HAIL THE KING!

Leviticus reminds us that we are to worship only God (Lev. 17:7; 18:21; 26:1). Ellen White writes that “whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1908], p. 305). Revelation 14 commands us to “fear God,” give Him glory, and “worship Him” (v. 7) in defense against the religiopolitical power called the beast that will rise up in the last days and try to redirect worship to itself. The master of this power is Satan, who has always wanted the worship that belongs to God alone (Matt. 4:8–10). Put simply, the Bible says there is an ongoing supernatural war that will only intensify before Jesus returns. The question we must ask ourselves is this: “Before whose throne do I bow today?”

The call to worship God is reflected even in the earthly sanctuary, the blueprints for which God personally gave Moses on Mount Sinai. It was a duplicate of the great temple-palace in heaven and was placed at the center of Israel’s encampment (Num. 2) as a place of worship, meeting, and Divine dwelling, as was the custom for the human kings of the day (Benjamin Galan, *Rose Guide to the Tabernacle* [Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, Inc., 2008], p. 74).

In this lesson we will look for evidence of worship within the book of Leviticus and learn how it relates to us today.
Write out Leviticus 9 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out Leviticus 9:22–24. You may also rewrite the chapter in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
WORSHIP DURING THE FEASTS

The Israelites brought their sacrificial gifts to the sanctuary every day. But at certain times of the year during celebrated feast days the whole nation came together to express thanks and praise to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Each of the annual feast days that God gave to Israel are listed in chronological order Leviticus 23. In one sense the feast days were like national holidays commemorating special events in their history. Each one also included unique ceremonies that portrayed future events in salvation history.

The Passover Feast was an opportunity to worship God for delivering them from the Egyptians (Lev. 23:5; Exod. 12). Every Passover lamb pointed forward to Jesus who would sacrifice His life for us (1 Cor. 5:7).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was an opportunity to praise God for leading them during their hurried escape from Egypt (Lev. 23:6; Deut. 16:1–8). It pointed to the coming of the Messiah, who is our “bread of life” (John 6:35). These seven days of unleavened bread is also a reminder to confess and forsake the yeast of sin in one’s life (Matt. 16:6; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor. 5:6–8).

The Feast of Firstfruits was a time to thank God for the firstfruits of the harvest (Lev. 23:9–14). For Christians today, it points to Jesus’ resurrection of and the final resurrection of those who died trusting in Him (1 Cor. 15:20–23).

The Feast of Weeks was an opportunity for Israel to praise God for the abundance of this year’s harvest and the other blessings that come from keeping God’s law (Lev. 23:15–22; 26:1–13; Deut. 16:9–11). It also pointed forward to the larger harvest recorded in the book of Acts when God’s Spirit would be poured out on His church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

The Feast of Trumpets was a call for sincere repentance of sin in preparation for the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:23–25). For the Christian, this is a warning and an invitation to prepare of the second coming of Jesus and the final hour of judgment (John 5:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:1).

The Day of Atonement, or the Day of Judgment (Yom Kippur), was the most solemn of all the worship times. Although it was a day of rest much like the Sabbath, the people were called to deny themselves, search their hearts, and pray for their sins to be atoned for in the most Holy Place (Lev. 16:29–34; 23:26–32). For the Israelites, this day pointed to the great day of judgment that began in 1844 when Jesus took up His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest (Dan. 8:14).

The Feast of Tabernacles was the final feast of the calendar year (Lev. 23:33–44). They praised God that they were no longer strangers and pilgrims and rejoiced that God brought them out of wandering in the wilderness. This feast helped them remember that they once dwelt in temporary dwellings called booths. They worshipped God for miraculously bringing them to permanent dwellings in the promised land. The Feast of Tabernacles also pointed forward to the time when we will no longer be strangers and pilgrims in this world and will be welcomed into our forever home in heaven (Heb. 11:13–16).
THE PALACE OF WORSHIP

There is no doubt the tabernacle was furnished like a palace. Gold, gorgeous tapestries, and careful attention to detail were everywhere, especially in the two rooms of the sanctuary: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The Holy Place had the golden lampstand (Exod. 25:31–40; 26:35), the golden altar of incense (Exod. 30:1–10), and the golden table of showbread (Exod. 25:23–30), and the Most Holy Place housed the ark of the covenant, which was covered in gold as well (Exod. 26:31–33).

Yes, the tabernacle was indeed a palace, and the King of kings ruled, guided, and received worship there. Ellen White understood that the wilderness tabernacle was primarily a place of worship. She wrote, “The sanctuary, . . . when made, was to be the visible center of the nation’s worship” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 314).

Although the Most Holy Place was blocked from view by not only the tent but also the giant curtain between the Holy and Most Holy Places, people could see the glory of the Lord. The curtains around the courtyard of the sanctuary were only half as high as the tabernacle itself, so God’s glory shown out for the people to see—to a limited degree. They could not see His form resting above the ark of the covenant, but they could see the cloud or shekinah that covered Him and the heavenly light that shone from Him and radiated throughout the whole camp (Ex. 40:34–38; Num. 9:15–23). God Himself was dwelling among His people (Exod. 25:8). Ellen White further specifies that it was Jesus who dwelt among the people (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 311).

In addition to being furnished like a palace, the temple was also ingeniously laid out as a simple pathway for worshippers to approach and worship God. Each piece of furniture not only revealed a step every worshipper can take toward intimacy with the Lord, but were also beautiful revelations of Jesus!

There are some who claim that there are many paths to God, but the Bible teaches that only one path will take you to Him, and that path is Christ. Jesus Himself said it: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Hebrews 4:14–16
Hebrews 8:1, 2
Hebrews 9:1–10
Revelation 4; 5

What other verses come to mind in connection with Leviticus 9?
WALKING THROUGH THE WAY

The sanctuary shows practical ways that we can reconcile with God:

1. Faith. To enter the courtyard that surrounded the tabernacle one must walk through the door. Jesus described himself as “the door” (John 10:9). To approach God, we must do so with faith in Jesus (Acts 4:12; Heb. 11:6).

2. Confession. Next, we must approach the bronze altar of burnt sacrifice. By faith, confession, and repentance we must place our sins upon the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Admitting you have sinned in a particular way and confessing that sin to Christ is how you transfer your sin to Jesus, who died for you (Lev. 5:4, 5; 1 John 1:9).

3. Baptism. Between the altar of burnt sacrifice and the tabernacle, there was a bronze laver or basin filled with water (Exod. 30:17–21; 40:30–32; Heb. 10:22). The priests washed their hands and feet there before entering the tabernacle or offering sacrifices on the altar of burnt sacrifice. When a person is baptized in the name of Jesus and brought into church fellowship, they also begin their ministry in the church and community.

4. The Word. Once one was inside the door of the tabernacle, the table of the bread of the presence was immediately to the right (Exod. 30:1–10). On this table were 12 loaves of bread to be eaten throughout the week. Worship involves consuming the Word of God like bread (Rev. 10:9). Also, Jesus called himself the “bread of life” (John 6:35).

5. Sharing. Directly across from the table of showbread was the golden lampstand. It was 75 pounds of pure gold! This also represented Jesus, who said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Like Jesus, the lamps were fueled by oil, not wax (calling them candlesticks is therefore incorrect). Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit (Zech. 4:2–6).

6. Prayer. The last piece of furniture in the Holy Place was the altar of incense, which was located just outside the curtain leading into the Most Holy Place (Exod. 30:1–10). Twice per day (morning and evening) the priest offered incense. The sweet smell of the burning incense represented the prayers of the saints ascending to the throne of God (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3, 4).

7. Presence. The only piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place was the ark of the covenant. It was called the ark of the covenant because inside were the Ten Commandments, which is God’s covenant (Exod. 34:28). The ark of the covenant was a throne! The seat of this throne was called the “mercy seat.” It was here that God dwelt in a radiant cloud and ruled his people through His leaders Moses and Aaron (Exod. 25:22).

Because our Great High Priest Jesus Christ has gone before us and made a way for us, we all at any time can enter into the invisible presence of God. You can right now go in before the throne room of heaven and speak to, listen to, and worship God directly (Heb. 4:14–16). The heavenly throne room and our God who rules from there is described vividly for us in Revelation 4 and 5. Just as God spoke to Moses and Aaron from the Most Holy Place, so He will also speak to you and me.
THE ANTITYPE OF THE FEASTS

“The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ. His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God. Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be approached—symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul” (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 353).

“The ceremonial law was given by Christ. Even after it was no longer to be observed, Paul presented it before the Jews in its true position and value, showing its place in the plan of redemption and its relation to the work of Christ; and the great apostle pronounces this law glorious, worthy of its divine Originator. The solemn service of the sanctuary typified the grand truths that were to be revealed through successive generations. The cloud of incense ascending with the prayers of Israel represents His righteousness that alone can make the sinner's prayer acceptable to God; the bleeding victim on the altar of sacrifice testified of a Redeemer to come; and from the holy of holies the visible token of the divine Presence shone forth. Thus through age after age of darkness and apostasy faith was kept alive in the hearts of men until the time came for the advent of the promised Messiah” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 367).

“On the fourteenth day of the month, at even, the Passover was celebrated, its solemn, impressive ceremonies commemorating the deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and pointing forward to the sacrifice that should deliver from the bondage of sin. When the Saviour yielded up His life on Calvary, the significance of the Passover ceased, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was instituted as a memorial of the same event of which the Passover had been a type” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 539).

“The Feast of Tabernacles was not only commemorative but typical. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and pointed forward to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth His reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 541).
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Which of the steps toward God listed in our lesson do you find the hardest to do and which do you find the easiest? Please explain.

In what ways is our experience with God more dynamic today than it was in Israel’s day?

What would you say to someone who believes there are many paths to God?

Although as Christians we don’t need to keep the feast days, what can we learn from each of them?

How does knowing that God is king, sits on the throne, and rules from the temple in heaven give you courage and confidence today?

How do you personally worship God?

How has the meaning of worship changed after this study?