



God is spirit, and those who  
worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

**On Worship**  
with Pastor Steve

## Thanksgiving in Worship

For many years now, like most Christian families, in our home we have made it a tradition to give thanks before meals. When our children were younger and all still lived at home, I would choose one of them to say the blessing. Usually it was a short prayer, very short, and most of the time the blessing was the same prayer each time. I also noticed that the younger children would often pray the same prayer as the older children. The substance and the length of the prayer was never really an issue with me, but I did want my children to understand that God provided for our meals and to learn to have a grateful heart for his provision. My hope was that the gratefulness for food would also spill over to every part of their lives.

The act of thanksgiving in worship has been around for many years. In fact, God made provision for it in the Levitical law.

*This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which he shall offer to the LORD: If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer, with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, or cakes of blended flour mixed with oil. Besides the cakes, as his offering he shall offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering. And from it he shall offer one cake from each offering as a heave offering to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offering. The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning.*

Leviticus 7:11-15

According to James M. Freeman in his book *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, there were three types of peace offerings; thank-offerings, offerings for vows, and free-will or voluntary offerings (Leviticus 7:12 & 16). Freeman writes, "The offerings were accompanied by the imposition of hands and by the sprinkling of blood around the great altar, on which the fat and the parts accompanying were burned."

Another aspect of the peace offering was that parts of the offering were waved and others were heaved (Leviticus 7:34). According to Jewish tradition the parts of the offering were laid on the hands of the offerer. The priest would put his hands under that of the offerer and move them horizontally for the wave offering and vertically for the heave offering. This action was intended to be a presentation of the offering to God as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. The use of the Hebrew word for thanksgiving also bears out this Jewish tradition.

In Leviticus 7:12, 13 and 15 the Hebrew word used for thanksgiving is towdah. Towdah means an extension of the hand, avowal or adoration. This word comes from another Hebrew word yadah. Yadah means to use or to hold out the hand, to physically throw at or away, especially to revere in worship with extended hands. Towdah and yadah are used many times throughout the Psalms.

### **Towdah:**

*That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works.*

Psalm 26:7

*Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.*

Psalm 50:14

*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.*

Psalm 69:30

*Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

Psalm 95:2

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

Psalm 100:4

*Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.*

Psalm 107:22

*I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.*

Psalm 116:17

*Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God. . . .*

Psalm 147:7

**Yadah:**

*Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.*

Psalm 18:49

*Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.*

Psalm 30:4

*To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.*

Psalm 30:12

The tradition of offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving continued with King David. 1 Chronicles 16 records that once David had successfully placed the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle he built, he offered the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. He then appointed some of the Levites to commemorate or record, to thank (yadah), and praise the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:2-4). David even wrote a psalm of thanks which he gave to Asaph for the Levites to minister to the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:7-36). David also appointed singers and musicians to minister and give thanks at the tabernacle of Moses which was in Gibeon where the priests offered the morning and evening sacrifices.

King Solomon continued the tradition of giving thanks when the ark of the covenant was moved into the temple (2 Chronicles 5). After years of idolatry in Judah, King Hezekiah restored temple worship and thanksgiving (2 Chronicles 31:2). And after years of exile, Ezra and Nehemiah both record the restoration of Davidic thanksgiving during the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 3:11; Nehemiah 12).

The importance of giving thanks has always been a part of the church age. Jesus gave thanks (Matthew 15:36; 26:27). In his epistles the Apostle Paul exhorted the churches to give thanks. Here are a few of his revelations.

*For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.*

2 Corinthians 4:15

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. . . .*

Philippians 4:6

*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving. . . .*

Colossians 4:2

*. . . neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

Ephesians 5:4

*. . . giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .*

Ephesians 5:20

*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

Colossians 3:17

*. . . in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

The Greek words used in these passages by Paul for thanks and thanksgiving (eucharisteo and eucharistia) mean; to be grateful or to actively express gratitude towards, to say grace at meals, grateful language to God as an act of worship. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John uses those same words as he witnesses the host of heaven giving thanks to God.

*Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever. . . .*

Revelation 4:9

*. . . saying: Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

Revelation 7:12

*. . . saying: We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

Revelation 11:17

The writer of Hebrews also exhorts us; *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.* (Hebrews 13:15) The Greek word used in this verse for thanks (homologeō) means to assent, acknowledge, or covenant. So, in giving thanks to His name we are assenting to, acknowledging and making covenant with all that makes God, God.

We mentioned earlier that the Old Testament thank-offering was made with an animal sacrifice. The sacrifice was placed in the hands of the offerer and waved and heaved with the help of the priest. The offering was intended to be a presentation to God as supreme ruler of heaven and earth. Today we present our thank offering is much the same way. We still need the assistance of a high priest to offer our sacrifice. As the writer of Hebrews said, *. . . by Him (Jesus) let us continually offer. . . .* In other words, by his sacrifice we offer our sacrifice. He makes our sacrifice acceptable. However, there is one major exception. We do not offer a dead animal sacrifice; we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

In Romans 12:1 Paul wrote, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* Reasonable service also means reasonable worship. So, our sacrifice of thanksgiving is offering our bodies in covenant with God, assenting to and acknowledging that he is supreme ruler of heaven and earth.

In modern day worship services there is a popular trend of lifting and even waving hands. I dare say many people who express their worship in this manner do so without a clue as to what it represents. Many do it just because it's popular, but doing something because it's popular doesn't make it worship. You see, the offerer of the Old Testament sacrifice could have waved his hands, but without the blood sacrifice it would have meant nothing. It would have not been acceptable to God. Therefore, the waving or lifting of our hands to God in thanksgiving is not acceptable to God if, through Jesus, we do not offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

So, as we enter God's gates to come before his presence with our hands extended in thanksgiving, let us remember that we do so, not only in gratitude for his mighty acts, but as a presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice in covenant with him, acknowledging that he is supreme ruler of heaven and earth.

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