

Testimony of Nonbelievers

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Testimony of Nonbelievers (Vasicek)

In Revelation 4 we read of angels and saints glorifying God. Does that mean that only believers glorify God? No it does not. Why not? First we shall read from Revelation and then from other parts of the Bible.

John saw the activity of the four living creatures praising and giving glory to God.

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever ... (Revelation 4:8-9/ESV)

John then saw and heard the twenty-four elders prostrating themselves before God, offering the crowns that he had given them and singing that He is worthy of glory forever.

... the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." (Revelation 4:10-11/ESV)

We have from Moses this verse from Deuteronomy that tells us of God's wish for His people Israel to be an example to other nations of believing in, trusting in, and living with and close to God.

Moses said: See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:5-8/ESV)

Does that mean that all nonbelievers who glorify God are converted to faith. No, it does not necessarily mean that. God is certainly glorified when sinners convert to faith by repentance. However, praise from unrepentant sinners also glorifies him. We see in the Psalms that when nonbelievers come cringing for fear before God.¹ Isaiah sang of the nations singing a new song to glorify God. Believers and nonbelievers alike may also experience fear in it other Hebrew meanings, such as honor, respect, reverence, and worshipful awe.²

¹ Eduard J. Vasicek, *The Midrash Key*. (Kokomo, IN: Edward J. Vasicek, 2010) p.51.

² Lois Tverberg and Bruce Okkema, *Listening to the Language of the Bible* (Holland, MI: En-Gedi Resource Center, 2006) p. 8.

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Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name." Selah. Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. (Psalm 66:1-5/ESV)

Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them. Let the desert and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. Let them give glory to the Lord and proclaim his praise in the islands. (Isaiah 42:10-12/ESV)

We read of Nebuchadnezzar glorifying God. What are we to make of this? Daniel tells of King Nebuchadnezzar's chastening by God's Law in that it curbed evil by keeping the king from further persecuting God's people, and it revealed to the king his sinfulness. However it did not move him to ask for forgiveness of sins against God.

When Nebuchadnezzar came back to sanity, he praised God as everlasting this way: *At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation ... Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. (Daniel 4:34, 37/ESV)*

We also read that God is glorified when people do His will even if they do not know Him or believe in Him as He wants. God harnesses evil to glorify Him by the obedience of others. These are examples of this:

God used King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria to punish Israel (1 Chronicles 5:26).

God used King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as His servant to punish Judah (Jeremiah 25:9).

God used King Cyrus of Media-Persia as His shepherd to restore Judah (Isaiah 44:28).

There are some whom God either promises to punish or even curses outright. Note that God did not curse Adam and Eve, but only the serpent and the ground. He punished Adam and Eve and promised them a rescuer.

The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The man called his wife's name Eve,³ because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. (Genesis 3:14-21/ESV)

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7/ESV)

"As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. (Jeremiah 7:16/ESV)

³ Eve sounds like the Hebrew for life-giver and resembles the word for living.

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“Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble.” (Jeremiah 11:14/ESV)

Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.” (Jeremiah 17:5/ESV)

“Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the Lord. Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall, for I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment,” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:11-12/ESV)

Jesus cursed the fig tree as representative of anybody who does not abide in Him and bear the fruit of the holy Spirit. In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!” And the fig tree withered at once. (Matthew 21:18-19;; c.f., Mark 11:12-14)

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! (1 Corinthians 16/ESV)

Authors and Organizations Mentioned in the Article and Bibliography

Tverberg, Lois	Lois Tverberg has been teaching and writing about the Jewish background of Christianity for the past fifteen years. With Ann Spangler she authored the best-seller, <i>Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus will Transform Your Faith</i> (Zondervan, 2009). The book explores the first-century world of rabbis and disciples, festivals, prayers and the Torah, and how restoring Jesus to his Jewish reality sheds light on his life and ministry.
Vasicek, Edward A.	Edward A. Vasicek is an author, columnist, pastor, father, husband, and born-again Christian. He graduated from Moody Bible Institute with highest honors and continues to serve as pastor of Highland Park Church in Kokomo, IN, where he has ministered since 1983. He occasionally preaches at the Messianic Congregation, “Ahavat Yeshua,” (“Ahavat Yeshua is Hebrew for the “Love of Yeshua”, i.e., Jesus.) in Indianapolis. He views the church - even the evangelical church - as having slipped away from its Biblical origins. His prescription for this ailment is a return to an absorption with the Bible, as exemplified in Psalms 1 and 119. We are to understand the Scriptures in their original Jewish context, as first century Messianic Jews would have understood them. This includes recognizing that many New Testament passages are interpretations and applications (Midrash) of Old Testament passages.

Bibliography

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