

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 3, Number 9 ♪ September 2008

THEME: Spirit and Truth

A TALE OF TWO MOUNTAINS: JESUS ON WORSHIP

(John 4)

Old Covenant Barriers



The Old Covenant system of worship, in spite of its gracious provisions for relating to the covenant-keeping God of Israel (through a temporary covering of sin in anticipation of Christ's atoning work Romans 3:24-25), nevertheless was a system that demonstrated strongly the distance that sin had put between God and even his own chosen people. Access to the presence of God (represented in the architecture of the tabernacle) was severely proscribed. The common people were not allowed to enter into the tabernacle at all, while entry into the Holy of Holies was reserved for the High Priest alone, who himself could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16).

The book of Hebrews clearly demonstrates how all the barriers of this Old Covenant system were destroyed, and the way into the presence of God made fully available, by the redeeming death of Christ on the cross. Hebrews 10:19-22 climactically encourages us to take full advantage of that free and unfettered access with confidence and assurance.

Jesus Christ came to remove other barriers as well: to break down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Ephes 2:14-20), male and female, slave and free (Gal 3:28). And in John 4 we see His barrier-breaking ways in full force.

Jesus breaks down **geographical** barriers
(4:3-4)

The Jews had a deep-seated contempt for the Samaritans. The people were the product of Jewish and Gentile intermarriage; they rejected all but the first five books of the Old Testament; and they had instituted their own place and form of worship on Mount Gerizim. Jews in Jesus' day would show their animosity by going out of their way to avoid going through Samaria when traveling between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north (Samaria was situated between the two); they would cross over the Jordan River and go up the east side so as not to step on Samaritan soil.

Given this common practice among the Jews, it is particularly striking when we read at the beginning of John 4 that, in journeying from Judea to Galilee, Jesus "*had to pass through Samaria*" (4:4). This necessity was not a physical one, as other Jews demonstrated regularly by taking the trans-Jordan route. Rather it was a *divine* necessity; as we learn later in the chapter, Jesus had a divine appointment to keep in Samaria, and work to do for His Father there (4:32-34). And so he shuns precedent and breaches this geographical barrier by heading directly into "enemy territory."



Jesus breaks down *social* barriers
(4:5-9)

Having forged his own path right through this traditional geographical barrier, Jesus does another surprising thing. He strikes up a conversation with a Samaritan, and a woman at that (surprising the woman herself, 4:9; as well as the disciples, 4:27). Jesus readily dispenses with traditional taboos when there is a needy soul at stake.

Jesus breaks down *spiritual* barriers
(4:10-15)

Jesus deepens his unconventional approach by offering this unlikely representative of the despised race the gift of eternal life, which he characterizes as living water. While she does not at first understand (thinking rather of physical water, such as she has come to draw), Jesus persists in explaining in explaining the unique nature of this water and its cure for spiritual thirst.

Jesus breaks down *religious* barriers
(4:16-26)

In response to Jesus' thorough (yet uncondemning) knowledge of her personal history, the woman raises the issue (whether it's in an attempt to change the subject, or out of genuine interest, we're not told) of the religious barrier that most sharply divides the Jews and the Samaritans: the location and nature of their respective systems of worship. And Jesus explodes the now-false dichotomy by explaining that He's *changing the rules*: under the age inaugurated by His coming, the question of "in this mountain" or "in Jerusalem" (in the temple on Mount Moriah) isn't even the right question or sphere of inquiry anymore (4:21): rather, true worship, Jesus proclaims, must now be defined by being both "in spirit" and "[in] truth" (4:23). The issue is no longer *where* or *when* one worships, but *how*.

The Worship God Seeks

Worship "in spirit" indicates that it must come from the inside out, from man's spirit—the internal, immaterial party of his nature. (That this, rather than the Holy Spirit, is in view seems more likely because Jesus points out that "God is spirit" [4:24] as the reason why He must be ap-

proached in this way.) Worship must be from the heart, be sincere and genuine, if it is to be acceptable to God. Contained in this assertion is probably implied a contrast to the Jews, and especially their leaders, whom Jesus often castigated for practicing an external form of religion without an internal reality as its basis (see Matt 6:1-18; 23:23-28; etc).

Worship must also be "in truth": it must be according to God's self-revelation and His revealed will. We must worship God as He really is, and as He wants to be worshiped (and ultimately, of course, this means it must be *through Christ*, 4:26). This is in marked contrast to the Samaritans' worship, as Jesus makes clear to the woman: "You worship what you do not know" (4:22); by rejecting most of the Old Testament they had thereby rejected the true God of the Old Testament.

In our own day we see the same imbalances in one direction or the other as was true of the Jews and the Samaritans. There are plenty of highly religious people in our world who are very, very sincere about their beliefs and their worship; and they strive through prayers and fasts and pilgrimages and even suicide bombings to achieve favor and status with God. But of course, they are sincerely *wrong*: their worship is not according to *truth*. Likewise, we all know people who practice a "form of godliness" (2 Tim 3:5)—attending church, reciting the Apostles' Creed, taking the Lord's Supper, etc.—but without any apparent heart faith or true commitment to the Lord.

Jesus says that worship must be *both* in spirit *and* in truth.

God Seeks Worshipers

One other crucial perspective on worship from Jesus' lips is found in 4:23: the Father is *seeking worshipers*. The Bible never says that God is seeking pastors, or missionaries, or Sunday School teachers, or Christian businessmen and -women. These are all worthy pursuits, but they are not what God wants first and foremost from us. Most of all, He wants our *worship*. We must fulfill the first and greatest commandment (to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength—which is worship), before we turn to serve our neighbor as the second greatest commandment commands. We must "be something" before God before we "do" something for Him.

QUOTABLES

Spirit and Truth

“She had raised the subject of worship, and the Saviour’s reply was as pregnant a statement on this issue as had ever escaped the lips of man. Indeed, once He had uttered it, it would be impossible thereafter for any man intelligently to ponder this theme without returning to consider those priceless words. As an utterance on worship they were timeless and absolutely definitive.”
(Zane Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit*, 16)

“The frightening freedom of worship in the New Testament is a missionary mandate. We must not lock this gospel treasure in any cultural strait-jacket. Rather let us find the place, the time, the dress, the forms, the music that kindles and carries a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. And may our communion with the living God be so real and the Spirit of God so powerfully present that the heart of what we do becomes the joy of all the peoples we are called to reach.”
(John Piper, “Our High Priest is The Son of God Perfect Forever” [sermon], December 8, 1996)

“In the New Testament, all the focus is on the reality of the glory of Christ, not the shadow and copy of religious objects and forms. It is stunning how indifferent the New Testament is to such things: there is no authorization in the new Testament for worship buildings, or worship dress, or worship times, or worship music, or worship liturgy or worship size or thirty-five-minute sermons, or Advent poems or choirs or instruments or candles. In fact, the act of getting together as Christians in the New Testament to sing or pray or hear the word of God is never even called worship. I wonder if we do not distort the biblical meaning of ‘worship’ by using the word almost entirely for an event for which the New Testament *never* uses the word.

But all of this makes us very free and, perhaps, very frightened. Free to find place and time and dress and size and music and elements and objects that help us orient radically toward the supremacy of God in Christ. And frightened, perhaps, because almost every worship tradition we have is cultur-

ally shaped rather than Biblically commanded. The command is a radical connection of love and trust and obedience to Jesus Christ in all of life.”
(John Piper, “Our High Priest is The Son of God Perfect Forever” [sermon], December 8, 1996)

“Moving in the opposite direction from the Pastorals John seems to be reacting against a growing formalism and institutionalization in worship (as well as in ministry). Here the key passage is John 4.23f. ‘God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth’ where John is able to achieve his purpose by setting Christian worship over against the traditions of Jewish and Samaritan worship that is, by setting worship in Spirit and truth over against the sort of concerns in worship typified by the Jerusalem/Gerizim conflict John is saying in effect that Jesus has left far behind that sort of issue and attitude, just as he has superseded the temple (2.19), the Jewish feasts and sacrifices (1.29; 6.4, 2558; 7.3739; 19.36), the law (1.17; 4.10, 14; 6.3035) and the Jewish rituals (2.6; 3.2536) worship of God no longer depends on sacred place or sacred tradition or sacred ceremony. The worship that God seeks is a worship not frozen to a sacred building or by loyalty to a particular tradition or rite, but a worship which is living off the ever new response to God who is spirit as prompted and enabled by the Spirit of God in the light of the truth of Jesus. John 4.23f. therefore is probably intended by John as an implied rebuke to all who want to continue worshipping God in terms of institution, tradition and ritual.”
(James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 131)

“To worship God in spirit involves a contrast with worship in the letter, in the legalistic encumbrance so characteristic of the Jew; to worship him in truth contrasts with the Samaritan and all other worship which is false to a greater or lesser extent.”
(E. F. Harrison, “Worship” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 119)

“And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure.”
(John Milton [1608-1674], *Paradise Lost*, Book I,
lines 17-18)

“‘Those who worship God,’ Jesus told the Samaritan woman, ‘must worship in spirit and in truth.’ They must worship with inner integrity, not simply as an external display, and they must be truthful in their worship, true to the character, the nature, the person, the qualities and characteristics, indeed the very identity of God. That is the ‘God’ side of the worship equation.”

(Michael Knowles, “The Worth of Worship”
<http://mcmaster.ca/mjtm/2-5b.htm>)

“True worship is Word-informed (John 4:23), heart-grounded (John 4:23; Mark 7:6-7), God-centered (Rev. 22:9), Christ-exalting (Rev. 5:12) and Spirit-empowered (Phil. 3:3).”

(International Council of Ethnodoxologists)

“God is not seeking worship or a good worship service—He’s seeking worshippers.”

(Bob Kauflin)

“The true, the genuine worship is when man, through his spirit, attains to friendship and intimacy with God. True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible.”

(William Barclay, *Gospel of John*, vol. 1, 154)

“What are the two great enemies of true worship throughout history? Are they not the errors of Gerizim and Jerusalem? Zeal without knowledge, on the one hand, and knowledge without zeal, on the other. Truth without spirit, or spirit without truth. According to verses 23 and 24, both things are necessary.”

(Eric J. Alexander, “Worship: The Glory of Revival,” *Reformation and Revival Journal* Vol. 2, No. 1 [Winter 1993], 81)

“It is significant that in John 4:23 Jesus did not say that God is seeking evangelists. He said that God is seeking worshippers.”

(Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, 39)

“To worship ‘in spirit and truth’ is best under-

stood to mean not ‘in the Holy Spirit,’ but rather ‘in the spiritual realm, in the realm of spiritual activity. . . . This is because (1) the discussion that Jesus is having with the woman at the well in this context is a discussion about the location of worship (see vv. 20-21)—should it be in Samaria or in Jerusalem? Jesus’ answer would fit this inquiry much better if he were speaking about the spiritual realm in which we worship, as opposed to the physical location of Jerusalem or Samaria. (2) In the Greek text the word *en* (‘in’) of the phrase ‘in spirit and truth’ corresponds to the same word (*en*) used in v. 21 to speak of (literally) ‘in this mountain’ and ‘in Jerusalem.’ Once again the contrast is in terms of location ‘in’ which one is to worship. (3) The word truth refers to a quality of worship, not to a person. The parallel would be more understandable if ‘in spirit’ likewise referred not to a person but to some quality of the worship, such as the realm in which it is to be done.”

(Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1010)

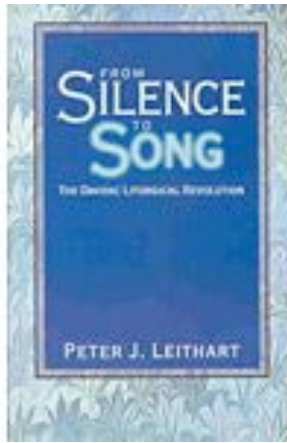
“The transition from worship under the old covenant to worship under the new is characterized by the covenantal stipulations and provisions of two respective covenants. The way wholly loving God works out under the old covenant is in heartfelt obedience to the terms of that covenant and that includes the primary place given to the cultus with all its import and purpose in the stream of redemptive history; and the implications of this outworking include distinctions between the holy and the common, between holy space and common space, between holy time and common time, between holy food and common food. The way wholly loving God works out under the new covenant is in heartfelt obedience to the terms of that covenant and here the language of the cultus has been transmuted to all of life, with the implication, not so much of a desacralization of space and time and food, as with a sacralization of all space and all time and all food.”

(D. A. Carson, *Worship by the Book*, 40)

“The worshippers whom God seeks worship him out of the fullness of the supernatural life they enjoy (‘in spirit’), and on the basis of God’s incarnate Self-Expression, Christ Jesus himself, through whom God’s person and will are finally and ultimately disclosed (‘in truth’); and these two characteristics form one matrix, indivisible.”

(D. A. Carson, *The Gospel acc. to John*, 225-26)

BOOK NOOK



From Silence to Song

The Davidic Liturgical Revolution

by Peter Leithart (Canon Press, 2003)

So many of the current flood of books on worship are thin on biblical content. That's what makes this book refreshingly different. It is full of fascinating insights and well-supported arguments based on a careful reading and study of the biblical text. (This is illustrated by the fact that the slim 130-page text is accompanied by a Scripture Index of eight full pages!) In the process he makes the book of 1 Chronicles come alive with interest and relevance—no small accomplishment!

Leithart shows what an enormous debt we owe to King David for his innovations in musical worship:

From what we can learn in the Pentateuch, Israel's worship in the Mosaic period was virtually silent. . . . Trumpets were blown over the morning and evening ascension offerings (Num. 10:9–10), but no other liturgical music is explicitly mentioned. By contrast, as we shall see (chapter 4), the worship of the Davidic tabernacle was mainly worship in song, and the Levitical choir and orchestra was later incorporated into temple worship in the days of Solomon. When Christians sing hymns and psalms in worship, when we play organs or pianos, guitars or trumpets, we are heirs of the Davidic "liturgical revolution." (15-16)

Through a study of numerous passages in 1 Chronicles, Leithart traces that "revolution," the remarkable development of music in Israel's worship, and the leading role of Levites in that new focus. He makes a good case that, whereas the Levites were charged with lifting and carrying the Ark of the Covenant during its years of migration (Deut 10:8), their role evolves when the Ark settles in Jerusalem, becoming one of "lifting up" the Name of the Lord in song (63).

During David's reign this worship centers around the new tabernacle that he erected on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:17; 1 Chron 16:1), where he places the Ark of the Covenant, even while the original tabernacle of Moses resided in Gibeon as another center of the nation's worship (1 Chron 16:39–43; the Ark and the rest of the tabernacle furniture are later reunited in Solomon's temple: 1 Kings 8:1–11; 2 Chron 5:2–14). He notes this curious juxtaposition, and sees David's tabernacle as pointing to the future (especially since it rested on Mount Zion, which figures so prominently in Old Testament prophecy's views of the future; whereas the temple itself would be built elsewhere in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah).

Leithart attempts to unravel the difficult prophetic reference to the restoration of the Davidic tabernacle that is found in Joel 9 and (quoting Joel 9) at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Leithart does not buy into the assertion of a few charismatic writers that the modern-day charismatic movement and its (undisputed) influence on the Church's worship was in fact the restoration of David's tabernacle; he rightly points out that James in Acts 15 clearly sees the fulfillment as having already happened in his day. Leithart suggests that the restoration is one of future-looking, Gentile-welcoming worship such as (he shows) was practiced on Mount Zion under David. (He makes the fascinating observation that, until the time of David, Jewish references to the Gentiles were almost exclusively hostile, rather than the invitation to the nations to worship and bow down before Israel's God, which is the predominant bearing in Chronicles and throughout the Psalms.)

Leithart's careful exegesis unfortunately gives way at one point to a risky typology when he attempts to make direct connections to New Testament worship (99-100), illustrating once again what a treacherous minefield typology can be. His leanings toward a preterist eschatology (which sees many of the biblical end-time prophecies fulfilled by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) also lead him to some questionable conclusions (99-100). These small detours are a reminder of the importance of the kind of exegetical rigor which is so admirably displayed in the rest of the book.

In the last chapter of this stimulating study, Leithart draws a set of helpful and insightful biblical principles from his study, which may helpfully inform and inspire our use of music in worship, in grateful acknowledgment of the legacy of David's liturgical revolution.

GLOBAL WORSHIP

In Memoriam Thomas L. Avery (1949-2008)

On Tuesday August 12, the world of ethnodoxology lost a giant. Tom Avery died of a sudden health problem in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Tom was well known as a leader in ethnomusicology with Wycliffe/SIL. For many years he worked in Brazil, helping Amazonian Indians develop Christian songs using their tribal heart musics. No one will ever forget the Canela Indians' version of "It Is God's Word That Makes Me So Very Happy," which Tom introduced around the world to great amazement and amusement. In later years he worked in various parts of Latin America, holding workshops, leading seminars, training interns, and being a shining light. He learned multiple music styles of Latin America, from very urban to very rural.

In the cause of using "heart music" in worship, Tom had a huge impact around the world—in fact, he was the one who popularized that phrase in missions.

For about ten years, Tom taught ethnomusicology for Wycliffe/SIL. Some of Tom's materials are used probably everywhere in the world where a course on "music and missions" is taught today. He was also SIL's first International Coordinator for Ethnomusicology. In that role he shepherded ethnomusicologists (novices and professionals), helping to develop the department into the powerhouse it is today.

Tom studied under Vida Chenoweth at Wheaton College, and received his doctorate in ethnomusicology from Indiana University. He later had the vision to develop computer programs based on the melodic analysis method that Vida had created.

In many innovative ways, Tom helped to promote missions in general and "heart-music worship" in particular. He was a co-founder of the Wycliffe World Music Band, which performed global Christian music for many thousands of people. He was also among the founders of the Global Consultation on Music and Missions, which gave rise to a series of important milestones in ethnodoxology.

Tom directly inspired, challenged, trained, influenced and encouraged thousands of people around the world, and untold hundreds of thousands through those. He was very good at multiplying his efforts. We think of him now floating, bobbing, shouting, laughing, exalting—singing with the Logos, playing his charango to the Lover of his Soul, doing the stomp dance with the Bright and Morning Star, playing panpipes with the angels, drumming a sanctified samba in the glory cloud—and we envy him. Let's rejoice with Tom's good fortune, grieve the real loss to his family and to us, and work to extend his passion to millions more—that passion to help the peoples of the world know God, love him, and worship him fully.

—Paul Neeley & Brian Schrag

UPCOMING WORSHIP EVENTS

Beginning Fall 2008, The Bethlehem Institute at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota will be offering a rigorous, two-year graduate apprenticeship program in worship studies.

For more information, click [HERE](#).



Thursday 11 to Saturday 13
September 2008

info [HERE](#)

NOTE: I'm looking forward to participating in this event, the first of its kind and scope in the U.K., and will report on it on www.worr.org and in next month's issue.

ALSO CHECK OUT:

QUOTABLES: Worship & more
words of doxological wisdom

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The Pastor and Worship



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