

THE MOST
IMPORTANT
THING IN
Your Life

with Ron Isam

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE

**“Man's chief end in life is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”
from Westminster Shorter Catechism**

**“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”
Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your
soul, and all your mind.’ - Matthew 22:36-37 NLT**

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Introduction

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. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.
(John 4:23-24 NKJV)

WHAT WORSHIP MEANS TO GOD THE FATHER

The Seeking Father. Jesus said that the first and great commandment is for man to love God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength (**Matthew 22:37**). It seems natural for men to seek God. But in the area of worship, we are told that God is seeking men. God would only seek something of supreme value.

In light of the great commandment and the clear-cut teaching of Jesus concerning the desires of the Father, we conclude that worshiping God in spirit and truth is the singularly most important thing in our lives. The famous words of the Shorter Catechism say it very succinctly; What is the chief end of man? **“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”**

The Singing God. Zephaniah has a powerful prophecy about God himself singing and rejoicing over his people. Like a mighty military hero, the victorious God brings deliverance to his **“humble and lowly ones”** (3:12). The prophet concludes in **Zephaniah 3:17 KJV,**

***The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty;
He will save and rejoice over thee with joy.
He will rest in his love,
He will joy over thee with singing.***

The Worshipping Savior. Much of the ministry of Jesus was spent in prayer and worship of the Father. He lived in God and only did those things that pleased the Father.

The gospels tell how Jesus sang hymns with his disciples (**Matthew 26:30**). And when the writer to the Hebrews shows the humanity of Jesus, he explains that Jesus is a priest unto God and a fellow worshiper with his disciples (**Hebrews 2:10-18**), **“I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.”**

The Royal Priesthood. The church is portrayed as a temple to house the living God, and its people are described as priests to offer praise and worship to him. (**1 Peter 2:5**) says that we are **“like living stones built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”** Verse 1 Peter 2:9 adds, **“You are a**

royal priesthood....that you should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Hebrews 13:15 concludes, *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”* NKJV.

Since we are compared to priests and a living temple, let us see what we can learn from the truths of temple worship.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS FROM THE TEMPLE WORSHIP

David. God gave a special revelation of wisdom to King Solomon. This revelation qualified him to write most of the book of Proverbs (**1 Kings 3:12**).

In like manner, God raised up David, *“a man after His own heart.”* David is outstanding in his worship of God and his ability to capture all the varied experiences and emotions of man before God, as expressed in the Psalms.

David not only prepared the building materials for the temple, but he created musical instruments and trained Israel to worship God before the temple was built. The temple in Jerusalem was to be the appointed place where the nation gathered to celebrate its life in God. Therefore, we need to learn from the principles given to David regarding worship.

Our special interest is the dedication of the temple and the bringing in of the ark.

The Dedication of the Temple. **1 Chronicles 25:1-8** tells how David trained singers and created instruments to glorify God. One interesting feature is that it was a “family affair,” as fathers trained their sons and daughters to worship (**1 Chronicles 25:5-6**).

According to **2 Chronicles 5:12-14**, the temple was dedicated amid mighty praise and a unified singing about the grace of God *“**12 The Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets — 13 indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying:***

“For He is good, For His mercy endures forever,”

that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, 14 so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God. NKJV

The house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not minister because of the cloud; *“for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God”*

Probably no connection exists between the numbering of the priests and the 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, but one can hardly resist the devotional thought! Notice the emphasis on their unison – being in one accord and trumpeting the grace of God – his “steadfast love.”

Bringing in the Ark. The delightful account about bringing in the ark is given in **2 Samuel 6**.

Note the elements of worship as suggested by verses

2 Samuel 6:14 and **2 Samuel 6:15**. "**David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.**" Three things are underscored.

The **wholeheartedness** of the worship, David worshiped with all his might.

The **child-likeness** of the worship. The people were "making merry" before the Lord. The Hebrew word, *sachaq*, translated "making merry" pictures the joyful play of the little children. **Zechariah 8:5** uses the same word and says, "**The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets.**"

The **humility** of the worship. Dancing was usually the role of slaves, especially the slave girls. **Unger's Bible Dictionary** says that a linen ephod symbolized both the role of a priest and the garment of a woman. So for David, the mighty king, to remove his royal robes and don the garb of a serving person and dance with slave girls was an act of great humility and self-effacement.

Michael, his proud and indignant wife, was incensed at his humility. How dare he take on the role of a menial! David explained in **2 Samuel 6:22**, according to **Moffatt's translation**, "**When I dance in God's presence I count myself too humble for that honor... I am not honoring myself...(you think) I am seeking honor from slave girls?**" By the way, The Bible says that Michael had "**no children to the day of her death**", because she "**despised**" the wholehearted, childlike, and humble worship of her husband David the King. Be careful not to despise someone's orderly worship because it can bring barrenness in more ways than just not having children.

THE WELCOME OF JESUS CHRIST TO WORSHIP GOD

David. God gave a special revelation of wisdom to King Solomon. This revelation qualified him to write most of the book of Proverbs (**1 Kings 3:12**). In like manner, God raised up David, "**a man after His own heart.**" David is outstanding in his worship of God and his ability to capture all the varied experiences and emotions of man before God, as expressed in the Psalms. David not only prepared the building materials for the temple, but he created musical instruments and trained Israel to worship God before the temple was built. The temple in Jerusalem was to be the appointed place where the nation gathered to celebrate its life in God. Therefore, we need to learn from the principles given to David regarding worship. Our special interest is the dedication of the temple and the bringing in of the ark.

Psalms 117. In some ways the shortest of all the Psalms is the most significant. For in Psalm 117 the Gentiles are invited to worship God and celebrate his grace with the people Israel.

***Praise the Lord, all you nations;
extol him, all you peoples.
for great is his love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord.***

This Psalm, including **Psalms 113-118**, was used in the Passover celebration. This means that Jesus said these very words on the night of his betrayal in the upper room as he finished the

Passover and transformed it into the Lord's Supper.

In this great section on worship in **Romans 15**, the apostle Paul quotes **Psalm 117** as his basis for Christ's welcome to the Gentiles to glorify God: "**Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you for the glory of God. Christ became a servant...in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,**

*'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing hymns to your name.'*

*And again it is said,
'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people;'*

*And again,
'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him,
all you peoples.'*

Jesus is David's greater son who builds the true temple of God. Therefore, the Gentiles through Jesus Christ are invited to worship God according to the principles revealed to David. For those of us who are Gentiles, the Psalms have become our hymnal; we are the new temple of God, and we with the redeemed Israel make up the new people of God.

Ephesians. The place of the Gentiles in the purpose of God is probably best learned from Ephesians. According to **Ephesians 1:5-6**, "**God destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved.**"

The church has become a new temple for a dwelling place of God, **Ephesians 2:19-22** explains "**Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**"

Conclusion. As priests unto God, let us have true temple worship. Through Jesus Christ let us offer up wholehearted, child-like, humble and unified praises to the Father.

To achieve what God desires, we must by grace be given an open ear to hear and an open mouth to speak. David explained it this way in **Psalm 40:6-10**, and Jesus repeated it in **Hebrews 10:5-7**. Let's make it our aim, too.

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

**"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.**

**6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.**

**7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.'" NKJV**



What It Means To Worship In Spirit and Truth

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24 NKJV)

“26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27 NKJV)

“14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” (1 Corinthians 14:14-15 NKJV)

WHAT IS SPIRIT?

God is Spirit. When Jesus taught the woman at the well about worship, He said, ***“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*** The Samaritan woman had faulty views of God. Out of her ignorance she limited God to a local mountain as **John 4:20** explains, ***“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship?”*** Jesus countered by saying, ***“Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem...but in spirit and in truth.”***

God has revealed himself to us as an eternal spirit, ***“a most pure spirit, invisible, without body parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal.”*** He is infinite in being and perfection.

Spirit and Truth. “The words “spirit and “truth” are quite inseparable. Jesus spoke of the Spirit of God as the “Spirit of Truth” (**John 16:13**)

And he told the woman in **John 4** that the true God is a “Father.” Three times he referred to worship of the Father. This means that God is “personal.” Spirit is not a mysterious indefinable term for a blind physical force such as electricity. The fruit of the spirit is ***“love, joy, peace, patience,***

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” These concrete characteristics speak of a life-level.

As spirit, God is invisible to the natural eye, but He is the very spirit of life, for in Him **“we live and move and have our being.”**

The Father and Son. Father is a “family” term. God has revealed himself to us through his Son. We worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 1:17**). As **1 John 5:20** puts it, **“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”**

We worship God the Father through the power and person of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And, this is what it means to worship in spirit and truth.

WORSHIPING WITH THE SPIRIT

Man has a spirit. God is Spirit, man is a body-spirit. **James 2:26** bluntly notes, **“The body apart from the spirit is dead.”** In **1 Corinthians 14:14-15** Paul distinguished between his mind and his spirit. He could, he said, pray or sing with his mind or his spirit. By the mind he means the rational part of man which communicates intelligently with other men and God. This part of man is never ignored or belittled. But it is not viewed as a completely adequate expression of worship – for it is too limited. The mind alone is merely one part of man’s total nature.

Jesus said God wants us to love him with our total being, our mind, yes, but also our heart and our soul. (**Matthew. 22:37**)

The Non-Rational. Man is more than a rational being. Worship in the spirit is not rational, however, **we do not mean irrational!** We mean **non-rational**. The spirit of man is deeper, more “real” and personal than the human intellect. The spirit is the “real you.” Sometimes the human mind is incapable of saying all that one feels, knows and desires. Therefore, worship in the spirit allows for the total being, the conscious and the unconscious, the rational and the non-rational, to be lifted up to God.

With Groans That Words Cannot Express. Paul says in **Romans 8:26-27** that the Spirit intercedes for us **“with groans that words cannot express.”** So we get an inkling of the Spirit in such things as sighs and groans and laughter and singing. Laughter, for example, is among the most meaningful things we do and yet it is difficult to explain what one is “saying” when he laughs. It is non-rational, yet full of meaning. This gives us a clue to singing in the Spirit and speaking in tongues.

The finite human intellect is simply not capable of comprehending the infinite God. Nor is it designed to accommodate fully faith, hope and love. These are reserved for the “spirit.” The mind has its place, but as a total tool of worship it might be compared to a peanut.

Conclusion. If we worship in the Spirit it may seem strange to us, remember that the wisdom of man is often directly at odds with the wisdom of God. In **1 Corinthians 2:14** the apostle wrote, **“The man without a Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”**

God alone knows what pleases Him and how He wants to be worshiped. God needs to heal us at the heart and unify our being to worship him. **Psalm 86:8-13 NKJV** explains this,

***8 Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord;
Nor are there any works like Your works.***

***9 All nations whom You have made
Shall come and worship before You, O Lord,
And shall glorify Your name.***

***10 For You are great, and do wondrous things;
You alone are God.***

11 Teach me Your way, O LORD;

I will walk in Your truth;

Unite my heart to fear Your name.

***12 I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.***

13 For great is Your mercy toward me,

And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.



The Meaning of Body Speech

“9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation. 10 All my bones shall say, “LORD, who is like You, Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?” (Psalm 35:9-10 NKJV)

“2 My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” (Psalm 84:2 NKJV)

“1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 12:1 NIV)

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE BODY

Man as a Body-Person. The Bible gives great importance to the human body. The body is viewed with dignity and is really quite inseparable from one's essential person. **1 Corinthians 6:19** calls the body a ***“temple of the Holy Spirit.”***

The body is never viewed as an unnecessary addenda to the spirit. The resurrection of the body is said to be absolutely necessary (**1 Corinthians 15**). If the body is not raised, nothing is left. Christianity does not teach the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. For the body is the person.

All created human life must be expressed through a body. Man is not a pure spirit like God. He is and always will be a body-person.

The Bible offers a complex but unitary view of man. According to Biblical thought, we are our bodies. The Hebrew bible does not even have a word for the human body as such. When the Old Testament speaks of the body, it uses the descriptive word “flesh,” ***basar***, which emphasizes man's creatureliness. In summary, we must worship God with our body.

The Body as a Living Sacrifice. The body was made by and for the Lord. It belongs to God. **1 Corinthians 6:20** notes, ***“You are not your own; you are bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”***

Worship of God must come from the heart, but it should also show up in an open, concrete, and real life way.

Paul says that spiritual worship is to present our bodies as living sacrifices. The language is obviously taken from the Old Testament sacrifices. In light of Leviticus, let us look at some of the lessons suggested by one of the offerings.

- The sacrifice could be a very valuable animal or inexpensive bird, perhaps suggesting that worship of God was open to everyone.
- The animal was to be a male, perhaps suggesting the giving up of one's power and independence, and the worshiping of God with all might and strength.
- If it was an animal, it was skinned and if it was a bird, it lost its feathers, perhaps suggesting the putting aside of all pride and self-glory.
- Every part of the animal was laid out in order by name, perhaps suggesting the use of the personality and the whole man in worship.
- The animal was totally burned to ashes, perhaps suggesting the wholehearted way we are to love God with "all our heart, soul and mind."

GOD'S CALL TO WORSHIP

Hebrew Word Pictures. Behind our common English words for worship are some pictures of the body.

The very word worship, for example, shachah, literally means to prostrate one's self in some way, such as bowing down or falling down flat on one's face. Psalm 95:6 explains,

"O come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!"

And Joshua 5:14 illustrates, "Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped." A call to worship is an invitation to "get down" before the Lord.

Our word "bless" is a word picture taken from body language, for the Hebrew word, berak is the word for the knee and means to "kneel down."

Another common word translated praise or thanksgiving is yadah, which literally means to use the hand.

Silence. Contrary to much thinking, the Bible does not call for men to worship God in silence. This is perhaps one of the leading deceptions about reverence, for churches are said to be reverent when no one speaks above a whisper and men tiptoe around in silence. Even as I write these words, I am holding a church bulletin which begins in bold words: ENTER IN SILENCE.

The oft-quoted words of Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God," is a command for the nations to cease military action. A meek and quiet spirit does not mean a non-talking person, but a soul at peace, free of anger and manipulative action.

Biblical worship is a fairly "noisy" affair. Note I did not say disorderly or confusing. God calls us to worship with "loud praises," "joyful noises," and "high sounding cymbals." Psalm 30:12 says,

"My soul shall praise thee and not be silent."

Such chapters as Exodus 15, 2 Samuel 6, 2 Chronicles 5, 2 Chronicles 20, 2 Chronicles 29-30, Ezra 3, Nehemiah 12, Acts 2 and Psalm 150 show how mighty God wants us to worship him; to fill God's house with joyous praise which springs up from loving creative spirits set free by the grace of Jesus Christ true reverence for God, Psalm 100:1-2 is conclusive:

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the lands!

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

THE LANGUAGE OF BODY SPEECH

The Meaning of Upraised Hands. The human hands represent what we do. They are the organs whereby we accomplish things. We readily understand the prayer in **Psalm 90:17**, "**establish the work of our hands for us.**"

One's entire life can be expressed in the way he uses his hands. For this reason we say such things as, "holding a life in one's hands." **Psalm 119:109** puts it this way, "**I hold my life in my hand continually.**" David recognized the meaning of upraised hands to God when he wrote in **Psalm 141:2**, "**Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**" Upraised hands suggest at least two things in worship.

- It is the way we acknowledge our weakness and express our need. Since the hands are the organs whereby we work and accomplish things, hands raised to God are an admission that we are not able to establish our lives. We raise our empty hands in surrender to God's power and to receive his grace. **Psalms 28:2** explains,

"Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift my hands toward your Most Holy Place."

- It signifies a unity with another and is used to express the striking of an agreement or covenant. This form of clapping or striking hands is usually translated as "making a pledge" (**Proverbs 6:1, Job 71:3, etc**) The word used describes a bondsman. In this case we show our unity with God and acknowledge our covenant relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.
- **Hiss and Clap / Stomp at the Enemy.** "**All who pass by clap their hands at you; They hiss and shake their heads**" **Lamentations 2:15 NKJV.** Many times when kings would come

home from war the people would clap in triumph for the King, and then when the enemy would come by they would clap their hands hard and hiss and shake their heads.

The Meaning of Dancing. Worship with full body movement has been lost to most of the church except to some black congregations and other experimental groups.

Jewish people still use a great deal of body motion in prayer and praise as they sway back and forth rhythmically. This is probably a descendant of Biblical dancing.

Biblical dancing had no resemblance to modern ballroom dancing, for the sexes did not dance together. It was merely a joyous form of using the whole body in some form of skipping or swaying to God.

Unger's Bible Dictionary says that religious dancing was made a part of worship of the early Christians but was probably laid aside because of objectionable dances in pagan rituals. The following things are said about dancing in the Bible.

- The people of Israel, especially the women, celebrated victories with singing and dancing (**Exodus 15:20; Judges 1:34; 1 Samuel 18:6-7; 1 Samuel 29:5**).
- David danced before the Lord with all his might at the bringing in of the ark. (**2 Samuel 6:14-16**).
- In various Psalms, David exhorts us to praise God with dancing (**Psalms 149:30, 150:4, 30:11**).
- Jeremiah prophesied the restoration of dancing with renewal of God's people (**Jeremiah 31:4, 14**).
- Jesus used the illustration of dancing as normal for children (**Matthew 11:17**); as a celebration for returning prodigal sinners (**Luke 15:25**); and He told us to "leap for joy" amidst adversity (**Luke 6:23**).

CONCLUSION: Like other parts of the body, the feet are also symbolic. The feet were often washed to show humility and purity. They could be shaken to denote separation. And they could be placed on the neck of an enemy to picture victory.

Worship with dancing calls for discretion, but God knows how He wants to be worshiped. It is not for man to decide what does and does not please God. Since the Scriptures command us to "praise His name with dancing," we should respond with joyous hearts.



Joyous Children

*"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise." Matthew 21:16
NKJV*

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS CHILDLIKENESS

Turning into Children. To illustrate greatness in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus placed a little child in the midst of His disciples and said, "***Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven***" (Matthew 18:2). He meant we must take on the unassuming, spontaneous simplicity and natural dependency of childlikeness.

Alan Funt of Candid Camera once said that his greatest joy was to work with small children. He commented on how free and natural they were. But something seemed to go wrong, he said, as children grew older. They tend to become self-conscious, less natural and more rigid.

It is significant that the Scriptures inseparably link worship with children. We must, so to speak, turn into children before we can be perfected in praise.

Palm Sunday. One of Jesus' important teaching times on worship took place on Palm Sunday amidst the praises of little children. According to **Matthew 21:15-16**, "***But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did (healing the blind and the lame) and the children shouting in the temple area, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant. 'Do you hear what these children are saying?' they asked him. 'Yes' replied Jesus, 'have you never read,***

***From the lips of children and infants
You have ordained praise?"***

Psalm 8. This quotation of Jesus is from Psalm 8, what might be entitled, "Man's Title Deed to the Earth."

David saw the majesty of God in such things as the stars and the miracle of human speech in the mouth of babes. Yet he knew that God was mindful of man and had placed man in dominion over all the earth.

Two major ideas might be drawn from Psalm 8.

•It takes the spirit of a child to express the proper wonder at God's majesty in creation. Moffat translates **Psalm 8:20** in this order:

*Let me sing of this, thy heavenly strength,
Like tiny children lisping out thy praise.*

•When men are like children before God, they take their proper place as victorious kings of the earth. The familiar King James version of **Psalm 8:2** reads, "***Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger.***"

This may recall the victory of David over the giant Goliath. **1 Samuel 17:42** explains, "***He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him.***" God brings victory as childlike spirits send forth praise to Him.

Remember how the victorious armies of Jehosophat followed the praisers into the battle according to **2 Chronicles 20:22**, "***When they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the enemy.***"

The tribe of Judah, the kingly tribe, was chosen to lead Israel in the line of march. And the name of Judah means, "Praise!"

Man is never more the king of the earth than when he is praising God. And man is a man as God meant man to be when he is trusting God, his Father, like a loving little child.

BROTHERS BE "MATURE BABES"

1 Corinthians Chapter Fourteen. 1 Corinthians 14 provides a vital insight into the worship of the early church and the life of the apostle Paul.

In a manner similar to David, Paul joins an appeal to manliness with childlikeness. After the explanation about praying and singing in the spirit (in **1 Corinthians 14:14** and **1 Corinthians 14:15**), Paul says in verse **20**, "**Brothers, stop thinking as children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.**" He means that while spiritually and morally we are to characterize innocence and purity, we are to be clear-headed and mature in our thinking.

Maturity also means that we should act in love and be considerate of others. The people of Corinth were violating these principles in public worship, for in their selfishness they had forgotten to think of others, especially the unbelievers who visited their worship services.

Childlikeness is not the same as childishness. In worship, men are asked to be "mature babes." Paul illustration of a "mature babe" is based on the prophecy in **Isaiah 28:9-13**, as **1 Corinthians 14:21** indicates.

Isaiah 28:9-13. In Isaiah's day the people of Israel had grown proud and rebellious. They had lost their childlike trust in God and were hardened against his word. Isaiah's messages were fitted only for "babes they complained:

**When will he teach knowledge,
and to whom will he explain the message?
those who are weaned from the milk,
those taken from the breast?
For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little there a little.**

Isaiah's report showed that God's displeasure which would issue in the captivity of foreign powers and prevent Israel from entering into God's true rest.

**Nay, but by men of strange lips
and with an alien tongue
the Lord will speak to his people,
to whom he said,
"this is the rest;
give rest to the weary
and this is the repose;"
yet they would not hear.**

Man must not set up his proud unregenerate intellect in defiance of God. Such things as speaking in tongues and singing in the spirit call for a radical return to a childlike spirit. Still, we are not to imagine that worship in the spirit is offensive or violates a single law of love. "Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults."

THE JOYFUL SOUNDS OF LITTLE CHILDREN

Joyful Noises. It is interesting that the Scriptures often call for God's people to make "joyful noises" unto the Lord.

The Hebrew word translated noise, "*ruah*," literally means noise! Sometimes it is a "shout." This joyful noise or shouting has a special history behind it. It was done for example in the following cases:

- It was the blast or sound that came from the trumpet announcing Jubilee (**Leviticus 25:9**). Jubilee was something to shout about indeed. All debts were canceled; houses and lands returned to the original family estate; prison doors were opened and slaves set free. This wasn't something merely to talk about – it demanded a joyful shout!!
- It was the victory shout of the armies of Israel around the walls of Jericho (**Joshua 6:20**).
- It was the joyous worship as the ark of God was being brought in for the temple at Jerusalem (**1 Chronicles 15:28**).
- It was the loud praises when the foundations for the new temple was laid after the return from captivity (**Ezra 3:10-13**). "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David, king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: 'He is God; His love to Israel endures forever.' And all the

people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, many shouted for joy. And the sound was heard far away.

Out of the Mouth of Babes. Babies learn to communicate before they learn to talk. Communication comes earlier and is more fundamental to man than mere rational speech.

Parents learn to interpret the cries and coos, the noises that ascend from the infant's crib. So it should not seem strange that Jesus said, "perfect praise comes out of the mouth of babes." He means that men must resist all pride and any false autonomy that would keep them from being open and receptive.

On one occasion Jesus greatly rejoiced before God. **Luke 10:21** gives the reason, "***At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.'***"

Conclusion. It is hardly happenstance that David, Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ all three link together childlikeness with worship. God is calling us all to be joyous children before Him. One wonders if Jesus healed the blind and the lame on Palm Sunday, so they, like all men, might see the glory of God and dance before him like happy little children.



CHAIRETE! ***New Creation Worship***

“7 So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the LORD, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight. 8 And they cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student.” (1 Chronicles 25:7-8 NKJV).

“Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.” (Psalm 33:3 NKJV).

“18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.” (Isaiah 65:18-19 NKJV)

THE NEW CREATION

The Resurrection. The heart of the gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “He was designated the Son of God in power according to the spirit of Holiness by his resurrection from the dead,” says Romans 1:4. Jesus is now free of all corrupting powers. He reigns in life. And He has sent His spirit, the Holy Spirit, back into this old creation so that men might live as creative new creation people with him.

In the words of **2 Corinthians 5:17**, ***“If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”***

Chairete. After the initial meeting with Mary at the tomb, the first word spoken by the risen Lord to his disciples is recorded in **Matthew 28:9-10**, ***“Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.”***

The Greek word translated “Greetings” is *chairete*. Literally it means something like “be full of cheer,” “be glad,” or “rejoice.” Like the Hebrew word shalom, it carries a volume of meaning, much more than a mere greeting. It is almost as though Jesus gave us a watchword from the new creation – “Rejoice!”

The apostle Paul, of course picked up on the theme in the repeated formula of **Philippians**

4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.”

The Book of Revelation depicts the sleepless praise of all creation in the four living creatures who “day and night never cease to sing around the throne of God” (Revelation 4:8) It is a powerful poetic picture of life awakened to the reality of a new creation life in God.

The New Has Come. A life in Christ means that the new has come. The old has not totally passed away, and that means that we must suffer. But the new has come, and that means that we must suffer. But the new has come, and that means we can rejoice. **Romans 5:3** paradoxically puts it, **“we rejoice in our sufferings.”**

“For in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37)

“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-17)

The early Christians won the day for they simply “outlived everybody.” Acts 2:46-47 records: “they partook of food with glad and generous hearts praising God and having favor with all the people.”

After being beaten and socially humiliated, “They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus” (Acts 5:41).

They were drawing their life from the risen Christ, from the new creation. They were like a people **“filled with new wine” (Acts 2:13)**. Therefore, they sang **“new songs”** and spoke with “new tongues.”

New Songs

Making up the Melody. Ephesians 5:18-20 instructs us to “be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We know the Psalms were written to be sung. Some still, apparently retain their ancient name of the melody and the type of musical instrument. While all the tunes have been lost, the loss is really our gain, for we are given the privilege of making up our own melodies in a fresh and creative way.

Spiritual Songs. The singing of a “spiritual song” especially calls for a creative spirit. The New bible commentary calls spiritual songs, “spontaneous expressions of praise,”

A common element of worship exists between psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. But as Trench clarifies, “each has a meaning which belonged to it more, and by a better right, than it belonged to either of the others.” (Synonyms of the New Testament, 296).

Spiritual songs apparently can also be distinguished from singing in tongues, for both **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16** emphasize spiritual songs being sung in public services and to one another, while in **1 Corinthians 14:15-19**, places greater control on singing in public.

We conclude that spiritual songs are spontaneous, free, and creative expressions of praise both in words and melodies to God. It could be done by a single individual or by an entire congregation in

joyous thanksgiving to the Father.

Singing in Tongues. As we have seen, singing in tongues is a Biblical form of worship and should be encouraged as a way of blessing God.

In **1 Corinthians 14:15-19** the apostle Paul explains the function and the limitation of singing in tongues as “**blessing with the Spirit,**” and “**giving thanks well.**” The problem is, of course, that it is in tongues and intended primarily for God. This limits the public manifestation of singing in tongues. It is mostly a private means of worship.

Tongues are defined in **Acts 10:46** as “**extolling God**” and in **Acts 2:11** as telling forth the “**mighty works of God.**” So, singing in tongues in one’s private devotion becomes a highly creative act of worship.

Again, we must remember that God knows how he wants to be worshiped. Unregenerate man would hardly have chosen singing in tongues as a significant spiritual gift.

New Wine

The spirit of Jesus calls for men to be constantly fresh and flexible. “***Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,***” says **1 Peter 2:2.**

Nothing can grow without changing. Jesus said that his teaching was like new wine, which demanded new forms to receive it and express it. In the words of **Luke 5:37**, “***No man puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins.***” He said this to counter the resistance and rigidity of the Pharisees. They simply could not change their old tastes; so Jesus warned, “***No one after drinking the old wine desires the new; for he says, the old is good***” (**Luke 5:39**).

Creative new creation worship should keep us forever open, receptive and growing. We should seek for new ways, new depths, and new forms in which to glorify God. This must be, of course, in harmony with the Scriptures and be in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit-Filled. We worship God the Father in the name of His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that we worship the God revealed to us and made accessible to us through Christ and we do it by the reality and dynamic of his Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

No true worship would exist without the Holy Spirit. Therefore, creative new creation worship comes through the Holy Spirit. Paul is emphatic in **Ephesians 5:18**, “***Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***”

The Holy Spirit creates worship and worship causes the believer to be filled with the Spirit. Worship and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit and worship – the two are inseparable. Since believers worship and pray by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can boldly believe that the creative joy of ever increasing love and adoration will never be exhausted.

Singing Stars and Sons of God. The infinite heavenly Father beckons his happy children ever

onward, ever upward. The limitless skies above suggest that the joyous task of glorifying God will never end. In **Psalm 8:1-3** David pondered creation and said,

***O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens;
When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?***

God reminded Job of the joy of the morning stars and the sons of God when the earth was first created, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” As joy was the culmination of the first creation, so the fullness of joy is the substance of the new creation.

Isaiah 65:18 triumphantly tells it, “***I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.***”

Conclusion. The risen Christ still calls his people to rejoice. His chief word from the new creation is ***Chairete!*** Rejoice! Like his disciples we gladly fall at his feet and worship. For us, life has become a constant celebration, even though we live amidst suffering and death.



The Joyful Assembly

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,” (Hebrews 12:22 NKJV)

“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.” (Colossians 3:16 NKJV)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Hebrews 12:18-24. Hebrews is a book of “better things.” It describes how Jesus Christ guarantees the eternal inheritance of the people of God. The writer contrasts and compares the benefits of Israel under the old dispensation with the better things of believers under the new covenant.

The high point in the Old Testament was the revelation given to Moses at Mount Sinai, which became a terrifying experience for Israel (**Hebrews 12:18-22**). In contrast, believers in Christ have come to a joyous community assembled in festal gathering. Taking the marginal reading of the RSV, ten things belong to believers, **12:22-24**. (The number ten is no doubt an intentional association with the Ten Commandments.)

- Mount Zion
(Mount Zion typifies the Kingdom of God, the place where God reigns.)
- The city of the living God
(God is our native homeland)
- The heavenly Jerusalem
(The earthly Jerusalem is a pale reflection of the true reality.)
- To innumerable angels, Cf. Deuteronomy 33:2
(Both the visible and the invisible world harmonize in Christ.)

- To the joyful assembly
(The time for joyous national celebration.)
- To the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven
(The first-born received a double portion of the inheritance.)
- To a judge who is God of all
(Which guarantees a universal justice and triumph.)
- To the spirits of just men made perfect
(Perfection is already an accomplished fact.)
- To Jesus the mediator of a new covenant
(Jesus has ratified the new covenant arrangement in grace.)
- To the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel
(The blood of Abel cried out for vengeance, not grace.)

The National Feasts. Three times a year the families of Israel assembled in Jerusalem to keep the religious holidays called the “feasts of the Lord.” They included:

- The Passover** – the feast of unleavened bread
- Pentecost** – the feast of weeks
- Tabernacles** – the feast of booths

The feast of booths in **Deuteronomy 16:14-16** illustrates the nature of these festal gatherings:

- It was a family affair with every level of society including visitors, “Be joyful at your Feast – you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.” (**16:14**)
- It lasted an entire week, which represents the smallest but complete cycle of human life and activity, “For seven days celebrate the Feast” (**16:15**).
- The feast was to be characterized only by rejoicing, “and your joy will be complete” (**16:16**). The Hebrew phrase, *ach samach*, rejoice only, excludes sorrow, mourning and murmuring.

GRACE AS THE GROUNDS OF REJOICING

The Dynamic of Grace. **Colossians 3:16** says we are to worship “**with a thankfulness in our hearts to God.**” Literally the Greek New Testament reads, *en the charity*, “by the grace.”

The KJV reads, “**with grace in your hearts.**” This means that grace is grounds and dynamic of all true worship. In fact, the Greek word for grace, *charis*, is the root word for thanksgiving, *eu-charis* – our English word eucharist – and the same is true for joy which is the word *chara*. So grace and joy and thanksgiving are all related.

The Melody of Grace. Lewis Sperry Chafer believes that “grace more than any other single word is the sum total of all that enters into Christianity.” In **Romans 5:21** Paul concludes that the “**reign**

of grace leads to eternal life.” The love and grace of God is everywhere celebrated throughout the entire Bible. But nowhere does it show up more powerfully than the Psalms. It seems that grace just has to be sung!

Of the 237 times the Hebrew word for grace, *chesed*, is used, 127 are in the Psalms. *Chesed* is translated by such endearing terms as “loving kindness,” “mercy,” and “steadfast love.” A surface study of these 127 passages show the following glorious things about grace.

- Grace is wonderful and glorious for it is like a miracle in human life (**Psalm 31:21**)
- Grace is given on the basis of God’s name in sovereign freedom which means no man can boast of his own merit (**Psalm 109:21-22**).
- Grace is everywhere and it is everlasting; the earth is full of it and it extends to the heavens (**Psalm 119:64, Psalm 36:5**).
- Grace follows us, surrounds us and crowns us; it comforts us, supports us and saves us (**Psalm 23:5, 32:10, 103:4, 31:16, 94:18, 118:76**).
- Grace is God dealing with us in love and mercy and not on the basis of our sins (**Psalm 103:8-12**).
- Grace is God himself coming to meet man in mighty redemptive power (**Psalm 59:10**).
- Grace is better than life (**Psalm 63:3**).
- Grace should be sung and rejoiced in day and night (**Psalm 89:1-2, 90:14**).

GIVING AND RECEIVING GRACE

Body Life. Hebrews says we have “come to the festal gathering and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.” The festal gathering is inseparable from the general assembly.

Grace is not mystical substance. It comes through sharing the truth of God’s Word. As fellow believers teach and minister grace to one another, growth takes place.

Body Growth. We grow in grace and knowledge, says **2 Peter 3:18**. And this comes as we learn to speak the truth in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16 explains the conditions and process of body growth: “*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*”

Colossians 3:16-17 and **Ephesians 5:19-21** present five interlocking truths.

- We are called to a life of thanksgiving before God in everything that we say and do.
- Thanksgiving manifests itself in creative spiritual worship.
- The source of our thanksgiving is the grace of God.
- Grace comes through the Word of God as it indwells believers.

- The Word of God richly indwells believers as they sing and talk to one another in submitted body life.

Conclusion: Believers should meet together constantly to celebrate the grace of God. Through Jesus Christ we are already accepted in heaven's register.

The shed blood of Jesus Christ ratified the new covenant and graciously speaks of the love of God for lost sinners. We do not run from God, we run to him.

As **Hebrews 12** concludes, "**28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve (worship) God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.**" Hebrews 12:28-29 NKJV

