

Hebrews 8 (1-2) – When Jesus Sings

When it comes to Christian worship, there are a lot of differences in music, and style, and such. But if you ask people to tell you why they think certain songs or styles or situations are good, or what makes for a worshipful atmosphere, or what about worship is significant, they will inevitably talk about the presence of God. That is understandable. Everyone would like to experience something of the presence of God. Of course, what that means to people will vary, but for many, the ambience of audio-visual excitement is key. People want to see and hear and feel like something is going on.

And it was no different for the Hebrew Christians back when the book of Hebrews was written. For many centuries, they had a lot of things that accompanied their worship experience. There was a temple. There were priests. They had a lot of musical accompaniments. They had choirs. The congregations were large. There were visible sacrifices. There was *fire*.

But now, after Jesus had risen, and the people had been scattered, and the gospel was spreading, it had changed. Now they're meeting in homes, or outside, and in different countries, and some of them are longing to return to the past. And the temple was going to be destroyed. It might seem very discouraging. So, what remedy, and what motivation does the writer give to these people wanting to experience the presence of God?

The book of Hebrews teaches us to move forward, instead of romanticizing the past. It wasn't as if all those privileges and all of that ceremony and ritual and audio-visual circumstance they had before were not wonderful things. They were. But they were pointing to something greater, to *someone* greater. And that someone had come. And that someone was also still with them. And he was changing, sharpening their focus. Because that someone was giving us more than we had before. The writer of Hebrews is telling them not to worship the worship of the Old Testament. But to enter more fully into the worship that the OT worship pointed to. And he is telling us the same thing. God is not calling us to go back, but to move forward.

The author of Hebrews tells them to keep their eyes on what God has given them in the gospel because now they have more than they ever did before. What they have, what we have, is nothing less than the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ among us as the worship leader of the congregation. Therefore, if you will look to Jesus, and what he has given us, you will know that you have greater privileges than they did in the past.

Our experience may not seem as audio-visually spectacular as theirs was. But it is a far greater experience. Jesus has given us baptism and the Lord's Supper for us to see and experience. And there is more. You just have to put your faith in what the Bible says that Jesus is doing in our worship today. So, let's look at that, and see what Jesus is doing.

To start our sharpening, let's read Hebrews 8:1-2 – *Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.* This is talking about Jesus as our Great High Priest. And you'll notice that this speaks about the Lord Jesus as "a minister." The Greek word there for minister is where we get our English word "liturgy". That word "liturgy" refers to the form and order of our worship. Our liturgy is the pattern of our worship. And here we see that in heaven, Jesus is the liturgist, in other words, the worship leader.

We have a high priest, a minister, a liturgist, a worship leader in the holy places, in heaven, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. Hebrews 9:24 says – *For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.* Jesus is our Great High Priest and the worship leader in heaven. And Jesus is not only our Great High Priest and the worship leader in heaven. He is also among us as the worship leader in our local congregations. And Hebrews 2:10-18 shows us some of the ways in which Jesus stands among us as our worship leader. Hebrews 2:10-18 is describing what God the Father has made the Lord Jesus to us. So, how does Jesus make our worship honor God and transform our lives?

One way is that Jesus gathers us together and brings us to God as his own family. Hebrews 2:11 says – *For he who sanctifies (Christ) and those who are sanctified (Christians) all have one source (God the Father). That is why he (Jesus) is not ashamed to call them (us) brothers.* All Christians are part of the family of God. Jesus is God the Son. And Jesus is a Christian’s Lord and Savior. But since God the Father serves as our source, Jesus calls you brother.

Look at vs.13. It says, *“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”* This is a quote from Isaiah 8:18, picturing Jesus speaking to God the Father. The basic New Testament picture of the church is that we are the family of the Lord Jesus Christ. And because of the gospel we may say what Jesus says to his Father, *“Abba, Father.”* God the Father is OUR Heavenly Father, too.

The picture that Hebrews gives to us is of Jesus leading us in our worship to the Heavenly Father and saying to him, *“Father, I stand among the children you have given me.”* That means Jesus is present with us in our corporate worship, as we all cry out as the family of God to our Heavenly Father.

In Revelation 4-5 we see this. The Apostle John being caught up into heaven. He sees the worship and there are all sorts of sights and sounds, angels, and elders, and martyrs and saints, and every nation, tribe, and tongue. It is a picture of the whole family of God. And there is Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for us, saying to his Heavenly Father, *“Father, the family in heaven and the family on earth are gathered to worship you.”* This is a picture of what will happen in the future. But the worship atmosphere can also describe what happens now. It is awesome to realize that not only is Jesus standing among us, but he has brought into the presence of our Father.

There is more. Look at vs.12. Jesus is speaking – *I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.* This is a quote from Psalm 22:22. People usually know Psalm 22 from verse 1, which Jesus quotes on the cross, and you read in Matthew 27:46 – *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* But by doing that, Jesus was referring to the entire Psalm, which takes us on the journey from the cross, through the

resurrection, to his ascension into heaven. And it's from that part of the Psalm that the words of Hebrews 2:12 come from.

Christians have been adopted into God's family. We are brothers with Jesus. And Jesus, our risen and ascended Savior, our representative before the Heavenly Father, sings to God the Father in the midst of the congregation. Think of it, Jesus singing to his father, our Father – *"I will sing your praise."* With Jesus leading the choir, you have every reason to join along with him.

Jesus, our worship leader, represents us before God, he ushers us into the presence of God, and he leads us in singing to God. Imagine Jesus singing along with us as we lift up our praises to God. And you don't have to imagine it, because it is true. What a privilege! Jesus not only atones for our sins with his blood. He attunes our voices to the frequency of heaven! No one can make all of us sound more heavenly than Jesus!

Jesus used the Psalms. Jesus sings the Psalms. And so, we know that Jesus uses every type of emotion in his singing, and we should in our singing. Because the Psalms, and our hymns and spiritual songs, are a revelation of how God interacts with humanity, and that even in sorrow and lament, in frustration and fear, in chaos and calamity, in suffering and loneliness, he is with us and at work in us, in both good times as well as bad. When Jesus leads the singing, he helps us think clearly, and he helps us learn to fully and honestly express ourselves in the presence of our Heavenly Father. So that we can know our God and praise his name in every situation. And so that, when redemption comes, our praise is that much more powerful.

Did you know that the whole Trinity sings? Zephaniah 3:17 says that God will rejoice over you with loud singing. And Hebrews 2:12 says that Jesus sings. But what about the Holy Spirit? Well, think of it – the Holy Spirit indwells you. And Spirit filled worship means that the Holy Spirit sings through you. Those who have been redeemed by Christ are part of the eternal choir. And there can be no greater worship privilege. So, worship God with all you've got. Because God is right there singing with you.