

Zambia Report 2: Theology¹
ABC 6/5/22

Review trip, (S) 2 weeks training pastors & church leaders in Zambia. There were 8 of us on the team (S), all GTN staff except for me. 2 from Pennsylvania, 2 from AZ, 3 from WA, & me. (S) Our last 2 days teaching, Joel & I were in Zimba, about an hour out Livingstone. (S) We got to see a little of the countryside traveling back & forth. (S) Roadside shops selling fresh produce & charcoal mainly. On our way to Zimba our second day, the van we were in broke down about 10 miles into the drive. (S) Fortunately, we pulled over right at a bus stop & within minutes were on the public bus (with A/C & playing Christian music videos on the monitors) & on our way to Zimba. (S) Everyone who completed the training received (S) a certificate, of which they were very happy. This is the group in Zimba. (S) Thankfully, shortly after this picture was taken, the van that had broken down earlier arrived to take us back to Livingstone. (S) No matter where you travel, kids are kids! Although the accommodations weren't always wonderful (S), we didn't go for comfort. We went for the people (S) who are hungry to learn from God's Word. (S) Here are a few pictures of various guys at the different locations doing some of their group work. (Sx) Keep going until pic of question time At the close of every teaching there was a time for comments & questions which was a wonderful time of interaction & learning together. As I mentioned last time, we had 2 Zambian pastors teaching with us, (S) Pastor Wise in Ndola & Pastor Charles (S) in Livingstone & Zimba. They both did a fabulous job & will be doing more teaching in the future as well as recommending others who can teach. Keep these men in your prayers as they continue to study & proclaim the gospel in Zambia. (S) This pastor, as you can tell, is pretty blind. That's a large print Bible he's struggling to read. (S) This is Elijah, who was born with severe disabilities. He traveled 2 hours each way so he could be at the training. You might think he came from a different town, but not so. (S) He uses this hand-crank cart to travel everywhere & was thrilled to learn more from God's Word that he could then share with others. Be praying for the church in Zambia & for GTN staff, including Joel, who will be returning there next week to do some training in other areas. (S) Zambia is a beautiful country with wonderful people (S) & I was blessed by my time there & seeing more of God's beautiful creation. (S) OK, not everything was beautiful, unless you like

¹ Portions adapted from Grudem, W. A. *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*

reptiles like this (S) monitor lizard. It was only about 4 feet long & I'm told tastes like chicken. Anyway, I saw some sights & some (S) signs I'd never seen before.

As I mentioned last time, I taught 2 courses 4 times each, bibliology & theology proper. *Theology proper* is simply the attempt to understand the truth God has revealed to us about Himself. When Jesus cried out in agony on the cross, **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?** (Mt 27:46), He's asking a theological question. When David wrote Ps 23, **the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want**, he was making a theological statement. When we state that **God is love** (1 Jn 4:16), we're making a theological statement. All of us are theologians. As Christians we must be theologians. We want to grow in our knowledge of God & His truth. This morning we're going to look at a few of the basics of what the Bible says about God. Are we going to be able to cover every verse that tells us about God? Of course not. That's the study of a lifetime. & this morning, you won't even get everything I taught in Zambia. Basically, you'll get the introduction. Why do we study the foundational doctrines of the Bible? There are many reasons, including:

- To know God better so that we might worship Him more
- To become more mature disciples
- To be better equipped to teach others
- To be better prepared to reach the nations
- To deal with wrong ideas & answer those who ask

As sinful creatures, our natural tendency is to place value on things which have no true worth & to cheapen the things that are truly worthy. It started in the Garden of Eden when Adam & Eve valued Satan's word above God's Word. Ever since then, humanity has continued to value the wrong things. People live in pursuit of popularity, pleasure, prosperity, & possessions. As Christians, we should be different. God's good news has come to us & is transforming & enabling us to know Him through Jesus. He's rescued us from the darkness of sin & opened our spiritual eyes to see things as they really are. Why wouldn't we want to know & praise Him? God created us to know, worship, & glorify Him. I want to quickly look at Rev 4-5 where we see a few things which will help us in our study & worship of God.

Rev 4:1-11

Notice these things about the worship of our God:

1. Worship is Theological. Those who know God best worship Him most. It's impossible to worship God if you don't know Him. & since true worship is a response to knowing Him, the more we know God the

better we can worship Him. The scene presented in Rev 4-5 is one where the elders & the angels know God far better than we do & the depth of their worship is directly tied to their knowledge of God. What this says to us is if we want to worship God better we need to know Him more. How do we do that? Through the study of His Word & by developing our relationship with Him. As we come to know God better we can't help but worship Him more. Worship is all about knowing God & responding to that knowledge. Listen to what the 4 living creatures say & notice the theological content of their worship.

A. They say, **Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God...** (8). What are they saying about God? They're saying He's the epitome of holiness, perfectly holy, set apart, different from us, & without sin. Part of their worship is speaking eternal truths about God & flows from their knowledge of God. This is theology, truth about God. He is holy. He is unequally pure.

B. 2nd, they speak to the sovereignty of God they say: **Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty** (8). As they sing their hymn of praise they recognize His sovereignty over all things. They have a view of God which sees Him for who He is, **the Almighty**. There's nothing outside of His authority & no one escapes His judgment. Part of what we need to remember about God as we worship Him is the theological truth that our God is **almighty** & that He always reigns & is in control. The difficulties experienced here don't go unnoticed by our God. This truth should bring us great comfort. He's almighty God, ruler of all nature & He is for us.

C. 3rd, they speak to His eternal nature. **Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was & who is & who is to come** (8). There's never been a time when God didn't exist. He's always been. He doesn't change. He's as He always was. Our God is eternal. God has no beginning or end. We as humans always exist in time. Revelation describes our future in terms of a succession of events. This requires time. For humans, *forever* is endless time. We have a beginning within time but no ending. Not so with God. Ps 90:2 says, **Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth & the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.** Paul tells us God was working **before the foundation of the world** (Eph 1:4). He has always existed. He is the 1st & last, the beginning & the end, **the Alpha & the Omega ... who is & who was & who is to come** (Rev 1:8). Jude tells us that **glory, majesty, dominion, & authority** were God's **before all time** as well as **now & forever** (Jude 25). Because God is eternal, His view of time is far different from ours. For example, **a thousand years** are in His sight **but as yesterday**

when it is past (Ps 90:4). Therefore, all of past history is, to God, as if it just happened. Peter affirms this when he writes that **with the Lord ... a thousand years is as one day** (2 Pt 3:8). But Peter also tells us one day seems to last forever to God: **With the Lord one day is as a thousand years** (2 Pt 3:8). Taken together, this lets us know that God views the whole span of history as clearly as He would if it were a brief event that had just happened. But He also views a brief event as if it were going on forever. God sees & knows all events—past, present, & future—with equal vividness. As the One who created & rules over time, God uses time for His own purposes.

Self-created God debate

D. Now look at the last verse in Rev 4, where the elders cast their crowns before Him & say, **Worthy are You, our Lord & our God, to receive glory & honor & power; for You created all things, & because of Your will they existed, & were created** (11). The theological nature of worship continues as the elders recognize that He alone is worthy of worship because He's (4th) the Creator of **all things**. The reason all things exist is because of His will. You aren't here by accident. You aren't the result of billions of years of evolution & some biological accident. You're here by the specific will & design of the Holy, Almighty, Eternal Creator. He created you in His image for a specific purpose. He is Someone to Whom you can trust your life. He is someone to Whom you can commit your soul. He is Holy, Almighty, & Eternal. He is the Creator & we are His creations. These are deep theological truths about God that we must know & worship God for. Worship is all about God, not us. Therefore, we must do as Scripture commands: **Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth** (Col 3:1-2). These creatures in Rev 4-5 worship God for who He is & for what He's done. They worship Him because He's the Creator.

E. Look at Rev 5:9 where Jesus, the Lamb is being worshiped. Listen to what they say: **they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll & to break its seals; for You were slain or slaughtered, & purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe & tongue & people, & nation."** Here we see that Jesus is worthy of our worship & praise, not just because He is God, & He is, but also for what He's done. Pastor Charles taught on Christology, getting into all of this, & did a masterful job. What has Jesus done? He's shed His blood & given His life to pay the price for our sins & offers us eternal life as

a free gift of God's grace. We'll be remembering & celebrating that later as we take communion together. Theology isn't just knowing about the character of God, but also about the work of God. Worship exalts His nature & work & we can only do that if we know Who we are worshiping. If you want your worship to be true worship, preoccupy yourself with knowing God, with Who He is, & what He's done, is doing, & will do. This knowledge is never based on how you feel or what someone's said. Never just take my word for it but search the Scriptures for yourselves. This knowledge must always be based on the revelation of God Himself in Scripture. The more you know Him the more you'll be driven to worship Him. Those who know Him best worship Him most.

2. Worship is Practical Worship is about us doing what we should do, saying what we should say, & being what we should be. It involves specific & intentional action on our part directed toward God. We make decisions & act on the things we believe. I believe gravity is real. Therefore, I don't jump off roofs. I believe fire is hot, therefore I don't stick my hand in flames. If we truly believe God is real & that He's revealed Himself to us in His Word, we can't help but respond in worship.

A. Worship Involves Purity. Rev 4-5 takes place in heaven where there is no sin. The elders are robed in white, which speaks of purity. Worship in heaven is perfect because of the absence of sin. But as long as we're on earth we have to deal with temptation & sin & we have to work to keep our hearts & lives pure by constantly confessing our sins. The purer our lives, the more powerful our worship. As we come to worship God we must examine ourselves & allow the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts to see if there's anything within us that would keep us from being able to worship. Is there an attitude, an action, or a sin you've not dealt with? Do you have something against someone? Have you done something which would cause someone to have something against you? If you don't deal with it, your worship will be in vain. Don't bother going through the motions if it's not real. Let God by His Spirit show you your hidden sins; let Him show you the things in your heart which keep you from knowing Him like He wants you to know Him. Then confess those sins, be forgiven, & worship in purity.

B. Worship Involves Humility. In 4:10, 5:8, & 14 we see the elders falling down & worshiping. These 24 elders are seated on thrones around the throne of God. Think about this: These guys are exalted to the point they're given thrones around the very throne of God & they're given crowns which seem to signify a reward for lives well lived. & yet what do they do? They fall down & worship God! They know

God as He truly is & bow down & worship Him. Sometimes we lose the sense of awe which accompanies worship. But those who know Him best & who worship Him most see Him as He's revealed Himself to us. We must recognize Him for who He is & humbly fall down & worship Him. Humility before God is an absolute. **God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble** (Jas 4:6). Until you come to the point where you abandon all hope in yourself & see yourself for what you really are without Jesus, you won't experience true worship. Not only does theological worship involve purity, humility, but ...

C. Worship Involves Surrender. In 4:10 the elders cast their crowns before the throne. These crowns represent rewards. But instead of holding on to their crowns & remaining on their thrones, they abandon their thrones & cast their crowns before His throne. Everything they have, everything they possess, their position & their possessions, they've laid at the feet of God. Isn't that beautiful?! You can't truly worship God unless you're willing to surrender everything you are & everything you have to Him. One of the reasons many don't worship God is because they insist on holding tightly onto things which belong to God. This isn't just material possessions, but includes surrendering your agenda, your future, your relationships, your hopes, your dreams, & your reputation to Him. It means trusting Him with your spouse, your children, your job, your time, & your ministry. Without God you'd have nothing & be nothing. Everything you are & have is because of Him. You cannot worship Him if you don't trust Him & aren't willing to surrender everything to Him. When we don't trust Him, we sin because He's always faithful & deserving of our full & uttermost trust. Worship involves purity, humility, surrender, &...

D. Worship Involves Praise Praise, at its most basic, is speaking of the excellencies of God. Rev 19:4-5, ***The 24 elders & the 4 living creatures fell down & worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, Amen, Hallelujah. & a voice came from the throne saying, Give praise to our God, (notice that's a command) all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small & the great.***

It's likely an angel saying this, since he refers to God as **our God**. The voice firmly commands another group, **all His bond-servants**, to join in the anthem of praise.² Praise involves exalting the wonders & the excellencies of our God. True praise means wherever we are, whatever we're doing, we give praise to God. We do this in front of those who know Him & in front of those who don't know Him. We

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Revelation 12–22*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p 200

ascribe to Him the honor & the glory that He alone is due at all times & in all places. We who know Him have a responsibility to make Him known to those who don't yet know Him. One of the ways we do this is by praising Him. Worship is a lifestyle, not an event. Worship is theological, worship is practical, & ...

3. Worship is Personal. Worship isn't just something we do, it's who we are & how we live. Worship involves our everyday lives. Worship is something each of us must do as individuals. Listen to the elders & the living creatures in Rev 5:12: **Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory, & blessing.** We could spend a lot of time here talking about each of these things. Let's look at just one. Why do you think they said He's worthy to receive **power**? Doesn't He already have all the power He needs? After all, He is God & He's all-powerful. So why would they assign power to Him? I believe it has to do with the power of their own lives. They're saying He's worthy of the entirety of the power of their lives. When we ascribe power to God we're saying that with all the power of our lives, with everything we are, we're going to work to give Him the honor & the glory & the blessings He is due. Isn't this what Paul says in Rom 12:1-2?

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living & holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. & do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good & acceptable & perfect.

Worship involves the way we live our lives day in & day out. It's who we are before God, both publicly & privately, both internally & externally, both spiritually & physically. Therefore, be a continuous worshiper of God. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, it's good to worship God. Ps 33:1 says, **Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.** The word **becoming** means it fits, it looks good on. If you've been saved because you're trusting in Jesus' death on the cross for your sins, then praise is what looks good on you! Become a person of praise & worship! What does your worship look like today? Are you going through the motions, is it a duty, or is there truly a connection between you & God as you come before His throne? Whatever preoccupies the majority of your time is what you worship. It's that simple. What are you worshiping? Let's be worshipers of our great God at all times, in all places, by all means available to us. Those who know God best, worship Him the most! That is all introduction.

From there we went on to ask & answer the questions, How do you know God exists? Why do you believe He exists? How do you know what He is like? How do you know what He's done? How do you know what He expects from us? How do you know that He is knowable by us? After all, He is independent & doesn't actually need us or anything else in creation for anything. He didn't create us because He was lonely or needed fellowship with us. God has always been perfectly & completely happy & fulfilled in His existence. Even though God is completely independent, He also *chooses* to give us value & significance. He allows us to be important to Him! As He says in Isaiah 43:7, **Everyone who is called by my name & whom I have created for My glory.** & Zephaniah says God **will rejoice** over us **with gladness** & **exult** over us **with loud singing** (Zeph 3:17 ESV). Although God doesn't need us, He allows us to bring joy to His heart that results in **loud singing!** Don't we have a great God? Scripture teaches that God exists, is knowable, is independent, unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient, & righteous. Because we're finite creations of an infinite Creator, we'll never fully understand everything there is to understand about any of God's attributes. Even so, there's great value in learning of them. In them we find the things about God He wants us to know. & as people created for His glory (Is 43:7), we can bring Him glory as we imitate Him by exhibiting likeness to His attributes, by becoming more like His Son, Jesus. Why do we study theology? To know God better so that we might worship Him more! I'd end with this list of God's names, descriptions, & deeds.

Who is our God? He is Elohim, Yahweh, Jehovah, Adonai. He is the God most high (Ps 57:2), the *I am who I am* (Ex 3:13-15), the beginning & the end (Is 41:4), the Alpha & Omega, the 1st & the last (Rev 1:8; Is 44:6), who is, who was, & who is to come. Our God is a consuming fire (Dt 4:24), the Deliverer (Rom 11:26), & the eternal One (Is 41:4). He is the faithful God (Dt 7:9), the fountain of living water (Jer 2:13), our glorious Lord (Is 33:21) & God only wise (Rom 16:27). He is the Creator (Is 40:25), & the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9). He is the great God (Ezra 5:8), the great King over all the earth (Ps 47:2), above all gods (Ps 95:3), & the great & dreadful God (Dan 9:4). Our God is the holy & just One (Acts 3:14), the Highest One (Dan 7:25), the righteous Father (Jn 17:25), righteous Judge, & righteous Lord (Ps 11:7). He is everlasting light (Is 60:20). He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob (Ex 3:6). He is salvation (Ps 35:3) & He is my Lord & My God (Jn 20:28).

He is the God of the covenant (Judg 9:46), God & Father of all (Eph 4:6), & God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 11:31). He is the God of all comfort (2 Cor 1:3), all flesh (Jer 32:27), & all grace (1 Pt 5:10). He is the God of peace (2 Cor 13:11), love (Jn 3:16), & hope (Rom 15:13); the God of patience (Rom 15:5), truth (Dt 32:4), & salvation (1 Chron 16:35). He is the judge of all (Gen 18:25), the Lord of lords (1 Sam 1:3), the Lord of hosts (Dt 10:17), & the preserver of men. Our God is the God who works wonders, is the Lord of my Salvation (Ps 88:1), & the God of my life (Ps 42:8).

How is our God described? The Lord God omnipotent (Rev 19:6), Mighty on High (Heb 1:3), perfect in knowledge (Job 37:16), the only wise God (Rev 16:27), a jealous God (Ex 20:5), & ought to be feared (Ps 76:11). & yet He who formed you (Dt 33:18) is the Helper of the fatherless (Ps 10:14), full of compassion (Ps 86:15), & ready to pardon (Neh 9:17). He who dwells on high (Ps 113:5) in heaven (Ps 123:1), is the God who sees (Gen 16:12), hears our prayers (Ps 65:2), & to whom we may draw near (Phil 4:8). That's our God!

He is the holy Father (Jn 17:11), heavenly Father (Mt 6:14), living Father, (Jn 6:57), Abba Father (Mk 14:36), the Father of mercies (2 Cor 1:3), Father of glory (Eph 1:17), & Father of lights (Js 1:17). He is our God & Father (Gal 1:4) & the God & father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1:3).

He is our Savior, Redeemer (Is 49:26), Shelter (Ps 61:3), sure Foundation (Is 28:16), shade (Ps 121:5), shield (Ps 18:30), & our rock (Dt 32:4). He is our Strong Lord (Ps 89:8), our mighty One, our Champion in battle (Ps 24:8), & the tower of our Salvation (2 Sam 22:51).

He is our refuge from storms (Is 25:4) & in times of trouble (Ps 9:9). He is our Defense (Ps 59:25), Deliverer, Fortress (2 Sam 22:2), Help (Ps 27:9), & our Hope (Jer 17:17). He is our Lamp (2 Sam 22:29), our dwelling place (Ps 90:1), our Potter (Is 6:5), our Guide (Ps 48:14), our Strength, our power (2 Sam 22:30), & He is our Salvation (Ex 15:2).

What does our God do? We'll spend eternity finding out. Our God bears our burdens (Ps 68:19), remembers us (Ps 136:23), satisfies our mouths with good things (Ps 103:5), & does great things (Ps 71:19). He redeems us (Ps 136:24), forgives us (Ps 103:3), lifts us up from the gates of death (Ps 9:13), & saves us by His right hand (Ps 17:7). He does all this because He spared not His own Son (Rom 8:32) & has called us by the grace of Christ (Gal 1:6).

Do you know this God? He is worthy to be praised (2 Sam 22:4)! Get to know Him better so that you can worship Him more!

In Livingstone, as always, I asked for comments or questions. The three other times I taught this, there were always some. But this time, there was silence until one man simply said, *We must worship*.

Here's a glimpse of the next 15 minutes. VIDEO

PRAY -- Communion -- Men Come

Do you know where God's attributes shine most gloriously? At the cross of Jesus. There we see His wrath, justice, holiness, truth, & righteousness as His wrath is poured out on His Son in our place. But there also we see His love, grace, mercy, & kindness, allowing a Substitute to take our place. Jesus, our Substitute, received what we deserved. There we see God's majesty, strength, beauty, humility, goodness, & faithfulness. Every perfection of God shines brilliantly in the cross of Jesus. That's why we talk & sing so much about Christ's death & resurrection. That's why we're told to remember Him through the elements of communion together as a church body.

While the eating of the Lord's supper is never called *worship* in the NT it is certainly one way we worship our God in obedience to Him. The essence of worship is the treasuring of the beauty & worth of God. Christ gave us this simple *Lord's Supper* to help us keep Him in memory, especially His blood & body given up in death. This is worship if in the doing of it there is an authentic heart experience which says: *We must remember Him because He's the most valuable Person in the universe. We must remember His death because it's the most important death in history.* Setting out this physical reminder of Jesus time after time in the life of the church is worship if our hearts feel the preciousness of remembering Christ & tremble at the prospect of forgetting Him. Remembering Him enables us to proclaim Him, since you can't proclaim what you don't remember. & proclaiming helps us to remember. We need His death to be proclaimed with word & bread & cup lest we forget the preciousness of His death for us.³ Through communion we remember that the One who was crucified, died, buried, & rose again, is now alive & within us. This leads us to the mysterious greatness of our great God. Through our participation in this symbolic meal, we remember together our Lord's sacrificial death, enjoy communion with Him & with one another, are strengthened & nourished by

³ John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-lords-supper-as-worship>

Christ's sustaining grace, & proclaim Jesus's death until He returns. Communion causes us to *look* in 5 directions:

- We look *backward* as we remember Christ's body & blood given for us at the cross; we remember that His death has brought us forgiveness of sins & eternal life.
- We look *outward* as we celebrate the family bond we share with brothers & sisters in Christ in our local church.
- We look *upward* as we realize we're lifted up to be seated with Jesus, to whom we bring our hungry hearts for nourishment with the grace of the new covenant.
- We look *inward* as we examine our hearts to ensure that we're walking in faith & repentance, & living with love for our brothers & sisters in Christ. & ...
- We look *forward* as we wait in hope for the glorious day when we'll celebrate the fulfillment of all God's promises at His heavenly banquet.⁴

Many Christians mistakenly think that the Christian life is something that's just *between me & Jesus*, a private relationship with God with no one else involved. They view the church as having nothing or little to do with their faith. The church is viewed as something optional that may aid one's faith, but isn't essential. With this kind of mindset, the Lord's Supper becomes like a private dinner date with Jesus. That's not how it is to be. The Lord's Supper is a time for the church to come together & to strengthen our bonds of faith as we enjoy communion with Jesus & with one another. The Lord's Supper is worship because it expresses the infinite worth of Christ. No one is more worthy to be remembered. No one is more worthy to be proclaimed. & no one can nourish our souls with eternal life but Jesus. So let us come & remember, & proclaim & eat together. Paul tells us,

I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; & when He had given thanks, He broke it & said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:23-24).

Let's worship our great God & Savior as we remember His plan of salvation for us only through His Son given for us.

In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread & drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:25-26).

We worship God together as we remember God's Son, our Lord, who died in our place for our salvation.

⁴ Aubrey M. Sequeira, *Why Is the Lord's Supper So Important?* p 48

