

**A Brief Look at Music in Biblical Worship**

**A. The Bible is full of songs and music.**

**1. Types of Old Testament Music :**

- a. Psalms – Israel’s book of songs\*
- b. Formal and professional
  - i. David’s Tabernacle (1 Chronicles 15:16 – the Ark processional)
  - ii. Temple worship (Psalms 145-150)
- c. Informal, spontaneous, ecstatic
  - i. Saul prophesying with the prophets (1 Sam 10:5-11)
  - ii. “v6. The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. “
  - iii. *“This free flowing service is very similar to the kind of spontaneous worship and music that characterize contemporary charismatic or praise and worship traditions of worship”* Robert Webber “Enter His Courts With Praise”
  - iv. 1 Samuel 14:14-23 David ministering to Saul on the harp
  - v. v23 Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil Spirit would leave him”
  - vi. Elisha prophesying with music (2 Kings 3:15) “But now bring me a harpist.” While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha

**2. New Testament**

- a. Songs
  - i. Magnificat – Luke 1:46-55
  - ii. Benedictus – Luke 1:68-79
  - iii. Gloria in Excelsis Deo – Luke 2:14
  - iv. Nunc Dimittis – Luke 2:29-32
  - v. Revelation 4, 5, 19, others
- b. Hymns
  - i. Philippians 2:6-11
  - ii. John 1:1-14
  - iii. Colossians 1:15-20
  - iv. 1 Timothy 3:16
  - v. 2 Timothy 2:11-13
- c. Spiritual Songs – Greek “pneumatic odes”, *Jubilus*, ecstatic expressions ala 1Cor. 12-14

3. *“Worship is focusing on and responding to God.”* Donald Whitney. It requires our participation. God as the subject and object of our affections.
4. OT role of the arts. The tabernacle was elaborate and artistic (Exodus 25:10-22). The temple was a place to encounter God, not a museum. Art symbolically communicated truth about God.
5. NT role of the arts. Now God’s image was incarnate in Christ (Col 1:15). New meaning to symbols of the bread, wine, oil and water of baptism.
6. *“Music and the arts played an important role in biblical worship. They were a voice through which God communicated. Today God’s people are anxious to hear from God. The authoritative voice of God is heard primarily in Scripture. But the message of God may be communicated to us in non-verbal ways as well. It may be reflected in music and the arts. Surely the Scriptures present music and the arts as poetic and majestic ways to encounter the living Word in worship!”* (Webber p. 4)

**B. Music can help facilitate our encounter with God as content, proclamation or response.**

7. Music as Content. *“The content of worship is the story of the meaning of human existence”* (Webber p. 13) It tells the story of God and man - from creation to recreation, the gospel story. So one major purpose of our songs is to tell the story, or parts of the story. Some Biblical song examples:
  - a. Job 38:7 the morning songs “sang together” at creation
  - b. Exodus 15:1-8 Israel’s song of deliverance from Egypt
  - c. Psalm 98:1 God “has done marvelous things”
  - d. Songs of God becoming incarnate through Christ in Luke
  - e. Revelations – songs of Christ victory, over the evil one
8. Music as Proclamation. Ephesians 5:18-19 “be filled with the Spirit addressing one another in psalms hymns, spiritual songs”. Our songs should proclaim (which means “to herald, tell out, to declare”) truth about God’s nature, His character, and His ways. We are to proclaim how God “rescues us from our dislocated condition and relocates our lives in God”.
9. Music as Response. God initiates, we respond. (David Peterson, “Engaging God”) Music helps us respond to the proclamation of God’s story. We may lift our hearts with a song of personal response (“I Love You Lord”) or lift our voices together as a sung prayer (ie Psalm 118 “His love endures forever”).
10. Webber – *“What is the purpose of music in worship? Very simple. So that the content of worship, which is the biblical story may be sung forth. This singing is a proclamation of truth, to which people may respond in sung prayer”* (p. 15)

**C. The Lord Is Enthroned on the Praises of His People**

11. Psalm 22:3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the praise of Israel. *Or*  
**Yet you are holy, / enthroned on the praises of Israel**
12. “When we sing a psalm of praise we are actually acknowledging and enthroning God. Our worship puts God on the throne. It recognizes God as the ruler of the universe.”  
(Webber p. 32)

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*Bonus Notes:*

**THE PSALMS**

1. \* The Psalms are literally Israel’s “Book of Praises”.
- a. Hebrew : *Sayfer tehilleam or Tehilleam*
  - b. Greek: *Psalterium*
  - c. Latin: *Biblo psalmon*
- (“Transformed By Praise” Mark Futato, 5-6)
2. These are the worship songs of the Jews.
- a. There are 150 in 5 major divisions, following the five divisions of the Torah.
  - b. All are songs, although we don’t know exactly what the music sounded like.
  - c. They were written by several people over a 1100 year period, the most well known is David. Other writers were Asaph, Korah, Moses, others
3. Types of Psalms and some examples:
- a. Hymns: 8, 19, 95-100, 145 – 150
  - b. Thanksgiving (Individual-118, and Community - 67)
  - c. Lament: Personal 3-7, 9, 10, 25-28; and Community 12, 79-80, 129
  - d. Trust: 23, 27, 91, 125, 131
  - e. Wisdom (Torah): 1, 119, 127-128, 133
  - f. Storytelling (Remembrance) 78, 105-106, 135-136
  - g. Liturgy: 15, 24, 50, 68, 81-82, 134
  - h. Royal: 2, 20-21, 89, 101, 132, 144
  - i. Messianic: 2, 16, 22, 25, 69, 110
4. *“Praise is a command. To praise is to acknowledge. Praising God is acknowledging who God is and what he has done. Praising is confessing what God has done in the history of salvation. Praising is confessing what God has done in our lives. We carry out the command to praise the Lord by acknowledging and confessing who God is and what he has done, and in so doing, we render honor and glory to the one who is the object of our praise. “*  
 *(“Transformed By Praise” Mark Futato, 8)*