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W O R S H I P

Hebrews 10:22-31

One Main Thing

Worship—what is it? How is it done? Why is it done? What does it accomplish? When we uncover the answers to these questions, our minds are opened to a whole new understanding of God and His plan for humanity.

Introduction

Many people see their worship to God in one of two ways. The first group sees their worship to God as somewhat of a payment plan. They view their worship as a way of slowly giving something back to God in the form of sacrificing their time and money. This type of believer understands the huge debt we owe to Jesus for His sacrifice, but also understands that it is a debt that will never be fully repaid. However, with each opportunity to worship we reveal that we are making some effort to give back to the One who gave so much.

The second group sees their worship as an investment plan. This group understands the debt as being already paid by Jesus, now we are just making investments into His kingdom so we will be able to have our “Mansion Over the Hilltop.” They see that each time they worship, they are making some type of deposit that will enable them to receive some future blessing from God. Let me assure you that both of these views of worship are faulty and neither of them offer a correct understanding of what worship is and why we worship. Worship isn’t about our giving back and certainly not a way of seeking a return on our “investment.”

Application

So what is worship? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “worship” meant to “prostrate oneself” or to “bow down.” The first time it was used was when Abraham bowed down to the three messengers who announced the birth of Isaac in Gen 18:2. The word signified what was done when one came in contact with God. In the New Testament, there are a few Greek terms that we can translate as “worship,” but the most often used is *proskuneo*, which is defined as “to make obeisance, do reverence to” or “to kiss.” It is the word that Jesus uses when being tempted by Satan in Matt 4:10, and the word that Jesus used in His discussion with the woman at the well in John 4:21–24 concerning worshipping in “spirit and in truth.” Therefore, worship should not be something that we feel is payment for Christ’s services or a

deposit into a heavenly bank account; rather, more of a reaction to greatness.

Why should we worship? The first and foremost answer is that it was commanded by God in both the New and Old Testaments. I intentionally placed the New before the Old so that by going backwards, we should see the command as well as the necessity of expressing our reaction to God for His greatness. In the New Testament, we have the command to worship in several places. All throughout the New Testament, we see the command and the example of the early Christians to “gather together,” “meet together,” or “assemble yourselves together” on the first day of the week from the moment the church was established and continued throughout the spread of the church (Acts 2:42,46; 20:7; 1 Cor 11:18; 14:26–40; Heb 10:22–31). The emphasis is placed on believers coming, assembling, and meeting together not only with one another, but with God as well. In Acts 20:7, Luke tells us that when they gathered on the first day of the week, they broke bread. This act is what Paul calls the “Lord’s Supper” in 1 Cor 11:20–29. The Lord’s Supper (or “communion” as we have often referred to it) is our way of being joined with Christ as we partake of the body and the blood. Therefore, when we come together, we are not only assembling with each other, but with God as well.

Why is such an assembling, or communing with Christ so important? For a long time, we were separated from Christ. Since the events of Gen 3, when man sinned

in the Garden, he separated himself from God (Isa 59:1–2). God has sought to provide a way that would lead us back into His presence, so we can have the same communion that Adam had with God before the Fall. God’s plan was set into motion for this reunion in Gen 3:15 when He pronounced the coming of One (the Messiah) who would crush the head of the snake (Satan), a prediction called the *protoevangelium* (the first telling of the gospel). God continued His plan through men like Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham as He used them to establish what faith in Him looks like. He further continued His plan in Moses when He instructed the nation of Israel to build a place that would be considered His abode: the Tabernacle (Exod 15:17; 29:44–46). It was within that Tabernacle upon the Mercy Seat that God said, “I will meet with you” (Exod 25:22). This was not only God’s way of reminding His people of His everlasting love and care for them, but also to provide a means by which God’s people could express their reaction to that love and a way for it to be reciprocated by sacrifices and offerings. In Leviticus 23, God appointed certain days and feasts in which He commanded that His people come and be in His presence. This served as a pattern of God’s plan to restore the connection that had been lost since Adam’s fall.

As time passed, the Tabernacle became a long-lasting fixture in what became the Temple that was built in the days of Solomon. However, these buildings were never meant to serve as the permanent place that God’s people

were commanded to come and offer up their reaction to His greatness. The incarnation of Christ brought about God coming in the form of man (Jesus Christ) to give Himself as the ultimate sacrifice (Heb 7:27; 10:1–22) so that the lost connection could be restored. He replaced that earthly Temple with His body (John 2:20). Today, those who have been baptized into Christ, have “put on Christ” (Gal 3:26–27), making them part of the body of Christ. Therefore, when we are gathered together for the purpose of worship and communion with God during the Lord’s Supper, we are symbolically reuniting the body of Christ and re-establishing our bond with God that sin has broken for so long. It has been God’s plan all along that the connection between God and man be restored in the form of our assembling together upon the first day of the week.

But that isn’t the only blessing of our worshipping together. There is something that happens when believers come together to worship. The writer of Hebrews reveals three by-products of our gathering together:

~ *Draw Near to God.* When we come together to worship with a “true heart and full assurance of faith,” we can “draw near” to the House of God (Heb 10:19–22). In our efforts to “draw near to God, He will draw near to you” (Jas 4:8). Therefore, when we “assemble” with a true heart we are not only inviting God to restore our relationship with Him, we are also making efforts to grow closer to Him each time.

- ~ *Holdfast our Profession of Faith.* Our faith in Christ is based on His being the Son of God and that He is a “rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). However, with the struggles that are common to Christians as we live in this world, it can be difficult to remain strong and continue to draw close to Him. That is why a continued reminder of His eternal love and unique message of salvation are necessary for Christians to hear. This reminder provides the worshipper something to hold onto when the storms of life attempt to break us down. It is imperative that we continue to be reminded of even the most rudimentary of Biblical principles, so we do not allow ourselves to slip (Heb 2:1-3). When we assemble, we are strengthening our grip on our faith.
- ~ *Encourage Others to Exercise Their Faith.* When Christians are assembled together to worship, there seems to be a dynamic between the “true worshippers.” They become energized to be “provoked,” or “aroused,” to participate in things that promote “love and good works.”

In commanding us to worship in a corporate way, God has granted us not only a way to get close to Him, but also a way to hold on to the faith we have and motivate others to do the same. If that were not enough of a reason to worship God, there remains another that needs to be discussed. To answer the question, “Why should we worship God?” I will defer to science. (Yes, I said science!) Newton’s Third Law of Motion says, “For

every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." God's action of sending Christ to die for us requires a reaction on our part. God is not simply a force, nor is our reaction to His love near equal to the love that He has bestowed upon us. However, when a true believer begins to understand the gravity of God's love for them, they are compelled to worship. It just comes naturally. Over and over in God's Word, when someone comes in contact to the awesomeness of God, it is almost a reflex reaction to "prostrate oneself" or "make obeisance, or reverence" or "kiss." Isaiah and Paul both remind us that there will be a day when "every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess" the name of Jesus (Isa 45:25; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10). Therefore, the answer to the question, "Why should we worship?" should be, "How can we not?!"

Conclusion

Worship is not about paying a debt or making an investment. It is more about the true believer wanting to grow closer to God every chance that he or she gets and then simply doing what comes naturally: bowing down to greatness!

Discussion

1. Discuss the impact of the sin in the Garden of Eden and the separation it caused between God and man.

2. Discuss how Christ bridges the gap between God and us.
3. What are some ways that being a part of the corporate worship service helps us “holdfast” to our faith?
4. What are some ways that being a part of the corporate worship service helps us encourage others to exercise their faith?
5. Discuss different personal examples of how you felt closer to God after a worship service.