

Revelation 4-5: Pictures of Worship

Attention

- 1) What is worship? What does worship consist of? How is worship properly performed?
 - a. At our house we don't talk about going to church. We talk about going to worship.
 - b. I prefer the way we say it, but still there is a lot of room for misunderstanding.
- 2) Worship is not a place we go; it is something we do. It is a verb. And it shouldn't happen only in these walls.
 - a. Unfortunately, good habits will sometimes produce the complacency and even contempt of familiarity.
 - b. But worship is more than an action; it consists of particular actions performed in a specific state of mind.

I. The Focus of Worship

A. *God's Worth (4:8; 5:11-13)*

- i. Worship is literally ascribing worth to God by giving praise and service to Him.
 - a) Scriptural worship is based upon the belief that God is deserving of adoration and devotion.
 - b) Thus worship originates with an understanding of who God is. **4:8; 5:11-13**
- ii. Many associate worship merely with liturgical acts – singing, praying, reading, etc.
 - a) So worship becomes a ritual to perform, a specific set of behaviors that constitute worship.
 - b) But worship is not action for action's sake; it is an expression of our view of God.
- iii. How we see God will determine how we worship Him, for better or worse.
 - a) Israel did not revere God, so their worship was routine and tedious. **Ma. 1:12-14**
 - b) The reality is such “worship” is not worship at all! God rejects it as such. **Ma. 1:10-11; 2:3**
- iv. Consider God as you prepare to worship Him; consider His attributes, perfection, and majesty.
 - a) We must worship God because He deserves it; He needs nothing from us; we need Him.
 - b) Even if God did nothing for us, even if He was not good, He would still deserve our worship.

B. *God's Work (4:11; 5:9-10)*

- i. Worship begins with an understanding of who God is, but it also honors what He has done.
 - a) God deserves worship because He is God; nothing more is truly needed to inspire worship.
 - b) But how much more should we delight to worship One who has done so much for us!
- ii. The praise of Heaven acknowledges both God's worthiness and His work. **4:11; 5:9-10**
 - a) He made the world from nothing; all creatures exist by His power and plan.
 - b) He redeemed us by His blood and made a kingdom of those once estranged from Him.
- iii. Biblical worship was frequently historical in perspective, reflecting on the mighty works of God.
 - a) Events like the flood, the exodus, and the wilderness experience became subjects of praise.
 - b) Ultimately God is revealed in what He does, so His works are inextricably tied to His worth.
- iv. Worship must focus outside ourselves; we must know God and His deeds to truly honor Him.
 - a) Thus we cannot worship merely by singing or speaking; we must be thinking about God.
 - b) Worship without the proper focus is not worship; it is a religious ritual, not righteousness.

II. The Form of Worship

A. *The Attitude of Worship: Humility (4:10; 5:8)*

- i. If we see God clearly, as He is, we will realize how inadequate our worship will inevitably be.
 - a) How could man ever sufficiently praise a Being so high, so holy, so perfect, so great?
 - b) Creatures greater than us praise Him constantly; the need for praise is never satisfied. **4:8**
- ii. Frequently throughout the scriptures you find men assuming physical postures in worship.
 - a) In these chapters, kneeling or prostration seems the preferred position. **4:10; 5:8**
 - b) Elsewhere men lifted their hands, bowed their heads, raised their heads, and/or stood.
- iii. The primary Hebrew and Greek words for *worship* express the idea of bowing or prostration.
 - a) *Shachah* means to *prostrate* or *bow down*; *Proskuneo* means to *kiss towards* (the hand).
 - b) These should indicate our state of mind, but they were often associated with bodily posture.
- iv. No posture is mandated for worship in the Bible, but neither should its usefulness be dismissed.
 - a) The heart may be reflected in the body. (e.g. *Coming late, playing w/ babies, looking around*)
 - b) The body may help focus the heart. (e.g. *Stopping your activity to kneel and pray*)

B. The Action of Worship: Giving (4:9)

I. WE GIVE TO GOD...

- a) Worship is a gift, but in one sense there is nothing we can truly *give* to God. **1Ch. 29:10-16**
 - Everything we have to give came from God and belongs to God and is for God.
 - Thus like the twenty-four elders we cast our crowns before the One who gave them. **4:10**
- b) Worship is something we give to the One who has given everything to us.
 - What kind of gift would you give to someone who gave you the greatest gift imaginable?
 - What are we giving to God when we worship Him? Does it honor what He has given us?

II. GLORY

- a) Worship involves praising God, glorifying Him, but how can we glorify One so glorious?
 - Much of our religious service involves bringing ourselves into harmony with God.
 - So it should be with our prayers, and so it should be with the rest of our worship.
- b) In worship we say what is right about God; we say who He is, what He is, what He has done.
 - We glorify Him by acknowledging the glory He already has, giving rightful honor as due.
 - Much of worship in the Bible consists of speaking well of God and His qualities.

III. HONOR

- a) *Honor* in 4:9 speaks of valuing something by a price, showing deference and reverence.
 - What does our worship say about the value we place on God? Does it show reverence?
 - Whether we worship and how we worship says a lot about what we truly think of God.
- b) Many value themselves instead of God, so they worship on their own terms, in their way.
 - What is the difference between deciding when I want to assemble and using instruments?
 - Our worship only honors God when it acknowledges Him on His terms, as God.

IV. THANKS

- a) Worship must focus on God, but it should also include gratitude for what He has done for me.
 - I must beware that thanksgiving does not honor me rather than God. (cf. Lk. 18:9-14)
 - But it would be sinful to receive so much from God and never give thanks to Him.
- b) Gratitude is not meaningful unless it is communicated to the Giver.
 - All ten lepers were glad to be healed, but only one gave glory to God. **Lk. 17:17-18**
 - Does your worship spring from a joyful, thankful heart touched by the goodness of God?

Action

- 1) Have you worshipped today or only gone through the motions? The heart makes all the difference.
- 2) God is Spirit. Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. He is seeking such to worship Him.