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Anyone Worthy of Worship Wouldn't Want It

June 12, 2023



#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to the idea that anyone worthy of worship wouldn't want it and anyone requiring worship doesn't deserve it and whether it's appropriate to do good deeds with the intent of earning a reward in Heaven.

* How would you respond to the idea that anyone worthy of worship wouldn't want it and anyone requiring worship doesn't deserve it?

* If our good deeds on earth earn us a reward in Heaven, is it appropriate to do such deeds with the intent of earning a reward in Heaven, or should our intent be focused on making a difference here on earth?

Transcript

[MUSIC] This is the #STRasketPodcast. I'm Amy Hall and I'm here with Greg Cokle and we're here to answer the questions that you send us on Twitter with the #STRask. We're here to attempt to answer it.

All right, this first question comes from Sandra. I've heard this put two ways from a podcaster named Matt Dilhunti and I'm having trouble getting around it. To paraphrase, anything worthy of worship would not want it.

Or anything expecting or requiring worship does not deserve it. I've always struggled with this but never heard it put into words. Well, John Piper addresses this in not desiring God but the companion to it.

What's the follow-up? It might be the pleasures of God? It could be. And he talks about Christian hedonism. I think, well, maybe- He talks about that in desiring God also.

Yeah, he also. Okay. So here are the kinds of questions.

Because it's come about a baytheus a lot. Yeah, so the podcaster she's talking about isn't it? Okay, so, so, I mean, here's where I kind of lead into it. If I talk to you, are you a

sports fan? Yeah, man.

I love basketball. Oh, okay. Great.

Who's your favorite? Such as so. Do you cheer him? Is he a good? Oh, yeah, he's fabulous. You wouldn't believe him.

Okay. Do you cheer him? Do you think it's appropriate to cheer him? Well, it seems appropriate to like applaud excellencies. All right.

Okay, good. I agree with you. All of those things.

I think it's appropriate to applaud excellency. All right. So, do you think it is a good thing for people to think it's appropriate to applaud excellency? Yeah, I mean, what if somebody was really good and they, they, people just totally dist all of that.

And put him down for being a good basketball player. No, it is a good thing. So a good person would, it would be a virtue for a good person to applaud excellency.

Okay, what if the one being, pardon me, applauded is the most excellent. Imaginable. So much better than your basketball player in so many different ways.

Would it be appropriate to do that? Sure. Would it be a good thing to do that? Yeah, notice I'm just following the same steps here, but I'm working up here. Then why would it be inappropriate for the most virtuous one to receive and expect to receive the applause that is properly do him.

So there's, there's the question. And so if it is a good thing for anybody to do that, then, then any, then, and it's virtuous, then virtuous beings would promote that. Most virtuous being would promote it mostly, and it would apply to himself the most virtuous being.

What I'm trying to say is we already have a built in a tuition that shows that this is appropriate. The only time it isn't appropriate is when you have somebody who is not virtuous or just a human, not perfectly good, who is demanding that for themselves. It's outside of their prerogative because they're mere creatures.

And this is kind of the idea that Piper develops, I think, in that book. And I just put it in like a series of questions to build up to it to get step by step commitment from the person that I'm talking to. That's the tactics.

The third step of the tactical game plan, but those are the reasons why I think it's not inappropriate for God to expect worship of himself. I think you explained it really well, Greg. Thank you for that.

I think the biggest problem, and you kind of touched on this too, is that when people say this, they're picturing, they're picturing human beings who have done this. And of

course, human beings don't deserve the kind of praise that we give to God because they're not God because they're sinful. And so when we picture, let's say, the North Korean dictator and we picture him demanding praise, well, we obviously recoil at that and we think that's horrible because he doesn't deserve it.

But that's not who God is. God actually does deserve it. He actually does deserve it.

And it's actually good for us to celebrate him and to worship him. So when we're evaluating God, we can't evaluate him as if he were a sinful person. We have to evaluate him in light of who he actually is in terms of what his authority is over us and his position over us and his character, which by the way, he's proven by having Jesus die on the cross for us.

I mean, he's already proven to us his love and his goodness. So that's not in question. Now, there's no dictator who has ever sent his son to die for his enemies.

That's not how it works. God shown us who he is. And what he wants to do, I mean, within the Trinity, the fellowship you have there and the love and the joy that you have in that fellowship, he wants to share that with us.

And that's what we experience as we're worshipping him. We enter into the joy of the Trinity. And this is the point Lewis made, CS Lewis makes the point that when we worship that completes our joy, that's where it's all heading.

When we see something that's worthy of praise and we praise it, that completes our joy. That's part of the joy that we have in whatever it is that we're praising. So it's right and it's good for us and it's joy bringing and it brings us into the fellowship with the Trinity.

It's wrong to take someone for granted. I mean, think about children who take their parents for granted and never thank them. We all think that's horrible.

So like you said, Greg, so why is it? Why is it suddenly the wrong thing if someone who deserves that thanks and that praise tells us that we should do that? For our own good, obviously it doesn't change God at all if we don't do it. It's for our own good and our own joy. I have two other thoughts here.

And one of them is I do not recall any place that Jesus demanded worship. I have a number of places where Jesus was worshiped and he accepted it, but he did demand it. Now that's understandable.

And maybe you can think of it. I can't, but that's understandable in light of the fact Philippians 3 that he laid aside the privileges of divinity in order to be a servant to others. Okay.

So his goal when he came to earth was not to use his glory and power to his own

advantage, even though he deserved it, which is why he received it when it was offered. Okay. And this is a point that Tom Gilson makes in his book too good to be false.

Sorry. Too good to be sorry, Tom. Too good to be false that here's a guy with all of these incredible things and never use them for himself.

Jesus in that case in his earthly ministry, but he did receive worship because it was appropriate. So in one aspect of Jesus of God's life, as it were, his human life on earth during the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, this isn't what he demanded. He was in the second person was in a different role, a servant's role.

But when it was offered, he received it. And it's pretty obvious. Okay.

But here's the other thing that I think it's good for Sandra to think about with regards to this video, whatever that she watched. So the atheist here is assessing God in moral terms. This is not appropriate.

This is not morally right. Okay. Now, you can look at this issue from one of two perspectives.

This is this issue of giving God glory and him demanding glory or demanding worship that is appropriate for him from an atheistic perspective or from a Christian perspective. All right. Those are the two alternatives that we're dealing with here.

If you look at it from an atheist perspective, my question is going to be, where are you getting the moral categories by which you are judging the God of the Bible right now. Now, there's only one place they have to get those moral categories. And I've talked to plenty of atheists and all this and read lots and lots of material.

That is Darwinian evolution. Okay. Now, that turns out to be a relativistic characterization of morality, not an objectivist characterization.

These complaints that are being raised are objectivist. God is bad for demanding that God you describe is bad for requiring this. But what do you mean by bad if it violates some objective standard of morality? Where is that coming from in your system? And if what you're saying is it's only bad in the sense that it disagrees what I have learned to say because of evolution.

That's trivial. So your evolution doesn't agree with God. So what? Who cares what your evolution tells you to believe? This is not a substantial complaint.

Now, he could say, well, I'm judging by your value system, not by my value system. Okay, our value system says God is morally perfect and he deserves praise. So it seems to me no matter where you stand in this discussion, whether you're standing within an atheistic worldview or a Christian theistic worldview, which are the only two options

given us here.

There is no real grounds for complaint, especially coming from an atheist who is borrowing from some kind of theistic worldview, a moral system to use to impose to accuse God of being immoral. When in his system, there is no standard for morality, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. That's a quotation from Richard Dawkins and many others, by the way, who make it clear that if there is no God moral realism is dead, fine, then you can't assess God of the Bible.

You can't critique him based on a moral realism that makes no sense in your worldview. So that's just another something that you want. I had another thought while you were talking, Greg, everybody worships.

We all express praise of things. And what God does in most of the Old Testament is not just say, I demand you worship me, what he's doing is directing the way they'll worship him. Worship is a natural response to seeing God or Jesus as they are, right? It's a natural response.

Just as you said, people fell down at Jesus' feet and worshiped him and he accepted it because worship is a natural response to seeing God. So in the Old Testament, he's directing how they should worship. You should worship this way but not that way because he was trying to direct them into, you know, don't sacrifice your children to me.

That's not what I desire. He was directing them into ways that would reflect who he was to the world and to them so that they would not go astray from him. But, you know, and he does say, you know, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength.

They need to put God above all else. But what's the alternative to that? Putting something fallen above God. And what results from that? I'll tell you what results from that.

All the cultures that were doing these horrible things because they were worshiping their gods the way their false gods, the way that they wanted to, that was harming all of these people. So the way to actually have a flourishing society is to actually love God above all else and desire to worship him the way he wants to be worshiped and to follow him the way that he's designed us to follow him. And that's in goodness, injustice, in all of these things.

And when these cultures exchange God for something else, this is a point of Romans 1. Right, right, right. They worship the creature rather. Yes.

You end up with all sorts of evil. Wow. Wow.

And the service last Sunday, where I was at in Seattle taught, they sang a song that I

was from it. Bless the Lord. Oh, my soul.

Oh, my soul. That's Psalm 103. Listen to what it says.

Bless the Lord. Oh, my soul. And all that's within me.

Bless is holy name. Bless the Lord. Oh, my soul.

And forget none of his benefits, who parts all your iniquities, who heals your diseases, redeems your life with the pits, crowns you with love and kindness. And on and on and on it goes. The Lord performs righteous deeds and judgments for all who are oppressed.

He made known his ways to Moses, etc. Notice what's happening. There's an appeal to honor and bless and worship God in virtue of what he's done and who he is.

So it's not like you've got this Eagle Maniac that's up there, you know, like the president of North Korea or something. He said, look at what I've done for you. Look at what he's done for us.

This almost says, look at all these things that he's done. He is worthy of our obeisance, our praise, our worship. Mm-hmm.

And he is. All right. Here's a question from Sam.

If our good deeds on earth earn us a reward in heaven, not salvation, but an extra reward, is it appropriate to do such deeds with the intent of earning a reward in heaven or should our intent be on earth and the impact we can have here? No, I think absolutely it's appropriate because that is offered as an inducement in Scripture. You do this. You'll get that.

Really? Cool. I've actually thought about this a lot before. If God is offering a reward for something we do, then it is an appropriate reward.

It is what is appropriate in that circumstance. And we know about these reports because Paul talks about it afterwards. You do this, then you will receive.

I don't know how that can be taken as anything less than an inducement, but it's an appropriate inducement. Okay, because it's an appropriate reward, because it's one that God is giving and he doesn't ever do anything inappropriate. Now, I can see how some people might be a little uncomfortable with this kind of stuff.

And I'll tell you, you know, in my own conversations with God about this, I have told God, I don't care about that. You can give me what you want to give me, but I don't really care about that. I care about other things.

I care about being faithful for faithful to sake. I care about being obedient to God for

obedient sake. I care about communicating the word, and there is a reward for those who communicate the gospel of peace.

I was trying to think of the verse, but there are different characterizations of words that might be given. I do those things, but I mean, I'm not trying to wave my own flag. I'm just saying, I'm interested in doing those things for their own sake, not because I'm going to get a reward.

Now, if I get a reward, okay, I'll take it. If God's giving it out, I'll take it. The, I think the concern is that if we're doing it for the reward, that's in our mind that we're not doing it properly for God.

And I can understand the concern. And I don't believe that's the case, because God is the one who is offering the promise that a reward will be given from him for this behavior. And that's up to him to do.

He could do as he wishes. So I don't think it's inappropriate. Now, some people want to qualify this.

They would say, Oh, yeah, yeah, we get rewards, but we give them all back. We give them all back. We throw our crowns at the feet of the foot of the throne.

So really, when I get the rewards, I don't know. First of all, I don't know if that's actually accurate. We have statements like that, language like that, the book of Revelation.

Throwing the crowns, whatever. And maybe that's all the rewards we give, we give back. I don't know.

But it may not be that the, that you're actually getting a crown in a certain sense, literally, that you can give the crown back, but you're getting something, some benefit that accrues to you that you carry with you and you enjoy for the rest of eternity, because God has deemed it so. But I think that's one way of trying to have your cake and eat it too. Well, we don't get rewards.

Oh, yes you do. Oh, okay. Well, we give them back.

So that doesn't even count. Well, I don't know. That's not persuasive to me.

I think we get rewards. It's not clear to me that we give them back, whatever those rewards are. God gives them because he thinks we deserve them.

It's an honor of the individual to do so. And I think we can look forward to the rewards that God has promised us. Does that make sense? Yeah, it does.

And I don't think the two things are so separate. I think they're intertwined. Because the things that God is rewarding are the things that are important to us.

And those are the things that are good for our neighbor and good for the world. So I think a lot of times what promising reward is showing us is what's important. You know, you should lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth.

Well, maybe you don't realize that the things of God that have to do with character and serving others are actually more valuable in the long run than building up a treasury of money. And we kind of need that lesson to know which one is the lasting, more valuable thing to seek. So we're seeking it because we want to do something valuable with our lives.

We want our lives to be meaningful. These are all good things to seek. So we're doing the things that are meaningful and have that reward of being valuable in the long run.

And as we're doing that, we're doing the things that are actually helping our neighbor. So I don't even know that you have to choose one thing or the other. Maybe of course dichotomy.

Yeah, because you want to do what matters. You want to do the weighty thing. And so it's good to know what those things are and to know that the things of God are the things that are worthwhile.

And I want to thank you this idea that you referred to here from Jesus and the Sermon of the Mount, the laying up treasure. I think that's where it is. Treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroyed nor thieves break in its seal has been a major factor in my life for the last 10 years.

We're actually longer than that. Increasingly significant because when you move towards the end of your life, you're aware that a lot of expectations you had for your future have not materialized. That's living.

I mean, that's nothing unusual about that. And well, that probably never materialized. And that can be unsettling.

And for me, when I reflect on those things in my life that things have not gone as I wished and there are disappointments that I face, I also reflect on that by the way, those are those are valuable things in this life. I reflect on the things that I have placed where moth and rust can't destroy or thieves break in and steal. These other things, well, they're temporal and they can be taken away and they can be corrupted in some way and it doesn't work out.

And that's part of the angst, not angst really, but dissatisfaction of growing older and realizing your punch list one way or another's, your bucket list is not a good thing. Your bucket list is never going to be satisfied. And for some people, that can be really upsetting.

And I don't mean like, oh, I really wanted to go to Peru or something like that or climb Akan Gagua or something. I mean, like the important things in your life that you hoped for that really are substantive that never really materialized for whatever reason. The rescue from the depression that that my cause is, wait a minute, but I have other things that I can do that would position my position and inheritance that can't be taken away, that can't be disappointed.

And so to me, in a certain sense, I take much deeper satisfaction. I look at my own life, I say, well, that you don't like that, but you know what, you got this and I'm going to keep doing this. I'm going to keep making an investment in my, for lack of a better term, my heavenly 401k.

And one day I'll be living off that free-turdity kind of thing because God is protecting that. I know in whom I have believed, then that he is able to keep that which I've entrusted to him until that day. That all that helps me, you know, in troubled times.

So in other words, following up on what you just said there, Greg, when we're promised rewards for certain things, he's actually changing our idea of what the reward of what a reward is. Because the reward is not, I'm going to give you more money. I'm going to give you more this or that.

The reward is in the things that you're doing. So it's going to be along the lines of the godliness that we're seeking and the serving others and increasing of our love. These are the valuable things.

So it's actually changing our idea of what we're seeking after. And it's right to seek after the good things and the joy that they bring us. So for all those reasons, hopefully that'll help people think through this a little bit.

I know a lot of people have questions about how this works. So that was a great question, Sam. All right.

If you'd like to have your question answered, send it to us on Twitter with the hashtag #STR. Go through our website at STR.org. We look forward to hearing from you. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason.

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