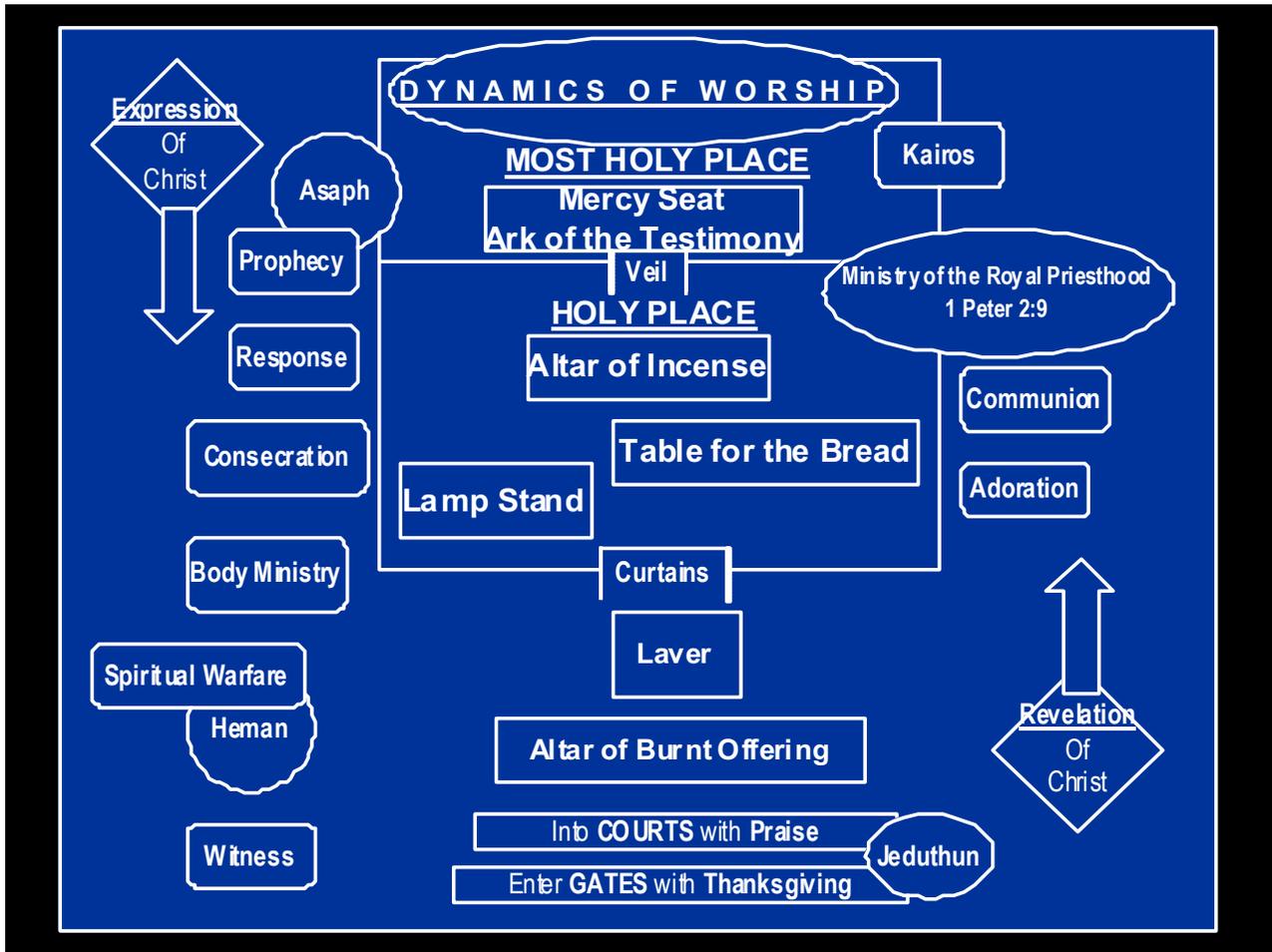


## TABERNACLE TRUTHS - IX

A PATTERN FOR REVELATION & RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST THROUGH WORSHIP & PRAYER



# THE MINISTRY OF THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

## The Expression of Christ

## Introduction

The major part of this study has been concerned with the INWARD movement into the presence of God and the ongoing “REVELATION OF CHRIST”. To “round it off”, as it were, we will now briefly discuss the OUTWARD movement from the presence of God and the “EXPRESSION OF CHRIST” to His Body and through His Body out into the world. To do so, I’d like to restate and elaborate on some things that were given in the introduction to this study.

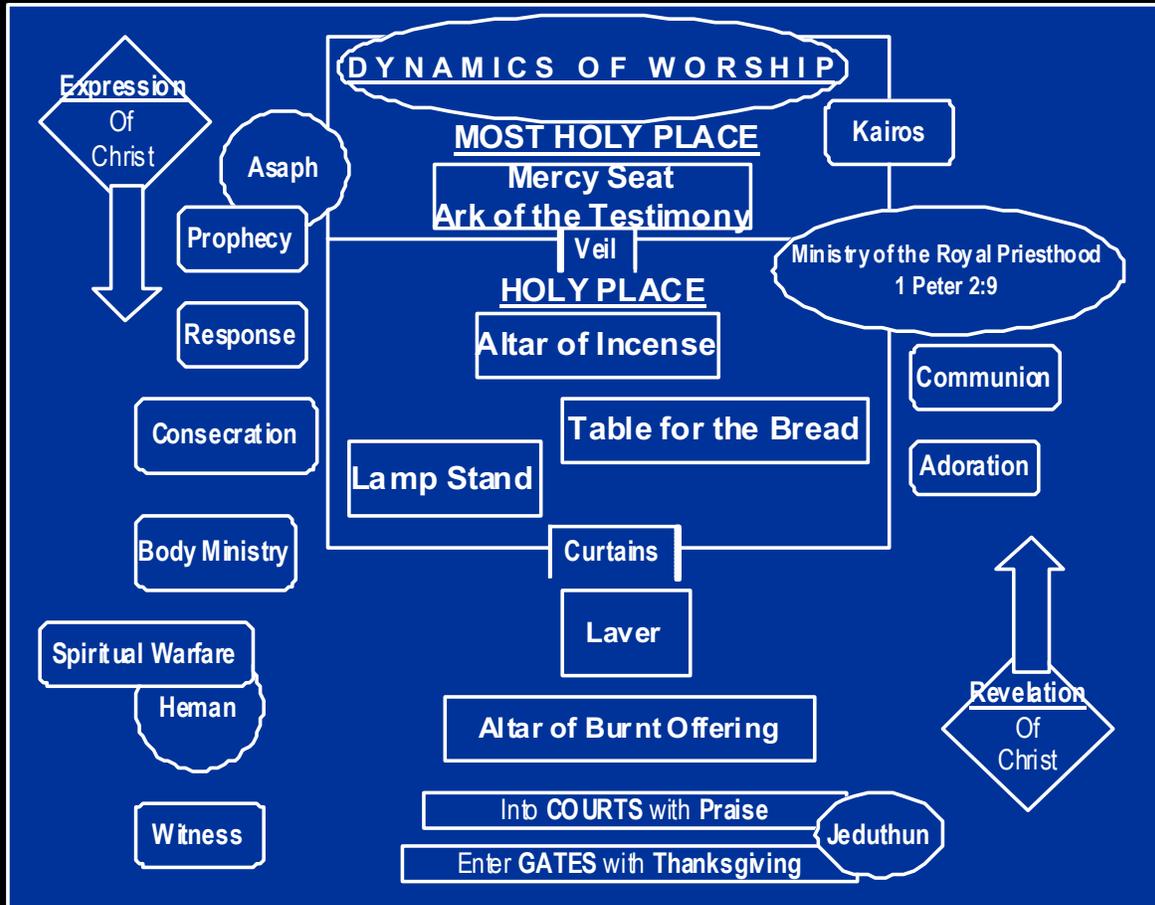
1 Peter 2:9 states: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” So, we see that the symbolic ministry of the Old Covenant priesthood is fulfilled in the priesthood of the New Covenant, which is the whole Church, led by Jesus<sup>1</sup>, our high priest<sup>2</sup>. **We are a priesthood, called to serve the Lord, “presenting our bodies as living and holy sacrifices”<sup>3</sup>. This is what it means to “worship” the Lord.**

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:15

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:1, 5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:1



## THE DYNAMICS OF WORSHIP

In the Tabernacle Pattern given by Moses<sup>4</sup> we see a number of aspects or **Dynamics of Worship**. These dynamics progress as we move, so to speak, from the Outer Court, to the Holy Place, and into the Most Holy Place where we have firstly, priesthood **MINISTRY TO THE LORD** with **Entering, Adoration, and Communion**, which we have already discussed. This **INWARD** movement culminates with what we will call the **Kairos Moment**, which includes **Prophecy**. These two aspects, along with two other aspects, **Response** and **Consecration**, will be discussed shortly.

<sup>4</sup> Also, the Tabernacle of David: 1 Chronicles 16:37-42; 25:3-5

And secondly, we also have priesthood **MINISTRY TO PEOPLE** with **Body Ministry, Warfare, and Witness** to the world again in the Outer Court, which we will also discuss.

I mentioned in the introduction of this study that to Worship in Spirit and Truth we need to read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, and apply New Covenant truth to the Old Covenant pattern. To help us understand Worship in Spirit and Truth, I believe it is accurate to say that in New Covenant Worship and Prayer, the Tabernacle Pattern changes from a prescribed sequence to a composite in which the Holy Spirit may highlight a given aspect and lead us into a particular dynamic of worship at any given time.<sup>5</sup>

Each of these aspects of **The Dynamics of Worship** warrants multiple messages, but this is an overview:

### **In the Outer Court:**

- **“Entering”**: with Thanksgiving & Praise

### **In the Holy Place:**

- **“Adoration”**: A response to the Revelation of Christ as seen in the Tabernacle furnishings.

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout this booklet, I will be referring back to what is stated very succinctly here in this paragraph as an absolutely essential principle in the understanding of Worship in Spirit and Truth in light of the New Covenant.

- **“Communion”**: Or **“Fellowship”**<sup>6</sup> in which there is a living Encounter and Experience of Christ during the acts of Worship and Prayer.

### **In the Most Holy Place:**

- **The “Kairos” Moment**<sup>7</sup>: *Kairos* is a Greek word which means “the opportune time”, “the defining moment”, “the fullness of time”, “the appointed time” in the purpose of God – in this case, during a time of collective worship when the glory of the Lord comes upon the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark of the Testimony, the place God has chosen to meet with and speak His will to His people.<sup>8</sup>
- **“Prophecy”**<sup>9</sup>: According to Thayer<sup>10</sup>, “prophecy” is “discourse emanating from divine inspiration declaring the purposes of God” - whether in the generic sense of divinely-inspired preaching and teaching, or in the more charismatic sense of a “gift of prophecy”<sup>11</sup> – or both – it is “the Word of the Lord” - **“what the Spirit says to the Church”** for “those who have ears to hear”<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Greek: *koinonia*, Strong’s # 2842. 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Greek: *kairos*. Strong’s number 2540. In the Eastern Orthodox liturgy: “It is time for the Lord to act”, indicating that the time of the liturgy is an intersection with eternity.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 25:32

<sup>9</sup> Greek: *propheteia*, Strong’s # 4394. Literal meaning: “a speaking forth”.

<sup>10</sup> Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

<sup>11</sup> e.g. 1 Corinthians 14

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 11:15, 13:43; Mark 4:9 & 23, 7:16; Luke 8:8, 14:35; Romans 11:8; Revelation 2:7 & 11 & 17, 3:6 & 22, 13:9.

Again, here at the Mercy Seat, where the Shekinah Glory, the Manifest Presence of God, rests, where God speaks to His people, the **Kairos Moment** – a **Prophetic Moment** – is very much **the apex of our worship**.<sup>13</sup> And it functions as a “turning point”, as it were: It is a culmination of moving INWARD into the presence of God, MINISTERING TO THE LORD, meeting with Him, hearing His word, being filled, that is, coming under the influence, of His Spirit, receiving the life of Christ and the gifts of the Spirit. We are equipped to “turn around”, as it were, in an OUTWARD flow from God’s presence to MINISTER TO PEOPLE” - both to the Body in the Holy Place, and to the world, in the Outer Court.

### **In the Holy Place (again):**

▪ **“Response”**: Worship is our **Response** to God. The psalmist wrote: “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty expanse. **Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness.**”<sup>14</sup> Worship is a **Response** to the Revelation of God – the Revelation of what He does and what He is like.

Those who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, asked Ezra the high priest to read to them the Book of the Law. In Nehemiah 8:5-6 it says: “<sup>5</sup> Ezra opened

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<sup>13</sup> Simply put: In the Protestant tradition, the ministry of the Word is the apex of the worship service, whereas in the Catholic tradition, the ministry of the Table (Communion) would take that place.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 150:1-2

the book in the sight of all the people ... and when he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup> Then Ezra *blessed the Lord* the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while *lifting up their hands*; then they *bowed low* and **worshiped the Lord** with their faces to the ground.” These were collective acts of worship. As a lifestyle, worship is a **Response** to the gospel of God and the salvation of Christ in our lives. In the collective worship of the Church, it is a **Response** to “the word of the Lord”, a **Response** to “what the Spirit says to the Church”.

- **“Consecration”**: The Greek word most often translated “worship” in the New Testament is *proskueno*. It literally means “to bow forward and kiss the feet”. Earlier, we spoke of “presenting”, “yielding”, “surrendering” ourselves at the Laver for the transforming work of the “washing of water with the word”.<sup>15</sup> In the same way, when *God speaks prophetically* during the **Kairos Moment**, the appropriate **Response** is to “present” ourselves and our lives, “yield” our wills and “surrender” our hearts in submission and obedience to that word.

This is the apostle Paul’s exhortation: “I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present** your bodies *a living and holy sacrifice*, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*.... (to) be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may **prove what the will of God is**, that which is good and well-pleasing<sup>16</sup> and

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<sup>15</sup> The Laver: A Pattern for Worship and Prayer: Presenting-Yielding-Surrendering

<sup>16</sup> Greek: *euarestos*, Strong’s # 2101

perfect.”<sup>17</sup> We can refer to this “*spiritual service of worship*” as **Consecration**.

It is a pretense and a travesty when the Church hears the word of the Lord without giving an appropriate **Response**. Like parents, God “does not speak just to hear His own voice”. God said through the prophet Jeremiah that He is “watching over His word to perform it”.<sup>18</sup> And through the prophet Isaiah He said: “So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please *and* purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”<sup>19</sup>

If the Church does not **Respond** to the word of the Lord with a **Consecration** that is *presenting, yielding, surrendering* in submission and obedience to His words – if there is, in that sense, no *bowing down in worship*, God said through the prophet Amos that He “will send a **famine** in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but **of hearing the words of the LORD**.”<sup>20</sup> God and His messengers will cease speaking. We can understand this situation in two different ways: A situation where there are only relatively few ministers who are actually hearing and speaking a word from God’s heart and mind. Or a situation where it may be that “the word of the Lord” is available but, as in the case of Israel, the majority of the Church is like the people both Isaiah and Jesus described:

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<sup>17</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 1:12

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 55:11

<sup>20</sup> Amos 8:11

A people who “keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.”<sup>21</sup> The situation will be as the Lord spoke in Psalm 81:12: “So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices.”

To use the tabernacle or temple in analogy, there will be *Ichabod* – the glory will depart because of the removal of the Ark of the Testimony.<sup>22</sup> Jesus said He would remove the Lampstand from its place”;<sup>23</sup> and the proverb says that “where there is no revelation, the people perish.”<sup>24</sup> God will remove His Manifest Presence. If and when that happens, a church no longer has any authentic purpose for continuing to gather. It can be likened to Zedekiah’s temple which was judged by God and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It can be likened to Herod’s Temple, during the time of Jesus, which was judged by Jesus and utterly destroyed by the forces of the world system in 70 A.D.

But as the writer to the Hebrews said: “Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case--things that accompany salvation.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:15

<sup>22</sup> 1 Samuel 4:21

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 2:5

<sup>24</sup> Proverbs 29:18

<sup>25</sup> Hebrews 6:9 *New International Version*

**Consecration** is a fitting **Response** to salvation. There is a verse in the Psalms<sup>26</sup> that paints a beautiful, yet succinct picture of **Consecration**: “Your people will **offer themselves freely** on the day of your power, in holy garments.” These are John Wesley’s notes on that verse: “*Your People* - Thy subjects, **shall offer thee** as their king and Lord, not oxen or sheep, but **themselves, their souls and bodies, as living sacrifices, and as freewill - offerings, giving up themselves to the Lord** (2 Corinthians 8:5), to live to him, and to die for him. *The day of Your power* - When thou shalt take into thy hands the rod of thy strength, and set up thy kingdom in the world. *In holy garments* - Adorned with the beautiful and glorious robes of righteousness and true holiness.”

Every member of the Body of Christ is a member of what Peter referred to as “the royal priesthood”<sup>27</sup>. The best example of **Consecration** is seen in our High Priest, when in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus said to the Father: “Not My will, but Yours be done.”<sup>28</sup> If you read about the **Consecration** of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood<sup>29</sup>, you will see there was a “Ram of Consecration” offered, the blood of which was applied to their right ears, right thumbs, and right toes, to symbolize sanctification and **Consecration** of Who they listen to, what they set their hands to, and the direction of their lives as priests to the Lord. The inner parts of the ram were used as a “burnt

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<sup>26</sup> Psalm 119:3 *English Standard Version*

<sup>27</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>28</sup> Luke 22:42

<sup>29</sup> Exodus 29:1-21

offering” symbolizing the self-rule of their lives “going up in smoke” as it were.

In the New Testament, we see the apostle Paul exhorting the Church to **Consecration** by “the **presenting of (our) beings as living and holy sacrifices as our spiritual service of worship that we may prove what the will of God is**, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect”<sup>30</sup>. Referring to a particular church as a model, Paul said: “**They gave themselves first to the Lord** and then by the will of God to us.”<sup>31</sup> Paul also described his own personal **Consecration** and that of his apostolic team to the Cause of Christ saying: “The love of Christ possesses<sup>32</sup> us; therefore we have determined<sup>33</sup> to no longer live for ourselves but for Him Who died and rose again for us.”<sup>34</sup>

▪ “**Body Ministry**”: What is meant by the term “**Body Ministry**” can be succinctly communicated with this one verse from 1 Corinthians 14:26: “*When you come together, each one* has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for *building up*.”<sup>35</sup> What is pictured here is the Body – each individual member of the church – doing “the work of ministry”. Now, the Lord “gave the apostles, the prophets, the

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>31</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:5 *English Standard Version* – in reference to the Church at Macedonia.

<sup>32</sup> Greek: *sunecho*, Strong’s # 4912.

<sup>33</sup> Greek: *krino*, Strong’s # 2919

<sup>34</sup> A paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 5:14

<sup>35</sup> *English Standard Version*

evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”<sup>36</sup>; and their ministry takes place in special equipping sessions and situations. But, what is pictured in Corinthians is the Body, having been equipped, now doing “the work of ministry” – that is, the Body “**building itself up in love**”<sup>37</sup> **through the various spiritual gifts**<sup>38</sup>. This Body Ministry opportunity can take place in small group meetings in homes. But Body Ministry can also take place in collective worship meetings, if the church leadership recognizes the validity and value of Body Ministry, nurtures and encourages it, and has sensitivity to the flow and movement of the Holy Spirit to “make room” for it during times of collective worship.

As with all the other aspects of the **Expression of Christ** in the Tabernacle, as a topic in and of itself, “Spiritual Gifts” requires a series of teachings. But suffice to just list here the **spiritual gifts** mentioned in scripture, unfortunately not being able to take time to define the various gifts or to explain their operations. And while there are three categories of spiritual gifts - **motivational gifts**<sup>39</sup>, **manifestation gifts**<sup>40</sup>, and **ministry gifts**<sup>41</sup>, I will only list here **the manifestation gifts of the Spirit**, as it is specifically those spiritual gifts which are mentioned in

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<sup>36</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12

<sup>37</sup> Ephesians 4:16

<sup>38</sup> Greek: *charismata*

<sup>39</sup> 1 Peter 4:10-11 & Romans 12:6-8

<sup>40</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

<sup>41</sup> Ephesians 4:11 & 1 Corinthians 12:28

the context of the **Body Ministry** in 1 Corinthians 14:26. The following **manifestation gifts** are most often in operation in a collective worship situation, which is the specific context we have been discussing in this study. They are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11:

<sup>7</sup>“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”

It is good to remember that, as with the **Kairos Moment, Prophecy, Response, and Consecration**, the **Body Ministry** of the manifestation gifts of the Spirit is also intended to be, not for entertainment or for the making of celebrities in the Church, but for the **Expression of Christ**. Probably the most accurate testing of the authenticity of a spiritual gift is to hold it up to the stated ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.<sup>42</sup>” “Because the testimony of Jesus is the

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<sup>42</sup> John 15:26

spirit of prophecy.”<sup>43</sup> The Holy Spirit’s ministry is to reveal Jesus. With the exercise of a spiritual gift, after all is said and done, did it, or did it not, reveal and glorify Jesus?

## Prayer

Before discussing the last two aspect of the **Dynamics of Worship**, I think it would be good to again highlight the role of **Prayer** in the Dynamics of Worship. Again, this is a review of what was mentioned in the introduction to this study:

Prayer is the conversational aspect of our relationship with the Lord. And Prayer is an essential part of Worship. If we desire to be genuinely attentive to these Dynamics of Worship as revealed in the Tabernacle Pattern, we would agree that it is fitting for various types of Prayers to be interspersed into the fabric of our Worship as we reflect on the various types of Christ during the INWARD and OUTWARD movement in the Presence of God. Whether they be Prayers by an individual worship leader, unison prayers of the people, or spontaneous prayers by individuals in the Body, these are all fitting and worshipful Responses to God.

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<sup>43</sup> Revelation 19:10

## Music

I think it good to also attempt to briefly comment on the role of music in Worship. Just as Prayer is an aspect of Worship, music is an aspect of Prayer, and Song is a particular mode of Prayer.

Music is a truly amazing creation of God. It also proves to be mysterious, if one pursues the science of music – that is, its nature and its interaction with the human spirit, soul and body. I have played, studied and taught music for about 66 years. I have read, studied and taught the Bible for almost 44 years. And for all of that time I have been a musician and worship leader. I have always tried to gain a biblical and spiritual understanding, rather than a cultural or conventional perspective on the role of music in the Church and worship. Like literally everything in life, the church cannot simply adopt the musical perspectives and implement the musical practices of fallen humanity and utilize them in the Church and worship. Neither can we simply assume that because the Church has traditionally employed music in certain ways for hundreds of years that we have explored all the possibilities God intended when He created music.

Throughout human history, aesthetics – the study of beauty and the philosophy of art - has offered two views: “art for art’s sake” or “functional art”. Some examples of functional music would be: the work songs of slaves and field workers, music therapy, pop music for entertainment, serious compositions for reflection, songs

for political campaigns or religious crusades, and worship music. I think both views have validity: Like all the arts, “music for the sake of the music” can glorify the Holy Spirit or the Human Spirit, depending on the artist’s worldview. But worship music, by definition, is not an end in itself – it is functional, serving as a means of expressing worship.

Music for Worship would include instrumental music for reflection, instrumental music to accompany Scripture reading and spoken Prayers, as well as, vocal music or songs, which are essentially Prayers which are sung. As I said, just as Prayer is an aspect of Worship, music is an aspect of Prayer, and Song is a particular mode of Prayer.

Combining melody, harmony and rhythm to our Prayers may serve to help **intensify** our prayers, that is, help make them more **personal** and **passionate**. In saying that, I am attempting to highlight something which the apostle James referred to regarding Elijah’s prayer. James 5:17 says: “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours (that is, human), and he prayed earnestly (or fervently).” The Greek construct<sup>44</sup> there literally means he “prayed with prayer”. Robertson explains that this is “a Hebrew idiom for intensity”.<sup>45</sup> I believe this “earnest (or fervent) prayer” in James 5:17 refers back to the “effective (or fervent) prayer that accomplishes much” in verse 16. I am not at all saying that Prayers need to be sung in order to be fervent. What I am saying is that the combination of word,

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<sup>44</sup> *proseuchēi prosēuxato*, Strong’s #s 4336 & 4335

<sup>45</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament* by A.T. Robertson

melody, harmony and rhythm engages our emotions and arguably also our spirits, which can help to give more fervency to Prayer. Of course, emotion without authenticity is not spiritual. But emotions are not something to be avoided – God has them, and God gave them to us. In the Psalms, God instructed His people in how He desired to be praised. A study of the various Hebrew words relating to praise and worship<sup>46</sup> will show that the Hebrews worshipped God much more passionately than anything we see in the modern western churches. Trite Worship and anemic Prayer is not the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – it is the invention of pop culture and religious convention. Obviously “loving the Lord your God with all of you heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your strength, and with all of your mind”<sup>47</sup> must translate into passionate Worship and Prayer.

The Psalms are biblical Songs and/or Prayers accompanied by music, which reflect the full range of human life and emotion. There are a number of types of Prayer, which can be seen in the Tabernacle Pattern – these Prayers can be spoken by a worship leader, sung by a soloist, spoken by an individual in the Body, spoken in unison by the Body, sung in unison by the Body:

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.justworship.com/hebrewwords/hebrewwords.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27

## In the Outer Court:

- *Entering Prayers of Thanksgiving and Praise* – thanking God for His deeds - what He has done; and praising Him for His Person – for Who He is and what He is like, that is, His attributes.
- *At the Altar of Burnt Offering: Prayer of Confession*
- *At the Laver: Prayer for Sanctification and Transformation*

## In the Holy Place:

- *At the Lampstand: Prayer for Revelation or Illumination*
- *At the Altar of Incense: Prayers of Petition and Intercession*

## In the Most Holy Place:

- *At the Ark of the Testimony and the Mercy Seat: Prayer of Consecration* – as we discussed, the fitting and worshipful Response to the Kairos Moment and Prophecy is a *presenting, yielding, surrendering* of our hearts and lives in **Consecration**. We are “living sacrifices” and this is our “spiritual service of worship”.

## In the Holy Place (again):

*Prophecy:* We previously discussed Body Ministry through the exercise of the various spiritual gifts.<sup>48</sup> But in this section on Prayer, I'd like to emphasize, as the apostle Paul did, the particular gift of *Prophecy* and discuss how that is linked to Prayer. Paul's words at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 14 are: "Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly the spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.**"<sup>49</sup> In this context of Body Ministry, Paul describes prophecy in this way: "One who prophesies speaks to people for **edification and exhortation and consolation.**"<sup>50</sup> That is the *New American Standard* translation. The *English Standard Version* says, "**up building, encouragement, and consolation**". The *New International Version* says, "**strengthening, encouragement, and comfort**". And how will people in the Body be blessed in this way? By speaking forth words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which is a simple definition of prophecy. And here is the link to Prayer: The Scripture encourages us to pray for one another.<sup>51</sup> I want to encourage you to be open to the Holy Spirit leading you to pray for someone during times of Body Ministry. The Scripture also encourages us to "pray in the Spirit", which means to be led or inspired by the Holy Spirit regarding **what to pray** for that person. This, of course, something you learn and grow in, "having

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<sup>48</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:26

<sup>49</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:1

<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:3

<sup>51</sup> James 5:16; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1

your (spiritual) senses trained through constant practice”<sup>52</sup>. And here is the link with Prophecy: As you learn to be led and inspired by the Holy Spirit regarding **what to pray** for someone, you are just one small step away from being inspired by the Holy Spirit **what to speak forth** to that person which will be **up building, encouragement** and **comfort**. As I said before, this kind of Body Ministry can also take place in collective worship meetings, if the church leadership recognizes the validity and value of Body Ministry, nurtures and encourages it, and has sensitivity to the flow and movement of the Holy Spirit to “make room” for it during times of collective worship.

### **In the Outer Court (again):**

▪ *“Spiritual Warfare”*: And now for the last two aspects of the Dynamics of Worship which take place, as it were, in the Outer Court – **Spiritual Warfare** and Witness. **Spiritual Warfare** is a complex and controversial subject which cannot be completely covered here. But the following is an excerpt from my publication, *The Power of True Praise*<sup>53</sup>:

*In Ephesians 6:12 Paul explains that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood”. It is a spiritual warfare “against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the*

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<sup>52</sup> Hebrews 5:14 English Standard Version

<sup>53</sup> Also see my publication: *The Cross & The Powers of Darkness*

heavenly places.” I understand these “powers” to be spiritual entities which influence and work through human entities – specifically the ideologies of cultures of the world, including the politics and governments of the nations of the world; but at the source, “our struggle” is of a spiritual nature.

Paul gets more specific in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5:

*“<sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (or strongholds). <sup>5</sup>We are destroying **speculations** and **every pretention**<sup>54</sup> raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every **thought** captive to the obedience of Christ.”* “Thoughts”, “speculations” and “pretentions”. In other epistles Paul referred to them as “the elementary principles of the world”<sup>55</sup>, by which he meant human philosophic and religious systems influenced by “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons”<sup>56</sup> which serve to bring people under bondage.

Psalm 149 shows Praise to be a spiritual weapon:

*“<sup>6</sup>Let the high **praises** of God be in their mouth,  
And a two-edged sword in their hand,  
<sup>7</sup>To execute vengeance on the nations  
And punishment on the peoples,  
<sup>8</sup>To bind their kings with chains  
And their nobles with fetters of iron,  
<sup>9</sup>To execute on them the judgment written;  
This is an honor for all His godly ones.  
Praise the LORD!”*

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<sup>54</sup> NIV, “every lofty opinion” (ESV)

<sup>55</sup> Galatians 4:3, 8-9; Colossians 2:8, 14-15, 20

<sup>56</sup> 1 Timothy 4:1-3

Verse 6 reads: "Let the high **praises** of God be in their mouth..." "to execute vengeance ... to bind ... to execute judgment...." How does "praising" do all that? Actually, the word "praises" is not in the Hebrew text. But the idea of "praise" is there, and the absence of the word "praise", as we will see, actually serves to focus our attention on what "praise" truly is. The text literally says: "Let the high things of God" or "Let the heights of God". Commentators say this is in reference to God's many attributes. "Let God's many and various attributes – His omnipotence, His omniscience, His holiness, His righteousness, etc. be in their mouth...."

We have the same thought in the New Testament in 1 Peter 2:9, where in one verse we also find an excellent definition of the Church: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim the excellencies** of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." The NKJV: "show forth the praises of Him". RSV: "declare the wonderful deeds". (Greek) *exaggello*: "to make known a message or announcement". i.e. A PROCLAMATION of the praises – a PROCLAMATION of the excellencies – a PROCLAMATION of God's attributes and deeds. You see the "high praises" that "execute vengeance, bind and execute judgment" are PROCLAMATIONS of the truth of God. We are not to sing nice little praise songs to the powers of darkness; we are to make bold PROCLAMATIONS to the powers of darkness regarding the truth of God. It is THAT which will "execute vengeance, bind and execute judgment". It was the musicians who led Israel into battle. We, the Church,

*can do it with music; but it is the PROCLAMATION that is key to power in spiritual warfare.*

*A little more about the nature of this PROCLAMATION: Psalm 149:6 says: “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.”*

*Commentators say that in the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the second phrase repeats the idea of the first phrase. In other words, the “two-edged sword” IS the “high praises of God” – the “two-edged sword IS the PROCLAMATION of the truth of God.*

*When Paul speaks of conducting spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness, he explains that “the sword of the Spirit IS the WORD OF GOD”.<sup>57</sup> It is the word of God which we are to PROCLAIM to the powers of darkness.*

In a time of collective worship, the Holy Spirit may lead the Church to do Spiritual Warfare using either Praise Songs or Prayers or both.

- “Witness”: Jesus said that the Church would be His witness.<sup>58</sup> There is an individual witness and there is a collective witness – the Church is a collective witness. How is the Church a witness? What is a witness? What does it mean to be a witness? The Greek word used in the New Testament for “witness”<sup>59</sup> is a legal term referring to someone and their role in a court of law. A witness is someone who has knowledge and experience of

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<sup>57</sup> Ephesians 6:17

<sup>58</sup> Luke 24:48; John 15:27; Acts 1:8

<sup>59</sup> *martus*, Strong’s # 3144

something and/or someone and is asked to communicate what they know by experience. What we know by experience defines who we are; and who we are is our “witness”. This is what it means to BE a witness. Much of the Church is DOING witnessing without truly BEING a witness. What or Who is it that the Church should have knowledge and experience of and bear witness of? What knowledge and experience is the Church communicating to the world? What is the world’s impression of the Church?

Without citing the many books and articles on why this is the case<sup>60</sup>, and without debating at length who is the blame – the Church, the world or the secular media, there is still a very clear “bottom line”. I think we would all have to admit that somehow in our generation the witness the world has received from the Church is that we are a people who are politically conservative, think that America should be “a Christian nation”, and are people who hate abortion and gays. Somehow THAT is the witness the world has received from the Church. Whatever more the Church hoped to communicate, essentially THAT is the witness which has actually been communicated. Those in the Church may or may not see themselves in this way. The Church may have not consciously intended that the world see itself that way. But, because of what the Church has been preoccupied with - because of what has occupied the Church’s heart,

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<sup>60</sup> e.g. “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Church” by Dean Merrill; “UnChristian” and “You Lost Me” by David Kinnaman

mind, emotions and mouth, as well as political action, THAT is the message that has been communicated to the world.

Now, both Jesus and Paul said that without supernatural intervention it is actually impossible for the world to understand the things of God.<sup>61</sup> The world always has and always will “love the darkness rather than the light”<sup>62</sup>, and generally speaking, is not the least bit interested in understanding the things of God. So, in one sense, I am not concerned with the fact that the Church is misunderstood. If, when and how people come to understand the things of God is totally God’s problem, so to speak. What I am concerned with is being and doing what pleases God – being a good witness.

In the courtroom, it is not the witness’s responsibility to convince the jury of the truth – possibly, that’s the advocate’s responsibility. The witness’s responsibility is to accurately communicate what he knows by experience.

The apostle John powerfully bears witness with the opening words to his first epistle: “What was from the beginning, **what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands**, concerning the Word of Life— <sup>2</sup> and the life was manifested, and **we have seen and testify and proclaim** to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— <sup>3</sup> **what we have seen and heard we proclaim** to you also, so that you too may have **fellowship**

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<sup>61</sup> John 14:17, 1 Corinthians 2:11b-14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

<sup>62</sup> John 3:19

with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”<sup>63</sup>

This was John’s witness: We, the Church of Jesus Christ, are a people who know and experience God. We experience intimate fellowship with Him. We are a people who know and worship God. If you are truly seeking and want to know God, we invite you to come have fellowship with us, as we worship God.

Shortly before giving Moses directions on building the Tabernacle, God spoke out what He has always wanted as “a light (or a witness) to the nations”<sup>64</sup>: “His own possession ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”.<sup>65</sup>

The apostle Peter tells us who the Church is and what the witness of the Church should be from God’s point of view: “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that **you may proclaim the excellencies of Him** who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.”<sup>66</sup> THAT is who we are – THAT is our witness – a people who know and worship God. Our message to the world is: If you are truly seeking and want to know God, we invite you to come have fellowship with us, as we worship God.

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<sup>63</sup> 1 John 1:1-3

<sup>64</sup> Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; Acts 13:47

<sup>65</sup> Exodus 19:5-6

<sup>66</sup> 1 Peter 2:9