

Study 2 Why are we worshipping?

In the last study, we touched on the main reason people worship. It is in-built to do so. We were created for it! God did not need us to worship Him; He already had the angels for that. To illustrate, there is a great vision of the worship God already receives in the book of **Revelation**. In **Chapter 4**, we read that the four living creatures never stop saying, *“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.”* (v 8) At this, the 24 Elders fall down prostrate before the throne and cry out;

*“You are worthy, O Lord our God...
For you created all things,
and they exist because you created what you pleased.”*

(Rev 4:11)

So God doesn't need our worship, but despite that fact, He *chose* us to join in the worship. It *pleased* Him to create us to do so. But as with everything God planned for us, this too has become distorted by the fall. Sin has perverted our relationship, view and worship of God. Man has chosen to fill the void that a relationship and the worship of the Living God would have filled, and filled it with relationships and worship of created things.

One example might be sport. Football fans will fulfil some of this need to worship, by becoming fanatical about their sporting team. It gives them many of the things that organised religion will give them. They get a sense of belonging. They believe in a cause. They have a hope for the future, a purpose for living. They admire and proclaim their devotion to an individual star, exalting them to even greater achievements. They can cheer and sing with great abandon, without ridicule from the other followers. They even get an opposition in which they can vent their disapproval. And for the season, it can feel like the need to worship is fulfilled.

Of course, sport can only fill that natural void for a short time, and whether we realise it whilst living, or after we die, the futility of this endeavour will become all too real. When we come to see that we had been filling that need to worship with a form of 'poly-filler' rather than the God of Heaven that was supposed to fill it, we will understand how futile our pursuits have been. Other things we might fill this need with might be earthly relationships, ourselves, our work, hobbies or any other pursuit that we place above and before God.

It becomes self-evident to the born-again believer however, that worship that satisfies, worship that completes us, is True worship in Spirit. When we worship God as He is, we come to a place of peace and fulfilment. It is here that we

find our fundamental purpose for existence – in many ways, all our other tasks in life will emanate out of this basic principle of worship. (This is especially true when we seek the total meaning of worship as the bible expresses it – this we will look at in coming studies!)

So, how does the individual come to a place of True worship? As I have already mentioned, man is hard-wired to worship something. In every culture, there is evidence of some form of knowledge of the divine and worship of that divinity (or divinities) forms an integral part of their life. In false religions we can still see genuine worship (if not in Spirit and Truth) of non-genuine gods. How can this be?

The answer lies in the understanding of the one we worship. Genuine worship is birthed out of the knowledge of the one being worshipped. Let me explain. If I came to you saying that worship of Jesus was necessary for you to live forever, and you had never heard of Jesus or the stories about His life, death, resurrection or how this had given you eternal life, then worship of Him would be very difficult. He is just a name! By observation of others you might be able to manufacture the look of one who worships Him, but it would be difficult, given such scant information and without a personal revelation, to get involved in genuine worship from the heart.

Alternatively, as the significance of our own wretched condition (through sin), and the knowledge of Christ's work on the cross becomes a personal reality for us, thanksgiving (praise) and acts of adoration (worship) will naturally flow from the individual. And the closer we come to a true picture of the True God, the deeper and truer our worship will be.

In the case of false religions (and even sporting or celebrity idols), as people fall in love with them the more their adoration grows. The main difference between the impostors and the true God however, is that the more we come to know about God, the more pure and lovely He will become (and the more we will want to worship Him). With other gods though, the closer one gets the more we will see them for the fakes that they are, the silent idols of stone, or of our imagining. As for our sporting idols, their faults will be revealed the closer we get to them and all of them will be 'yesterday's heroes' before too long!

So what is the main reason for True worship, ultimately? To bring glory to the One who has done so much for us. It is the right response of the created to the Creator, of the redeemed to the Redeemer, of the saved to the Saviour. When we understand what God has done, who He is and how much He loves us, how can we not express it in our lives, our song and our everyday? We were created for it, and

as we seek him, growing closer in our relationship and knowledge of Him, how can we be unchanged?

As I ponder God's greatness, love, mercy, grace and forgiveness, I am at times overwhelmed with emotion. I have spontaneously burst into song, sometimes one I know well, sometimes with a song from my own heart. I have fallen to my knees and although tears might roll down my face, an incredible thing happens. I feel lifted in my spirit, I feel closer to my God, more complete, like everything is exactly as it should be in the world. I am fulfilling my purpose in life, and I am energised! It is why Isaiah wrote, *"(put on)...a garment of praise for the spirit of despair."* (Isaiah 61:3)

David knew this all too well. He, like many of us, was a musician / singer. We know that he played the harp skilfully, his praise of the Lord bringing relief to King Saul from the evil spirit that tormented him. (see 1 Sam 16:14-23) His psalms too reflect his devotion and knowledge of the God whom he served. Listen to some of the lines David sang, glorifying his God and declaring his works, wonders and love.

**You are my shield, O Lord.
You have filled my heart with greater joy
You are my refuge / righteous judge
Give thanks to the Lord, because of His Righteousness / His love endures forever
Our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth
I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation
My heart is glad, my tongue rejoices...because you will not abandon me to the grave
You have made known...the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.
You are my strength / hope / rock / deliverer / shelter / strong tower /
My heart trusts in Him...my heart leaps for joy...in song
I will exalt you / magnify you**

David, it seems, never found himself without reason to praise and worship God. The list could go on and on, and if we add to this the songs of His deliverance, Creation, forgiveness, then we would study nothing else this year. However, for this study, it is enough to say that, the closer we come to God, the more we know of His character, faithfulness and love, the more our hearts will want to worship Him as He is. It is what we were created to do, it is the longing of mankind and it is the responsibility of those that have so much to be thankful for.

Why do we worship? Because You O Lord deserve it!

1. In Revelation 4 we see a picture of all of heaven in worship. What is the reason that the living creatures and the 24 elders give for their worship?

2. Compare the song of **Rev 4:11** with **Rev 5:9-13**. What is the major difference between the themes of the worship in each passage?

3. Find a song in the bible that sings of God's amazing creation. (Hint: look in the psalms)

4. Find a song in the bible that sings about God's deliverance or salvation

5. Look through Christian song books, choruses or albums. Find a 'modern' song that you think expresses true praise and worship. Maybe it is one that mirrors the themes in Revelation 4 or 5.

6. It is easy to 'worship' something or someone other than God, if we don't keep life in perspective. Can you see that you have fallen into the trap of 'idol worship' at times in your life?

7. True worship comes from focussing on God's character, love, redemption and our relationship with Him. What themes tend to bring you closer to true worship?
