



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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What About Hand Clapping In Worship? (Part II)

In last month's edition of the *Harvesters*, attention was focused upon Bible authority as it relates to the practice of hand clapping in worship to God. It was shown in that study that there is absolutely no Bible authority for such a practice. Since God is the object of worship, people must worship Him according to His will and not according to their own will (Mt. 28:20; Lk. 6:46; Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). In this study, consideration will be given to two popular attempts by proponents of hand clapping in worship to justify their practice.

Is Hand Clapping Equivalent To Saying "Amen"?

The most common attempt made to justify hand clapping in worship is by comparing it to saying "Amen." Proponents of hand clapping in worship say that clapping hands is the modern cultural equivalent to saying "Amen." That is, saying "Amen" was the cultural way of showing one's approval in Bible times, but Christians today live in a different culture, and in this culture approval is shown by the clapping of hands. Therefore, according to them, hand clapping in worship is acceptable to God because it shows approval for that which is being applauded.

While on the surface this argument seems sensible, there is one major difference that has not been taken into consideration by the proponents of hand clapping in worship--saying "Amen" is authorized in the New Testament as a means of expressing approval in worship, whereas hand clapping is

not! Note the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks. seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*" (1 Cor. 14:15-16). Paul, here speaking in the context of the appropriate use of spiritual gifts in a worship assembly, is making the point that one cannot know to approve of a prayer or a song if one does not know the language in which it is spoken (cf. 1 Cor. 14:9, 11, 19). The important point here, as it relates to hand clapping in worship, is that Paul authorizes verbal approval in worship by saying "Amen" (or whatever word in one's language is equivalent), but nowhere is hand clapping authorized.

Some might respond by saying, "What's the difference? Approval is approval no matter how it is expressed." However, it is interesting to note that everything God authorizes in worship is to be clearly understood by those who worship. Singing must be clearly understood in order to teach and admonish (cf. 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Praying must be clearly understood in order for those praying to approach God acceptably and to ask according to His will (cf. Mt. 6:9; 26:39; Jn. 17:1; 1 Cor. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:14-15). Preaching and teaching must be clearly understood by both speaker and hearer in order for God to be

glorified, exalted, and obeyed (cf. Mk. 16:15; Acts 10:33; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:11). Giving money back to the Lord when the collection is taken on the first day of the week must be clearly understood by the offerer in order for one to purpose in one's heart and truly be a "cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7 cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Partaking of the Lord's Supper must be clearly understood by those participating in order for it to be done in a manner pleasing to God (cf. Mt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-29). But what is understood when a round of applause is given during or after any one or all of these God-approved acts of worship? Is the applause for God? If so, by what authority? Is the applause for the person who led singing, led prayer, preached the sermon, passed the communion tray, or contributed the most money? If so, why are hand clappers praising men when they ought to be praising God?

What About The Bible Verses That Mention Hand Clapping?

Another common attempt to justify hand clapping in worship is to appeal to Bible verses where some practiced hand clapping with apparent approval from God. It is assumed that because hand clapping is found in the Bible, it must be acceptable to God at the present time. However, in evaluating this assertion, the following observation must be considered. First, every verse which mentions hand clapping is found in the Old Testament (2 Kgs. 11:12; Job 27:23; 34:37; Ps. 47:1; 98:8; Isa. 55:12; Lam. 2:15;

Ezk. 25:6; Nah. 3:19). From the start, therefore, any effort to justify hand clapping in worship based upon these verses is doomed to failure. It shows an obvious neglect to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The Old Testament has been completely fulfilled by Christ (cf. Mt. 5:17-20; Rom. 8:3-4; 10:4). Jesus "took" the Old Law (and all of its ordinances) "out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). Since the New Covenant has been put into effect by Christ's death (Heb. 9:16-17 cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13), authority for everything that is done in worship (or any other area) must come from the New Testament (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17).

Second, of the nine verses which mention hand clapping, five reveal that hand clapping was a way of expressing contempt and disdain. Concerning the total ruin God brings upon the wicked man, Job says that "men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place" (Job 27:23). Elihu upbraids Job for his defense against the accusations of the three friends by saying that Job "addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God" (Job 34:37). As Jeremiah describes the tragedy of Jerusalem's fall, he says "All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" (Lam. 2:15). Ezekiel gives the reason why God will destroy the Ammonites: "Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite [disdain NKJ] against the land of Israel" (Ezk. 25:6). Concerning Nineveh's certain destruction, Nahum states that "there is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit [report ASV] of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nah. 3:19).

In the light of these verses, why would anyone want to clap his or her hands at God?

Third, of the remaining four verses which mention hand clapping, three depict the excitement and jubilation associated with the enthronement of a king. In Second Kings 11:1-21, the royal lineage of David survives the attempts of destruction by Athaliah. David's royal lineage was able to survive because Joash, the son of King Ahaziah, was hid by Jehosheba (2 Kgs. 11:1-3). When the time was right (2 Kgs. 11:4-11), Jehoiada, the high priest, "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" (2 Kgs. 11:12). Using this imagery of a civil celebration at the enthronement of a king, the psalmist twice refers to hand clapping as an expression of excitement and jubilation at the enthronement of God. "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible [awesome NKJ]; he is a great King over all the earth" (Ps. 47:1-2f). "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together" (Ps. 98:8 cf. verse 6, "the Lord, the King"). It must be noted here that Israel was both a religious and a civil state, and that because hand clapping was done in civil ceremonies when a king was enthroned in ancient Israel, does not mean that hand clapping is authorized by the Lord in New Testament worship. New Testament worship must be authorized by the New Testament!

The other verse that mentions hand clapping is in a context where Isaiah exhorts his readers to follow the Lord's ways (Isa. 55:6-13). Among other reasons, Isaiah says, "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the

field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12). Isaiah here uses "exodus" imagery to show that only those who obey God's word will "go out with joy" and "be led out in peace." Like the psalmist, Isaiah personifies nature as rejoicing. This deliverance about which Isaiah speaks finds its ultimate fulfilment in the Messianic kingdom. Neither this verse nor the others mentioned above justify the use of hand clapping in worship to God. There is simply no Bible authority for it!

Conclusion

There are other arguments set forth in the attempt to justify hand clapping in worship to God. Such arguments as "we do not need authority for hand clapping" or "it does not matter to God whether we clap our hands or not so long as we are sincere" are easily refuted by a proper understanding of the truth (see last month's *Harvesters* for additional information on Bible authority in worship). If God exists (and He does), and if the Bible is the Inspired word of God (and it is), then whatever the Bible teaches relative to worship is true and binding upon all people. The Bible nowhere authorizes hand clapping in worship. If so, where is the passage? This truth is not difficult to know, but the acceptance of it by some seems to be. (Brian Kenyon)

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Monday

9:00 Tests Faced by Those in Poverty
9:45 Tests Faced by Bible Preaching
10:45 Tests Faced on the Mission Field
11:30 LUNCH

Preachers Forum

1:30 Tests to Grow Spiritually
2:00 Tests To His Family
2:30 Tests Relating to Elders
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions
4:30 DINNER
7:00 Tests Faced by Jesus
7:45 Tests Faced in Soul Winning

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Wednesday

9:00 Tests Faced in Police Work
9:45 Tests Faced by Bible Preaching
10:45 The Tests of Truth and Conscience
11:30 LUNCH

Crisis Forum

1:30 The Loss of Mate, Child or Parent
2:00 The Loss of Income
2:30 Loss of Health and Aging
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions
4:30 DINNER
7:00 Facing The Tests of Life
7:45 Tests in James 1

Earl Anderson
V. P. Black
Freeman Green

Billy Lambert
John Griffis
Rex Dutton

Brian Kenyon
Dub McClish

Tuesday

9:00 Tests Unique to Those in Power
9:45 Tests Faced by Bible Preaching
10:45 Tests Unique to Employees
11:30 LUNCH - (Faculty, Student, Alumni Photos)

Worship Forum

1:30 Worship: Authorized Acts
2:00 Expediency
2:30 Unauthorized Acts
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions
4:30 DINNER
7:00 Tests Faced By Joseph
7:45 Tests Come to All Stages of Life

Kenneth Randolph
V. P. Black
Sam Conley

Tom Holland
Jimmy Clark
Jeff Clark

Robert Pirant
Tom Holland

Thursday

9:00 Tests Faced by Peter
9:45 Tests Faced by the Restoration Plea
10:45 Tests Faced in Restoring the Wayward
11:30 LUNCH

Church Forum

1:30 Fellowship
2:00 Leadership
2:30 Avoiding New Fads
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions
4:30 DINNER
7:00 Tests Unique to the Young
7:45 Tests Faced in Marriage

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	Marriage and the Family 22354	Stilwell	3
	Preparation and Delivery of Sermons 22303	Blackman	2½
Wednesday ___ 8:30 to 12:00 ___ 1:00 to 4:15	Christian Evidences 22344	Stearsman	3
	Holy Spirit 22350	Kenyon	3
Thursday ___ 8:30 to 12:00 ___ 1:00 to 4:15 ___ 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.	Computers and Churches 32388	Kenyon/Stearsman	3
	Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians 12336	Davidson	3
	Denominational Dogmas 12331	Kenyon	2½
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