

Psalm 134 — “True, Authentic Worship!”

****READ THE TEXT****

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

- **What is True, Authentic Worship?** *do you know*?
 - Many today may equate WORSHIP with entertainment, emotions, feelings, music, no-strings-attached, self-improvement, a spiritual high, loud music, ecstasy, fun.
- BUT** - What -- or *WHO* -- is worship really about?
- R Kent Hughes marvelously nailed it when he said:
 - The unspoken but increasingly common assumption of today's Christendom is that worship is primarily for us -- to meet our needs. Such worship services are entertainment focused and the worshippers are uncommitted spectators who are silently grading the performance. From this perspective, preaching becomes a homiletics of consensus -- preaching to felt needs -- man's conscious agenda instead of God's. Such preaching is always topical and never textual. Biblical information is minimized, and the sermons are short and full of stories. Anything and everything that is suspected of making the marginal attendee uncomfortable is removed from the service... Taken to the nth degree, this philosophy instills a tragic self-centeredness. That is, everything is judged by how it affects man. This terribly corrupts one's theology.
 - **God deserves worship!** He planned it! He calls us to it! He designed it. He doesn't only call us *TO* it but he tells us *how* to do it. He created it so he regulates *how* worship is function.
- Paul House -- OT theologian -- writes so gloriously & accurately:
 - In the OT Law, Yahweh chose Israel to honor God among the nations by being different than other peoples. The goal is for them to stand out from -- NOT be absorbed by -- the cultural setting to which they are going (Promised Land).
 - **The (true) worship of God stands out from that of the world.**
- What hinders TRUE WORSHIP [roadblocks/stoppers]
 1. triviality -- our age/generation/culture is not one advocating great thoughts, great actions, and great integrity. Surface-level, highly-entertained, becoming more shallow by the day.
 2. self-centeredness -- we are just a man-centered, self-absorbed age
 3. ignorance -- ignorant of God because we are ignorant of our Bibles
 4. distraction -- we train ourselves to sit for moments. But we must train ourselves to sit & study; kneel & pray!

What must be done?—“YOU MUST FIRST take a church down deep in the Word if you would lead them up high in worship. The depth determines the height. The depth in the Word determines the height in worship. Shallowness in the Word leads to shallowness in worship. Too many churches try to fake it simply by turning up the volume” (John MacArthur)

- ▶ **Objectively** - God qualifies us for worship at salvation.
- ▶ **Subjectively** - We gather & are edified in worshiping together.
- ▶ **Experientially** - We worship in response to God's self-revelation.
- ▶ **Biblically** - we worship according to the Book (God regulates it)
- ▶ **Prophetically** - We worship *looking* to future glory: worship!

▶ **Christocentrically** - We worship the Father in Christ's Name.

Background to Ps 134 (Songs of Ascent)

- Anonymous song (last of the 15 songs of Ascent).
- remember this is the LAST of the 15 songs of ascents. *this comprises the LAST song/hymn that pilgrims would sing before they approach Jehovah with His people in the Temple*
- NOTE something: NOTE ALL THE VERBS/VERBALS -- 'worship is action' -- bless (v.1), stand... (v.1b), lift up (2a), toward the sanctuary (v.2b), bless (v.2c)
- In this song: the ministers of the LORD are exhorted to bless the LORD

THERE IS ONE PRIMARY, repeated word in this psalm: LORD - Yahweh/Jehovah

>> **Worship is about God** [*Godward; God-centered; God-focused*]

Worship is TO God
Worship is ENABLED by God
Worship is EXALTING GOD
Worship is THRU God
Worship is FOR God
Worship is PROCLAIMING God
Worship is ABOUT God
Worship is RESPONDING to God

>> **we engage in Trinitarian Worship—**

Worship is to be GOD-exalting
Worship is to be CHRIST-mediated
Worship is to be SPIRIT-empowered

Worship: rightly responding to God's revelation of Himself

1. GOD SPEAKS - thru His Word - God revealing Himself to us.
2. WE RESPOND - respond to what we've learned from revelation.

"WORSHIP is the missing crown of the evangelical church" (AW Tozer)
So we need -- desperately -- need this!

THESIS — We must understand what TRUE, AUTHENTIC WORSHIP is. *We'll see the multi-faceted nature of WORSHIP*

To obtain full-orbed understanding of worship...

I. THE PREEMINENCE OF WORSHIP

Behold! (1a) -- the priority of worship

This is the 'attention grabbing word'

"Man's chief work is the praise of God." —Augustine

God saved you to be a worshiper of Him.

A.Behold! This is the collar-grabbing word!

B.NET has "ATTENTION!" ESV has "Come!..."; NASB: "Behold"

C.Listen up! Here's the importance! Attention! ***most important!***

Sunday gathering is **the** most important meeting of your week!

II. THE PRAISE OF WORSHIP

Bless the LORD!

A.v.1a- BLESS the LORD -- the importance of blessing >> adoring, praising, exalting, elevating, bragging in, speaking of

1. NIV/NET have "**Praise**" where the word "Bless" is there.

2. *Stars, heavens, sea, mountains praise! But they can't bless our God! Do we speak well of Him? Elevate Him? Brag on Him?*

B. Spurgeon words it well:

1. "To bless" means to think well of Jehovah; to speak well of Him. Adore Him with reverence, draw near to Him in love, delight in Him with exultation.

2. **You *can* and *should* bless your God** — at home, at work, w/ the family, in the meeting, doing research, writing emails, on campus — in public, in private, with others. **Speak well of God!** >> if we asked people in your life: would *others* testify of YOU that you BLESS GOD? (Ps 103.1ff)

3. the phrase "bless the LORD" occurs in v.1a and in v.2b -- forming an INCLUSIO bracketing this section together/cohesion/frame. **They saturate** the section.

III. THE PEOPLE OF WORSHIP

All servants of the LORD who serve by night...

A.V.1b - all servants - speaks of Levites & Temple servants.

1. Specifically this refers to the **Temple Servants** who labored, ministered & worked in the Temple.

2. Deut 10.8 -- the sons of Levi to take charge

3. 1 Chron 9.33 - the Levites served & worked **day & night**

4. 1 Chron 23:24-32 -- to assist the sons of Aaron w/ sacrifices, to stand every morning & praise God & to do so continually.

5. ***Note**, Hezekiah was used of God to bring revival when he charged the Levites to do their duty, not be negligent and to stand before God, to minister to God, and to be His ministers (2 Chron 29.11)

B. Dear NT Christian, you are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2.9)! This is for us!

C. ALL SERVANTS -- Note the comprehensiveness of this. ALL servants. NONE excluded.

1. And note this is not a mere idea, opinion, option. It's not contingent on how you 'feel' -- it's God's command. COME!

D. And for us as NT people of God: SERVANT -- God's people -- though rich in Christ -- are slaves of the living God! We are workers, ministers of the new covenant.

E. Remember your position: you are a *servant* (in Greek: a *slave*) of the LORD! You're a minister! You are *submissive to Christ your Lord* not *sovereign over Christ!* You are to bow to Him, obey Him, serve Him, do what He calls you to do! Go where He bids!

1. We are bought by Him, by His blood, for His glory, for His possession!

Rev. 7.15 - in heaven we *serve the Lamb day & night in His temple!*

IV. THE PURITY OF WORSHIP

Lift up your hands to the sanctuary

A. Raising the hands is common in Scripture.

B. Raise them **to the sanctuary** [to the Holy Place, ESV].

C. Symbolic of purity, holiness, no hypocrisy, sincerity (1 Tim 2.8).

D. It signifies purity/piety/dependence. That Everything must come from GOD and with hands stretched upward it also signifies that God is the giver of such good gifts.

E.NOTE the repetition: And Bless the LORD (cf. V.1a)

BLESS THE LORD -- *Worship is about blessing God, adoring God* —

1. OUR MUSIC should bless the LORD
2. OUR Demeanor should bless the LORD
3. OUR SCRIPTURE-READING should bless the LORD
4. OUR PRAYING should bless the LORD
5. OUR PREACHING should bless the LORD
6. OUR CONVERSATIONS should bless the LORD
7. OUR LISTENING should bless the LORD
8. OUR PREPARATION should bless the LORD
9. OUR ARRIVING should bless the LORD
10. OUR ATTITUDE should bless the LORD
11. OUR THOUGHTS should bless the LORD
12. OUR ORDINANCES should bless the LORD
13. OUR GOAL must be to bless the LORD

Our worship must be PURE! — *pray for this at SLCCC*

V. THE POSTURE OF WORSHIP

Lift up hands (excurses)

A. Bible is replete with expressions of worship (postures) -- standing, walking, kneeling, weeping, bowing, falling on face, jumping, leaping, shouting, lifting hands.

B. Raising the hands symbolizes

1. Supplication (Ps 28:2; Lam 2:19)
2. Praise (Ps 63:4; Neh 8:6)
3. Prayer (Ps 141:2; 1 Tim 2:8)
4. Blessing (Lev 9:22).

C. 1 Kings 8.30 - Solomon prayed in the direction of the sanctuary

1. and Solomon prayed and spread out his hands toward heaven (1 Kings 8.22)

D. Ezra 9 - I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the Lord my God (Ezra 9.5)

1. Bob Kauflin (with sovereign grace music) writes: *Physical expression in worship is both commanded & spontaneously modeled in Scripture as a way of giving God glory... Those expressions include clapping, singing, bowing, kneeling, lifting hands, shouting, playing instruments, dancing, standing in awe. These expressions of praise, of course, have to flow from a heart that genuinely desires to honor God.*

*Whatever **POSTURE** you employ (many of them) -- do it from the **heart** engaging with God, encountering His majesty, enthralled with His beauty, amazed by His grace. [the real issue is the *attitude* of your heart, not the *position of your hands*.]*

VI. THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

Lord bless you from Zion

A. May God bestow divine graces/blessings/happiness

B. The Smile of God: the favor of God, the pleasure of God!

C. cf. the Aaronic benediction -- Num 6.24. Actually -- it's a priestly benediction to the people.>> it's the leaders/the ministers who bless the congregation.

1. From Zion -- earthly Zion [God's Name, 132:13-14]
2. Many blessings of God come to us *in worship*; meeting w/ God's people.
3. **Zion** = the place of God's dwelling; the place of corporate worship; the place of God's election; a foretaste of coming glory in the heavenly Zion

- a)*Hebrews 12:18-24 -- this earthly Zion prefigures/foreshadows HEAVENLY ZION
- Heb 10.22-24)
- b)>> THEN -- worship God! Heb 12.28-29

VII. THE PERSON OF WORSHIP

LORD, LORD, LORD, LORD - 5x!

A. The ultimate THEME of the psalm (worship) is LORD!

B. 5x - LORD; 1 defining phrase:

1. HE WHO MADE HEAVEN & EARTH

Note how GOD is described...

- ✓GOD is singular
- ✓GOD is powerful
- ✓GOD is creator
- ✓GOD is sovereign
- ✓GOD is existing
- ✓GOD is caring/concerned
- ✓GOD is transcendent (heaven)
- ✓GOD is involved (earth)
- ✓GOD is unrivaled

C. NOTE the same God who meets w/ His people in a particular spot (=Zion) is the same God who makes heaven and earth.

Note the **MAGNITUDE** of God & also the **INTIMACY** of God.

Note the **COSMIC POWER** of God & the **COMPASSIONATE NEARNESS** of God.

VIII. THE PATH OF WORSHIP

Saved by God; approaching God thru Christ's mediation

Jesus told the woman at the well: *"I who speak to you am He" [John 4.26]*

A. Bryan Chappel writes: Our worship is never primarily about pleasing ourselves... our worship is primarily about pleasing God. But what we may forget is that our worship, no different than the rest of our lives, pleases God when we represent His Son through it" (123)

1. Call it what you may, but if Jesus Christ is not the crowning sparkle that *permeates it all*, you have no worship! All worship is *Trinitarian worship*.

2. It is worship **TO** God, **THRU** Christ, **BY** the Spirit.

B. Christ is our mediator, our access, our defender, our Advocate, our Savior, our Propitiation, our Redeemer, our Reconciler.

1. No wonder: Worship quickens the conscience by the holiness of God, feeds the mind with the truth of God, purges the imagination by the beauty of God, opens the heart to the love of God, devotes the will to the purpose of God" (William Temple).

CONCL-

Concluding Illustration

- Speaking of corporate assembly — Let us:
 - **PREPARE for worship**
 - Prepare your body
 - Prepare your heart

- Prepare your mind
- Prepare your family
- **PERSEVERE during worship**
 - Arriving on time
 - Fighting all distractions
 - Engage the mind
 - Listen with intentionality
- **PRACTICE after worship**
 - In conduct / implementation
 - In conversation
 - In consecration
 - In vocation
 - In family religion
 - In meditation

Thomas Watson reminds us: “When we praise God, we spread his fame and renown, we display the trophies of His excellency”

May God help you to engage & enjoy True, Authentic Worship of our Great God!