

Psalms 29:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Analysis

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. This verse continues the summons to worship, specifying what glory means and how worship should be conducted. The threefold "give unto the LORD" (v.1-2) creates liturgical rhythm, emphasizing worship's centrality.

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name" (הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ/havu laYahweh kevod shemo) specifies the quality of worship—giving glory appropriate to God's character. "Due unto his name" (kevod shemo) means "the glory of His name" or "glory befitting His name." In Hebrew thought, name represents character, nature, reputation. God's name encompasses His revealed attributes: holy, just, merciful, faithful, powerful, eternal. Worship must correspond to who God is, not our preferences or cultural trends. Third commandment warns against taking God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7)—treating His character lightly. Giving glory due His name means worshiping in manner befitting His majesty.

"Worship the LORD" (הִשְׁתַּחֲוֹּה לַיהוָה/hishtachavu laYahweh) uses shachah, meaning to bow down, prostrate oneself, pay homage. This verb describes physical posture—falling face-down in reverence. While worship encompasses more than posture, physical expression matters. Abraham "fell on his face" before God (Genesis 17:3); Joshua "fell on his face to the earth, and did worship" before the Angel of the LORD (Joshua 5:14); the twenty-four elders "fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him" (Revelation 4:10). Worship engages the whole person—mind, heart, and body.

"In the beauty of holiness" (בְּהַדְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ/behadrat-qodesh) describes worship's character. Hadrah means beauty, splendor, glory, majesty. Qodesh means holiness, sacredness, separateness. Translation varies: "in the beauty of holiness" (KJV), "in holy splendor" (ESV), "in holy attire" (NASB), "in sacred vestments" (NRSV). Interpretations include:

1. Worship characterized by holiness—set apart, pure, reverent
2. Worship in holy garments—priestly attire signifying consecration
3. Worship in beautiful sanctuary—temple's splendor reflecting God's glory
4. Worship acknowledging God's beautiful holiness—His perfection.

All meanings converge: worship must be holy, set apart, pure, reflecting God's character. Casual, flippant, worldly worship dishonors God.

This verse establishes worship's standard: corresponding to God's character (glory due His name), humble in posture (bowing down), and holy in quality (beauty of holiness). Worship isn't entertainment, self-expression, or emotional manipulation but reverent response to who God is.

Historical Context

Temple worship in ancient Israel combined splendor and holiness. The tabernacle's construction required finest materials—gold, silver, precious stones, costly fabrics (Exodus 25-31). Solomon's temple magnified this splendor (1 Kings 6-7). Priests wore specially designed garments "for glory and for beauty" (Exodus 28:2). All this physical beauty pointed to spiritual reality—God's transcendent holiness and glory.

Yet prophets consistently warned that external beauty without heart holiness is worthless. Isaiah confronted Israel: "I hate, I despise your feast days...Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs" (Amos 5:21, 23). Micah demanded: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). True worship requires both external reverence and internal righteousness.

Early church inherited this tension. Christians initially worshiped in homes,

catacombs, and simple structures without architectural splendor. Yet worship maintained reverence—Hebrews 12:28 instructs: "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." As Christianity became established, debate arose over worship's proper form. Eastern Orthodox developed elaborate liturgy emphasizing beauty; Western Catholicism emphasized sacramental worship; Protestants emphasized simplicity and Word-centeredness; Pentecostals emphasized Spirit-led spontaneity. Despite differences, all traditions claimed to worship "in the beauty of holiness."

The phrase "beauty of holiness" influenced Christian art, music, and architecture. Medieval cathedrals expressed transcendence through soaring arches, stained glass, and sacred music. Reformers like Calvin questioned whether such splendor honored God or distracted from Word and Spirit. Bach's compositions aimed to express "glory to God" through musical excellence. Controversies continue: contemporary versus traditional, simple versus ornate, contemplative versus celebratory. This verse reminds us: worship must reflect God's holiness, not merely our preferences or culture.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to give God 'the glory due unto his name,' and how can worship fail to correspond appropriately to God's character?
2. How does physical posture in worship (bowing, kneeling, prostrating) relate to heart attitude, and is physical expression important?
3. What is 'the beauty of holiness,' and how should this shape both individual devotion and corporate worship?

4. How can churches balance external reverence and splendor with internal heart worship, avoiding both empty ritual and casual irreverence?
5. In what ways might contemporary worship culture fail to worship God 'in the beauty of holiness,' and how can this be corrected?

Interlinear Text

וְהָבָה	לַיהוָה	כְּבוֹד	שְׁמוֹ	וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִּיתָ	לַיהוָה
Give	the LORD	the glory	due unto his name	worship	the LORD
H3051	H3068	H3519	H8034	H7812	H3068
וּבְהִדְבַּחְתָּ	קִדְשׁ:				
in the beauty	of holiness				
H1927	H6944				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 110:3 (Holy): Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Psalms 97:9 (References Lord): For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

Psalms 27:4 (References Lord): One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

2 Chronicles 20:21 (Holy): And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 90:17 (References Lord): And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Psalms 96:6 (Parallel theme): Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

