

WORSHIP THAT BEFITS JESUS CHRIST

Psalm 100

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INTRODUCTION

"Worship should be the central activity of the church." So says Robert Webber in his book *Worship is a Verb*. If this is true, it is necessary for us to seek answers for the important questions about worship. *Who* should worship? *Whom* should we worship? *Where* should we worship? *Why* should we worship? *How* should we worship?

I believe Webber is correct. Worship is of primary importance to the Church. Nevertheless, the world is filled with all manner of worship. That is why I am caused to ask, "What is the worship that would be most appropriate to offer to Jesus Christ?" In the prayer book of Israel there is a psalm that clearly patterns Israel's idea of worship befitting Yahweh. It is Psalm 100. I want to hold before you Psalm 100 as a model of the worship that befits Jesus Christ.

WORSHIP THAT BEFITS ISRAEL'S GOD

Seven Verbs of Worship

One of the keys to understanding the emphasis of Psalm 100 is to study its verbs. There are seven different verbs used in Psalm 100. The first one tells the worshiper to "*shout for joy*." This is the shout that accompanied the victory after battle. It is the shout that was given when the kings of Israel went forth or returned. The LORD was to be treated with renown and reverence as Israel's Great King.

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The second verb guides us to "**worship** the LORD with gladness." The AV uses the word "serve" in the place of worship. The Hebrew word reflects the idea of work or service. It came to mean performing an act of worship as conducted by the priest at the Temple. The Psalmist probably has in mind worship as a life of obedience offered to God.

A third verb, in verse two, bids us "**come** into his presence with singing." This is because all worship is an entering into the presence of God. This idea repeats in verse four in the summons of a fourth verb: "**Enter** his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise." Worship that is not an act of entering into God's presence is not true worship.

This fact is amplified in the call of a fifth verb: "**Acknowledge** that the LORD is God." For the Psalmist, acknowledging who God is constitutes a vital function of Israel's worship of the LORD. He must be honored as God. Nothing less is suitable. Anything short of this would be unacceptable. The word "know" is an important expression in the Bible. It connotes the truth that worship is a relationship with the LORD.

Israel is called to "**give thanks**" and to "**bless** his name." These sixth and seventh verbs are expressions of adoration, honor and reverence. They are words of action. Because God has acted for His people, they, in turn, were to act with recognition and appreciation. To "give thanks" is a public confession that acknowledges the benefits received from God. To "bless" was to pronounce favor or goodwill toward a person. When offered to God it represented an attitude of faith, trust, and favor toward Him.

Seven Reasons for Worship

Why should they worship God in this manner? What reason does the composer of this Psalm give? There are seven reasons presented in Psalm 100. The first to be accepted is, "*He has made us.*" God is the Creator in two ways. First, in the Genesis sense of giving life to all human beings. But, even more, for Israel, God had made them a People by delivering them from Egypt. They had become His chosen treasure at Sinai as He established His covenant with them.

This covenant relationship is the basis for the second reason for worship: "*We belong to Him.*" Israel belonged to the LORD because He had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. "*We are His people,*" is the third reason given for worship. They, who were not a people, are now the people of God. Fourth, Israel was the "*sheep of His pasture.*" The LORD told them this through the prophets, "*And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.*" (Ezek 34:31 -KJV) The LORD was their shepherd.

It is the last three reasons that provide the very foundation for the worship of Israel. These reasons are rooted in the very nature and character of God Himself. "*For the LORD is good.*" What does it mean that the LORD is good? First, it means that "the Lord of Israel is the source of all that makes life possible and worthwhile." (Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms*, Fortress, '86, p. 12). Second, He is good because of the good things He does and has done for Israel. He has shown His goodness by the nurture and care of his people. He chose them. He delivered them. He protected them in the wilderness and gave them the land of promise.

The refrain of many generations in Israel rang, "*The LORD is good, for His mercy endures forever.*" It is fitting that part of the reason given by the psalmist would be, "*His*

steadfast love endures forever." The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (Jer 31:3 - KJV)

"His faithfulness is to all generation" This phrase echoes the voice of Moses who said, "*Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.*" (Deu 7:9 - KJV)

The Quality of Worship

Since we have directed our attention to the verbs and the reasons of worship, we could easily miss the value of Psalm 100's adjectives. It is the adjectives that give the rich meaning about how we are to worship. These few small words can enlighten us to the kind of worship that befits the LORD.

The psalmist does not simply say to make a shout. He says to make a shout for **joy**. The significance of Psalm 100 is not the call to worship. It is the call to worship "with gladness." Worship of the LORD is to be with mirth or glee. It is to be a festive occasion. Entrance to God's presence is not with mournful chants or droning, doleful tones. It is to be with singing. Revelry is called for in the praise of Israel's God.

These adjectives appear in Scripture at times of restoration or revival in Israel. This is a very important fact. When God acted in their behalf, because of an urgent or bad situation, the people were made aware of His greatness. The act of salvation was so incredible and marvelous

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that the people were almost overcome with joy, thanksgiving, and gladness. The nation responded with celebration and enjoyed a festive occasion in worshipping the LORD.

Under King Saul, Israel suffered great shame at the loss of the sacred Ark of the testimony. It was an ornate box that contained the symbols of the LORD's covenant with Israel. When it was captured by the Philistines, Israel went into mourning. It was said, "*The glory of the LORD has departed from Israel.*" King David was greatly affected by this shame. He made every effort to return the Ark to the Temple. On the day he was successful, the whole city rang with rejoicing. Joy and gladness so overwhelmed David that he laid aside his royal robes and danced before the Ark like a common (or uncommon) worshiper.

The adjectives of Psalm 100 appear in II Chronicles 20. Israel was threatened by enemies under Jehoshaphat's reign. He prayed to the LORD and was encouraged to trust in God's help. Jehoshaphat appointed the singers of the Temple to precede the warriors with praises saying, "*Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.*" While they sang and praised the LORD, God sent enemies against Israel's enemies. They were destroyed leaving their goods as spoils for Israel to gather. The people returned to Jerusalem and the Temple with joy, singing, and praise.

At the high points of Israel's faith relationship with the LORD, the adjectives of Psalm 100 were present. The restoration led by Hezekiah was climaxed with the Temple choir singing and rejoicing with gladness. (II Chr. 29:30) The sounds of cries of joy were heard "afar off" when the foundations of the second Temple were laid under Zerubbabel. (Ezra 3:13) The dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem was a model of the type of praise called for in Psalm

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100. They keep the dedication as a festival of singing and instruments of music. They sang and played the worship songs with gladness and thanksgiving.

In the book of Esther, The Jews were saved from extermination during the Exile. Those with Esther and Mordecai were overcome with joy. They kept a feast to celebrate the LORD's deliverance of His people. They appointed "*the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting, a holiday on which they send gifts of food to one another.*" (Esther 9:19 - NRSV)

Psalm 100 is a hymn that attempts to capture the apex of Israel's praise. The adjectives of worship found there are the same as those witnessed in the greatness moments of deliverance by their God. Their deepest and most intense quality of worship in response to these times is recited and remembered in Psalm 100.

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As Christians we are not people under Moses. We do not live in the days of the psalmist. It may seem that the occurrences of great redemption in O.T. times are very far removed and irrelevant. Nevertheless, the truth is, we have witnessed the greatest act of salvation that God has ever done. In Christ, God has come to deliver the entire world from the power of sin and evil. This deliverance dwarfs those in O.T. times. Isn't it proper, even reasonable, we should respond in worship in the manner Israel did at their great deliverance?

In the N.T. Jesus is worshiped with the adjectives of Psalm 100. Upon the last entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem Luke tells us "*the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen.*" (L. 19:37 - NRSV) After

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Christ had risen from the dead He appeared to His disciples and ascended before them. They responded in worship in the spirit of Psalm 100: "*And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:*" (Luke 24:52 - KJV)

On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jesus disciples, they were overwhelmed by the mighty works of God. They praised the Lord for His marvelous works. There was an eruption of thanksgiving and worship that shocked the people of Jerusalem. It was not a momentary occurrence, but a part of new life. "*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*" (Acts 2:46 - KJV)

Throughout the N.T. we hear the adjectives of Psalm 100 in the praise of Jesus Christ. By Jesus' Ascension He has been placed, "*Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*" (Eph 1:21 - KJV)

Paul exhorted the Philippians to, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." (Phil 4:4 - KJV) Why? Because He humbled Himself and died for their sins on the Cross. He has been exalted: "*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" (Phil 2:9-11 KJV)

Paul told the Romans that "kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom 14:17 - KJV) The joy of the Holy Ghost and the joy of

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Psalm 100 are rooted in the majesty of God. The mighty God had come in Jesus to save the world. It is right to praise Jesus Christ in the adjectives of the great historic moments of Israel: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim 1:17 - KJV)

CONCLUSION

What type of adjectives do you use in the celebration of God's act of salvation in Jesus Christ. Is it much like this expression of Peter? "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" (1 Pet 1:8 - KJV) I believe that Christians today need to recite the grand worship of Israel unto Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus is Israel's God become our Savior. His act of grace and mercy is so remarkable only the adjectives of Psalm benefit Him.

How do we worship Jesus? With great joy. With joyful songs. With gladness in our hearts. "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb 13:15 - KJV). We should worship with the expression of a heart in love with Christ. He has done such a mighty thing for us and joy is most appropriate. Only gladness can reflect the measureless appreciation He is worthy of.

How do you worship the Lord? Is it with an attitude befitting Him. We need to better realize the greatness of Christ that merits the grandest of praise. It is crucial that we evaluate the presence of joy and gladness in your worship. If you feel the adjectives of Psalm 100 are missing, it could be a reflection of your faith in His great salvation. Or, it may reflect the need

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for a better understanding of the majesty of Christ. There is also another reason. It could suggest a need for a deeper relationship of trust in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 100 calls you and I to reflect this week and ask ourselves: If there is one way we could enrich the quality of our worship next Sunday, what would it be? Let us all offer to Jesus the worship that befits Him!