

PROPHETIC PSALMING by Robyn Green

King David was a warrior, prophet, king and, no less importantly, a psalmist. Near the end of his reign, he established an orchestra and choir of 4000 Levitical musicians (I Chronicles 23:1-5). Of this number, 288 were specifically anointed to prophesy "according to the order of the king" and were "instructed in the songs of the Lord" (I Chronicles 25:2, 7). These were the psalmists, a group who carried on David's ministry of worship to the Lord and for the people. Where are the people called and anointed for this ministry today? How are they prepared and trained? What are some characteristics of psalmist worship and praise? What effect will greater restoration of this ministry have on the body of Christ and the world? This is an exciting time for the church. We are in preparation for the harvest, and prophetic worship is one of the keys that will bring it about. Just as God is restoring the prophetic ministry in general, the time has come for the church to regain the awesome power of prophetic **psalming**.

The Key of David Opens the Door

"These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Revelation 3:7).

The Key of David is in the Lord's hand. He entrusts it to those who are open to prophetic worship and psalming. Whether they realized it or not, the people of Israel continually proclaimed God's prophecies concerning the coming Messiah when they sang the Psalms of David. They were "door openers" who voiced prophetic preparation before the birth of Jesus. With greater revelation than the Jews of the Old Testament, today's psalmists are called to lead a procession in the Spirit which prepares the way for the Second Coming of our Lord. Through worship and intercession, the Key of David is still available for those who will receive this treasure in their hearts and use it skillfully with their hands.

An open door is the means of entrance. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). The psalmist is called to lead the body of Christ to and through the open door. One door is inward, the door of salvation for an individual. Psalmist ministry can open the door of evangelism (I Corinthians 16:9) and people will be gloriously saved.

Once we come to know the Lord, the greatest door for the Key of David to open is the door in heaven (Revelation 4:1). This is the door through which we enter the heavenly realm through worship, intercession and psalming. Although God is always present, there are times when we enter His very throne room. We don't often stay there long because our mortal bodies can't handle it. However, in that place, psalmists can fulfill their highest calling to the Lord Himself. "Come, let us go up!" (Micah 4:2)

An Audience of One

A psalmist is called to minister to God before ministering for Him. God wants our hearts. We can learn impressive musical skills, but no one can "train" a psalmist to love God. Every day a psalmist must choose to love God and enter into His presence in secret through praise and worship. If you want to be used by the Lord in public, prepare by giving Him private concerts of worship and praise. I eventually came to the point where I preferred playing in front of nobody but God. Only recently has God begun to allow me to flow in a psalming anointing in public.

The Holy Spirit must be the only spirit that motivates the psalmist. Pride must go, and our performance orientation needs to be nailed to the cross. A psalmist must be totally dead to selfish ambition in the world's system, a daunting task in a society which idolizes those with musical talent and pays huge sums of money to merchandise the gifts of God. But you cannot successfully do warfare against principalities which you have allowed to remain in your heart. It is dangerous to presume to be a psalmist without total consecration to God and His ways. Things which have been allowed in the past will no longer be acceptable in the days to come.

God gave me a vision in late 1989. I saw the temple sacrifices as they occurred during an event such as Solomon's dedication of the Temple (see I Kings 8:62-63). I saw the musicians and the choir with their faces pointing upward. They were standing right in front of the animal sacrifices. Thousands of animals were being slaughtered. It was not a pretty sight. Blood, gore and guts were all over the place. It smelled. It was noisy--a bull doesn't go quietly to his demise. I asked, "God, what is this? Why are you showing me this?" He said that when I play music it is as if I were standing in front of priests sacrificing animals, but I should be oblivious to the smell, the noise and the sight of the blood. I should not be moved by how a congregation looks or the extent to which they seem to respond. Rather, my role is to focus on the Lord and respond to the spiritual condition of the people only as directed by the Holy Spirit.

This vision brought home the level of concentration a psalmist must focus on Jesus and the Holy Spirit while ministering. He or she ultimately plays for an audience of One. If the psalmist is obedient, the end result will be the Father's pleasure and lasting fruit in the lives of the people.

Playing Skillfully

The Bible exhorts musicians to "play skillfully with a loud noise" (Psalm 33:3). Skill is more than the ability to read music and play or sing with technical accuracy. Skillfulness must combine technique and improvisation. Improvisation is the spiritual component of music, the part which breathes life into the dry bones of technique. Improvisation is the work of the Spirit, and a psalmist must have a dynamic, experiential relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word for "skillful," yatab, has shades of meaning: to be good, to be well, to be beautiful, to be pleasant, to be lovely, to be glad, to be cheerful. Responding to the Holy Spirit, anointed psalmists will be able to do one or all of these things on their instruments or with their voices.

Currently, the requirements for modern-day Levites vary from church to church. Sometimes technical skill is the only requirement. In other situations, musical proficiency is overlooked, to the detriment of all. We should choose the worship team based on skill, commitment and the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. There should be a process of training those with promise and bringing them to maturity, both spiritually and musically.

I believe that God will soon send the church a large number of secular musicians who are really called as psalmists. These will need to be disciplined, but they will be ready to minister quickly. As musical and spiritual

competency increases, we will hear not only psalms and hymns, but "spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19). These improvisational melodies and words will bring salvation, healing, deliverance, prophecy, warfare and worship. Musicians will reach a place of unity in the Spirit in which He is truly the conductor.

"Scanning"

Psalms 32:8 promises, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." A similar theme is found in Deuteronomy 4:36a, "Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee."

The essence of psalming is the improvisational creation of melody and words under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. How is this possible? With man it is not, but "With God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). To describe this process of flowing during worship in the revelatory gifts of I Corinthians 12, I use the word "scanning." Scanning is the art of listening to God for words of knowledge, discerning of spirits, picture instructions, Scripture, prophecy, etc., while continuing to play. It incorporates improvisation, but requires something more--a "seeing in the Spirit" which makes the improvisation of words and music consistent with the will of God for a specific moment in time. The psalmist may receive a word of knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, healing or intercession for the entire congregation or for specific individuals. Scanning combines spirituality with physical activity, an opportunity for the psalmist to give spirit, soul and body to the Lord. Obedience to revelation received can break chains in the heavens and release captives on the earth. To do this, it is necessary to have a level of skill which allows the musician to move beyond the need to concentrate on playing or singing to a place of hearing and responding.

Have you ever seen a blind pianist? A blind pianist must of necessity become a skillful "ear" musician. This is what the psalmist must learn to do as well. In scanning, the psalmist focuses on God, reaching a place where the notes alone may pierce the heavens or touch people's hearts with a message beyond words. Along the way, the psalmist prays in the Spirit, waits, slows down, speeds up, and generally flows in the Spirit as the next step is being revealed. Thus, scanning is a combination of technique, improvisation and spiritual discernment. It is a faith walk, but one of freedom, communion and power.

Selah

There often comes a moment in a worship service when there is a special sense of God's presence. David described these moments with the notation "Selah." "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalm 32:5; for other examples, see Psalm 3:2; 3:4; 3:8; 4:2; 7:5; 9:16; 20:3; 32:4; 39:5).

Selah is the time when the Key of David has opened the door into heaven. Musically, it is generally a time of silence or instrumental ministry to the Lord between the singing or playing of previously written songs or hymns. David used this term to denote a time of quiet introspection or reflective thought, a time to meditate on the goodness of the Lord. It is likely that David usually continued playing during times of Selah as he ministered to the Lord.

Selah is not only a time to meditate on the Lord's presence; it is also a time to receive revelation and direction for what is to follow. It is a time to scan or see in the Spirit. It is a time to let music alone do the work of the ministry. It is a time to let a new melody develop in the worship team. It is a time for everyone to pray quietly in the Spirit. Such periods of Selah are largely uncharted waters for today's church.

In order for times of Selah to come, the level of control that is maintained in most churches will need to be lifted. To let a spontaneous new song arise generally takes time, and it cannot be "screened" ahead of time by those in leadership. If someone brings forth something questionable or soulish, it can normally be dealt with later in private. The opportunity to receive fresh manna is worth the risk.

Spiritual Benefits

As prophetic worship is released by the power of God, young people will be delivered from all types of satanically induced music. Prophetic worship will demonstrate the power of godly music as the people sing to God and play for God. In 1988 I was at a church in Montgomery, Alabama, with a worship team from Nashville. The worship went through the door into the prophetic realm. The sounds in the room were supernaturally amplified and the air itself seemed to thicken.

The impact was astounding. People began to fall on their faces before God. Others were weeping. People streamed to the altar to meet with the Lord. The members of the congregation began ministering to one another. The drummer could not see his drums because of the cloud of God's glory. But my favorite impression from that night was a group of teenage boys sitting in front of the altar with tears streaming down their cheeks. God spoke to me, "They have finally heard my anointing in power. They will never be the same. The other music won't be able to compare anymore." This is the power of prophetic music to effect change.

In II Kings 3:15, Elisha said, "Bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." Usually this minstrel anointing is instrumental only, and the result is horizontal--releasing another person to prophesy. By dispelling distractions and depressing spiritual influences, a psalmist can play an important role in releasing a spirit of prophecy in a congregation.

A corollary to the role of the minstrel is psalming during preaching. Several years ago, I played piano while an evangelist was preaching. By listening with spiritual ears, it is possible to musically support the preaching of the Word and enable it to go forth with greater impact. This is not always appropriate, but it can be a way the Spirit amplifies the impact of a spoken message. Many Black churches have combined music and preaching for years, but it is fairly uncommon among other types of congregations.

In the next decade, many other applications for God's psalmists will emerge. Music with a transferable anointing like the shadow of Peter and the cloths touched by Paul will be produced for a world in need, not for a music industry dedicated to greed. The focus of a new breed of Christian musicians will not be on markets and money, but on music which will change the world to the glory for Almighty God.