

The Worship of God

The Worship of God # 1 {Its Distinctive Nature}

Introduction:

- *What I Mean by the Subject*
- *How I Will Approach the Subject*
- *Section 1: The Distinctive Nature of the Worship of God*
- *Section 2: The Divine Rule of the Worship of God*
- *Section 3: The Dialogical Character of the Worship of God.*

Introduction:

- *Under What Headings I Will Address the Subject*
- *I. God's Special Presence in the Church in Matthew 18:20*
- *II. God's Special Identification of the Church in 1 Timothy 3:15*

I. God's Special Presence in the Church in Matthew 18:20

● A. The Character of This Promise

- These words limit this promise to the formal or public gathering of the people of God.
- The promise of v. 20 comes attached to a very plain condition or limitation,
- "For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them."
- Let me set out four grounds for this assertion.

A. The Character of This Promise

- *The first is the **context** of verse 20.*
- The passage before us from verse 17 on deals with the local church.
- It is this significant context that must control our interpretation of this promise.
- *The second is the **connection** of verse 20.*
- The use of “again” at the beginning of v 19 emphasizes this connection.
- There is a web of connections...

A. The Character of This Promise

- *The third is the **condition** of verse 20.*
- The condition is “gathered together in my name.”
- Matt 10:41 is parallel: “He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet...”
- To receive a prophet in the name of a prophet means to receive him in his official character as a prophet—because he is a prophet.
- Similarly, Matt 18:20 this phrase has reference to the gathering of Christ's people in their official character as His church.

A. The Character of This Promise

- *The fourth is the **correspondences** of v 20.*
- The parallels between this passage and 1 Cor 5:1-13 confirm all this.
- 1 Cor 5:4 reads: “In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus.”
- The parallels between this Matt 18:20 and 1 Cor 5:4 provide Paul’s interpretation of Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:20.

A. The Character of This Promise

- *The fourth is the **correspondences** of v 20.*
- *Both* are treating church discipline.
- *Both* call for discipline to be enacted by a formal gathering of the church.
- *Both* use the same Greek word for “gather.”
- *Both* describe this gathering as taking place in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- *Both* speak of its authority as consisting of special presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.


A. The Character of This Promise

- *The fourth is the **correspondences** of v 20.*
- The Apostle Paul supports in 1 Cor 5:4 the interpretation of Matt. 18:19-20 offered here.
- So does John Owen:
- "...so the Lord Jesus Christ hath promised his presence to the same ends and purposes, unto all them that assemble together in his name for the observation of the worship which in the gospel he hath appointed: Matthew 18:20."

B. The Consequences of This Promise

- If God in Jesus Christ is especially present in the assemblies of His church, then this has tremendous consequences.
- One is the “regulative principle of the church.”
- If God is specially present some place, a special conduct is required in that place.
- The gathered church is “holy ground” (Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15).
- This rebukes low views of worship ...

II. God's Special Identification of the Church in 1 Timothy 3:15

- **A. The Forceful Descriptions**
 - *The House of God*
 - *The Church of the Living God*
 - *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*
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II. God's Special Identification of the Church in 1 Timothy 3:15

● B. The Pressing Questions

- Is the church here the universal or the local church?
- With what is the church being contrasted here?

● C. The Practical Conclusions

- The unique identity of the church requires a unique regulation of conduct in it.

Practical Lessons:

- ***Thus, both Matt 18:20 & 1 Tim 3:15 teach the church is under God's special regulation.***
- *It is crucial to distinguish between formal gatherings of the church & informal gatherings.*
- *It is important to have a clear beginning and a clear ending to the meetings of the church.*
- *When you come to church, remind yourself that you come into the special presence of Christ.*

Practical Lessons:

- *The special presence of Christ in the midst of His gathered people suggests that modern Christianity is infected with an inability to distinguish what is holy from what is not.*
- *The special presence of Christ in the midst of His gathered people encourages us to use the public means of grace diligently.*

Closing Word ...

