

# ♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 4, Number 3 ♪ March 2009

## THEME: New Testament Worship

### KEY THEMES IN NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP (Part 1)

#### The Old and the New

A helpful exercise for students of biblical worship is to consider both the similarities and the contrasts between Old Testament and New Testament worship. At first consideration, the mind tends to rush to the stark discontinuities between the worship prescriptions of the Old Covenant sacrificial system and the cancellation of its provisions under the New Covenant. But it is important to acknowledge the profound continuities as well:

1. In both testaments, worship is seen an appropriate *response to God's self-revelation*.
2. In both testaments, worship is *of the Creator*, the one true God whose character never changes and whose glory is over all.
3. In both testaments, worship is made possible through *God's gracious provision of redemption*.
4. In both testaments, God is approachable in worship by sinful man only *through a divinely appointed mediator*.

#### The Superiority of the New

Nevertheless, the changes wrought by the New Covenant and its fulfillment of the Old Testament Law in and through the Person and work of Jesus Christ are cataclysmic. This is the basis for the argument of the Letter to the Hebrews. Its author expounds the vast superiority of the New Covenant, in all its aspects, over the Old; and to those addressed, apparently considering a

return to Judaism because of pressures and persecutions, the writer in effect says: Why would you *ever* go back to a system which is so obviously inferior and transitory?

#### Towering New Testament Themes

Among the great distinctives of worship under the New Testament are the following.

#### 1. ACCESS

To quote from [Worship Notes 3.9](#):

“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, Romans 3:24-25 in anticipation of Christ’s atoning work), 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/temple) was severely proscribed. The common people were not allowed to enter into the tabernacle/temple 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.”

That opening of the way into God’s presence is powerfully dramatized by the tearing from top to bottom of the veil in the Jerusalem temple (the one barring access into the Holy of Holies, i.e., into the presence of God) at the precise moment of Christ’s death (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). The way into the presence

of God was now open by the removal of the barrier of sin by the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

In Hebrews 10:19-22 the author climactically turns to make application of the tremendous truths he has been expounding concerning the superiority of Christ, his priesthood, his sacrifice, and the New Covenant instituted by his atoning death. And so he declares:

*“THEREFORE, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, LET US DRAW NEAR with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

Note that the verb of the sentence does not show up until verse 22; it is an imperative: we are to “draw near.” The Greek verb here translated (*proserchomai*) is one used commonly in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to speak of the approach to God in worship—though it was not really that “near” because of the restrictions of the tabernacle/temple setup, as seen above. But *now* that approach is clear and open and direct because of Christ’s ministry; and so we are urged to come close “in full assurance of faith” in the “confidence” we can have because of what Christ has accomplished for us. The writer is saying: you have this wonderful access through Christ (as he been explaining for 10 chapters)—now take full advantage of it! Enjoy to the fullest the advantages that are yours because of the superior benefits of the New Covenant.

The writer of Hebrews actually gives *two* reasons why we can draw near, and do so with confidence and assurance:

1. “since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh” (vv. 19a-20): that is, because of Christ’s **past** work on our behalf, **opening the way**.
2. “since we have a great priest over the house of God” (v. 21): that is, because of Christ’s **present** work, empowering and

mediating and perfecting our worship, **leading the way**.

What a wonderful, two-fold truth about Christ’s role in our worship: he both *enables* our access to the Father, and also actively *takes us with him* into the Father’s presence! (For more on the present ministry of Christ is leading our worship, please see [Worship Notes 1.8](#); my articles “[Jesus Our Worship Leader](#)” and “[Proclamation and Praise](#),” and my book [Proclamation and Praise: Hebrews 2:12 and the Christology of Worship](#) [Wipf & Stock, 2006].

The individual believer’s direct access to God, through no other mediator than Jesus Christ himself, was an important rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers recovered this crucial truth, which had been largely lost in the Church during the Middle Ages, when the people believed that they had to go through Mary, or the saints, or a priest in order for their prayers to be heard or their worship to be received by God. Calvin, Luther and the other Reformers drew largely upon the book of Hebrews to demonstrate that “there is one God, and there is *one mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

It’s important to remember that this precious access to God, won for us and enacted for us by our Lord Jesus, is one of the primary goals of the gospel. Certainly the gospel is intended to save us from sin, death and hell; but not only that: Christ died, not just to save us *from* something, but also to save us *to* something: that we might enjoy this access to God, and glorify him and enjoy him forever. Here are some New Testament passages that speak to this: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might *bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18). “And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have *access in one Spirit to the Father*” (Ephesians 2:17-18). “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who *draw near to God* through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Or, as Fanny Crosby put it,

**“O come to the Father  
through Jesus the Son,  
and give him the glory,  
great things he hath done.”**

## QUOTABLES

### “Let Us Draw Near” (Access)

“In spite of the utter newness of the access to the Father through Jesus in one Spirit which the new covenant has brought, the worship of the new ecclesia has a real continuity with the worship of the old. It is the same God of glory who is worshipped. His glory in the overthrowing of Pharaoh and in the leading of Israel through the Red Sea has its counterpart in His glory in Christ’s victory over sin and death and in the exodus of the new Israel in Jerusalem. His glory in the creation is not forgotten but enhanced in the worship of Him as redeemer.”

(Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 97)

“We have a temple—a temple not made with hands, a temple which is the Body of Christ, in which we are built together as living stones; for we are the temple of the living God. The veil of the temple at Jerusalem was rent at the death of Christ, for his death abolished the old barriers between priest and people, Jew and Gentile, God and man. He is our great High Priest; and we are a kingdom of priests; we all have access, in Christ, into the holy place.”

(C. F. D. Moule, “Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the NT” *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 [1950]: 39)

“There is, secondly, the action of the exalted Christ in heaven as our High Priest and Advocate with the Father. It is his presence before God on our behalf in the power of his accomplished work that gives us the right to approach God. It is through him that we have our access unto the Father (Eph. 2:18, cf. Rom. 5:2, 1 Pet. 3:18), through him that we draw near unto God (Heb. 7:25, cf. 10:19-22), through him that we offer our prayers and praises to God (John 15:16, Eph. 5:20, Heb. 13:15), through him that our obedience, our worship in the widest sense, in spite of all its falterings and inadequacies becomes a sacrifice acceptable to God (1 Pet. 2:5).

The efficacy of our worship as our action lies in his action on our behalf, his continual intercession (Rom.8:34, Heb. 7:25, 1 John 2:1 f.).”

(C. E. B. Cranfield, “Divine and Human Action: The Biblical Concept of Worship,” *Interpretation* 12:4 [October, 1958], 391)

“The owner has the right to throw away the inventory, and God wouldn’t have lost an ounce of glory if the Great Flood had destroyed everyone, including Noah. But God in His grace became the inventory to purchase our lives with His blood. The Creator became the creation, and according to Revelation 13:8, in the mind of God Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross before the world was spinning on its axis. The veil of the Temple that once separated us from God’s presence has been torn in two, and both prostitute and peasant have access into the Holy of Holies.”

(Christian George, “Younger Evangelicals and a Restlessness for Revival,” *The Founders Journal* 71 [Winter 2008], 16)

“Christ is our Mediator, by whose intervention we offer ourselves and our all to the Father. He is our High Priest who, having entered into the upper sanctuary, opens up an access for us, He the altar on which we lay our gifts, that whatever we do attempt, we may attempt in Him.

(T. F. Torrance, “The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper,” in *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, 150)

“Jesus is shown to have gained access to the only sacred space worth having—heaven. That space is superior to any previously gained through entry into the promised land or into the inner sanctum of the cult place. Trusting in this, his readers should not hanker after the lost Jerusalem.”

(M. E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 67)

“As our ascended Lord, Jesus not only receives our worship but also perfects our prayers. In fact, Jesus ‘always lives to intercede for us’ (Heb. 7:25). Jesus (and not any other human worship leader) is the true lead worshiper. As we worship it is fitting to think of Jesus as active: praying for us, perfecting our prayers, giving us full access to God. This is pastorally significant because it welcomes us to offer worship even in weakness (Heb. 4:14-16).”

(John Witvliet, “Question and Answer,” *Reformed Worship* 80 [June 2006])

“To pray in Jesus’ name and through him means that we enter into Jesus’ status in God’s favour, and invoke Jesus’ standing with God and the efficacy of his redeeming work . . . to be given access to God. . . . Christians properly call God ‘Father’ . . . because we enter into Jesus’ relationship to God as Father. We are to consider ourselves as enfranchised into Jesus’ sonship with God.”

(Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship*, 107-8)

“We do not appear with our gifts in the presence of God without an intercessor. Christ is our Mediator, by whose intervention we offer ourselves and our all to the Father; he is our High Priest, who, having entered into the upper sanctuary, opens up an access for us; he is the altar on which we lay our gifts.”

(Bryan D. Spinks, “The Ascension and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ” in *Time and Country*)

“If the narrative about creation displays the wonders of Paradise where people had *immediate* access to the Lord God, the account of the expulsion of the sinners from that garden sanctuary reminds people that only through *mediation* can they draw near to the divine presence again.”

(Allen P. Ross, *Recalling The Hope Of Glory: Biblical Worship From The Garden To The New Creation*, 109)

“Without the cross we have no access to God. ACCESS DENIED (like a wrong computer password). You can sing, dance, prophesy, but only JESUS is the password into God’s presence. We will never write a song that will can lead people into God’s presence! Without the cross, we have no acceptable worship. ‘*Through him* then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name’ [Hebrews 13:15].”

(Bob Kauflin, “Biblical Values for Worship and Their Application to the Local Church”)

“We learn to appreciate the access to God which Christ has won for us only after we have first seen God’s inaccessibility to sinners. We can cry ‘Hallelujah’ with authenticity only after we have first cried ‘Woe is me, for I am lost.’”

(John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 109)

“To know this God, who both condescends to share all that we are and makes us share in all that He is in Jesus Christ, is to be lifted up in His Spirit to share in God’s own self-knowing and self-loving until we are enabled to apprehend Him in some real measure in Himself beyond anything that we are capable of in ourselves. It is to be lifted out of ourselves, as it were, into God, until we know Him and love Him and enjoy Him in His eternal Reality as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in such a way that the Trinity enters into the fundamental fabric of our thinking of Him and constitutes the basic grammar of our worship and knowledge of the One God.”

(Thomas F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*, 155)

**ALSO CHECK OUT:**

QUOTABLES: Worship & more  
words of doxological wisdom

[worr.wordpress.com](http://worr.wordpress.com)

# A GOOD FRIDAY OR MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE OF TENEBRAE (Shadows)

## SILENT PROCESSIONAL

## CALL TO WORSHIP

Come to Calvary's holy mountain,  
Sinners, ruined by the Fall;  
Here a pure and healing fountain  
Flows to you, to me, to all,  
In a full, perpetual tide,  
Opened when our Savior died.

Come in poverty and meanness,  
Come defiled, without, within;  
From infection and uncleanness,  
From the leprosy of sin,  
Wash your robes and make them white;  
Ye shall walk with God in light.

Come in sorrow and contrition,  
Wounded, impotent, and blind;  
Here the guilty free remission,  
Here the troubled peace, may find.  
Health this fountain will restore;  
He that drinks shall thirst no more.

He that drinks shall live forever;  
'Tis a soul-renewing flood.  
God is faithful; God will never  
Break His covenant of blood,  
Signed when our Redeemer died,  
Sealed when He was glorified.  
(James Montgomery, 1891)

HYMN: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

## MEDITATION

## HYMN OF GRATITUDE

Amazing Grace, shall always be my song of praise.  
For it was grace that bought my liberty.  
I do not know just why He came to love me so;  
He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.

I shall forever lift my eyes to Calvary,  
 To view the cross where Jesus died for me.  
 How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul;  
 He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.  
 (Words by Dottie Rambo; © 1968 NewSpring)

## COMMUNION

## RESPONSE

I shall forever lift my eyes to Calvary,  
 To view the cross where Jesus died for me.  
 How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul;  
 He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.

## *Service of Tenebrae (shadows)*

### *Shadow of Gethsemane (Mark 14:26-42)*

(Choir) 'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow  
 The star is dimmed that lately shone;  
 'Tis midnight, in the garden now  
 The suffering Savior prays alone.

'Tis midnight, and from all removed  
 Emmanuel wrestles lone with fears  
 E'en the disciple whom He loved  
 Heeds not his Master's grief and tears.

### *Shadow of Betrayal (Mark 14:43-50)*

(Cong.) O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,  
 Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;  
 O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!  
 Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.

### *Shadow of Denial (Mark 14:51-72)*

(Choir) Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon Thee?  
 Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone Thee.  
 'Twas I, Lord, Jesus, I it was denied Thee!  
 I crucified Thee.

***Shadow of Rejection (Mark 15:1-5)***

(Choir) Ah, holy Jesus, how hast Thou offended,  
That man to judge Thee hath in hate pretended?  
By foes derided, by Thine own rejected,  
O most afflicted.

***Shadow of Mockery (Mark 15:16-20)***

(Cong.) Man of Sorrows! what a name  
For the Son of God, who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

***Shadow of Golgotha (Mark 15:21-32)***

(Cong.) What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,  
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?  
O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,  
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.

***Shadow of Death (Mark 15:33-39)******The Everlasting Light***

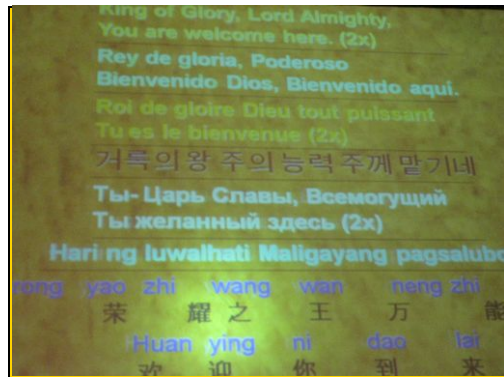
*Please depart in silence*

**NOTES**

After each of the “Shadow” readings, one of a series of seven candles is extinguished; the house lights are simultaneously progressively dimmed, until the room is completely dark by the time the seven and last candle is put out. The congregation sits in darkness for a minute or two, then light is brought up on the cross, and the people are dismissed to leave quietly with a benediction such as: “Go in his light, and in the hope of his Resurrection.”

Obviously other hymns and songs can be substituted for the ones used here.

## GLOBAL WORSHIP



### “A World of Worship”

inaugural event

The multi-ethnic worship training event, “*A World of Worship*” was held in the Dallas area January 16-17, 2009. It gathered together more than 120 participants from around the Dallas region and several Southern states. There were representatives from over 30 churches in addition to a group of 20 students from a Christian university.

The event was planned and put on by members of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (with help from other colleagues), and was made possible by a generous grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (funded by the Lilly foundation).

Some of the attendee feedback:

- “Without question the event has prepared me to better serve others overseas as it pertains to music missions.”
- “The speakers were outstanding and entertaining as well as informative. I loved learning the new songs, too. I was very impressed with the whole thing, and found myself very encouraged... Thank you!”
- “I liked the balance of lecture, discussion, and demonstrations. I also appreciated the actual worship times.”
- “This was a wonderful conference... As I prepare to lead a bilingual congregation, having ... tons of new music and ideas to help me hit the ground running rather than starting from scratch is very helpful.”
- “It helped me to see and understand that when I'm surrounded by other cultures, not to be an observer, but to join in and participate, be vulnerable, make friendships.”

Similar events are planned for the D.C. area and Minneapolis in May (see below).

## UPCOMING WORSHIP EVENTS

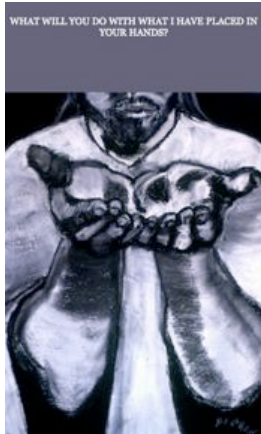
**INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING BIBLICAL WORSHIP IN YOUR CHURCH WHICH REFLECTS REALITIES OF THE MULTI-ETHNIC, GLOBAL CHURCH?**



Join us for **A World of Worship** - a church-based, life-changing weekend event exploring a biblical perspective on the connections between multi-ethnic worship, global mission, and the local church. Three locations, three questions, three outcomes...

VA/Washington DC	May 9, 2009	McLean Bible Church (Reston, VA)
Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN	May 29-30, 2009	New Hope Church (New Hope, MN)

[www.aworldofworship.org](http://www.aworldofworship.org)



**THE EIGHTH ANNUAL HIS GIFTS AND PRESENCE  
NEW ENGLAND ARTS FESTIVAL  
JUNE 27TH, 2009  
McCORMACK PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, AT  
GORHAM HIGH SCHOOL, GORHAM MAINE**

<http://www.newenglandchristianartscouncil.org/>

## WorshipGod Conference

August 5–8, 2009

Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland

<http://www.sovgracemin.org/Events/WorshipConference.aspx>

## COMING NEXT MONTH:

### Worship and Experience



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