

11. Unity in Worship (4Q 2018—Oneness in Christ)

Biblical material: Rev. 4:8, 11; Matt. 4:8, 9; Dan. 3:8–18; Rev. 14:9; Rev. 14:6, 7; Acts 4:23–31.

Quotes

- To gather with God’s people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer. *Martin Luther*
- The Church is everywhere represented as one. It is one body, one family, one fold, one kingdom. It is one because pervaded by one Spirit. We are all baptized into one Spirit so as to become, says the apostle, one body. *Charles Hodge*
- The unity of Christendom is not a luxury, but a necessity. The World will go limping until Christ’s prayer that all may be one is answered. We must have unity, not at all costs, but at all risks. A unified Church is the only offering we dare present to the coming Christ, for in it alone will He find room to dwell. *Charles H. Brent*
- There is unusual power in united prayer. God has planned for His people to join together in prayer, not only for Christian fellowship, spiritual nurture, and growth, but also for accomplishing His divine purposes and reaching His chosen goals. *Wesley L. Duesel*

Questions

What is significant about unity in worship? Doesn’t worship reveal our many differences—our worship services vary widely around the world? How do we become one in worship? How can we make our worship relevant and meaningful? Can we still be one with those who worship in ways that make us uncomfortable?

Bible summary

Rev. 4:8, 11 record songs of worship. Satan in his temptations tells Jesus to bow down and worship him (Matt. 4:8, 9). Nebuchadnezzar demands worship of his image (Dan. 3:8–18). Rev. 14:9 warns against worship of the beast, while earlier the call is made to worship God as Creator (Rev. 14:6, 7). The early church spent much time together, in prayer, in fellowship over meals, and in worship (Acts 4:23–31).

Comment

The Devil’s greatest tool in his rebellion against God is to defame him. The Devil’s highest ambition is to be like God—in the most wicked, jealous sense. He even had the gall to demand worship of God himself, when God came as Christ to this world: “Then the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory. He said to Jesus, ‘I will give you all these if you fall down on your knees and worship me.’” (Matthew 4:8, 9 FBV.)

As Goethe wrote in *Faust*, “The devil is an egotist.” He is completely wrapped up in himself and his selfish ambitions to such an extent he will falsify every truth in order to gain his objective. He is the Father of Lies, the Murderer of Truth from the beginning.

Think of all the times the Devil has spread false ideas about God. Right from the beginning, Satan has been lying to humankind about the kind of person God is. First to

Eve, then through Eve to Adam (Genesis 3). Then to Cain, in convincing him to rebel against the “arbitrary” worship requirements of God, leading him eventually to murder his righteous brother (Genesis 4). Then to all the inhabitants of the earth before the Flood. The time in which “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5 KJV).

In contrast our worship consists of giving God his worth, which is what worship really means. We delight in the one, the only one, who can heal and remake us in his image. We join together in praise to the one who is altogether trustworthy, right, and good.

Worshipping in spirit and in truth. This suggests that we can also worship *not* in spirit and *not* in truth... How we can do this is worth reflecting on...

All too often worship is how to do with what we feel. We feel “reverent and worshipful” when we go into a massive cathedral. Yet what we feel at that point may not necessarily have anything to do with worship.

It is by coming to know the *truth* about God that we can really *spiritually worship*. Only as we begin to see the wonderful truth that God has shown us about himself—primarily through Jesus who came to do just that—can we worship God in a way that is real and relevant. At its heart the word “worship” means giving someone their worth. In other words, an expression of how we think of someone, the positive attitude of respect and appreciation. *You cannot truly worship without thought and admiration.*

Giving worth involves the concept of ascribing value, indicating what we think is really our treasure. Worship is saying that God is *worth-while*. Jesus spent much time trying to explain the importance of identifying true values, what was really important as opposed to what we usually value—what we “give worth” to. So worship reorders our priorities, and reveals to us and others what we really think is vital.

It is in the recognition of God as he truly is that we *want* to worship him, to thank him and to praise him for his presence in our lives. Worship is very personal, and cannot be defined by ritual. The sense of awe and grandeur at the beauty in nature brings us to reflect and worship the God of creation—and this can be very far from church. In all that we do, we need to keep a consciousness of God. This is worship.

Ellen White Comments

Morning and evening let all hearts be united in reverent worship. {ML 32.2}

Under two heads, love to God and love to our neighbor, all the precepts are bound together in a sacred unity. These two principles are immutable, as eternal as the throne of God. By them man’s character is tested, and he is shown to be obedient or disobedient. Those who obey the first, loving God supremely, will pour out the riches of God’s goodness in love and compassion to their fellow-men. They will do far more than merely acknowledge the truth; they will offer far more than a ceremonial worship; they will give to God the whole service required by Him; for supreme love to God is an evidence that the truth is an abiding principle in the heart. {ST, January 25, 1899 par. 5}

Our meetings should be spirited and social, and not too long...The worship of God should be both interesting and instructive to those who have any love for divine and heavenly things. {RH, April 28, 1885 par. 5}