

1 Chron. 16:7-16 (LD 45, Q116) “Appointed to Give Thanks”

For the Children: These days, if someone is asked to sing in a choir, perhaps even to go on TV and perform before judges and an audience, they might think to themselves, “Wow! I might become famous! I might win a prize! This might start my singing-career!” They agree to do it for themselves, or because close friends or family pressure them. The worship of the church – such as singing and prayer – is not for such human reasons. It is done to honour God, to say “Thank You” to Him, and to encourage others to worship Him. We should want to praise and thank Him more than anything else! **Questions:** Why should we want to praise and thank God more than anyone else? Why did David appoint Asaph and sons to organize the music in the OT worship services? What are the main things we should pray and sing about?

Introduction:

First Point: A Levitical Duty

- 1) The Ark’s Arrival: David is thankful, and full of joy at the arrival of the Ark in Jerusalem. See 2 Sam. 5:12 and 1 Chron. 16:1-5. He celebrated with the people, made offerings to the Lord, and appointed the Levites to minister before the Ark, with joy, praise and thanks. Note the emphasis on joyful thanksgiving in vss. 4,7,6,34, and 35. For the Ark represented the Presence of God in the midst of His people, to save and protect them according to His covenant-oath. This pointed to the Presence of God in Christ, who brings sinners even closer to God. Gratitude for that should lead to godly living and thanksgiving.
- 2) Asaph’s Assignment: The need for thanksgiving for this is seen in David’s re-organizing of the public worship. The Levites have a “mediatorial” role in giving joyful thanks and praise before the Ark. Asaph and sons, of the Levites, are given a “mediatorial” task of overseeing the music in the public worship. Asaph writes Psalms (50, 73-83), and the Asaphites sing and play musical instruments. See also 1 Chron. 6:31f, 15:16-17; 2 Chron. 29:30; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 11:17,22. All this points to Christ, the Great High Priest, who ministers in the “heavenly tabernacle” with His Self-offering. He even gives thanks to His Father for hearing Him, so that we can be enabled to believe (Jn. 11:41-42).
- 3) The Priesthood of All Believers: In Christ, all believers have a priestly role. Instead of having “mediators” sing for us, we all sing to express our joyful gratitude (Col. 3:16). The church’s songs are like “sung prayers.” They have the same elements, for the same reasons – to confess the Lord’s character and works, to offer praise and thanks to Him with joy.

Second Point: An Example of Public Worship

- 1) The Element of Praise: David then supplies Asaph with a sample Psalm, to show him what the church’s music should be like. Since this music is like sung prayer, it also shows us all the basic elements of balanced prayer, as well as balanced church-music. The chief of these is praise – for who God is, for His works and for His covenant-Word (vss. 10,12,15-18). We sing and pray His praises because He *deserves* it, and to make Him known (v. 8).
- 2) The Element of Thanksgiving: Praise is for who God is and what He has done; thanks is for what He has done for *us*. Prayer is the “most important part of thanksgiving” (Q116), because giving thanks shows we value what God gives us; it also humbles us, showing our dependency on God; it deepens our communion with Him; and helps us to trust that He is really blessing us - even when appearances may seem to point in the opposite direction. If we don’t thank God, it may indicate that we have not truly believed the promises or known God.
- 3) The Element of Joy: The singing of Asaph and sons was to “Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad” (v. 10). Knowing that God brings us close to Himself through His Son is indeed a cause for celebration! Prayer should reflect this as well.
- 4) The Element of Supplication: David’s Psalm sings of seeking the Lord and His strength. In prayer, too, we ask for God’s help for ourselves and for others – supplication and intercession. See Ps. 51. This, too, is done on the basis of what Christ has done for us.

Conclusion: