

# Hand Clapping In Worship?

*By Ron Boatwright*

Today we are living in an entertainment crazed society that is expecting to be entertained. Hand clapping, whistling, and yelling are done at plays, ball games, the theater, and at other forms of entertainment to show our approval and satisfaction of the entertainment. This influence of the world has crept over into the church where people today want to clap during the worship or at a baptism, to show their approval of the "entertainment" they are receiving. We are not in the worship service to be entertained, but to give our worship to God.

Do we realize how great God is? We are told "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psalms 96:9), and we are to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Since Our God is awesome, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him" (Psalms 33:8). Hand clapping is done when we have been entertained but it shows utter disrespect and lack of reverence for God in our worship services. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Psalms 89:7). The vast majority of the denominational world thinks their worship to God is acceptable, but Jesus says, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). When we ignore what God says and do things our way, then our worship also becomes vain. If we expect to be pleasing to God and go to Heaven, we must pay attention to what God says in the Bible as to how He is to be worshipped.

We must show the utmost reverence to God if our worship is to be acceptable to Him. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29). If our worship is not acceptable to God then the end result will be disastrous as we spend eternity in the burning fires of Hell.

God has given us warnings in the Bible concerning unacceptable worship of Him. One example is that of Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament. "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1-2). Just as Nadab and Abihu were severely punished by being consumed by fire for their unauthorized worship, we today will be severely punished eternally in Hell for

our unauthorized worship as we offer strange sounds of hand clapping to the Lord. Do people today realize that because of their disobedience, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

We are told, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). To do all in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do all things by His authority. Where in the Bible has God authorized hand clapping in worship to Him? It is not there. If the Lord wanted hand clapping to be included in our worship He would have authorized it, but He didn't. Hand clapping in worship is not authorized just as playing a mechanical instrument of music is not authorized in worship to God.

If we are going to clap in worship, why don't we also whistle, yell, and scream to show our approval? Or why don't we clap during the Lord's Supper or as a prayer is being led? Our worship to God is not for our entertainment. We are not the spectators, God is. God is the one being worshipped and glorified, not us. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). We glorify and honor God when we do what He tells us, how He tells us, when He tells us, the way He tells us, where He tells us, and for the reason He tells us. We are to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Jesus says that those who worship God "must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24); but hand clapping in the worship service is not in spirit and in truth. We are to "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Hand clapping is not decent and in order in worship to God.

People who clap their hands in worship may, "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2-3). People may be sincere in their hand clapping in worship, but they are sincerely wrong just as the vast majority of the religious world is sincerely wrong and will lose their souls in eternity. It will be too late on the Day of Judgment if the Lord says to us "depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). Going to Heaven must be our number one priority in this life. Let's make sure we are worshipping God "in spirit and in truth", the way He has authorized. God has not authorized hand clapping to be included in worship to Him.