

A People Ordered for Worship (1 Chr 25.1-8)

Building a House for God's Name: Studies in 1 & 2 Chronicles

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The primary theme of 1 Chronicles 22-29 is David's painstaking preparations to ready his son Solomon for the building of the temple.
- B. In chapter 22 we saw the lengths to which David went to ready the *resources* (labor, materials, wisdom) necessary to build the temple. Then, the Chronicler spends an extended section (chs. 23-27) outlining the meticulous organization of the people required to *facilitate and administrate worship* in the temple.
- C. These chapters emphasize that the centerpiece of Israel's national life was to revolve around the worship of the Lord as represented in the ministry of the temple. Offering right worship to the Lord was of such great importance that it necessitated extensive administrative organizing of the people.
- D. Outline of 1 Chronicles 23-27
 - 1. The organization of the Levites (ch. 23)
 - 2. The organization of the Priests (ch. 24)
 - 3. The organization of the Temple Musicians (ch. 25)
 - 4. The organization of the Gatekeepers and Treasurers (ch. 26)
 - 5. The organization of the Lay Supervisors (ch. 27)

II. DAVID'S REVELATION AND THE ORDERING OF THE KINGDOM

- A. These chapters are designed to present Israel as a microcosm of a redeemed people ordered for the purpose of worship.
- B. David's ordering of the kingdom of Israel around the tabernacle/temple (worship of the Lord) is a remarkable turn in redemptive history. This is directly tied to David's *revelation of worship in the place of God's economy and kingdom*.
- C. David possessed a unique understanding of how God had ordered his creation and sought to bring the whole of his life and assignment into agreement with this order.
- D. David was himself an extravagant worshiper of the Lord. This was expressed both in his skillful pursuit of music and his writing of psalmody to encapsulate this revelation.
- E. David was also committed to *instructing others* in worship to the Lord and *ordering* the kingdom of Israel around worship of Yahweh.
- F. David set Levites before the ark in order to worship God. This order included 4,000 full-time musicians, 288 singers, and 4,000 gatekeepers. In other words, at the center of David's expression of government were nearly 9,000 people who were employed to facilitate perpetual worship before the Lord.

⁷The number of them along with their brothers, who were trained in singing to the Lord, all who were skillful, was 288 (1 Chr 25.7)

⁴Twenty-four thousand of these," David said, "shall have charge of the work in the house of the Lord, 6,000 shall be officers and judges, ⁵4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 shall offer praise to the Lord with the instruments that I have made for praise." (1 Chr 23.4-5)

³³Now these, the singers... were in the chambers of the temple free from other service (1 Chr 9.33)

- G. David built the tabernacle this way in accordance with the pattern of the heavenly temple that was revealed to him by the Lord.

¹¹Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat; ¹²and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers... ¹³for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the house of the LORD... ¹⁹“All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan.” (1 Chr 28.11-19)

- H. David commanded his sons to continue this establishment in obedience to the commandment given by God through his prophets.

²⁵And he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gd the king’s seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets (2 Chr 29.25)

III. GOD’S ZEAL TO BE WORSHIPED

- A. David understood something foundational about God — namely, that God is zealous to be worshiped and has designed his kingdom to be established on the worship of his people.

³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. (Ps 22.3)

- B. The Chronicler describes the desire of God to find a heart that is ordered toward him in worship.

⁹For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him (2 Chr 16.9)

- C. Jesus declares that the Father is *seeking* worshipers who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

- D. Throughout eternity, God will receive perpetual worship.

¹¹Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Rev 4.11)

¹²Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! (Rev 5.12)

- E. God has ordered his kingdom around agreement with him by his people in the place of worship and prayer.

¹⁸Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him... ¹⁹He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you (Isa 30.18-19)

¹³Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14.13-14)

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC AND SINGING

- A. If the heart of God’s people (as his holy dwelling place in this world) is to live in a posture of engagement with him (communion) in the place of agreement with his person (worship) and his purposes (prayer), we must see one of the most profound gifts for facilitating and stewarding this reality is the gift of music and singing.

- B. One of the primary ways (and I would argue, one of the most fundamental and essential ways) that God has given us to draw near to him and pursue his presence is the means of song.
- C. David's revelation of the importance of singing and music at the heart of the tabernacle (ministering to the Lord) is a portrait for us of the importance of singing and music at the heart of God's people.
- D. Because of this, we desire to build and cultivate a vibrant, healthy, and anointed worship ministry at the heart of our church.
- E. Anointed worship is a summary statement for a commitment to the truth that music and song provide important avenues for the people of God experiencing the presence and life of God as they minister to him in an atmosphere of anointed ministry.
 - 1. **Music and song:** God has ordained and given singing and music as important ways to engage the whole of our person in the reality of worship. Because of this, we need to spend time highlighting the importance of these means, instructing in them, as well as orienting resources toward facilitating growth in a vibrant, skillful, and robust expression of this type of worship ministry.
 - 2. **Presence worship:** the belief that the reality of God's *immediacy* (his immanence, his presence) is an essential element of Christian worship. Because of this, we pursue a culture of worship that seeks to (1) invite believers to respond to him with this understanding; and (2) leads with expectation and clarity toward stewarding God's active presence among us.
 - 3. **Ministry to the Lord:** The New Testament gives us a portrait of the "priesthood of all believers". One of the most fundamental aspects of the priestly ministry is the *primacy* of ministry to the Lord. However, we often exclusively speak of the priesthood of all believers with regard to ministry to one another.
 - 4. **Anointed ministry:** belief that individuals are empowered by God's Spirit to lead his people with skill and excellence. This requires a (1) framework for understanding; (2) a model of *how we lead* and respond together; and (3) training of worship leaders, singers, and musicians to facilitate and lead with boldness and confidence.
- F. There is a mysterious and spiritual reality to worship through song and music. Throughout the Bible the presence of music is closely related to the operation of the priestly ministry and the people of God.
 - 1. **Singing is a means of being filled with the Spirit.** Paul instructs the Ephesian church to be filled with the Spirit (as an ongoing reality in their lives) and gives them the precise means *how* they are to do this: by **singing** psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with you heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5.18-20)
 - 2. **Music (singing) can be an act of prophesy.** In the establishing of the Davidic tabernacle, the Levites were given a charge to **prophesy** on their instruments before the Lord. This demonstrates that songs (and music) can be prophetic.

¹David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals. ²...sons of Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king. ³Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun ...who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD. (1 Chr 25.1-3)
 - 3. **Music is a means through which the spirit of prophecy can be facilitated.** In the OT, Elisha calls for a musician in order to facilitate an atmosphere for his ministry.

¹⁴And Elisha said, “As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you nor see you. ¹⁵But now bring me a musician.” And when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him. (2 Kings 3.14-15)

4. ***Music and singing can be an act of spiritual warfare.*** It is evident from the Scriptures that spiritual realities are altered within the atmosphere of musical worship. This gives evidence to the reality that God takes up his throne (establishes his government, rule, kingdom) in the places where his people are in agreement with him.

²¹[Jehoshaphat] appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever.” ²²And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. (2 Chr 20.21-22)

²³And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him. (1 Sam 16.23)

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken (Acts 16.25-26)

5. ***Music and singing are a unique fulfillment of the dominion mandate.*** Music is a “wasteful” exercise that adds very little utility to our lives. However, it is also a remarkable picture of humans fulfilling the commandment to subdue and exert authority over created order. In singing we must exert rule over our own bodies and situate them within a greater whole with order, proportion, harmony, and rhythm. To make music we must turn the raw elements of creation into instruments, learn and master the various properties and proportions that make up musical performance (rhythm, meter, pitch, etc.). This requires a knowledge of musical principles (theory) as well as developing skillful hands (excellence with our voices or on an instrument).

³Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable (Ps 145.3)

6. ***Music and singing facilitates unity.*** The commandment throughout Scripture brings the people of God face to face with the necessity of singing. One of the unique and particular blessings of music and song is the ability to facilitate and enhance unity among many voices. There is a dynamic interplay within the Scripture between the power of the voice of the Lord (Ezek 43.2; Rev 1.15) and the power of the voice of the saints offering up their worship to the Lord in eternity (Rev 14.2).
7. ***Music and singing engages our affections.*** Music facilitates a different engagement of our person as ***affectional beings***. We are commanded to love God with all of our *hearts* and all of our *souls* (speaking of the internal, affectional, volitional aspects of our being). One of the great gifts of music is that it allows us to set our affections upon the Lord in song. We do not espouse a pursuit of emotionalism — but equally we do not espouse a pursuit of emotionless worship. The Scripture is filled with commands to *delight* in the Lord, to *cherish*, *long for*, and *love* him. The presence of music and song can help facilitate our formation toward these ends.

¹I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise (Ps 138.1)

8. ***Music and singing engages our bodies.*** In a similar manner to its place as a picture of dominion accomplished, music has the potential to engage the whole of our bodies. This acknowledges that we are not merely minds, nor are we the sum of our experiences (our feelings, affections). Rather, we are embodied creatures who are commanded to engage the whole of our being in the worship of the Living God. This is why we ***practice*** an embodied worship through song: singing, dancing, clapping, shouting, lifting of hands, kneeling, etc. As whole beings (mind, heart, soul, strength) our affections are shaped and learned not only by what we *think* (renewed in our minds) but by the things that we *practice* consistently (trained in righteousness).