

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #106
11/12/2008

“The Lord's Final Words: Part 3”
Revelation 22:8-9

Revelation 22:8 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 showed me these things.

As we continue our study of this marvelous passage of our Lord's last words to man, two very interesting matters catch our attention in the verses before us. The first matter is John's personal testimony. The second is the matter of worship.

“And I John saw these things, and heard them.”

It is natural for John to want to bear personal testimony to the Lord and to His truth. Though John has not been seen or heard from since Chapter one, his personal relationship with the Lord, commitment to serving Him and involvement with Him as the recorder of this Revelation of Jesus Christ compels him to insert a few words about the reality of this awesome experience.

He had begun his recording with a personal touch such as is seen in the following verses from Chapter one:

“1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.”

In each of these verses is a personal word, a personal testimony, expressing the historical reality of what happened. If the things we read in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, as recorded by John, are not true, then John is a fraud, a very clever and determined fraud. It's with a great deal of bold, arrogant audacity that some so-called scholars, theologians, and preachers today proclaim that the things recorded by John are not true as presented. In reality they are calling John both a fraud and a very bold liar.

Revelation 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:8 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 showed me these things.

Revelation 22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

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This is not the only place that John seized the opportunity to bear a clear and strong personal testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. Turning to his little letter which is called First John, one finds an extremely strong personal testimony presented in a very detailed and powerful way by John. Pay close attention to the words describing his personal experience in 1 John 1:1-5.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

Notice the underlined words. They call attention to personal, first-hand experiences by John. He so clearly asserts they are true that it's as if he is daring anyone, anytime, anywhere, to deny the reality of his personal first-hand experience with the living Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John are found the following words (as translated literally from the actual Greek words God dictated to him) which John penned:

“When the beginning began, the Word always had been; the Word has always been face-to-face, equal with God; God always has been the Word. The Word took upon Himself flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten, with the same identical essence of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14).

Once again, notice the personal reference to his personal first-hand involvement with Him to Whom he bears testimony. Christianity is a relationship with a person, not a set of doctrines or beliefs. That personal relationship is with Jesus Christ, Who died on the cross to pay for all of the sins of every person and rose triumphantly from the grave and was alive to speak to John and is alive today. Having that personal relationship, which is so unique and real, means that the individual who has such a relationship with Jesus Christ not only receives forgiveness from all of his sins, but also becomes a totally new creature with an assured eternity spent enjoying the presence and unrestricted fellowship of the One Who has redeemed him. John, with his personal testimony, is saying that, not only did he hear and see these marvelous things, but he is also affirming that he has this dynamic personal relationship with his living Lord, a relationship which no one can dispute.

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The second matter in these verses which catches and demands our attention is the matter of worship. The very fact that God would take up space in this extremely important farewell address by our Lord to turn our attention to this matter tells us that it is of critical importance. God uses John's experience to teach us some valuable truths. John, understandably, is caught up in the emotional excitement of the moment as he receives this critical last message from his Lord. As he does, he behaves in such a way that he has to be rebuked, and deservedly so.

He says, **“And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.”**

In one way or the other, John's emotional response to this fantastic experience has been repeated by other people when they have been witnesses to something that is so heavenly and magnificent and representing the deity of God. Let us be clear about what John tells us happened so that we might rightly understand what God is saying to us about the matter of worship.

1. When John saw and heard the things presented to him by the angel, God's messenger, he indicates that he was overwhelmed. Apparently, he felt that he had to make a response. That was good.

2. John **“... fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.”** That was bad.

3. The angel quickly told John: **“... See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”** It was good for the angel to rebuke John and protect both John and himself from the wrath of God. The angel realized that John had entered a danger zone, one that could have disastrous consequences for both of them and immediately stopped him.

John would have known what God had said about how to approach and worship Him and that what he did was completely unacceptable. God tells us how we must worship Him and, not leaving it up to any person to decide these things, only accepts worship that is done according to His instructions. Because the Lord included this matter in His final words to man means that we should study His Word and pay close attention to what He tells us.

God gave clear instructions to the Israelites about how to worship Him when He organized them into a nation at Mt. Sinai:

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God ...
(Exodus 20:2-5).

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Some things God said to the Israelites are relevant to John's experience:

1. God reminded them that He had laid a foundation for His relationship with them as their benefactor — He had blessed them by setting them free from bondage.
2. They were not to worship any other gods.
3. They were not to make any forms or images representing Him which they would then worship instead of worshiping Him — nothing!
4. God warned them that He is a jealous God and would punish them severely if they disobeyed Him regarding how they worshiped Him.

In addition to this passage which relates so directly to John's experience, there are some other passages in God's Word which provide us with principles about approaching and worshipping God.

The first passage is found in the fourth chapter of Genesis and concerns Cain and Abel when they each decided to worship God by making an offering to Him. Prior to this God had sacrificed the life of an animal by shedding its blood so that He could cover Adam and Eve's sinful nakedness so He could fellowship with them. Cain and Abel would have known about what God required to be done before a sinner could enter His presence. As a result, Abel conformed his actions to God's requirements, but Cain decided he wanted to approach God according to his own way and not abide by God's requirements. Because of this God rejected his worship and Cain was burdened with guilt. The resulting sin and guilt not only separated Cain from God, but it also separated Cain from his brother. Consequently, Cain, being at enmity with God, became hostile to his brother and murdered him — all because he insisted on worshipping God in his own way, according to his own opinions, instead of submitting himself to God and worshipping Him according to God's way. The lesson is that when we desire to worship God, we must do it according to His requirements and not according to our own desires or ways.

The second passage is found in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus and tells us about the Israelites, who had only recently been delivered from their bondage in the land of Egypt where all types of idols were worshipped, assembled in the presence of Jehovah God for the first time. God told them that they must respect His holiness, (His “otherness”) for He was not like the idols they were used to worshipping. He gave them three commands:

(1) Don't touch God's mountain or He would kill them — it was holy and they were to treat it as holy (Ex. 19:12-24).

(2) They were to bathe and wash their clothes even though they were in the midst of a desert (Ex. 19:14).

(3) They were to abstain from normal sexual relations with their wives — they must behave differently in order to approach a different, holy God (Ex. 19:15). In this experience, the holiness of God is emphasized and teaches us that when we worship our holy God Who is unlike anyone or

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anything else, we must approach Him with reverence and fear because He is “other than” anyone or anything else. We must not attempt to enter His presence in the same way we would enter the presence of any other.

There are two other passages of significance which need to be examined so we can learn some other principles about how to worship God.

First, in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus is found the experience commonly known as “the worship of the golden calf.” In this passage we are told about the Israelites who grew impatient about Moses’ absence of forty days while he was up on Mt. Sinai with God and decided to worship Jehovah on their own terms. The service was led by Moses’ brother Aaron. Apparently not believing that God meant what He had told them forty days earlier (Exodus 20:1-5), they rather arrogantly decided to do things their own way and worship Jehovah in a way similar to the way they had worshiped idols in Egypt. Incorporating practices from their pagan past, they made a golden image of a calf (one of the Egyptian deities) and began to worship it even using music with which they were accustomed. They tried to worship Jehovah in the same ways they had worshipped idols in pagan Egypt. God rejected their worship and was so angry that Moses thought He was going to kill all of them. Among the lessons to be learned, lessons which John surely knew and understood, was that God will not accept any worship that is (1) contrary to His instructions, and (2) that is mixed with activities associated with the worship of idols, particularly if it is mingled with man-made images and pagan or secular music. When one approaches God to worship Him, he must worship the Lord God in a way that is clearly separated from anything associated with the worship of idols or that involves pagan or secular activity.

Second, in the twenty-first chapter of 1 Chronicles we find David, who had sinned greatly against God, had been convicted of his sin and now wanted to express his repentance and contrition to God by offering a sacrifice. The angel of God commanded David to build an altar and worship God on a piece of property that belonged to another man. The other man, Ornan, offered to allow David to use his property. He even offered to give the property to David. David however replied to Ornan: **“Nay, but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.”** David knew he could not worship God by offering anything that (1) belonged to another person. He also knew that he could not offer anything to God in worship (2) which did not require a sacrifice of him.

While we have examined some passages about worship which are not directly related to John’s experience, they do provide important guidance to us as we worship God today. John was wrong in bowing before the angel, but, if we follow what God tells us, maybe we can avoid making mistakes that will be as displeasing to God as John was in what he did.