

Worship

Worship in Genesis: Two Classes of Worshipers

Lesson #1 for July 2, 2011

Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-3; 4:1-4; Titus 1:2; Genesis 6:1-8; 12:1-8; 22:1-18; 28:10-22.

1. What does it mean to worship? How do we choose who/what we are going to worship? If we are to worship God, do we need to really value Him? Is it truly worth it to serve Him? Do we truly worship God? Why? Is it because of what He has done for us? Is God's primary value the fact that He is planning to save a remnant from the human race? Or, do we worship God because He is Creator, Ruler of the universe, Winner of the great controversy with all that implies—in other words, because of who He is?
2. *Worship* is a shortened version of the Old English word *worth-ship* which means to consider something of great value. One definition of *worship* is that it "is a conscious effort to seek God's presence." (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 9) Are you comfortable with that definition? Would you want to add to it?
3. In this lesson we will study the kind of worship which took place inside the Garden of Eden; the stories of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-4); what we know about the descendants of Cain and Seth and their accomplishments; the story of Abraham; and the story of Jacob—particularly his experience at Bethel on the way to Haran.
4. What form did worship take inside the Garden of Eden? Try to imagine the incredible worship service that took place as the entire universe celebrated the creation of our world. Who was in charge? There was no "church." No doubt, Adam and Eve were just wide-eyed, trying to take it all in. There was no thought then about how God would save us out of the mess of sin that we are in! Did Adam and Eve worship God? How much did they understand? What did they do on those precious Sabbaths in the Garden of Eden? Were they in fear of God? In awe? Were they reverent? Did they think of God as a Savior? Or, as a Friend? Were their thoughts about God different from their thoughts about angels? Don't you suppose that God and the angels thought of the Garden of Eden as a sort of extension of heaven itself?
5. How was all that changed by the entrance of sin onto this planet? How were the attitudes of Adam and Eve changed? (Genesis 3:8-13) Were Adam and Eve's answers truthful? Were they an attempt to deflect blame? From where did the ideas of fear, shame, guilt, nakedness, making excuses, and even blaming each other come? Had any of these things ever manifested themselves in the prior history of the universe? What about during the revolt in heaven? (Revelation 12:1-12)
6. How does sin affect our worship? (Isaiah 59:2) This is more than physical separation. We feel uncomfortable, ashamed, even guilty. Can you think of a time when your personal sin or wrongdoing seemed to separate you from God? How was your worship during that time? Cain and Abel grew up in the same environment. How did they turn out so much different from each other? Was Adam and Eve's parenting faulty? We know very little about the lives of Cain and Abel other than the experience recorded in Genesis 4:1-4. Why do you think Cain and Abel brought different sacrifices? Abel followed God's directions when he brought his lamb. Cain decided that he would worship God in the way he wanted. He considered his own thoughts and ideas superior to God's. That is exactly what Satan did in heaven. He chose his own way—his own selfish way—instead of God's way. Why didn't God accept Cain's offering? Is God's way always best? Do you think that the fact that God accepted Abel's offering and did not accept Cain's was the only reason why Cain killed Abel? Or, was this the final act in a long history of sibling rivalry?
7. Cain and Abel represent two different classes of worshipers. One class recognizes the superiority of God's ways and chooses to love as God loves and obey as God commands. This obedience

leads to an ever closer relationship with God and more blessings. The other class chooses to follow the selfish way, doing worship in whatever manner, fashion, or style that they choose. There is no possibility that this kind of worship will lead them closer to God. Soon, they are doing all sorts of strange things even as parts of their worship.

8. Obviously, worship inside the Garden of Eden had nothing to do with animal sacrifices. So, what changed when they were put out of the garden? When was the first sacrifice made?

To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation. {*Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.1}

9. How long do you think those garments made of fig leaves would have lasted? When were the first animals sacrificed? Did God have to take lambs or sheep and sacrifice them to provide the clothing that He gave to Adam and Eve? Did He not only harvest the skins but show them how to prepare them, to clean them, and to tan them so they would serve as good clothing? Or, did God simply create the clothing necessary? If so, how did Adam and Eve later learn how to prepare their own clothing? Were the skins for those first clothes derived from animal sacrifices as God taught Adam and Eve how to sacrifice innocent animals? (Genesis 3:21)
10. Our Bible study guide repeatedly comments about Cain's offering not being acceptable to God. It also speaks about our worship as not being acceptable. What is implied by this word, *acceptable*? Is God upset? Is our goal just to please God? Does providing an acceptable sacrifice somehow relate to the difference between faith and works? Does faith make an offering acceptable? Could Cain's offering have been accepted if it was given in faith?
11. The *Bible Study Guide* says, "In contrast, Abel's offering of an animal reveals (however faintly) the great truth that only the death of Christ, the One equal with God (*Phil. 2:6*), could make the sinner right with God." (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for June 27) How does the life and death of Jesus Christ make the sinner right with God? Do we need to somehow do something to win God's approval? How did they learn that sin is bad? How did God explain to Adam and Eve why it was necessary to shed blood because of their sins? Did He attempt to explain the whole plan of salvation? Did He explain why Jesus had to die?
12. We all must recognize that something needs to be done to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. Could we as human beings ever bridge that gap? When Eve transferred her faith and love to the creature in the tree instead of God, what changed? How do we fix that?
13. Would you describe Cain's sacrifice as self-centered worship? What about the worship being offered by the children of Israel living in Jerusalem in Isaiah's day? (Isaiah 1:15-18)
14. Read Genesis 4:17-26. In these verses we see a very clear distinction between the accomplishments of Cain's descendants and the accomplishments of Seth's descendants. Do you think Cain's descendants were worshiping in any way? Did their music have anything to do with worship? Do you think that Seth's descendants invented any new technologies? Or, was their worship of God their only accomplishment? What is implied by the words, "People began using the LORD's holy name in worship." (Genesis 4:25,26)
15. As all Bible students know, there was a rapid deterioration of man's relationship with God from the

Garden of Eden to the flood. Read Genesis 6:1-8. What did the angels think—or even perhaps say to God—as they saw that deterioration happening before their eyes? Did they have any questions about God’s dealings with the sinners on this earth? Did they wonder how that beautiful creation that God had made could possibly have come to this?

16. Why did God send the flood? Did He send the flood to punish the wicked people? Did He send it to rescue the few with whom He still had contact so that He would not lose all touch with humans? Was the flood God’s rescue plan? Did the angels ask Him what He was going to do differently the next time? Did they think God had made a mistake in making humans?
17. Read Genesis 7:2 and 8:20. Noah had been instructed to take seven pair of each of the clean animals into the ark but only one pair of each of the unclean animals. When they came out of the ark, one of each of the clean types was sacrificed on the altar in worship to God. With so few animals still alive, did that seem like a waste? How long do you suppose it took Noah to offer one of each of the clean animals as a sacrifice? Did Noah have other things to do? Notice that this is the first time in recorded history when people actually constructed a place to worship—at least an altar.
18. What do we know about other forms of worship in the ancient world? We do know that it was not long before many people were worshipping fertility. Of course, if one is a subsistence farmer or depended upon the fertility of his animals and crops for his daily food and livelihood, it is not too hard to see why people worshiped fertility! Some of the ancient fertility cult systems actually reached the place where they were sacrificing their own children!
19. What kind of attitudes toward God would be developed if one was constantly trying to appease His wrath or to win His favor? What would you think about a god who demanded your children’s lives as sacrifices?
20. Careful study of the ancient cultural gods in the different nations suggests that each nation tended to produce gods that represented what they themselves most honored and most respected as a nation. For example, the ancient Assyrians had a god of war. Doesn’t that suggest that their worship was very self-centered? What are the dangers of a self-centered type of worship? Is our worship in any way self-centered?
21. No doubt, it seemed to the angels that things deteriorated after the flood perhaps even faster than before the flood. Finally, God picked Abram/Abraham to be His representative. (Genesis 12:1-8) Abram was the first foreign missionary. But, how did God feel about leaving Abram’s family and all the dwellers in Ur behind? Was God working with individuals in other parts of the world at the same time? Or, were all His efforts focused on Abraham?
22. There are some hints in the story of Abraham and Sarah that suggest that they convinced a number of people to join them in their wanderings. At one time, Abraham was able to lead an army of 318 trained men of war from among his own people! (Genesis 14:14)
23. But, Abraham himself had several foibles recorded in Scripture. Finally, God gave him that terrible test with the anticipated sacrifice of Isaac recorded in Genesis 22:1-18. How did Abraham come to consider God of more worth than even his son Isaac? What was Abraham supposed to learn from that experience about how to worship? Was it primarily to teach Abraham about the substitutionary nature of salvation? Or, was it primarily to teach Abraham about the seriousness of sin? What would you do if you received a message in the middle of the night like the one that Abraham received? Would you call a psychiatrist? How did Abraham know for sure that this message was from God?
24. In order to recognize God’s voice, Abraham must have had a long-term, personal relationship with Him. Do we have such a relationship? Do we place God first in our thinking?
25. Read Genesis 28:10-22. Jacob and Esau were twins. We are familiar with the rivalry that developed between them. Finally, at the age of 77, Jacob was forced to flee from the wrath of his

brother. When he was too tired to run any further, he stopped at a place called Luz which he later named Bethel and lay down with a stone for a pillow. There, God gave him a vision of a ladder ascending to heaven and assured him that he would be protected. This was a confirmation of several similar messages given to Abraham and Isaac before him. When Jacob woke up, he set the stone upright and poured oil over it as an act of worship. What kind of thoughts do you think were going through Jacob's mind as he did that? Was he overwhelmed with God's presence, power, and majesty? What kind of worship was that? Or, was he attracted by God's offer of friendship? Love? Why did he promise to pay God a tithe thereafter? What did he do with that tithe?

26. 1 John 4:8,16 tell us that "God is love." Are there any verses in the Bible which describe God as *power* or *majesty*? Do we worship God primarily because of fear? Awe? Or, terror? Are we impressed by His power and majesty? Or, are we more attracted by His love? There are a number of occasions recorded in the Bible when either an angel of God or God Himself appeared in some degree of majesty and power. (Ezekiel 1:28-2:1; Daniel 8:17-19; Revelation 1:17) The human beings that were approached always "fell on their faces" in the dirt, frightened almost to death. But, notice carefully what God said to them: "Stand up. I want to talk to you." What does that imply about how we should worship God?
27. Consider the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection. (Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12,13) Why didn't Jesus just tell them who He was? They would have been overwhelmed with His power and full of awe. Instead, He carefully went through the Old Testament with them showing how it prophesied events of His life and death here on this earth. Is God trying to tell us that an understanding of why He came and lived and died is more important than just a sense of His power and majesty?
28. "Worship is not about approaching God as you would some buddy or pal." (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, for Thursday, June 30) What would be wrong with that approach? Does this suggest a lack of reverence or respect? Does it suggest that we have overlooked our dire need of His grace and forgiveness? Should we come to church each Sabbath with a sense of awe, reverence, and fear? Do we come to church with hearts which are hard, cold, and ungrateful? What would happen if we came to church with a true sense of love and friendship for God?
29. One of the big questions regarding worship in the Old Testament is this: What is the relationship between animal sacrifices and worship? What are we supposed to learn from all those dead animals? Was God trying to teach us that sin leads to death? Are we inclined to underrate the seriousness of sin?
30. What would be your first steps in trying to improve the quality of worship in your church? Do we need more complete information about God through Bible study and prayer? Do we need the courage to witness to others, thus strengthening our faith? Do we need more awe, reverence, and terror leading to a greater respect for God?
31. What aspects of the biblical story make you want to worship God the most? The fact that He is Creator? Or, Savior? So loving and tolerant of our mistakes? The fact that He convincingly won the great controversy and demonstrated that He is a God of love who has the only system or government that could possibly survive for the rest of eternity?
32. Is it wrong for some Christians to think of God as a Friend—almost bringing Him down to their level? Do we need more fear, awe, and terror? Or, do we need a better understanding of who God is and how He runs His government?

© 2011, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: May 29, 2011

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Worship\SS-1-Worship-2011_07_02-2011_05_10-Fin+.wpd