

♪ Worship Notes ♪

THEME: Song in Scripture
(part 8)

MORE ON "THE DAVIDIC LITURGICAL REVOLUTION" IN CHRONICLES

In [Worship Notes 4.10 \(October 2009\)](#) we examined King David's institution of a central musical component in the worship of the tabernacle (carried on later in the temple constructed by his son Solomon). Drawing largely on Peter Leithart's fascinating little book *From Silence to Song: The Davidic Liturgical Revolution*, we saw how David transformed the largely silent Mosaic sacrificial system into one rich with musical (choral and instrumental) praises to God.

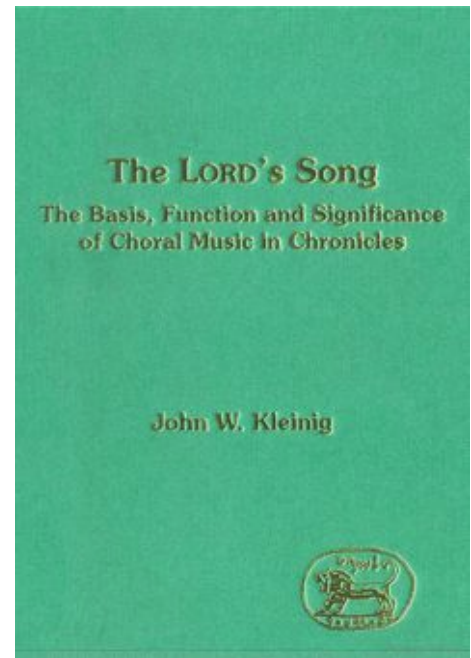
More insights are to be found in a volume which Leithart acknowledges as foundational to his study: *The Lord's Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* by John W. Kleinig. This careful technical work (originally written as a Ph.D dissertation) digs deeply into the Hebrew text to produce an enlightening study of "the ritual function and theological significance of liturgical music in Chronicles" (p. 13).

As observed in *Worship Notes 4.10*, the significance of music in the worship practices of almost all Christian traditions is a legacy of these reforms carried out by David. In the Introduction to his study, Kleinig cites no less a luminary of church music than J.S. Bach as evidence of this lasting influence. Bach commented in marginal notes he wrote in his copy of a biblical commentary that 1 Chronicles 25 "was the true foundation for all God-pleasing church music. . . . Through David, God's Spirit had instituted church music together with all the other

aspects of the divine service at the temple (p. 13). Kleinig comments, "It seems then that Bach was influenced by Chronicles in his understanding of liturgical music. It had been instituted by God Himself to proclaim His word and grant his precious presence to His people in their worship of Him" (p. 13).

Kleinig notes the Chronicler's "special interest in choral music," observing that Samuel and Kings completely lack the frequent mentions of or allusions to liturgical music found in the following passages in the Chronicles:

1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles	
6:31-47	5:11-14	29:25-30
9:14-16, 33	7:1-6	30:21-22
15:1-16, 43	8:12-15	31:2
23:2-5, 25-32	20:18-30	34:12-13
25:1-31	23:12-13, 18	35:15



Here are a few of the important observations and conclusions that Kleinig makes in his work:

1. The Addition of Choral Praise to the Mosaic System

"At the command of the Lord through His propheet, Gad and Nathan, David organized the choral rite for the temple at Jerusalem [Even though the choral rite had not been instituted in the Pentateuch, it is held to have filled three commands of the Lord in the

law of Moses:

- a. His instruction to the priests in Numbers 10:10 to proclaim the Lord during the presentation of the public burnt offerings and peace offerings;
- b. His commission to the Levites in Deuteronomy 10:8 and 18:5 to stand before Him at the ark and to minister there in His name;
- c. His call to all the Israelites in Deuteronomy to rejoice in His presence as they presented their sacrifices to Him at His chosen sanctuary."

(pp. 186-87)

2. Musical Praise as Response to God

"The Lord's song was not performed during the rite for atonement in the preparatory section of the service, but during the subsequent central rite for the presentation of the burnt offering.

- a. Sacred song was not meant to induce the Lord to accept His people but presupposed His acceptance of them in the rite for atonement.
- b. Since the Lord held His daily audiences with His people at the temple during the public burnt offering, sacred song combined with it to proclaim His gracious presence with His people, His acceptance of their sacrifices and His readiness to receive their petitions."

(p. 189)

So too our musical (and other) worship is always a *response* to God's self-revelation and gracious initiative in our lives; not seeking to *win* God's favor, but rather to *thank* Him for His gift of salvation. (See [Worship Notes 1.5 \[May 2006\]: "Revelation and Response"](#))

3. The Significance of Sacred Song

- "a. By praising the Lord, the singers proclaimed His name and publicized His accomplishments.
- b. By praising the Lord, the singers acted as His prophets and prophesied in His name.
- c. By praising the Lord, the singers evoked His glorious presence at the temple in Jerusalem and responded to its manifestation there.

d. By praising the Lord, the singers engaged in supernatural warfare against the Lord's enemies."

(p. 190)

Our musical praises continue to function in much the same way.

4. "The Replacement of David by Jesus as the Leader of Praise in the New Testament"

"It seems to me that the tradition of David as the patron of praise at the temple in Jerusalem may have influenced the belief of the early Christians that Jesus was the leader of praise in their worship. Thus in Hebrews 2:12 the words of Psalm 22:22, which are ascribed to David, describe how Jesus proclaims the name of His Father and praises Him in the liturgical assembly (cf. Romans 15:9). Just as David had given his words to the Levitical singers in 1 Chronicles 16:7-36 for them to use in praises, so the word of Jesus is said in Colossians 3:16 to provide the content of the songs sung by His disciples in their instruction and encouragement of each other."

(p. 185)

This is a fascinating suggestion: since "the Lord's song was instituted by David, the Lord's anointed king, to be performed for him and the people by the priests and the Levitical musicians . . . David was regarded as the leader in praise" (p. 188). Jesus, "David's greater son," fulfilled the words of Psalm 22 in His suffering, as well as in the following victory (Psalm 22:22ff.); and in fact the writer of Hebrews ascribes the words of Psalm 22:22 to Christ Himself. So Jesus in His dual role as the Revealer of the Father and Leader of our worship in effect takes over the leading musical position instituted and embodied by David himself. And we, as worship sub-leaders under Christ our High Priest, represent Him as we "let the word of Christ to dwell richly" in our services (Colossians 3:16).

For more on this glorious theme, please see:

[Worship Notes 1.8 \(August 2006\): "Jesus Our Worship Leader"](#)

[Worship Notes 4.11 \(November 2009\): "The Savior and Our Song"](#)

[Worship Notes 5.2 \(February 2010\): "All and in All \(Colossians 3:16\)"](#)

WORSHIP NOTES is a free monthly online digest of reflections, views, news and reviews concerning biblical worship. It is produced by Ron Man as a publication of **Worship Resources International**, a ministry devoted to "strengthening the body of Christ in the U.S. and around the world by promoting the priority, understanding and practice of God-centered, Christ-exalting, Biblically-based worship." To subscribe, please go to www.worr.org and click on "Worship Notes" at the top; all back issues can be accessed there as well. There are many other free resources on the website also. You also might want to check out the worship quote blog, Quotables (worr.wordpress.com).