

## **Chapter 12**

### ***PRAISE AND WORSHIP 1***

#### ***EXPERIENCING GOD'S PRESENCE***

#### ***SCRIPTURAL CONCEPTS OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP***

Introduction: When we as Christians think about Praise and Worship, we often think of the idea of a song service at church on Sunday or of the "preliminaries" to the preaching in a believers' meeting. In these lessons on Praise and Worship we want to look at corporate and personal worship from a very scriptural perspective. In the first section of this lesson, we will look at Praise and Worship as providing a way in which God's Presence can dwell among His people and in the second section we will look at some Scriptural concepts of Praise and Worship.

#### ***SECTION 1: "THAT I MAY DWELL AMONG THEM"***

- I. After God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt and was preparing them for the conquest of Canaan, He commanded Moses to build a Tabernacle or a "tent of meeting" as a place of worship where God's Holy Presence could dwell among His people. (Exodus 25:1-8; Exodus 33:7-11; Exodus 35-40)
  - A. Moses' Tabernacle became a meeting place where the God who is everywhere could meet with priestly representatives of His people. God specified the structure, the design, the pattern, even the list of materials from which the Tabernacle was to be built. God described its furnishings; altars, tables, bowls, lamp stands. The Tabernacle was priceless and incredibly beautiful. But the focal point of the Tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant, the object to be placed in the holiest part of the Tabernacle and the place where God said His Holy Presence would dwell.
  - B. This tabernacle went with the Israelites everywhere; it was the center of all their life through 40 years in the wilderness. When they traveled the Tabernacle and the Ark led them. When they camped, everyone camped around it. The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant became for Israel the visible representation of God's covenant with them. It reminded them and reassured them of God's covenant promise to Abraham. "*I will bless you and you will be a blessing*" and God's further promise to them through Moses, "*I will be with you - I will be your God - you will be My people.*"
  - C. The entire structure of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the worship rituals that were practiced there, pictured sinful man coming before a Holy God. The sacrifices of sheep, goats, and cattle, the confession of sin, the washings and anointings; every one of these things was a symbol - a picture of the new covenant reality. The incense representing prayers, the blood of a sacrificial lamb sprinkled on the mercy seat of the Ark by the high priest while all the people waited outside; it all pictured and pointed toward Jesus and His once for all sacrifice of Himself to make it possible for God's Presence to dwell with us always.

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- D. The Tabernacle went with Israel through 40 years in the wilderness, it went with them across the Jordan into Canaan under Joshua's leadership, and the Ark of the Presence even accompanied them into battle against their enemies. After the land was conquered the Ark and its Tabernacle found a permanent resting place at Shiloh.
  - E. Near the end of the period of the Judges, Eli the high priest allowed his perverse and rebellious sons to take the Ark into battle against the Philistines. They were defeated in battle and they lost the Ark, the Presence of God. As Phinehas' wife gave birth to a son on that day she named him Ichabod (the glory is departed). On that day she lost her husband, her father-in-law, and her own life - but her grief was over the loss of God's Presence among His people. (1 Samuel 4)
  - F. The Ark caused great trouble, sickness, and distress for the enemies of God and for their god as it remained among them for seven months. Then the Philistine rulers sent it back to Israel in a new cart. The Ark of God's Presence returned to Israel but for many years, they left the Ark in a little village miles away from the Tabernacle and the center of life. The tabernacle was in Shiloh, but the Ark - the Presence – wasn't there anymore. (1 Samuel 5-6)
- II. When David became king of Israel, he realized that the Tabernacle with its rituals of sacrifice and worship had little power or real meaning without the Ark of the Covenant which represented the presence and reality of God among His people. As soon as David had established his headquarters in Jerusalem, he expressed his desire to bring back the Ark. *"Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul."* (1 Chronicles 13:3)
- A. After two attempts, David successfully brought the Ark of the Presence to Jerusalem. In the process he learned some important lessons about dealing with the presence and power of the living God. David learned that when you're doing God's will it must be done in God's way, and you need to prepare a place for the Presence of God. (1 Chronicles 13:5-13; 1 Chronicles 15:2,13; 1 Chronicles 16:1)
  - B. Even though Moses' Tabernacle remained at Shiloh, the Presence of God was at David's Tabernacle in Jerusalem. Nothing is said of the structure or material or furnishings in David's Tabernacle. The entire emphasis is on the worship in David's Tabernacle. No longer a focus on rituals and sacrifices, but on singing, dancing, rejoicing and worshipping God from the heart; "Worship in spirit and in truth." David arranged that there would be singers, musicians, and choirs offering praise and worship to God before the Ark of the Presence twenty-four hours a day - continual praise in the Presence of God. (1 Chronicles 16)
- III. David built a Tabernacle for the Ark because he desired the Presence of God - (At Shiloh they still had Moses' Tabernacle - all the form and furniture - but no Presence.) David didn't care so much about the fashion, form, furniture - He just wanted God's Presence! (1 Chronicles 13:3; 2 Timothy 3:5)
- A. God said through the prophet Amos that He would rebuild or restore the Tabernacle of David. (Amos 9:11; Acts 7:48; Acts 17:24; Acts 15:16)

1. God did not restore the Tabernacle of Moses with its detailed instructions and elaborate rituals (Over 50 chapters in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy deal with the Tabernacle of Moses and the rituals of its worship.) The Tabernacle of Moses was the tabernacle of animal sacrifice and law, with the high priest entering the Holy Place once a year to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat. (Jesus entered once for all the Holy of Holies with His own blood and sprinkled the mercy seat with the blood of one sacrifice that atoned for all sin. Hebrews 9)
  2. God said He would restore the Tabernacle of David - where all the people rejoice and praise the name of the Lord because the Lamb of God has taken away their sin and invites all to be priests and worship before Him. Now not only one High Priest - but all may come into the Holy of Holies and experience the Presence of God.
- B. What is the truth in all this for us? The Presence of the Living God is among His people. He is accessible. We don't come before Him through elaborate rituals and only meet Him in a structure built according to a detailed set of plans and traditions. We can meet with Him and actually experience the joy and power of His presence in Praise and Worship. Praise for Him – God's Presence for us! God desires our sincere Praise and Worship, we desire the genuine Presence of our God. (Hosea 14:2; Hebrews 13:15)
- C. I enjoy and appreciate all that goes into the process and experience of "church;" Beautiful buildings, good music, powerful preaching, good fellowship. But what I am seeking is the Presence of God. As a believer, I have both a desire and a need to experience the Presence of the living God in praise and worship.

## ***SECTION 2: SCRIPTURAL CONCEPTS OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP***

### **I. The sacrifice of praise** (Jeremiah 33:11-13; Hebrews 13:15)

We do not Praise and Worship God just because we feel like it and are bursting with joy and enthusiasm. We Praise and Worship Him because He is worthy of our Praise. He is always worthy, even when we don't feel "Praisey!" Therefore it is legitimate to worship and praise Him as a sacrifice of our flesh - Spirit overcoming flesh. This sacrifice is acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.

### **II. Magnify the Lord** (Psalm 34:3; Psalm 35:27; Psalm 40:16; Psalm 70:4; Luke 1:46; Acts 10:46; Philippians 1:20)

The act of praising God or giving testimony to His greatness is often called "glorifying" or "magnifying the Lord." To magnify means to "make to appear larger." Many times our problems and difficulties appear large and overwhelming to us and may seem like mountains obstructing our pathway. Praise and Worship "Magnifies the Lord," putting things into proper perspective and allowing us to see Him as larger than our problems. This releases faith and allows us to rejoice in Him.

III. **God inhabits or is enthroned upon the praises of His people** (Psalm 22:3 AV)

Our praise and worship creates a throne or resting place where our Holy God can come and reign in our midst. An Old Testament type of this is the "Mercy Seat" where God's Presence appeared. When we praise and worship God in spirit and truth, His presence "dwells among us."

IV. **Ascending Mount Zion - Psalm 120-134: Psalms of Ascent** (Psalm 24:3)

The Psalms of Ascent were sung by the Israelites as they came into the city of Jerusalem on the feast days and walked in procession up the "Hill of Zion" to the Tabernacle or to the Temple to offer sacrifices and worship God. This pictures God's people coming from their scattered towns and villages and gathering in unity for the common purpose of worship. Worship lifts us above the routine of everyday life and worship unites us.

V. **Enter His gates with Thanksgiving... enter His courts with Praise** (Psalm 100:4)

We come into the presence of God in Praise and Worship in a process that normally takes us from Thanksgiving into Praise and then into Worship; much like the process of entering a king's palace through the gates into the courtyard and then being invited to enter the throne room for an audience with the king.

VI. **Praise moves us from the earthly to the heavenly realm** (Psalm 73:16-17)

In this Psalm of Asaph, he expresses his frustration and discouragement over trouble and injustice. Then he enters God's sanctuary and he is reminded that he has not been seeing the whole picture. There is a change in perspective or point of view that takes place when we come into the presence of the Lord in Praise and Worship. "...Then I understood!" There are many things that we simply can't understand until we come into God's presence in Praise and Worship.

VII. **In both personal and corporate praise and worship it is often helpful to follow a theme**

This allows us to focus on one particular aspect of God's goodness or greatness. Some of the possible themes for praise and worship:

Thanksgiving	Victory	Rejoicing
Repentance	Spiritual Warfare	Adoration
Magnify the Lord	Unity	Praise for His Acts
Yieldedness	Exalting His Majesty	Comfort
Exhortation	Holiness	Outreach
Commitment	The Blood of Jesus	Revival

VIII. **Scriptural types of expression of praise and worship in believers' meetings: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs** (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)

In Paul's letters to the churches, he makes reference to several aspects of praise and worship in the developing church. He refers to the singing of psalms (poetic songs from scripture or tradition typically sung to accompaniment of stringed or rhythm instruments); hymns (often more formal songs written to teach or aid in remembering important truths or events); and spiritual songs (usually spontaneous expressions of praise, often prophetic and inspirational in nature.)

IX. **Definition of some key terms for praise and worship:**

Thanksgiving and Praise can be done as acts of the will or acts of obedient faith. True Worship is a response of the heart to who God is. This is one of the reasons we must see Praise and Worship as a “flow;” a process that takes time, effort, and commitment.

- A. **Thanksgiving:** Gratitude for benefits received or experienced. Related to our own experience of blessing and provision.

Focuses on: THE PROVISION OF GOD.

*"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God..."*

- B. **Praise:** An expression of approval or admiration. Acknowledging God's perfection, works, and benefits. Man can be praised, God must be praised.

Focuses on: THE POWER OF GOD (Miracles, deeds)

- C. **Worship:** To bow down, to fall down, to serve, to kiss the hand, fall to the knees, touch the forehead to the ground. To pay honor, devotion, and reverence to God. Positioning ourselves in humility before God.

Focuses on: THE PERSON OF GOD

**QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION**

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1. Do you feel that it is important that we actually experience the Presence of God in Praise and Worship? Does Experiencing God's Presence require that we have a particular kind of feeling in Worship?
2. Do you think that having outward rituals or liturgies and having some sort of tangible, visible object is helpful in keeping our worship focused on God? Why?