

Living Hope for the End of Days

Study Guide

Worship the Christ of Revelation

LHC: Message One (980412PM)

Week 1: Worship the Christ of Revelation

(Revelation 1:1)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you continually worship Christ anew and afresh through His wonderful names in Revelation!

SUNDAY: Worship the Ever-Present Christ!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

—Revelation 1:1

In the latter part of the first century, in the azure green of the Aegean Sea off the coast of Turkey was a barren island, a Roman penal colony, a rock quarry that cut stones for imperial temples and buildings. A boat carrying John, the last apostle, made its way to that colony island. John, as the final living member of Christ's inner circle, was considered to be the last of the empire's greatest enemies.

When John reached that prison island, he was perhaps eighty years old. Wized and stooping, gray and halting, and scarred by the fight, he was still forced to work in the rock quarries. Every day, while he worked in those quarries, he had plenty of opportunities to meditate on what Jesus had done while he walked with Him and during his own sixty years of ministry.

As storms blew in over the Aegean Sea, I am confident that he found great peace remembering Jesus' power to still howling winds as He did when the disciples were in the boat on the stormy Sea of Galilee. Jesus spoke authoritatively to the wind and waves, and both immediately became calm, as did His disciples. Whenever John saw withered vegetation on Patmos, he thought about the time Jesus caused the fig tree to wither. When he saw prisoners die, John meditated on Jesus' power to touch dead bodies and bring them back to life. He recalled personally seeing the widow at Nain sobbing as her son's coffin was being taken out to the burial place. But then Jesus walked out and intercepted the crowd; and when He touched the coffin, the boy sat up. John was also there when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. So on and on, the Holy Spirit prompted precious memories of the One who loved him so!

No matter where John was, he was near his beloved and ever-present Lord Jesus Christ. When he “looked full in His wonderful face, the things of earth grew strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.” And John’s heart, overwhelmed with joy, worshiped!

You and I have the same opportunity to worship the ever-present Christ, but we get to see more of Him than John saw. Having written just one of the four Gospels, John did not personally witness what Matthew, Mark, and Luke reported. But we have *all the Gospels* through which to see Christ, so we have an abundance of precious moments of Christ’s power to meditate upon. This same ever-present Christ is with us at home, at school, at work, at play, or wherever we may be! What a thought! I wonder: *Do you purposefully look for evidence of Christ’s presence throughout your day and talk about it over dinner?* I hope so!

Like a landmark, Jesus will never be out of sight for us. Consider this illustration: When I was a child, I went on camping expeditions that my father used to lead. We fished and canoed on those great Canadian lakes. We camped in a wilderness area; there were no homes along the lakeshore, no boathouses, no towers, or other man-made landmarks to help us find our way. So we picked out a particular landmark to sight, such as a rock outcropping or a fallen tree along the shore. Then we always stayed in sight of it so that we could find our way back to camp. Like a physical landmark that helps us keep our bearings, Jesus is always in sight.

The next time you feel alone, abandoned, desolate, or useless, remember that just as Jesus was never out of sight for John, He will never be out of sight for you—ever!

Now please join with me in spirit as you read the following prayer for the week ahead. May its words, as well as the others throughout Living Hope, sink deep within your heart and soul so that our spirits blend together as one voice before the throne of God.

My Prayer for You This Week: *Father, we thank You that we can very appropriately end our journey through the Word with this wonderful unveiling of Jesus in Revelation, which is a priceless gift. We can think of no higher honor, no greater privilege, and no more solemn responsibility than to come before Your presence. We come humbly, asking You to clothe us with humility. We come reverently, asking You to cleanse and purge us from any of the leaven of sin that always seeks to attach itself to us. We come rejoicing, for the blood of Jesus Christ, unmerited by us, is Your favor upon us. We thank You for His cleansing. We come worshipfully, asking that You would accept the upraised hearts that we offer to You today. We come overflowing with joy, for we know that we are redeemed, and we are persuaded that You, our Redeemer, can keep us unto that day when we sit at Your table in heaven. We pray that every part of our study of this precious book of Revelation will have Your favor upon it. Meet with us in a very special, transforming, and glorifying way in our lives, so that we will know that surely we have been with Jesus, in whose name we ask all this. Amen.*

MONDAY: Behold Your God!

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ”
—John 20:28, emphasis added

William Temple (1881–1944), the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944, defined worship as follows: “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”¹

If there is no worship, there is no change in the life. Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. How? **Quickening** of our conscience by His holiness—being renewed through the life and power of our endless life in Christ; **nourishment** of mind by His truth; **purification** of imagination by His beauty; **openness** of our hearts by His love; **submission** of our wills to His purpose. All of this gathered together in adoration is the greatest of all expressions of which we are capable.

One clear way God invites our worship is by revealing himself through His divine names. Since Revelation is a revelation of Jesus and His person, its twenty-two chapters are a gold mine as the Lord unveils His deity through more than sixty-seven names and titles. The greatest insight into adoring the Lord comes by way of His names and titles in His Word. They are real treasures to find!

Chapter 1: He is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the Dead, Ruler over the Kings of the Earth, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Almighty, the First and the Last, the Son of Man, the Living One!

Chapter 2: He is the administrator of the church who has the sharp two-edged sword, eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass!

Chapter 3: He is the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, who is holy and true, who has the key of David, who is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God!

Chapter 4: He is the One who sits on the throne in heaven!

Chapter 5: He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and the Lamb who was slain—who lives forever and ever!

Chapter 6: He is the wrathful Lamb!

Chapter 7: He is the redeeming Lamb and the providing Lamb!

Chapter 8: He is the patient collector of our prayers!

Chapter 9: He holds back the monsters from the abyss!

Chapter 10: He is the Creator of heaven and earth and sea!

Chapter 11: He is Christ, the Lord God Almighty!

Chapter 12: He is the Christ, the Lamb, Jesus!

Chapter 13: He is the Lamb, whose is the Book of Life!

Chapter 14: He is the Lamb on Mount Zion, Jesus, the Lord, the Son of Man!

Chapter 15: He is again the Lamb, the Lord God Almighty, the King of Saints, the Lord!

Chapter 16: He is the One who was and is and is to be, the Lord God Almighty!

Chapter 17: He is Jesus, the Lamb—Lord of Lords and King of Kings!

Chapter 18: He is the Lord God!

Chapter 19: He is the Lord our God, the Lord God, the Lamb, Jesus, the Faithful and True, the Word of God, Almighty God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Chapter 20: He is Jesus, the Christ!

Chapter 21: He is the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb, the Lord God Almighty!

Chapter 22: He is the Lamb, the Lord God, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, Jesus, the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star, the Lord Jesus— *our* Lord Jesus!

Worship Christ in His majesty—worship Him in all His glorious names! Nothing can possibly come into your life that the all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present Christ didn't know about long before it happened. As Creator, He made you as you are; he picked your family, limitations and all. The Lamb has paid the price for sin. And the Lamb is the only One who has the reservation book, the Book of Life, which is the key to enter into the paradise He has prepared for His bride. Have you made your reservation? Is your name written there? Are you in touch with Him to prepare for what is ahead?

Are you worshiping the manufacturer and owner of your life in grateful awe that He knows and cares for you?

TUESDAY: The Bible—God's Worship Guide

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

—Colossians 3:16 NASB, emphasis added

Could I challenge you? For a wonderful worship experience in Revelation, search for all the names and titles of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Over the next few weeks, begin your search by looking, chapter by chapter, for the names and titles of Christ in Revelation. Use markers, colored pencils, or pens to mark each one in a special way that will help you remember where you found them. As you mark each one, ask yourself the "So what?" question: *So what does Jesus as the _____ (fill in a name or title) mean in my life for today?*

Learn to practice noticing God's presence during each day. Worship ought to become a daily habit: Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Punctuate every moment with inward whisperings of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving: *Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice* (Psalm 55:17).

To heighten your preparation for public worship, be sure to have personal times of inner worship, confession, Bible study, and attentiveness to Christ, your present teacher: *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it that you may do all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and have good success (Joshua 1:8).*

Learn to worship God in many different settings of worship. Worship God when you are alone. Have home groups not only for Bible study but also for the very experience of worship itself. Gather in little groups of two and three to learn to offer up a sacrifice of praise. Many blessings can occur in smaller gatherings that, just by sheer size, cannot happen in the larger experience. These little experiences of worship will empower and impact your larger Sunday gatherings as well.

Determine to prepare for the gathering of the church for worship. On Saturday night, prepare by having an inward examination and confession prior to going to bed early. On Sunday morning, before the actual worship service, go over the hymns and Scripture passages that will be used that day. Then pray that God will fill the sanctuary with His presence.

You can have one of the most vital ministries at your church by arriving ten to fifteen minutes early and sitting, with your Bible open, in the worship center. Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower those who will minister during the service: the instrumentalists, the orchestra, the choir, the soloists, the worship leaders, and the One who ministers the Word. Let go of all inner distractions so that you can really participate in the worship service.

If you do these things faithfully, you will be well on the way to growing in your ability to worship!

WEDNESDAY: Cultivate a Life of Worship

*Having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and **departed to a solitary place**; and there He prayed.*

— Mark 1:35, emphasis added

Listen to what one man who spent years meditating on worship has written: “Worship is something we do. Studying the theology of worship and debating the forms of worship are all good, but by themselves they are inadequate. In the final analysis we learn to worship by worshipping.”²

Willingly offer yourself to the Lord as an instrument for worship. As an individual, learn to let go of your agenda, your concerns, your being blessed, and your hearing of the Word of God. The language of the gathered fellowship is not “I,” but “we.” So surrender to the ways of God; submit to others in the Christian fellowship; desire that God’s Spirit will rise up in the group, not just within you as an individual. Seek to become of one mind, of one accord. Cultivate a life of complete spiritual dependency. Dependency means that you will be completely dependent upon God for anything significant to happen. The work is God’s and not yours. A simple way to start this is to pray before doing anything; invite the Lord’s presence, blessing, and guidance. Then give Him all the credit for anything good that happens.

Guard yourself from exposure to harmful influences that will kill worship. Cultivating worship also involves dealing with all the weeds that grow and choke the growth of your crop, as well as the pests that try to steal the harvest. For example, some of us are in the high-risk category for skin cancer. So what should we do? We should stay away from exposure to those deadly UV rays. Since all of us are prone to soul cancer that eats away at our worship, we should avoid having a lot of exposure to TV rays because they distract, deaden, and deflate the welling up of our souls in worship to God! If you cannot fast from TV, newspapers, and magazines for even a week, then you are a very *weak* Christian, and at risk spiritually.

Part of learning to cultivate worship is learning how to drown out distractions through prayers of gratefulness to God. For example, when I am preaching, I love to have babies and little children in the congregation. Rather than feeling that distractions somehow deter us from worshiping God, we should learn to simply receive whatever happens in a gathered worship experience. This applies to whatever happens at home or other places of private worship, as God tests our spirit. Grumbling and complaining cannot be successfully partnered with a spirit of adoration and worship!

THURSDAY: The Fruits of Worship

Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

— Hebrews 13:15

Did you know that there will be many times that you will not “feel” like worshipping? Perhaps you have had so many disappointing experiences in the past that you think it is hardly worth it because there is such a low sense of the power of God. Even so, you still need to offer the sacrifice of worship to God.

The sacrifice of worship gets offered to God himself. It is vital that you join other saints to amplify your worship. When we are gathered for genuine worship, we are like a heap of burning coals encouraging one another to warmth of love and devotion. One log by itself cannot burn for very long, but when many logs are put together, even if they are poor logs, they can make quite a fire. Remember the counsel of Proverbs 27:17 that *iron sharpens iron*. Even rather dull lives can help each other if they are willing to try.

Go to church—even if you do not feel like it.

Go to church—even if worship has been discouraging and dry before.

Go to church—praying.

Go to church—expecting.

Go to church—looking for God to do a new and living work among you as His family.

The sacrifice of worship deepens repentance. Resentments cannot be held with the same tenacity when we enter His gracious light. As Jesus says, if we have broken fellowship with another person, we need to leave our gift at the altar and go set the matter straight. Christ is very explicit about this: *“If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23–24). In worship, an

increased power steals its way into the heart sanctuary and an increased compassion grows in the soul.

The sacrifice of worship bears the fruit of obedience. Just as worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience. If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change: *Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh* (Philippians 3:3).

The sacrifice of worship widens our ministry. Holy Spirit-prompted ministry saves worship from becoming an escape from the pressing needs of the real people around us. Worship enables us to hear the call to service clearly so that we respond like Isaiah. When Isaiah had the vision of our majestic, holy, and righteous God sitting on His throne, full of all His glory, he was instantly brought to his knees with a sense of his total unworthiness (see Isaiah 6:1–8). He was humbled; there was no more room for pride. His worship of the Most High God produced repentance, obedience, and finally, ministry, as he cried out, “Here I am, Lord! Send me!” Though still very conscious of his sin, he had been prepared to serve anywhere, anytime, anyhow, or anyway God directed because he was completely submitted to God’s will.

How would you evaluate your worship? Are you sensing that God is preparing you to serve anywhere, anytime, anyhow, or anyway as He directs? Are you willing to submit to that will?

FRIDAY: Worship — Then Serve Christ

*Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You **shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.**’”*

— Matthew 4:10, emphasis added

Worship is the most vital and life-changing topic of the whole Bible. When Jesus was alone in the wilderness (except for the devil’s presence), He stated His extremely important mandate for serving God. In Matthew 4:10, Jesus gave this order: “*Away with you, Satan!*” (10a). Then He quoted a verse from His memory arsenal of the Word of God: “‘*You shall **worship** the LORD your God, and Him only you shall **serve***’” (Matthew 4:10b, emphasis added).

Did you fully grasp what is supposed to come *before* service? *Worship!* This is God’s order. All service for Him is to flow out of worship. No worship—no service. As a child, if I did not wash my hands, I did not get to eat. But when I got a little older, my credo became this: “No Bible, no breakfast; no Bible, no bed.” The Lord’s rule is this: “No worship, no service.”

Does ministry ever get dull, tedious, and wearying? If so, that is a warning sign that the oil of worship is running low. Worship must always come before service. When the worship wanes, service becomes a drag because the Holy Spirit does not energize it.

We start worshiping God at the moment of our salvation for *we are the true circumcision* (Philippians 3:3 NASB). In this verse, the apostle Paul is talking about the Judaizers who were not followers of Christ. He described them in Philippians 3:2: *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!* These are the people who believed in an external form of salvation, or “salvation by surgery.” They believed

that if you are circumcised, you are going to heaven. This is the same as believing that if you are baptized or join the church or “walk an aisle” that you will go to heaven.

Baptism, joining a church, or “walking an aisle” are all external things. But God is after an internal heart belief. Therefore, He says that the only people who will go to heaven are those *who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh* (Philippians 3:2–3, NASB).

Do not count on what *you* have done, but on what *Christ* has accomplished. If you are born again, you are One who has been transformed from the inside out. God transforms us to be genuine worshipers when we are saved. We can then worship in the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, because of no longer having confidence in our own flesh.

Do you see why worship must come before service? Much service can be done in the power of the flesh, but only the Holy Spirit energizes true worship. Worshiping God is the most marvelous, encouraging, strengthening, and uplifting thing we can do!

SATURDAY: Worship Christ through Your Service

*For we are the circumcision, **who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.***

— Philippians 3:3, emphasis added

Even our very acts of ministry should be acts of worship that reveal His “worthship,” or just how much Christ is worth to us! Motivation is everything; only what is done out of adoration for Christ and love for others will last. We can have such a ministry, serving Jesus in any place, at any time, in any way, and anyhow we are—no matter what is going on in our lives. That is a wonderful way to live!

We can serve Christ in any place. John was isolated on Patmos, far from his home in Galilee, far from the church, far from anyone but God. And yet where was he when Jesus Christ came to reveal himself to him? Revelation 1:10a says, *I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day*. He was serving God right where he was.

Even though his captors tried to restrict John from witnessing, doing church work, and preaching, he grabbed every opportunity to talk about the Word and all that Christ had done. If we are God’s servants we will likewise be talking about the Word, and telling others what Christ is doing in our lives.

We can serve Christ at any time. John was at least eighty years old and near death. He had not seen Jesus for sixty years. Everything had been taken away from him—his scrolls, books, church, freedom, and health—for he had to sleep in a cave. John, however, did not let that defeat him; he still served Christ to the best of his ability.

There are no limits to what God can do through us, no matter what age we happen to be. Even a young child can serve Christ. For example, as a young boy, David served the Lord and meditated on Him. The seeds of all the great psalms were planted back in his boyhood days when he was still a shepherd. God says that we can serve Him at any age in life. That is a comforting thought! There is no mandatory retirement from serving the Lord.

We can serve Christ in any way. We can still serve God regardless of where we are, what is taken away from us, or how hard the times might be. John chose to serve the Lord any way he could, and what he loved to do most was worship Christ.

We can serve Christ no matter how we are. We can serve Christ in any condition in which we find ourselves, even when we are suffering. John was suffering loneliness, pain, discouragement, deprivation, and abuse. Most of all, on this pagan island with the soldiers who worshiped false gods, John was suffering spiritual oppression. Because John was in the forefront in fighting the kingdom of darkness, Satan especially attacked him.

Make a choice to live in hope. You can decide today to emulate John's attitude by asking God to give you this spirit:

“It does not matter where I am: I am going to serve Christ in any place. It does not matter how old I am: I am going to serve Christ at any time of life, even at the very end. It does not matter what my circumstances are: I am going to serve Christ in any way I can, no matter what they take out of my life. It does not matter how I am, even if I am suffering: I am going to serve Christ anyhow. This is my way to worship the glorious ever-present Christ—to show Him just how much He's worth to me!”

If your heart's desire is to serve the Lord in this manner, I encourage you to bow your head and humbly ask Him to use you anywhere you go, and at any time He wants to—and He will. Like Isaiah, tell Him: “Here I am, Lord! Send me!” Then make the words of this beautiful old song become a deep prayer of your heart:

Fill Thou My Life, O Lord My God

*Fill Thou my life, O Lord my God,
In every part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim
Thy being and Thy ways.*

*Not for the lip of praise alone,
Nor for the praising heart—
I ask Thee for a life made up
Of praise in every part:*

*Praise in the common things in life,
Its goings out and in;
Praise in each duty and each deed,
However small and mean.*

*Fill every part of me with praise:
Let all my being speak of Thee
And of Thy love, O Lord,
Poor though I be, and weak.*

*So shalt Thou, Lord, from even me
Receive the glory due;
And so shall I begin on earth
The song forever new.*

*So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free;
But all my life, In every step,
Be fellowship with Thee.*

— Horatius Bonar (1800 – 1889)

¹ William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel, First Series*. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1940), p. 68.

² Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper Books, 1998), p. 170.