

Happy Are You, O Israel!



SABBATH—JULY 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Leviticus 9; Leviticus 10:1–11; Deuteronomy 33:26–29; 1 Samuel 1; 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; Revelation 20:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “How terrible it will be for those who say that what is evil is good! How terrible for those who say that what is good is evil! How terrible for those who say that darkness is light and light is darkness! How terrible for those who say that what is bitter is sweet and what is sweet is bitter! How terrible it will be for those who think they are wise! How terrible for those who think they are really clever!” (Isaiah 5:20, 21, NIV).

IN MANY CULTURES PEOPLE BELIEVE IN BEING INDEPENDENT FROM OTHERS. In these cultures it is so easy to forget what must always be the starting point of all worship: the action of God in history. True worship should be the Christian's heartfelt answer to God's powerful acts, both in Creation and in Redemption¹ (again, the theme of the first angel's message). True worship comes from our response to God's love. It should influence every part of our lives. In the end, true worship is not just what we do on Sabbath. It should influence all parts of our lives and not just in church.

In our desire to make worship meaningful, it is so easy to fall into the trap of making worship only about our needs, our desires, and our wants. Worship should be satisfying. But the danger comes from how we try to experience that satisfaction. We can find true satisfaction only in the Lord who created and redeemed (saved) us.

This week we will learn more about true worship from Israel's history—both from the good things that happened and from the bad.

¹ Redemption—freedom (salvation) at a price. For example, Jesus Christ paid the price for our freedom from sin by giving up His life on the cross for our sins.

SUNDAY—JULY 24**THE DEDICATION (Leviticus 9)**

Seven days of preparing the sanctuary for dedication² had passed (read Leviticus 8). On the eighth day the priests entered their holy ministry (work) in the sanctuary. They were starting a work that would continue for more than fourteen hundred years. This work would symbolize (stand for) the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary,³ the true sanctuary where Christ now works for our good.

What parts of Leviticus 9 teach us about worship? What truths are taught by the different services that help us to understand the work of God for human beings (people) and why we worship Him? For example, what does the work of atonement⁴ teach us about what God has done for us and why we worship Him?

Verses 22–24 are very interesting. It is hard to imagine what must have been going on in the minds and hearts of Moses and Aaron as they entered the sanctuary. And when they came out, “the glory [great power and perfect beauty] of the Lord” appeared before all the people. These verses do not say

exactly what happened, but there were a lot of people in the camp at that time. For all of them to have seen what happened means that it must have been something special. Perhaps the glory was shown by what happened next. “The Lord sent fire on the altar. It burned up the burnt offering and the fat parts that were on it. All of the people saw it. Then they shouted for joy. They fell with their faces to the ground” (Leviticus 9:24, NIV).

The tabernacle had been dedicated. The priests were dedicated (set aside) for the service of divine worship. Holy fire appeared to show that the sacrifice had been accepted. The people answered with a shout of praise. Then they humbly fell on their faces before the glory of God’s holy presence. What we learn here is the need for deep respect and obedience during worship. The people followed every detail of God’s commands. And the Lord showed His acceptance of what the people had done.

Notice how the people acted. They shouted and fell on their faces. However serious the whole service was, the people showed deep respect, joy, and fear all at the same time. How can we learn to show this kind of respect and joy in our own worship services?

2. dedication—the act of officially saying that something (such as a new building) was created for a particular purpose (such as worship).

3. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

4. atonement—forgiveness and cleansing from sin.



Holy fire appeared to show that God had accepted the sacrifice.

MONDAY—JULY 25

FIRE FROM BEFORE THE LORD (Leviticus 10:1–11)

“With the help of his sons, Aaron offered the sacrifices that God required. Aaron lifted up his hands and blessed the people. All had been done as God commanded. And He accepted the sacrifice and showed His glory in a wonderful way. Fire came from the Lord and burned up the offering upon the altar. The people believed that the fire was a wonderful example of God’s power. They felt deep respect for God and great interest in His work. They saw in it an example of God’s glory and favor. And they raised a great shout of praise and worship and fell on their faces as if they were bowing in front of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 359.

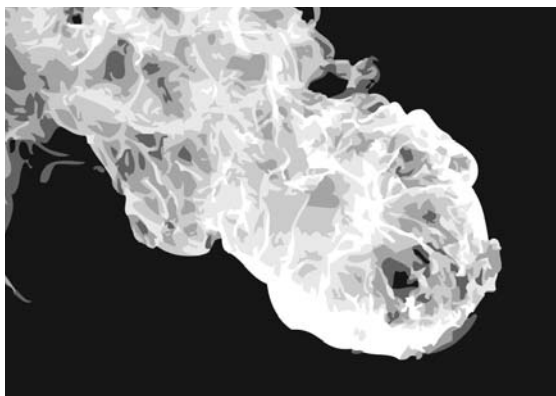
5. Substitute—a person who takes another person’s place. For example, Jesus Christ took our place by dying on the cross for our sins. He was our Substitute.

It is hard to believe that after something so wonderful, a terrible fall would happen. After such a show of God’s power, you would have thought that all the people and the priests would have always obeyed. How foolish we are to ever fail to understand how wicked the human heart is!

Read the story of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1–11. Who were they? What was their sin? (Read also Exodus 30:9; Leviticus 16:12; and Leviticus 10:9.) After what just happened in chapter 9 of Leviticus, what lesson can we learn from how Nadab and Abihu died? What important gospel lesson can we learn from this sad story?

The Hebrew wording in both Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 is the same: “The Lord sent fire on the altar. It burned up the burnt offering” (9:24, NIV). Burned up what? In Leviticus 9:24, the offering was burned up. But in Leviticus 10:2, it was the sinners. What a powerful example of the plan of salvation. At the Cross, the “fire from God burned up” the offering. And that offering was Jesus. So, all who put their faith in Him never have to face that fire because a Substitute⁵ faced it for them. But those who refuse to accept God’s way will have to face that fire themselves in the same way as those priests did (Revelation 20:9). The same glory that was shown at the Cross will be the glory that destroys sin in the end. What a sharp and clear choice this is for us all.

In one way, if you think about it, fire is fire. What is the difference? But clearly, in this case, it was a big one. Think about not just how you worship but your life in general. What, if any, “strange fires” might you need to put out in your life?



What “strange fires” might you need to put out in your life?

TUESDAY—JULY 26

**HAPPY ARE YOU, O ISRAEL
(Deuteronomy 33:26–29)**

Imagine the scene: the faithful servant Moses, who was scolded by the Lord for showing his anger in front of the people, stands before the nation of Israel as their leader (Numbers 20:8–12).

Later on, Moses knows that he is soon to die. How easily he could have wrapped himself up in self-pity and frustration. But even then, Moses’ thoughts were for his people and for the future they were to face. He was standing before the people as their leader. For the last time, Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit, gave a blessing to each tribe. He then closed with a prayer.

What is Moses saying in Deuteronomy 33:26–29 that can help us to better understand what it means to worship the Lord? What truths, what principles (important rules), can we use as we try to learn more about what true worship is?

The word *Yeshurun* is a poetic word for Israel (read Deuteronomy 33:5, 26). It comes from a root word (*yashar*), meaning “upright” or “straight.” The word does not mean just upright in body. It also means upright in character.⁶ Job was described (Job 1:1) as “perfect and upright” (from *yashar*). (Read also Psalm 32:11; Psalm 97:11; and Proverbs 15:8.) So, Moses is talking about what God’s people should be like. They should be the same as those who have entered into a covenant⁷ relationship with God.

As always, the important point is that God acts for the good of His people. All of the things that will happen to Israel—victory over enemies, safety, salvation, the fruit of the land—will happen because of what the Lord has done for His people. How important it is that they never forget these important truths. One of the many things that worship can do for us is to always be a reminder of what “the God of *Jeshurun*” has done for us. Praise, worship, and respect can help us to keep focused on God and not on ourselves and our problems.

6. character—the way that someone thinks, feels, and behaves; who you are.

7. covenant—promise or agreement; having a very close relationship with God.

Think about all the reasons for praising and worshiping the Lord. Why is it so important for you to remember all these blessings, all that He has done for you? If we do not, how easy is it to fall into discouragement?

WEDNESDAY—JULY 27

AN ATTITUDE (FEELING) OF SURRENDER (1 Samuel 1)

In the Bible, worship is serious business. It is not a matter of personal taste. It is not a matter of doing one's own thing or following one's own desires. There is always the danger of falling into dead rituals (set forms) and services. They are not the way that leads to true worship. True worship of the Lord changes our lives and helps us to follow His will (plan) and character (Galatians 4:19). We must be careful not to let self-glory or sinful satisfaction control us in the way that we worship.

We now jump ahead a number of years in Israelite history. We will read a simple story that can help to tell us how true worship can be shown in the heart of a penitent (sorrowful) soul.

Read 1 Samuel 1, the story of Hannah. What can we learn from her experience that helps us to understand the meaning of worship and the way in which we are to worship the Lord?

We must remember that God Himself should be the focus (center) of our worship. But we are not worshiping

a far-off or imaginary person. We are worshiping the God who created us and bought us back from sin. We are worshiping a personal God who acts in our lives in the most personal of ways. He also mixes with humans in human events. He acts in ways that will help us with our deepest needs if we let Him.

Hannah worshiped the Lord from the deepest place in her soul. In a way, we are all like Hannah. We all have heartfelt and deep needs that we cannot fulfill for ourselves. Hannah came before the Lord in an attitude of complete self-surrender. (After all, how much more self-surrender could one offer than to be willing to give up one's child?) We can, and should, come before God with our needs. But we always must put those needs under the Lord's control. True worship should flow from a broken heart that knows that it is helpless without God.

What are the broken places inside you? How can you learn to give them to the Lord?



We should always come to God with our needs.

THURSDAY—JULY 28**WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE**
(1 Samuel 15:22, 23)

What important principle can we learn from 1 Samuel 15:22, 23 about true worship? What does it warn us against? How can we make sure we are not guilty of exactly what these verses warn about?

These verses tell of the continued downfall and backsliding (returning to evil) of Saul, Israel's first king. Saul was to attack and *fully destroy* (the Hebrew word suggests "dedicated [chosen by God] to destroy") every person, every animal. God planned to use Israel to punish a wicked nation, the Amalekites. In His mercy God had delayed this action for some three hundred years. Saul received clear instructions about what to do. But he openly disobeyed (1 Samuel 15:1–21). And now Saul was going to suffer the results of his disobedient actions. Samuel's answer to Saul in verses 22 and 23 helps us to better understand what real worship should be about.

1. God would rather have our hearts than our offerings. (If He truly has our hearts, the offerings will follow.)

2. Obedience is more pleasing to Him than sacrifices are. (Obedience is our way of showing that we understand what the sacrifices are truly about.)

3. Stubbornness in following our own way and desires over God's is

idolatry (idol worship). This is because we have made a god of ourselves, our desires, and our opinions (thoughts).

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart as you ask yourself the following: in what areas in my life am I choosing to follow my own desires and opinions rather than letting God lead me? How can what I have learned from the examples of Saul's terrible sins help me to add to my worship experience?



When God has our hearts, our offerings will follow.

FRIDAY—JULY 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "The Sin of Nadab and Abihu," pages 359–362; "The Presumption of Saul," pages 616–626, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"God has placed a curse upon those who do not follow His commandments [laws] and those who do not respect the difference between common and holy things."—Adapted

from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 360.

“[Saul’s] terrible sins must be connected with Satan’s evil tricks of magic. Saul had tried very hard to stop idolatry [idol worship] and witchcraft. But in his disobedience to God’s command Saul had shown the same spirit of rebellion [war; uprising] against God. Saul, too, had been as inspired by Satan as are those who practice magic and witchcraft. When warned by God, Saul had added stubbornness to rebellion. Saul could have offered no greater insult to the Spirit of God than if he had openly joined with idol worshipers.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 635.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Why is it so important in worship to truly keep Christ as the center? What other things can come in and make us forget the Lord as the center of our worship? In what ways might we be in danger of using the Lord just as a cover for the worship of something else?
- ❷ How can we be two-faced in worship? What does it say about us if we do one thing in church and another thing outside of church? None of us is perfect. But the lives we lead should be connected with the kind of worship we practice. Sadly some people go to church, “worship,” then go home and treat their spouses and children badly, or take part in other evil behavior. How do such practices bring dishonor to our worship?
- ❸ Go back over the memory verse for this week. How can we be sure that we are not doing exactly what we are being warned not to do here?
- ❹ How can you better learn the “art” of worship, the “art” of self-surrender to the Lord? How can you learn to come closer to the Lord in your own private time of worship?