

New Covenant Worship

Revelation 15:3-4

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Text

15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who prevailed over the Beast and over his image and over the number of his name, standing on the glassy sea, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who could not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? Because You alone are holy, because all the nations will come and do obeisance before You, because Your righteous judgments have been manifested."

Introduction - results of massive survey by George Barna

Most of you know who George Barna is, right? He is the guy that does massive surveys and analysis of Christian opinions on all kinds of subjects. He is kind of the equivalent of Gallop for the Christian church. He is probably the most quoted analyst of Christian opinions today.

Well, in the year 2000 George Barna co-wrote a book called Experience God in Worship. And in that book he summarizes the results of a massive survey. And let me read you a section of that because it shows the troubling state of the church on worship. I won't read the statistics; I'll just read his conclusions. He says,

Most adults will contend that a Christian has a responsibility to worship God. However, when asked to define what worship means, two out of three are unable to offer an appropriate definition or description of worship...

...True to cultural form, the driving motivation behind the worship-event attendance of millions of adults is to have a pleasing experience. For most Americans worship is to satisfy them, not to honor or please God. Amazingly, few worship-service regulars argue that worship is something they do primarily for God; a substantially larger percentage of attenders claim that attending worship services is something that they do for personal benefit and pleasure...

Good worship is defined in numerous ways. [And he goes on to describe various ways that people define worship, and they are mostly very man-centered. And then he says:] Most people attend worship events expecting to experience outcomes such as comfort, predictability, professionalism, and satisfying interpersonal relationships. Very few accept divine confrontation as a hallmark of worship. Yet, sometimes God uses a worship environment to grasp our attention and interact with us in ways that bring greater discomfort than security and joy. To most adults, such an experience is viewed as a negative, not a positive.

Put this in context, and the notion that America has a major problem in the area of worship is an inescapable conclusion. Perhaps the most striking feature of the research is the revelation that our problem is not an inability to craft services or experiences that are culturally relevant - we know how to do that... The problem is that American Christians do not have a heart that is thirsting for an experience with God, eager to express gratitude and praise to him, ... humility, appreciation, acknowledgment of his love and character, and joy in knowing and serving him...

Later in his analysis he says,

If worship is so central to Christian experience, then how is it possible for church people to have strayed so far from the mark?¹

And his conclusion is that our worship has been shaped by cultural forces far more than it has been shaped by Scripture. It has been shaped by man's expectations far more than it has been shaped by God's expectations. It is man-centered to the core.

I don't normally read such a long portion from a book, but I wanted you to see that it is not just little-ole-me who sees a pervasive problem in the area of worship. Even a mainstream authority like Barna recognizes that there is a huge problem.

Of course, this is nothing new on planet earth. The church has constantly needed to be reformed. I believe that is one of the reasons that these vignettes on worship have been scattered by God all throughout this book of Revelation. Each vignette gives reform to yet another area of worship. Let's look at each of the points in your outline and see if our worship looks anything similar to this New Covenant worship.

I. New Covenant worship acceptable to God is brought by overcomers whose life is different from the world - character matters (v. 2)

The first point says, "New Covenant worship acceptable to God is brought by overcomers whose life is different from the world - character matters." We see that in verse 2. Of course, we have already seen that earlier in the book. God rejected the professional worship of the Jewish synagogues because they had no faith in Christ. That's not surprising. They were equivalent to the liberals of today.

But in chapters 2-3 God also rejected the worship of at least some true churches. The church of Ephesus had lost its first love and had lost its spiritual capacity to hear God in worship. They were just going through the motions on a horizontal level. So Jesus admonished them to have spiritual

¹ In Michael D. Warden, *Experiencing God in Worship: Perspectives in the Future of Worship in the Church from Today's Most Prominent Leaders*, (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2000), pp. 15-17.

ears. The church of Smyrna was warned to listen what the Spirit was saying to the churches and to strive to be an overcomer. And you see similar admonitions to other churches, with Laodicea making Jesus Christ so sick to His stomach with its worship that He was ready to vomit them out. Jesus wasn't even inside that church. He was outside, knocking on the door of the church. Verse 2 definitely is not describing Laodicea. The point is that even true churches can have worship that doesn't get past the ceiling, let alone stand before God's throne room.

Hebrews 12 gives us instruction on how to be caught up to the heavenly Jerusalem and how to approach God's holy throne. It is not automatic. Yet there are saints in Revelation 15:2 who have succeeded in doing exactly that. They are standing on the sea of glass before God's throne and they are passionately worshipping God. And how does it describe them? It describes them as overcomers. Verse 2 says that every one of them constituted "those who prevailed over the Beast and over his image and over the number of his name." They were set apart to the Lord and not set apart to culture.

Amos 5:21-23 describes what happens to the worship of those who adapt to culture, cling to sin, and become man-centered. Despite the fact that they had incredibly professional worship services, God tells them,

Amos 5:21 "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Amos 5:22 Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Amos 5:23 Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. Amos 5:24 But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream. Beautiful music and emotionally sensitive worship services cannot whitewash a life of disobedience to God. If we are to have worship that God delights in, then it must be worship that flows from a heart devoted to God and that fights against the world. If we compromise with the beast, with the economics of the beast, and with the name of the beast, we cannot expect to bring pleasure to God. Why? Because He is the arch-enemy of the beast.

And by the way, even though we are only dealing with the subject of worship today, you ought to meditate on the implications of that phrase for involvement in politics. Many Christians in politics today wear the name of the beast. They do not act like Shadrack, Mesheck, and Abednego.

II. New covenant worship is not watching professionals sing and perform; it is an active participation of each saint (vv. 3-4)

A second thing that we notice about this worship is that it is the worship of the whole congregation, not just a professional band. One of the things that amazes me when I visit churches on vacation is the number of people who passively sit or who passively stand and appear to simply watch the band worship. I should have been worshiping God myself rather than looking around the room (so I have four fingers pointing at me), but it was distracting to see 90% of the congregation not singing.

Who is doing the singing in verse 3? Not a soloist. Not an organized choir. Not the worship band. It was each and every member of the heavenly Zion. They sang the song of Moses. They sang the song of the Lamb. I have often been asked why we do not have choirs, and my response is the same as Charles Spurgeon's - that hopefully the whole congregation is the choir singing to God. Synagogue worship was different from the temple. New Covenant worship is not professionalism; it is offering up the sincerity of the heart. Even though we try to practice and we try to gain more skill on the worship team (because God commands us to sing with skill) we try to involve ordinary people and not become a professional elite. And it is one of the reasons we keep the worship team in the back, where they can't be seen. I'm sure there are advantages to keeping them up front, but keeping them in the back helps us keep our focus where it should be. You are the choir. Each of you must be active.

III. New covenant worship is not complex, ornate, or artificial; it is accessible to ordinary Christians (vv. 3-4)

The third thing I see here is that the New Covenant worship was down-to-earth even though it was in heaven. It was not complex worship that takes years to master. Some so-called Covenant Renewal worship is so incredibly complex that sometimes even the worship leaders get lost and for sure the visitors get lost. And the readings and prayers are so poetic and ornate that it is hard to relate to them. It seems artificial. But we can easily fall into the same mode. When we try to outdo each other in the poetic beauty of our prayers, our focus may be in the wrong place. Who are we trying to impress? Men, or God?

When you read verses 3-4 you do see emotional depth to it (yes); you see

theological depth (yes); you see a focus on God (yes); you do see a well thought-through prayer, but you do not see complex, ornate, or artificial prayers or songs. These are normal words of normal people whose hearts are not normal because they are set on fire by God. But the words themselves are normal. The Greek is not stylized Greek. It is not Attic Greek. It is Koine Greek - it was the street language of ordinary Jewish Christians. The point is that there is nothing artificial about the way that they pray. It is simply the overflow of hearts that are full of God.

IV. New Covenant worship is 100% grounded in Scripture (vv. 3-4)

The next thing that you see is that every phrase of this song is grounded in Scripture. David Chilton does a good job of showing where each phrase comes from. Interestingly, it is not from one passage of the Bible, but phrases from numerous passages of Scripture. In other words, this is not a psalm, but a hymn. It is based on Scripture, but it is not an extended Scripture like a Psalm would be. It's more like an exposition of Scripture. But it is Scriptural, through and through.

When I evaluate the hymns and songs that Kathy has researched and that others have contributed, I want to make sure that every phrase is Scriptural. If a worship song has a non-Scriptural phrase, I remove it and substitute a Biblical phrase. God does not want man's opinions being offered up to Him in worship, no matter how cool they may sound. But more to the point, His command (and it is a command) in Colossians 3:16 is, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." In other words, the word of God must dwell in you richly by means of the music that we sing. Obviously if we sang only the Psalms, the word of God would dwell in us richly. But good hymns are expositions of Scripture, and good songs are expositions of Scripture as well. They are another way of driving the word of God deep into our souls.

And by the way, there is a prejudice that some people have in favor of old hymns simply because they are old. But there are some horrible old hymns that do not let the word of God dwell in your richly. You will not find some of the language of their verses anywhere in the Bible. Take the hymn, "I Walk Through The Garden Alone." It is sentimental, sappy, and filled with platitudes. If Revelation 15 is to be a model of the church's singing, then we need to avoid both extremes of the church - the extreme of exclusive psalmody and the extreme of non-Scriptural songs that simply share

testimonies or feelings. Worship should be like the moon reflecting back the light of the sun. We should reflect back to God the Scriptures in every portion of our worship; telling Him that we agree with those Scriptures and that they express our heart's desire.

V. New Covenant worship includes old and new; it borrows from the time of Moses and from the time of Jesus (v. 3a)

The next thing that I see is that New Covenant worship includes both old and new. It borrows from the time of Moses and from the time of Jesus. Verse 3 says, "They sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb."

A. *The song of Moses continues to be our song*

This is such a rebuke to the modern church which has completely thrown out the Psalter. And actually, it has thrown out anything Mosaic, for the most part. But here we see that the songs of the Mosaic economy continue to be the lifeblood of New Covenant worship. Why? Because God has not authorized us to put a dividing page between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He has not authorized us to rip out the Old Testament from our Bibles. We will see in the next sermon that both Israel and the Gentile nations will be judged in verse 5 based upon the law of Moses. That is what commentators say is being referred to by the phrase "the sanctuary of the tabernacle of the testimony." The ten commandments that were put inside the ark of the covenant was called the "testimony." And the ark of the covenant was called the tabernacle of the testimony because it housed God's law; it tabernacled the two tables of the law. And the temple was called the sanctuary of the tabernacle of the testimony. So even the law of Moses exactly as it was written on two tablets and stored in the tabernacle of the testimony, is included in this New Covenant worship.

So if churches want to get their worship past the ceiling, they must not sneer at God's Hymn book, the Psalter. They must not sneer at Moses. They must not sneer at the law of God. The songs that hit the top of the worship music charts of heaven were the songs of Moses and the Lamb. Though we will likely sing an endless list of new songs in heaven, the old will never grow old or obsolete. Glenn Dale Peace once said,

"Don't waste your time trying to figure out which is best--the old or the new. They are both best, for they are both vital to the whole. The song of Moses and the song of the Lamb--cease to sing either and you rob the other of it's fullness of joy. Christians should

appreciate the heritage of their old hymns, and yet enjoy the endless possibilities of new songs, by which to praise their Lord. God is always the same, and so whatever was valid once, will always be valid. But God is also infinite, and so there is no end to what can be discovered, and so the new is always valid also. The wise Christian will learn from the heavenly singers to preserve the old, and pursue the new.

B. The song of the Lamb gives added depth

And singing the new is exactly what it means when it says, "and the song of the Lamb." This song has phrases taken from the Old Testament and it has phrases taken from the New Testament. You won't find the exact words of this whole song anywhere in the Psalter. Some of it came from Moses and some of it was newly composed. So John doesn't want us only singing the Psalter. New Covenant worship incorporates both. We are commanded in the New Testament to sing Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And you will find several non-Psalter songs being sung in worship services recorded in the book of Revelation. Indeed, commentators point out that other books of the New Testament quote from new musical compositions. New Covenant worship includes both.

Speaking of the importance of the singing itself, Martin Luther said, "Next to theology I give the first and highest honor to music." And concerning the energy with which the whole congregation sang, John Wesley said,

Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you are half dead or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of it's being heard than when you sung the songs of Satan.²

And if he was around today, he would probably say, "than when you cheered the football team."

VI. New Covenant worship includes instruments (v. 2d)

Next, I want you to notice that verse 2 ends by showing that this singing was accompanied by harps. There was instrumental music in this worship service. If they are harps of God, they are authorized by God. And because there is a huge debate in some circles on whether the Bible truly authorizes musical instruments in worship or whether they were only used in the temple and only used by Levites, I want to spend a bit more time on this point. In a sermon I cannot do this subject justice, so I have written a large book that deals with every objection and solidly roots the use of instrumental music in the Bible. But let me at least introduce the subject to you in a preliminary way.

² <https://www.worshipedia.org/node/1494>

If there are harps of God, then God must have authorized them somewhere. Where does He do this? In my book I show that He authorizes their use in the law of Moses, in the life of David - especially the tabernacle of David, which was quite different from the temple, in the Psalms, the prophets, and in the New Testament. And the commands that are given are not just given to male Levites in temple worship (as some people claim), but those commands go way beyond the temple to commanding instruments in synagogue worship, and indeed to Gentile believers in other lands. I've written down in my notes here some sample verses that show that God allowed Levites (1 Chron. 15:16; 2 Chron. 7:6) and non-Levites to play instruments. Some of the non-Levites include prophets (1 Sam. 10:5), kings (2 Sam. 6:4; Is. 38:20), ordinary citizens (Ps. 33:1-3; 2 Sam. 6:5), males (1 Chron. 13:8; 15:16) and females (Ex. 15:20; Ps. 68:25). And each of the Scriptures I have behind those categories give commands from God to accompany the singing of corporate worship with musical instruments if those people are adequately skilled and if they have the character qualifications that are laid out in Scripture. The instrumental worship that God speaks against is that which comes from a bad heart (Eph. 5:19) or that which is produced by those with a lawless life (Amos 5:23). But the point is, God delights in the music of the upright. It was not just a command for Levites in the temple. It was a universal command.

And by the way, God's delight in instrumental music started long before the time of Moses. According to Job 38 and Ezekiel 28, God created instruments for angels to use in worship before God even created man. In fact, Job 38:7 says that all the angels burst into songs of worship on day one of creation when they watched God amazingly create the earth out of nothing. They could not help but stand in awe of God and rejoice in song and praise Him. And Lucifer was an upright angel on that day who accompanied the singing with tamborines and pipes according to Ezekiel 28:13. And in that passage God called that musical accompaniment "perfection" and "beauty" (Job 38:6-7; Ezek. 28:12-15). It was beautiful to God. It was perfect for Him. God has enjoyed worship accompanied by instruments from day one of creation to the end of the book of Revelation (such as Revelation 5:8; 14:2; 15:2).

And he wants us to glory in the same music. He wants us to pray, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If heaven is the pattern for everything we do (as Colossians 3:1-2 says that it should be), then our worship music on earth should be patterned after the worship music of heaven. This involves not only singing new songs (such as the songs

given in Rev. 3:8,11; 5:9,12,13; etc.), but also valuing the instrumental music that God loves so much (and which is seen throughout Revelation - Rev. 5:8; 14:2; 15:2; etc.).

This is no different than what happened in the Old Testament worship of temple and synagogue. God showed Moses “the pattern” for their worship by showing him what happened in heaven and then having Moses imitate that worship on earth (Ex. 25:40; 26:30; Numb. 8:4; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5). It was not enough for heaven to be beautified with such music. God’s heavenly kingdom invaded earth’s earthly kingdom and enabled David to affirm that the “praise of the upright is beautiful” (Ps. 33:1), and it is said to be beautiful in the context of being accompanied by the same kind of instrumental music that characterized heaven (and you can see that instrumental accompaniment in the next two verses). Just as there are “harps of God” in heaven in our passage of Revelation 15:2, there are “musical instruments of Jehovah” on earth (2 Chron. 7:6).

In my book I seek to demonstrate in depth how the Booth of David was the paradigm for the New Testament church worship. It included non-Levites and even Gentiles playing instruments in worship by God's authorization. They couldn't do that in the temple, but they did do that in the synagogues and in the tabernacle of David. It was foreshadowing the New Testament worship of the New Covenant according to Amos 9:11,12 and Acts 15:15-17. I am skimming over just a handful of my arguments in my book, and I am doing so in a very cursory way. But because some have asked for a bit more proof, I am trying to give it.

And there are many other proofs. Every time God commands us to sing a “psalm” He is commanding us to use musical instruments. And the reason I say that is because the meaning of the Hebrew and the Greek words for “psalm” literally mean a song accompanied by musical instruments. So if we are commanded to sing Psalms, we are commanded to use instruments. And my book deals with every objection to that conclusion.

But the Psalms themselves command the use of instruments over and over - and in a couple of places, even command Gentiles to play instruments in worship. The Psalms say, “Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn” (Ps. 98:5-6). “Sing praises on the harp to our God” (Ps. 147:7); “Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp” (Ps. 149:3); “play skillfully” (Ps. 33:3); “Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harps! Praise Him with the timbrel... Praise Him with stringed instruments

and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with clashing cymbals!” (Ps. 150:1-6).

Even the term “Selah,” which occurs 74 times in the Old Testament, is an instruction to use musical instruments since it refers to forte (or very loud) instrumentation. If the Psalms are for today, can we ignore these oft-repeated Selahs?

And what about the instruction, “Higgaion” (cf. Psalm 9:16 with 92:3)? That is an instruction to use “quieter instrumental music.” There is a place for quietness in instrumentation. In fact, the instruments must be servants to the words, not vice versa. And there are some words that call for softer instrumentation or no instrumentation. In any case, it is hard to spiritualize away such instructions that God has preserved for us.

Even the inspired titles of the Psalms show us that God loves musical instruments. Can we really forbid stringed instruments while singing Psalm 3 when the inspired title calls us to sing it “with stringed instruments”? God didn't just preserve that instruction for the Levites of the Old Testament; He preserved it for the church of today. Can we really forbid wind instruments when Psalm 5 calls us to sing those words “with flutes”? And if it is only symbolic of joy, why command a flute is one place, a harp in another, and other instruments? And why command the instruments to be loude here and softer there?

And some people object that you can't find the piano in the Bible; we can only use the specific instruments that are listed in the law of God. But God authorizes any generic “musical instruments” (which is the meaning of *neginoth* in the title of Ps. 54,55; etc.). That's why David was not in sin when he said that certain Psalms (like Psalm 8 and 81) were to be accompanied by “an instrument of Gath” (which was an instrument invented by the Philistines of Gath). That is indicating that even musical instruments not explicitly mentioned in the Pentateuch are allowed, and they are allowed because God's law gave that flexibility. Certainly David modeled the use of “all kinds of instruments” (2 Sam. 6:5) and authorized the use of all kinds in Psalm 150. I think the keyboard and guitar are covered by the phrase, “all kinds of instruments.”

And part of the reason for this commanded flexibility seems to be that God loves variety. Suzanne Haik-Vantoura has demonstrated how the diacritical marks above and below the Hebrew text of the Old Testament are musical notations and have given the church the foundations for Western music. And the exquisite nature of this original music exhibits variety in voice and

instrument, melody and harmony, modality and rhythm. The fact that exactly the same words are sung to one tune and instrument in one psalm and to a totally different tune and instrument in another psalm shows God's flexibility. His Biblical guidelines for music are not inhibiting but spur us to reverent creativity. God loves music and He wants us to love music. And if this is a subject that you have conscience issues over, I would encourage you to pick up my ebook on the subject from leanpub.³ There are so many other proofs that my book covers.

And I should point out that those who have conscience issues over the possibility of adding things to worship should also have conscience issues over the possibility of taking away things from worship that God has authorized. Both involve us in equal sin. The regulative principle of worship covers both adding and subtracting. For example, the classic passage on the Regulative Principle of Worship is Deuteronomy 12:31-32, which says,

You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

While most evangelicals are constantly adding man-made traditions in violation of this verse, there are Reformed people who take away from God's commands by forbidding instruments, and forbidding the raising of hands, and kneeling, and saying "Amen," all of which are commanded by God. OK, enough on instruments.

VII. New Covenant worship draws the heart out in God-focused adoration (v. 3)

I see yet another implication for reform when verse 3 showcases that New Covenant worship draws the heart out in God-centered adoration. There is nothing man-centered about this worship. Verse 3 says, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!"

Where is the focus? It is on God. This is not a seeker-sensitive worship. This is a God-sensitive worship. In his instructions on worship, John Wesley said,

Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.⁴

I was very convicted by Dick Dungan when I would spend weeks at a time

3 Type in "Kayser" in leanpub's search menu for all my books, or go to this link:
<https://leanpub.com/musical-instruments-in-worship>

4 <https://www.worshipedia.org/node/1494>

on missions trips with him. He was so God-focused in all of his life that worship constantly poured out of him. I occasionally felt frustrated because I couldn't sleep with him in the same room. All night long while he was sleeping soundly his face radiated joy as he was singing to God in his sleep and delighting in worship in his sleep. Now, I am not saying that we all need to do that, but the Godward focus he had was so supernatural and so obvious that it made me long to have more of that myself.

Louis Albert Banks tells of an elderly Christian man who was a very fine singer, developing cancer of the tongue. He had to have his tongue removed and a portion of his throat. And prior to the operation, the man asked the doctor, "Are you sure I will never sing again?" And the doctor affirmed that he would never be able to sing again. The patient then asked if he could sit up for a moment. He said, "I've had many good times singing the praises of God... I have one song that will be my last. It will be of gratitude and praise to God." And right there he started to softly sing the words of Isaac Watts' hymn,

I'll praise my Maker while I've Breath, And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler power; My days of praise shall ne'er be past, While life, and thought, and being last...

He wanted the last thing that his vocal chords could say to be adoration. Hopefully none of you will experience the loss of your voice. But New Covenant worship should take on a God-centered adoration such as these two men have had. A lot of criticism I hear from people in other churches shows a self-centered focus. Worship is not about the pastor and others serving you. It's not about tickling your ears with new information. It's about directing you into more and more of a God-centered focus. The very meaning of the term "worship" means that we are serving God and blessing Him and bringing pleasure to Him. That should be our motive. We are here to serve Him. Even when we are listening to a sermon where God is challenging and/or blessing you, it should be the response of your heart to say, "Lord, help me to be pleasing in your sight as I seek to conform my life to Your Word. I love you. My life is yours. Have your way with me. Speak to me through this sermon. I am listening." There is no part of the worship service that cannot be God-centered.

VIII. Yet New Covenant worship continues to express awe, reverence, and humility (v. 4)

The next verse indicates that along with adoration, there should be awe, reverence, and humility. "Who could not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? Because You alone are holy..."

According to Barna, the fear of God is completely absent from many worship services. Yet when you look through the worship services of Scripture you see that the fear of the Lord is central to New Covenant worship. Who would not fear you O Lord, and glorify your name.

To glorify someone is to look to His advancement, His honor, His joy. Do we do that with God? If not, ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to glorify the Father. He is an expert at glorifying the Father and can enable you to do so as well. The Holy Spirit is infinitely humble and can give you some of His humility.

IX. New Covenant worship continues to have three motives for reverencing God (v. 4)

Now, verse 4 gives three reasons why people should fear God. The first motive is that He alone is holy. The word "holy" does not have as its primary meaning to be righteous (though it does include that idea of being set apart from sin). But its primary definition is being separate, other, and totally transcendent. He alone is transcendent. But either definition of holiness is a great motive for worship.

The second is that His Great Commission will be so successful that all nations will worship Him. Missions is a tremendous motive for worship. And it is the most natural response of those who have been saved. God told Pharaoh, "let my people go that they may worship me." Redemption leads to worship, and where worship is lacking, redemption has probably been lacking too.

This also speaks of judgments. Just as Israel rejoiced when they saw the judgment on Egypt in the Red Sea, these saints are rejoicing and worshipping when they see God's judgment on Israel and Rome. Judgments may cause the non-elect to hate God. But judgments cause the true believer to stand in awe of God and to love Him the more.

X. New Covenant worship is doctrinally rich (vv. 3-4)

One thing that troubles me about some churches that I have run across is how they seem to deliberately keep doctrine out of their worship. One pastor told me, "Doctrine divides; love unites. I don't like doctrine." I told him, "Well, you just expressed a doctrine, and its an unbiblical one."

But this song of Moses and the Lamb is incredibly rich in doctrine. I won't spend much time on it, but let me point out some of the doctrines that

undergird this worship.

A. *God's nature is displayed here:*

First, there are God's attributes that are used in worship. As I read verses 3-4 I want you to see if you can notice the doctrines of God's Lordship, His omnipotence, His justice, His judgment, His truthfulness, His holiness, His knowability (in other words, He can be known), His transcendence, and His imminence. Every one of those attributes is explicitly stated in these two verses. In other words, it is a doctrinally rich song. Let me read those verses, and on your fingers see if you can tick off nine attributes of God.

“Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who could not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? Because You alone are holy, because all the nations will come and do obeisance before You, because Your righteous judgments have been manifested.”

B. *God's providence*

Well, the same verses also show God's providence. That can be seen in the phrases, "your works" and "Your righteous judgments have been manifested." That's the doctrine of providence. When we consider God's providence in America, we shouldn't get depressed; we should worship.

C. *God's sovereignty*

And the phrases, "your ways" and "King of the nations" shows the doctrine of God's sovereignty. Doctrine is not irrelevant to worship. It becomes the fuel of worship. It stimulates worship if our hearts have any grace at all. If the Father seeks worshipers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth, then the truth of Scriptural doctrine needs to permeate worship.

D. *God's eschatological plans for earth*

Verse 4 also gives one facet of our doctrine of eschatology. Why do they worship? It says, "because all the nations will come and do obeisance before You." Literally, they will worship before You." This is a God who is so awesome that He will eventually convert every nation, and entire nations as nations will worship Him. True eschatology is not irrelevant. It transforms worship. When I became Postmillennial, it revolutionized my worship.

And in eschatology, judgments of nations precede conversion of nations, so he says that they will worship for yet another motive: "because Your righteous judgments have been manifested." But the two phrases taken together show Christ advancing the cause of His kingdom infallibly just as Psalm 2 predicted that He would, and that Jesus will not stop until all

nations are Christian nations. John Wesley said about this phrase, "This is a glorious testimony of the future conversion of all the heathens. The Christians are now a little flock; they who do not worship God an immense multitude. But all the nations shall come from all parts of the earth to worship him, and glorify his name."⁵ How do pessimillennialists deal with this verse? They say that it can't be taken literally because everyone knows that things are getting worse. For example, even though the Dispensationalist commentator, Thomas, prides himself in being a literalist in interpreting Revelation, he claims that this particular verse can't be taken literally. Why? Because he doesn't believe the world can be Christianized. And I say, "No. It can be and will be. All nations will one day worship Jesus. The Great Commission will not be a failure. It will be a success."

XI. New Covenant worship involves affirmations that require faith (vv. 3-4)

But of course, it takes faith to believe that. This is why so many people reject Postmillennialism. It takes faith to believe it. But all of worship takes faith. Paul makes clear in Romans that without faith it is impossible to please God. If we want our worship to get past the ceiling, we must believe the Word of the God that we are worshipping. To do otherwise is to insult the God we are worshipping. Yet there are countless Christians in America who despise God's law, disbelieve His promises, use carnal weapons rather than God's spiritual weapons, and in other ways show that they are not living by faith. New Covenant worship worships because it can see beyond what the world sees. It sees heaven invading earth gradually and replacing the kingdom of man with the kingdom of heaven. We must have the spiritual eyes of faith if we are to worship fully.

I started this sermon with the research of Barna on the state of worship in American churches. It is in desperate need of reformation. And it may be that our own hearts need to be tweaked or even majorly adjusted so that we conform to the pattern of heaven. If that is the case, it is not a reason for despair. Just repent and ask God to change you. Don't even despair over the state of the church. God knows exactly how to get Christians to live by faith rather than by sight. It is my hope that the book of Revelation as a whole has been accomplishing that task in you. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen. Let's pray.

5 John Wesley, Notes. p. 709