

Worship in the Book of Revelation



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rev. 1:13–18, Job 42:1–6, Rev. 19:1–5, Revelation 13, 14:6–12.*

Memory Text: “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth” (*Revelation 14:3*).

Few books of the Bible hold as much mystery and fascination as does Revelation. It is filled with incredible images of beasts and dragons and fire and earthquakes and plagues and armies and fogs and cities and falling stars and so forth.

And yet, amid all the drama, the theme that repeatedly appears is worship. Whether dealing with the final crisis regarding those who worship the beast and its image, or revealing beings in heaven who sing praises to God, Revelation comes back again and again to worship: worship of Him who “liveth for ever and ever” (*Rev. 5:14*), worship of Him “which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou has taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned” (*Rev. 11:17*), and worship of the One who is to receive “glory and honour and power” (*Rev. 4:11*).

In short, Revelation reveals what we have been looking at all quarter: that the Lord alone, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Judge—is worthy of our worship and praise.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 24.*

“I Fell at His Feet as Dead”

Perhaps one of the greatest revelations we have been given of the majesty and power of God has come to us through astronomy. Most of the ancients had no idea of the size and expanse of the cosmos. In the twentieth century, with the incredible advances in various telescopes, we have been given a view of the universe that would have baffled most of the ancients. Indeed, we ourselves are baffled by it, by the size, by the distances, and by the incredible number of galaxies and stars. We barely can wrap our minds around it all.

And here is the amazing thing: only something greater than the cosmos could have created the cosmos, in the same way that only something greater than a painting could have created the painting. Thus, the God whom we worship, the God whom we serve, is the Creator of the universe; hence, He is greater than it all.

Who, then, are we in contrast to such a God?

Read Revelation 1:13–18, John’s depiction of Jesus, as revealed to him there. What is his reaction, and why would he react that way? How is the Cross presented here?

Read Job 42:1–6. How does Job’s reaction compare with John’s?

Though both these men were given only a partial revelation of the Lord, what they saw was enough to greatly humble them. There was fear, reverence, awe, and a sense of repentance in their reactions. How could there not be? They were getting a view of the Creator of the universe; more so, they were sinful beings getting a view of a sinless and holy God. No doubt, a realization of their own sinfulness, their own unrighteousness, their own filth, rose up in them before the presence of the Lord.

How should our worship services elicit in us a similar reaction? That is, shouldn’t we be given a sense of the presence of God, which should humble us? At the same time, how crucial that the Cross be lifted up before us as our only hope of salvation.

Holy, Holy, Holy . . .

Though the book of Revelation still holds many mysteries, the dominant motif comes through time and time again, and that is, of worship. All through Revelation are scenes of various beings worshipping the Lord.

Read the following texts. What can we learn about worship from what appears in them? What themes appear here that we have seen throughout this quarter?

Rev. 4:8–11 _____

Rev. 5:8–14 _____

Rev. 7:9–12 _____

Rev. 11:15–19 _____

Rev. 15:1–4 _____

Rev. 19:1–5 _____

Among all the things that Revelation can teach us, one thing should stand out: what happens on earth impacts heaven, and what happens in heaven impacts earth. Heaven and earth are, as we have been told, closer than we might think. Revelation shows us just how close. Indeed, time and again the beings in heaven are worshipping God for what He has done on earth.

What, too, are the themes of praise and worship seen here but themes we have been looking at all quarter? The Lord as Creator, the Lord as Redeemer, the Lord as Judge. He is praised for His holiness, He is praised for the shedding of His blood, He is praised and worshiped for His power, for His might, and for His honor. He is praised for His justice and judgment and for the salvation He offers.

Think again through the plan of salvation, of what it means and what God has given us through it. Don't we have so much to praise Him for? Whatever your struggles, whatever your trials, take time every day to praise the Lord for all that you have to be thankful about. It will change your life.

Revelation 13

From the introduction onward, we have seen how the final end-time crisis will center on the question of worship. The issue of worship is not a small matter. The eternal destiny of souls hangs on it. This crucial truth becomes more apparent in what unfolds in Revelation 13 and 14.

Read Revelation 13 and answer the following questions:

1. What is the historical context of these verses? What are they talking about historically and prophetically?

2. How often does the theme of worship appear in this chapter? What does that tell us about how central it is?

3. Where is the gospel, the salvation offered to us in Christ, presented in this chapter?

From the beginning of the great controversy, Satan sought to subvert the authority and power of God. The battle that he started in heaven is now being played out on the earth. This chapter shows the enemy's work through history, through the powers presented there, and how it will climax in the final crisis surrounding the issue of worship: all those who do not worship the beast and his image will face economic and physical persecution. Even though Satan knows that he is defeated, even though, at the Cross it was over for him, he still continues to fight, still continues to seek deceiving as many as he can, and he will do so right up to the end.

Yet, in the midst of all this, we have Revelation 13:8, which refers to Jesus as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”; that is, even before all this began on earth, the “everlasting covenant” (*Heb. 13:20*) had been in place, offering all humans the opportunity for salvation. Those who truly have accepted that salvation, whose names are in the book of life, shall not worship the beast or his image. They are worshipping, instead, the One who “washed us from our sins in his own blood” (*Rev. 1:5*), and we will no doubt be doing the same, worshipping Him, in heaven, as well.

Revelation 14

Revelation 14 opens with what? A heavenly scene, showing the 144,000 who were “redeemed from the earth” (vs. 3). It starts out with a vision of the future, of what it will be like, at least for this group, when they stand before God in heaven. And though the text doesn’t come right out and say it, this certainly seems to be a depiction of some sort of heavenly worship.

Thus, Revelation 14 continues the theme of worship found in chapter 13. These people didn’t worship the beast and his image but instead are seen worshipping their Lord in heaven.

The chapter then returns to earth, picking up where chapter 13 left off, where those who worshiped the beast and his image were shown in contrast to those who would not, those whose names were written in the book of life.

Read Revelation 14:6–12. Why are these texts so central, so crucial to us as Seventh-day Adventists? What themes appear here that we have been looking at all quarter? Why do we call these verses “present truth”?

These verses are rich and ripe with truth: Creation, Redemption, judgment, salvation, the gospel, obedience, faith, the Ten Commandments, and mission. Here, too, we can see the fiercest warning in all the Bible, and it centers on the question of worship: “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (*Rev. 14:11*).

As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand how central to this whole issue the seventh-day Sabbath is, which is so tied in with Creation and with worship. We worship the Lord because He is the Creator, and the Sabbath has been and still remains the foundational mark, or sign, of His role as Creator.

Though we still do not know when, and how, these issues will be brought to the forefront, we can be sure that they will. How crucial it is, then, that we be ready, not only to stand firm for the truth but also to be able “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (*1 Pet. 3:15*).

Worship God

“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (*Rev. 22:8, 9*). Read the context of these two verses. What’s the essential message here about worship?

All quarter we have seen the same thing: humans have this innate need to worship. Even good things. Here John wants to worship the heavenly messenger who has revealed to him so much incredible truth. And yet, he is told to stop and worship God.

This is not the first time he has had this experience. In Revelation 19:10, he is about to do the same thing, and again, he is stopped and told to worship the Lord. It reminds one of Christ’s words to Satan: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (*Matt. 4:10*).

In both cases, too, John fell at the feet of the object he sought to worship, a symbol of surrender, of submission, and of reverence before the object of worship. Anything else is not really worship, is it?

And that is because worship is not merely about what we do on Sabbath for a few hours each week. Worship is about falling at the feet of our Lord all the time. It is about our entire attitude and relationship to God. Worship is what we should be doing 24/7; it is about living a life of faith, of obedience, and of surrender to the Lord. Worship is about putting God first and foremost in all that we say, all that we do, and all that we think. Worship is how we treat others, how we treat those we love, and those who are hard to love. Worship is about obeying the commandments, it is about ministering to those in need, it is about dying to self and proclaiming the gospel.

Again, think about Creation, think about the God who created the creation. Then think about the Cross, about the Creator dying for the sins of those whom He had created, bearing in Himself the punishment that they deserved in order that these undeserving beings could have the chance of being re-created in a new heaven and a new earth.

Because God created all that exists, anything else we worship is simply our worshipping more creation, worshipping idols of one form or another, worshipping what cannot save us. In contrast, with the image of the Creator on the cross, the question is, why would we want to worship anything or anyone else?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “The Impending Conflict,” pp. 582–592; “The Final Warning,” pp. 603–612, “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 662–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“Worship is bending low before our Maker, recognizing and acknowledging His holiness and our creatureliness. It is submitting to His sovereignty, responding to His majestic presence.”—Richard M. Davidson, Andrews University, *Worship in the Old Testament* (used by permission of the author), p. 3.

“The Psalmist states: ‘Serve the Lord with fear [awe]; rejoice with trembling’ (Ps. 2:11). In worship we recognize the awesome majesty and infinite power of the King; we remember that ‘Our God is a consuming fire’ (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29) that would instantly consume us if it were not for the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus who was ‘consumed’ on the altar of Calvary in our place.

“Thus our worship will keep a balance between joy and awe. It will be a holy joy. . . . Our worship must have awesome depth . . . yet vibrant joy.”—p. 30.

“The redeemed raise a song of praise that echoes and re-echoes through the vaults of heaven: ‘Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb,’ verse 10 [of Revelation 7]. . . .

“In all that shining throned there are none to ascribe salvation to themselves, as if they had prevailed by their own power and goodness. Nothing is said of what they have done or suffered; but the burden of every song, the keynote of every anthem, is: Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, discuss in more detail the plan of redemption, the miracle of the Incarnation, the sinless life of Jesus, His death on our behalf, and the promise of His second coming. Why does all this make Christ so worthy of worship?
- 2 What are ways that we worship the Lord when we are not in church service? If we are not worshipping the Lord all the time, can we truly worship him for a few hours on Sabbath? Discuss your answer.
- 3 What are some good things that we could be in danger of worshipping?

God's Gentle Nudges

by ARMINDO CACHIAIA

No one event, no single person led me to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But as I look back, I realize that God was nudging me in that direction since I was a child.

When I first heard that some people worship on the Sabbath, I wondered why anyone would worship on Saturday instead of Sunday. Then a classmate saw me reading a small booklet that featured the Ten Commandments on the cover. He told me that the Ten Commandments, including the fourth one, were still binding on God's people. I didn't pay too much attention at that time, but years later I remembered this.

When I finished school and married, my wife and I joined a Protestant church. An Adventist man I knew spoke to me of the Sabbath, and again I wondered about it. But mounting leadership assignments in church kept me too busy to think about the Sabbath.

Then God put the question of the Sabbath in my mind again. It bothered me. I realized that I had to answer this question once and for all. When I met Adventists in my travels, I asked them about the Sabbath. They answered with conviction and quoted Bible texts to back up what they said.

I became busier and busier in my church, but the Sabbath question never went away. Finally I resigned my positions in my church and decided to visit an Adventist church to learn for myself whether the Sabbath was really God's holy day.

My wife refused to go with me, but I went anyway. The church wasn't perfect; the people weren't perfect. But I knew I was hearing Bible truth, and I felt I had found my spiritual home. My 14-year-old son went with me, and we began studying the Bible together. Soon both of us were convinced. I continued to invite my wife, and after five months she agreed to go. My son and I were baptized, and later my wife joined us.

I know that God led us to His truth by gently nudging me over the years. I'm a local elder now, and I'm helping to plant another company of believers in the area. My wife and son are also active members. I'm overjoyed that as a result of my conversion some members of my former church are asking questions about what Adventists believe. Others are attending the Adventist church, and some have joined the church.

Our mission offerings help provide materials to teach honest-hearted people about God. But sometimes God nudges us toward His truths. For that I'm grateful.

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Paul's letter to the Galatians has been compared to spiritual dynamite, and rightly so. Along with Romans, no other book in the Bible has sparked as much revival and reformation. What is it about Galatians that has made it such a backbone of spiritual revival? Unlike any other book in the Bible, Galatians addresses a number of themes crucial to the Christian soul. It tackles issues such as freedom, the role of the law in salvation, our condition in Christ, and the nature of the spirit-led life.

Next quarter's Bible study guide, *The Gospel in Galatians* by Carl Cosaert, invites us to journey with the apostle Paul as he pleads with the Galatians to remain true to Jesus and gives us a chance to reflect on our own understanding of the gospel. It is our hope that God's Spirit will spark a spiritual revival in our hearts as we rediscover what God has done for us in Christ.

Lesson 1—Apostle to the Gentiles

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Persecutor of the Christians** (*Acts 7:58*)

MONDAY: **Saul's Conversion** (*Acts 9:5*)

TUESDAY: **Saul in Damascus** (*Acts 9:10–14*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles** (*Acts 11:19–21, 26*)

THURSDAY: **Conflict Within the Church** (*Acts 10:1–11:18*)

Memory Text—*Acts 11:18*

Sabbath Gem: God had far different plans for Saul, plans that Saul never could have anticipated for himself. Not only would this persecutor of the Christians become one himself and preach Jesus as the Messiah, but he would preach this message among the Gentiles.

Lesson 2—Paul's Authority and Gospel

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Paul, the Letter Writer** (*2 Peter 3:15, 16*)

MONDAY: **Paul's Calling** (*Gal. 1:1, 2*)

TUESDAY: **Paul's Gospel** (*Gal. 1:3–5*)

WEDNESDAY: **No Other Gospel** (*Gal. 1:6–9, 5:12*)

THURSDAY: **The Origin of Paul's Gospel** (*Gal. 1:11–24*)

Memory Text—*Galatians 1:10*

Sabbath Gem: Paul's teaching that the Gentiles could become Christians on the basis of faith alone was under attack by false teachers who insisted that they first needed to be circumcised. Paul considered this an attack on the very essence of the gospel itself.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.