

Oneness in Christ Unity and Worship

Lesson #11 for December 15, 2018

Scriptures: Revelation 4:8,11; 14:6-7,9; Matthew 4:8-9; Daniel 3:8-18; Acts 4:23-31.

1. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have claimed that the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 are our message—our final message—to the world. We have not often focused on the fact that these messages are largely about worship. It talks about worship in the first message; it talks about false worship in the second message; and it talks about false worship in the third message. Do we understand all that is involved in each of these messages? Do we know and understand what they say about worship?
2. From the earliest days of the Christian church, they spent a great deal of time in worship. They learned from the disciples all they could learn about the life and death of Jesus; and they fellowshiped together, broke bread, and prayed together. (Acts 2:42) It was a very exciting time. Pentecost had taken place, and thousands of people had joined the group. From those who had money, it came pouring in to help support those who did not. Their lives were filled with fellowship, study, and prayer. There was constant talk about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
3. In his first epistle, Peter challenged us to be a holy priesthood unto God. (1 Peter 2:5) Are we excited about the Christian message? Are we expressing gratitude to God in a community of worship? That kind of worship would transform people's hearts and minds into the likeness of the character of God. It should also prepare us for service. And shouldn't service automatically lead to unity? Each week as we come together to celebrate and worship if we would take the opportunity to talk about the wonderful things that God has done for us in the previous week as we served Him, what would happen in the church?
4. So, this week let us look at not only the events connected with worship but also what *worship* itself means. Read Psalm 29:2. Do we really recognize the worth of God? Do we give Him the glory due to His name? Look at what we know about the word *worship* and its derivatives from Hebrew and Greek:

worship - noun [Middle English *worshipe* **worthiness, respect, reverence paid to a divine being, from Old English weorthscipe worthiness, respect, from weorth worthy, worth + -scipe -ship**] (before 12th century). —Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** (10th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. [Bold type is added.]

Worship. [Heb. generally a form of *shachah*, "to bow down," "to worship"; Gr. generally *latreuo*, "to serve," especially with respect to the outward forms of worship, and *proskuneo*, "to do obeisance," "to prostrate oneself," "to reverence."] The attitude of humility, reverence, honor, devotion, and adoration that properly mark the relationship of created beings to their Creator, especially in His presence. The Bible teaches that such worship is due to the one true God alone (Ex 20:1-3; 34:14; Mt 4:10; Acts 10:25, 26; Rev 19:10).—Horn, S. H. (1979). In *SDA Bible Dictionary** 1184. Review and Herald Publishing Association. [Brackets and content inside the brackets are in the source.]

5. Revelation 4&5 show us a very interesting picture of heaven. There are creatures and elders surrounding the throne of God; they are constantly praising Him. Jesus told us that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:7,10) Is that why the beings surrounding the throne of

God are rejoicing? Who are those creatures? What kind of beings are they?

6. What do you think is implied by the statement that “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come”? (Revelation 4:8) Don’t you think our supremely-intelligent God would get tired of hearing the same words over and over again? And notice the response of the 24 elders: They fall down before the One who sits on the throne and throw their crowns down in front of Him. Do they ever pick them up? But, all these beings who surround the throne of God are constantly giving Him glory, honor, power, and praise.
7. In Revelation 5:9-14, they proclaim that Jesus Christ is worthy to take the scroll and break open its seals. Ellen White told us that scroll is a history of all the events of this world. Surely, Jesus is the one who is worthy to open that scroll and talk about all that has happened here on planet earth.

Revelation 5:12: “The Lamb who was killed is worthy, to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and strength, honour, glory, and praise!” —American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Revelation 5:12). New York: American Bible Society.

8. **God’s ways sometimes seem like very strange ways. Imagine winning the greatest controversy of all time by dying! Of course, He had to rise from the grave three days later to confirm that His victory was successful.**
9. But, what leads to all this worship in the throne room of God in heaven? From our perspective here on planet earth, does it seem that God is winning?
10. When events on planet earth come to an end, God’s faithful people will also worship Him by saying:

“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”
—Revelation 15:3-4, *New King James Version.** [Bold type is added.]

11. So, why do we worship God? The answer, of course, is that without God, we would not exist; He is our Creator and our Redeemer. But, more than that, we worship Him because of who He is! We adore Him, we reverence Him, we praise Him, we love Him, and we obey Him because He is worthy.
12. Fortunately for us, He has chosen to reveal Himself through the Holy Scriptures. And thus, we can get to know Him.
13. We worship God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—because of all that They have done for us; but, even more so because of Their very natures resulting in the way They run Their universe. We worship Them because Their very nature—love—is the only way to run a universe with transparency and fairness. In contrast to Satan’s way—selfishness—there can be no comparison. Selfishness is—by its nature—self-destructive.
14. Jesus Himself said to Phillip when Phillip questioned Him as recorded in John 14:8-14 that if we have seen Him (Jesus), we have seen the Father.

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed.... In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father.—Ellen

G. White, *That I May Know Him** 338.4.

15. When we have a correct understanding and appreciation for who God is, awe and faithfulness is the only appropriate response. Where would we be if Jesus had chosen not to come to this earth, live, die, and rise again? Every night, Father and Son planned for the next day.
16. But, Satan is alive and “well.” And he wants more than anything else to be praised and worshiped. He even asked Jesus to bow down to him! (Matthew 4:8-9) It is hard even to imagine such arrogance. But, there are other examples of such arrogance elsewhere in Scripture. Read Daniel 3:8-18. Nebuchadnezzar was sure that he could replace the image he had seen in vision with an image of solid gold and force all of his subjects to bow down to it—him. But, the response of the three young Jewish worthies completely turned the worship of that golden image upside down.

Important are the lessons to be learned from the experience of the Hebrew youth on the plain of Dura....

The season of distress before God’s people will call for a faith that will not falter. **His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death.**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 512.1-513.0. [Bold type is added.]

17. But, the fight over who we should worship will not end until all things are made new.

Revelation 13:15-17: ¹⁵The second beast was allowed to breathe life into the image of the first beast, so that the image could talk and put to death all those who would not worship it. ¹⁶The beast forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, slave and free, to have a mark placed on their right hands or on their foreheads. ¹⁷No one could buy or sell without having this mark, that is, the beast’s name or the number that stands for the name.—*Good News Bible*.*

Revelation 14:9-11: ⁹ A third angel followed the first two, saying in a loud voice, “Whoever worships the beast and its image and receives the mark on their forehead or on their hand ¹⁰will themselves drink God’s wine, the wine of his fury, which he has poured at full strength into the cup of his anger! All who do this will be tormented in fire and sulphur before the holy angels and the Lamb. ¹¹The smoke of the fire that torments them goes up for ever and ever. There is no relief day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, for anyone who has the mark of its name.”—*Good News Bible*.*

18. Is it really possible to force someone to truly worship you—or anyone? You can force a person to go through the motions; but, is that true worship?
19. How has Satan tried to get people to worship him down through the ages? From the days of Cain and Abel down to the very events of the second coming, Satan has done his best to bring that about.

Isaiah 14:14: You said you would climb to the tops of the clouds and be like the Almighty.—*Good News Bible*.*

20. So, how could we possibly be deceived by the Devil? We are born selfish. As infants, all we can think about is our own needs. And for many that selfishness never really goes away. We

want things—a nice home, a nice car, a comfortable job, plenty of money, etc. While there is nothing essentially wrong with those things, they can take a top priority in our lives and crowd out worship of God and service to others which are the really important ways to prepare for a life in companionship and love of God forever.

21. Read Revelation 14:6-20. Notice that these verses tell us that God has an eternal message of good news for us; He is challenging us to honor God, praise His greatness, and worship Him. The second and third angels' messages are warnings against worshipping the false christ.
22. The three angels' messages are followed in Revelation 14 by two pictures suggesting that the harvest is ready and that it is time to reap.

It is interesting to note that at the end of time worship is identified as a key issue in the great controversy for the allegiance of the human race. This worldwide announcement is a call to worship the Creator.

“The central issue in the final crisis will be worship. Revelation makes clear that the test will not be denial of worship, **but rather who is worshiped**. At the time of the end, only two groups of people will be in the world: those who fear and worship the true God (11:1, 18; 14:7) and those who hate the truth and are worshipers of the dragon and the beast (13:4-8, 14:9-11). . . .

“If worship is the central issue in the final conflict, no wonder then that God sends His end-time gospel urging the inhabitants of the earth to take Him seriously and worship Him as the Creator, the only One worthy of worship.”—Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2002), pp. 444, 445.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, December 11. [Bold type is added.]

23. So, what should be our main emphasis as we worship God? The early church experience teaches us that what they were most interested in was knowing the details of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, that was based on an understanding of the Old Testament and the prophecies which pointed forward to the Messiah.
24. We can find several places in Scripture where people are commended for studying God's Word; that is an essential part of worship. You cannot worship God and hold Him as worthwhile unless you know about Him. See 2 Kings 22:8-13; Acts 17:10-11; and 2 Timothy 3:14-17. How many people today “worship” entertainers? Or, sports figures?

Wherever the truths of the gospel are proclaimed, those who honestly desire to do right are led to a diligent searching of the Scriptures. **If, in the closing scenes of this earth's history, those to whom testing truths are proclaimed would follow the example of the Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily, and comparing with God's word the messages brought them, there would today be a large number loyal to the precepts of God's law, where now there are comparatively few.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 232.1. [Bold type is added.]

25. So, how could our church in the 21st century come together and study God's Word more effectively and conclude by worshipping God more correctly? Are we each firmly-enough grounded in the Scriptures so that we could give a clear answer to anyone who asks us about the truths in which we believe? (1 Peter 3:15) Peter apparently recognized that new truths would be revealed by a careful study of Scripture.

2 Peter 1:12: And so I will always remind you of these matters, even though you

already know them and are firmly grounded in the truth you have received.—*Good News Bible*.*

26. Study of the ancient customs and of documents from the very early days of the Christian church suggests that during fellowship meals, someone would offer a special blessing over the bread and drink in memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Of course, they were looking forward to His very-soon return. (See Acts 2:46-47.) Are we?
27. Prayer is one of the important aspects of worship. (See Acts 1:14; 4:23-31; 12:12.) Notice that two of these occasions happened because Peter—and in one case, John—were miraculously released from prison.
28. Have we as a church experienced the unity which comes from praying together? How does prayer lead to greater unity? Members of a family virtually always unite in opposition and defense against any external enemy. They may squabble with each other incessantly; but, when an external enemy shows up, they stand shoulder to shoulder.
29. Another very important aspect of worship is the seventh-day Sabbath. Clearly, one of our major ways of maintaining fellowship and unity is based on the fact that we come together to worship on Sabbath. Notice these words from Ellen White about the effects of faithfully observing the seventh day Sabbath.

It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that He is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship Him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 437.2-438.0. [Bold type is added.]

30. Clearly, the Sabbath was intended to remind us of God's creation. Creation was the first issue that led Satan to rebel. He wanted to be a creator like Michael the Archangel. When we worship the true Creators—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we are recognizing that Satan and all that he stands for are not to be worshiped for any reason whatsoever.
31. In the 21st century when someone mentions *worship*, the discussion often turns to styles of music, the organization of the divine service, etc. But, true worship can happen anywhere, at any time, when we turn our thoughts to God and all that He/They have done for us and will do for us because of who They are.
32. Would it be correct to say that worship is the Christian's thankful and awesome response to God for all that He has done for us? Are you thankful that He has answered the questions in the great controversy to the satisfaction of all who study it carefully? Are you thankful that He has provided a means for our salvation? What does it mean to you to know that Jesus, the King of heaven, died for you?
33. We worship God not just because of what He/They have done or will do for us, but also because of the very nature of Their beings, the love that They have demonstrated and the government that has resulted from that love.
34. So, could you correctly identify the meaning of *worship*? What does *worship* actually mean to you? *Worship* should mean holding someone or something in our thinking as of true ultimate worth-ship. One of Satan's most successful ploys today is convincing people he does not exist.
35. Have we carefully thought through the two sides in the great controversy? If we focus on what God has done versus what Satan has done, isn't that sufficient reason for worshiping God and rejecting Satan?

36. Do you feel that you have an intellectual understanding of the great controversy? And of who God is? But, maybe not a heartfelt appreciation for all that He has done?
37. How much is involved in *worship*? It certainly involves honor and respect. Does it also include service and obedience? What would you say is a reasonable response to all that God has done for us? How will you respond?
38. Revelation 13&14 make it very clear that in contrast to what many have thought, the issue is not about *whether* we will worship or not worship; but, in fact, it is about *who* we will worship. Everyone will either choose the side of Satan or the side of God and hold them in respect because of what they have done.
39. Could we be deceived by Satan? When we consider the incredible contrast between what Satan has done versus what God has done, how could we possibly agree to join Satan's side?
40. Review once again what examples we might have of how God has been worshiped down through the centuries. Read Isaiah 1:10-20. What is going on in these passages? Compare Isaiah 58. How could those people who were to be a part of the royal family of God, the descendants of Jacob/Israel, have wandered so far away from God's plan for them? In the New Testament, the most common word for *worship* is *proskyneo* which literally means "to kiss toward." In those days, it was common for an ordinary person who would be approaching a king for some reason to actually kiss his foot. That was a recognition of their dependence or submission to the person they were approaching. Surely, this implies more than just a physical act. So, *to worship God* is to recognize His greatness and majesty. Are we willing to accept the idea that He is Lord of our lives?

True worship has several important features. **First and foremost**, it is directed at God and Him alone (*Deut. 6:13, Matt. 4:10*). **Second**, it is never forced. It is a spontaneous response to the character of God and His redemptive actions on our behalf. It begins from the heart and not from the expectations of others. **Third**, worship is not simply a Sabbath morning activity or a part of a worship service. It is a lifestyle. We are to live and breathe our responses to what God has done for us. The living creatures in the throne room, pictured in Revelation 4, worshiped continually day and night. While such intense focused worship is not possible in our lives, this figure underscores the idea that each word and action of ours should bring honor to the name of God.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 147. [Bold type is added.]

41. If we become true worshipers of God, will we be attracted to others who are true worshipers of God?
42. We have reviewed many of the reasons for worshipping God. Why do you think worship seems to be such an important part of the three angels' messages? Are we giving worship adequate emphasis in our times together and our studies together and our attempts to reach out to those not of our church?
43. What is the relationship among the prayers and songs and activities we normally do in Sabbath school and church to the true worship of God?
44. Why is it that many—especially of our young people—have come to think that our church services are boring and, therefore, are leaving the church in great numbers? Could we make the worship of God really attractive, once again?

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Last Modified: November 23, 2018

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