

Worship Then and Now

by William MacDonald

With the knowledge we have of the sacrifice of Christ, we should be spontaneous and compulsive worshippers, pouring out our praise and adoration to God.

Scripture: Psalm 150:1

Topics: "Worship", "The Incarnation of Christ"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the profound worship of the psalmists, who, despite lacking the full revelation of Christ, expressed immense praise for God's greatness and creation. He reflects on how they would have been astounded by the incarnation of Christ and His sacrificial death, which they could only glimpse. MacDonald urges that if the psalmists could worship so fervently with limited knowledge, we, with the full understanding of Christ's sacrifice, should be even more passionate in our worship. He encourages believers to let their lives be a continuous song of praise, inspired by the love and grace shown at Calvary. Ultimately, our response to God's incredible love should be spontaneous worship that invites all creation to join in glorifying Him.

Transcript

David and the other writers of the Psalms were worshippers. They had great thoughts of God. The marvels of His creation swept them away in rapturous song. When they considered His greatness, goodness, and grace, their minds strained to take it all in. They thought of Him as the Upholder and Controller of all things and were confounded. The writer of the closing psalms was so overwhelmed that he called on all creation, animate and inanimate, to sing the praises of the Lord. All people great and small, old and young, kings and princes, yes, all angels, together with beasts, birds, and creeping things should form a universal choir. He enlists the accompaniment of all kinds of instruments - harps, trumpets, cornets, timbrels, cymbals, and organs. His subject is so amazing that he summons the sun, moon, and stars to join the anthem. The heavens, earth, sea, hills, mountains, and waters must not be silent. Fire, hail, snow, and stormy winds have their part. The subject is so breathtaking that the Lord is worthy of total praise, Ps. 150.

Yet these psalmists did not have a Bible. They did not know how the Son of God would come down to planet earth and be born in a cattle shed, His crib an animal's feed box. They did not know that wise men would see their God 'contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made Man'. Nor did they know that in that manger would lie the One 'who built the starry skies'. Hidden from their eyes was the truth that the babe in

the manger would be 'the Eternal Word that spoke the worlds out of the womb of nothing, that the tiny arms of this helpless child were the hands of Him who laid the timbers of the universe' (Ian Macpherson).

They did not know that the Architect and Maker of the universe would one day wear a carpenter's apron in a place called Nazareth. Or that He would 'wander as a homeless stranger in the world His hands had made'. They would have gasped at the thought of God having no place to lay His head, or that He would sometimes sleep under the stars while His followers went to their homes.

Did they realize that God would actually come to earth and heal the sick, give sight to the blind, restore limbs to the maimed, cast out demons, and raise the dead? Or, that in spite of all His kindness, He would be insulted, ridiculed, and driven out of town?

It would have been incredible to them that He, the Judge of all, would be betrayed by one of His own, arrested, and put on trial. The civil authorities would find Him innocent, but He would be scourged until His back was like a furrowed field and He was no longer recognizable as a man.

The psalmists did not know in great detail what we now know. At a place called Calvary men would nail the One who is truly God to a cross of wood. It would be unimaginable to these Old Testament poets. They would have shaken their heads to think that the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His Person, the Maker and Upholder of the universe, was there on a cross, purging man's sins, Heb. 1. 1-3. Frail creatures took the One Who is high and lifted up in glory and lifted Him up on a pole of shame. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He was bound by nails. It was the Immortal who was dying.

Imagine the torrent of heavenly harmony that the psalmist's massed choir would have raised if they could have sung in the words of Charles Wesley:

Amazing love! How can it be

That thou, my God, should die for me?

Or Isaac Watts' hymn that says:

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast

Save in the death of Christ my God.

They saw through a glass darkly. At times they had brief glimpses of what would happen, but the full revelation was not for them to know.

The thought is this. If they, with the limited knowledge they had, could have poured out such torrents of praise, worship, adoration, and thanksgiving to the Lord, how much more should we with what we know about Calvary and of the One who died there for us.

Once we grasp the truth of what our God has done for us, of the sacrifice He made to save us, we will be spontaneous and compulsive worshippers. No one will have to coax or cajole us to praise the Lord. Our tongues will be the pen of ready writers. Our lives will be one unending psalm of praise to Him. In the words of Charles Wesley, we will 'dissolve our hearts in thankfulness and melt our eyes in tears'. We will be 'lost in wonder, love, and praise', and 'drowned in love's mysterious deep'. Like the psalmist we will call on all creation to join us in singing the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

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