

THE KIND OF WORSHIP JESUS FOUND SATISFYING

Eventually a study of John 4:1-33 (NASB)

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Worship is a response to God or a response to events believed to be His responsibility. Not every act by which mankind attempts to please his gods or God is, for lack of a better word, satisfying to Him. In the ancient world, satisfyingly the gods or God was of paramount importance. I believe that the account of Jesus' dialog with the woman at the well reveals an important way to worship and satisfy our God. I have always been curious about the various locations Jesus chose to teach in and what the significance of each might be. For instance, I think His choice of Jacob's well is intended to draw our attention to the subject of worship.

Very early worship:

"So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell."

"Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 'If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.'"

"And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." (Gen. 4:3-8)

Note that God had "regard" for the man first then the offering. Therefore the key to worship from the beginning, was the attitude of the man's heart. Cain's anger reveals an expectation that his offering ought to have been acceptable to God. Farmers still think that they work harder than sheep herders. This is always true of worship; we hope that God in his mercy will accept our offering and that makes it acceptable in His sight and satisfying to Him.

So it goes, down through the ages and on through to The Gospel of John, chapter four. There, as an outcast woman's question reveals, the mystery of acceptable worship still remained hidden from the gentiles. She asked, "How should we worship God? Your Fathers say that we should worship God in Jerusalem, but our Fathers say on this mountain. What say you, Prophet?"

Jesus answered the woman-at-the-well, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." (John 4:23)

All of Jesus' life must be seen as perfect worship; He is the embodiment of truth and spirit.

In truth: Meaning in reality. "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." (Rom 12:1)

In spirit: By His indwelling presence and our complete and total dependence on Him, as He exemplified in Jesus' public ministry. This is acceptable to The Father as worship: "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor 6:16)

God welcomes almost any gift at all, from a pure heart. We must not be found in the seat of those who would

put themselves between anyone and God. In as much as we Christians worship the one true God, would it not be arrogant to judge the acceptability of another believer's worship? I keep thinking of that old grade school craft project where each of the kids, with the aid of a paper plate as a mold, made a plaster cast of their very own hand print. The teacher helped them embed a wire in the back so that the parents could hang it on the wall. What kind of a parent would reject that kind of offering? Maybe all of our worship looks like that to God.

Sadly for some, even though no one can really confess that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit, worship without bending the knee to the fact of Jesus' Lordship is vain and working against the inevitable. Worship without honoring Christ is at best ignorant because of what Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:9-11)

Jacob's well, dream and word:

Even though no reference to Jacob's well is found in the OT there are stories of Jacob's worship that Jesus' disciples would have known.

Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Gen 28:10-29:1)

And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Jacob's Worship:

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top. And he called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.

Holy places, names and times:

Before Jacob's dream, the place had only been a stopping place. but when he awoke it had become to him a "holy place." Jacob, in error, believed that the place had become holy and responded with promises he never kept. Even so, his response was acceptable to God as worship because it came from a pure heart. It was Jacob's plaster hand print present for his heavenly Father. Worship can take many forms. It can be intensely emotional, deeply personal, in the form of prayer, private or public. It can be silence, a confession, or a meditative experience. In Jacob's case, worship can even be promises that he made in ignorance. Places have meaning in the Bible yet when Jesus left the disciples behind and prayed alone in Gethsemane it did not become a "holy place". Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus was blindingly dramatic but he did not

consider the road a "holy place".

In addition, Jacob took the stone he had used for a pillow and to set it up as a pillar, declaring that it would become a house of God, apparently meaning that a temple would be built there. It never happened and the test of a prophet is whether or not what he says comes to pass. Jacob is not speaking the Word of God. Neither was Peter, years later, when he wanted to build commemoratively at Jesus' transfiguration. About the only thing Jacob got right was the idea of tithing. Not merely giving God a tenth but the best, off the top, the cream of the crop or as we would say, "Our utmost for His highest".

Jacob's Name:

JACOB: A personal name from the Hebrew noun for "heel" meaning, "he grasps the heel" or "he cheats, supplants" (Gen. 25:26; 27:36). Jacob is the original ancestor of the nation of Israel and the father of the twelve ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 25:1--Ex. 1:5). He was the son of Isaac and Rebekah, younger twin brother of Esau, and husband to Leah and Rachel (Gen. 25:21-26; 29:21-30). Later, God changed his name to Israel (Gen. 32:28; 49:2).

Jesus at the well:

So why is Jesus, on His return to Galilee, in a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph? After His last visit to the temple, it is likely that He is avoiding a premature conflict with His enemies: "And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables;" (John 2:14-15)

Jesus gathered many followers in Jerusalem. He taught them of their need to be born of the spirit of God. The timing and the place make Jacob's well a great location to teach about worship and after trashing the temple court yard, about "holy places" too. Surely Jesus' born again teaching and His actions in the temple must have left his disciples with a lot of questions.

SYCHAR (see' kahr) The place name is intended to note "falsehood," though perhaps originally derived from "Shechem." The village in Samaria where Jacob's well is located. Jacob bought the parcel of land from "the children of Hamor, Shechem's father" (Gen. 33:19). The site has been identified variously with Shechem and a village just north of there called 'Askar'. Archaeological excavations have revealed that Sychar and Shechem are part of the same ancient settlement.

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And He had to pass through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (John 4:1-6)

The woman's quandary, "What do you say to a young gift giving God who wants a drink?"

"There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. (John 4:7-15)

The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw."

Everybody wants something and this is how it adds up so far: Take one husband (not at the well) plus a little conviction of sin and it equals. "You are a loser". Add liberating truth and it equals, "This is your day, your hour, your moment, your time."

"He said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

She asked the big, "Are you?" question that everyone wants to know and of all the people who have asked and ever will ask, Jesus chose to answer her: (John 4:16-24)

"The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." (John 4:25-26)

And who are you guys? Notice the contrast in between Jesus' attitude toward the woman and that of His disciples.

"And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"

So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. (John 4:27-30)

True worship results in a satisfied God!

"In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.'"

But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."

The disciples therefore were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?"

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. "Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.' "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."(John 4:31-38)

Therefore:

Evangelism is a true form of worship because it satisfied our Lord Jesus. He spoke of what had just happened as though He had eaten a large meal. Satisfying God is what worship is all about.

"And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all the things that I have done.' So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.' And after the two days He went forth from there into Galilee." (John 4:39-43)

"Two days"? I wondered allowed about what He might have been doing.

My wife Elizabeth said, "What ever it was, I'm sure it's finished."

Amen! er something.

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"He must increase, but I must decrease..." (John the Baptist)

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