

## Why Come to Worship?

Rev. 4:2b-11

### Introduction:

1. We may think of worship as, “Going to church,” as putting on “Sunday clothes,” as “observing the Lord’s Supper, singing, praying, giving and listening to a sermon.”
2. We may think of worship as “doing what we are supposed to do.”
3. We may even see the call to worship God as rather like the order that goes out from a dictator whose subjects may not like him, but have learned to fear him. He wants a hundred thousand people to line the streets for his birthday parade. The people come out to cheer and wave as though their lives depended on it. In fact they do. Turn away in boredom, or don’t show up at all, and it will mean judgment and condemnation.
4. Contrast this with the cheers at a football game or a final shot made at the end of a basketball tournament that wins the game . . . or what about the standing ovation given at the end of a particularly moving musical or theatrical performance.
5. What does worship mean to you?
6. In Rev. 4 and 5 there is a scene in heaven that results in worship. What brought on this worship? And how is this worship similar or dissimilar to your own?

### Discussion:

- I. The four living creatures and the 24 elders of Rev. 4 worshiped.
  - A. Were I to see these awesome living creatures perhaps I would be like those at Lystra who wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas after they healed a man lame from his mother’s womb (Acts 14:8ff). These beings are truly awesome in appearance.
  - B. But they worship the one on the throne as very much more awesome than themselves.
    1. They say, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come” (v. 8).
    2. They are awed by . . .
      - a. The holiness of God.
      - b. His Almighty power.
      - c. His eternal existence.
  - C. Their worship consisted of giving glory, honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne.
    1. There is no evidence of rote behaviors merely repeated out of a sense of duty or obligation.
    2. Perhaps we would do well to recognize that our behaviors ought to be recognized as a means to an end rather than ends within themselves. The Lord’s Supper, singing, praying, etc. are meant to glorify, honor and express thanks to Him who

sits on the throne.

3. But if we are not awed by His holiness, power and eternal nature such actions can be little more than cheering a dictator who judges and condemns if we do not perform the right actions. Such worship is hollow. The Lord said of Jerusalem, “This people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts from Me and their reverence consists of tradition learned by rote” (Isa. 29:13).

D. The worship of the 24 elders.

1. They fell down before Him who sits on the throne. The word “worship” denotes a “falling down,” a prostration resultant from the presence of God.
2. Moses hid his face (Ex. 3:6b). Ezekiel fell on his face (1:28b). Isaiah said, “I am ruined” (6:5). It is more than physical prostration. It is humility of spirit.
3. These elders cast their crowns before the throne.
4. They said, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created” (4:11).
5. Their worship acknowledged God’s worthiness to receive glory and honor and power.
6. These were based on the fact that He is Creator!
7. It would do us well to reflect more on what it means that God created. The creation is so incredible. We are only able to be exposed to a little of it at a time. Even this is incredible, but imagine the creation everywhere for all time, not only coming into existence, but continuing to exist all by the power of God.

- E. “Well this is all well and good that God be praised in heaven by these grand beings, but what about here on earth? It’s a mess. What is God going to do about it?”

II. Revelation 5 seems to address this very question.

- A. There is a book in the hand of God that holds the information regarding God’s plans.
- B. The Lion/Lamb of David takes the book to open it and reveal its message.
- C. The 24 elders worship Him saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (5:9-10).
  1. The Lamb has purchased with His blood people from every nation.
  2. The Lamb has made them to be a kingdom and priests.
- D. The angels, living creatures and the elders around the throne praise the Lamb (v. 12).
  1. He is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing.
  2. Every created thing in heaven and earth praise the one on the throne and the Lamb (13-14).
- E. We worship in praise of God’s intervention in this realm.

1. All creatures recognize why God should be worshiped.
  2. We too worship for this same reason.
  3. Not only is God creator, He is the rescuer of the creation.
- F. An invitation to worship is an invitation to join in the worship of all creation for the same reasons that they are worshiping.

### III. In worship we become like what we worship (Psa. 115:1-8; 135:15-18).

- A. Idol worshipers become like their gods.
- B. The worshipers of the Lord become like Him.
  1. Created in His image.
  2. Worship makes us more fully image bearers. It restores what was lost from sin. Cf. Eph. 5:18.
- C. But how?
  1. In our communication of the word of God—in preaching and teaching we communicate God’s rescue operation and so like Him we communicate love, grace and compassion. Cf. Matt. 5:43ff.
  2. In the Lord’s Supper the proclamation is made that the Lamb has spilled His blood in payment for sin. The content of the book is revealed. The story of God’s plans are revealed. Let us not diminish the magnificence of the revealed mystery by saying, “I do not need a pinch of bread and a swallow of grape juice to remember the Lord.” Let us not be so focused on the outward forms that we miss the real meaning!
  3. Singing is designed to praise, to teach and admonish. It is a manifestation of the word of Christ within us (Col. 3:16). It expresses thanksgiving for what the God of heaven and the Lamb have done.
  4. Worship is not something to be watched but participated in. How can we read Rev. 4 and 5 and not join with all creation in worship? Our giving is reflective of our joint participation with God’s plan of rescuing the world from the consequences of sin. Whether we are giving to address the needs of the poor or giving to advance the teaching of Christ it is all about rescuing the world from sin.

### Conclusion:

1. If we have only seen worship as an obligatory thing to do . . .
2. If we have only seen it as done to satisfy a dictatorial spirit . . .
3. If we have only seen it as necessary to avoid the condemnation of a dictator . . .
4. We have missed the point entirely and seen worship as mere forms and traditions performed by rote, filled with emptiness and in need of neglect and abandonment.
5. But for those who understand it it is both natural and engaging!!!