

Who Must We Worship?

The Guard of the 1st Commandment

"You shall have no other gods before me."
Ex. 20:3, ESV



The 1st Commandment, to have no other gods in your life, is the greatest and most comprehensive commandment of all. It effects everything else. You can't understand or obey the other commandments until you first embrace this one. If you are a Christian it is not because of your sufficient obedience; it is because Jesus kept this commandment perfectly and gave you the gift of his righteousness by his grace. And that means that you now must choose to respond to that grace and make your life one with your Lord and Savior.

"Sir, Give Me This Water" - John 4:1-26

Now I want to draw some observations of the 1st Commandment from the episode of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Read this passage first in your own Bible and follow along in it. In order to see our lesson here, I'm going to start with the heart of the story and work backward.

Verse 26 - *"Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'"* Jesus, the Son of God sent from heaven, reveals himself to this woman. All along in this story, it is evident that it is Jesus who is pursuing her, not the other way around. It is the grace of God that is being poured out to this woman.

If the well she had come to had poison in the water, would it have mattered if she had taken a drink?

The greatest way God can say "I love you" is to show you Jesus, bring you face to face with him, allow you to see who he is. If you remember, the commandments do not first tell us what to do, they first tell us who Jesus himself is and what he did - they show us Jesus.

Verse 22 – *“You worship what you do not know.”* Like everyone else, the woman was used to talking about “religion” – in other words, just talking about the differences in people’s opinions, the different choices people make, the different backgrounds they have, the different gods they grew up with, the different ways they were taught to understand their god, even the different evaluations people make as to the usefulness of religion at all! Jesus cuts through all that. He is dismissing everything that people hold to, everything they have opinions about. He is saying that such things only display people’s ignorance, He is saying that even with such sincerity, such devotion to ignorance is useless.

If Jesus had left her at this point, he would have left her hopeless. They would have agreed to disagree and left it there. But that was not his intention. The idols of this world are nothing, they must be stripped away if a person is to be made ready to see and be confronted by the living Jesus.

Verse 18 – *“you spoke truly.”* Now we see what it is in which she really believes and trusts. She argued with Jesus that she was a good Samaritan with a Samaritan religion but the truth is in how she had chosen to live her life. Her actions, her lifestyle, her choices all proved there was no love for any god there at all that was any stronger than her love for herself. Her words of self-defense mean nothing.

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That is so often the case today, isn’t it? What a person does with his/her body tells us so much more of what/who that person really believes much more clearly and honestly than do their words. Don’t whisper to me when no one else can hear that you believe in Jesus and that you are a Christian, when I can look at what you do before men, what choices you make in public. By your fruit I can so easily tell what it is that is really in your heart.

And Jesus knew this of her! And yet, he pursues her anyway! She doesn’t seek him but he seeks her! If Jesus came requiring this woman merely to obey the 1st Commandment, he would not have wasted so much of his time. Jesus was calling her to fix her eyes on him and once finding his love for her to be genuine, to then choose to follow her Lord with her life as well as words.

Verse 15 – *“Sir, give me this water”* When Jesus talked with her, she admitted she was thirsty. But what drink truly satisfies? Is religion just a choice? Is it just an option you can take or leave? Is it just for this life? If the answer is “yes”, then nothing you drink today will satisfy, it will only harm. If the well she had come to had poison in the water, would it have mattered if she had taken a drink? If some people choose to worship one god and others choose to worship no god at all, can’t they both be right?

Perhaps you have heard of the use of this illustration – “God resides, as it were, on a mountaintop and there are many roads to the top of that mountain – one is Christian, another Buddhist, another Islam. The road you take is not important – what matters is that you get to the top, that you get to god.” Or, perhaps you have heard someone say this: “there is one god but he goes by different names – some call him Allah, others Jehovah, others something else – but it is the same god. It doesn’t matter what you call him, just so you call upon him.”

There is, indeed, a universal need for God in all men – all men are alienated from God, we are inherently thirsty & we long to be filled. But all men are fallen and sinful. In our natural hearts, we do not want God, we actually only want to run away and hide from God. And instead of worshipping God, sinful man creates idols for himself – gods he can control, construct, and

worship as he chooses. We must not make the mistake of thinking that just because all men are thirsty whatever it is that they choose to drink will truly fill them up and be life-giving. This woman admitted she was thirsty but she still didn't know what would satisfy that thirst. She needed to be shown.

Verse 6 - *"It was about the sixth hour."* It would have been very unusual for a woman to come out to the well of the city at this hour and even more unusual for her to come alone. When we read later in the story of her reputation perhaps that had something to do with it. This woman's sin had reaped its most obvious consequence - she was alone, without friends, without God, without hope. She came alone and she came then even to avoid the others.

Sin, worshipping that which is not the true God, reaps its consequences in even the most basic parts of our lives. Oh, she could have put another label on it. She could have said "The women of the town don't like me", or "It's easier when there is not a crowd at the well." But the truth of the matter is, not having a fellowship with God had its effect in breaking off any relationships she might have had on earth. At first, misery loves company - but after a while, you learn the truth: misery is only happy when it's alone.

Are you alone? Is your sinful heart, your sinful choices tearing apart your world? Have you created your own idol to console you, distract you while your life continues to waste away? Come, I want to show you Jesus.

And if you have come to Jesus, have you ever regarded the 1st Commandment in that light? as an expression of Jesus' love for you? as a remedy, not just a law, to your true spiritual needs? Is that what worship is supposed to mean to you? That you can come before the living God for blessing and not for rejection? What choice are you willing to make now?

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