

REVELATION – SERMON 74

APOSTOLIC ANGELOLATRY ADMONISHED

Revelation 19:10

INTRODUCTION

- Worship is defined as “Honour, reverence, homage, in thought, feeling, or act, paid to men, angels, or other spiritual beings, and figuratively to other entities, ideas, powers or qualities, but specifically and supremely to Deity” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)
- The worship of God has been described as “the honour and adoration which are rendered to him by reason of what he is in himself, and what he is to those who render it.” (George Morrish)
- Man is made in God’s image with the purpose of worshipping his Creator
- “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever”
- But man has chosen to reject God and instead worship idols (Romans 1:21-25)
- The fact is that every person worships *something*; if it is not God, it is an idol
- All of us, even the best of Christians, are susceptible to idolatry
- All of us are capable of the worst of sins while we dwell in these bodies of flesh, and it is only the grace of God that keeps us from them
- Previously we have seen in the opening verses of Revelation 19, the Alleluia chorus, as the multitudes in heaven rejoice over the destruction of Babylon
- Then follows the proclamation of the marriage supper of the Lamb that will take place on earth when Christ returns in glory with his saints
- The angel concluded his dictation to John with the solemn declaration: “These are the true sayings of God”
- It is at this point that the apostle John, overwhelmed with the heavenly visions, does something astonishing—he prepares to worship an angel
- His actions provoke a response from the angel that provides us with some vital lessons, both negatively and positively, on divine worship

I. CORRUPT WORSHIP EXACTS CENSURE

A. The danger in times of heightened emotional states

1. In such times we are more prone to saying and doing things that may be contrary to God's will
 - a. Note that John had a thorough understanding of true worship (John 4:20-24), and had warned others against idolatry (1 John 5:21)
 - b. Yet *twice* he fell down in worship of a created being (Revelation 22:8-9)
2. Peter, overwhelmed on the mount of transfiguration, spoke without understanding what he said (Luke 9:33)
3. God pre-empted Paul's potential sin after his vision of paradise by giving him a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7)
4. Note the importance of rationality in our worship
 - a. We are commanded to love God "with all thy mind" (Mark 12:29-30)
 - b. God's has given us the spirit "of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7)
 - c. The Christian is to be transformed by a renewed mind (Romans 12:2)
 - d. Our songs and prayers must be "with understanding" (Psalm 47:7; 1 Corinthians 14:15)

B. Angels are not to be worshipped

1. Angel worship was a problem in New Testament times (Colossians 2:18)
2. Roman Catholics venerate (worship) the angels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael
3. No created being is to be worshipped, regardless of how glorious they are

C. Angels are fellowservants with the saints

1. This is a reminder that God has not enlisted us alone in this struggle against evil
 - a. We have the church, we have the saints all over the world—a great army of believers
 - b. But we also have an invisible army at our side, equipped with supernatural strength
2. Angels are called "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14)

3. While the word fellowservant (*sundoulos*) is frequently used to describe all Christians (Matthew 18:28; 24:49; Colossians 1:7; 4:7; Revelation 6:11), it is only used here and 22:9 to describe angels
 - a. They “desire to look into” the things of the gospel (1 Peter 1:12)
 - b. “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Psalm 34:7)
 - c. “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Psalm 91:11)

II. CORRECT WORSHIP EXALTS CHRIST

- A. This verse shows Christ’s deity
 1. The angel flatly refused the worship that Christ receives
 2. The word translated “worship” (*proskuneo*) occurs 65 times in the New Testament and is *always* translated “worship” in our English Bible
 - a. It means to “kiss (the hand or the ground) toward” hence, often in the oriental fashion bowing prostrate upon the ground
 3. Eleven times the Gospels tell us that Christ was worshipped (Matthew 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52; John 9:38)
 - a. Modern Bible versions have translated this word as “kneeling down” in numerous places, thereby diminishing Christ’s glory and deity
 - b. The fact that Christ received worship shows that he is God, because only God can be worshipped (Exodus 34:14; Isaiah 42:8; Matthew 4:10; Acts 14:11-15; Revelation 19:10)
 4. God the Father commands angels to worship the Son: “And let all the angels of God worship him” (Hebrews 1:6)
- B. Believers are those who “have the testimony of Jesus” (1:9; 12:11,17)
 1. We are “ambassadors for Christ” taking the gospel to a lost world, to reconcile them to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)
 2. We are to bear witness of Christ through our words and our consistent behaviour
- C. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy
 1. There are two ways that this statement may be interpreted: either that Jesus is the *theme* of prophecy, or that Jesus is the *source* of prophecy

2. The true spirit of prophecy will always bear witness to Jesus Christ
 - a. He must have pre-eminence in all things (Colossians 1:18)
 - b. The heart of prophecy (forth-telling of God's word) is to manifest the glory, beauty and loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - c. The Scriptures testify of Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:44-45)
 - d. We can discern the truthfulness of a man's message by its effect on its hearers—does it turn men to Christ, causing them to bow before him and confess him as Lord? (Philippians 2:9-11)
3. It is by the Spirit of Christ that the prophets of old foretold the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-11)
 - a. He is the “word of God” (John 1:1) and “the true Light” (John 1:9) who lights the world through his gospel
 - b. Hence, our worship must be to him as the source of revelation, rather than to the communicators of revelation, whether they be men or angels

CONCLUSION

1. We are reminded here that in this life, even the best of Christians is prone to stumbling
2. The sin of idolatry is very near to all of us, requiring only the slightest deviation from true worship of the true God
3. God is seeking for sinners, bringing them to repentance and faith, but ultimately, in order that they *worship* him (John 4:20-24)
4. Has God found a true worshipper in me?
5. “Worship God” should be the prevailing thought that guides our whole lives
6. Every thought, word, action and decision should be controlled by the command: “worship God”
 - ✓ My first waking thought each day: *worship God*
 - ✓ In how I spend my time: *worship God*
 - ✓ In what I allow my eyes to behold and ears to hear: *worship God*
 - ✓ In my dealings with others: *worship God*
 - ✓ In my conversation: *worship God*
7. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)