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September 2020 “GOD WANTS THIS”

Dear Friends,

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus has a very interesting conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. It begins with Him asking her for a drink of water and ends up with Him teaching her about worship.

²³But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. ²⁴God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
(John 4:23-24)

The phrase used by Jesus, “the hour cometh, and now is,” could be accurately restated as, “the generation cometh, and now is.” The generation Jesus was speaking of is the Body of Christ. As Christians, we have a Father, brothers, and sisters, but no grandparents, aunts, uncles, or children of our own. This means that our family tree would have God at the top as our Father, then all who are born again on an even, vertical line, albeit with differing dates of physical birth. This is further revealed in 1 Peter 2:9-10,

⁹But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The verses in John chapter four and First Peter chapter two strongly emphasize praise and worship as being critical elements in the life of a Believer. In John, Jesus said God seeks for His generation of children to worship Him. In First Peter, we are told that praise is something a Christian should be doing. These two passages alone should make it indisputably clear that God has placed a very high priority on praise and worship. This being so, let's consider examples from scripture which reveal what happens when people worship God.

²Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion...⁷And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims:...¹¹And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course: ¹²Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)¹³It 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; ¹⁴So 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.

(2 Chronicles 5:2, 7, 11-14)

Notice that God's presence did not fill the temple when the ark was brought in. Neither did His glory manifest when the priests, singers and musicians were assembled. It was only *after* they began praising and thanking the Lord that the glory cloud of God filled the temple. Now consider this next example of God responding to praise and worship.

¹It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle...³And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ⁵And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, ⁶And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?...¹²O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. ¹³And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

¹⁴Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; ¹⁵And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. ¹⁶To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

²⁰And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. ²¹And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. ²²And 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. ²³For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. ²⁴And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies

fallen to the earth, and none escaped. ²⁵And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. (2 Chronicles 20:1, 3-6, 12-17, 20-25)

God did not set ambushments against the enemy armies when Jehoshaphat decided to seek the Lord, or when the people fasted, or when the people gathered together, or when Jehoshaphat began to pray, or when the people began marching toward the enemy's encampment. It was only *after* the people began to sing and praise the Lord that God moved. The invading armies turned on and killed each other, and the children of Judah spent three whole days gathering the wealth of the enemy for themselves.

Consider what David wrote about God and His response to praise and worship,

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. (Psalm 22:3)

The word "inhabitest" comes from the Hebrew word *yāšaḇ* (yashav) and in this verse it means, "to sit, dwell; a lengthy residence; to inhabit; sitting on a throne as a king; cause to or make to dwell." The figurative image presented here is that when a person or people (i.e., a congregation) begin to worship God, He stands, picks up His throne, brings it to the place where the worship is taking place, then sits down in the middle of the room to fellowship with the people in their worship. Additionally, it also means that everything God is, everything He has, and everything He can do is with Him in that place of worship.

Some people may read all of this and reply, "Yes, Brother Martin, that's all well and good; but those verses are all from the Old Testament, and Christians are living in the days of the New Testament!"

Seriously? None of the worshipers in the Old Testament were born again, yet look how God responded when they praised and worshiped Him. Yes, Christians are living in the days of the New Testament, but we are the generation of worshipers that God had been seeking for thousands of years. We are the ones who can worship Him in spirit and in truth...**NONE** of those in the Old Testament could worship Him that way! Christians are the ones who can give God the praise and worship He truly desires.

Do you honestly believe when Christians worship God with all their hearts that God's glory will not be released? Do you honestly believe He will not be involved with our battles? Do you honestly believe He will not inhabit the place where we are when we praise and worship Him? He will do all that and more! In Acts chapter 16, Paul and Silas were in Philippi. Through a series of events they were arrested, and you can read what happened next in the following verses,

²²And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. ²³And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: ²⁴Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. ²⁵And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. ²⁶And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all

the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. (Acts 16:22-26)

As we praise God, there is an anointing released that can help us break the shackles of every form of addiction and bondage we feel we cannot escape. The more we praise God, the more the eyes of our understanding are enlightened to realize who we have become as a child of God. Sermons are information *about* God; worship is interaction *with* God. Information alone cannot change a person; but interaction with God can bring about permanent change.

Praise and worship should never be relegated to being a response to positive emotions. Praise and worship are a decision no matter what kind of emotions a Christian is experiencing. The book of Psalms gives us more revelation about praise and worship than any other book in the Bible.

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

(Psalm 28:7)

Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. (Psalm 33:1) [Note: the word “comely” comes from the Hebrew word “naweh” and it means, “beautiful, fitting, appropriate, that which is becoming.”]

I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. (Psalm 34:1)

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. (Psalm 42:5)

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God. (Psalm 50:23)

³Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. ⁴Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. ⁵My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips (Psalm 63:3-4)

I strongly encourage you to read the book of Psalms and take note of how much is written about praising God. But Psalms isn't the only book in the Bible which speaks of praise and worship.

²Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. ³Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. ⁴And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. ⁵Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. ⁶Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. (Isaiah 12:2-6)

This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

(Isaiah 43:21)

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

Do you want to be more sensitive to God's presence? Do you want Him to play a larger role in all you do?

O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. (Psalm 34:3)

The word "magnify" comes from the Hebrew word "gādal." In this verse it means, "to make great, influential, of value, importance; to cause to grow; to promote to a higher position." We magnify God in our lives as we worship Him. In doing so, we make Him "larger" – more influential – in our heart and mind than every problematic situation we face. When we magnify Him this way, He captures more of our attention than the things of this world.

God is seeking for His children who will worship Him, both privately and in a congregation. When we give Him what He seeks, it's as though an alarm sounds in Heaven, alerting Him that a person or a church has entered into a time of magnifying Him in spirit and in truth. When this happens, He responds with His presence, His glory, and all He has to offer. What a precious, wonderful God we serve!

In His Grace,

Jim

P.S. – Over the years, one of the topics I have taught on extensively is praise and worship. This month I am offering a CD of a sermon titled, *Worship: God's Habitation*. You can receive a copy by sending in the order form below.

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