

Praise (II): Praise in the Congregation

I. Praise is the type of gathering that God delights in

Psalm 149:1 speaks of praising God in the assembly of the saints. **Therefore, praise is a form of gathering that pleases God. It is not a worship style exclusive to any particular church or denomination.**

1. Praise in the congregation in the Old Testament

(a) 2Chr 5:11-14

Elder Yong Wu said, "They lifted their voices in unison", indicating that during worship, there was a unified sound from the stage to the congregation. This shows that praise is not just internal. When priests praised in unison, the glory of God filled the temple and the priests could not stand. When we sincerely and wholeheartedly praise God, His glory will greatly manifest because God is enthroned on our praise. Therefore, if we want to fill our homes and workplaces with the glory of God, we need to praise out loud more.

Example: Missionary Yong-Yin Ha used praise to evangelize, worshiping God on the streets, and many rogues believed in the Lord.

(b) 1Chr 23:5, 1Chr 23:30, 1Chr 25:3, 1Chr 25:7

"there brothers **who were trained** in singing to the Lord" (1Chr 25:7), praising this unseen God requires training.

- ◆ No one is naturally good at praising. The more we praise, the more open our hearts become, making it easier to see God's glory and feel His presence. In time, we will have more words to praise Him. **Therefore, we must open our mouths to praise God.**

(c) Psa 22:25

Psalm 22 is David's prayer during extreme distress. Regardless of circumstances, David had a desire to praise God continually in the assembly of the saints.

- ◆ When we first learn to praise God, we may only have a willing heart without knowing how to do it. Yet the more willing we are to open our mouths to praise, the more heaven will open to us, allowing us to have more words to praise Him with.
- ◆ We don't need to wait for God to give us many words to start praising. We can just start with one phrase. We can begin with saying "Hallelujah" or "Praise the Lord."

2. Praise in the congregation in the New Testament

(a) Acts 2:46-47 The way the early churches gathered was to be "together with one accord praising God."

(b) Acts 4:24 "they lifted their voice together to God"

(c) Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas were “praying and singing hymns to God”. In Greek it says “sing praise”.

Even in the midst of darkness, being whipped, imprisoned, inconvenient, and in pain, we should still submit to the Lord and sing praises often. Singing praises will shake open all prisons.

- ♦ **Unless we know how to sing praise in the darkness, we don't really understand praise.**

(d) Eph 5:19, Col 3:16

Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts to God.

- ♦ Psalms: Many psalms can be sung. Many psalms have their tunes written.

E.g., Psa 6, 9

- ♦ Hymns: Everyone can have hymns. Children often find it easy to express their joy through singing. Adults often lose the innocence of children, but God wants us to return to being childlike, he wants us to sing out the words we want to pray, without needing God to give us a tune first.
- ♦ Spiritual songs: These are melodies given by God, not composed by ourselves. They are often unheard of, sometimes sung in tongues and then translated, or directly sung in human language. God often gives spiritual songs to individuals with more freedom. Those who are less free often focus more on themselves and are less likely to have spiritual songs. God often gives spiritual songs to those who are tone-deaf because they are simple.

3. Heavenly gathering:

Many earthly services such as preaching, healing, evangelism, speaking in tongues, etc., will cease in heaven, but worship and praise will continue. Therefore, while on earth, we must continuously practice and learn how to worship and praise.

(a) Rev 4:8-11

- ♦ Heaven is filled with worship. The four living creatures and twenty-four elders never cease to worship day and night.

(b) Rev 5:11-14

- ♦ All creation praises God. We rarely give Him the glory and honor that He deserves.

(c) Rev 7:9-12

- ♦ The lifestyle of heaven is worship. When God's presence and glory open up to us, we cannot help but to praise and worship.

(d) Rev 19:1-6

- ♦ Heaven is filled with the sound of many waters, and the loud voice of thunder saying, "Hallelujah." When we say "Hallelujah," our spirit will continue to rise. **If you don't know how to praise, just say "Hallelujah".**

In the Book of Revelations, God tells us what heaven looks like. Some people will find it joyous to live in heaven while others will find it uncomfortable because they are never used to praising here on earth. They are more interested in church activities like gatherings, outings, and travel than Jesus.

Unless we are interested in the Lamb who is sitting on the throne while on earth and eager to worship Him, heaven will not feel like heaven for us. In our gatherings on earth among the saints, we can already taste the grace of heaven. We should continue to praise and worship Him in our gatherings, pouring out our love to Him.

II. Psa 149:1, singing a new song to praise God

A new song is a song of praise sung in the Holy Spirit

4. Psa 40:3

- ♦ "A new song" refers to the words of praise to our God, a song of praise and worship given to us by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it would have lyrics or simply a spiritual song, not a familiar tune, but given by the Holy Spirit.

5. Rev 14:3, 5:9

- ♦ No one can learn the new song except the 144,000 redeemed. As long as you frequently draw near to Him, praise and worship Him, a new song could naturally come out of you.

III. God's intention

God gave us a prophetic word in one gathering: "Prayers that bring down blessings through praise are my favorite way of prayer. I like prayers offered with thanksgiving, gratitude, praise, and joy, but my people have not learned this lesson. My people, in this matter, are slow and clumsy. Because you have not followed my command, you have missed a great blessing."

- ♦ Angels have been recording our gatherings, so don't wait until heaven to learn how to praise. **I hope none of us will be slow and clumsy in this matter (offer praise and a brief gratitude-filled prayer).**

IV. Psa 149:2, the attitude of praise

6. Psa 149:2 "...be glad in his Maker ... rejoice in their King"

- ♦ God said to Merin Carothers, "I want you to rejoice always because of my son's death for you. From today, no matter what you encounter, rejoice." Rejoice because there is no suffering greater than Jesus' crucifixion.

7. Psa 116:12-13, "lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord."

- ♦ How do we repay God's salvation? Through praise!

- ♦ Praising and thanking God is the fastest and most direct way to access salvation.

8. Heb 13:15 "Through Jesus then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God"

- ♦ God's Son has already offered Himself as a sacrifice for us. Now God wants us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him as well.

Offering ourselves daily, it means not catering to our feelings and emotions, putting them to death like a living sacrifice, and solely praising Him because it brings joy to the One Who created us!

- ♦ If we can give thanks in everything and find joy and happiness in pleasing the Lord who created us, even in our worst circumstances, it will become our greatest blessing. This promise is for those who love Him more than their own feelings.

Assignments:

1. Continue learning to praise out loud every day. **Make an effort to worship and praise out loud during gatherings.**
2. Be glad and rejoice in our Maker and praise Him for the difficulties we are facing.
3. Memorize scriptures: Psa 149:1-4, Psa 22:25, Eph 5:19, Heb 13:15

For leaders:

1. After the meeting, lead everyone to learn and practice praising out loud through songs. (Praising together, using psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.)
2. Recite verses aloud together for the next gathering. You can also share testimonies or ask questions.