

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAISE

LESSON TWO: PRAISE DEFINED

by Sandy Harber

Put simply, "praise" is commendation. To praise something or someone is to speak well of it or him/her. It is approbation, an expression of approval. Giving praise is assigning value, honor, glory, or merit to someone or something.

"Praise" is one of the major themes of the Bible. The Object of praise is, of course, God. It is man's duty to praise God because a failure to do so is to withhold what rightly belongs to His glory (Psalm 138:5). God is worthy of praise because of Who He is and what He has done (Psalm 107:8).

There are 21 different Hebrew and Greek words that are translated "praise" or a variation thereof ("praises," "praising," etc.) by the King James translators. These words convey the different actions and attitudes by which praise is rendered. One word means "to kneel (as an act of adoration)." Another indicates "to rise; get oneself up (in exaltation)." There are several words where praise is expressed by the use of musical instruments. Still other terms that indicate singing and/or shouting. Attitudes of thanksgiving, celebration, and triumph account for several more "praise" words. Two Hebrew words include the action of hands extended in adulation. Taken together, these terms of praise paint a picture of a noisy, joyous crowd of worshippers celebrating with voices, gestures, and musical instruments the majesty and glory of our God.

Praise is often loud. Praise is animated. Praise engages body, soul, and spirit. Praise occurs when the awesome majesty of God fills our hearts so full that the overflow bursts forth from our lips. David danced before the Lord (II Samuel 6:14). Israel was commanded to rejoice before the Lord (Deut. 12:11). Paul encourages the Church to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). All creation praises the Lord (Psalm 148).

The Hebrew title for the book of Psalms is "Praises." Every psalm contains some element of praise. The key word of the book of Psalms is "Hallelujah," which translates into English as "Praise ye the Lord." "Halal" is the most prevalent of the Hebrew words translated "praise" in our Bibles. "Hallelujah" literally means "praise ye Jah (one of God's names)."

"Doxa" is one of the Greek words translated "praise" in the New Testament. "Doxa" means "an opinion." It is used in a favorable sense, thus signifying honor resulting from a good opinion. The New Testament contains several doxologies. "Doxologies" literally means "glory words."

The word "praise" or a variation appears 312 times in the King James Version of the Bible. Two hundred seventy-seven references are found in the Old Testament. I was surprised to find that "praise" only appears 35 times in the New Testament. Does that mean that the Church does not give praise to the One Who redeemed us? Of course not! "Praising God" was one of the activities of the infant Church (Acts 2:46-47). Peter documented that God's people are identified as such by our showing forth His praises (I Peter 2:9). What I learned was that the Greek "praise" words were often translated "glorify," "honor," "hymn," "sing," etc. in the New Testament. The idea of praise runs through the New Testament but it is often expressed in more descriptive terms. The Body of Christ will continue to praise Him now and in the future (Revelation 19:4-6).

How do you praise the Lord?

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." Revelation 19:5