



CALVARY
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN
SEPTEMBER 24, 2017

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REVELATION 7:9-12

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PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Revelation 7:9-12 and Luke 4:14-16. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for our groups, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

BIBLICAL EMPHASIS: Heaven is the home for all of God's children where they can praise His name for eternity.

TEACHING AIM: Worship is an act of centering our attention on who and what God is, not on one's self.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: Luke 4:14-16— "On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. . ."

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- 1 What are some habits that are so ingrained in you that they have become a lifestyle?
- 2 What are some areas of your life where you could use more discipline?
- 3 What about worship? Do you associate a need for discipline with your worship of God?

Additional Introduction Option

Split your group up into smaller groups of 2-3 people. Challenge each group to read through Psalm 95 and make two lists as they read:

- List 1—What the psalm reveals about who God is and what He does.
- List 2—What the psalm reveals about us and our worship of God.

Practicing the discipline of worship, both personal and corporate, is vital as a means of growing in Christlikeness. Just like we need discipline to eat well, spend less money, or make better use of our time, we also need discipline in our spiritual lives for things like prayer, church, and service.

After a few minutes, bring the groups back together and discuss the lists they made.

Worship is the act of centering our attention away from ourselves and onto who and what God is. God calls us to worship Him on a daily basis, both on our own and by gathering together with other believers. As this discipline becomes ingrained in us, it ceases to be a discipline and becomes a lifestyle. When worship is a lifestyle, we join in the activity of heaven and follow the pattern set forward by Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

The Book of Revelation is apocalyptic in nature. God revealed history to John in a major vision with a series of smaller visions. The visions included symbols, imagery of the battle of good and evil. John also saw the ultimate triumph of good at Christ's second coming. The specific vision John recorded in Revelation 7 was of the throne room of heaven and of the eternal worship taking place there.

Notes:

> Have a volunteer read Revelation 7:9-12.

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

- What is the occupation of this multitude as they stand before the throne?
- What do these people ascribe to God?
- Does your worship of God, individually and corporately, do the same?

The great multitude were faithful believers from all over the world. They were clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands. Jewish people waved palm branches at times of great celebration. Worship is the sole activity of heaven. When we worship on earth, we join the eternal and constant activity of heaven. One of the most important things for us to remember about worship is that it is *both* an event and a lifestyle. The lifestyle aspect of worship prepares us for eternity.

Notes:

- When the multitude cries out, how do the angels, elders, and the four living creatures respond? What does this say about God's kingdom and Christ's sacrifice?
- What do verses 10 and 12 reveal about God? What do these truths mean to you?
- What does John's vision in Revelation 7 teach us about worship? How should the worship of heaven affect the way we live now?

The multitude broke into praise, singing salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. God's will made salvation possible, and the work of the Lamb accomplished it. Only through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is salvation from sins possible for us. The sevenfold doxology in verse 12 includes blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might. Together these terms represent the complete majesty of God's person. These attributes provide a framework for Christians to use in praise of God as well. We do well to spend time meditating on these divine qualities.

Worship is simply a response to who God is and what He does, and we can worship God in many different ways both privately and corporately. Worship happens any time we reply to God in some tangible way. Our worship is to be centered fully on God—not on ourselves, our preferences, or our choices. God gave us the free gift of salvation, so we thank Him through a lifestyle of worship (Rom. 12:1).

- What are some ways we make worship “me” focused? What are some active ways we can fight back against this tendency?
- Look again at Revelation 7:9. How is God glorified through the salvation of people from all races, ethnicities, socio-economic classes, and all other walks of life?
- Why must the worship of Christ be made available to all types of people without exception?

The apostle John had lived long enough to see the church of Christ grow from a small Jewish sect to a multi-national, multi-ethnic organism fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ. He had lived through the struggles of ethnic inclusion (Acts 15) and had come out on the other side to see the glory of God in the inclusion of the Gentiles. For him, this vision of God’s dwelling place must have been assuring and gratifying as God allowed him to see a piece of heaven on earth. For us, this vision reminds us of the vast reach and power of God’s salvation, and of our role as the church to spread that good news and invite the nations to join us in our worship.

We noted at the onset of today’s study that not only does Scripture reveal the future of our worship, but

Worship Defined

Christian worship is often defined as the ascription of worth or honor to the triune God. Worship is more fully understood as an interrelation between divine action and human response: worship is the human response to the self-revelation of the triune God. This includes: (1) divine initiation in which God reveals Himself, His purposes, and His will; (2) a spiritual and personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ on the part of the worshiper; and (3) a response by the worshiper of adoration, humility, submission, and obedience to God.

Worship may be understood in either a broad or narrow context. In a broad sense, worship is seen as a way of life (Rom. 12:1). In this context all of life is viewed as an act of worship or service before God (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). Worship is also pictured as an act of the assembled people of God, as seen in the worship prescribed by God in the tabernacle (Exod. 25-40; Lev. 1-7) and temple (1 Chron. 22-29; 2 Chron. 3-7; 29-31), as well as in the worship of the NT church (Acts 13:2; 1 Cor. 11-14).

also it gives us the pattern for a lifestyle of worship established by Jesus. Let's take a few moments to consider the example He set for us while on earth.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 4:14-16.

Notes:

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. ¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

This passage of Scripture immediately follows Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. After He had overcome the onslaught of Satan, Jesus was filled with the Spirit and began His public ministry. But even though He was the Son of God and the teacher of all, Jesus continued "as was his custom" to meet weekly to worship the Lord.

- Even though Jesus was the Son of God, He continued to worship the Father regularly. What are some reasons that Jesus worshiped?
- Why might it be that Luke emphasized Jesus' worship in the synagogue at the very beginning of His public ministry?
- Take a few minutes to brainstorm stories in the Gospels that highlight Jesus' lifestyle of worship. What stories or moments come to mind?

- What is your take away from His example?

The Christian life is about growing in Christlikeness, as we noted last week. So if worship was important for Jesus, how much more important should it be for us? Here are some passages that highlight Jesus' lifestyle of worship: Matthew 4:1-11 (worship through Scripture); Luke 5:16 (worship through prayer); Matthew 26:36-56 (worship through prayer, surrender, and sacrifice); John 13:1-17 (worship through service); John 17:1-5 (worship through sacrifice); John 11 (worship through love and compassion).

Notes:

If we truly seek to model our lives after Jesus, we should give our lives to Jesus in worship. This is what Paul called our "spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1). Worship was the product of Jesus' life—it should be the same for us as His followers.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 1 Jesus' public ministry began in the local synagogue where He worshiped regularly. How should your local church be the launching point for the ministry of its members?
- 2 Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What does worship look like in a group like ours?

- 3 Being that the throne was surrounded by people from every language and tongue, how does worship relate to the mission of the church to reach the nations?

Notes:

PRAY

Thank God for His Word that teaches us. Thank Him that through the power of His Word and the Holy Spirit, He has empowered the church to fulfill His mission. Ask God for the desire to gather regularly with our church family, and pray that we would worship regularly with the rhythms of our lives.

MEMORIZE

And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."
– Revelation 7:10

REVELATION 7:9-12

7:9-10. One of the great themes of Scripture is God's election. The 144,000 clearly portrays this as we have already seen. Equally prominent—and the perfect complement—is the theme that God's people are vast in number. Consider Genesis 22:17, in which God promised Abraham, "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore." This second theme is evident here. John saw a great multitude that no one could count. That they are beyond number exaggerates for effect, for God numbers them and calls them each by name. Clearly these are multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual—people from every nation, tribe, people and language.

Notes:

John describes them as in heaven before the throne and in front of the Lamb, so his location since the beginning of vision two (Rev. 4:1) has remained unchanged. Perhaps this multitude has dislocated the living creatures, elders, and angels that used to occupy "center stage," although John doesn't offer specific information about this. They are wearing white robes—explained in verse 14—and holding palm branches. Palm branches were the ancient equivalent of balloons at a party, a mark of joy and festivity. Palm branches appear only twice in the New Testament: once when a great crowd of Jesus' followers welcomed him into Jerusalem (John 12:13); and here where another but greater crowd worships him around his heavenly throne.

Revelation 7:10 contains the first words spoken in heaven by an assembly of redeemed people. (The worship in Rev. 5:13 is offered by all created beings.) Their first praise is for full salvation. Salvation from sin. Salvation from all sorrow and sadness. Salvation from the trials that they endured. Such salvation is wholly God's; they cannot take credit for it. God Almighty on his throne, by his sovereign

grace, and Jesus the Lamb by his redemptive work have provided full salvation.

7:11-12. Like a great antiphonal choir, angelic beings echo back the worship of human beings. John noted specifically that the multitude of all the angels standing around the throne responded (see 5:12). They fell down on their faces in worship (as the twenty-four elders had done earlier, 4:10). Their words of worship are similar to the “Creation Song from the Elders” (4:11). Of all the prayers in the New Testament, this is the only one with Amen at both the beginning and the end. The angels ascribe seven attributes to our God for ever and ever. Six of these seven overlap the attributes offered by the angels to the Lamb in Revelation 5:12. The word order is different, however, as the following list shows.

Notes:

LUKE 4:14-16

The Spirit was Christ’s guide, from desert temptation to synagogue service and ministry. Satan tried to lead Jesus to Jerusalem to do miracles before the multitudes. The Spirit led him to rural Galilee to teach in the small worship places. Interestingly, Matthew has Jesus take refuge in Galilee because John the Baptist had been arrested. Luke did not connect Jesus’ ministry to John’s. John served to prepare the way. Jesus is the sole focus. In Galilee Jesus escaped the major political centers and ministered to the farmers, fishers, and traders who were the center of Jewish civilization. In Galilee Jesus found wide acceptance. People thronged to hear him. No one had ever taught like him before. He was the popular hero of the hour. Then the time arrived for Jesus to go home.

In a setting of universal praise, Jesus went home to Nazareth to preach. He followed his family’s normal habit and went to synagogue worship.

There they repeated Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41 (called the Shema), the central verse of Judaism, pledging allegiance to the one God. Next, they prayed, heard a passage read from the Pentateuch or Torah, then a passage from the prophets, a sermon, and a final priestly blessing. Jesus was given the honor of reading the scroll and then preaching. He read Isaiah 61:1-2. Then he claimed that the passage was fulfilled as they heard him read it.

Notes: