

Biblical Worship: Revelation & Response

In the book of John, Jesus tells a woman: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” We are called to worship God in spirit and truth, so we must first understand what it means to worship. We are here tonight because we desire to worship God. So, what is worship? Is it music and song, making melodies in our hearts to God? Is it prayer and meditation, the spiritual discipline of silence and contemplation? Is worship sitting down and listening to some strange guy speak for way too long about the Bible? Is worship always being happy and joyful? Is it always being dour and solemn? Is worship for church?

What God has revealed to us in His Word is that worship is humble response to God’s revelation of Himself. That is to say, worship is not coming to God and calling Him near. Worship is responding in a grateful giving of our lives because He has already drawn near. He has already given us the reason to worship, and worship always demands a reason, the cause of our expression of grateful love toward God. Worship is the humble response of the heart, through its various external expressions, to the grandeur and beauty of God. We see the Lord’s greatness, we respond by giving Him all that He is worthy of: everything. This is why we’re here: to see who Jesus is, the greatest self-revelation of God there has ever been or ever will be. We want to see Him, to know Him, to draw near to Him, and to respond in humility, gratitude, and with our highest love of all: worship. He is worthy of all power in our lives, all rulership over our lives, all honor from our lives. He is worthy of it all.

1. Biblical worship is always a response to the revelation of God.

- a. Revelation = that which is revealed about someone
 - i. Some truth of reality concerning who God is or what God has done
 - ii. Both His Person and His Work reveal Him
- b. “The Lord passed by”
 - i. God’s personal name is used: YHWH
 1. His covenant name that He gave to His people to know Him
 2. It involves two primary aspects:
 - a. His self-existence, “I am”
 - b. His covenant promise: “I am with you” (see Exodus 3)
 3. God desires to reveal His character to His people
 - a. Moses was dealing with stubborn people down the mountain and needed to see God’s promise that it was all going to be OK
 - b. So “He proclaimed” His powerful and covenant name to Moses, repeating it twice for fullness
 - ii. God’s back = his “least” glorious
 1. As opposed to face to face, which is way of saying very intimate
 2. John 1 – the Word is “toward” God, that is face to face with Him
- c. Compassion
 - i. *Rakam* – “womb”, softness, care
 1. Latin: “with feeling”
 - ii. Used of Jesus
 1. **Matthew 14:14** When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
 2. **Matthew 20:34** Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

3. **Mark 1:41** Moved with compassion, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."
 4. **Mark 6:34** When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.
- iii. Not merely pity, but pity with action
 1. Pity feels bad, but does not act to bring comfort
 - iv. Compassion pities and moves to bring comfort
 - a. Note the actions of Christ above
 - b. Healed, touched, cleansed, taught
 - v. Moses needed to know that God was going to move in pity towards His people
- d. Gracious
- i. *Chanoon* – “show grace or favor”
 1. Only used of God in the OT
 2. Unmerited or unearned favor shown from a superior to an inferior
 3. Commonly coupled with compassion in the OT
 - ii. The Lord chose to reveal His loving provision of compassion and grace to Moses first in His revelation of Himself
- e. Slow to anger
- i. Literally “long to anger”
 - ii. It is the inward ability to restrain one’s anger in the face of provocation.
 1. Mercury metal vs. other metals
 2. Mercury has no patience, it runs all over the place at room temperature
 - iii. Set in opposition to the quick-tempered man who is a fool
 1. Note that this is not “angerless”, but rather a slowness to anger
 2. God does eventually come to anger when provoked long enough
 3. He is always in control of His anger and is slow to it, giving many chances for repentance
 - a. **Rev 2:21** – “I have given her time to repent, but she does not want to repent of her immorality.”
 - b. **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,¹ not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
 - iv. The LORD is patient and not quick to explode into anger
- f. Lovingkindness
- i. Chesed – the faithful, loyal, promise-keeping love
 1. Used of God’s love for His chosen people
 2. This faithful love is what He is reminding Moses of at this point
 - a. “I will take care of my people as I have promised. It is who I am.”
 - b. He will return them to Himself
- g. Truth
- i. With “lovingkindness” 15 times in the OT
 - ii. Faithful, reliable, complete, knowledgeable truth
 1. God is loving and kind without being weak and unrighteous
 2. God’s love is not without truth and righteousness
 - iii. Balanced in v6 between love and justice
 - iv. God is Truth and His word is Truth
 1. John 17:17; 2 tim 2:15
 2. Ps 119:160
- h. Keeping lovingkindness for thousands
- i. Forgiving their iniquity and trespasses
- i. Not leaving the guilty unpunished
- i. Visiting the iniquity on the 3rd and 4th
 - ii. Set in contrast to the greatness of His grace (thousands)

2. Worship is a *humble* response

- a. Moses bowed low to the earth
- b. Histachevah – to prostrate oneself
 - i. Shows reverence, humility, and vulnerability
 - 1. “you can do whatever you want to me”
 - 2. “I’m not worthy”
 - ii. “made haste” to bow low, too
 - 1. God’s revelation forced him to the ground in holy fear
- c. Proskuneo – NT word meaning “kiss toward”
 - i. Idea of prostrating oneself before a superior and kissing the sandals or hem of his/her garment, even the ground they were standing on
 - ii. Used in ancient times of deified persons (Roman emperor), God, idols, angels
 - 1. **Acts 7:43** You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'
 - 2. **Acts 10:25** When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man."
- d. “Worth-ship” – English word
 - i. Denotes something *worthy* or of great value
 - ii. Worship is ascribing the greatest value to a person, the highest form of love
 - 1. Note: not adding value, but ascribing value, subjective, not objective
 - iii. We worship that which we hold to be the most valuable, most beautiful, most worthy of our time, efforts, gifts, etc.
- e. Worship always has a reason, and it is usually stated!
 - i. **Revelation 4:8-11** And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" ⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."
 - ii. The Bible’s revelation of God gives us reason to worship

3. Worship is giving, not receiving

- a. Common view is that we come together to receive something from God in worship
 - i. Peace, clarity, joy
 - ii. We come expecting to receive
- b. Worship is an act of giving
 - i. God receives in our worship
 - ii. We give
 - 1. Adoration/love
 - 2. Praise
 - 3. Acknowledgement of our unworthiness (repentance)
 - 4. His worthiness to receive our praise
 - 5. Obedience
 - iii. Our service to one another is a form of our worship to the Lord
 - 1. He calls us to serve each other, *like He has served us (think Jesus)*
 - 2. We respond by serving each other, like He has served us
 - a. We imitate His love as His love fills us up
 - b. We forgive because He forgives us

- c. We are gentle because He is gentle with us
- d. We defend the poor because He became poor for us
- e. Etc.
- c. Note Revelation 4:11
 - i. "worthy are you...**to receive** glory, honor, power..."
 - ii. He is worthy to receive these things because of a reason, "created all things..."

4. Worship is attitudinal, not merely formal

- a. Formal worship is the external acts of worship
 - i. Prayer
 - ii. Prostration
 - iii. Hands lifted, hands folded, hands over ears
- b. Formal worship is the outward expression of the inward worship of the soul
 - i. Formal worship without inward worship is sinful
 - 1. See Pharisees
 - 2. **Isaiah 29:13-14** And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, ¹⁴ therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden."
- c. God desires worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth
 - i. All of our hands raised and knees bent mean nothing if not accompanied by the heart of humble worship to the Lord because of His greatness and wonderful works.
 - ii. The formal expressions are not bad, but they are intended to express our hearts as we honor the Lord
 - iii. A person can honor the Lord while not having formal expressions, but one cannot honor the Lord while not having spiritual worship, no matter how much formal expression he/she have.

Conclusion:

So, when we gather together on Sunday nights, we come to worship the Lord. That means that there will be a revelation of the Lord from His own Word and the opportunity to respond humbly and meaningfully to Him for His greatness and majesty. Our external forms of response may be different from week to week: music, prayer, silence, acts of service, etc., but there will always be a reason to give God all that we have...because He is worthy of all that we are. And our worship of Him never stops here, it must become who we are: worshippers. That means that we are constantly responding to Him in humility and obedience throughout our entire lives. In every week, in every day, in every moment we desire to worship the Lord. That is true and pure worship, and that is what I desire for myself and for you all, so that God would be honored and glorified as He is worthy.

Pray and Contemplate

Exodus 34:6-8 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, ¹ forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." ⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped.