

How Should We Worship? – Old Covenant Worship

Worship is Communal

- A. As those descended from the patriarchs the people of Israel were heirs of the patriarchal promises, but it wasn't until the covenant at Sinai that these descendants of Jacob were joined together as a _____ in covenant with God.
1. **Exodus 19:5-6** — Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a *holy nation*.
 2. **Deuteronomy 7:6** — For you are a *holy people* to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a *people* for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
- B. “_____” and “_____” are used often in the Bible with this specialized sense of a *holy nation* and a *covenant people* – a community of people bound together by a common covenantal commitment to a common covenantal Lord.
- This nation and this people did not exist prior to Sinai. What will this new set of circumstances mean for _____?
- C. Without introducing any additional parties to the dialogue we can say that worship is now fundamentally _____ in nature.
1. The Levites were chosen to perform the service of the tabernacle instead of all the firstborn males in Israel, and the firstborn Israelite males stood, in turn, for the people of Israel as a whole.
 - a. **Numbers 3:5-7, 11-12** — Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. They shall perform the duties for him *and for the whole congregation* before the tent of meeting, to do the *service [abodah]* of the tabernacle” ... Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel *instead of every firstborn...*”
 - b. **Exodus 4:22-23** — Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I said to you, “Let My son go that he may *serve [abad]* Me.’””
 2. The high priest performed the temple worship with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon his shoulders and over his heart.
 - a. **Exodus 28:9, 12** — You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel... You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial.
 - b. **Exodus 28:15, 17, 21, 29** — You shall make a breastpiece of judgment... You shall mount on it four rows of stones... The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names... Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.
 - c. **Psalm 133:1-2** — Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.
 3. All the males in Israel (representing the entire people and nation) were to appear before the Lord three times a year at the feasts of Unleavened Bread (Passover), Weeks (Pentecost), and Booths (Ingathering; Exod. 23:14-17; 34:18-24; Deut. 16:1-17).
 - a. Cf. **Psalm 35:18** — I will give You thanks in the great congregation; I will praise You among a mighty throng.
 - b. Cf. **Psalm 149:1** — Praise the LORD! Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of the godly ones.
- D. In the New Covenant, this communal nature of worship is _____ in the priesthood of all believers (Rev. 1:5-6; cf. Isa. 61:6; 66:19-21) and the temple that is now built of living stones (1 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 2:19-22) by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ as our great high priest (Heb. 4:14) and God's incarnate temple (Jn. 2:19-21; Col. 1:19; 2:9).

1. The communal nature of worship is epitomized in the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray “_____ Father... give _____... forgive _____... do not lead _____...”
2. **1 Peter 2:4-5, 9** — And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual *house* for a holy *priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy *nation*, a *people* for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.
3. If Old Covenant worship was communal in a preparatory and typological way, then the communal nature of worship comes into its own and is _____ manifested and enjoyed only under the New Covenant.

E. It is no longer possible for us to fulfill our obligation of worship to God unless this worship is expressed

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1. “I can worship God just as well in nature as I can in a church building”?
 2. “Virtual worship”? Livestreaming the service?
 - a. Temple worship cannot be livestreamed because the temple cannot be livestreamed.
 - b. Livestreaming the Sunday morning service is not a second-best substitute for temple worship. Instead, it is by definition an entirely _____ thing (internal worship / private external worship).
 - c. There is only one place that temple worship can happen, and that is in the physically gathered congregation.
 3. Any voluntary neglect of Sunday morning worship is a denial of the fundamentally communal shape of worship under the Old and New Covenants.
 - a. Any voluntary neglect of Sunday morning worship is a denial of the Old and New Covenants themselves and therefore, in a broader sense, a denial even of the _____.
 - b. A biblical theology of worship will enable us to make the gathering of the church for worship the _____ and the most joyful priority in our week.

Worship is Covenantal

- A. Under the Old Covenant, worship was shaped and regulated by the covenant.
 1. **Hebrews 9:1** — Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.
 2. Worship was centralized at a specific place (the tabernacle/temple), engaged in at specific times (Sabbaths; feast days; morning and evening sacrifices; etc.), and performed by a specific priesthood (the Levites).
- B. When the covenant changes, the worship changes.
 1. **John 4:21** — Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship [*proskyneo*] the Father.”
 2. **Hebrews 7:11-12** — Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law [covenant]), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law [covenant] also.
- C. Temple worship is shaped by whichever covenant is in force at the time. Temple worship, therefore, is always the formal _____ of—and _____ of—the covenant relationship in covenant dialogue between God and His people.
 1. **Zechariah 13:9** — “I will bring the third part [of the people] through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will *call on My name*, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘*They are My people,*’ and they will say, ‘*The LORD is my God.*’”

2. To voluntarily neglect temple worship, therefore, is to spurn the covenant relationship that God Himself is pursuing with His people.

The Temple Choir

- A. In connection with Old Covenant worship, singing (with musical accompaniment) was carefully provided for in the days of David as one of the elements in calling upon the name of the Lord.
 - **1 Chronicles 16:4, 7-9, 35, 37, 41** — [David] appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, even to [remember; *zakar*] and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel... on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD. Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders... Then say, “Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us and deliver us from the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, and glory in Your praise” ... So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark continually, as every day’s work required... With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- B. The special role of these Levitical and priestly choirs was to do what the rest of the people of Israel were not _____ or privileged to do, and in so doing to *represent* their brothers unceasingly before the Lord.
- C. Not only did these choirs represent the people before God, but they also functioned in a priestly capacity to represent God to the people (cf. 1 Chron. 16:7-36).
 - **1 Chronicles 25:1, 3** — David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps and cymbals... who prophesied in giving thanks and praising the LORD.
- D. We can only understand the place of song in Old Covenant temple worship when we understand the function of the Levitical singers as those divinely appointed to represent the people in covenant dialogue with God and even to represent God in covenant dialogue with His people.
 1. The Psalms were sung in Jewish homes at Passover (cf. the Egyptian Hallel; Pss. 113-118) and by the Jewish pilgrims as they journeyed to Jerusalem for the annual feasts (cf. the Psalms of Ascent; Pss. 120-134).
 2. The singing of psalms was an integral part of private—and even of corporate—external worship for every Jew.
 3. The singing of psalms in _____ worship, however, was—strictly speaking—a priestly prerogative belonging only to the Levitical choirs (cf. Ps. 134:1-2).
- E. In the New Covenant, these Levitical choirs are fulfilled in the singing of the whole congregation because we are all now priests and Levites who minister before the Lord (cf. Isa. 66:18-21; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6).
 1. When we sing together in temple worship, we are a priestly _____ _____ calling upon the name of the Lord and also proclaiming the authoritative word of the Lord to ourselves and to one another.
 2. Membership in the Old Covenant Levitical choirs was hereditary (passed down from father to son). We could think of these choirs in terms of a school of temple singers and musicians.
 3. But this specialized school of temple musicians has no equivalent today in New Covenant temple worship. Today, membership in the temple choir is no longer restricted to a few but is the privileged birthright of _____.
 - a. **Ephesians 5:19** — [Be] filled with the Spirit, speaking *to one another* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart *to the Lord*.
 - b. **Colossians 3:16** — Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing *one another* with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts *to God*.

- F. In the fourth century, after the emperor Constantine’s conversion, “Christian worship began to be influenced by imperial protocol. Incense, which was used as a sign of respect for the emperor, began appearing in Christian churches. Officiating ministers, who until then had worn everyday clothes, began dressing in more luxurious garments. Likewise, a number of gestures indicating respect, which were normally made before the emperor, now became part of Christian worship. The custom was also introduced of beginning services with a processional. Choirs were developed, partly in order to give body to that procession. Eventually, the congregation came to have a less active role in worship.” (Gonzalez)
- G. We live in a day when singing is the domain of pop stars and generally associated with polished and choreographed entertainment. Singing is thought to be mainly for those who are “talented” in singing.
1. In the Bible, song is a gift that God has given to us all and that we are all commanded to participate in together.
 2. As Christians, we are all _____ together in the temple choir (the covenantal and communal nature of worship), privileged to enter the holy place (Heb. 10:19-22; cf. 4:14-16) and lift our voices in song before the Lord (cf. Rev. 11:19).

Omnipresence and Special Presence

- A. There is a sense in which all of life should be consciously lived in the presence of God because God is present everywhere (2 Chron. 2:6; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24). It’s this reality that allows us to speak of all of life being worship (internal worship).
- B. However, the very fact of temple worship requires the doctrine of God’s special presence.
- **2 Chronicles 7:16** — For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.
- C. A common theme, therefore, in the Old Testament is that of carefully _____ unto God’s special presence at His temple.
1. **Jeremiah 30:21** — I will *bring near* [their leader] and he shall *approach* Me; for who would dare to risk his life to *approach* Me?’ declares the LORD.
 2. **Ecclesiastes 5:1** — Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and *draw near* to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil.
 3. **Hebrews 10:1** — For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who *draw near*.
- D. The doctrine of God’s special presence requires that special (external) worship that is a drawing near unto God at specific times and places as well as in specific ways (cf. Ezek. 48:35; Mat. 18:20; Acts 24:11).
- E. **Isaiah 56:7** — Even [foreigners] I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”
- Here, prayer is a synonym for worship – the worship that God’s covenant people offer up to Him when they draw near to Him at His house.
- F. **Hebrews 10:19–22** — Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over *the house of God*, let us _____ with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.