

Ben Witherington III. *We Have Seen His Glory: A Vision of Kingdom Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 166 pages. \$16.

Ben Witherington III posits the ideal of “Kingdom worship” as an eschatological, christocentric, participatory model that can remedy what he believes to be the current state of worship in most churches: “a performance of the few for the couch potatoes for Jesus in the pews” (146). Witherington feels that lethargic worship is the result of church leaders not understanding the idea of worship found in the New Testament. Therefore, he leads the reader on an episodic journey through the New Testament to unfold the framework of Kingdom worship.

Witherington begins with organic descriptions of worship found in the New Testament. In chapter one, he uses the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 to point out the ethical and eschatological nature of worship. Witherington hopes his exploration of the Johannine passage does for the reader what Jesus did for this woman – depict worship as an ethical act breaking destructive social barriers, and adjust the liturgical focus from a worn past to God’s acts in the already and not yet. Thus, in Chapter Two, Witherington states that worship should only be focused on God’s glory, not human glory. Then, he discusses Paul’s support of women wearing veils in 1 Cor. 11. (22-25) In his effort to frame worship as an environment where God’s glory should take the fore (which is laudable), Witherington uses 1 Cor. 11, a biblical text that is wrought with exegetical problems for women, without referencing feminist or womanist biblical scholarship on the matter. Even so, Witherington’s idea of a theocentric focus as primary in worship rings true. He shows how the christocentric nature of worship appears in liturgical time and patterns. For Witherington the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus birthed a necessity for Sunday worship and brought an end to animal sacrifices. Witherington bases this argument on various Pauline epistles, passages in Acts, and texts in Hebrews that refer to the regular Sunday worship of ancient Christians, and suggest that the end animal sacrifice is found in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

Chapter Four is an examination of the Judaic legacy of Christian worship. He begins with early Christians worshipping in synagogues and notes that their persecutions forced them out of the open worship of synagogues into covert places. Witherington also reveals the overlap between synagogue and early Christian worship: singing, praying, reading scripture, expositing scripture, almsgiving, pronouncing benedictions, and liturgical leadership by elders. (57-60)

Witherington delves into the New Testament references to these actions in order to construct a picture of early Christian worship. After grappling throughout Chapter Five with the synoptic gospels, numerous Pauline epistles, and the *Didache*, he finds that the early church combined spontaneity and planning in worship, focused on Christ in singing, relied on the Holy Spirit to pray, and used the Lord’s Prayer as a format for prayer. In Chapter Six, Witherington depicts early Christian preaching by focusing on how Hebrews, James, and 1 John served as sermons for their respective communities. He uses rhetorical analysis to establish the homiletical character of these three epistles. Though his position has merit, it would be strengthened if he consulted the argument of O. C. Edwards, which claims that these epistles are sermon fragments at best. Nonetheless, this analysis of Hebrews, James, and 1 John presents the orality, the rhetorical devices (like alliteration, amplification, and *expolitio*), the exegesis of the Old Testament, and the ways in which contemporary issues were treated in early Christian sermons.

Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight regard how work and daily life are part and parcel to worship. “Now, all proper work is Christian service, and all is doxological.” (140) According to

Witherington, working and living are expressions of faith; therefore, all that is done should be done to the glory of God. (143)

Witherington's work is a wonderful resource for clergy, liturgists, and laypersons who desire to better understand Christian worship through the lenses of the New Testament. It challenges contemporary notions surrounding worship that are theologically shallow, socially depraved, and inaccurate. Witherington encourages a healthier approach to worship in light of "Kingdom come and Kingdom coming." (161)

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