

2009-07-07

*Worshiping the Creator, Part 1*

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Let's Pray. "Father in Heaven, our hearts have been moved by music today and we've been drawn closer to You. We praise You for that. We came here searching for You. We came here to experience You. And now Lord we are about to open Your word and we want more. We want You to speak directly to the very needs within our souls. We are praying heavenly Father that You would rain from on high right now, that You would speak to us through Your word, that you would inform us of Yourself and inspire us by Yourself. We pray that Your presence will be so powerful in our midst that our lives will be changed for eternity. Please Lord, do a great work now and teach us through Your word. We pray in Jesus name, Amen."

I was 9 years old and I thought I knew a lot of things, most 9 year olds do. My dad was outside washing the car, 1962 blue Rambler station wagon, three speed on the column. My dad's pride and joy, he loved it. Later when I was a teenager I got to drive it, I didn't love it so much. It wasn't very fancy. The only way I could get it to squeal out was to go in reverse. When you leave the A&W and everybody is squealing their tires and you have to do it in reverse, it's not real exciting. But dad was out there washing the car and I engaged him in a debate, asking him questions. My dad liked to debate. It was one of the fun things he did. He liked to instigate it so to speak. He liked to stir us on.

At his funeral in fact, we had a whole list of sayings that he had, that he would use to counter act the very things he was trying to argue for. He just loved the interaction I guess. He always did it in a fun spirit. But somehow we got discussing water. At 9 years of age, I was convinced that water did not weight anything. It was clear. Something clear doesn't weigh anything. I mean, the air -- I didn't know then that air had weight. I had no idea. And so I'm arguing with my dad, I said, "Water doesn't weight anything." And so dad said: "Okay, I'll tell you what Jerry; go get an empty gallon jug, fill it with water and walk around the block."

Well, I found an empty gallon jug, I filled it full of water and I didn't get to the end of the driveway and I was convinced, "You know, my father is right. Water has weight. I'll accept it, the evidence is in. Father is right." So I was going to use that information to my good because a couple weeks later we went to Grandma and Grandpa Arnold's cottage up in Northern Michigan on the mighty Muskegon River. Right near Big Rapids, or just south of Big Rapids. And I was old enough to be able to use a row boat by myself. And man, when I got in that row boat, I was a pirate on the high seas, I was in a space ship sometimes, I was rowing from cloud to cloud. It was a wonderland for me, I have a vivid imagination and it was taking me everywhere in that boat.

But I was excited on this particular day because I had learned water had weight. So I asked my Grandmother if she had several gallon jugs that were empty. She did, she had three. So I filled those jugs with water, sealed them, put a rope through them, tied them together tight, tied that rope to the very front of the row boat and headed out

into the river with my brand new anchor. I was excited, water is heavy! I had three gallons of water, and I know that's twenty some pounds, isn't it? Isn't a gallon of water about 8 pounds? Yes, something like that. Anyways, it was heavy enough at 9; I knew it would hold my boat. And so I rowed out into the river, got where I wanted to be, where I was going to settle in on my trip, and I took those three gallon jugs of water and I threw them into the water.

Huge splash and those three gallons of water went down, and then they came up because water weighs the same as water. I didn't know that at age 9. I thought maybe I did it wrong, so I threw them in again. Splash! They went down, they came up. My anchors weren't holding. You see, my father said water had weight, I had experimented with it, I discovered it to be true. But instead of going back to my father again and inquiring more about the subject, I figured I had enough information. I've got it figured out now. And consequently I had enough information, just enough information really, to be dangerous. And I wonder if that is true with many of us. Our Father has told us certain things. And we understand them and we've proven them to be true. But yet we're not going back to Him for more information, and really, we have just enough information to make us dangerous spiritually because we think we've got it all together.

We have been studying in the Book of Acts for, I think, about 3 years. I've lost track. And we've made it to chapter 14. A couple weeks ago, somebody in the church said, "Are we going to get to the Gospels anytime soon?" And I said "Yeah, but we have another 2 or 3 years with Acts" and that poor gentleman just moaned... We've come to a chapter in the Book of Acts where Paul and Barnabas are in Lystra. And they have healed a man, the man has jumped up and he's walking around and the townspeople are trying to worship Paul and Barnabas as Gods. That's where we are in our story. And Paul and Barnabas tell them to turn from these vain things to the living God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. And so it seems pertinent that we would step away from the Book of Acts just a little bit, and we are going to have a study within a study, a series within a series if you will, and we are going to look at worshipping God, worshipping the Creator.

I understand from my study in the Word of God that between now and when Jesus returns, worship is going to be the major issue. Well, what does worship mean? Do we have just enough that we are satisfied and actually dangerous? You know, when you study about worship you come to the Greek word "Proscenaeo" and you say "Oh that's impressive," and what does it mean, and you study about it. And I studied all about it and I thought, "Oh, I'll come up with something and that will wow them, and that will change their lives." But I didn't. And you contemplate the themes of worship. Are we talking about specific forms of devotion? Are we looking at rights, practices, times, individual, corporate worship, weekly event, every day experience, one place, all places? Is it a methodology, is it a mindset? What is worship? How does it work? And what are we supposed to do?

And I think for many who are of our denomination; we've talked to our Father. And He's told us, and we understand sundown Friday, and we understand sundown Saturday. And we fuss a bit about in between, but we kind of understand those parameters and that's worship to us. And I believe in all honesty that maybe we have just enough information to make us dangerous but not enough information to change our hearts, to change our lives. We can come to church at the right place, right time, all that type of stuff, even have the right process and still go home and be as mean as a snake. We have not worshipped, worship is not affecting us the way God wants it to affect us. Worship should have a transforming experience in our lives. Worship should change us. But to have just enough information could be having an anchor that's heavy but it will not hold. And so today we begin our journey about worship.

I'd like for you to turn to Acts 14:15. It's the story I've referred to earlier. We'll read our first text there. Just so you know I'm not making this up, I want you to read it in your own Bibles. Acts 14 verse 15. Verse 15 says: "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you and preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them." That title, or that expression, that formula, "God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them" is used a number of times in the Scriptures. It's used in Acts chapter 4, but we're going to turn today to the Book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 14, that very phrase, almost verbatim is used.

But instead of saying "turn to" another word is added, and it will bring clarity to what we are seeking here today. Revelation 14 verse 7 John is quoting an angel, an angel flying through mid Heaven. And this angel is saying with a loud voice, "Fear God, give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea, and springs of water." At the core worship must mean turning towards God. "Turn away from these vain things," Paul and Barnabas said. "Turn to the Living God who made the earth, or made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them." And here in Revelation we are told to worship Him who made heaven and earth.

So I go back to my list of questions. How do we do that? Do you really know? Does the Bible inform us at all? Actually it does. The Bible has lots to say about worship. And we are beginning our journey. Our first stop today will be to look and see how worship is conducted in Heaven. If we can get a picture of how worship is done in heaven, maybe we can get a picture of how it can be done in our hearts. How it can be done here on this planet. And so we are going to go for a few moments this morning into the very presence of God in heaven and we are going to experience worship on that level and we will make a few applications to our lives here. Let's start in Revelations chapter 4.

Revelation chapter 4, we will read verses 9 through 11. This is the scene in heaven around the throne of God. And if you want a beautiful, beautiful passage to read, read verses 1 through 8 this afternoon. It's just beautiful as it describes God seated on His

throne in heaven. Here we have verse 9: “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne saying, ‘You are worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For You created all things and by Your will they exist and were created.’” They are worshipping God as the Creator in this passage. It says in verse 9 that the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to God as Creator.

“Glory,” you may know is from the Greek word “Doxa.” That’s where we get the phrase Doxology, or the title Doxology. It means worshipful praise, and the Doxology is that “Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below, praise Him above ye heavenly host, praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!” That’s the Doxa, the Doxology. It is worshipful praise. And we come to the word, “honor.” “They give glory, they give honor.” Honor comes from the Greek word “timaó” and it means or it’s a process of determining the value of something, to price it, to estimate its worth, to give careful regard or veneration, preciousness, respect, honor and reverence, all those are the flavor of the word, “honor.”

And then it says, “They give thanks,” “Eucharistos.” They give thanks. They are grateful, thankfulness, gratitude, mindful of benefits. And so I’ve re-written this so you could understand it better. “Whenever the living creatures give worshipful praise, expressions of regard, respect and reverence, and declare their gratefulness, the twenty-four elders join in.” I want to tell you something brothers and sisters. I believe that that is a principle in Heaven. That if in our hearts we are truly praising God, if in our hearts we are truly worshipping God, if we are giving Him glory, if we are giving Him honor, if we are giving Him thanks, other people will know it. Other people will see it, and they are going to do what the four and twenty elders do, they are going to say “I’ve got to get in on that!” “I’ve got to get in on that!”

And I wonder if that testifies of our experience, or if we are just moping along through life critical and bitter, and on and on, and all those negative things that we hold on to. Or are we really in our hearts at the throne of God, worshipping the Creator, and having a powerful effect upon our own lives? And other people saying, “Man, I want to get in on that!” That’s what serving God is. I want it. Well the four and twenty elders, they get in on it. And they do something very interesting. They remove their crowns when they worship the Lord. Now who gave them their crowns? God did. You know, you don’t just sit around in heaven with a crown that you make. God gave that crown to them. I don’t understand all the symbolism of that crown, but I know it is evidence of a position, of a place.

They have a position and a place given to them by God. And when they worship God, they set that position aside. And they humble themselves before the Lord and they give Him glory, and honor, and praise. And you and I have a crown. We have a crown. We have a position in life, we have dignity, we have moral worth, we have a desire to

achieve, we have talents, we have skills, and we have all kinds of things given to us from God. And many times brothers and sisters, the crown that we wear is what causes problems. In the home, the reason for conflict is somebody is wearing a crown and they expect somebody else to know it. See? And worship before God as the Creator, we are going to take those crowns off. Whatever they are, we are going to humble ourselves before God, and something life changing will take place in our homes, in our hearts, in our lives. They are worshipping God as Creator.

I want to show you another picture of worship. It's found in the very next chapter. Revelation chapter 5 it says, "And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'who is worthy to open the scroll and to loosen its seals?' And no one in heaven or on earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll or to look at it. So I wept much." Here's an old man, weeping; John, an old man, weeping. Why? Why is he weeping? What does he care about that scroll? Well John understands Biblical typology. John understands what's going on. That scroll is the title deed to planet earth. Whose name is on it? And it's sealed in heaven by, and can only be opened where the elders are.

And Jesus is there, the Father is there, but the Father is on the throne, He's got the title deed to earth in His hand. But somebody's got to open it! Who's got the authority to open it? They looked in Heaven, couldn't find anybody, they looked on earth, couldn't find anybody, looked under the earth, couldn't find anybody. And John wept. He wants to know. He knows there's been a controversy. He knows there's been a conflict. He knows there's evil, he knows there's good. And he knows Christ has won. Now he wants to see it in writing. He's weeping. And one of the elders said to him, verse 5, "Do not weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

You know if you need a text to get through life, if you need a text to hold you through difficult times and through discouragements, and through defeats, and through depression, go to that verse! Jesus has triumphed! That's what it's saying. Jesus has triumphed! We read on, "And I looked and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having 7 horns and 7 eyes which are the 7 spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures..." here comes worship, "...and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song."

The first scene we saw them worshipping God as Creator, now we see them worshipping God as the Redeemer. Here is their Creator who is their Redeemer. He has shed His blood and He has won back earth and everybody who will follow Him. He has won that all and they worship Him. And now when they worship Him they add music and they

add prayers to that worship. Do you see that? They have harps; they have lyres, in some of your Bibles. And they sing this new song, the new song of redemption. God has redeemed us, or the Lamb has redeemed us to God by His blood. And out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and He's made them kings and priests. Do you worship God as your Redeemer? I read somewhere one time that no matter how bad things are in life, if we will remember Calvary, we'll know everything we need to know to get on with life. We've been redeemed. Jesus Christ came, born of a woman, lived a sinless, spotless life, took our sins upon Himself and shed His blood on our behalf on Calvary. And these people get it, they know it, and they are worshipping their Creator who is also their Redeemer. They add music, and they add prayers to that.

I want to show you another picture of worship in the Book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 11, and there is a sister passage to this. You will find it in Revelation 19, 1 to 6, but we'll not read that today. That'll be nice reading for you this afternoon. Revelation 11 beginning with verse 15: "Then the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven saying..." Have you notice there's lots of noise in heaven? When you read the Book of Revelation, there's lots of noise. Anyways, "...a loud voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever!'" Now here comes worship, "...and the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God."

Now, notice why they worshipped Him here! Follow along, verse 17: "...saying, 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is, the One who was and the One who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come. And the time of the dead that they should be judged and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and You should destroy those who destroy the earth.'" What is that a scene of? They are worshipping their Creator who is judging. They are excited about the judgment! We saw them excited about being created, we saw them excited about being redeemed; now we see them excited about the judgment.

Why? Because in essence what it is saying is, "Finally, God is going to do something! God is going to march into the throne and judgment is going to take place. And He will reign. He will conquer, He will reward the prophets, He will reward the saints, He is taking over!" And they are rejoicing and worshipping God who is judging. And may I ask you a question? Do you worship God in praises and adoration because the judgment is going on? If not, maybe we know enough about the judgment to be dangerous. But not enough to understand the implication that if you and I are in Jesus Christ, that's all we need. That's all we need! And the Lord is there to vindicate us before the one who accuses us, and then to establish the reward. I have no idea what my reward will be, I just want to be there. I just want to be there, reward enough. And in heaven they rejoice and they worship their Creator. They rejoice and they worship the Redeemer. They rejoice over and they worship the Judge.

There's another picture that we are going to look at. And that is, worshipping the God who fulfills, who keeps His promises. Please turn to Revelation chapter 7. Now Revelation chapter 7 has two groups of people in it. The first group is a numbered group. Revelation 7 verse 4 it says, "I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty four thousand." Now I believe that's a symbolic number, it's not a literal number, but it is a numbered group of people. They are the people who will be alive when Jesus returns. Then there is another group of people, look at verse 9. "After these things I looked and behold, a great multitude, which no one could number."

So you have two groups of people, one group numbered, one group that can not be numbered. So many, so big and so vast is the group that they can't be numbered. Now you can read what different scholars say. I've been there and I've drawn some conclusions. The hundred and forty-four thousand obviously will be those who are alive when Jesus returns. Who are the other ones? They are all the other people who have accepted Christ as their Savior. Chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation is a picture of the redeemed from all ages; those who are alive when Jesus returns and those who have fallen asleep in Christ and are waiting for the resurrection and the second coming.

So if anybody asks you what your favorite part of the Bible is, if you could be anywhere in the Bible, you tell them you want to be in Revelation chapter 7 because everybody there is saved. Everybody there is saved. Now notice the worship that takes place here in Revelation chapter 7. We are going to begin reading with verse 10. This group is "...crying out with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.' And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever Amen.'"

"Then one of the elders answered saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore...' " notice what happens, "...they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore. The sun shall not strike them nor any heat for..." (the microphone cuts out)...that didn't help... muffled sounds... let's see. Which verse? It's on? I know I was going somewhere with this. What verse? 17. Ok, yes.

No more hungering, no more scorching from the sun, verse 17: "For the Lamb is in the midst of the throne..." Excuse me, I'm going to re-read that, "For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters." Now get this, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." The God, the Creator who fulfills His promises! So far we've looked at four pictures of worship: the

Creator who creates; the Creator who redeems; the Creator who judges; and the Creator who fulfills His promises.

I listened to my father, got enough information that I thought I had it all. But my anchor wouldn't hold. And I'm wondering if your experience in God is so strong that you could say, "There's no more to learn about worship". I doubt any of us would say that. And so as we begin this journey today, I have one simple appeal as we come to the end of this message, and that is this: Are you willing to take your crown off and bow before God and allow Him to teach you about worship? Where you can worship Him as Creator, as Redeemer, you can worship Him as Judge, and you can worship Him as the One who fulfills His promises. And today if you would like to say to the Lord, "Yes Lord, I am willing to step away from my crown and let You teach me how to worship You," I'm going to ask you to stand right where you are at.

"Father in Heaven, we are beginning a journey today -- a journey to explore how to get to Your heart and to have You in our hearts. And today it begins with a decision. We have decided to ask You to teach us how to worship You. And we pray Lord for a life transforming experience in Christ. We pray this in Jesus name, Amen."