

The Summer of Psalms

By Doug Hamilton

4) Reverence for God

We have already covered three aspects of Christianity through the perspective of the Psalms. 1) Praise to God 2) Protection with God and 3) Service for God. All the songs that we sang for the worship service, the prayers that were lead and the scriptures that were read all focused on the same themes. In this fourth lesson we will focus on the Christian perspective of reverence toward God.

Reverence: It means to show a devoted deferential honor and regard for someone or something, a demonstration toward another of great worthiness and honor. The word is literally translated or footnoted as “FEAR” in most all versions of the Bible. That is the connotation of the word in the following verse from the Psalms.

- Psalm 135:20 O house of Levi, bless the LORD; You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD.

To truly understand this reference to reverence that the Psalmist mentions, it is necessary to understand the name “Levi”. He was the third son of Jacob, born with him through his wife Leah (Gen 29:34). It was his descendents that would eventually be given the charge of the Priesthood and oversight of the Holy Tabernacle of God.

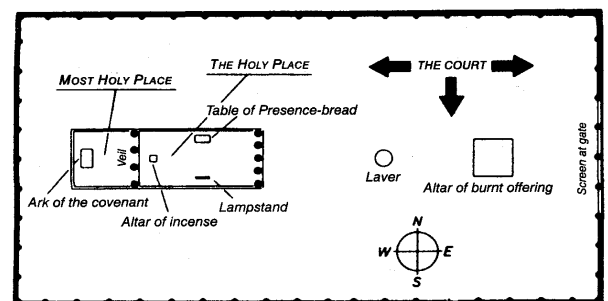
- Numbers 3:6 “Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.”
- Exodus 27:21 “In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.”

They were the one tribe from the twelve tribes of Israel that were in charge of all the workings of the tabernacle, the portable temple of God. *Numbers 3:6-7* “...the tribe of Levi...shall perform the duties...for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.” They were in charge of the setting up, the tearing down and the transport of all that had to do with the center of worship of Tabernacle (Numbers 4). This was also inclusive to the all the other priestly duties of sacrifice, offerings and measures of justice to be carried out among the people. It is in the tabernacle that we will find our understanding of the reverence to God.

The Tabernacle of God

Before the Ark of the Covenant found a permanent home in the temple of Jerusalem, God required a portable center of worship for His people. It was to be designed with God’s blueprints in mind, for it was to Him this Tabernacle would be the center of reverence and worship for the Jewish nation. *Exodus 25:9* “According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.

The entire tabernacle area only took up the area of about one-half American football field (50 yards long and 25 yards wide). Located within that one-quarter of an acre lot was the Altar of Burnt offering, the Braven Laver and the Tent of Meeting. Within the Tent of Meeting there were two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, both

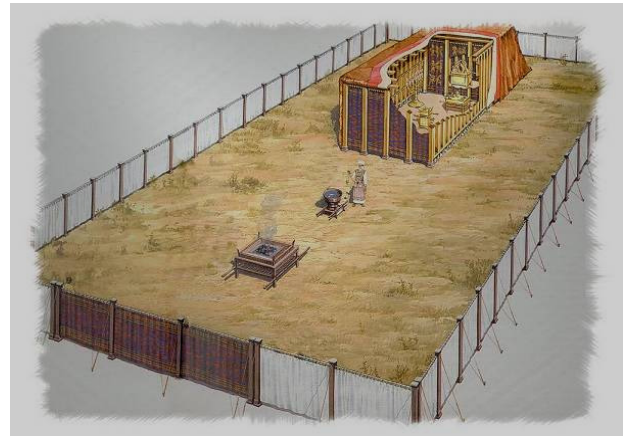


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of which was separated by a veil. The foremost was twice the length of the latter and contained the Table of Shewbread (the on the right), the Golden Lampstand (on the left) and the Altar of Incense (in the center toward the back by veil). It was in this room that only those of the priesthood of Levi could enter. It was in the Holy Place that the priests would serve God on behalf of the people by placing the twelve loaves of the Bread of the Presence, tend to the continual lighting of the lampstand and fume the incense through the veil into the Most Holy Place.

The Most Holy Place, nicknamed the “Holy of Holies”, housed the Ark of the Covenant. It was considered to be the perceived throne seat of God. There was only one man from among the Levitical priests, called the High Priest, could enter. It was only one time a year, during the Great Day of Atonement, that the High Priest would offer for the sins of ignorance that were committed by the people of the nation (Leviticus 16). *Hebrews 9:7 “...but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.”* Before the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies, there was required a cloud of incense to be fumed into it to eliminate direct sight between man and God. This was because all of mankind is so evil, even the High Priest, that no one could come into the presence of God and expect to live.



- Exodus 33:20 But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”
- Habakkuk 1:13 for God’s “...eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor.”
- Hebrews 5:1–3 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; ² he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; ³ and because of it he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

When the High Priest went into the “Holy Temple” on that one day to make the atoning sacrifice, it was with great reverence to God. Records indicate that sometimes the Jews were in such fear of God’s wrath that they actually tied a rope around the waist of the High Priest before he went into the Most Holy Place and died. They figured if God struck him dead in the Tabernacle, nobody would be going in after him.

They had good reason to believe this from the beginning because the first High Priest, Aaron, lost his two oldest sons out of lack of reverence for God in the Tent of Meeting, just on the other side of the veil. *Numbers 26:61 But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered strange fire before the LORD.* God instructed them to bring coals from the Altar of Burnt Offering and fuel the burning of the Altar of Incense unto the Lord. Instead they used fire from other source (Leviticus 10:1-2). Similar to someone smoking at a fuel pump shows a lack of reverence for a potential explosion, Nadab and Abihu showed a lack of reverence for the flammability of God’s intrinsic

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glory. They suffered an immediate burning death that emanated from the throne seat of God (the Ark).

Everything the Levitical priests would do in the tabernacle was to be in complete reverence and respect for the word of God. There were patterns spelled out on their job description and they were expected to follow it with the knowledge of judgment if otherwise. The Levites were told to dress in a certain way, carry out certain sacrifices and offerings in a certain way, say things a certain way, eat things a certain way, do it at a certain time and for certain intentions. If they did so, then it would turn out okay. If they did not fully revere God, then He would bring swift justice to them through the natural and imposed consequences. The people were to have the “fear of God” put in them concerning how the LORD would be approached.

This is an established theme of the Psalms.

- Psalm 93:1-2 The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. ² Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting. / Song 578 “We Will Glorify”
- Psalm 2:11-12 Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!
- Psalm 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. / Song 96 “I Stand in Awe”
- Psalm 47:2 For the LORD Most High is to be feared, A great King over all the earth.

God must be viewed as a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6) and that He stands for eternal life (John 10:10) and love (1John 4:8). In the same way we must look at God as the One that can and will war against us if we do not revere His holy name. God is to be revered! The Psalms make this clear.

- Psalm 5:7 But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.

They did not put their faces on the ground because they liked dirt, but that they were humbly yielding to God out of fear of what would happen if they did not.

- Psalm 119:38 Establish Your word to Your servant, As that which produces reverence for You.

If they did what God had asked them to do, then they would get what God said they would get. Adherence to reverence means blessing. No adherence to the word meant curse and punishment from God.

- Psalm 11:4 The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. / song 108 “The Lord is in His Holy Temple”

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We sang that song this morning. Do we really appreciate the reverence of those words rolling off our tongues?

- Psalm 76:7 You, even You, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

This is why ministers should be a bit uncomfortable when they are referred to as “Reverend”, for it is God that is to be feared. He is the one with the true power, not man.

Societal Lack of Reverence for that Which is Holy

We live in a different world than a few decades ago. The things that are holy today are frowned upon and that which God is for, most of the people are against.

- People used to be reverent for God’s word, but it is belittled by college professors, politicians and elites as some kind of fairy tale.
- Marriage used to be a God-ordained revered covenant between a man and woman, but now it is soon to be whatever we want to define it as.
- God set aside his revered kingdom called the church, but the world wants to make it look like we are a group of fools that don’t have anything better.
- He designed us with a reverent plan of creation, but yet we will not love our brother that was made in the likeness and image of God.
- God planned corporate worship to be a moment of revered focus on Him, but now it risks becoming just another social get-together.
- People used to be reverent in their language concerning God, but today a large number of people think nothing to use the Lord’s name as a cuss phrase.
- Society used to revere God by telling nothing but the truth, the whole truth so help them God, but today the truth is relative to whatever we think it is today.

The Life of a Christian is to not only walk in the grace and love of God, but also in reverence with fear and trembling.

- Philippians 2:12–13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.
- We need to have a healthy fear of the Lord to properly function as a Christian. That is a theme from the Psalms.

His Magnificence

Clark Clifford shares this reminiscence of his former boss, Harry S. Truman: Every morning at 8:30 the President would have a staff meeting. One day the mail clerk brought in a lavender envelope with a regal wax seal and flowing purple ribbons. Opening it, the President found a letter from King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, whose salutation began, “Your Magnificence.”

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“Your Magnificence,” Truman repeated, laughing. “I like that. I don’t know what you guys call me when I’m not here, but it’s okay if you refer to me from now on as ‘His Magnificence.’”

Truman subsequently sent a message to the United Nations supporting the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine. Soon afterward he received a second letter from King Ibn Saud. This one began: “Dear Mr. President.”

This week’s challenge

Take the time this week and drop the elders or me an email, expressing areas that you are going to demonstrate a greater reverence toward God. If we all tried a little harder to demonstrate reverence to God in our everyday life, then those in the church and the world will take notice and the result could be great. Here are just five simple demonstrations of reverence that I would like to suggest.

- Fully participate in the worship service.
- Kneel or Bow when praying at home.
- Turning off the cell phone before worship.
- Show a genuine respect for the elders.
- Dressing up for the Sunday worship service.

Service 4: Reverence for God

3 – Hallelujah Praise Jehovah

662 – All to Jesus I Surrender

Prayer

578 – We Will Glorify

318 – O Sacred Head

Lord's Supper

4 – To God be the Glory

Sermon

96 – I Stand in Awe