

QUESTION

Why does God demand exclusive worship to him alone?

ANSWER

This can be answered from two points of view: first from God's point of view and then from the point of view of those who worship him.

It was no accident that God began the stipulations of the Covenant with the first commandment that he, and only he, be worshiped. We can learn the reason why this was so by considering the preamble to the Ten Commandments. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exodus 20:2). The people were in cruel and bitter slavery for 400 years. The United States has been in existence for a little over 200 years and yet it might seem to us like it has been forever. How much more would 400 years seem like forever? Their slavery in Egypt was an impossible situation for Israel. Without God's intervention slavery would be forever.

Who else could have performed such a miraculous act in such a miraculous manner with such miraculous results? The answer is "no one!" The issue of exclusive worship is that God alone is worthy. No other god is like him. No other god could have done what he had done. The people in covenant with him owe their absolute allegiance to him. (Not to mention gratitude).

To demand exclusive worship is a natural result of who God is and what he has done. The people who are called by his name must acknowledge this fact. Imagine the outrageous insult for the people so graciously and miraculously rescued and loved to give their worship to another. It would be a slap in the face. It would be an inexcusable insult. It would be crazy. Therefore, the demand for exclusive worship makes perfect sense in view of all that God has done and for the reality of his true nature and identity. God's point of view is the ultimate reality.

From the point of view of the people the demand for exclusive worship can be seen as motivated by God's love. God loves his people to the uttermost. Who else better to provide for them than the Creator of the universe? He has proved himself again and again. The folly of the people giving their worship to another god is that other gods can do nothing. The other nations may have their gods, but the gods are not gods at all.

2 Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" 3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. 4 But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. 5 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes but they cannot see; 6 they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; 7 they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. 8 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. (Psalm 115:2-8)

The gods are nothing. All who follow them can receive no help from them. This is where the danger begins. False teaching will eventually follow as well. The ultimate danger in worshipping other gods is that it will keep the worshiper from a right relationship with the true, living God. Paul made the point that, in reality, there are no gods. He related this fact to those who may have had a problem eating food that had been sacrificed to idols (gods).

4 We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 7 But not everyone knows this. (1 Corinthians 8:4-7)

Furthermore, the gods can offer no gospel and the message they offer will not bring salvation as Paul teaches in his letter to the Galatians.

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – 7 which is really no gospel at all. Galatians 1:6-7

The issue of exclusive worship is an essential doctrine. There is only one God who saves. There is only one gospel. To worship another god robs God and damages the worshiper in this life and for all eternity. The reason God can demand exclusive worship rests on two unchanging truths:

1. The nature of God
2. The love of God