

# Swept off your Feet

## Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

### CHAPTER 18

## Worship of Humans, Angels, Demons, Satan, or Idols

### Worshipping a Fellow Human

After Cornelius welcomed Peter into his home, he *“fell down at his feet to worship him”*.<sup>1</sup> Immediately Peter ordered this Roman centurion to stand saying, *“I myself am also a man.”*

### Worshipping an Angel

In another incident, John bowed to worship an angel after he experienced a series of extraordinary revelations while exiled on Patmos.

*At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. **Worship God!** For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* (Revelation 19:10 NIV)

Not once, but on two separate occasions John knowingly assumed a position of facedown worship before an angel.

*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets*

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 10:25-26 NKJ

*and of all who keep the words of this book. **Worship God!***" (Revelation 22:8-9 NIV)

John ranks among the top connectors with Jesus before and after His resurrection, and in heaven. He also encountered several angels, seeing them with his eyes and hearing them with his ears.

Based on divine revelation and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John describes individuals and groups worshiping idols and demons.<sup>2</sup> According to the widespread custom of his time, he probably saw individuals bow before Roman officials and various pagan deities. John saw deceived men and women under various degrees of compulsion worshiping the dragon, the beast, and the image of the beast.<sup>3</sup> After experiencing both true worship and worship amiss, John still repeated his mistake by worshiping an angel twice.

This account provides valuable insight for worshipers facing the future. The angelic messenger that John worshiped did not intentionally flaunt his supernatural power to attract worship. Though Satan may disguise himself as an angel of light, this angel did not execute any such plan cloaked in deception to entice John's worship.<sup>4</sup>

Compromised by advanced age, rugged physical conditions, and unusual emotional duress, John demonstrated a natural human weakness. He proves that we all have the potential to worship amiss, no matter how knowledgeable or well-connected to Christ we are. Possessing accurate information did not prevent John from worshiping an angel. He knew the facts better than most. Connecting with sound doctrine was insufficient. John wrote five of the 66 books in the Bible. He ranks as a preeminent authority in the love of God, experiencing divine passion firsthand. Yet, John deliberately bowed to worship an angel—twice.

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<sup>2</sup> Revelation 9:20

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 13:4, 8, 12; 14:11; 16:2

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:14 NAS

Worshipping an angel in the brilliance of the moment may constitute an understandable blunder. Cornelius worshiped Peter beyond a cultural courtesy as a venerated spiritual leader.

*When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell [pipto] at his feet and worshiped [proskuneo] him. But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man." (Acts 10:25-26 NAS)*

While such a response reflects a serious lapse in judgment, the consequences are trivial. Mistakes like this trigger a stern rebuke for the benefit of the worshiper. It offers an opportunity to reinforce the truth and thereby redirect reverence toward God.

We need more than head knowledge, church experience, and love to avoid worshiping Satan in an impetuous act of worship. For the fortitude and discipline needed to worship God alone, we must connect beyond information gathering and worship beyond performing religious rituals.

The following table details angel worship in the Bible.

<b>Falling, Bowing, or Worshiping an ANGEL</b>				
<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Times</b>	<b>Hebrew Greek</b>	<b>Association</b>	<b>NAS Verse</b>
Balaam	1	Qadad	Bowed before the Angel of the Lord	Num 22:31
David and the Elders	1	Naphal	Fell on their face in response to the Angel of the Lord	1 Chr 21:16-17
Daniel	1	Nathan	Bowed in response to an angel speaking	Dan 10:15
Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women	1	Klino	Bowed before 2 men in dazzling clothes at Jesus' tomb	Luke 24:5
John	2	Proskuneo	Fell down to worship an angel	Rev 19:10
		Proskuneo		Rev 22:8-9

1. Balaam bows in response to seeing the angel of the Lord (a possible theophany).

*Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he **bowed** [qadad] **all the way to the ground**. (Numbers 22:31 NAS)*

2. **David** and **the Elders** fell on their faces in response to **the angel of the Lord** (possible theophany).

*Then David lifted up his eyes and saw **the angel of the LORD** standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, **fell** [naphal] **on their faces**. David **said** to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Your hand be against me and my father's household, but not against Your people that they should be plagued." (1 Chronicles 21:16-17 NAS)*

3. **Daniel** bowed facedown in response to an angelic visitation.

*When he had spoken to me according to these words, I **turned** [nathan] **my face toward the ground** and became speechless. (Daniel 10:15 NAS)*

*...I **bowed** [nathan] **with my face toward the ground** and was speechless. (Daniel 10:15 NIV)*

4. At Jesus' empty tomb, **Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James**, and **other women** bowed to the ground before two dazzling "men".

*While they were perplexed about this, behold, **two men** suddenly stood near them **in dazzling clothing**; and as **the women** were terrified and **bowed** [klino] **their faces to the ground**, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? (Luke 24:5 NAS)*

5. Twice **John** mistakenly fell down to worship an angel.

*Then I **fell** [pipto] at his feet to **worship** [proskuneo] him [**angel**]. But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; **worship** [proskuneo] God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10 NAS)*

*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I **fell down** [pipto] to **worship** [proskuneo] at the feet of the **angel** who showed me these things. (Revelation 22:8 NAS)*

*But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. **Worship** [proskuneo] God.” (Revelation 22:9 NAS)*

### **Worship Associated with DEMONS, SATAN, or IDOLS**

In the end, one distinction will separate all worshipers—those who worship God in spirit and truth and those who worship Satan in fear and deception.

Worshiping Satan or one of his associates invites dire consequences. This gesture is different from worshiping a human leader or an angel because it activates a punitive outcome. Stated in no uncertain terms:

*“**If anyone** worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11 NIV)*

The phrase, “*if anyone*” stipulates a dangerous cause and effect possibility. Each time John worshiped the angel an imperative command followed—“*worship God*”. Before facing demonic ultimatums from political tyrants, rouge religions, or Satan, informed worshipers must connect with the power of the Holy Spirit to:

- Establish an irrefutable conviction for worshipping God alone
- Fortify their resolve to contend earnestly for the faith
- Gain spiritual discernment and supernatural discipline, to avoid the mistakes of Cornelius, John, and others

<b>Those who do not Worship God in the Revelation</b>				
<b>Potential Worshipers</b>	<b>Times</b>	<b>Greek</b>	<b>Association</b>	<b>NAS Verse</b>
Rest of Mankind	1	Proskuneo	Worship Idols	Rev 9:20
Rest of Mankind	1	Proskuneo	Worship Demons	Rev 9:20
Whole Earth	1	Proskuneo	Worship the Dragon (Satan, Devil)	Rev 13:4 (Rev 12:9)
Whole Earth, Inhabitants not in the book of life	3	Proskuneo	Worship The Beast	Rev 13:4
		Proskuneo		Rev 13:8
		Proskuneo		Rev 13:12
Unspecified	1	Proskuneo	Worship the image of the beast	Rev 13:15

Some theologians consider the first beast in Revelation 13 to be antichrist. Nonetheless, the Bible avoids mentioning antichrist by name in association with worship.

### 1. Idol and Demon worship

*The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to **worship** [proskuneo] **demons**, and the **idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood**, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; (Revelation 9:20 NAS)*

### 2. Dragon, Beast, and Satan worship

*“And **the great dragon** was thrown down, **the serpent of old** who is **called the devil and Satan**” (Revelation 12:9 NAS)*

*they [the whole earth, Revelation 13:3] **worshipped** [proskuneo] **the dragon** because he gave his authority to the beast; and they wor-*

*shipped* [proskuneo] **the beast**, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” (Revelation 13:4 NAS)

*All who dwell on the earth will **worship** [proskuneo] him [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. (Revelation 13:8 NAS)*

*He [second beast] exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to **worship** [proskuneo] **the first beast**, whose fatal wound was healed. (Revelation 13:12 NAS)*

### 3. Image of the beast worship

*And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not **worship** [proskuneo] the **image of the beast** to be killed. (Revelation 13:15 NAS)*

### Worship Associated with an Idol of Jealousy

In a vision, Ezekiel describes an Idol of Jealousy in Jerusalem with its seat at the northern gate to the inner court. North of the Altar Gate, he saw “*the idol of jealousy*”. At the entrance to the temple, about twenty-five men prostrated [shachah] themselves toward the sun in the east between the porch and the altar. This act invoked a pronouncement of God’s unrelenting wrath.

While sitting in his house with the elders of Judah, the hand of the Lord God fell on Ezekiel. He saw the following vision:

*Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward there was the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal. 3 He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head ; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court,*

where the seat of the **idol of jealousy**, which **provokes to jealousy**, was located. 4 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance which I saw in the plain. 5 Then He said to me, "Son of man, raise your eyes now toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this **idol of jealousy** at the entrance. 6 And He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations." (Ezekiel 8:2-6 NAS)

The vision continues in the inner court. Ezekiel witnesses about 25 men prostrating themselves seemingly in worship.

*And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east; and they were **prostrating** [shachah] **themselves eastward toward the sun**.* (Ezk 8:16 NAS)

This idolatrous act kindled an uncharacteristic response from God. He declared consequences involving relentless wrath.

*"Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them."* (Ezk 8:18 NAS)

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