

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAISE
LESSON SIX: PRAISE AND MUSIC

by Sandy Harber

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Psalms 22:3

Our God is a musical God. David tells us that He inhabits our praises. The Hebrew word translated "inhabits" means "to sit down." By implication, the word means "to dwell; to remain." The New American Standard Version states that God is "enthroned upon the praises of Israel." Picture God in His temple in heaven sitting upon a throne created from the praises of His people. This is where He dwells, resting in the midst of voices raised in song extolling His nature, His attributes, and His mighty works. David used the Hebrew word "thillah" for the English "praise" in this verse instead of the more popular "halal." "Thillah" means "a hymn." God dwells in, sits enthroned upon, the hymns sung to glorify Him.

Psalm 22 is a Messianic psalm: it looks beyond David to Jesus. Read through the psalm and you will see the crucifixion. The first words of this psalm were quoted by Jesus as He hung on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In verse 3 the Savior answers His Own question: "thou art holy." A holy God could not continue to have fellowship with the Son while He bore our sins in His Own body on the tree (II Peter 2:24). Nevertheless, the Father sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins (I John 4:10). That is, Jesus Himself was the atoning sacrifice that satisfied a holy God's just demand for punishment of sin. How can mankind withhold praise from such a loving, gracious, and merciful God? We cannot! And that praise usually take a musical form (Ps. 89:1; 92:1; 95:1; 96:1; 98:1; 101:1; 108:1). God accepts the praise of His people as His due and so He sits down and makes His home in these hymns. He sits enthroned in the songs that honor and glorify Him.

David had turned praise into an art form. I'm convinced that one of the reasons that he was called "a man after God's Own heart" (I Sam. 13:14) was his ability to praise God in all situations. He began composing songs about the greatness and goodness of God when he was a shepherd boy watching over his father's flocks. As king, David continued to focus on praising and honoring his God. He arranged for the ark of the covenant, upon which God dwelt with His chosen people, to be brought to Jerusalem and placed in a special tent (I Chron. 16:1). Then he appointed specific Levites to minister continually before the ark. Their job was threefold: 1) to record, or document, what God had done for His people; 2) to thank Him by publically declaring or testifying of His goodness; and, 3) to praise Him with voices and musical instruments (I Chron. 16:4).

We can follow this same pattern. First, look inward. Ask yourself, "What has God done for me?" Make note of it. You have the makings of your own personal psalm or song of praise. The next step is to look outward. Declare publically what God has accomplished in your life. Share your story, psalm, or song. Lift up your voice. It will encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ. It may also open the eyes of the lost and give them hope. And, finally, send it upward. Tell God what He means to you. Bless Him for Who He is. Thank Him for what He has done for you. Speak it silently in your heart in prayer. Speak it or sing it out loud. Turn it into a song. Create a throne of praise for Him to inhabit.

"And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." I Chronicles 16:4