

To God and God Alone

by D. A. Carson

When an angel appeared to the Apostle John and began giving him instructions for writing the Book of Revelation, John fell at the angel's feet in worship.

"Do not do it!" the angel cried. "I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. *Worship God!*" (Rev. 19:10, emphasis mine).

Worship is ascribing worth to what we most value and cherish. If God is the One we most value and cherish and we ascribe to Him all the worth properly His, we worship Him.

Worship promises loyalty. If I truly worship God, I simultaneously pledge myself to serve Him. Everything else spins out of this center.

David tells us to "worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness," the splendor of all that makes God God (1 Chron. 16:29):

- The angels of heaven worship God because He alone is the Creator (Rev. 4:11). We worship Him for the same reason (Psa. 95:6; 100:2-3).
- The hosts of heaven bow before the Son because by His death He purchased people for God from every people and nation (Rev. 5:9-10, 12).
- We speak of the glorious splendor of His majesty (Psa. 145:3-5).
- Worship flows from listening to His every word (Deut. 6, 8; 1 Chron. 16).

Failure to worship God is idolatry. Because we are finite, we will, inevitably, worship something or someone. Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, wrote, "So long as man remains free he strives

for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship."

Because we are fallen, we gravitate to false gods: a god that is manageable, a material god, an abstract god like power or pleasure, or a philosophical god like Marxism or democracy or postmodernism. But worship we will.

Yet Jesus says the first commandment is to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Indeed, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Matt. 4:10).

Worship becomes the category under which we order everything in our individual lives. Whatever we do or whatever we say, we are to do all to the glory of God. That is worship.

And when we come together, we *worship* together—a time and place for corporate singing, for prayer, for ministry of the Word, for sharing the gifts God has given, and for enjoying the Lord's Supper.

Our God desires that all should honor the Son (John 5:23). We dare not focus on the mechanics of worship and lose sight of the goal. As we focus on God Himself, we learn to worship—in the process we learn to edify one another, bear with one another, and challenge one another.

"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Psa. 95:6-8).

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