

Biblical Transitions in Worship

By Dennis Prutow

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Bible Text: 1 Chronicles 16:37-42

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Westminster Evangelistic Ministries

Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

7418 Penn Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15208

Website: www.wordfortheweek.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rptsprof

Turn in your Bibles now to 1 Chronicles and chapter 16 at the end of the chapter starting with verse 37, 37 through 42; 1 Chronicles chapter 16 verses 37 through 42.

Hear God's Word.

So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required; and Obed-edom with his 68 relatives; Obed-edom, also the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah as gatekeepers. And he left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which He commanded Israel. And with them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His lovingkindness is everlasting. And with them were Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those who should sound aloud, and with instruments for the songs of God, and the sons of Jeduthun for the gate.¹

May God be pleased to help us in our understanding of this particular portion of God's Word and hopefully to see its relevance for us so many hundreds of years later.

My friend Pete was an elderly gentleman who came to church with his wife and this particular sabbath morning he was sitting toward the back of the fellowship hall where we were conducting our adult sabbath school class and I was leading. And during the class Pete erupted with some vehemence stating that he thought it would be a wonderful idea for us to be able to go back to the time of Moses to be around the mount, to see the glory of God, to experience the sounds and hear the thunder and see the lightning and see the glory of God descending upon the mountain.

And I said to him perhaps you would think it would be a good idea to go back and to experience those things, but part of what we need to realize in the Church today is that we

¹ 1 Chronicles 16:37-42

have something which is far better and we ought not to yearn to go back to those former things.

And like Pete many of us, I think, and many people in the evangelical Church today have a yearning and a hankering to go back to former things. But we ought not to do so. And the reason we ought not to do so is that the redemptive purposes of God are always carrying us forward, not backward. The redemptive purposes of God are carrying us forward in worship. The redemptive purposes of God are carrying us forward in the spirituality of worship. And because this is the case you should not and I should not yearn for the past. And that is the idea that I want you to get this morning, which is a very simple one, I think, that because the redemptive purposes of God are always carrying you forward—and especially this is true in worship and the spirituality of worship—you need not yearn to go back to former things.

And in 1 Chronicles 16 what we look at are former things. And you may wonder at first why then should we go back and look at the former things. It is for the purpose of our understanding that God leads us forward. And interestingly enough when you begin to examine 1 Chronicles chapter 16 and our text this morning you realize that in David's time Israel was going through a profound transition and moving forward. Israel was not returning to the past. Israel was moving forward.

Look at our text, if you would, in verses 37 through 39.

“So he left...”² that is, David. “So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required.”³ Again, to recall the story that the ark of the covenant had been brought up to Jerusalem and David pitched a tent in Jerusalem in which he placed the ark of the covenant. And now Asaph and his relatives were stationed at the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem to minister there, to sing the songs of the Lord before the presence of the Lord before the ark of the covenant.

And then look at verse 39. “And he left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon.”⁴ The tabernacle, the tent which Moses built was not in Jerusalem. The tabernacle was in Gibeon. Gibeon was a little town north of Jerusalem and a little west, about eight to 10 miles. And there the tabernacle had been for some time. And there David also stationed the priests to offer sacrifices and to sing before the Lord. He left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place which was at Gibeon. And the idea of a high place was just a place of worship. That is what the terminology refers to here in the text.

And so we have this strange situation where in Jerusalem we find the ark of the covenant and in Gibeon we find the tabernacle and they are separated. And they are separated for a

² 1 Chronicles 16:37

³ Ibid.

⁴ 1 Chronicles 16:39

time until the temple is built. And Israel is going through a period of profound transition because the temple is to be built in Jerusalem and David will learn shortly that Mount Zion is the place of God's choosing where the temple is to be built. He is shown that by revelation. And then Solomon is able to build the temple in the place of God's choosing.

All of this goes back to Deuteronomy and what God promised earlier. And so Israel is in a great time of transition. And this time of transition includes some of the things which David now does before the ark of the covenant and in the tabernacle, that is, the institution of the songs of God in the tabernacle.

But before we go there let's notice something else, verse 40. David maintained the burnt offerings before the Lord. Let's read verses 39 and 40 together.

And he left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which He commanded Israel.⁵

And so David maintained the burnt offerings on the altar which was at the tabernacle. Now these burnt offerings were the basic and principle and primary offering of the nation of Israel. And I would like you to see that that is the case. So if you would turn back with me in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter one, let's just read a few verses here and you will notice that Leviticus chapter one is the place where we find the discussion of the burnt offerings. This is the first offering discussed in Leviticus.

Let's just read a few verses here.

Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock. If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.'"⁶

This offering was the first offering of atonement. Now the word "atonement" here is translated in the Greek Old Testament with the word used in the New Testament of Jesus Christ that he is the propitiation for our sins. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. In other words, this burnt offering pointed forward to Jesus Christ and it was maintained on the altar of burnt offering. And if you look at another text with me you will see how these offerings were to be sacrificed.

⁵ 1 Chronicles 16:39-40

⁶ Leviticus 1:1-4

Would you turn to Numbers chapter 28 with me, Numbers chapter 28? Here the burnt offerings are described a little bit more for us.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be careful to present My offering, My food for My offerings by fire, of a soothing aroma to Me, at their appointed time.' And you shall say to them, 'This is the offering by fire which you shall offer to the LORD; two male lambs one year old without defect as a continual burnt offering every day. You shall offer the one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.'"⁷

Verse six, "It is a continual burnt offering which was ordained in Mount Sinai as a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD."⁸ Morning and evening, morning and evening continually these offerings were placed upon the altar pointing to the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was to come.

Look at Numbers 28:9-10.

Then on the sabbath day two male lambs one year old without defect, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its drink offering: This is the burnt offering of every sabbath in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.⁹

On the sabbath day the sacrifices were doubled because it was a special day. And they all pointed to Jesus Christ.

And when you go back to 1 Chronicles 16 you will notice the language in 1 Chronicles 16 verses 39 and 40.

He left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which He commanded Israel.¹⁰

And so there the sacrifices were carried out.

But then David, in accordance with the commands of God, adds something to these sacrifices. Look at verse 41 in 1 Chronicles 16. "With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His lovingkindness is everlasting."¹¹

⁷ Numbers 28:1-4

⁸ Numbers 28:6

⁹ Numbers 28:9-10

¹⁰ 1 Chronicles 16:39-40

¹¹ 1 Chronicles 16:41

David—and as we will see—initiates the song of the Lord with the sacrifice of the Lord. Notice the language. “With them...”¹² that is with the priests who were performing the sacrifices, with those sacrifices the song of the Lord was to be raised before God.

And so close was the association of the songs of God with the sacrifice that in the New Testament the sacrificial language is utilized with singing, you see. It is quite astounding that this should be the case. Keep your finger there, again, in 1 Chronicles 16 and turn back to the book of Hebrews, the very last chapter of the book of Hebrews and verse 15, Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 15 and look at the language that is utilized by the writer to the Hebrews. “Through Him,”¹³ that is through Jesus Christ, through the one to whom those burnt offerings pointed, “Through Him then, let us continually offer...”¹⁴ that same language utilized in Chronicles and in Numbers and in Leviticus, continually morning and evening, let us continually do what? “Offer up a sacrifice...”¹⁵ And what kind of sacrifice? A sacrifice of praise, a sacrifice of praise. And that sacrifice is defined more fully. A sacrifice of praise that is, “the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”¹⁶

And so the whole idea of those original sacrifices is now carried forward to you and to me and we are to offer up a sacrifice all right. But it is more particularly defined as a sacrifice of praise. And the words continually there have to do with morning and evening sacrifices that is the morning and evening worship of the people of God. And that is the original idea behind the people of God gathering for worship morning and evening. And it seems very simple when you go back and look at the terminology in the Bible.

And so we have the privilege of gathering morning and evening to offer up sacrifices of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to him. That is the way the language is packed together.

Let’s go back, now, to 1 Chronicles chapter 16.

With the sacrifices came the song and then also in verse 42. “And with them were Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those who should sound aloud, and with instruments for the songs of God, and the sons of Jeduthun for the gate.”¹⁷ And with them, with the sacrifice was the song and with the song there was with the sacrifice also certain instruments. And these instruments are quite interesting and astounding. And you will notice even in 1 Chronicles chapter 16 and verse 42 there are two categories of instruments. “And with them were Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those who should sound aloud.”¹⁸ And the trumpets were ordained by Moses to be played over the sacrifices. And these trumpets announced the presence of God and called the people to remember the good things of God.

¹² 1 Chronicles 16:41

¹³ Hebrews 13:15

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ 1 Chronicles 16:42

¹⁸ Ibid.

Would you look at another text with me, this one in Numbers chapter 10, if you would, Numbers chapter 10 and verse 10? Just a little note about the trumpets.

God said to the people, Numbers 10:10, “Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the LORD your God.”¹⁹ These trumpet sounds were a reminder, a reminder to God and a reminder to the people concerning the good things of the work of God. And it must have been quite an amazing picture because as the sacrifices were prepared and the burnt offering was placed upon the altar, the fire which originally was fire from God—do you remember that? It was originally fire from God. God came down from heaven and lit the fire on the altar and the people were enjoined to keep that fire burning perpetually. It was never to go out. And so that was fire from God. And when the sacrifice was placed upon the altar and the flames began to rise around that sacrifice the trumpets were sounded and the people were reminded of the good things of God and the presence of God was glowing in fire before them. And then the cymbals would crash as a sound telling the choir that they should begin to sing.

And this is what 1 Chronicles chapter 16 and verse 42 actually tells us back there again. “And with them were Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those who should sound aloud, and with instruments for the songs of God.”²⁰ And the other instruments were harps and lyres. It was actually they harps and the lyres that accompanied the singing of the people at that time.

But for our purposes now it is important for us to see that all of these things were packed together, that when the sacrifice began the songs of God began and when the sacrifice ceased, the songs of God also ceased.

Let me call your attention to one other text in this regard in 2 Chronicles, if you would, 2 Chronicles chapter 29, two texts. First of all verse 27. “Then Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD also began with the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David, king of Israel.”²¹ And then verse 25. “He then stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with harps and with lyres, according to the command of David and of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the command was from the LORD through His prophets.”²²

All of this was done in accordance with the command of God. And so there was a profound transition that was taking place. And I can imagine some of the people of Israel saying, “What is going on over there at Gibeon? What is David doing introducing this singing in the tabernacle and bringing these instruments in? What is he up to anyway?”

¹⁹ Numbers 10:10

²⁰ 1 Chronicles 16:42

²¹ 2 Chronicles 29:27

²² 2 Chronicles 29:25

Wouldn't it be better for us to stay like Moses originally inaugurated in the worship of the tabernacle? Shouldn't we go back to the times of Moses? Wouldn't things be better if we went back?"

I can just imagine some of the Israelites taking that kind of posture.

But now let's fast forward a little bit. Let's think about our own position. And as we fast forward to our own day thinking about what took place so long ago, I want you, if you would, please, to turn to another text and this one in Hebrews again, Hebrews chapter 10, Hebrews chapter 10 beginning with verse four, Hebrews chapter 10 beginning with verse four. And notice what the writer to the Hebrews tells us.

Verse four. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He..."²³ that is, Christ.

... Comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God.'" after saying above, "sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.²⁴

He takes away the first in order to establish the second. He takes away those Old Testament sacrifices with all that they involve in order to establish the sacrifice of Christ.

And as there was a transition period in the time of Moses there was a great change that occurred when Christ came. All that was old was taken away. Those sacrifices and the things that accompanied those sacrifices, all taken away. Why? To establish the priority of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Why would we want to go back to the old things? Why, when we have what the sacrifices pointed us toward? Why would we want to go back? That is the point. We ought not to yearn to go back.

I want to read to you a comment from Calvin in this regard. It comes in his commentary on Psalm 83. Listen to what he has to say. "The name of God, no doubt, can properly speaking be celebrated only by the articulate voice. But it is not without reason that David adds to this those aids by which believers were wont to be...to stimulate themselves the more to this exercise especially considering that he was speaking to God's ancient people. There is a distinction, however, to be observed here that we may not indiscriminately consider as applicable to ourselves everything which was formerly

²³ Hebrews 10:4-5

²⁴ Hebrews 10:5-9

enjoined upon the Jews. I have no doubt that the playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol and all that kind of music which is so frequently mentioned in the psalms was part of the education—that is to say, the infant instruction of the law. I speak of the stated service of the temple. For even now if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments they should, I think, make it their object not to dissever their cheerfulness from the praise of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense or the lighting up of lamps and the restoration of the other shadows of the law.”

Why would we want to go back? That is the point.

I am fascinated by this. I am fascinated by this because theologically and biblically men and women often want to go back to the Old Testament kinds of things. Think about it. Are there not those who relish the fact of the land of Israel being brought back into being and the temple being rebuilt on the mount? Why would you want to go back to those things when Jesus Christ has come?

Eschatologically, people want to go back rather than forward. I think it is quite astounding. And they look forward to the reestablishing of the Old Testament worship in Jerusalem. Why would you want to go back? And even in our own circles there is a hankering to go back to Old Testament standards.

Charles Spurgeon mentions this in his *Treasury of David* quoting from Thomas Aquinas who was, as you know, an old Catholic. Thomas Aquinas said even that the introduction of the ceremonies and the instruments in the Catholic worship was a Judaizing of the worship of God. It was a going back to the past when we have that which is the substance, Jesus Christ.

And so I submit to you, friends, God is moving us forward in the spirituality of our worship. And when occasion comes I want to talk about the instruments and how they point us to heaven and the future. We are being pointed forward. Let's not hanker to go back to the standards of the Jews when we have—as the writer to the Hebrews tells us—a better covenant with better sacrifices and a superior approach to God through Jesus Christ.

I am thankful for what God has given us and I am thankful that he is carrying us forward in the spirituality of our worship. We need not hanker to go back.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you for the patience of your people and we pray that, albeit feebly presented, you'd be pleased to apply the truth of your Word to our hearts and lift us into your presence by the power of your Spirit to give you sacrifices of praise, the fruit of our lips through Jesus Christ the Lord we pray. Amen.