

BFF346 Priests Worship

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I am your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve, how are you today?

Steve: I'm well, and how are you?

Scott: I'm good. Let's do this. You said you have a lot of material.

Steve: We're going to discuss more about priestly parameters or what it means to be a priest. I don't know what comes to your mind when you think of priests in the Old Testament.

When I think of priests, I think of the many different functions they had in the Old Testament. They were offering sacrifices. When the tribes of Israel were camped around the tabernacle, the Levites were in the center. Priests were teaching people the laws of God.

The priests were on God's team and were focused on God the best they could. They were also the leaders in the worship, which we will be studying today. David set the priests apart, after the tabernacle stopped from moving through the wilderness, to worship. Today we're going to focus on their role as worshipers, playing instruments and singing praises to God.

Let's pray:

Father, help us today to, as the song says, "tune our hearts to sing your praise." Help us to not only learn something, but hear something that we can apply in our own hearts and in our own experience.

Help us as we walk through life, whether we're serving you in the marketplace, serving you in the home, serving you in other capacities. Help us to be priests in our heart of hearts and working with you and believing in you and standing by you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Psalm 100, as you know, has markedly changed my life. This Psalm emphasizes joyfulness, gladness, loud shouting, and singing. The first verse of Psalm 100, "Shout joyfully to Jehovah all the earth" and "Serve Jehovah with gladness." The word for gladness is joy or mirth.

"Come before His presence." Presence in the Hebrew, is His face. The Hebrew word for joyful singing is ringing cry and militant in nature. Shouting joyfully, which we've explored before, is the same word that's used when Israel shouted and the walls of Jericho fell.

Thus as priests, we're shouting joyfully. We're serving God with gladness. We're happy about this. The best part of it is we're coming before His face with loud, joyful singing. I'm hoping this verse will compass everything we're going to discuss today. "Shout joyfully to Jehovah all the earth. Serve Jehovah with gladness. Come before His presence with joyful singing."

I wrote a book called, "Come into His Presence," based on Psalm 100. I was re-reading portions of it recently and found some pretty good stuff.

Scott: If you do say so yourself.

Steve: Yeah, if I do say so myself. I was edified this morning. I would like to declare that the kind of singing that's described in Psalm 100, is joyful, militant, happy, and whole souled. It demands the effort of our whole being. You can't worship like this in neutral speeds. You can't sit there and say, "Praise the Lord," or "To God be the glory. Great things He has..."

When you're singing in the spirit of Psalm 100, you have to be all in. It reminds me of God saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength." I believe singing a hymn is one of the few activities that encompasses our whole person. We're singing with understanding. We're proclaiming biblical truths. We're inspired when we're in unity with heaven and we're worshipping God.

Even though I don't go to an arm-lifting, hand-raising church, I want to when I sing hymns. When I'm home by myself and no one's in the house, as I was yesterday, I was working through my posture as a priest before God. My hands were lifted to God. My arms were raised. Being physically present helps to be all in.

Now I'm going to add this. I think that as believers, when we're believing that God is the undisputed King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we are in sync with heaven, the angels, and other heavenly beings.

Since He really does reign in heaven above and on the earth beneath, and His kingdom really is over all, and He really is omnipotent, all powerful and also all good and kind and righteous and loving and just, then it's appropriate that when we come into His presence, we sing, gladly, joyfully, and loudly!

We're declaring, "God, You've got everything in control." There's no other response than to say, "Good job. Well done. Keep at it. We are praising You. We adore You." To me, it's easy to see how people, living beings, angels, saints, martyrs in the book of Revelation do nothing but worship because they see what we are believing. They actually see it.

They know, "The great conflict is over. The Lamb is the Lamb on the throne. He has accomplished exactly what He set out to do. That's why he is sitting at the right hand of the Father. He has conquered. He is expecting His enemies to be a footstool for His feet.

Here is a snippet from the book Come Into His Presence, "When my children were younger, I loved to hear them sing while they were playing or during their schoolwork. Just hearing them hum made me know that everything was well in their little worlds. John, my son with Down syndrome, will sometimes sing in his room as he's getting ready for the day. My wife and I look at each other and grin for we know he's at peace.

"I like to think it blesses God's heart to hear His children singing as they approach Him. We are communicating that even though we have concerns and cares, our Father is greater than our problems. With childlike trust, we're declaring that our Dad has everything under control.

"When I am looking heavenward while singing God's praises, I like to think that it blesses Him and causes Him to smile. When so many are shaking their fists at God or complaining or questioning or even ignoring Him, I want Him to know that I think He's perfect. I want to join the angels in praising God and cheering Him on, that I'm grateful to be on His team.

"As I sing, I am declaring that everything is OK and that I am confident that He is not only my Creator and King, but He is also my Redeemer and Sustainer. He is working all things for my good, whether or not I am able to see or understand His will and His ways.

"The psalmist expresses this sentiment succinctly, 'Praise Jehovah for it is good to sing praises to our God, for it is pleasant and a song of praise is fitting.'" (Psalm 147:1). Praise and worship are appropriate.

If we really believe what we believe, if we really are convinced in our heart of hearts that He is Lord in heaven above and on the earth beneath, and there is no other, then I think that the only response that we have, that is adequate, is to praise Him.

Therefore, the first thing we do as priests is praise God because He is God. Boom. When He does certain things, wonderful things for us, we need to be not like the lepers who, when 10 of them were healed, nine of them just proceeded without saying thanks. We also need to thank and acknowledge Him.

Exodus 15 is one of the first times that we see a hymn in the Bible. This is when the children of Israel had just come through the sea, and the waters of the Red Sea had wiped out the Egyptian armies.

Beginning in Exodus 15:1, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto Jehovah and spake, saying, 'I will sing unto Jehovah for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. Jehovah is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. This is my God and I will praise Him, my father's God and I will exalt Him. Jehovah is a man of war. Jehovah is His name.'"

This is what we're supposed to do. This is what is appropriate. It's fitting, and it needs to happen on a regular basis. Number 1, we praise God because He's God. Then we praise God when He does wonderful things. Psalm 98:1, "Sing unto Jehovah a new song for He has done marvelous things. His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him."

Hymns have another function, and this particular one still puzzles me. I'm not saying that it blesses me. It just puzzles me. I'm not fully on board with this yet. In

Deuteronomy 31, Moses' final farewell sermon, everything that he knew about God was distilled and put into the book of Deuteronomy. Magnificent work.

Israel, every seven years at the feast, were to read the book of Deuteronomy out loud, the whole thing cover to cover. When the king of Israel sat down on his throne, it says in the 17th chapter, he was to get a copy of this book and write it out by hand with the Levites. And if he would do that and read it every day, then God was going to bless him. That's Deuteronomy 17:18–20.

Right at the end of Deuteronomy, 31st chapter, God says to Moses, "Write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths that this song may be a witness for Me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them and despise Me and break My covenant.

"When many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness, for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring." Then Deuteronomy 32, which is a magnificent hymn, a lot of it talks about God being their rock and their provider and their creator. It's wonderful stuff because it's the truth, but He wants them to memorize it.

One of the best ways for people to memorize anything is with music. We know that. If I ask people what's the alphabet, they say, "I can do the alphabet, all 26 letters." I say, "How did you learn it?" Then they sing their A–B–Cs. We learn well with music, and God put that into us.

In Deuteronomy 32, we are reminded that God is God. He has done wonderful things for them, but they have chosen to despise Him, break His covenant and worship other gods. It's a declaration of truth, but in this sad situation, it's a sober one.

Let's end up on a positive note. The evangelist, D.L. Moody, have you heard of D.L. Moody?

Scott: Yeah.

Steve: D.L. Moody was the first Billy Graham. Billy Graham was a wonderful evangelist who would rent out large stadiums. Tens of thousands of people would come over the course of the crusade which may last for several days. He'd be in Los Angeles or New York City or Chicago for a week. The first person of note to do what we call mass evangelism and there were others, was D.L. Moody.

Here is a little interesting note, I think I've told you this before, concerning the song, "It Is Well With My Soul" by Horatio Spafford. Many people know the history, of how he wrote these words on the spot in the Atlantic Ocean where his daughters had drowned.

Horatio Spafford was one of five businessmen that they saw the potential in D.L. Moody. Behind the scenes, they covenanted to support him financially for a year. Whatever it took to live in those days, they were going to put up the money so he

could devote himself full time to ministry, and he did. Horatio Spafford was one of the five.

Let's go back to D.L. Moody. He says, "Music and song have not only accompanied all spiritual revivals, but they are essential in deepening spiritual life. Singing does at least as much as preaching to impress the word of God on people's minds. Ever since God has first called me, the importance of praise expressed in song has grown upon me."

When you think of Billy Graham, you also think of his music leader, George Beverly Shea. D.L. Moody was accompanied by Sankey. If you study church history, most of the evangelists had a song leader who was anointed, just as the anointed preacher.

I find this relationship summed up nicely in Psalm 149:6, where the psalmist writes, "Let the high praises of God be in their throats and a two-edged sword in their hands." Here you have praises and the word of God, and they go together. It's a wonderful blend.

I'm going to close with this passage because ultimately, what we started with was praise helps us to come into God's presence. Not only is it fitting, not only is it faith-filled, not only is it wonderful, but praise has a lot to do with coming into the presence of God.

2 Chronicles 5: 11-14, "When the priests came out of the Holy Place, for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves without regard to their divisions. And all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen arrayed in fine linen with cymbals, harps, and lyres. They stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters." (We've had a whole podcast on this, on the shofar and the trumpeters.)

"It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison, in praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah. And when the song was raised with trumpets, cymbals, and other musical instruments in praise to Jehovah, 'For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever,' the house of Jehovah was filled with the cloud so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God."

What an experience that must have been. They were singing and worshiping in unison, with instruments, for there were 120 trumpets, a great brass band. As they were focused on God and worshiping Him, God came down. His glory filled the house of God, and they had to leave because it was too much for them.

To me, it's one of the most blessed pictures in scripture. It goes along with Psalm 22:3, which says, "You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel." I looked up the word "enthroned" in the Hebrew. It's the same word that means to dwell, to inhabit, to live.

God lives on and in the praises of Israel. He inhabits the praises of Israel. He dwells. He's present when we worship Him, which is exactly what we started with in the first place. "Come before His presence with joyful singing. And when we draw near

to God," it says in James, "God draws near to us," or as I like the newer translation says, "When we come close to God, He comes close to us."

We enter His courts and proceed through His gates, praising Him, joyfully praising Him, making glad sounds of praise. I don't know how to put this. In one sense, it's a duty of a priest, but it's also an opportunity, and it's a privilege. It's open to all of us.

I find great joy, great blessing, and great encouragement worshipping this way, even on days when I don't feel like singing. When I sing a real anointed hymn or psalm, it clears the air, it does. It's powerful. We're going to talk more about that in the next podcast.

You're a musician, Scott. What do you think?

Scott: There's a mystery to music. One of the things I love about it is that it doesn't do anything for survival. Inherently, if you were creating man, would you have created music? It's not something that makes us stay alive, and yet, it's so powerful it can move your body, your soul, your mind. Everything can connect in one song.

For those of us who grew up in churches where they didn't emphasize memorizing the Word, how many times did we later on read the Bible and find verses where I'm like, "Oh, huh, I remember that from this hymn that I sang as a kid"?

Scott: I didn't know that was straight out of the Bible. It's so powerful, just singing to God. It's one of those things the more I talk about it, the more ridiculous I sound because you just feel it. When you're praising God in worship and song, it moves the soul. It moves the mind. It can touch places that you didn't know you had.

Steve: I was just thinking this morning that this is Christmas season when we're recording this. I always look forward to hearing the Hallelujah chorus. It's hard to sit down especially during the final chorus. Fortunately, many churches and venues encourage the audience to stand during that final chorus because you're getting pretty close to being in touch with heaven when you're standing there with a whole multitude of people, and you are worshipping. Wonderful stuff.

You talked about creation, which made me think of this verse in Job 38:4. This is when poor Job was being tutored. God was talking to him and says, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding. Who said its measurement since you know? Who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Who laid this cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Isn't that a picture?

Scott: Yeah.

Steve: I believe God created the world with music. I don't know if it was with music or if it just happened, but it was a joyous event. It was a magnificent event. The sons of God shouted for joy and the morning stars sang together. What a picture of God's creation.

Steve: Let's pray: Thank You, Father, for opening our eyes more and more to not only the power, but the efficacy and the depth of what it means to worship You and to sing joyfully and anointedly.

We ask You today, help us to do it. Help us to sing even when we don't feel like singing. Help us to worship You. Help us be at our posts as priests of God. We're not in the time of the tabernacle nor the time of the temple. Here we are now in the time of Jesus in the New Covenant, but we are still at our priestly posts.

We're worshipping You. We're believing in You. We're singing praises to You. We're joining those morning stars. We're joining the sons of God as You continue to recreate this earth because we know that You are not going to be satisfied until we're back to its Edenic form and we are walking with You and You're walking with us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.

Scott: I was reminded of Jesus' birth. I never thought of this until recently. I think you and I might have talked about it once. It says, "An angel of the Lord appeared to them," the shepherds out in the field, you know, "The glory of the Lord was shown around them and they were terrified, but the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'"

He announces Jesus' birth and then verse 13, "Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying glory to God in the highest!"

It's right there in the Word. Is this just my imagination running wild, maybe. But I have this feeling that perhaps the hosts of heaven, all these angels, just couldn't hold back. God seems to be saying, "Sure, go ahead," and just let them burst forth into the physical realm to be seen praising and singing over the birth of Christ. That's another one of those moments where it would have been amazing to have witnessed that heavenly chorus.

Steve: I love it. Thank you for adding that. That's perfect. They couldn't hold it in. I believe you're absolutely on target. I believe you're in the spirit. They couldn't hold it in anymore. Beautiful.