

What worship instrument does God delight to hear?

A. Introduction

1. Worship

2. 'What is their worship style?'

3. What is the chief end of man?

B. Scripture Reading, Isaiah 29

1. the context

a. Isaiah 28-35^A

b. Isaiah 28

c. Isaiah 29:1-8

2. the text – 29:9-16

a. more context: 29:17-25

C. Why was Judah's worship wrong?

1. Judah and Jerusalem the centre of worship^B

^A See also Isaiah 30:1-2

^B Isaiah 29:1, 1:11-15

2. 29:13 –^C their worship was only

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4. 29:16 –^E they worshipped something less

D. What was God going to do about it?

1. 29:9 – God removes

2. 29:10 –^F God makes them

3. 29:11-12 –^G God closes

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E. Application

1. worshipping must be^I

2. worshipping is having

^C Matthew 15:6, 9

^D Isaiah 28:12

^E Hebrews 4:15, Ephesians 5:19

^F Matthew 15:14, Acts 28:28

^G Romans 3:1-2, Matthew 4:4

^H Deuteronomy 4:6, 32:15; Revelation 3:16

^I John 4:23-24

A. Introduction

1. Worship

- a. often in planning our order of service, we select a topic or theme – a phrase related to the message, to assist in the choice of hymns, scripture readings and offertory
 - (A) the theme for today is ‘Sincerity in Worship’
 - (B) hopefully, today’s message will teach us about worship
- b. not all of our ideas on worship are Biblical
 - (A) some come from our culture: some good, some bad
 - (B) the tremendous incursion of the entertainment media into our homes over the past 50 years has markedly shaped what many churches and Christians think of as worship – either as a music or similar program carried out to near perfection, or as that which gives a great emotional lift to us who attend
 - (C) the terms ‘worship team’ and ‘worship leaders’ can give a very wrong impression of what is worship, as though worship can be induced into a person or group
- c. so when we hear it asked about a church,

2. ‘What is their worship style?’

- a. what is meant, of course, is ‘What is their service like? How do they seek to draw people into a spirit of worship?’ – and there is no single right way
- b. because as people we are all different, and certain kinds of music and pulpit preaching appeal to some & not to others
- c. churches have song leaders, choirs, orchestras, bands, as well as a wide variation in musical instruments
- d. some have no musical instruments at all, considering that the greatest instrument is the human voice itself
- e. some like the simplicity of a guitar, as an instrument coming close to the harp that David played
- f. others the trumpet, as the instrument blown by the angel
- g. and others the organ as the king of instruments

h. but there is one instrument above all others that God delights to hear in worship, and we will learn of it today – I'll ask you later if you can name it!

3. what is the chief end of man?

a. to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever

b. so what happens when our worship goes astray

c. our text today, Isaiah 29: 9-16, has a message about this

d. it was a message for the OT church, but the same message can apply to the NT church, because it is a part of the 'all Scripture that is profitable to instruction'

B. Our Scripture reading today is Isaiah 29 « »

1. but first, let me remind you afresh of the context

a. as we did last week when we looked at chapter 28

b. this section of Isaiah, chapters 28 to 35, is a warning to the leaders and people of Judah

(A) that just as they had made a mistake in seeking the help of Assyria against their northern neighbours of Syria and Israel (or the 10 northern tribes)

(B) so they were making a big mistake now in seeking the help of Egypt against Assyria: this is set out clearly in Isaiah 30: ^{30:1} 'Woe to the rebellious children,' declares the LORD, 'Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin; ² Who proceed down to Egypt Without consulting Me, To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!'

c. last week we looked at God's chastisement in Isaiah 28

(A) this people were going astray from the way that God had commanded them to go

(B) because of their self-indulgence, they were physically inebriated and behaving likewise

(C) because of their self-confidence, they were spiritually drunk and insensitive to God's leading

(D) so, just as a farmer employs a wide variety of tasks and tools to produce food, so God's is using a variety of ways to chastise and bring His people back to Himself

2. let's read Isaiah 29: 1-8, God's message to Ariel, a name for Jerusalem meaning 'altar hearth of God' or

'lioness of God'

a. so we see that, in spite of everything, Jerusalem – 'Ariel' – is God's, & He will bring it back to be the 'Ariel' He plans; but the plans of her enemies are but vanishing day-dreams

3. then, **Isaiah 29:9-16**, today's text, which tells us what God does when His people's worship is wrong; **let's read these verses**

- a. we will consider the last two verse again next week
- b. and, to all these verses we will return in a moment

4. then, **Isaiah 29:17-24**, which hold out the hope of a brighter tomorrow

- a. **17-21**: God will put their upside-down world back upright
- b. **22-24**: God, redeemer of Abraham, will again redeem
- c. God's program to reform their worship will be successful!

C. Why Was Judah's Worship Wrong?

1. Judah was the centre of the worship of the OT church

- a. Jerusalem, its capital, was the site of the Temple, the visible symbol of the Presence of God with His people
- b. all the various sacrifices required by the law – the three visits a year required of every male Israelite – the offerings to be made at the time of a birth, at the time of harvest – all these were made at Jerusalem
- c. no wonder, then, that Jerusalem is addressed as Ariel, where the sacrifices to God are offered up and devoured
- d. yet, the words in v 1, '**Do it again year after year, run the round of your pilgrim feasts**' (RGH) are not a commendation
- e. indeed, they are ironic, for God has already shown what He thinks of all their sacrifices and worship: **Isaiah 1:11-15**
- f. in short, God says, 'I am fed up to here with your worship'
- g. let's look at three verses in our text today that identify the ways in which their worship was only empty tradition

2. Their worship was only words 29:13
- a. Then the Lord said, 'Because this people draw near with their words And honour Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,' or, '...precepts of men'
 - b. the translation by the NAS of 'precepts' or 'teaching' by the word 'tradition' is a bit of a stretch, but can be justified in its being quoted by our Lord Jesus after he had shown the Pharisees had 'invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.' God's judgement of them therefore was, 'in vain do they worship me.' (Matthew 15:6, 9)
 - c. some translations of verse 13 have it as merely, 'their hearts are far from me' but the Hebrew is more forceful than that
 - (A) it isn't simply that their hearts – their real inner being – happens by circumstance or environment at this time to be distant from God – a situation caused by some external force or some passing difficulty. No.
 - (B) there is a here a deliberate act of the will: this people has sent its heart far away from God
 - d. so when they drew near to God in worship – and they went through the whole formal cycle: Passover, Feast of Weeks, Yom Kippur, Sabbaths, New moon – they spoke the words and said the prayer – But that was all
 - e. is that where we are? Mouthing the words? Singing the tune? ... but that's all it is?
 - f. their religion was only lip deep, skin deep; as we see in ...
3. Their worship didn't affect their plans 29:15
- a. Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, 'Who sees us?' or 'Who knows us?'
 - b. in the previous chapter, as part of God's indictment, he tells how they refused His guidance in their situation: 'He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," And, "Here is repose," but they would not listen.' (Isaiah 28:12)
 - c. rather, as we have noted, they sought help from Egypt
 - d. all their round of worship activity was empty, because it did not change what they did and what they

thought

- e. what they did, and did vainly, was to plan their own future and to do so in a fashion that sought to hide what they were doing from God Himself!
- f. for, their worship, such as it was, did not take into account the power and knowledge of the one they worshipped: He can't see us! He doesn't know!
- g. But God can, and God does; so, no wonder then that

4. They worshipped something less than the true God 29:16

- a. You turn *things* around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, 'He did not make me'; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?
- b. The first sentence of this verse is a one word exclamation. Perversity! Oh! your contrariness! And its meaning is, 'You have turned everything completely upside-down!'
- c. much of what we are saying today could be directed to the unfaithful, modernist churches – and that would make it a lot easier to pay attention to – but I want us to apply it to ourselves. Have we our values straight? Are our priorities correct? Do we worship God as absolutely holy, majestic, high above the heavens? ... or, are we tainted with the world and speak of Him as 'the Man upstairs' – that is what this verse is driving at – who is enthroned in our lives?
- d. they thought that their plans were every bit as good as those of God they had heard from Isaiah: after all, God didn't experience the difficulties going on in their lives, so they felt that they were justified to follow their own ideas.
- e. do we ever, even in a little recess in the back of our being, act as if, 'God just doesn't understand how I feel.'? As the Son of God, He does, you know. He walked this earth. 'For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.' (Hebrews 4:15)
- f. so, why was God fed up to here with their worship? – because they were not using the correct instrument for their worship – what is that instrument? it's not an organ, and yet it is an organ: – the correct worship instrument is the heart, to be 'speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.' (Ephesians 5:19)

D. What Was God Going to Do About It?

1. God Removes Their Spiritual Benefits 29:9
 - a. *Be delayed and wait, Blind yourselves and be blind; They become drunk, but not with wine, They stagger, but not with strong drink.*
 - b. *'Be delayed and wait' – 'Be stunned and amazed' – 'Stop and stare' –* because God is going to remove your many privileges that you have benefited from as His people
 - c. You have made your choice to blind yourself to whom He is; as a result, your blindness will be practical: you will no longer see His hand working to help and to bless you
 - d. God even stops talking to them through Isaiah and talks about them: they may have been physically drunk in their self-indulgence; now they are spiritually so as a nation
 - e. with God's help taken away, they are weak and reeling

2. God Makes Them Spiritually Insensitive 29:10
 - a. *For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers.*
 - b. in the mystery of Divine Sovereignty, God sends them further along the road that they have chosen
 - c. they fall into deep sleep, they become spiritually insensitive
 - d. it is said that a nation is given the government it deserves
 - e. in the same way, that church who denies the reality and power of their God will be given spiritual leaders of like nature. The Pharisees, said Jesus, were *'blind guides (or, leaders) of the blind.'* (Matthew 15:14)
 - f. praise God, that in the setting aside of the Jews, *'... this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.'* (Acts 28:28)

3. God Closes Their Eyes to His Revelation 29:11-12
 - a. *The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, 'Please read this,' he will say, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, 'Please read this.' And he will say, 'I cannot read.'*
 - b. one of the great privileges of the people to whom Isaiah preached is told by Paul: *'Then what advantage*

has the Jew?...² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.’
(Romans 3: 1-2)

- c. and, at this time, an especially powerful preacher in Isaiah
- d. but their wilfulness made them unable to hear or see it
- e. the message was sealed or hidden to priests and prophets who should have understood it; it was likewise closed to the common people who depended upon those leaders
- f. God’s word, the bread of life, was removed until hunger would drive God’s people back to seek its message

4. God Removes His Guidance 29:14

- a. **Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvellously with this people, wondrously marvellous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.**
- b. one of the promises to Israel as it entered the land, that by worshipping God aright, in justice and truth, the people all around would be amazed and exclaim, **‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’** (Deut. 4:6b)
- c. **‘But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked’** (Deuteronomy 32: 15) as Moses sang, and this people took this divine guidance – the wisdom from God – for granted: now it is removed

5. Let me sum up why God was working in such a strange fashion

- a. when people turn from the Lord, the Lord turns from them
- b. that’s as true in the NT as in the OT – the exalted Lord Jesus to the church of Loadicea spoke these words: **‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.’**
- c. He does this, not to reject forever, but that His people may repent and turn back to walk with Him once more as we have already seen in the closing verses of this chapter

E. Conclusion

1. What do we learn then, about correct worship

- a. it is a matter of the heart, it must come from our innermost being; it is sincere; it is true
- b. Jesus taught us this, **‘But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the**

Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' (John 4:23-24)

2. on a Sunday morning, as we gather together here
 - a. we seek to have a variety of hymns and spiritual exercises to aid in focussing our thoughts in worship upon God: our heavenly Father, on Jesus our Saviour, on the Holy Spirit
 - b. but worship is not simply what we do when we gather on a Sunday morning, it is our whole life in relation to God
 - c. worship is having a right relationship to God; that can only be found by faith in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ
 - d. Oh! That we would be true to this calling in Christ Jesus!

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