



original paintings by Viktor Vasnetsov

The God of Abraham Praise

To consider and extol the personality of God in worship is to trek the realm of the other-worldly.

Certainly the words that define His attributes are common enough, but therein lies the danger. To rightly worship, to praise God for who and what He is, we must lift these words and concepts out of the common and lift them up to where God lives. There are indeed those around us who are “wise,” “just,” “merciful,” or “strong.” We may even find someone who is “holy.” But God is not holy just to a higher degree than man; as Tozer reminds us,

We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is.

To accomplish the impossible, to worship God for His incomprehensible qualities, we must “worship in spirit and truth.” We must join our spirit to His, to commune using the language of heaven. Only then have we a chance to adore Him rightly, sincerely, acceptably.

...for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3

A good starting point for worship is to paint in our minds the breathtaking glories of God's throne room, then find a way to combine in ourselves appropriate reverence and fear for His holy majesty with the boldness we are to have by the blood of Christ.

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:19-22

On what are we to base this mental image? The apostle John and the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, all struggling for the words, describe it for us. Theirs are not literal snapshots of reality, but simply chronicles of men of mortal flesh groping for ways to express with mere words the blinding magnificence of holy God upon His throne. Their purpose is not to narrate, but to express the fearsome awe with which they beheld heaven's Holy of Holies.

Now over the heads of the living beings *there was* something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads. Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was* a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance

of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face...

Ezekiel 1:22,26-28a

So we push open the substantial golden doorway of heaven's throne room with the boldness and confidence we have by the blood of Christ. In Him we have not just permission to enter, but the assurance that when we do we will not be destroyed by the Godhead's holiness. But then, once inside, we approach that Holiness with reverent fear, acknowledging our low estate in comparison to His exalted majesty.

Who is He? Who is this one enthroned above? He is, in any one moment, ancient and forever—the great I AM.

*The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthroned above;
Ancient of everlasting days, and God of love.
Jehovah, great I AM, by earth and heaven confessed;
I bow and bless the sacred Name, forever blest.*

Because we serve a good and gracious God, true worship is always reciprocal, circular. The Spirit gives us the words, and we carry them upward to the holy throne of God. We bow down before Him in reverent fear, placing at His feet our words of adoration. Then, in return, He graces us with joy! And in that joy we worship Him all the more.

*The God of Abraham praise, at whose supreme command
From earth I rise, and seek the joys at His right hand.
I all on earth forsake, its wisdom, fame, and power;
And Him my only portion make, my shield and tower.*

*He by Himself hath sworn, I on His oath depend;
I shall, on eagle's wings upborne, to heaven ascend;
I shall behold His face, I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace forevermore.*

Worshipping in the Spirit before the thrones of heaven, we suddenly grasp the breathtaking truth: The same God who created all that is, who dwells eternally in the praise of heaven's created beings as well as the praise of all saints, who was the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses—this very same God is *ours* as well!

So what else can we do but fall down before Him, adding our voice to the resounding chorus that is His due.

*The whole triumphant host give thanks to God on high;
“Hail, Father, Son and Holy Ghost!” They ever cry.
Hail, Abraham's God and mine! I join the heavenly lays;
All might and majesty are Thine, and endless praise.*

Daniel ben Judah; revised version of “The Yigdal” by Thomas Olivers