

Worship in Genesis: Two Classes (Kinds) of Worshipers



SABBATH—JUNE 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 3:1–13; Genesis 4:1–4; Genesis 6:1–8; Genesis 12:1–8; Genesis 22:1–18; Genesis 28:10–22; Titus 1:2.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The Lord is certainly in this place. And I didn't [did not] even know it.’ Jacob was afraid. He said, ‘How holy this place is! This must be the house of God. This is the gate of heaven’ ” (Genesis 28:16, 17, NIV).

AS HUMANS WE NEED TO WORSHIP SOMETHING. What we choose to worship is the most important choice we can make. This is very true in the last days, when two groups of worshipers are clearly seen: (1) those who worship the Creator, and (2) those who worship the beast and his image.

Seeds for that big difference can be found almost at the beginning of the Bible. For example, in the story of Cain and Abel, we find two kinds of worshipers. Abel is worshiping the true God as He is supposed to be worshiped. And Cain is involved in a false kind of worship. Abel's worship is acceptable, but Cain's worship is not. That is because Abel's worship is based on salvation by faith. And Cain's worship is based on works. In fact, this is true with all false forms of worship. All false forms of worship are based on works. This theme will appear again and again throughout the Bible. True worship focuses on God only. True worship focuses on God's power and His goodness. But false worship focuses on humans and on self.

Lesson 1 WORSHIP IN GENESIS: TWO CLASSES (KINDS) OF WORSHIPERS

SUNDAY—JUNE 26

WORSHIP IN EDEN (Genesis 3:1–13)

Genesis 1 tells the story of Adam and Eve in their new home. The Creator of the universe has just designed and created a beautiful new planet. He finishes His work with the creation of the first family. The world comes from Him in perfect form. In its own special way, the created earth must be an example of heaven.

Genesis 2:1–3 then adds another important part to the story: God sets apart and makes holy the seventh day as the Sabbath. This is an act directly connected with God's work of creating the heavens and the earth. This act also gives the basic reason for the fourth commandment. A day is set aside for worship in a special way. We can only guess the kind of worship that Adam and Eve, as sinless humans, gave to their Maker. He is the God who had done so much for them. (Little did they know, at that time, just how much He would end up really doing for them!)



The seventh-day Sabbath is a symbol of all that God has done for us.

Read the sad story of the Fall in Genesis 3:1–13. What changes now took place in Adam's relationship (connection) to his Creator? (Verses 8–10.) How did Adam answer God's questions to him? (Verses 11–13.) What does his answer show about what had happened to him?

After the Fall a whole lot of things that were not there before suddenly were. Just like that! In a moment of disobedience, the moral (righteous) setup of humans changed. Instead of being filled with love, trust, and respect for God, the humans' hearts were now filled with fear, guilt, and shame. Instead of wanting God's holy presence, they hid from Him. For Adam and Eve, their relationship with God had been destroyed. The close relationship with God that they once enjoyed (Genesis 3:8) would now be different. When God came to Adam and Eve, they "hid themselves" from His presence. They were so ashamed, guilty, and afraid that they fled from God, who had created them.

What a powerful example of just what sin did—and still does—to us.

Think about times in your life when some experience, perhaps some sin, made you feel so guilty and ashamed that you wanted to hide from God. How did this influence your prayer life? What did it do to your ability to worship Him with your whole heart? This is not a pleasant feeling, is it?

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MONDAY—JUNE 27

WORSHIP OUTSIDE OF EDEN (Genesis 4:1–7)

After their punishment, Adam and Eve began life outside of Eden. The first gospel promise was given to them there in Eden (Genesis 3:15). But the Bible does not show us any sacrifices being offered until after Eden. (A person could guess from Genesis 3:21 that perhaps sacrifices were made then. But the verse itself says nothing about sacrifice or worship.) The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 clearly shows for the first time a system of sacrifice.

Read carefully the first recorded story of a worship service (Genesis 4:1–7). Why was Cain’s offering not acceptable to God? Why was Abel’s offering acceptable?

Cain and Abel represent (show) two classes (groups) of worshipers that have been going on since the Fall. Both of them built altars. Both came to worship God with offerings. But one offering was acceptable to God and the other offering was not.

What made the difference? To answer this question, we have to understand salvation by faith alone. It is the gospel, which was first given to Adam and Eve in Eden. But God made the plan before the world began (Ephesians 1:4; Titus 1:2).

Cain’s offering represented salvation by works. It was the basis of all false religion and worship. The separation between heaven and earth is so wide that nothing sinful humans do could ever bridge the gap. Legalism,¹ or salvation by works, is the human attempt (try) to do just that.

Abel’s offering of an animal shows the great truth that only the death of Christ could make the sinner right with God. Christ is the only One who is equal with God (Philippians 2:6).

So, we are given a powerful lesson about worship: all true worship must center on the fact that we are helpless to save ourselves. We also need to know that all our hard work or efforts to save ourselves are the same as Cain’s action here. To offer true worship, we need to know that only through God’s grace² can we have any hope of eternal life.



Abel’s offering showed that only the death of Christ could make a sinner right with God.

1. legalism—the belief that we are saved by our own good works, apart from what God has done for us.

2. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us, through our faith, in order to take away our sins.

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Examine your own thoughts, reasons, and inner feelings about worship. How Christ-centered is your worship? Or might you be focusing too much upon yourself?

TUESDAY—JUNE 28

TWO KINDS OF WORSHIPERS (Genesis 6:1–8)

In Genesis 4, we notice that people started to fall more deeply into sin after the Fall. For example, Lamech became a polygamist.³ He then killed someone. The murder caused him to be very afraid. But Genesis 4:25, 26 shows that some people were trying to be faithful. This is because at that time “people began to worship the Lord” (NIV).

What practice is happening in Genesis 6:1–8? Why is it so dangerous? What results did this lead to?

Little by little, the two kinds of worshipers began to come forth (Genesis 6:1–4). There was great wickedness (evil) on the earth. But there also were holy men who were leaders in keeping alive the knowledge of God. Only a few of them are named in the Bible. But in every age, God had people who were faithful to Him. In every age, God had people who were truehearted worshipers. But the time came when the human heart got so wicked that the Lord had to wipe

people out and start over. That was the reason for the Flood.

According to Genesis 8:20, what is the first thing the Bible shows Noah doing after he comes out of the ark? Why is that important?

How interesting that the first thing Noah does is worship. And the important part of that worship is the sacrifice. This is the first example of a Bible leader building a place of worship. This place is an altar on which Noah and his family offer their sacrifices. So, this is how Noah shows the world that he depends on the Lord. He also believes in the soon coming of the Messiah, who will give His life in order to save all who believe in Him. Noah knows that he is saved only through God’s grace. Without it, Noah would have been destroyed with the rest of the world.

How do you daily show God’s grace in your life? Or more important, how should you show that you must depend on His grace?

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 29

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM (Genesis 12:1–8)

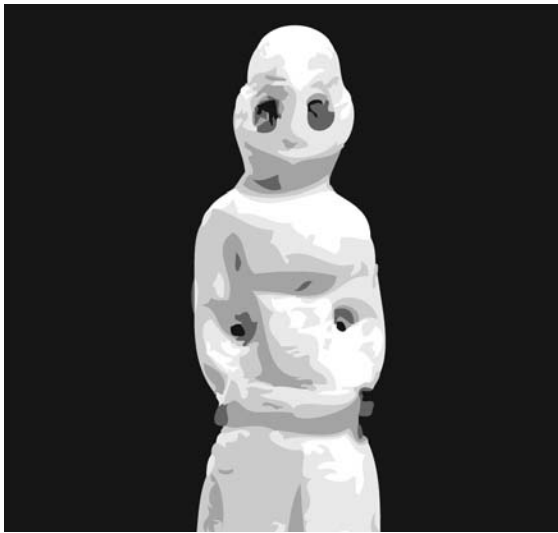
What does Genesis 12:1–8 teach us about Abram (later Abraham) and his calling by God?

Abraham was faithful to God. But

3. polygamist—a person who has many wives.

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some of Abraham's relatives (family members) began worshiping idols. This practice was very common in their culture. So, God called Abraham to separate from his relatives and his comfortable home in order to become the father of a nation of worshipers who would follow the true God.



God called Abraham to separate from those who worshiped idols.

No doubt Abraham and his wife, Sarah, influenced (led by example) many to accept the worship of the true God. But there was another reason, too, why God called Abraham to father a new nation. “ ‘Because Abraham obeyed me. He did what I required. He kept my commands, my rules and my laws’ ” (Genesis 26:5, NIV). And here is another reason: “Abram believed the Lord. The Lord accepted Abram because he believed. So his faith made him right with the Lord” (Genesis 15:6, NIV).

But at the same time, Abraham had some painful lessons to learn.

Read about the terrible test that Abraham had to go through in Genesis 22:1–18. Why was this terrible test given to Abraham? According to verses 8, 13, 14, what was the real message that God wanted Abraham to understand?

As we have seen, the death of Jesus, God's Son, is a very important part of the plan of salvation. From the beginning, the Hebrew system of sacrifices symbolized (stood for) the death of God's Son. The Lord wanted people to use only animals for sacrifices. But in the pagan cultures, people really sacrificed their own children. This is something that God said He hated (Deuteronomy 12:31). What powerful personal lessons about faith and trust Abraham learned through this test! This act stands throughout history as a powerful symbol of how important the death of Christ is for people's salvation. Abraham got a small taste of the pain that the death of Christ must have caused the Father. But only through Christ's death could all people be saved.

Think deeply about the kind of faith that Abraham showed in this test. It is so powerful! No one can imagine it. What should this teach us about the weakness of our own faith?

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Abraham's act of offering up Isaac stands as a powerful symbol of the need of Christ's death for our sins.

THURSDAY—JUNE 30

BETHEL, THE HOUSE OF GOD (Genesis 28:10–22)

Jacob and Esau, like Cain and Abel, represent (show) two kinds of worshipers. Esau's love for adventure was admired by his quiet father, Isaac. Esau's brother, Jacob, seemed to have a more spiritual nature. But he also had some serious faults too. Jacob wanted the birthright, which legally belonged to his elder twin, Esau. So Jacob became involved in his mother's tricky plan to get it. As a result, Jacob fled in terror to escape his brother's anger and hatred. He never saw his beloved mother again.

Read the story of Jacob's escape (Genesis 28:10–22). Note the messages of encouragement (hope) and promise that God gave him through a dream. What was Jacob's answer?

This is the first example in Genesis of "the house of God" (verse 17). For Jacob, this house was only a pillar of stone. But Bethel became an important place in Bible history. Here Jacob worshiped the God of his fathers. Here he made a vow of faithfulness to Him. And here, like Abraham, Jacob promised to return to God a tithe—a tenth of his riches—as an act of worship.

Notice Jacob's sense of fear and respect because of God's presence. Jacob must have understood God's greatness as never before. And the Bible shows Jacob's attitude (feeling) of fear, respect, and awe toward God's greatness. The next thing that Jacob does is worship. Here, too, we find a principle (important rule) about the kind of attitude we should have in worship. This attitude, which is shown in Revelation 14:7, is to "fear God."

Worship is not about coming into God's presence as you would some buddy or pal. Our attitude should be that of a sinner in great need of grace. We should fall in front of our Maker with a sense of need, fear (respect), and thankfulness that God, the Creator of the universe, would love us and do so much in order to save us.

How much respect and fear do you have when you worship the Lord? Or is your heart hard, cold, and unthankful? If so, how can you change?

FRIDAY—JULY 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "The Creation," pages 47–51; "The Temptation and Fall," pages

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60–62; “Cain and Abel Tested,” pages 71–74; “After the Flood,” pages 105–107; “The Test of Faith,” pages 148–153; “The Night of Wrestling,” pages 197–203, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.⁴

“[Jacob’s] vow [at Bethel] was the outflow of a thankful heart for the promise of God’s love and mercy. Jacob felt that God had claims upon him which he must accept. He also felt that he needed to show his appreciation [thanks] for God’s special favor. In the same way we need to show our appreciation for God’s love and mercy. The Christian should often review [think about] his past life and remember with a thankful heart the past favors that God has shown him. . . . He should recognize all of them as proof of the watchcare of heavenly angels. In view of these many blessings he should often ask, with a humble and thankful heart, ‘The Lord has been so good to me! How can I ever pay him back?’ Psalm 116:12, NIV.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 187.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What Christ has done for us should be at the heart of all our worship. As you think about this important point, answer these questions: (1) Why do we worship Jesus? (2) What has He done that makes Him worthy of worship? (3) What purpose does our worship of God serve?
- ② How can our worship services become better tools for showing the world who God really is and what He is like? What parts of worship that we have learned from this week’s lesson, can be very helpful in witnessing?
- ③ Review the story of Abraham’s giving of his tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). In what ways is tithing an act of worship? What are we saying to God when we return to Him our tithe?
- ④ Think more deeply about the idea of fear and respect in worship. Why is this an important part of worship? What is wrong with thinking that we are equal to God when we worship Him?

4. Patriarchs and Prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.