyres were often used together in a string ensemble to accompany the singing of a choir. People who object to the employment of guitars in worship should realise that the harp and lyre which were inevitably used to accompany biblical worship, are the ancient equivalent of the modern guitar. Musical accompaniment in the Bible, employing a wide and colourful variety of instruments, must have been very dramatic and exciting.

2 Chr 5:12-14

“All the Levites who were musicians-- Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives-- stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets.

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: “He is good; his love endures forever.” Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.” (NIV)

Numerous and varied styles of music were used too which should encourage us to realise that God does not share the narrow views of many Christians as to which instruments may be unsuitable for worship.

Many national churches have been robbed of authentic cultural expression in music and worship by a narrow view, frequently espoused by Western missionaries and church leaders, about the suitability or otherwise of historic, ethnic instruments. Unfortunately this gave rise to the idea that the organ was the only proper instrument to accompany worship. It further indicated that only Western Hemisphere instruments and Western World music styles were sacred and that all manner of emerging world instruments and music were totally unsuitable. Fortunately this narrow view is being gradually dispelled and many ethnic examples of Christian worship are emerging.

Churches in the non-Western world should be encouraged to employ musical instruments and styles that are culturally appropriate to their national traditions and cultures.

Chapter 10

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

The impact and effectiveness of good praise and worship, in a congregational setting, can scarcely be exaggerated. This is a fact I have noticed so many times. Most successful churches I have observed, have had the help of a good worship program. Most churches that have experienced dynamic growth, have also featured good congregational worship. There are factors involved in effective praise and worship that are powerfully conducive to the atmosphere that wins the day.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF A WORSHIP SERVICE?

If the average Christian were asked this question, what might their response be?

A worship service is where the members gather together to worship God.

A worship service is a gathering of the members to hear the Word of God.

A worship service is where Christians gather to sing hymns and songs.

Responses like these would be partially correct, but not wholly so. These concepts fall short of the ideal result of a church worship service.

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP.

True congregational praise and worship occurs when a gathered group of God's people join harmoniously to exalt God corporately in music and song. Such worship originates in heaven.

Job 38:4-7

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.

Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone--

while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (NIV)

It was an integral feature of the New Testament church that even a prison sentence could not stifle. God shouted a responsive Hallelujah so loudly that the prison walls fell down!

Acts 16:25-26

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose." (NIV)

It will also feature strongly in heaven throughout eternity. Rev 19:6-7

"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." (NIV)

TRUE CORPORATE WORSHIP UNITES A CONGREGATION

Psa 133:1-3

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.

It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore." (NIV)

Dwelling, living, flowing in unity attracts the anointing of God in a powerful way. True corporate worship is one of the ways in which the Spirit of God *tunes* a congregation and brings it into the unity of the Spirit. As a congregation yield themselves to attaining united expressions of worship, God blends their spirits together in harmonious unity.

MUSIC ATTRACTS THE PRESENCE OF GOD

II Ki 3:14-18

"Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you.

But now bring me a harpist. " While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha

and he said, "This is what the LORD says: Make this valley full of ditches.

For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink.

This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you." (NIV)

When Elisha the prophet urgently needed a word from God, he summoned a musician. Even while the harpist played, the Spirit of God came upon Elisha and he prophesied what Israel must do. Music produces an atmosphere conducive to spiritual manifestations that indicate the presence of God. Spiritual music can invite God's presence in a tangible, discernible manner. A dynamic spiritual atmosphere is often created by a congregation harmonising with each other and with God's Spirit.

A group of Spirit filled musicians, with instruments and voices lifted in praise can be a dynamic and powerful attraction in a church. Every church leader should give high priority to forming such a team.

It is exciting to realise that God loves music. Whenever His people delight themselves in music, song and dance, God loves to join in with them.

MUSIC INSPIRES AND STIMULATES PEOPLE

There is a rousing and stimulating element in stirring music that unites and activates any body of people. Who has never been aroused by a military band? The army of the Lord marches best to the strains of triumphant music that stirs the inner passions of a redeemed heart. The music of the church, marching triumphantly towards the future manifestation of God's kingdom reign, should be the finest in the world.

Unfortunately the church at large has frequently allowed itself to believe that sacred (holy) music must be staid, conservative and old fashioned. This is not true. Kingdom music, inspired in heaven, should be the most dynamic and appealing ever heard. It

should be so unique and inspirational that people would travel miles to hear and participate in it.

TRIUMPHANT MUSIC LIFTS MORALE.

Morale is mutual, and united confidence. Its is “esprit de corps,” the united, optimistic, triumphant spirit of a body of people amalgamated by the same aims and objectives. It is the high degree of optimism and confidence that fills the heart of a united and committed company of people.

Stirring music is a main contributor to high morale. It inspires people and brings out the best in them. It unites them as one person. Which is why John says:

Rev 19:6-7

“And I heard, as it were, the voice (singular) of a great multitude, (plural) as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” (NKJ)

THE ARMY THAT WAS LED BY A CHOIR.

2 Chr 20:20-22

“Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: “Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever.”

Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.” (NKJ)

Israel’s army was outnumbered and facing possible defeat, except that God had promised them victory.

2 Chr 20:17

“You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.”

(NIV)

God did not encourage them to rely on their numbers, or weapons, but on His Word, to which the Levites responded with great shouts of praise.

2 Chr 20:19

*“Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korabites **stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice.** (NIV)*

God sent them into battle with a choir before them, exalting the Lord in their praises and magnifying His grace. As they sang God set ambushments against their enemies completely conquering their adversaries.

THE LONE PIPER

One of my friends of some years ago, won the Victoria Cross for outstanding bravery under enemy attack. The incident occurred in World War II, when he was a piper in a Scottish regiment. His platoon was under heavy attack and suffering massive casualties. Communications were poor, his unit was in disarray, making a disorderly retreat under withering enemy fire. Bill soon realised that their confused retreat was making he and his mates an easier target for the enemy and that if something were not done quickly they would soon be decimated. Being a earnest Christian, he immediately committed the situation to God in prayer. Throwing down his rifle, he grabbed his bag pipes and began to play a stirring Scottish tune. Immediately his associates slowed down their retreat.

Encouraged by his own music, Bill began to march towards the enemy. His comrades, witnessing his bravery, began to sing and shout loudly and joined him as he walked resolutely towards the enemy troops. Fresh morale surged through his unit as a sense of patriotism and bravery inspired them all. Though Bill was wounded, he continued to advance and the whole unit took fresh courage, surging past him, into the teeth of their foe with guns blazing. The tide was soon turned under their counter attack, and before long the enemy were in retreat and the Scottish troops had won the day. In subsequent dispatches, his bravery under fire despite sustaining two bullet wounds, was recognised as the factor that changed the fate of his unit. His associates spoke of the surge of morale that swept their ranks as the skirl of the bag pipes sounded forth. Without considering their own safety they joined their brave comrade, routing the opposition and winning a strategic victory that ultimately saved their lives. The whole regiment was later honoured when Bill was invested with the Victoria Cross Medal by his king.

That incident frequently reminds me of spiritual warfare. Often, when the enemy appears to be gaining the upper hand, voices lifted in praise to God have turned the tide from imminent defeat to resounding victory. In a similar manner, dynamic music expressing praise to God, has frequently inspired God's army to march forward to victory.

THE POWER OF MUSIC'S ATTRACTION

Rousing music has a universal appeal. It stirs something within every human spirit. It awakens dormant faith and positively inspires the inner man. Other people love to join an enthusiastic congregation. There is a special sense of belonging amongst people who lift their voices together in jubilant song. Good, spirited, triumphant music and song is an extremely positive and attracting force. It makes people want to be part of that crowd.

WHAT KIND OF INSTRUMENTS?

The question often arises, "What is the best type of instrument to use for praise and worship?"

Obviously there are numerous factors involved in answering this question. Some of those factors might be :-

1. The ethnic identity of the church.
2. The size of the congregation and venue.
3. The kind of instruments available.
4. The style of worship desired.

However, there are several issues that need to be considered in making this important decision.

ACCOMPANIMENT

This is the most important aspect, the need to provide basic accompaniment for the congregants. The obvious instruments for this are simple accompaniment instruments such as a piano, electronic keyboard, or guitar, all of which are suitable to provide the simple basics of music, i.e. melody, harmony and rhythm. In a very real sense these are the lead instruments and one should try to ensure that the players are competent and capable.

An electronic keyboard is very desirable because it is capable of producing such a wide variety of musical effects and is extremely versatile.

RHYTHM SECTION.

This usually consists of drums, and other forms of percussion instruments, plus bass instrument. The skill and maturity of the rhythm musicians is extremely important. They frequently dictate the tempo of the worship. Drums are a particularly powerful music medium with a very strong influence and should be carefully utilised. They can almost “make or break” the quality of worship.

AN IDEAL SMALL MUSIC GROUP

In a relatively small situation a piano, or electronic keyboard, guitar, bass and drums will constitute a very adequate music group. Modern electric key boards, particularly a MIDI board may be ideal because they can simulate a whole orchestra if necessary.

AUGMENTATION.

In a larger setting it is often desirable to augment the basic instruments with other suitable ones. Violins, flutes, or other single note instruments can add great to the effectiveness and beauty of worship, setting very powerful moods. Almost any instruments, properly and appropriately used, can enhance a worship service.

SUITABLE MUSIC TEAM MEMBERS.

A worship team must be prayerfully and carefully put together. Adding the wrong persons can spell disaster. Each member should be carefully examined using the following criteria.

1. Spiritual maturity.

This qualification covers a wide spectrum and is by far the most important factor. Spiritual sensitivity and discernment, with an eagerness to flow with God's Spirit, is even more important than technical skills.

2. Musical ability and skill.

Obviously this is also very important. Yet this is an area in which people can frequently achieve a greater degree of competence. In other words, if you have someone who meets all the other criteria, they can usually improve and enhance their musical skills.

3. Commitment.

Every team member must be willing to commit themselves to every requirement that will ensure the effectiveness of the team. This obviously includes attending all rehearsals, keeping in practice, and being present for every event to which the team is committed.

4. Loyalty.

The harmony and unity of the worship team must have the highest priority and to achieve this every member must exercise and maintain loyalty to the pastor, leader, and every fellow member of the team.

5. Compatibility.

Musicians are often uniquely individualistic, artistic, creative and sometimes temperamental. It is essential that they are also compatible, willing and able to fit into and flow together with the team. There must be no petty jealousy or competition among them. Every individual talent must be brought into subjection to God and to the spirit of the team. Team spirit is essential.

6. Unity of the Spirit.

Eph 4:2-3

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (NIV)

The musicians and singers must be in spiritual unity, with the Holy Spirit and with one another. It takes regular prayer, spiritual adjustments, and corporate worship together to achieve and maintain this.

7. Corporate anointing and flow.

The music team must enjoy and move in a mutual anointing. They must learn to listen to the gentle voice of the Spirit and be aware of how the Spirit is moving on other members of the team. They must learn to flow together in the anointing of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can also use music for the glory of God and edification of people. Notice the powerful therapeutic effect that anointed music had on Saul. (1 Sam 16:23). David had been anointed by God (V 13). He was a skilful musician, a gifted composer and a sweet singer. When he played and sang under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the evil spirit departed from Saul. He was refreshed. He was well.

MUSIC EXPRESSES THE JOY OF LIBERTY

It was only when Israel was in captivity in Babylon that they ceased to sing and play. Their anointed music ceased and they hung their harps on the willow trees (Psalm 137).

When their Babylon captors goaded them to sing, they replied, "*How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*"

When their captivity ceased, after 70 years, they returned home with joyful singing and laughter. There was praise on their lips (Psa 126:1,2). It is only when the Church is in spiritual captivity that her anointed music ceases. When that captivity is broken and the people come into liberty once more, music, singing, praise, dancing and laughter are all restored unto her.

MUSIC AND SONG IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many critics of lively worship maintain that a scriptural foundation for it is purely Old Testament. They infer that the New Testament church has no such mandate, yet the New Testament also contains numerous references to music and singing in worship.

1. **The disciples sang hymns together.** (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).
2. **Paul and Silas sang praises to God in prison.** (Acts 16:25).
3. **The Apostle Paul instructs the church in anointed singing.** (Eph 5:19)
4. **The book of Revelation is interspersed with mass choirs singing mighty anthems of praise.**

CHRISTIANS ARE EXHORTED (EPHESIANS 5:19; COL 3:16) TO SING:-

- a. **PSALMS.** The biblical psalms set to music.
- b. **HYMNS.** Anthems of praise to God.
- c. **SPIRITUAL SONGS.**

Spontaneous songs given by the Spirit. The songs of the primitive church were praises to the Lord. Their primary objective in singing was to praise and magnify God. They did not sing for effect, or to entertain. Their singing was not man-centred. It was directed to God for His pleasure alone.

MUSIC CAN BE USED TO TEACH GOD'S WORD

Col 3:16-17

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (NIV)

WORSHIP PROMOTES UNITY IN A CONGREGATION

Worshipping together in music and song encourages and promotes a certain measure of spiritual unity. This is especially true when a congregation is truly *worshipping in the Spirit*. Unity with God (perpendicular) and with each other, (horizontal) is greatly strengthened by playing and singing in harmony together. The Holy Spirit is able to

tune our hearts as one when we recognise Him as our heavenly choir director and follow His leading. Congregational “singing in the Spirit” can be particularly effective, when the Holy Spirit wants to tune the hearts of the people.

BONDAGE AND DEPRESSION CAN BE BANISHED BY MUSIC

1 Sam 16:23

“Whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him. “

This type of anointed singing and music, directed to God in praise and worship, is very rare in the church today. But God is restoring this ministry to His people. Here are some suggestions to help you bring your community into a ministry of anointed music in praise to God.