

SOME THINGS THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MUSIC

I. LIFE HAS PROBLEMS, AND THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE IS TO PRAISE GOD.

Life has problems, dilemmas, and complications. The apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 predicted that even though Jesus had come to earth, lived, died, and risen, nevertheless conflict and turmoil would continue:

"This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

These verses are saying that on this earth the Christian life will not be perfect. It will not be a utopia. There always will be problems to complain about, but the Bible warns that a complaining, bitter response to life's difficulties is not Christ-like. **Complaining is connected with the works of the flesh specified in Galatians 5:19-21**, especially hatred, wrath, strife, and envyings (bolded in the text below):

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, **hatred**, variance, emulations, **wrath, strife**, seditions, heresies, **Envyings**, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ..."

Rather than displaying the works of the flesh, Christians need to show the fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that "... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance ..."

The fruit of the spirit is connected with praise in daily life. Ephesians 5:18-21 says, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to your heart in the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ..."

These verses tell us that a spirit-filled Christian is a person who praises God, and of course a spirit-filled Christian will not be able to help showing forth the fruit of the spirit Who is filling him. **These verses also say that a spirit-filled Christian is a musical Christian.**

II. IN THE BIBLE, MUSIC AND PRAISE GO TOGETHER.

Throughout the Bible, music is connected with praise of God. Some have suggested there was music at the creation, when, in Genesis 1:2, "... the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Was the movement of the Spirit a "ululation" audible as heavenly music?

Later, God made the dry land. Genesis 1:9 records that, "... God said ... Let the dry land appear: and it was so."

This is when God laid the "foundations of the earth," the structure that gives the dry land its stability.

The Bible says there was music at this time. In Job 38:4-7, God asks Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Whatever the nature of the "morning stars," there was certainly musical praise of God at the creation. After God finished His creation, however, man sinned in the Garden of Eden. **The coming of sin into the earth introduced the possibility of making music that is not pleasing to God.**

III. IT IS POSSIBLE TO OFFER PRAISE THAT DISPLEASES GOD.

After man sinned in the Garden of Eden, there continued to be music. Genesis 4:21 says that "... Jubal ... was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ."

But Jubal was descended from Cain, who had disobeyed God by offering a sacrifice that displeased God (Genesis 4:5). Cain's descendants, including Jubal, are presented in Genesis chapter 4 as *departing* from God, not approaching him. Genesis 4:26 contrasts Seth's line with Cain's, emphasizing that with Enosh, Seth's descendants "began ... to call upon the name of the Lord," in contrast with Cain's progeny who were moving away from God. The music of Cain's descendants was in fact a part of man's descent into evil, and eventually, as Genesis 6:5 relates, "... every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The story of Jubal therefore illustrates that **it is possible to offer music or other sacrifice that displeases God.**

Cain's music has two lessons for us: **(1) we can offer sacrifice to God that is sinful; (2) it is possible to use music for evil.** In other words, music is not neutral. Music is either good or evil, right or wrong. The Bible has much to say about the words and characteristics of "right" music. This is the topic to which we now turn.

IV. THE RIGHT KIND OF PRAISE EXALTS GOD ALONE, NOT OURSELVES.

Music is supposed to be used by the people of God to glorify God. The music of the Israelites after they crossed the Red Sea is an example of this principle. Their praise, recorded in Exodus 15:1-21, specifically addressed God's personality, power and works. Their praise affirmed that:

God is strong, v. 1
He is Savior, v. 2
He executes judgment, v. 7
He is unique, v. 11
He is merciful, v. 13
He is Protector, v. 17
He is everlasting, v. 18

Praising God doesn't mean thanking God for who we are or speaking of what we have done. It means praising God

Himself. Psalm 149:2 establishes this principle by saying, "Let Israel [all redeemed people] rejoice *in him* that made him ..." (emphasis added).

Maybe the reason some people are confused about what praising God means is that they do not really know Him. A person who doesn't know God can't praise Him properly. We are in fact supposed to praise Him in all we do, for as 1 Corinthians 10:31 exhorts, "... whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Words of praise are also beautiful words. Proverbs 25:11 tells us that, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

If God has redeemed us, our goal is to let our words of praise be acceptable to Him. Christians do well to remember the prayer of the psalmist, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in my sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

V. "PRAISING GOD" MEANS PRAISING HIM FOR HIMSELF AND HIS WORKS.

The Bible has examples of praise that are good for us to emulate, and others that are not. After Jael executed Sisera, she praised God as recorded in Judges 5:1-31. In her song of praise, she affirmed that:

God executes judgment, v. 2
He delivers His people, vv. 10-11
He controls the elements, vv. 4, 20

The praise we offer God is related to how close we are with Him. If we are close to Him, we praise *Him*. If we are not, we praise ourselves. Deborah praised God in words affirming His works and power. They were certainly beautiful words acceptable to Him, but she also praised herself in verse 7 of Judges chapter 5: "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."

Deborah's praise shows that our praise of God can be corrupted by words displeasing to Him. **The mere act of praise alone is not enough to please God. Our words of praise themselves must be pleasing to God.** Otherwise our attempts at praise are vain.

In Deborah's time, the Israelites were not close to God. They "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (Judges 4:1), and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Deborah's flawed praise reflected these spiritual difficulties. As our modern culture slowly departs from God, how much is this departure reflected in *our* praise?

We have seen that right praise affirms God's person, power, and works. The Bible has many examples of this kind of praise. At the dedication of the Temple, the people praised God as recorded in 2 Chronicles 5:13. They affirmed that:

God is good.
He is merciful.
He is everlasting.

Another "praiseworthy" example took place after the Temple rebuilding began, as recorded in Ezra 3:10-11. There we read that:

God is good, v. 11
He is merciful, v. 11
He is everlasting, v. 11

Yet another example of praise that pleases God is the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), in which Mary praised God for allowing her to bear Jesus. Her praise began with the beautiful words in verse 46, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Then she continued by affirming that:

God is merciful, v. 48
He is mighty, v. 49
He is strong, v. 51
He executes judgment, v. 52

Luke 1:41 tells us that the Holy Spirit had given Mary this song. It is significant that the Holy Spirit did not magnify Himself, but magnified God the Father instead. In John 15:26, Jesus made the general claim that the Holy Spirit would not exalt Himself but would "testify" of Christ. Thus John 15:25 states a general principle, of which the Magnificat is a specific example, that **"right" praise focuses on praising God the Father and God the Son.**

So what does it mean to praise God? Praising God means affirming Who He is – the Creator (see Appendices Va and Vb), our Deliverer, Christ our Redeemer, Who is strong, good, rightly judging, merciful, and everlasting.

VI. "PRAISING GOD" MEANS THINKING OF HIM AS THE BIBLE DOES.

In the Bible, the emphasis on God is mainly as Redeemer and as Creator. Let's consider how the Bible describes God as Creator. In the book of Revelation, we read that there will one day be a New Creation. The New Creation to come will not develop over a long time, but will appear suddenly. In Revelation 21:1-2, the apostle John "*saw* a new heaven and a new earth ..." (emphasis added). The New Creation abruptly came into his view rather than slowly emerging from some kind of nebulous, previously existing chaos.

Since the New Creation will suddenly appear, why would the present creation have developed slowly? After all, God is always the same, or as Hebrews 13:8 puts it, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Why would God work differently with the present creation than with the one to come? The book of Revelation does not present God as having to use natural law or eons of time to bring the New Creation into existence. Why would God be constrained to have employed natural law over eons to bring the present cosmos into being? Time and the laws of nature are creations of God, and as Creator He was not bound by these laws or required to use long intervals of time to "create."

Praising God means praising Him as Creator (see Appendices VIa and VIb). **Affirming Him as Creator means affirming His power to create in a way that is beyond science, outside of natural law, and not requiring eons.** On the other hand,

If God *had* to use natural law, He is limited.

If He *had* to use a long time, He is not almighty.

If He *had* to work gradually over eons, He is not strong.

If He *had* to "create" in a way that science can explain, His thoughts are not higher than ours.

Isaiah 55:9 quotes God as proclaiming that "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." If we say we are praising God, but we are thinking of Him as subject to natural law and requiring eons for "creation," then we are contradicting Isaiah 55:9 and we are not really praising Him.

Do we dare seek to bring God down to the level of our understanding? **It is possible to say we are praising God without really accepting who He is.** As mentioned, genuine praise means affirming God's attributes. One of His attributes is "Creator." Further, 1 Samuel 15:22 reminds us, "to obey is better than sacrifice," and James 2:20 says "faith without works is dead." Before we can praise, we must exercise obedient faith in the Creator God of the Word, rather than claiming we are giving praise while thinking of the Creator as a mere supervisor of eons of naturalistic development.

How would our parents feel if we praised them without obeying them? How would my boss feel if I gave praise without obedience? **God wants obedience before He wants the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15). Is much of our praise actually disobedience because we are refusing to praise Him for Who He truly is -- almighty God, which includes "almighty Creator"?**

A person not believing in creation can't fully praise God as Creator. We need take care that we do not match Jesus' tragic description of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:8, who honored God "with their lips," but had hearts "far" from Him.

A person not believing in redemption can't really praise God as Redeemer. **This means that the lifestyle and spiritual state of a performer do matter. Christians who hedge on God's ability to create, and performers who are not redeemed, can mouth words of praise, but the words are not pleasing to God.**

VII. WHEN IS PRAISE OF GOD UNGODLY?

Praise is ungodly when it does not praise God for Who He is, or when our hearts disbelieve who God is – Creator and Redeemer – despite our praise words. Praise is a kind of *sacrifice*. Hebrews 13:15 speaks of "the sacrifice of praise." But if we are offering our sacrifices with disobedient hearts, with hearts disbelieving what the Word says about God as Creator and Redeemer, then our sacrifices displease God (1 Samuel 15:22). Are we like the Israelites, whose sacrifices God could not abide (Isaiah 1:10-15)? **Are we like the**

Pharisees -- mouthing the right words, when our hearts are far from Him (Matthew 23:27-28)?

Are we professing godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5)? Dare we say, "Yes, I believe in God as Creator, but His power was limited by having to use the „laws of physics over billions of years"?

Are we like the Laodicean church, "... rich, and increased with goods ..." (Revelation 3:17), thinking our hearts are close to God, when really we are spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"?

Praise means we believe what God has said about himself, not what someone else says He said. **It is possible to feel warm and devotional inside, but God requires not just zealous worship but right worship.**

Those who would worship Him must worship him in the right way. As John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit," not as an idol or graven image, a principle recognized by most Christians. But John 4:24 goes on to say that we must worship Him "in truth," a principle not so well recognized.

Not just any worship is acceptable to God, even as Cain's offering was unacceptable. Nor are all praise words acceptable to Him. Are we worshiping and praising God in truth? Are we crediting him for the "great wonders" he has done -- including creation by His spoken word? Or are we praising a god of our own imagination who cannot do what the Bible says God did -- who could not have created as the Bible says He did? Are we reading the Bible to see what God says about Himself? Or are we reading and listening to the opinions of other people -- other commentators, other theologians, other "experts"? 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us to, "Study to show [ourselves] approved unto God ..." The study to which Paul is here referring is the study of *God's Word*, not the opinions of men.

Our culture needs to hear about the power of God. Our culture has no fear or respect for God because it doesn't know His power. **To those who deny His power, God may hide His power.** In Nazareth, the people denied Jesus' power to do supernatural works. Therefore,

"... he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58);

"And he could do there no mighty work, save that he laid hands upon few sick folk, and healed them" (Mark 6:5).

He did a few works -- as in the American church today -- but no great works, because the people had already decided Jesus hadn't worked by His almighty power in the past. **It is possible to try to praise God fervently, but if our praise is improper, or we have unbelief or sin in our hearts, God withholds His power.**

Is God hiding His power from us because we deny His power in creation? In our culture, people search for ecstatic, charismatic experiences to find the power of God. **But the worship of God is to be in spirit (John 4:24), not by seeking**

physical experiences. Our music should therefore appeal primarily to our spirit, rather than being sensual and appealing to the physical. For a spiritual experience of God's power, try meditating in Genesis chapter 1 with a total acceptance of God's having created the entire cosmos in only six days by His spoken word -- and nothing else! Then in truth you will feel the power of God.

VIII. EXTRABIBLICAL IDEAS AND RESOURCES

Music has four elements: melody, pitch, harmony, and rhythm. **The Bible emphasizes melody as the element that should be dominant in music (e.g., Ephesians 5:19).**

Studies have shown repeatedly that each of these four elements has a strong psychological and physiological effect. This should no great surprise, for everyone has felt the effects of music -- the faster heartbeat, the sweaty palms, the faster breathing, the surging emotions. Listening to music can be a "rush." This is why military organizations employ martial music to inspire loyalty and fighting spirit.

Research on the psychology and physiology of music shows that music dominant in high pitch stimulates productive mental activity. Music dominant in low tones deadens innovative thought and can lead to zombie-like trance states. Classical music, especially from the 1500s to the late 1800s, and most traditional church music, is rich in higher tones.

Similar studies have shown that traditional harmony induces a feeling of relaxation and well-being, especially when the harmony is resolved at the end of the piece. Dissonant arrangements, on the other hand, cause feelings of tension, even anger, especially if dissonance dominates.

Finally, a regular clockwork rhythm induces a feeling of confidence and well-being, but a dominant syncopated rhythm -- the so-called "rock beat" -- generates feelings of stress and even violent emotions.

Virtually all rock and much "contemporary Christian music" (CCM) emphasizes low tones, relying on sub-woofers to magnify the effect, as well as dissonant harmony, and of course a rock beat. These elements when dominant have the potential to control the body, mind and emotions, creating a dependency on the part of the listener so that the listener is hostile to the idea of abandoning these elements.

The Bible says that Christians are to be controlled only by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:19). **Christians should avoid anything, including rock music and CCM, that could challenge the Holy Spirit's control.** These ideas are discussed further in the following:

Non-Christian Sources (no biblical applications):

Science and Music by Sir James Jeans

"Music" by Karl Geiringer, in *The Grolier Collegiate Encyclopedia*

The Pelican History of Music edited by Alec Robertson and Denis Stevens

The Enjoyment of Music by Joseph Machlis

Christian Sources (with biblical applications as discussed above):

Contemporary Christian Music Under the Spotlight by David Cloud

Music Education in the Christian Home by Mary Ann Froehlich

The Marxist Minstrels by David Noebel

Measuring the Music by John Makujina

CONCLUSIONS

Music is not neutral; the music matters, not just the words.

Praise of God can be sinful, and music can be used for evil.

God demands obedience before He desires praise.

Praise is sinful when (1) we don't really accept who God is

(Creator and Redeemer), (2) there is unbelief, or (3) there is disobedience.

God wants not just fervent praise, but right praise.

Proper praise is mainly spiritual, not physical or sensual.

A performer's lifestyle and spiritual state do matter; fine

sounding praise words and music are displeasing to God if the performer's heart is far from Him.

APPENDICES ABOUT MUSIC, PRAISE AND CREATION

Roman numerals in the section headings below are linked back to the equivalent Roman numeral in the main text above. **A two-page outline of this paper follows the appendices. It is suitable as a handout for Bible studies and Sunday schools.**

Va. "PRAISING GOD" MEANS PRAISING HIM AS CREATOR.

The Psalms are the model "praise-book" for worship, for as Ephesians 5:19 says, we are to be "... speaking to [our]selves in psalms ..."

How do the Psalms praise God? Besides praising God in the ways mentioned in the main text above, 13% of Psalms explicitly praise God as Creator:

Psalm 8:3, 4

Psalm 19:1-3

Psalm 24:2

Psalm 33:6

Psalm 89:11

Psalm 95:4

Psalm 96:10

Psalm 100:3

Psalm 104:1-24

Psalm 115:15

Psalm 121:2

Psalm 134:3

Psalm 135:6-7

Psalm 136:4-9 (especially verse 4)

Psalm 139:14

Psalm 145:6

Psalm 147:4

Psalm 148:5

Psalm 136:4 links almost all the Psalms with God as Creator, for it specifies one of God's great works as "creation."

In ages past when the world moved away from God and forgot Him as Redeemer, the Bible gave more emphasis to God as Creator. For example, Genesis 1:1-31 was written in a time of paganism as an apologetic to refute pagan ideas about origins. Some key points in this chapter are the following:

- v. 1 -- earth did not come from a "cosmic egg" via big bang;
- v. 3 -- light was not produced by a big bang;
- v. 7 -- "waters under the firmament" = oceans, which appeared before land; implies that earth was originally cool, not molten;
- v. 8 -- "firmament" = atmosphere
- v. 9 -- dry land appeared after oceans
- v. 12 -- plants appeared before the sun; implies that the sun is not the ultimate lifegiver
- vv. 14-18 -- the sun appeared after light (v. 3), after the first evening and morning (v. 5); implies that the sun is not the ultimate light-giver or the ultimate time-teller.

The sun is an *ordained* light-giver, not a great god as almost all cultures have thought. So what if nearly all cultures have been mistaken about the sun? The answer is Rom. 3:4: "... let God be true, but every man a liar ..." Are we learning to rely on what the Bible says, even if other people disagree? Are we learning to ask not, What do others say? the experts? the authorities? But, what does the Bible say?

Vb. WE NEED TO PRAISE GOD AS CREATOR IN A CULTURE MOVING AWAY FROM HIM.

Praising God means praising Him as Creator. As Psalm 100:3 commands, "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us ..."

Moses praised God for the creation in Genesis chapter 1 and refuted pagan ideas about the universe. Pagans believed (and evolution still teaches) that life came from the sea. But in Genesis 1, verses 20-21 teach that *God* brought forth life from the sea. The pagan idea tries to keep what God did but leaves God out. In fact, ancient Sumerian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman evolutionary concepts were all similar to modern ones. This is not surprising, since Ecclesiastes 1:3 says, "There is no new thing under the sun."

Jeremiah 31:35-37 was written in a time of paganism, and like Moses, Jeremiah based God's trustworthiness on His role as Creator:

"Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night ... the Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth be searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord."

This creation-based promise of security speaks to Christians today, for we are Abraham's seed, as Galatians 3:7, 4:4-5, and 4:28 remind us:

"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ... But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ... Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."

In Revelation, the book of the end times, creation is prominently taught, as in Revelation 4:11 and 5:11-13 (and a similar passage in Revelation 10:6):

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and are created. ... and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne ... and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ... And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth ... heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him ..."

In the end times, human culture will be so far gone that people will have forgotten that God is Creator. Little earthly testimony of God's power will remain, so an angel will fly in heaven with the message of creation (Revelation 4:6-7):

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth [now notice what gospel he preaches!] ... Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him ... and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg, in his "much-quoted aphorism" (James G. Lanz, *Physicist ponders God, truth and „final theory“*, *New York Times*, January 25, 2000, p. F-1), said "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless." But the angelic message in Revelation is one of salvation from the despair of naturalistic purposelessness and chaos.

VIa. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES GOD AS PRESERVING HIS CREATION TODAY.

When Paul wrote to the Colossian church, it was struggling with pagan gnosticism, teaching that Jesus Christ was not almighty God but merely a good man -- like current modernist teaching. **One of the arguments Paul makes for Jesus being God is that Christ created, and also preserves His creation today**, as in Colossians 1:3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 16-17:

"We give thanks to God ... Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus ... For this cause ... also ... do not cease to pray for you ... [Paul wants the church to thank God for their salvation just as he has -- why?] -- That ye might walk worthy of the Lord ... Giving thanks unto the Father ... [why give thanks unto the Father?] -- Who hath delivered unto the power of darkness ... In whom we have redemption through his blood ... [now notice Paul's crowning reason for giving thanks for Jesus Christ as almighty] -- For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,

whether the be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [continue to exist, "hold together," are preserved]."

"To preserve" means "to maintain a previous condition," not to bring about constant, continuous change.

The idea that the cosmos has experienced unceasing, gradual change over eons contradicts this preservation principle.

The book of Hebrews was written to Jews to show them that salvation in Jesus Christ is better than the Old Testament law. Again, one of the main arguments for this claim is that Christ is preserving His creation today, as stated in Hebrews 1:1-3:

"God ... Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things [now notice why Christ has been appointed heir of all things -- Hebrews wouldn't accept the reason that "Jesus died on the cross"], by whom also he made the worlds [He is heir because he made it all]; [now notice the functions or work of Christ today] -

"Who being the brightness of his [the Father's] glory [just as wise sons are a credit to their earthly father, Proverbs 15:20], and the express image of his person [Jesus is the Father in human form], and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high ..."

"Upholding all things" -- preserving the creation -- preventing it from collapsing into chaos -- is one of the works Christ is performing now. **This is the opposite of letting the creation go through continuous, gradual change.** Even now, in fact, Christ is preventing the very kinds of change proposed by naturalistic theories. Indeed, Genesis 2:1 states that the creation was "finished" after the creation week: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." The "host of them" includes stars, thus disallowing theories of gradual stellar development.

As mentioned earlier, Hebrews 13:8 indicates that Christ is always the same, not just in time, but also in space. He acts the same way in the physical creation as He does with the spiritual creation. How does He work in the spiritual creation? He creates the redeemed soul in an instant at salvation: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is [not "becomes"!] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The general principle is that what God creates spiritually or physically is conserved: "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it [this way], that men should fear before him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

It is certain that what God creates spiritually is everlasting: "... I give unto them [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). The word "man" in both verses is added for clarity, but absolute security is indicated by reading without the italicized

"man." Thus in the spiritual realm, God creates instantly and everlastingly. It is surprising that any Christian believing (rightly) that spiritual creation is not a process would believe that physical creation must have been a (long, gradual) process over eons.

Vib. THE GREAT LIE OF HISTORY IS THAT GOD IS NOT CREATOR OR PRESERVER.

This lie will be especially strong in the end times, when there will be strong delusion, as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, and 11:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, ... That ye be not ... troubled ... that the day of Christ is at hand. ... For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he [the Holy Spirit] who now letteth [prevents] will let [prevent], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed ... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they might receive a [actually, *the*] lie."

Since there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:3), we would not expect this lie to be something new. This lie in fact is the one believed in the ancient past and described in Romans 1:20, 21, 22, and 25:

"For the invisible things of the creation of the world are clearly seen ... so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God [they knew Who He was, but praised him partially, refusing to praise Him by accepting all that He is -- as Creator, then Redeemer] ... Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [they *became* -- this didn't happen all at once, but gradually -- as it is in our culture] ... Who changed the truth of God into a [the] lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator [note, they didn't abandon worship of God totally, but they gave worship of the creation a higher place - even as our culture worships God today, but gives nature and the "laws of physics" the power of self-organizing over eons into the cosmos we observe -- denying the power of God to have done this by His spoken word -- these were the beliefs of ancient pagan cultures!]"

Thus the lie is related to false views of origins and generates great arrogance, even in believers. Isaiah 28:14-15 describes this condition:

Wherefore hear the word of the Lord ... Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are in agreement [even as Christians today have approved abortion, a policy strengthened by the Darwinian idea that man is no more than a highly developed animal]; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge [e.g., we are convinced the cosmos developed over eons and will continue for eons without tribulational change as predicted in 2 Peter 3:3-4]."

With our culture accepting the lie about origins and denying that God is Creator, we have set ourselves up for the very judgment outlined in Romans 1:20-25.

AN OUTLINE STUDY ON THE BIBLE AND MUSIC

I. WE SHOULD PRAISE GOD, NOT COMPLAIN.

The problems of life will always be with us, 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

The Christian life will not be perfect. There will always be problems to complain of. But complaining is connected with the works of the flesh, Gal. 5:19-21:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, **hatred**, variance, emulations, **wrath**, **strife**, seditions, heresies, **Envyings**, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ..."

We need to show the fruit of the spirit instead, Gal. 5:22-23, and the fruit of the spirit is connected with praise, Eph. 5:18-21.

II. MUSIC IS A WAY OF PRAISING GOD.

Throughout the Bible, music is connected with praise of God. Some have suggested there was music at the creation, Gen. 1:1-2, especially v. 2, when "... the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Later, God made the dry land, Gen. 1:9: "And God said ... Let the dry land appear: and it was so." This is when God laid the "foundations of the earth," the structure that makes the dry land stable. The Bible says there was music at this time, Job 38:4-7. Whatever the nature of the "morning stars," there was music and praise of God at the creation.

III. GOD CAN BE DISPLEASED WITH OUR PRAISE.

After man sinned in the Garden of Eden, there continued to be music, Gen. 4:21: "... Jubal ... was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." But Jubal was descended from Cain, who had disobeyed God by offering a sacrifice that displeased God (Gen. 4:5). **So it is possible to offer a sacrifice that displeases God.** The music of Cain's descendants was a part of man's descent into evil, Gen. 6:5: "... every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Jubal's music has two lessons for us: **(1) we can offer sacrifice to God that is sinful; (2) it is possible to use music for evil. So we cannot truly say that music is neutral.**

IV. BIBLICAL PRAISE EXALTS GOD, NOT US.

Music is supposed to be used by the people of God to glorify God. The music of the Israelites after they crossed the Red Sea is a good example. Their praise in Ex. 15:1-21 was that:

God is strong, v.1

He is Savior, v.2

He executes judgment, v. 7

He is unique, v. 11

He is merciful, v. 13

He is Protector, v. 17

He is everlasting, v. 18

Praising God doesn't mean thanking God for who we are or speaking of what we have done, but praising God Himself, Ps. 149:2: "Let Israel [all redeemed people] rejoice in him that made him."

Maybe the reason that some people are confused about what praising God means is that they do not really know

Him. A person who doesn't know God can't praise Him properly. But if we know Him, are we praising Him? And are we praising Him, not what He gives us? We are supposed to do this in all we do, 1 Cor. 10:31.

Praise words are beautiful words, Prov. 25:11. If God has redeemed us, our goal should be to let our words of praise be beautiful and acceptable to Him, Ps. 19:14.

V. RIGHT PRAISE GLORIFIES GOD & HIS WORKS.

The Bible has examples of praise that are good, and others that are bad. After Jael killed Sisera, she said in Judges 5:1-31 --

God executes judgment, v. 2

He delivers His people, vv. 10-11

He controls the elements, vv. 4, 20

The kind of praise we make is connected with how close we are to Him. If we are close to Him, we praise Him. If we are not, we praise ourselves. Deborah praised God, but she also praised herself (v. 7).

The Israelites were not close to God at this time. They "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (Judges 4:1), and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Once again we see that praise alone is not enough to please God. It needs to be the right kind of praise.

An example of the right kind of praise happened at the dedication of the Temple. In 2 Chron. 5:13 we read that --

God is good.

He is merciful.

He is everlasting.

Other good examples are in Ezra 3:10-11 and Lk. 1:46-55. So what does it mean to praise God? **The answer: Praising Him for Who He is -- strong, good, judging, merciful, redeeming, everlasting.**

VI. RIGHT PRAISE THINKS OF GOD BIBLICALLY.

In the Bible, the emphasis on God is mainly as Redeemer and as Creator. Consider how the Bible describes God as Creator. In the book of Revelation, for example, we read that there will one day be a New Creation. The New Creation to come will not develop over a long time, Rev. 21:1-2. **John saw it suddenly, quickly, not slowly evolving.** So why would the present creation have developed slowly? After all, God is always the same, Heb. 13:8.

Why would He work differently with the present creation than with the one to come? Praising God ultimately means praising Him as the real Creator --- not having to use natural law, not having to use a long time, but creating in a way that is beyond science.

If God had to use natural law, He is limited.

If He had to use a long time, He is not almighty.

If He had to work gradually over eons, He is not strong.

If He had to work in a way that science can explain,

His thoughts are no higher than ours, Isa. 55:9.

It is possible to praise God without really accepting who He is. To "praise" Him without accepting Him as Creator, for example, is disobedience. Remember:

1 Sam. 15:22 -- "to obey is better than sacrifice"

Jas. 2:20 -- "faith without works is dead"

God wants obedience before He wants the sacrifice of praise. Is much of our praise actually disobedience because we are refusing to praise Him for Who He truly is -- almighty God, which includes "almighty Creator"? A person not believing in creation can't fully praise God as Creator. And a person not believing in redemption can't really praise God as Redeemer. **This means that the lifestyle and spiritual state of a performer does matter. Unsaved performers can't really praise God.**

VII. WHEN IS PRAISE OF GOD UNGODLY?

When it does not praise God for Who He is. Praise can be a good thing -- it is *sacrifice*, Heb. 13:15 -- "the sacrifice of praise." But are we making offerings and sacrifices with disobedient hearts, 1 Sam. 15:22?

Are we like the Israelites, whose sacrifices God could not abide, Isa. 1:10-15? **Are we like the Pharisees -- mouthing the right words, but our hearts are far from Him, Matt. 23:27-28?**

Are we professing godliness -- but denying the power thereof, 2 Tim. 3:5 -- "Yes, I believe in God, He but I also believe that He was not powerful enough to create instantly by His spoken word -- He can't really help me -- I can't really depend on Him."

Are we like the church of the end-times at Laodicea, Rev. 3:17 -- "... rich, and increased with goods ..." -- very materialistic but not very spiritual -- spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And what is "being spiritual" anyway? It is being godly. **And what is being godly? It is being kind, obedient, and tenderhearted, Eph. 4:32, 6:1.** To be otherwise is disobedience.

Praise means we believe what God has said about Himself, not what someone else says He said. Feeling warm and devotional inside may not be true worship **because God requires not just zealous worship but right worship.** We must worship Him in the right way, John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit [not as an idol or graven image - a principle recognized by most Christians] and in truth [a principle not so well recognized]."

Not just any worship is acceptable to God, even as Cain's offering was unacceptable. Worship of God is to be in spirit (John 4:24), not by seeking physical experiences. Are we worshiping and praising God in truth? Are we crediting him for the "great wonders" he has done -- including creation by His spoken word? Or have we defined a god of our own who can't do what the Bible says God does?

Our culture needs to hear about the power of God. Our culture has no fear or respect for God because it doesn't know His power. **To those who deny His power, God may hide His power.** In Nazareth, the people denied Jesus' power to do miracles. Therefore, "... he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58).

Mk. 6:5 says the same thing. He did a few works -- as in the church today -- but no great works, because the people had already decided Jesus hadn't worked by His almighty power in the past. It is possible to try to praise God fervently, but if our praise is improper, or we have unbelief or sin in our

hearts, God withholds His power. Are we praising a god made in our own image, one who must conform to our human ideas, one who is not really Creator? **Is God hiding His power from us because we deny His power in creation?**

Are we each reading the Bible to see what God says? Or are we reading and listening to the opinions of other people? 2 Tim. 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God ..."

EXTRABIBLICAL IDEAS & RESOURCES

Music has four elements: melody, pitch, harmony, and rhythm. **The Bible emphasizes melody as the element that should be dominant in music (e.g., Eph. 5:19).**

Studies have shown repeatedly that each of these four elements has a strong psychological and physiological effect. This should no great surprise, for everyone has felt the effects of music -- the faster heartbeat, the sweaty palms, the faster breathing, the surging emotions.

Research on the psychology and physiology of music shows that music dominant in high pitch stimulates productive mental activity. Music dominant in low tones deadens innovative thought and can lead to zombie-like trance states. Classical music (1500s-late 1800s) and most traditional church music is rich in higher tones.

Similar studies have shown that traditional harmony induces a feeling of relaxation and well-being, especially when the harmony is resolved at the end of the piece. Dissonant arrangements cause feelings of tension, even anger.

Finally, a regular clockwork rhythm induces a feeling of confidence and well-being. Dominant syncopation -- the so-called "rock beat" -- generates stress and violent emotions.

Rock music and much "contemporary Christian music" (CCM) emphasizes low tones -- even using huge subwoofers to magnify the effect -- along with dissonant harmony, and a rock beat. These elements when dominant have the potential to control the body, mind and emotions, causing a dependency in the listener so that the he is hostile to the idea of abandoning these elements.

But the Bible says that Christians are to be controlled only by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). **Christians should avoid anything -- including music styles -- that could challenge the Holy Spirit's control.** These ideas (without the biblical applications) are discussed further in the following:

Science and Music by Sir James Jeans

"Music" by Karl Geiringer, in *The Grolier Collegiate Encyclopedia*

The Pelican History of Music edited by Alec Robertson and Denis Stevens

The Enjoyment of Music by Joseph Machlis

CONCLUSIONS

Music is not neutral; the music matters, not just the words. Praise of God can be sinful, and music can be used for evil. God wants obedience before He wants praise.

Praise is sinful when (1) we don't really accept who God is (Creator and Redeemer), (2) there is unbelief, and (3) there is disobedience.

God wants not just fervent praise, but right praise.

Proper praise is mainly spiritual, not physical or sensual.