

The Sacrifice Of Praise

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On the isle of Patmos, as the first century came to a close, the apostle John received revelation from God regarding future events. What he recorded provides us with indications of what our responsibilities will be as spirit beings in the Kingdom of God. John writes:

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

Those in the first resurrection will reign and work with Christ through the Millennium as kings and priests. We can have a part in the first resurrection if we have been obedient and faithful to the Eternal with the help of the Holy Spirit imparted from God through Jesus Christ. In our duties as kings, we will have the power to correct many of the problems of society and lead the people in God's way of life. As priests of God, among other things like teaching and counseling, we will be responsible for offering sacrifices.

Spiritual Sacrifices

Between AD 63-67, the apostle Peter was inspired to write to the "elect" who were dispersed throughout Asia Minor—and to us today—that Christians are to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* and proclaim the praises of God. "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5). We are in training now, learning how to be priests of God for His spiritual priesthood, and a primary reason is to offer up spiritual sacrifices. A spiritual sacrifice is an act of giving up and offering to God our time and effort in a way that is pleasing to Him.

What makes a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God? Is it merely the sacrificing of our time and effort? No, it is more than that. Comparing the sacrifice of Noah to the hypocritical sacrifices of the children of Israel shows that the attitude and righteousness of the offerer is important to God (Genesis 8:20-21; Amos 5:21-27). A spiritual sacrifice must be offered in an attitude of obedience, humility, and reverence.

Praising God is a spiritual sacrifice. "Therefore by Him [Christ] let us continually offer the sacrifices of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). Sincerely offering praise to God is an acceptable sacrifice which pleases Him. Praise is a form of spiritual worship that helps us stay focused on God.

It was the continual responsibility of the Levitical priesthood "to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at evening" (I Chronicles 23:30). Also, David organized the Levites in "their duties (to praise and serve before the priests) as the duty of each day required" (II Chronicles 8:14). Whole families of the tribe of Levi were set apart to praise God in the Temple through vocal and instrumental music (I Chronicles 25).

King David set us an example. He praised God seven times each day (Psalm 119:164). The principle here is that we should be praising God continually or be prepared to do so at any time, not a specific number of times a day. Oftentimes, if we do something by rote, its meaning and sincerity suffer greatly.

Forms of Praise

Praise can be offered in several different forms: singing, playing musical instruments, dancing, speaking, or praying (Psalm 146-150). God enjoys them all, provided they are based upon spiritual truths and principles and are presented in humility. We have an opportunity to praise God in song each week in our worship service. It is designed to put us in a joyful, thankful, and humble frame of mind so that we will be more receptive to the instruction given that day.

As a spiritual sacrifice, praise is a specific duty that we as a royal priesthood in training are **required** to perform. "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, *that you may proclaim the praises of Him* who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9). "Praises" is the Greek word *aretai* which means "virtue" and "excellencies." When we praise God, we proclaim His virtues, showing the excellencies of all that He does.

Offering up the spiritual sacrifice of praise to God is not something to be taken lightly. It is the duty of God's spiritual priests to offer praise continually and with a sincere and dedicated attitude. There are innumerable attributes and characteristics for which we may praise the Almighty God of heaven. For example, the Eternal's purity and righteousness which is "the beauty of holiness" (II Chronicles 20:21).

Look at creation for an unlimited number of blessings for which to praise God—"all Your marvelous works" (Psalm 9:1). We should praise Him for the power needed to create and sustain all of the physical and spiritual realm: "We will sing and praise Your power" (Psalm 21:13). We can praise Him for His uniqueness and faithfulness: "The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord?" (Psalm 89:5-6).

Praising the Eternal for His name and His goodness is a spiritual sacrifice. "I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good" (Psalm 54:6). God has many names, for example, *Yhwh Shalom* which means "the Eternal of Peace." *Yhwh Zidkenu* denotes "the Eternal our Righteousness." One of King David's many praises to God was for "Your glorious name" (I Chronicles 29:13).

We can praise God for His involvement in His plan of salvation: "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. . . . The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works" (Psalm 145:4, 17). We can certainly praise Him for revealing to us His Word:

I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name. . . . All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth. (Psalm 138: 2, 4)

The number of things for which we can praise the Eternal God is unlimited. The more time we spend communicating with God, the more our eyes are opened to God's attributes. If we allow ourselves to be separated from God because of sin, as a result of neglecting our spiritual lives, we will find it hard to recognize and appreciate the attributes and characteristics of God. Our mental attitude is critically important in properly praising the Eternal. Without the right attitude our praises are unacceptable to the Almighty, but acceptable sacrifices of praise are pleasing to God.

The spiritual sacrifice of praise is an act of offering to God acknowledgement of His attributes! It is an act of spiritual worship that helps us to stay focused on Him. Our duty as a royal priesthood is to continually offer the spiritual sacrifice of praise to God.

Learning How to Praise

In reading the last three chapters of the book of Psalms, one will find that praising God is so important that it is the dominant theme that the Almighty God wanted to impress upon us. After studying the writings and life of King David, it is clear that his praise for the Eternal God is a major reason that God considers him "a man after His own heart" (I Samuel 13:14).

A very interesting and helpful study can be made into the book of Psalms, noting particularly how and for what the psalmists praised God. The Psalms are a gold mine of information that will enhance our worship.

We have so many reasons to praise our holy and righteous God! Praise the Eternal!