

THE WORSHIP LEADER AND JESUS CHRIST

Bob Kauflin

I. Introduction

In our songs and prayers we can be unaware of the ways we address God.

God, Lord, Father, Jesus, Father God, used interchangeably without much thought. If we've studied the Trinity we might add "Spirit" to the list. Sometimes we get stuck on one person of the Trinity. In the 70s, almost always "Jesus." More reformed, usually, "O great God" or "Father."

The God of the Bible is Triune, Father, Son, and Spirit.

We're not Muslim, Mormon, Hindi, or Jehovah's Witnesses. We worship all three persons of the Trinity as God. But there is a specificity in their roles and relationships. We can't simply interchange the names of the Father, Son, and Spirit in our songs, or necessarily say the same things to each one. The Father didn't die for us. The Spirit didn't send Jesus.

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Eph. 2:18)

We don't come through the Father to Jesus, or through Jesus to the Spirit. What we find is that the Spirit has been sent to exalt Jesus for the glory of the Father. Both the Father and the Spirit want to draw our attention to the Son.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 1:9-11)

While our worship ultimately redounds to the glory of God the Father, at the heart of biblical worship is Jesus Christ.

The Father is delighted and glorified when we honor his Son.

And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" (Lk. 9:35)

The Spirit came specifically to glorify the Son.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13-14)

Want to highlight 3 specific reasons Jesus is the heart of biblical worship.

II. Jesus is the leader of our worship.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." (Heb. 2:10-12)

Jesus communicates God's Words to us and our words to God.

"I will tell of your name to my brothers" – occurs primarily in preaching/teaching, but also takes place as we sing the word of Christ

"in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise" – Jesus sings for us, with us, and through us.

He is not content to receive worship at the Father's right hand from those whom He has graciously redeemed; rather He insists on standing with His brothers and sisters (see Heb 2:11); and not just joining in—but actually leading the chorus of grateful response to the Father for His grace! (Ron Man, "Worship Notes," Vol. 1, Number 8, Aug. 2006)

Our worship is made possible by Jesus.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb. 10:19-22)

The separation of the "Holy of Holies" from the rest of the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament made it clear that we aren't able to approach God any way we want.

We have to find a way to approach the blazing holiness of God without being consumed.

Our worship is made acceptable by Jesus.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:4-5)

It's not our perfect offerings that make our worship pleasing to God, but the perfect Christ.

All our offerings of worship are at once humbled and exalted by the powerful saving work of Christ. – Harold Best

Our worship is made one by Jesus.

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Eph. 2:14-16)

We are a spiritual house, not a group of scattered bricks.
We are united through our common leader, not our common musical preferences.

A few implications:

We are utterly dependent on God to approach God.

We will never lead anyone into God's presence. Only Jesus can do that.

Gratefulness, rather than anxiety, should predominate our thoughts as we prepare to lead.

Our "worship" isn't better or more pleasing to God because we hit all the right notes.

Music as unifier is a poor substitute for Jesus as unifier.

III. Jesus is the content of our worship.

Phil. 3:3 tells us we are those who "*worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus.*"

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

Where do we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? In the person and works of Christ.

The person of Jesus (Heb. 1:1-4; Col. 1:15-19)

1. Radiance of the glory of God
2. exact imprint of God's nature
3. image of the invisible God
4. superior to angels
5. firstborn of all creation
6. has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge
7. heir of all things
8. existed before all things
9. head of the church
10. fully God, fully man
11. King of kings, Lord of lords

Jesus is infinitely glorious simply to behold.

ILL Like a diamond that refracts a new shaft of light every time it's moved, in eternity we will never exhaust the facets of Christ's glory and beauty.

The works of Jesus

1. created all things
 2. upholds the universe by his word, took on flesh
 3. obeyed his Father perfectly
 4. made purification for sins
 5. became sin for us
 6. absorbed God's wrath in our place
 7. rose from the dead
 8. ascended to his Father's right hand
 9. intercedes for his people
- is coming back to destroy death, mete out justice, and live with his bride forever

The center of Christ's works is his death on the cross, where he became sin, endured God's wrath, and ransomed a people for his Father's glory. The heart of the gospel.

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14)

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Cor. 2:2)

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, (Rev. 5:9)

A few implications:

We need to find, write, and sing more songs that spell out who Jesus is and what he has done. (In Christ Alone, Glorious Day, It is Finished, The Perfect Wisdom of our God, Glorious Christ)

Jesus should be bigger in our minds and hearts after we meet to sing his praise.

We need to help our people move beyond catch phrases and Christianese to think deeply about the glory of Christ.

"The evangelical orientation is inward and subjective. We are far better at looking inward than we are looking outward. We need to expend our energies admiring, exploring, expositing, and extolling Jesus Christ." (Sinclair Ferguson)

We need to incorporate God's Word into our singing in a way that makes Jesus appear more clearly and more glorious.

IV. Jesus is the glory of our worship.

“As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:20-21)

What excites you about leading a group of people to worship God in song? A number of possibilities...

1. being used by God to bless his people
2. a great arrangement that works
3. the joy of working in community
4. hearing people sing a song you wrote
5. the experience of being overwhelmed by God's presence

All good things. But what surpasses them all is glorying in Jesus Christ. Paul says by life or by death.

In life

How would you finish this sentence – My Life is...my music. My wife. Sports. My career.

Illus Been a musician for 35 years. Majored in piano performance. Have over 80 days of music on my iTunes. But music isn't my life. Jesus is.

How do we get to the point where we can say with Paul, “For me to live is Christ?” I've got good news for you. If you're a Christian, you're already there.

*Col. 3:3-4 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ **who is your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Christ is already your life! Do you think you have something more? Something better? Something more fulfilling? Something more amazing?

Jim Elliott, was a missionary from the first part of the 20th century who was brutally murdered at 28 years old by the Auca Indians of Ecuador as he and four others were seeking to share the gospel with them. He said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

What we have in Christ, we cannot lose. Let's give up the foolish pursuit of trying to find something better.

In death

If it were possible for a created soul fully (I mean, up to the full measure conceivable in a finite being) to “appreciate”, that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme bliss. (C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*)

And that would be heaven.

The greatest, most transcendent, most powerful experiences here are just a whisper of what awaits us in the new heavens and the new earth.

What we do on earth, in this life, is but the smallest, weakest, time-constrained foretaste of what is yet to come.

We haven't experienced it yet, and never will in this life. But one day, if we've trusted in the finished work of Christ, we will sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and be with our Savior forever.

It's what we were created for.

It's what we want to lead others to long for.

It's Jesus Christ. And he is the heart of our worship, for the glory of God.