

II. Gospel Worship in Biblical Perspective

Worship God!

“Who?”

Revelation 19:6-10

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In this study our focus will be on Revelation 19:6-10 but I'd like to open by reading Revelation 19:1-5 which says [1] *After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, [2] for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” [3] Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.” [4] And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” [5] And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In the last study we opened up our ministry theme at Briarwood for this coming year. Just a word of explanation – one of the practices of our church is to take an essential element of the Christian life and focus on it throughout the entire year. Last year it was personal evangelism – iShare – which was learning how to personally share the Gospel. The Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the authentic Christian life. When the Gospel does its work what would be the next thing to focus upon? The next thing to focus on is worship – Worship God.

In this study we'll actually look at the text from which we got the wording for the theme of this year – Worship God. So we have started a journey and here is the journey that we're on. Our journey this year is that we're in the Gospel pursuit (the Gospel work in our life) of God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped, Holy Spirit empowered worship. How does the Gospel bring us to God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped (where the Bible defines our worship), Holy Spirit empowered worship? That is where we're headed.

I want to do this by setting up some markers for us. I want to do this by going through a series of questions. In the last study it was 'why' are we doing this. Why do we worship God and why is this so important? That was our first issue and in this study it's Worship God; Who? We are also going to look at what, when, where and how. Those are questions we want to answer and we'll go through a series of text to develop and answer those questions. So in this study we'll look at Worship God; Who.

To review, in the last study it was Worship God; Why? In that study we put down our first marker on this journey. Before I give this to you let me just say that when we're talking about worshipping God there's a point we made and the two Greek words for worshipped we talked about were *proskynein* and *latreia*. We used those two words to point out that there are two features to worship. What are the two features? Worship is adoration and action – adoration shown in action.

Secondly, there are two factors of worship. There is life worship which is what we call general worship, our lives. Romans 12:1 says *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* I Corinthians 10:31 says *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Question one in the Westminster Shorter Confession is what is the chief end of man? Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. My obedience to God's Word as a Christian husband should be an act of worship. As a parent it's an act of worship. Stewardship is an act of worship. Evangelism, Christian citizenship and all of life are worship. It is foundational to all of life that it is worship.

Life worship leads to gathered worship which is special worship, the assembly of God's people in worship. It's when we come together and worship the Lord. Gathered worship sets the thermostat and the direction for life worship. They are inseparable. They feed on one another. The more we live for the Lord the more we love to gather with God's people to give the Lord praise. When we gather with the Lord's people it's to encourage and stimulate us to move into life throughout the rest of the week to the glory of God and to enjoy Him forever.

Journey marker number one from the last study addressed why we believe worship is important. Journey marker number one is acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is the culmination, the occupation and the affirmation of a Gospel saturated life. It is the culmination. Why did God make you? He made you to give Him praise and glory. Why did God save you? He saved you to the praise of His glorious grace. God is Creator, Redeemer and Provider. Why does God sustain you? He did this to the praise of His glorious grace. It is the culmination of our existence, our redemption and why God upholds us.

It's not only the culmination but it is our occupation. Whether in life or gathered assembly God calls us to live our lives as worship statements to the glory of God. It is also the affirmation. How do you know someone has been saved and liberated from the bondage of sin? What is sin? Sin is falling short of the glory of God. What does it mean to be saved from our sins? It now means to not want any longer to fall short of the glory of God but to exalt the glory of God. Do you want to know who is saved? Increasingly by God's grace they are growing in their desire that God would be their life. It's not about me, but it's about Him. To the Lord be glory, honor and praise, now and forevermore. That's the affirmation of the Gospel's work. The Gospel's immediate effect is to save us from our sins but its ultimate effect is to make us living statements of worship and praise to God, when we live and assemble.

In other words, IT (acceptable worship) is important (why?) because IT (acceptable worship) is important. I could preach forever (don't worry I won't) on the benefits of worship but that is not why we worship. Don't worship for the benefits that are multi-faceted, magnificent and glorious. We worship because worship is important. The praise of God is important. That's why we worship.

I want to lay down a second marker and let's back at Revelation 19. Revelation 19:6-10 walks us through a marriage banquet, John's response and then the Angel's response. Who wrote the book of Revelation? It was John. How many books did he write? He wrote five and four of them have his name on them. There is the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John and Revelation. So John wrote it and he was the last living

Apostle. One of the last things he writes is the book of Revelation which talks about what God has done, what God is doing and where it's all headed, the consummation, the New Jerusalem, the Wedding Feast, the Lamb and His bride, in the new heavens and the new earth forever and ever.

We have arrived at that point but before you get to that point in Revelation 18, Babylon, the great harlot, is brought to judgment and cast into judgment. Babylon with its culture of rebellion and depravity, filled with economic rebellion against God, military, religious, artistic and everything in life has been taken to oppose the glory of God and to exalt the glory of man. This Babylon, the great prostitute/harlot has been cast into judgment. In heaven what's the response when Babylon, the harlot, is cast into the lake of fire? It is worship. Then it says that not only has the great harlot been judged but the smoke goes up forever and ever. The judgment is irreversible, irrevocable, it is forever. Worship to the glory of God for He has won the victory and judgment over His enemies. Now we turn from Babylon to Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem. We turn from the harlot to the bride. We turn from the culture and garments of rebellion, to the garments of white linen that the bride has clothed herself with to meet her Groom, the Lamb.

Revelation 19:6-9 says [6] *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.* (It's not what we did that saved us but we have clothed ourselves in obedience to the Lord to meet Him and to present praise to Him. That's what the bride does.) [9] *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."*

Here is the Babylon – rebellion, kingdom of darkness, the harlot – clothed in deeds of prostitution and rebellion. Here is the New Jerusalem that is coming down because there is a bride who has made herself ready by God's grace pursuing obedience to the glory of God, clothed with fine linen. This is the bride of the Lamb. When judgment comes upon the harlot what do they do in heaven? They worship God. Now that the bride has been seen, made ready for the new heavens and new earth, what do they do on earth? They worship. Look at what John does in the next verse.

Revelation 19:10 says [10] *Then (after seeing this glorious glimpse into heaven) I fell down at his feet (referring to the Angel) to worship him (referring to the Angel), but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* This verse is where our wording came for the theme for this entire year. God has revealed to us why and how we worship Him, through His Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, the reflex on the earth by saved sinner, John, is to worship.

Praise the Lord but here is the problem. He didn't worship God. He worshipped the messenger. The Angel, unlike the angels who followed Satan's rebellion and left their abode of worshipping ministering spirits to God, kept his abode and said "**You must not do that!** I'm just a fellow servant that's all I am. John, I'm no different than you. You're a messenger. I'm a messenger. Worship God with intentionality, intensity

and grammatically, vehemence.” He gives the prohibition – You must not do that! Then he gives the exhortation – Worship God!

I want to draw out five lessons from this and then we’ll put our journey marker number two down. Before I do this I want to show you something in Revelation 22. Revelation 22:8-9 says [8] *I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, [9] but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”* John did it again. Can you believe that? He did the same sin twice. I’m glad I’ve never done that (smile). This time he did it from the text that we get the Handel’s Messiah *Hallelujah Chorus* from.

In the book of Revelation there are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls of wrath and there are seven benedictions which many people don’t know that. Our text for this study in Revelation 19 is the fourth benediction. When the fourth benediction is given he worships the Angel. In Revelation 22 he gives the sixth benediction and he worships the Angel again. The response is the same. Vehemently, intensely the Angel says “You must not do that!” Then comes the admonition of “Worship God!” So here are five lessons about acceptable worship.

The first lesson is acceptable worship is both reflexive and effusive as well as intentional and learned. I do not have to worry if you are going to worship or not or if I’m going to worship. We will worship. That is not a question. The question is who and what. If you don’t worship God then you’ll make some sport your god or technology or job or husband or wife or children. Worship is adoration and action with life and assembly. You will do that to someone or some thing. Worship is reflexive. Then when you’re saved it’s reflexive on steroids, where we really want to worship. I not only know I was made to worship but I want to worship and I hear God’s Word “I’m going to worship” but still I’m a sinner saved by grace so I have to be disciplined in worship. I have to learn worship, even John did.

Don’t you just love John’s honesty? If I had been John writing the book of Revelation I would have left this part out. Aren’t you grateful for his transparency? He not only says he worshipped the Angel instead of God but he says he did it again. So believers want to worship but we can easily get distracted from *latreia* to *idolatrea* through false worship. False worship is either the wrong object or the wrong way. So we have to know that worship is built into us by creation. It’s multiplied in redemption and God’s providence but it still has to be learned and intentional.

The second lesson from the text is that acceptable worship is both Spiritual and physical. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy Name. We worship originating from the heart and the soul but what’s in the heart will fill up the lips. The lips speak from the overflow of the heart. In other words, what is in the heart and the soul will come out of the mouth and be expressed in the life. It can’t help but do that. Our lives become windows to our soul because our lives are reflecting what is in our soul and heart. Even when we’re faltering the good that we would do we don’t do. There is still within us this good that we want to do. We want to live, love and serve the Lord because that is inside of us and so we have this struggle in our life.

In other words, when God works worship in our heart, soul and mind, it will come through our lips and be shown in our life. Here is an example. This is what Jesus is

talking about when He says we have to worship in Spirit and in truth. A man said to me “Pastor I couldn’t get to church to gathered worship on Sunday but I want you to know that I was with you in spirit.” My response would be “Well how about next Sunday don’t haunt us. Don’t send your spirit over here, bring your body with it.” Basically this is it. What is in our heart will show up with what we do with our body. There is no way you can be silent when we’re singing hymns of praise to God, not if your heart is full. Now we want to sing truth and we want to sing it to the glory of God but there is no way I can be silent. I am not going to let a rock take my place. So worship is both Spiritual and physical. John’s heart moved and then he hit the ground. You see him physically prostrate himself before the Lord. It’s both Spiritual and physical.

The third lesson is that not just any worship is acceptable. This really grates on us because most of us feel like “I’m with you. Yes I’m a sinner saved by grace.” Most of us feel like “God, it was raining outside. I braved the flu epidemic. I still showed up so God ought to be pretty well appreciative that I came and by the way I’m doing worship.” Most of us believe in our hearts that any worship ought to be acceptable to God. That’s kind of what we believe but this Angel is clear. No! You must not do that! There is *idolatreaia* and you certainly have to get the right object in place. It’s not just any worship that is acceptable to God.

The fourth lesson is acceptable worship is not determined by the worshipper but the One who is being worshipped. When we leave here today you and I are not the arbiter as to whether this gathered worship was pleasing to God. This coming week, I’m not the arbiter as to whether your life is pleasing to God or not, was a worship statement to God or not. God alone is the Arbiter. He alone is the One who determines whether worship is pleasing to Him which is why He reveals to us in His Word how to worship Him with our lives and when we gather together. God alone is the One who determines whether worship is acceptable or not, not me.

The fifth lesson is the undeniable essential element of acceptable worship is first and foremost the right object of worship – God. This is the crucial one. The right object of worship is the Father God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – the Triune God. That is essential number one. We can’t worship, worship. We can’t worship anything else. How do I know if I’m worshipping the wrong object? Anything that is affection, adoration, action – anything that is in front of, above or even alongside of God’s glory in your life then it’s wrong. A revealing factor is when someone says “Lord, if I don’t have this there is no way I can live.” Anything in my life that is above, in front of or beyond – like husband, wife, marriage, children, Mary, saints, church, people God used in our life – is wrong. Can we reverence and respect appropriately Mary, saints, those whom the Lord used in our life, loved ones, God’s good gifts, family, children etc? Yes, but we cannot worship that. There can be no other object above, in front of or alongside of the Triune God of glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All those other things do not get our affection and allegiance before Him or above Him. We enjoy them to enjoy Him and to use them for His glory and honor. That is the essential element, the right object.

So here is the takeaway. You must not worship anything or anyone other than the Triune God of glory. It doesn’t mean you can’t appreciate things or people or you don’t love God’s good gifts in your life, but you and I must see to it that we do not love or appreciate anything more than or as much as Him. I believe that last twenty years of

worship wars in the church, I'm not questioning the motivation of people, but it has been because we didn't get this first essential element down pat. Worship has many blessings. People are brought to Christ through worship services. People are encouraged. There are all kinds of blessings attached to worship, but they are not the object of worship. We don't have a worship service to attract people to the church or to bring people to Christ or to equip and encourage you or to get the preferences of someone. We have a worship service because we want to set the thermostat for life which is that God is in all, above all, through all and over all. We have gathered to worship to praise His holy Name.

Will people be evangelized through that? Praise the Lord! Will people be encouraged and equipped? Praise the Lord! But the worship service is not for that. It is for the praise of the Triune God who is pleased with the praise of His people and then will use that service for multiple blessings because we did not make idols of those things. We wanted to worship Him and now He says "Now, I can entrust these things to you." We must not worship anything or anyone but we must worship God. Let me put it simply. God is the center of life worship and gathered worship. God is the Center, the Circumference, the Substance and the Summation of worship.

Here is the only problem. God center? God circumference? God summation? God substance? Do you mind if I put in some modifiers? God is the infinite Center. God is the boundless Circumference. God is the unfathomable Substance. God is the unending Summation of worship. Praise God! Worship God! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we could be together. We are now about to come to Your Table. Would You come and minister and use the reminder of the cross and what Christ has done that will lead us to the marriage Supper, so that we might intentionally overflow effusively with worship to You. Use this Supper to put Your glory as the drenching rain to saturate our heart because of the cross of Christ, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.