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**Worship: Attitudes and Gratuities - Part 1**

By Tal Davis

When you hear the word “Worship” what do you think of? A church worship service? A certain kind of music? A minister preaching a sermon? We might ask, “Is worship something we do? Is it something we say? Is it some way we act?” The answer to all those questions is “YES!” If we think about it, worship is important because it is the basic reason why we exist. If we are believers, we will actually spend eternity in worship.

Perhaps you have visited churches with various kinds of worship services. You may feel some are so ritualistic and stuffy as to be meaningless. They seem to be all form and style with little theological content or emotion. Others are so loosely defined as to be incoherent, more like a rock concert or pep rally than a time of spiritual reflection.

The ideal worship for most people probably lies somewhere between those extremes. But no matter what the style of worship one may favor, it should always be with the right attitude. Despite what many people think, worship is not a spectator event – we are all participants. If we come with negative attitudes or with indifference, it affects our worship and that of others. Our attitude is contagious – good or bad! This is one reason TV cannot substitute for authentic worship.

So what should our attitudes be? In this article, and the next two installments, we will examine what should be our attitudes in worship. A model for how worship should be conducted is actually found in Scripture itself. Isaiah 6:1-10 is the prophet Isaiah’s description of his vision of worship in heaven. From his description, we can discern six essential attitudes that should characterize authentic worship. In this Part 1 we will look at three of them, and then in Part 2 three more. In part 3 we will see how this all coalesces in worship and thanksgiving as shown in Psalm 100.

The first attitude of worship Isaiah witnesses is awe in the presence of the Lord.

*In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim were standing above Him, each having six wings: with two each covered his face, and with two each covered his feet, and with two each flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of armies. The whole earth is full of His glory.” (Isaiah 6:1 NASB)*

In Isaiah 6:1-3, Isaiah gets a wonderful vision of God’s throne *“lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.”* The description is like a king in his chambers where He is surrounded by “Seraphim.” A seraph is a kind of six winged angel. Seraphim is the plural form of the word. His image of them is quite remarkable and awesome.

He says one of the angels proclaims, *“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of armies.”* The fact that he repeated “Holy” three times emphasizes that the LORD (Yahweh) is perfectly holy – like no other being. Isaiah clearly saw and was overwhelmed by God’s purity and holiness.

Many years later the Apostle John saw a similar angelic vision:

*And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” (Revelation 4:8 NASB)*

Recently something very unusual happened in Panama City Beach, Florida, (this writer was present when it happened). For the first time in fifty years, it snowed on Panama City Beach! It was a beautiful sight to see the pure white snow falling on the pure white sand. You could not tell the difference. That is how God’s holiness is, pure without stain. When we recognize His holiness it causes us to stand in awe of His glory and lift up our hearts in praise.

But recognizing God’s holiness also has a powerful effect on our understanding of ourselves. It causes us realize how impure and sinful we are, and to confess our sins and seek His forgiveness.

*4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, “Woe to me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of armies.” (Isaiah 6: 4-5 NASB)*

When Isaiah realized how holy the Lord was, he was stuck by his own contrast. It made him keenly aware of his own unholiness and sinfulness. Note he says mournfully, *“Woe to me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips.”* He also ac-

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knowledged that every other human around was as guilty as he was compared to the Lord.

Let's face it, admitting our unrighteousness is not easy for us to do. Nonetheless we need to acknowledge our sin. But what is sin? It is not just things we do, it is what we are! This is called the doctrine of original sin. We are by nature sinners who are separated from God by it. In order to be made right with God, we must be willing to confess we are sinners. To confess means to agree with God we have sinned.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)*

As C.S. Lewis said, confessing is not fun and is not just "eating humble pie." It involves a real death to self and repentance (turning away from sin). Genuine worship should include the confession of our sins before the holy God.

So after we have recognized our sinfulness and confessed it to God, we can express t he attitude of gratitude for His forgiveness.

*6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had*

*taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your guilt is taken away and atonement is made for your sin." (Isaiah 6:6-7)*

After Isaiah's confession, one of the angels flew down to him carrying a burning coal from the altar. Isaiah says the angel touched his mouth and said. "*Behold, this has touched your lips; and your guilt is taken away and atonement is made for your sin.*" This act, which was probably painful for Isaiah, symbolized his cleansing and forgiveness by God. This prepared Isaiah for the ministry God had for him which we will look at in the next installment in this series.

Thankfully, we don't need burning coals to get atonement for our sins. Jesus already paid it all on the cross! When we understand the price He paid, we can only have gratitude in our hearts. Nothing should motivate us more to worship Him than our thankfulness for His grace. A true worship experience emphasizes the attitudes of joy,

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love, and thankfulness for the forgiveness and salvation we have in Christ. For any Christian it is a natural expression.

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