

WORSHIP

New Testament usage of worship is divine homage. Repeatedly, the Lord Jesus Christ was worshipped with God's approbation. Christ never refused this worship, nor rebuked those who worshipped Him.

There are examples of worship offered exclusively to God the Father, such as in John 4:23, "worship the Father," or I Corinthians 14:25, "worship God," or Matthew 4:10, "worship the Lord thy God," etc.

There are examples of worship offered exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ, such as that offered by the magi (Matthew 2:8, 11), or by the leper (Matthew 8:2), or by the disciples after the storm (Matthew 14:33), or by the blind man (John 9:38), or by the angels of God (Hebrews 1:6), or by the woman of Tyre (Matthew 15:25), or by the disciples after His resurrection (Matthew 28:17), or by the disciples as He ascended (Luke 24:52), etc.

There are also instances of idolatrous worship, such as the worship of Satan (Matthew 4:9), or the worship of figures (Acts 7:43), or the worship of a human being (Acts 10:25), or worship of the dragon (Revelation 13:4), or worship of the beast (Revelation 14:8), or worship of his image (Revelation 16:2), etc.

In a number of places, when "worship" was offered to other than the true and living God, such as to human beings or angels, the "worship" was diverted from the creature to the Creator. In Revelation 19:9, 10 (N.I.V.), we read as follows:

"Then the angel said to me, Write. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! And he added, These are the true words of God. At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Thus, when John would fall at the feet of an angel, and seek "to worship him," one other than the true and living God, the angel said, "Do not do it . . . Worship God."

Again, in Acts 10:25, 26, we read as follows:

"And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man."

Thus, when Cornelius would fall at the feet of the apostle Peter,

and seek to worship him, Peter refused such homage by saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." In contrast, we read in Matthew 28:9, "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." Here, Christ does not rebuke them as the angel did John, "Do not do it. . .Worship God." Nor does Christ tell them as Peter did to Cornelius, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." He received the divine homage paid him, without rebuke, not only here, but in every other place where it occurred. And, He was well qualified for He was confessed to be "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), a statement also received without rebuke.

In Acts 14, "at Lystra," a miracle was performed on a lame man. When the people witnessed what was done, they said, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11, 12). Paul and Barnabas would not receive this homage, and reacted as did the angel to John, and Peter to Cornelius, saying:

"Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15).

Therefore, when divine homage was paid to an angel, to Peter, and to Paul and Barnabas, they all, without exception, refused it, and rebuked the worshipper. But, not so with the Lord Jesus Christ in a single instance. Notice the following examples:

1. Matthew 2:11, "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped (not her, but) him. . ."
2. Matthew 8:2, "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him. . ."
3. Matthew 9:18, "While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him. . ."
4. Matthew 14:33, "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him. . ."
5. Matthew 15:25, "Then came she and worshipped him. . ."
6. Matthew 20:20, "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him. . ."
7. Matthew 28:9, ". . .And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him."
8. Matthew 28:17, "And when they saw him, they worshipped him. . ."
9. Luke 24:52, "And they worshipped him. . ."

10. John 9:38, ". . .And he worshipped him."

In each case, worship was offered the Lord Jesus Christ. It was received by Him, without rebuke. If these people were all in error in worshipping Him, then He, as the one who said, "I am the . . .truth," was obligated to set the record straight. He did not. Therefore, He was worshipped, and received it with divine approbation.

The "worship" offered Him cannot have a watered down connotation. Consider two facts:

One, some of those who "worshipped him," not only "worshipped him," but also looked to Him for superhuman assistance. The leper of Matthew 8:2, not only "worshipped him," but expected Him to do something for him that no one else was able to do, "saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Moreover, the ruler of Matthew 9:18, not only "worshipped him," but expected Him to do something for him that no one else was able to do, "saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

And, two, the other instances of worship offered Him involved supernatural things that were the ground of the worship offered. In Matthew 14:33, the disciples "worshipped him" after He demonstrated His power over nature in quelling the storm. In John 9:38, the blind man, who received his sight, "worshipped him" after that fact. In Matthew 28:9, "the women" were compelled to "worship him" in view of the demonstration of His resurrection power.

The things that He was expected to do (Matthew 8:2; 9:18), and the things that He did (Matthew 14:33; 28:9; John 9:38), manifested His deity.

Matthew 18, in part, deals with the law governing forgiveness. Peter asked, ". . .how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). In answer, the Lord likened "the kingdom of heaven unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants," verse 23. When the king began "to reckon," one owed a sizeable debt and was unable to pay. When that servant was told what would be demanded of him, his wife, his children, and his possessions in order to pay the debt, he ". . .fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord have patience with me, and I will pay thee all," verses 25, 26. In the application of this principle, ". . .the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him. . .," verse 28. The casual reader might overlook the fact that in the first case, "the servant. . .fell down, and worshipped him," whereas in the second case "his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him," verse 29. The word "worshipped" in the first case is changed to "besought" in the second, which involves one "servant" dealing with "his fellowservant." The word "worship" is not appropriate in that matter.

"Worship" is due only the true and living God. "Thou shalt have no

other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness. . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. . ." (Exodus 20:3-5). The first of these words brings man face to face with the true object of worship. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The second of these words reveals the true mode of worship. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above."

The commandments of Exodus 20:3-5 are preceded by the words, "I am the Lord thy God. . .," verse 2. The word "Lord" here is "Jehovah," and "God" is "Elohim." There is special significance in the name by which God here speaks of Himself, "Jehovah." And, the commandments which follow are a logical sequence, if God indeed is what the name signifies. "Jehovah" is a combination of three Hebrew words, which may be translated into an English form thus:

1. "Yehi," He will be;
2. "Hove," Being;
3. And, "Hahyah," He was.

A combination is made from the three words by taking the first syllable of the first, "YEHi," the middle syllable of the second, "hOVe," and the last syllable of the third, "hahyAH," so that we have the name "YEHOVAH." The whole name means, "He that will be, He that is, He that was." If God is what this word signifies, then He alone is the true object of worship. He is "the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8), the "I AM THAT I AM" of Exodus 3:14, the "I AM" of John 8:58.

In Matthew 4:8, 9, ". . .the devil. . .saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The Lord, when confronted with a proposition to worship one other than the true and living God, responded by quoting from the plain, positive teaching of God's word, ". . .it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Compare "the Lord thy God" in Matthew 4:10 to "the Lord thy God" in Exodus 20:2. In both cases, He is the only true object of worship.

Now, in Hebrews 1:6 we read, "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The A.S.V. reads, "And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The Father brought the Son "into the world" once, but He purposes to do so "again," and "when he again bringeth" His Son "into the world" he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The One who "saith" is God the Father. And, the One to be worshipped by "all the angels of God" is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now notice an interesting point: In Matthew 4:10 the Lord Jesus

Christ addresses "Satan," an angel, and a powerful spirit creature, and obligates him that worship and service is only to be directed to "the Lord thy God." Yet, in Hebrews 1:6, the Father directs all angelic worship toward His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one thing that makes that possible, and that is, He is "the Lord thy God." Thomas confessed Him to be so (John 20:28), and on that basis Paul could write, "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24).

Now compare:

1. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. . . let all the angels of God worship him";
2. And, "Him only shalt thou serve. . . ye serve the Lord Christ."

Man was charged with worshipping and serving "the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:25). No creature, exalted or otherwise, is to be worshipped on equal ground with the Creator. In Hebrews 3:4 we read, "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." A building presupposes design and intelligence. In the animal realm there is no diversity to what animals build. The beaver's dam is the same around the world. But, there is diversity to what man builds. That diversity reflects the intelligence of the builder, who in turn reflects the intelligence of man's Creator. "Every house is builded by some man," and man alone of God's creatures is said to be "the image of God." And, "he that built all things is God."

In Hebrews 3:3 we read, "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house." Moses was used of God to build the tabernacle, but he himself was a part of what he constructed, namely a type along with the tabernacle. The type, however, pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Architect. The Designer, and the One to whom the entire typical system pointed, is to be "counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house." Who is this Builder? "God." Thus, speaking of Christ, "And he is before all things. . ." (Colossians 1:17), and "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3).

If Christ is a created being, then He would be an exception to the truth in John 1:3. Since "all things" came into existence "by him," then He is not an exception. Therefore, He should be "worshipped" for the very One who built "all things is God." If the Father created the Son, and One is the Creator, and the Other is the creature, it would be

a scriptural impossibility to honor Christ to the same extent that one should honor the Father. Yet, scripture affirms, ". . .honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. . . ." (John 5:23). No one who denies His Deity can possibly "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And, no one less than Deity ought to be so honored.

Christ was worshipped. Some who worshipped Him looked to Him for superhuman assistance. Others worshipped Him in view of the display of His miraculous power. Repeatedly, when one would worship other than the true and living God, the worshipper was rebuked, and the record set straight. Christ often received worship, yet without rebuke from Him, or God the Father, or the inspired writers. Worship is due only the true and living God. He is God. Therefore, worship ye Him! What an impertinence to think that God would obligate anyone to worship another who was less than Himself! What an insult to the integrity of a holy God to think that He would allow such worship without rebuke!

Jehovah's Witnesses tell us:

"We should not only know God's name but honor it and praise it. . .As the Creator of all things, Jehovah God. . .existed before all others. . .How right, then, that our worship should go only to him!" (end quote, *The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, pages 18, 19).

If, by their own admission, "worship should go only to" Jehovah, yet it repeatedly went to the Lord Jesus Christ with divine approbation, and was received by Him without rebuke to the worshipper, then He is not less than God!