

The Doctrine of Clapping Hands

Topics		
Positive Connotation		Negative Connotation
Charts, Maps and Doctrines		
	Summary	

Preface: Whereas, we associate the clapping of hands with a appreciation and respect or with keeping the beat to a song, the ancient world appears to have associated this activity with a number of different things, both positive and negative.

- We find that all people are enjoined here to *clap [their] hands*. In our culture, the meaning of this is fairly simple—we show approval, respect, admiration and/or appreciation toward those for whom we clap.
- There are a dozen verses in Scripture in which this phrase is found. The following are likely positive intentions associated with the clapping of hands.
 - In 2Kings 11:12: *He brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, gave him the testimony, and made him king. They anointed him and clapped their hands and cried, "Long live the king!"* This is very much like today; when a president is sworn into office, all those present clap their hands; this will be done by all of those there, despite their party affiliations.
 - Psalms 47:1: *Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with a jubilant cry.* In our passage, there is obviously a positive response.
 - Psalms 98:8: *Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains shout together for joy.* Here, clapping hands is associated with *joy*, so appreciation here is what is being called for.
 - Isa. 55:12: *You will indeed go out with joy and be peacefully guided; the mountains and the hills will break into singing before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.* Here, we have trees, which neither have hands nor would be able to clap them if they did, clapping their hands. This is associated with the hills singing, so, the idea is, the trees are clapping to keep time and to join into the merriment. What we have here is a great feeling of joy which is being expressed.
 - Then we have the interesting example where Israel celebrates that which is evil by clapping their hands, stomping their feet and rejoicing. Ezek. 25:6–7: *For this is what the Lord GOD says: "Because you clapped your hands, stamped your feet, and rejoiced over the land of Israel with wholehearted contempt, therefore I am about to stretch out My hand against you and give you as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the peoples and eliminate you from the countries. I will destroy you, and you will know that I am the LORD."*
- There are times in Scripture where the clapping of hands is associated with scorn:
 - Job 27:23: *It claps its hands at him and scorns him from its place.*
 - Lam. 2:15: *All who pass by scornfully clap their hands at you. They hiss and shake their heads at Daughter Jerusalem: Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?*
- There are times when clapping one's hands is associated with misery and despair over war and other disasters:
 - Ezek. 6:11: *"This is what the Lord GOD says: Clap your hands, stamp your feet, and cry out over all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, who will fall by the sword, famine, and plague."*
 - Ezek. 21:14: *Therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap your hands together. Let the sword strike two times, even three. It is a sword for massacre, a sword for great massacre—it surrounds them!*
- Clapping hands can be associated with doing something, initiating/completing a project. Ezek. 21:17: *"I also will clap My hands together, and I will satisfy My wrath. I, the LORD, have spoken."* Here, it is associated with satisfying the wrath of the Lord.
- Clapping hands can be associated with disapproval in Ezek. 22:13: *"Now look, I clap My hands together against the unjust gain you have made and against the blood shed among you."*

7. The final instance seems to indicate empathy is involved. Nahum 3:19: [There is no remedy for your injury; your wound is severe. All who hear the news about you will clap their hands because of you, for who has not experienced your constant cruelty?](#)
8. Summary:

In the ancient world, the clapping of hands could be associated with scorn or with appreciation. Luckily for us, the times when the clapping of hands is found in Scripture, its meaning and association is clear by the context.

Summary of the Doctrine of Clapping Hands

1. Hand clapping in the ancient world, just like today, is associated with appreciation, joy, respect and/or enjoyment. 2Kiings 11:12 Psalm 47:1 98:8 Isa. 55:12
2. Hand clapping in the ancient world could also be associated with scorn. Job 27:23 Lam. 2:15
3. Clapping hands could be associated with disapproval (scorn's younger brother). Ezek. 22:13
4. Clapping hands can be associated with misery and despair. Ezek. 6:11 21:14
5. And, interestingly enough, the clapping of hands appears to be associated with empathy. Nahum 33:19

The primary difference between this and the complete doctrine is, the complete doctrine lists all of the passages, the passages are written out, and sometimes a comment is added.

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