

Worship Intercession

By Don Potter

Copyright 2002. All rights reserved.

Wor-ship - *a. Reverent love and devotion for a deity or sacred object. B. The ceremonies or prayers by which this love is expressed.*

In-ter-ces-sion - *a. A prayer or petition to God in behalf of another. B. Mediation.*

The two words are very familiar to people who know God. Though we have often thought of them as being separate from each other - activities done at different times and different places - I believe the Lord is bringing them together so that more power may be released in the church.

Jesus, living to intercede (Hebrews 7:25), was also a worshiper. The Greek words translated "rejoiced greatly" in Luke 10:21 indicate that Jesus was leaping about in the Holy Spirit, worshiping His Father. In Luke 22:44 Jesus is the intercessor, sweating blood as He prays for His disciples and Himself.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11), the crowds spontaneously shouted "Hosanna!". In the ancient Hebrew, "hosanna" meant "save, we pray". The root of the word is a cry for help. During the triumphal entry of Jesus, the people were shouting intercession in the midst of their worship of Him. Though "Hosanna" had become primarily an utterance of praise rather than of prayer, the people on the Mount of Olives that day were also shouting intercession whether they knew it or not.

The "hosanna principle" ---combining praise and intercession---can have profound results. Jesus said that if the crowd stopped their worship of Him even the rocks would cry out in their place (Luke 19:40). One of the most effective ways we can corporately come together in agreement is by combining worship and intercession.

"Paga"

There are two Hebrew words for intercession. One word is "paga". Strong's lists its meanings as "to encounter, entreat, make intercession, fall upon (out of hostility), strike, touch (as a boundary), cause to light upon, interpose, make attack, reach the mark, push against, rush at someone with hostile violence, or kill".

We are to set boundaries in our lives that we can stand upon and strike with the sword of the Spirit. There are times when we will have to show hostility to the spiritual enemy

who encroaches on that boundary. The devil will endeavor to move in and take over every place in our lives that we do not actively fight for and possess.

We are like the Jews who were given the Promised Land to occupy. It was given to them, but they didn't actually possess it until they fought for it. Although our salvation has been given freely to us, unless we actively apply the blood of Jesus to our lives, we will miss out on the benefits of this gift of freedom.

"Tephillah"

Another word for intercession and prayer is "tephillah", which means "to intercede and to sing your prayers and intercession to God in formal worship". When Jesus cleared the moneychangers from the temple, He quoted a passage in Isaiah that uses this word: *"My house will be called a house of prayer ["tephillah" - ed.] for all the peoples" (Isaiah 56:7).*

This word specifically authorizes present-day believers to open up their hearts to God and sing intercession during a public worship time. It may seem strange to come together in a time of worship and sing your prayers to God, but it is a very ancient practice.

King David was well known for singing his prayers to God. He also was known for singing songs asking God to come against his enemies. In Psalms 7, 9, 10, 11, 17, 55, 56, 57 and 70, David and other psalmists sang petitions to the Lord asking for the destruction of their enemies. They likewise weren't afraid to sing their complaints, realizing the value of expressing their true feelings to the Master (see Psalms 22, 94, 102, 109 and 140). Many of the Psalms were proclamations exhorting Israel, the nations, and all living things to praise the Lord (see Psalms 66, 100, 103, 113, 114 and 150).

We should not be afraid to sing our intercession to God, asking Him to destroy our enemies. Some of these enemies are: rebellion in our children, sacrifices being made to false gods through abortion, lust running wild in the land, homosexuality, racism, divorce, etc. God has called us to worship Him in Spirit and in truth, and the truth is the reality of our lives. Entering into true worship and intercession requires us to get real about the true state of our lives.

We have been given two of the most powerful weapons the world has ever known for combating the works of the devil: worship and intercession. We must use them.

Dance

Dance has always been a big part of praise and worship, but there is also something else that I believe God wants us to see concerning it: movement can play a vital role in intercession, too. The God of Israel has always promoted the use of visual aids. By establishing the yearly Feast of Passover, He caused the people to act out their deliverance from Egypt. The Feast of Tabernacles was a reenactment of their time in the wilderness when they were living in tents. These were physical reminders of what it was

really like for their forefathers. Nothing would communicate more effectively to the generations that followed than taking part in the bitter meal of Passover and sleeping in an uncomfortable tent for seven days.

Another aspect of the physical displays and reenactments that God prescribed was that they were a celebration of the victories He had given in previous generations. In a similar way, we are beginning to act out our victories through movement in worship. Jesus has won these victories for us, as shown by one of the Hebrew words we will see for dance.

Most of the Hebrew words for dance mean about the same thing. "Karar", "machowl" and "raqad" all basically mean "to skip around, leap or whirl about." But I was surprised by what I found when I discovered another Hebrew word for dance: "chuw1" (or "chiyl"). This word means to "to travail, tremble (violently jerk), writhe in travail, twist, whirl, dance, fear, be in anguish, be pained, calve (give birth), rage, hope, assault, be strong, cause to bring forth, wait anxiously or longingly, or to be born".

This word for dance was used to describe intercession acted out through the body. The dancers reenacted the battles and victories that were being won in the Spirit, and also the victories the Lord gave His people on earthly battlefields. When Israel crossed the Red Sea and their enemies were defeated, Miriam and other Israelite women sang and danced in celebration of the victory (Exodus 15:20-21). Jephthah's daughter danced before her victorious father (Judges 11:34). When David returned from defeating the Philistines, the women sang and danced (I Samuel 18:6). The dances were expressions of joy and of physically acting out the victories that had been won.

"Chuw1" was used when referring to women dancing at "a feast of the LORD" (Judges 21:19,21). This was the movement that was done at the feasts. The women were not dancing around in pretty little groups for the entertainment of the guests! They were travailing in anguish as they brought forth the reenactment of the victories God had given.

The Lord once prompted me to think about how the song was sung that said, "*Saul has killed his thousands but David has killed his ten thousands.*" (I Samuel 18:7). I doubt that this was merely a nursery rhyme, sung sweetly to the war-torn men returning from battle! I believe that these women were every bit as tough as the men who fought the physical battle. Their dance to celebrate the return of the victorious men was full of fervor and mock action of that battle in honor of the men who fought.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, there was a wild reaction which no doubt included dance. It was more than a gentle shout that went up to the heavens that day. And the dancing, mirroring the "hosanna" combination of worship and intercession, was a proclamation of victory. Rather than being some kind of rehearsed and self-conscious movement drawing attention to the one doing the dancing, this dance was utterly focused on the One being celebrated.

Jesus has already won all the victories that will ever be fought. We are just walking out those victories in praise, and now in dance intercession as well.

A Strategy for Battle

In II Chronicles 20:1-20, a battle was about to start. Three nations---the Ammonites, Moabites and Horites---had gathered against Judah. The Ammonites and Moabites represent perversion, incest and an unrepentant heart. The Horites lived among mountainous rocks and made their homes by chipping away at the rock.

The spirits that were coming against Judah (which means "praise") were perversion, rebellion and an erosion of the rock of faith. That sounds a lot like what we are faced with every day!

Surrounded on all sides, Judah's King Jehoshaphat interceded before the Lord and received a divine strategy for the battle. *"He appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, 'Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting'" (II Chronicles 20:21).* After they had done this, God caused the enemies of Judah to turn against themselves and kill each other to the last man. We are battling the same spirits as Jehoshaphat did in his day! The strategy, likewise, must be the same: intercede, and then worship the Almighty.

It took three days for Judah to collect the spoil from the victory God gave them. In the same way, I believe that in the days to come we will gain victories regarding broken families, lost loved ones, rebellious children, runaway fathers, back-sliding believers, and so on. God has given us some great weapons, and they are divinely powerful to overcome the very strongholds we face.

Worship and intercession preceded Jesus on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. So too, they will be important ingredients preparing the way for His return.