We have been considering what the scriptures have to say about the protocol of our approach to God.

The Bible says that as we approach the Lord we are to come with praise and with worship. Not only does it tell us we are to come with praise and worship, but it tells us what that praise and worship will look like.

It involves singing, shouting, lifting hands, clapping hands. It’s not primarily a ‘cerebral pursuit.’ It involves the whole person, spirit, soul and body.

If the whole person isn’t involved, then it’s not rightly ‘biblical worship.’

The church at large has been gripped by a ‘fanatical silence’ and a ‘fanatical’ lack of response and passivity when it comes to praise and worship.

In the Hebrew language there are seven words that are translated by our one English word ‘praise.’

We often lose the various shades of meaning in the translation.

Eskimos apparently have about 18-20 words translated by our one English word snow.
These words relate to the various types of snow that can be found in differing conditions. E.g. It’s freshness, it’s stability, the degree of ice in it etc.

The English loses all that by just using the one word, ‘snow.’

The same is true of the word ‘praise.’

It’s interesting to me that the number seven is a word that has to do with completeness or fulness. These seven Hebrew words speak of the completeness of the ‘praise expression.’

Some of these words I will not comment on in any detail because we have effectively covered them in other studies.

1. **YADAH.**

We looked at this word last week.

He word ‘yadah’ literally means, ‘to hold out the hand,’ ‘to revere or worship with extended hands.’

We spoke last week of the use of our hands in praise. It is both human and biblical to lift the hands to an object of
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our worship. It is the natural extension of the heart to lift the hands.

Before I go to the next word let me just mention something about the clapping of hands.

I briefly referenced this last week.

Psalm 47:1
“Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with the voice of triumph.”

For many the clapping of the hands is little more than keeping the rhythm.

It’s intended to be much more than that.

There are four Hebrew words translated by our one word ‘clap.’

In terms of their meaning, they naturally fall into two groups with two words in each group.

The first group indicates clapping as a form of showing approval, of giving praise, of exhalation.
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1. **Taqa** – Literally, ‘to slap the hands together. It is the word used in Psalm 47:1.

2. **Macha** – ‘To strike the hands together in exaltation. It’s used in Psalm 98:8 “Let the floods clap their hands.” Isaiah 55:12 “The trees of the fields shall clap their hands…”

These two words correspond with the Western idea of clapping our hands to show delight, appreciation, and praise for a performance.

The second group of words relate to an Eastern custom of using a hand clap to show derision and scorn. It can be an indication of disgust and contempt.

1. **Saphaq** – ‘to clap as an indication of derision.’ Lamentations 2:15 “All that pass by clap their hands at you.” Job 27:23 “Men shall clap their hands at him and shall hiss him out of his place.”

2. **Nakah** – ‘to strike or go forward,’ ‘to punish.’ 2 Kings 11:12 “And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the
testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.”

Praising God not only invites His presence, it extends His rule.

People talk about spiritual warfare, and quite frankly, sometimes do lots of weird things in its name.

The best means of warfare is worship and praise.

Here, as we clap and worship at one level, spiritual warfare is being engaged in at another level.

In Psalm 18:34 and Psalm 144:1 the Psalmist spoke about God, “teaching his hands to war...”

While I’m sure he actually had physical warfare on his mind, I suspect that God had another form of warfare in His.

My conviction is that as we enter into praise and worship and engage in clapping it sends our spiritual shock waves that has the capacity to shake the enemies strongholds and push him out of his place.
2. **HALAL**

The word ‘halal’ comes from a root word that means, ‘to be clear.’ It can mean a clear sound but tends to refer to a clear colour. It is also translated ‘to shine.’

I think that this word ‘to shine,’ gives an idea of what praise does as far as God is concerned.

The phrase ‘to cause a person’s face to shine,’ indicates bringing pleasure to them.

**Psalm 31:16.**

“Let your face shine on your servant;”

Another way of saying this would be, “Be pleased with your servants.”

Praise brings pleasure to the heart of God.

**Revelation 4:11**

“Thou art worthy, 0 Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”
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When you genuinely love a person you constantly look for ways to please them. You listen for every hint or suggestion; you hide it in your heart until you can fulfil that expressed desire.

Praise is one of the greatest gifts you can bring before the Lord.

The word ‘Halal,’ has a number of other meanings which are instructive.

It means to be ‘clamorously foolish.’

This could be open to all sorts of interesting interpretations. What would you have to do to be considered clamorously foolish?

Perhaps it differs depending on the person.

For some raising their hands or clapping them in the context of a worship service might qualify.

There’s one area, at least for me that qualifies for making me feel clamorously foolish as I’m praising, and that is praising God in dance.
I’m no dancer!! Ask my wife!!

{Vince’s comment in Tajikistan, “Don’t worry Don, they’ll never know it was dancing.”}

Yet it is in the Scriptures as a way of bringing praise to the Lord.

**Psalm 149:3**

“Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp.”

For the most part, I think this actually describes choreographed dance entered into by trained dancers. Having said that, I also suspect there are times when God wants us to ‘get into the swing’ of praise by moving our bodies.

The Random House Dictionary defines dancing in these ways;

- To move one’s feet, or body, or both rhythmically in a pattern of steps, especially to the accompaniment of music.
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- To leap or skip as from excitement or emotion.
- To move nimbly or quickly.
- To bob up or down.

The last definition is within my skill range!!

And I have, and still do it on occasions.

It’s not pretty, but it is praise.

It reminds me of a Charlie Brown cartoon. Charlie Brown’s beagle, Snoopy, is jumping, up and down, his floppy ears flying out behind him. A benign smile fills his face, and his eyes close in satisfaction. As he leaps, Snoopy says, “If you can’t dance, at least do a happy hop.”

I’m a happy hopper!

St. Francis of Assisi was known among his contemporaries as “The dancing Fool.”

He often would dance with joy before the Lord.

3 and 4 TEHILLAH, ZAMAR.
I’ve put these two together because they both have to do with musical praise. ‘Tehillah’ means ‘to sing.’ ‘Zamar’ means ‘striking with fingers,’ ‘to touch the strings’ or describes part of a musical instrument.

I have already talked about the power of singing.

Singing seems to presuppose music, so although there is actually much more I could say about the power of both singing and music, I am, for the sake of time, going to pass on to the next word.

5 and 6 **HILLUWL, SHABACH**.

I’d like to consider the next two words together also.

Hilluwl means, ‘rejoicing,’ ‘celebration for harvest,’ ‘merry praise.’

Shabach means, ‘to address in loud tones,’ ‘to command,’ ‘to shout.’

The picture we get from these two words is overflowing rejoicing. It was compared to the celebration that took place at the time of harvest. In an agrarian society like
ancient Israel the harvest was the most eagerly anticipated time of the year. The labour of the whole year had its culmination in the time of harvest. It was a time of tremendous celebration.

The thought of shouting our praise is more than some of us can process.

It definitely qualifies for being ‘clamourously foolish.’

Yet it’s found in Scriptures on more than one occasion.

**Psalm 117:1**
O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise {Shabach – address in loud tones’} him, all ye people.

**Psalm 47:1**
“O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.”

**Psalm 27:6**
“And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; {‘Sacrifices of shouting’}I will sing, yea, I will sing praises...”
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For most of us shouting really would involve sacrifice. Something really would have to die for it to occur.

Let it die!

7. BARAK.

By now you probably need a word to soothe you. Most of what we’ve understood of as reverence and dignity has been blown out the door by these ‘hot blooded’ Hebrews.

It seems that with this word we’re back on more conservative ground. It means ‘to kneel,’ ‘to bless God as an act of adoration,’ ‘to bow down in a worshipful attitude.’

The Greek word for worship is ‘proskuneo.’

It’s the word from which we get our English word ‘prostrate.’

It has the idea of prostrating one’s self in homage. It actually describes a dog licking its master’s hand.
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A very common form of praise outlined in the scriptures is where people prostrate themselves before the Lord. Abraham, Ezekiel, Daniel, Moses and others are recorded as worshipping by bowing or prostrating themselves before the Lord.

In the whole of Biblical and Christian tradition prostration is the action most expressive of submission to God. No other action signifies as well man’s complete abasement before almighty power and divinity.

These words taken together give us something of an idea of what is required of us as we come before the presence of God. This isn’t just the record of how others, in another time came before Him. It constitutes the record of how He instructs us, in our time, to come before Him. We are not free to try to redefine this according to our likes and dislikes, our tastes and personality type.

We come on His terms, not ours.

As we do we will find the wisdom of His ways.