

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 22 of 32

THE MINISTRY OF WORSHIP

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said . . . " (Acts 13:2).

The word "ministered" as used in this verse comes from the Greek word "leitourgeo," which means "to worship." Worship is the only ministry which is directed to the Lord alone. Prayer involves some worship, but also intercession for others and petitions for our own needs.

We minister unto the Lord by worshipping Him. Let us always remember that! We do not praise God to be heard by men. Also, keep in mind that since worship is a ministry unto the Lord, we should not worship God for the purpose of receiving material benefits or spiritual blessings from Him. He has already done enough to deserve all our praise and worship!

We are commanded to worship God, but it must be in spirit and in truth: ". . . *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Matthew 4:10).

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

The word "worship" comes from the Greek word "proskuneo," which means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand. It means to prostrate one's self, or to make one's self low. It also means to reverence and adore.

The deepest form of worship is praise and adoration to God for what He is. There are "no strings attached" to this kind of worship. We are not worshipping Him for what we can get out of Him, or because of what He has done for us. Worshipping God for what He has done for us is "thanksgiving." Our worship should include thanksgiving, but we must not forget to praise and adore Him because of what He is!

In a future lesson we will discover that we can also refer to this kind of worship as "high praises." Examples of "high praises" will be given from the Word of God in that lesson.

SEVEN WORDS FOR "PRAISE"

The word "praise" as found in the Bible was translated from seven different words, six of them Hebrew, and the other New Testament word is Greek.

1. yadah: to revere or worship with extended hands
2. halal: to shine, to make a show, to boast, to rave, to commend, glory
3. tehillah: to sing a hymn of praise
4. zamar: to make music, to praise with song and music, sing forth praises
5. towdah: worship and adoration with extension of hands, especially a choir of worshippers
6. shabach: to praise with a loud voice.
7. ainesis: the act of praising God, an offering of praise.

The following are examples where the word "praise" was translated from one of these seven words. The student should look up each verse of Scripture in his Bible to note the full meaning:

1. yadah: Psalm 9:1; 138:1; Isaiah 12:1, 4
2. halal: Psalm 22:22; Psalm 111:1; Psalm 150

3. tehillah: Psalm 22:25; Psalm 34:1; Psalm 100:4
 4. zamar: Psalm 21:13
 5. towdah: Psalm 50:23; Title of Psalm 100
 6. shabach: Psalm 63:3
 7. ainesis: Romans 15:11; Revelation 19:5; Hebrews 13:15
- The Bible also teaches us to clap our hands unto the Lord (Psalm 47:1).

WE ARE A SPIRITUAL PRIESTHOOD

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood . . ." (I Peter 2:9).

"Ye also, as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priest- hood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5).

One of the main duties of the Old Testament priest was to offer up the proper sacrifices unto the Lord. We are spiritual priests. We do not offer up animals and fruits unto the Lord. We offer worship out of a pure heart unto the Lord.

"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:11).

EXAMPLES OF THE POWER OF PRAISE

1. Dedication of Solomon's Temple: *"It came even to pass, as 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 musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (II Chronicles 5:13-14).*



The glory of God did not fill the temple until the musicians and singers began to praise God in one mind and one accord--even though the temple was already finished, and all of the pieces of furniture were in their proper place. This teaches us that we can have everything in proper place in our lives, but we must worship God if we want to experience His glorious presence.

2. Judah's Victory Over Their Enemies: *"And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten" (II Chronicles 20:22).*

Several nations of Israel's enemies joined together to fight against Judah. Judah was greatly outnumbered. Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, proclaiming a fast throughout all Judah. The spirit of the LORD came upon one of the Levites, who prophesied that the Lord would give them the victory. They would not even have to fight for it!

Singers were appointed to worship and praise the LORD, and as they did so, God fought for Judah and defeated their enemies. This teaches us that in the time of temptations, trials, etc., we can have the victory by praising and worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Paul and Silas Experiences Victory in Prison: *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:25-26).*

Paul and Silas had been cast into prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead of moaning and groaning, they got their minds off themselves, and begin to sing praises unto their God. God sent a spiritual (and physical) earthquake. Because of this move of the Holy Spirit, Paul baptized the jailor and his household. (Acts 16:27-33)

THE BENEFITS OF A LIFE OF PRAISE

1. Praise decentralizes self. We get our mind off of our own selves and our problems when we minister to the Lord in true worship.
2. God's presence is continually with us (Psalm 22:3).
3. We will be spiritually fat (Psalm 63:3-7).
4. We can wear the garment of praise, or the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3). *ds*

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