

Chapter 12

The Battle Cry of Praise

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand.

—Psalm 149:6

It is no revelation to a seasoned Christian that mankind was created expressly to have fellowship with God. Part of that fellowship is predicated upon our worship of Him. Though certainly worship is more than just musical, it is also no secret just how important music is to the Lord. When we study the Scriptures, we notice many verses instructing us on the subject of music. One of the best known is this one from Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

—Colossians 3:16–17

This passage gives us a microcosmic overview of God's desire for the operation of our lives, as Paul lays out God's will concerning music. Whatever we do, we are to do it for God's glory. Is it any wonder then that the Adversary would so manipulate music to derail praise from God and instead deceive man into directing it toward himself?

Controversy

Though the Bible is replete with passages dealing with music, praise, worship, songs, psalmists, musical instruments and the like, it is probably amazing to most saints that there are nearly 900 Scripture passages that deal directly with music! It is interesting to note that in all of those verses, God neither advocates nor forbids any particular instrument, sound or type of music. It would have been so much simpler if God had declared a favorite style, but He didn't! This fact adds to the discussion of this often divisive topic within Christian circles, but nonetheless it adds to the absolute imperative reason that we should study this issue with great care. We wish that God would just issue a weekly "Top Ten", but since He doesn't, we'll each just have to dig in and search the Scriptures on this one!

More Controversy

It can probably be said that there are three uses for music: first, music that is devoid of serving God. Next, music that is neutral of serving God. And finally, there is music that is aimed squarely at serving Him. As we've mentioned, this is an area of very limited agreement across the Christian world, but we can probably find agreement that some lyrics and lifestyles being promulgated in music today are anti-biblical. Some lyrics sung could perhaps be classified as passive or neutral, neither glorifying God nor breaking any particular Biblical standards. And lastly, there are thankfully many lyrics and lifestyles that are glorifying to the Lord and blessed by Him. Please note again that we recognize this is

perhaps one of the most hotly contested topics of discussion among Christians today and is certainly up for a much more in depth debate than we'll allow for here. You can probably tell that we've been round and round from every angle on this issue; and without ample space, we know we're leaving this spiritual lightning rod dangling in the wind. Regardless of all the controversies, if we stick with the Bible, we can be absolutely certain whether or not the lyrics and lifestyle being presented are valid and are worthy to be called "Christian".

Most importantly, we can be assured that God has a *perfect* will concerning music: that is that He be worshiped and glorified through it! That's the kind of music that becomes an effective weapon in the arsenal of an informed believer.

A clear example of how completely God honors music which is played and sung for His complete glory can be seen in the overwhelming outpouring of His Spirit during the consecration of Solomon's temple in II Chronicles 5. As the musicians and singers worshiped the Lord, the temple was filled with the glory cloud of God and God literally overtook the participants. Since the New Testament tells us that we (His church) are now the temple of God, it would make sense that all believers who want God's anointing will fill His temple with music that brings Him honor and praise. Why would we ever want to settle for anything less? 'Nough said!

Secular Music - Satan's Battle Cry?

While we don't want to get sidetracked too far here, it's very hard to resist a few comments concerning the toll that ungodly secular music is exacting in our day.

Both David and Eric have concentrated many years of ministry and thousands of hours of research and effort on exposing the darkness within today's music industry. Coming from a past caught in the grips of the music business as a performer, record producer and recording engineer, Eric in particular has person-

ally experienced the worldly attraction brought on by the lure of rock music. Both these authors have written, spoken and ministered about this issue in great depth, and one thing we have concluded is that what the world is offering up for young people and adults to listen to today is laced with spiritual poison. Of as much or more concern is the accompanying lifestyle the musicians present, as music plays such a pivotal part in so many lives now. From Rap to Rock and from Pop to Country, the music industry is generally at odds with the overwhelming Scriptural evidence as to why music exists at all. This brings us back to the reason we've included this chapter.

Music as a Weapon of War

There is more to “praise and worship” than just singing hymns and choruses on Sunday morning. Lifting our voices to God is not only an obedient expression of our love and awe for God, it is a powerful tool of Spiritual Warfare.

To define the differences, praise is usually sung about God to men. Praise edifies, teaches, exhorts and encourages. Worship, on the other hand, is usually sung directly to God. Worship praises God, thanks Him, adores Him and petitions Him. To those who understand what the Scripture reveals about praise, and who know what is happening in the spirit realm as we carry on worship, the term “praise and worship” truly becomes a battle cry!

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

—Psalm 22:3

Scripture says that God inhabits or is enthroned in the very praises of His people. What an awesome thought! The King of all creation is magnified and literally lives in our praises! Dare we hold back giving Him glory whenever and wherever we can?

In Psalm 22:3, the English word “inhabitest” is translated from

the Greek word *Yashab*. It literally means “to sit”, “to remain”, “to have one’s abode.” This is extraordinarily powerful when we come to realize just what this really means to us as we do battle with the Devil.

To give praise to God is truly a spiritual experience. God—a **spirit**—dwells in our worship. Do you suppose He knows immediately when our worship is phony, contrived, and not truly from the heart? No one should believe that God ever honors a lackadaisical, halfhearted worshiper. We see a key to this in John 4 when Jesus states:

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

—John 4:24

Notice Jesus doesn’t say, “those that worship Him *should* worship Him in Spirit and in truth.” He said “**MUST.**” Otherwise our unclean offering is void of the presence, comfort and power of God. Without the Holy Spirit’s anointing as we stand in His truthful righteousness, our words are empty and our actions meaningless, for God longs for and only inhabits the true praise of His people.

Is it any wonder that Satan tries to so intimidate men in their praise and worship to Almighty God? He knows that not only is it a point of obedience for Christians to unabashedly worship God, but if he can keep them from doing so, they’ll be much less a threat to his evil work. Now we caution you that in saying these things we are not promoting demonstrative displays that bring attention to humans in the name of worship. But if Satan can bring the fear of what men think upon your mind, and keep you from entering into God’s courts through praise, then how much more will he be able to accomplish as he whips up on you in Spiritual Warfare? It is for good reason that the Devil does this, for without the weapon of praise and a complete understanding

of what it accomplishes in the spirit realm, you are greatly hampered in your effectiveness to battle.

We don't pretend to know all the dynamics that take place spiritually when a Christian worships the Lord, but we do know that something powerful, something extremely potent takes place. We're not referring to a feeling we might receive while worshipping. Though emotions might come into play during worship, understand that it is not the amount of tears we may shed that is the benchmark for how effective our worship may have been. It is the binding and even outright confusion our praise brings against the forces of evil that signifies the real cogency of our worship.

Setting the Table for Battle

In II Chronicles 20, we read of Israel facing overwhelming odds as they prepared for battle with three alien armies. In worldly terms, the battle looked as if it was over before it began, with Israel meeting disaster. You've probably been there at some point in your life, with a mountain before you that looked insurmountable. In the case of Israel though, defeat meant at least captivity by their foes and probably death. Greatly outnumbered, the army of Israel appeared to be doomed. In the natural, things looked bad, but all things are possible with God.

The night before the battle, God's Spirit came upon the Levite Jahaziel with a great word of prophesy.

...Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out

against them: for the LORD will be with you.

—II Chronicles 20:15–17

This is exactly the kind of word we want from the Lord when facing the impossible, isn't it? The passage says that Jehoshaphat and all of Israel worshiped the Lord, some probably kneeling, some bowing, and some lying prostrate before Him. We also see here that being led by the Levites, some stood and praised God "with a loud voice!" (When the chips are down, even the most conservative worshipers just may shout to the Lord!)

The next morning, Jehoshaphat appointed "singers unto the Lord" to go out *before* the army to worship the Lord. It was then that the Lord set ambushes against their enemies! As God's people worshiped and sang, the enemy armies slew each other! This is a picture or "type" of what can happen in the spirit realm during Spiritual Warfare. Wow! We don't have to paint much more of a picture than that to demonstrate the victory available to us Christians when we honestly and earnestly give praise to God in song! Worship sets the table for victory! These people were in a very serious life-threatening situation. There was no pretense in their praise. It was honest and without reservation. And true to His word, God *inhabited the praise of His people!*

Scripture in II Chronicles 20 goes on to say that Jehoshaphat and the Israelites took great loads of treasure, jewels, and other spoil and returned to Jerusalem the same way they had gone to battle—worshiping with psalteries, harps and trumpets!

Verse 29 says that "the fear of God" was on all the countries surrounding Israel and that there were peace and safety during Jehoshaphat's reign! Could it be that peace, safety and provision are attainable for those who worship God in spirit and in truth?

To Praise or not to Praise?

Too often we see people concentrating on how they feel during worship. Some saints seem to enter a worship service waiting on God to miraculously touch them before they begin to sing and enter into the flow of the service. They seem to be waiting on the worship leader and musicians to play just the right song that touches their *feelings*. May we say that whether we feel like it or not, we are **commanded** to worship God. Church, we need to enter in and concentrate on Him, allowing how we feel (be it good or mediocre) to become secondary. Often we may not *feel* anything as we begin to sing and praise the Lord but as we do so, His Spirit comes and meets us, filling our hearts with His joy as we express our devotion to Him. And let us not forget the biblical examples we have, which tell us music is indeed an integral part of the battle in the spirit. Perhaps we could say that it may indeed be a *dangerous* thing to just stand around week in and week out while a corporate worship service is going on. Would any worshiper have done that in the wilderness of Tekoa (II Chronicles 20)?

We do recognize the excesses within the body of Christ, as some in the church seem to actually “worship” worship itself, by using mere human effort to work themselves into a state of “spirituality.” It is also troublesome that in some corners of Christianity, the preaching of the Word and the ministry of the saints have been neglected to some extent because of the overemphasis on musical presentation. Still, while we’re more concerned with the spiritual lack apparent in those who *never* enter into worship than those who are perhaps on the opposite extreme, it is essential that the church understand the paramount importance of personal and especially corporate worship. Here’s why.

The Unseen Reason for Praise

As we study and learn what the Word of God says about worship, it is clear that while we are lifting praise and worship to Heaven, there is a second unseen benefit taking place.

As we read the Scripture and in particular see the Old Testament “types” about how music and worship were used, it reveals to us that New Testament worship is indeed a weapon of Spiritual Warfare. Just as the application and appropriation of the blood of the Lamb covers and protects us today, our understanding of what is taking place in the spirit realm as we praise God is integral to our victory as well. It could be said that the Christian—who knows the havoc that his or her worship to God is also wreaking on the powers of darkness in that general locale—will endeavor to worship God with all the more vigor! In fact, *it is the glory of the saints to inflict damage on the Devil and his workers!*

In Psalm 149, we see a terrific picture of both the purpose and priorities of worship.

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.
- 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
- 3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.
- 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.
- 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.
- 6 *Let* the high praises of God *be* in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;
- 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, *and* punishments upon the people;
- 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;
- 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

—Psalm 149:1–9

Notice the first five verses portray our foremost obligation in worship—to give God glory. But beginning in verse six, we see the secondary priority come into play—Warfare against the enemy. In reading Old Testament passages, we are to view them through New Testament eyes. Knowing that, and knowing that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers of Hell, then what we see here is a clear mission for the church today. We are to praise God, taking up the sharp and powerful sword of the Word of God; and through our Scriptural praise, inflict damage on the Devil's kingdom! To proclaim the judgment of Almighty God upon the Devil's forces is an honor; and as one version of the Bible says, it is “the glory of His saints!” Remember this passage the next time you are singing, “there is power, power, wondrous working power in the blood of the lamb!” Not only are you lifting up Jesus and giving Him the glory He is due, but by your commitment to worship, you are punishing, weakening and dethroning demonic beings who have designs on taking more captives around your general area!

If “one puts a thousand to flight and two, ten thousand” (Deuteronomy 32:30), just imagine what damage we could inflict upon the enemy’s kingdom in our locale if we joined together in the understanding that our praises weaken the defenses and advancements of the Powers of Darkness!

One more thought: If you've wondered why the usual, historical worship service in churches begins and ends with song, now you know. Just as Jehoshaphat sent the singers and musicians out at the head of the army, and also worshiped God after the battle, we do the same today. This is also reflected in the “Lord’s Prayer”, in which Jesus taught us how to pray by both beginning (Matthew 6:9b) and ending (Matthew 6:13b) with praise and worship. A solid, vibrant worship service softens the hard soil in the heart to accept the preaching of God’s Word and also binds the spiritual forces intent on deterring the will of God.

Praise Your Way to Freedom

“I just don’t feel like worshipping God. Things are coming unglued in my life and I have too many troubles to deal with.” Though a Christian may not ever verbalize these words, it is probably too often the scenario. Let us say that any saint, who is experiencing life’s turmoil or spiritual oppression, is the very person who needs more than anyone else to begin to praise God! When the storms of life hit, instead of giving in to the human inclination to declare, “woe is me”, and thus drifting into depression and despair, our reaction **should** be to praise the Lord! Do we praise Him **because** of the problem? No, we worship Him because He has all of the help and solutions we need in the midst of life’s problems. Satan desires for us to depend on human means to overcome the perils of this life. God desires us to look to Him instead. The Devil desires for you to fall into the trap of depression, but God says, “Come unto Me if you are weary and burdened!”

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:6–7

If you are looking for real answers to the storms of life, turn to prayer and supplication (worship) as the Scripture exhorts, and receive the peace of God! Why do anything else?

Worry or Worship?

It is an impossibility to honestly lift worship to God and also worry at the same time! That is so extremely freeing that we’ll repeat it again! ***It is impossible to worship and worry at the same time!*** Worry and worship are mutually exclusive activities. You can’t participate in both simultaneously. In the gospel

accounts, time and again Jesus told His followers to “take no thought” for things like food and shelter. He was saying, “don’t worry.” Do you suppose that if you do something that Jesus told us **not** to do, that in doing so you sin? Of course. Besides, what did worry ever accomplish? Someone once said that worry is like a rocking chair; it’s something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere! Worry wears us down. Worship lifts us up. Worry embodies Satan’s will, *while worship of God enthrones Him in our circumstances!* If you are under attack and your situation has the aroma of prune soup, remember: **Praise breaks the back of Satan’s attacks!** It may not be an instant solution, but it will certainly be the right action to take! So may we suggest that the next time you are tested and the trials of life seem insurmountable, that you make the volitional choice to turn to God in joyful praise? It is confounding to the enemy and glorifying to God. Plus, it will be a powerful witness to those around you as you walk through the trials with an attitude of praise, giving God the glory for His strength in you.

What Kind of Praise?

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

—Psalm 8:1–2

With all the talk in this chapter about praise, it would be good to close with a biblical definition of just what that means. Here in Psalm 8:2, the word “strength” appears in the King James Version. It is the Hebrew word *oze* (Strong’s 05797). It is interesting to note the English translation *Strong’s Concordance* renders for this word. It means, “force, security, strength, strong, power, boldness, loud, mighty, majesty, praise.” These are words which describe the kind of worship God desires. **If we go into battle**

with praise that fits this description flowing from our lips, we are certain to walk in the victory of God while we displace the enemy!

Eric Barger (Bar-jer) is a well known conference speaker, author and evangelist, with a no-nonsense message for today. His challenging, biblically based “Take A Stand!” Seminar series has been held in churches across North America since 1984.

Once lost in New Age mysticism and drug addiction as a secular rock musician and record producer, Eric is now a recognized author of several books including the Christian best seller, ***From Rock To Rock*** and the 2001 release ***Entertaining Spirits Unaware*** with coauthor David Benoit. He has written for *USA Today* and has been featured on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, “Point of View with Marlin Maddoux”, and “Truths That Transform” with Dr. D. James Kennedy as well as in hundreds of other electronic and print media interviews.

His evangelical teaching and apologetics ministry concerning issues such as the New Age Movement, the Cults, Spiritual Warfare and Current Events in the light of Bible Prophecy is headquartered in the Dallas, Texas, area where he resides with his wife Melanie.

To bring Eric Barger to your church, to receive his free newsletter or to request a materials list, contact Take A Stand! Ministries, POB 1485, Rowlett, TX 75030 or on the Internet at www.ericbarger.com.