

HABITATIONS OF PRAISE “The Use of the Voice: Sing!”

1 Chron 15:16

David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals. NIV

As we shall shortly see, singing shows up early in Israel's history. They were not unfamiliar with singing worship. But with the institution of the tabernacle of David, song became the heart of worship. King David established the Levitical choirs that would sing continual praises to God. Until he sent them there, no singers ever sang in the Tabernacle of Moses.

Though it may seem strange to us to think that some would argue against singing as being a proper form of worship, such has been the case at various times in church history. She has had to fight on numerous occasions for this expression of worship. When the devil is not successful in getting the church to ban song, he does his best to get us to argue over the forms of the songs (style and music). Though form is important, of greater importance is the content of the songs. Do they line up with Scripture? Are they a genuine expression of a believer's heart for God? Do they glorify Him? These type of questions are more important than: does it have a rock and roll beat? Is it a chant? Was it written after 1700? We need to understand that no particular style of music is sacred. What makes a song sacred is the message.

In much of Christendom, people sit in sixteenth century furniture, listening to seventeenth century instruments while singing eighteenth century songs and then wonder why the world finds them to be out of touch or irrelevant. In the history of the church, God has been worshipped in the styles and forms of music popular in the day. We take congregational singing as a given. But it is a hard won tradition. And each time revival has swept the church, breaking us out of old wineskins, new songs and styles of music have been birthed.

Song is powerful and creative. The purpose of our being is to sing praises to Him.

Job 38:4-7

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

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

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

7 while the morning stars sang [Heb. *ranan*, sing loudly] together and all the angels shouted for joy? NIV

The creation was birthed in song. God said, "Let there be light." Scientists have discovered that there is a phonetic value for every ray of light. Color is music at a higher frequency. Light and song are different expressions of the same cosmic reality.

Isa 43:20-21

20 The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen,

21 the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise [*tehillah*]. NIV

God formed his people for himself that they may proclaim his praise. The Hebrew word translated "praise" in this verse is tehillah, which means the singing of praises.

“. . . God has wonderfully organized the human voice, so that in the plaines throat and lungs there are fourteen direct muscles which can make over sixteen thousand different sounds. Now, there are thirty indirect muscles which can make, it has been estimated, more than one hundred and seventy-three millions of sounds. Now, I say when God has so constructed the human voice, and when He has filled the whole earth with harmony, and when He recognized it in the ancient temple, I have a right to come to the conclusion that God loves music.”¹

When one compares this to the mere twelve tones that the meadowlark makes, one can get an appreciation for the fact that God has indeed formed us to sing praises to Him.

Jer 13:11

For as a belt is bound around a man's waist, so I bound the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to me,' declares the LORD, 'to be my people for my renown and praise [*tehillah*] and honor. But they have not listened.' NIV

Ps 22:3 “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises [*tehillah*] of Israel. KJV

Though all the forms of Psalmic praise that we are going to be looking at during the course of this series are biblical and important, it should be noted that it is in the sung praises of His people that the Lord dwells.

Ex 15:1-11

1 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.

2 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.

3 The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.

4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea.

5 The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.

6 "Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

7 In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble.

8 By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.

9 "The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.'

10 But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

11 "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory [*tehillah*], working wonders? NIV

¹ Earnest Gentile, *Worship God!*, p. 147 quoting David J. Beattie, *The Romance of Sacred Song*, p. 21

The Lord is awesome in the tehillah! As we sing to Him, he is magnified in our eyes.

Ex 15:17-18

17 You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance-- the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.

18 The LORD will reign for ever and ever." NIV

This portion of the Song of Moses is prophetic of the day when Israel would worship in Mount Zion, the city of David where both the tabernacle of David and the Temple would be (at least in near proximity).

Singing praise is an eternal enterprise, as the Song of Moses shows, for his songs endure.

Rev 15:2-4

2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God

3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." NIV

Other songs of Moses in Scripture are recorded in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 90.

Ps 90:14

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. NIV

Singing was in all of Israel's history and a definite part of God's program of worship. So known for songs were the Jews that when they were in captivity, the Babylonians demanded songs of them.

Ps 137:1-3

1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

2 There on the poplars we hung our harps,

3 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" NIV

We are God's people. As such, we are to sing praises to Him. The Church, like Israel, should be known for its joyful songs. We are directed to sing in the New Covenant.

Eph 5:19

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, NIV

Col 3:16 NIV

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.

Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are the three general classifications of the types of songs that should be found in the Church and in private devotions. Let's look at each one in more detail.

Psalms-

Luke 24:44

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." NIV

These are the three classifications of the Hebrew Scriptures: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms or the writings. Psalms are Scripture set to music. They express musically what God has revealed about Himself Scripturally. God is intended as the primary and exclusive recipient of a psalm.

1 Cor 14:26

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. NKJV

James 5:13

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. NKJV

Hymns-

Hymns are songs composed by people setting statements of faith and theology to music. Though they glorify God and His ways, there is a strong horizontal thrust toward man. One could say that the psalm is the "love God" part of worship and the hymn is the "love thy neighbor" part. Many scholars feel that we have some of the hymns of the early church embedded in Scripture.

Phil 2:6-11

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NIV

Col 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.
17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.
19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,
20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. NIV

John 1:1-16

:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning.
3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.
5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.
6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.
7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.
8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.
9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.
10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.
11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.
12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-
13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.
14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"
16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. NIV

Heb 1:3

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. NIV

1 Tim 3:16

16 Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. NIV

Rev 4:8

8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." NIV

The power of hymn singing:

Acts 16:19-33

19 When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar

21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.

23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.

24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

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

26 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.

27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.

30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-you and your household."

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. NIV

Spiritual Songs-

1 Cor 14:15

So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. NIV

In interpretation, I believe this verse is speaking specifically about singing in tongues and then singing the interpretation. But applicationally, it would also stand for singing in tongues in private devotion or in instructed meeting and prophetic songs. The church doesn't have a huge deficiency in the psalms and hymns area. Where our faith and practice need to rise up is in the spiritual songs arena. We need to understand that our Lord is a singing Lord and we need to hear his voice.

The Lord sings over us:

Zeph 3:17

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

The Lord sings among us:

Heb 2:12

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." NIV

Ps 22:22 "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you." NIV

Rom 15:9

so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." NIV

Ps 18:49

Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O LORD; I will sing praises to your name. NIV

We need to hear His voice:

John 10:1-16

1 "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.

3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-

15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. NIV

If we will listen with spiritual ears, we will hear the singing in heaven. Spiritual song is hearing His voice in song and bringing it forth to the congregation. This is the new song.

“A spiritual song is a spontaneous song prompted by the Holy Spirit. It should be part of every Christian’s daily worship and walk with God. This is one of the ways in which we build ourselves up in the Holy Spirit . . . Having learned this great secret of spiritual song, we should carry it into the congregation when we are all assembled together.”²

The New Song in warfare:

Isa 42:10-13

10 Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.

11 Let the desert and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice.

Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops.

12 Let them give glory to the LORD and proclaim his praise in the islands.

13 The LORD will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies. NIV

Ps 40:3

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. NIV

Ps 149:1, 5-9

1 Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints.

5 Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.

6 May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands,

7 to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples,

8 to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron,

9 to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the LORD. NIV

Ps 104:33 “I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” NIV

Amen!

² Earnest Gentile, *Worship God!*, p.156, quoting James L. Beall, *The Ministry of Worship and Praise*.