

Worshipping in the Spirit

By Bill Scheidler

Key Verse: John 4:20-26

Jesus sharing with the Samaritan woman at the well

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

Five Characteristics of New Testament Worship

1. God is looking for those who will worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Worship “In Spirit” can mean several things:

a. Worship is to be spiritual in nature.

That is, it is not about the externals of worship such as buildings, stain glass windows, altars and external forms. It is not about a specific place (the temple). It is a sincere action of the heart toward God and therefore it can occur anywhere.

All that is needed for spiritual worship to take place is the heart and the voice. Everything else is to be an enhancement of the heart and the voice.

You can have instruments playing, people can be singing, but if the heart and the voice are not engaged, it is not spiritual worship.

b. Worship is to be worship in the Holy Spirit.

That is, our worship should come from a human spirit that is infused with the Holy Spirit. This is worship that is inspired by the Holy Spirit within and may at times consist of “singing in the Spirit” which Paul tells us is singing in “tongues” (I Cor. 14:15).

Worship “In truth” can also mean several things:

a. It is worship that is without falsehood.

It is sincere and without hypocrisy. It is not just for show. It is not just an outward form containing words of constant repetition. When you study the worship of David he was blatantly honest with God in his worship.

b. It is worship that is according to truth, that is, according to the Word of God which is truth.

2. God has a prescribed way in which we are to worship.

He had a prescribed way in the Old Testament—the proper order (Leviticus). They got in trouble when they did not follow it (I Chr. 15:13).

For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order. I Chronicles 15:13, NKJV

For because you bore it not [as God directed] at the first, the Lord our God broke forth upon us--because we did not seek Him in the way He ordained. --Amplified Bible

If we want the full blessing of God we must do God’s things God’s way. It is not a matter of worshipping God in any way that you want. True worship, which is a reflection of true submission to God, must be done in the way that God desires us to worship Him.

3. New Testament worship is according to the Davidic order.

David was the architect of worship in the Bible. His order of worship is reflected in the Psalms.

David seems to have jumped out of his dispensation of law into our dispensation of grace when he erected the Tabernacle of David on Mount Zion (Heb. 12:18-22).

“ For you have not come to [Mount Sinai] ...but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God...”

The worship of David was completely opposite from the Old Testament order established by God under Moses on Mount Sinai.

Tabernacle of Moses	Tabernacle of David
No Singing	Singer with Singing
No Music	Instruments and Music
No Recording	Recording (Psalms)
No Thanksgiving	Sacrifice of Thanksgiving
No Clapping	Clapping to the Lord
No Shouting	Shouts of Joy
No Dancing	Dancing before the Lord
No Lifting Hands	Lifting of Hands
No Access to Ark	All Levites before the Ark
Animals Sacrificed	No Animals Sacrificed
Natural Sacrifices	Spiritual Sacrifices

It should be noted in the Temple of Solomon both forms of worship were combined (See: I Chronicles 15-16).

The Early Church used the Psalms of David as a hymnbook because it was descriptive of their order or manner of worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... Ephesians 5:18-20

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:16-17

Notice the three levels of singing:

- Psalms

The Psalms of the Old Testament were the song book of the Early Church. Why? Because they reflected their New Testament order of worship. You can't sing about clapping without clapping. You can't sing about dancing without dancing, etc.

- Hymns

These were most likely composed songs that were designed to instruct in the truths of God.

- Spiritual Songs

These were most likely songs that came straight from the heart and were spontaneous or prophetic in nature. Some of them may have been adopted as congregational songs, but they were birthed from a spontaneous expression of love to the Lord.

4. The Davidic order involves the exuberant, full-bodied worship reflected in the Psalms.

Most of the Psalms were composed in relation to worship in the Tabernacle of David. Many were spontaneous expressions from the heart of the singer (this is why they needed recorders).

The Davidic order is characterized by the following:

a. Praising God with our voice or mouth (Ps. 42:4). This includes:

- SPEAKING (Ps. 51:15; 63:5; 66:8; 71:8; 109:30; 145:21)
- SINGING (Ps. 7:17; 9:1-2; 33:3; 40:3; 100:4; 135:3)

- SHOUTING (Ps. 5:11; 32:11; 35:27; 95:1-2; 132:9, 16)
- b. Praising God with our hands. This includes:
- LIFTING (Ps. 28:2; 63:3-4; 88:89; 134:1-2; 141:2; 143:6)
 - CLAPPING (Ps. 47:1; 98:8)
 - PLAYING INSTRUMENTS (Psalm 33:2; 43:4; 92:3; 97:4-6; 150)
- c. Praising God with our bodies. This includes:
- STANDING (Ps. 24:3; 33:8; 134:1; 135:1-2)
 - KNEELING OR BOWING (Neh. 8:6; Ps. 95:6-7)
 - DANCING (Ps. 149:3; 150:4; II Sam. 6:14)

5. The Davidic order involves the singing of a new song to the Lord.

- a. David continually referred to singing a new song (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; Ps. 96:1; Ps. 98:1; Ps. 144:9).

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. 2 Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. 3 Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. 4 For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth. Psalm 33:1-4

He has put a new song in my mouth-- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD. Psalm 40:3

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. 3 Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. 4 For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. Psalm 96:1-4

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. Psalm 98:1

- b. Isaiah encouraged the singing of a new song (Is. 42:10).

Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth... Isaiah 42:10

New Songs reflect new and up-to-date experiences with God.

- c. Worship in heaven involves singing a new song (Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3

They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. Revelation 14:1-3

This is a song that only the redeemed can sing.

d. A new song is a fresh, unknown song that is sung personally out of one's heart to the Lord to extol Him for His greatness, His attributes and His redemptive work in our lives.

e. The reasons for singing a new song can be summarized in the following passages:

- Psalm 33 – Because of His upright Word, His faithful works, His steadfast love, His marvelous creation, His absolute sovereignty, His grace manifest in choosing us.
- Psalm 96 – Because of God's name, His salvation, His glory, His greatness, His majesty, His honor, His strength, His beauty and His righteous judgment.
- Psalm 98 – Because of God's marvelous accomplishments, His supremacy, His revelation, His love and faithfulness, His impartial judgment.
- Psalm 144 – Because God defends and delivers from enemies, He provides victory over oppressors; He desires our personal prosperity and blessing.
- Revelation 5 – Because of Christ's universal redemption, His creation of the church and His servants.

This kind of worship creates faith in our own hearts and lives.

We are instructed in Psalm 47 to sing praises “with understanding.”

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. Psalm 47:6-7

As we worship in the corporate gathering of the church, the place for spiritual songs or new songs to the Lord is when we go into free praise between songs. In our personal life, new songs can be sung at all times. Let's keep our worship fresh before the Lord.