

Reverence¹



MEMORY VERSE: “Holy and reverend² is his name” (Psalm 111:9).



HISTORIANS AND EDUCATORS OFTEN TRY to name different periods of time. There is the Age of Reason, the Age of Aquarius, the Age of Deceit (lying and cheating), the Modern Era (period), the Postmodern Era, et cetera. But these names describe only a part of the whole time period.

If we tried to name our time, perhaps the best name would be the Age of Irreverence.³ Nothing is sacred (holy) these days. Few things are not allowed in books and magazines, on television, radio, and billboards. Every subject is laughed at. Recently a famous politician’s unfaithfulness⁴ to his wife was the subject of a comedian while the politician and his wife sat in the audience and laughed!

Fortunately, not everyone has lost their sense of reverence. For followers of Jesus, reverence should be one of the most visible⁵ signs of faith. This week, as we continue to look at the results of being forgiven, we will look at a subject that deserves a whole quarter’s study. That subject is reverence.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Why should we show God reverence? How does the Cross fit with the idea of reverence? Is fear the same as reverence? How is obedience connected with the idea of reverence?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 31.

¹reverence—respect for God.

²reverend—worthy of respect.

³irreverence—lack of respect.

⁴unfaithfulness—not being faithful.

⁵visible—can be seen.

SUN ISAIAH'S EMOTION.

“I [Isaiah] said, ‘There is no hope for me [Isaiah]! I am doomed because every word that passes my [Isaiah’s] lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty [God]’” (Isaiah 6:5, TEV).

Read Isaiah 6:1-5. These verses give the background of Isaiah’s emotion in Isaiah 6:5. God called Isaiah to be a prophet. But when he had a vision of God, Isaiah reacted with personal shame.

What was the one word Isaiah used two times to describe himself and his people? What was it about God that would make Isaiah feel this way? Was he talking about something physical or spiritual? Explain your answer. How do the following verses help us understand what Isaiah meant? Isaiah 64:6; Zechariah 3:1-3; Revelation 3:18.

The big problem in the modern world is that people do not see their own sinfulness. That is because they are comparing⁶ themselves to other

people. People can always find someone who is worse than themselves. Our sins do not look so bad when we compare⁷ our sins to someone who is worse than we are.

But Isaiah 6:1-5 shows us that when we compare ourselves to God, we know right away how sinful we really are. So the world needs a view of God’s holiness. When we view God’s holiness, we will see our true sinful condition and look for a cure. That cure is Jesus.

God did not mean to scare or destroy Isaiah or us by showing His holiness. God shows Himself to us to make us humble,⁸ not to humiliate⁹ us. When we are humble, we understand our need for God and try to do something about it. We feel helpless¹⁰ but not hopeless.¹¹ When we are humiliated, we feel useless¹² and beyond hope. Seeing God’s holiness never destroys a person emotionally. Seeing God’s holiness brings healing.

What happened to Isaiah after he confessed (admitted) his sinful condition? Isaiah 6:6, 7. Why is what happened to him a good example of what the gospel of salvation does for us?

MON REVERENCE AND THE CROSS.

“But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than an-

⁶comparing—showing how things are the same.

⁷compare—show how things are the same.

⁸humble—not proud; respectful toward God.

⁹humiliate—to make someone feel like they are worth nothing.

¹⁰helpless—having no one to help us.

¹¹hopeless—having no hope.

¹²useless—not being of any good use.

gels, so that through God’s grace he [Jesus] should die for everyone. We see him [Jesus] now crowned with glory and honor because of the death he suffered” (Hebrews 2:9, TEV).

What does Hebrews 2:9 suggest about reverence toward God?

We revere (respect) God because He created us (Psalm 100:3). We revere God because He is a flaming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24, TEV), because He is a merciful¹³ God (Deuteronomy 4:31), because He is great (Deuteronomy 7:21, TEV), because He is powerful (Psalm 29:4), and because He can do all things (Luke 1:37).

But most of all, we revere God because He is a forgiving God. He is a God who does not use our sins against us. He is a God who will wipe out our sins. He is a God who has sacrificed Himself for our sins so we can receive eternal¹⁴ life.

Think about Jesus as the One who made all things and keeps all things alive (Colossians 1:16; Acts 17:28). He died as a Substitute¹⁵ for the sins of the whole world (1 Corinthians 5:7). He is equal with God (Philippians 2:6). He became a human being and lived a life of perfect holiness (Hebrews 2:10). When we understand that it was God hanging on the cross, how can we fail to have a sense of reverence?

Why is the fact that God is a forgiving God the best reason for us to revere Him?

TUE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

What does each of the following verses teach us about “the name of the Lord”?

Exodus 20:7 _____

2 Samuel 6:2 _____

Job 1:21 _____

Psalm 20:7 _____

Psalm 116:4 _____

¹³merciful—full of kindness we do not deserve.

¹⁴eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

¹⁵substitute—someone who takes another person’s place; Jesus is our Substitute, because He died for our sins.

Matthew 6:9 _____

Romans 10:13 _____

James 5:14 _____



To modern strong orthodox¹⁶ Jews, the name of the Lord is considered so holy that it is insulting to God just to say it. So they often call the Lord *HaShem*. This means “the name” in Hebrew.

It is clear from the verses we studied that the name of the Lord is important, holy, and powerful. It is not that any magical powers come from the name itself. Instead, it is what the name represents that demands reverence.

In Bible times, a name was often closely tied with the purpose of the name. For example, read Romans 10:13. There is no salvation in the name itself. But salvation is found in Jesus. Read Psalm 20:7. Salvation is found not in the name of God. But salvation is found in the God who is named in Psalm 20:7.

In the Bible, God is so closely connected with His names that these names often are spoken of in the same way we speak about God. That is why the Bible is so clear about why we should use God’s names with reverence. To insult God’s name is to insult God.

In many languages, God’s name is used as a curse. Why would the devil be glad to have people curse God’s name?

WED TO FEAR GOD.

“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment

¹⁶orthodox—traditional; very conservative.

has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

The first and most important commandment is to love God with all our heart and soul (Matthew 22:37). But Revelation 14:7 tells us to “fear God.” Can we love what we fear?

The answer depends upon our understanding of fear. A few times in the Hebrew Bible, the word translated “reverence” (Leviticus 19:30; Leviticus 26:2; Psalm 89:7) comes from the same word translated “fear.”

Read Leviticus 19:30 and Leviticus 26:2. These verses help us understand that “fearing” God does not mean being afraid of Him in the same way we might be afraid of a poisonous snake. To fear God is to hold Him in reverence because He is God and we are not. To reverence God, to fear Him, is to admit that He is holy and we are sinners. Our reverence for God grows when we accept Him as our Savior and as we learn more about Him.

“True reverence for God is inspired when we understand His greatness and that He is present with us. . . . The hour and place of prayer are holy, because God is there. And as we show our reverence for God in our attitudes¹⁷ and behavior, our reverence for Him will grow. ‘Holy and reverend is His name,’ the psalmist¹⁸ wrote. Psalm 111:9. When angels speak God’s name, they cover

their faces. This is all the more reason for us, who are sinners, to speak God’s name with reverence!”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 48, 49.

It is one thing to say that we reverence God. But it is another thing to show that we reverence Him. How are we to show reverence for God? In a few places in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “reverence” means to “bow down.” Is there more to having reverence than just bowing down to God? Explain your answer.

THU REVERENCE AND OBEDIENCE.

“Follow the Lord and have reverence for him; obey him and keep his commandments; worship him and be faithful to him” (Deuteronomy 13:4, TEV).

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion [summary] of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, NIV).

As Jesus’ followers, we are forgiven. No matter what we have done, we can claim by faith Jesus’ righteousness (holiness). This is the righteousness He worked out through His own life and freely offers to us. All we have to do is accept His righteousness. No matter how sinful our lives have been, we can

¹⁷attitudes—how people think and feel about something.

¹⁸psalmist—person who wrote the psalm.

stand before God as perfect in His eyes as Jesus was perfect. God no longer holds our sins against us. He has forgiven our sins because we have accepted Jesus as our Savior.

As a result, our lives are changed for the better. And we decide, by His grace, to “declare the praises of him [God] who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). We will want to be the kind of persons He desires His people to be, “holy and dedicated to God, as you [we] wait for the Day of God and do your [our] best to make it come soon.” We will wait for what God has promised: “new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home.” And we will “do your [our] best to be pure and faultless¹⁹ in God’s sight and to be at peace with him [God]” (2 Peter 3:11-14, TEV).

All of this means obedience. If we love God, we will reverence Him. Reverence suggests more than just singing praises to Him or bowing down when we pray. We will obey God because we have reverence for Him.

Notice how Deuteronomy 13:4 and Ecclesiastes 12:13 join fear or reverence of God with obedience. (The Bible also joins love with obedience. Read John 14:15; 1 John 5:2, 3.) How can a person show respect or reverence to someone and then refuse to obey that person? It is the same as telling a person you love her or him, but then refuse to do

what that person wants you to do. Why is it not possible for us to truly have reverence for God while disobeying²⁰ Him? How is the Sabbath connected to reverence for God? Why do you believe true reverence for God will be shown through obedience to Him.



FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “All who come to God should be humble and reverent. In the name of Jesus, we may come before God boldly. But we must not do so too boldly, as if He were equal with ourselves. There are people who speak to the great, all-powerful, and holy God, as if they would speak to someone they were equal to or even to a less important person. There are people who act in God’s house in ways they would not dare to act in the house of an earthly king. These people should remember that they are in God’s presence, where angels worship and cover their faces be-

¹⁹faultless—having no faults.

²⁰disobeying—not obeying.

fore Him. God is greatly to be revered. All people who truly understand His greatness will bow humbly before Him. The same as Jacob seeing the vision of God, they will cry out, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other but the house of God; this is the gate of heaven (Genesis 28:17, NIV).'"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 252.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Showing reverence for God in church is one thing. But how do you show reverence in other places too? The store? The workplace? Et cetera?
2. What does Psalm 103 teach us about reverence toward God? What important parts of the gospel are found in Psalm 103? Write your own psalm of reverence to God.



God helps me to be strong, the same as a young eagle.

3. Think more about the idea that God's willingness to forgive is the best reason to reverence Him. What would it be like if God did not forgive us but left us to face the final results of our sins? Would you still consider Him worthy of reverence? Explain your answer.
4. In your own words, explain the difference between reverence and fear. Should reverence have a little fear?