

Introduction

As a teenager, I rejected Christianity. Not only had I rejected Christianity, I had become critical of the hypocrisy that I saw in those who claimed to be Christians, and was hostile towards God. Even though I was not seeking God, God sought me and revealed Himself to me. Even though I deserved wrath, God gave me mercy. The Lord sent a man named Don, who was a student at Southwestern Seminary, to the TCU campus to share the gospel with me. I saw something different in this man. I saw the love of God in his eyes. There was genuineness, softness, and warmth in him that God used to soften my heart. My heart was too hard to receive Him right away, but over time God softened my heart. I was not looking for God, but He sought me out and revealed Himself to me. He initiated the relationship. I am so grateful that He did. In the song, *The More We Seek Him*, the last line says, "I never want to go back to who I was," and I agree with that. I never want to go back. I am so grateful that God reached out to me.

In our text, the Lord spoke to Jacob, and told him to move to Bethel and build an altar to worship God. Last week we looked at how Jacob was obedient, and how he prepared himself and his family to worship God. This week is Part 2 of Jacob's worship of God, and it is called, *God's Part In Worship*. I want to look at God's Participation In Worship. Just as God initiated a relationship with me so that I could worship Him, we will see that God initiated Jacob's worship of Him. Second, God provided for the worship. Third, God responded to Jacob's worship.

God's Part In Worship (Gen 35:1-15)

1. God Initiates Worship (Gen 35:1)
2. God Provides For Worship (forgiveness, provision, protection) (Gen 35:1, 5,)
3. God Responds To Worship (blessing)

(Gen 35:1-8) "Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." {2} So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; {3} and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." {4} So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem. {5} As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. {6} So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. {7} He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother. {8} Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth. {9} Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. {10} God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name." Thus He called him Israel. {11} God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you. {12} "The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you." {13} Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. {14} Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. {15} So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel."

1. God Initiates Worship (Gen 35:1)

First, God told Jacob to go to Bethel and build an altar to God. This is God speaking and He tells him to build an altar to God. He did not say to build an altar to Me, but He used a third person approach. We are to worship only GOD. Any altar that is built should be built only to worship GOD. Jacob told his family to put away the idols, because they were to only worship God. Second, it was God who initiated the conversation with Jacob. It was not Jacob's idea to go build an altar; this was initiated by God. God also reminds Jacob that Bethel is where God appeared to him when he had fled his brother. Jacob was not seeking God at Luz; he was stopping over for the night on his way to Haran. It was God who appeared to him in that dream and revealed Himself to Jacob. God initiated that encounter, and now He is initiating another encounter.

(Gen 35:1) "Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

God created us so that we could have fellowship with Him. That is one of the purposes that He created us. He is not just the Creator, He is the initiator. In Revelation 4:11 the elders and the living creatures are worshipping God. They sang, "*Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.*" It was God's will for us to be created and to worship Him. He is worthy to be worshipped because He is the Creator and the Initiator.

(Rev 4:9-11) "And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, {10} the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, {11} "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

In Psalm 14, we read that there is no one who does good, and no one who seeks after God. The truth is that none of us sought God first. He initiated the relationship with us. He reached out to us. We were blind and He opened our eyes.

(Ps 14:1-3) "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. {2} The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. {3} They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one."

In my life, I was foolish and was not seeking God when He revealed Himself to me. God initiated His relationship with me. God had plans for my life before I was even formed in my mother's womb. In John 6:65, Jesus said that "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." Even if we were seeking God, we could not come to Him unless He granted it to us. God wants us to come to Him and to worship Him, and He initiated it. In Romans 5:8, Paul wrote that God demonstrated His love to us while we were yet sinners by having Christ die for us. In John 3:16, God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son. He initiated it, not us. In 1 John 4:7, we love because He first loved us. We would not be able to love if He had not loved us first. God initiated the relationship with all of us.

John 6:65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

(Rom 5:8) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

(1 John 4:10, 19) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins....{19} We love, because He first loved us."

God is still initiating relationship with Him and worship of Him. In Revelations 3:20, He tells us, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens the door I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me." God is inviting you to open the door and invite Him to come and fellowship with you. God is still telling people to go to the house of God, that is church, and worship Him.

2. God Provides For Worship

In Genesis 28, Jacob left home with little more than the clothes on his back. When God revealed Himself to Jacob at Luz, he built an altar and poured oil on it. He anointed and consecrated it because he said this is none other than God's house. God's presence was there, so he renamed it Bethel, which means house of God. After God had revealed Himself to Jacob and promised to be with him and to bless him, Jacob vowed to give God a tenth of everything that God was going to give him. What Jacob was going to give to God was a portion of what God was giving to him. God was the One who was providing everything.

(Gen 28:20-22) "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, {21} and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. {22} 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."

When God told Noah to build the ark, He told him to bring two of every kind of animal. But, God made an exception to that, and told him to bring seven of all the clean animals. Why? Because when Noah got off the ark, he was going to build an altar and offer up a burnt offering to God. He was to use clean animals for those sacrifices. God made provision for Noah so that he could worship the Lord and offer those sacrifices.

Notice that Jacob said, "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 will return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God." God did more than initiate the relationship by revealing Himself to Jacob. God promised to be with him and to protect him and to provide for him. God was providing for all of Jacob's needs, whether it was food or clothing, and was going to protect him. Jacob's first response was to make the Lord his God. Second, Jacob's second step was to set up a pillar and make it God's house. Third, Jacob vowed to give the Lord a tenth of everything that the Lord gave him. His worship came at the recognition that all things come from God.

Notice what God did in verse five. It says that "as they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob." I think the NASB misses something important in their translation. It correctly says, "And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." The Hebrew text reads "chittah Elohim," which means the fear or terror of God. Elohim is the plural word for God, so it is referring to the trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God put a terror on the cities so that they did not pursue Jacob. The Canaanites had every right to be upset with Jacob and his family, but God supernaturally protected Jacob.

In 1992 I was flying on a TWA flight from Saint Louis to Iowa City. At about 30,000 feet, I pulled out my Bible and turned to Romans 11. Immediately, the Holy Spirit gave me a song of the passage. I did not have my guitar in the cabin, so I wrote down the notes to the melody so that I would not forget the tune. Of all the songs that God has given me, that is probably Karen's favorite. In Romans 11:33-36, Paul acknowledged God's provision. He asks a number of rhetorical questions. God is the one who gives us wisdom and knowledge. God is the one that first gives to us. It is from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. God is the source of everything that we have. He is the One that provides for us to worship.

(Rom 11:33-36) "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! {34} For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? {35} Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? {36} For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

God not only gives provision and protection, He gives forgiveness and grace. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. So, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin covering. They felt naked and ashamed, so they hid from the presence of God. What did God do? Besides confronting them for their sin, He covered them with a garment of skin. The garment of skin required a blood sacrifice. God covered their sins so that they could be in His presence.

(Gen 3:7-8, 21) "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. {8} They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. {21} The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."

This was a prophetic picture of what the Lamb of God would do. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to be baptized by him, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" God's covering of Adam and Eve was a picture of what the second Adam would do, take away the sins of the world. In the gospels we find that when Jesus breathed His last on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. When Jesus took away the sins of the world, we could now go into the holy of holies. God made provision for our sins so that we could have intimate worship with Him. He does not want us watching from the outside in worship. God desires us to have intimacy with Him and to come into His presence, and He has made provision for our sins so that we can come into His presence. (See Isaiah 53:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Titus 3:5, and Romans 6:23.)

(John 1:29) "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

(Mark 15:37-38) "And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. {38} And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

3. God Responds To Worship

After Jacob had built an altar at Bethel, Deborah died and they buried her under the oak and named it Allon-bacuth, which meant oak of weeping. We talked about interruptions in worship last week. They went to Bethel to build an altar and worship God, but Deborah died and they stopped what they were doing to deal with Deborah's death. They obviously loved her because they wept and grieved over her. God was with them in their grieving. We know from Psalm 23:4 that even when we walk through the shadow of death, He is with us. We also know in 2 Corinthians 1:3 that God was there comforting them in their loss. God had some things that He wanted to share with Jacob, but He waited until their grieving was over. God's timing is always perfect.

(Gen 35:8) "Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth."

Then God appeared to Jacob and blessed him. There were three things in God's blessing to Jacob. First, God spoke to him about his name. Second, God spoke to Jacob about being fruitful. Third, God spoke to him about the land which He was going to give to him and his descendants.

(Gen 35:9-12) "Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. {10} God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name." Thus He called him Israel. {11} God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you. {12} "The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you."

None of these promises were new. In Genesis 28:13-14, when God met with Jacob at Bethel the first time, God had spoken to him about the land and about his descendants. In Genesis 32, after Jacob had wrestled with God all night, God changed his name from Jacob to Israel. These were not new promises; they were reminders and words of confirmation.

Genesis 28:13-14 {13} 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. {14} "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will 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.

(Gen 32:27-28) "So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." {28} He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

There are three things that we need to know about restatements or reminders. First, when God repeats something to us, it shows that He is firmly resolved to do it. Notice what Joseph told

Pharaoh in Genesis 41:32. God had given Pharaoh two different pictures of the same prophetic word. Joseph said, *"Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about."* This showed that God had made up His mind about the matter and He was going to bring it about quickly. So, when God speaks to you and I about a matter on more than one occasion, it is to reinforce what He has spoken earlier. It is to let us know that it will surely happen. It is to let us know that it is getting ready to happen. This is something that the Lord has firmly resolved.

The second thing about reminders is that they let us know about things that are important. We share the Lord's Supper every week as a reminder of what Jesus did for us. We are not to take Jesus' death on the cross and His payment for our sins lightly. We are not to take His new covenant with us lightly. These are really significant and important things and God tells us to take the Lord's Supper in "remembrance" of what Jesus did.

When Paul wrote the church in Rome, he said, "But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God. (Romans 15:15) He wanted to remind them again of some important truths. When Paul wrote the Corinthians, he told them that he was sending Timothy to them, and he would remind them of Paul's ways in Christ. (1 Corinthians 4:17) When Paul wrote Timothy the second letter, he reminded him to kindle afresh the gift of God which was in him through the laying on of hands. (2 Timothy 1:6) He also exhorted Timothy to remind the church in Ephesus not to wrangle about words. (2 Timothy 2:14) He wrote Titus and exhorted him to remind the churches in Crete to be subject to rulers and authorities and to be ready for every good deed. (Titus 3:1) Paul was continually reminding the various churches of things that were really important. We have a tendency to forget things, and so reminders help us do the things that are really important.

The third thing about reminders is that they help us call things to mind. In the Navigators' Topical Memory System, we learned to say verses over and over. We had cards with the verses on them and we would review them regularly. The purpose of reviewing them regularly was so that we could call them to mind at any time. Notice what Peter said in 2 Peter 1:12-15. *"Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind."* Peter's reminder was not to teach them new things. He reminded them of things to reinforce their memory so that after his departure, they would be able to recall them. Reminders were part of the learning process.

The first reminder that God gave Jacob was about his name change from Jacob to Israel. He had been Jacob for about a hundred years so his identity as Jacob was firmly entrenched in his mind. But God wanted Jacob to let go of his old identity and take hold of his new identity. I think that we have the same tendency. We tend to hold on to our old identity and do not embrace our new identity. God has given us a new identity. We are saints, not sinners. We are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. We are the bride of Christ. We are forgiven. We are the sons and daughters of God. Some of the problem for us is that we don't know our identity in Christ. Some of this comes through false teachings.

A number of years ago we visited a church and when they took the Lord's Supper, they had to say to the pastor, "I am a sinner..." before partaking of the elements. I met with the pastor and told him that I could not take their communion. I said to him that I am a saint. The term saint or saints is used sixty-nine times in the Bible. Sixty-two of those reference are in the New Testament. The Greek word for saint in the New Testament is *hagios*, which means holy or sacred one (Strong's G40). Christians or Believers are referred to as saints. When the word sinner is used, it primarily refers to those who have not received Christ. When a person receives Christ into their life, they are made holy. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul wrote, "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" We are now the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ is not a sinner, and we are no longer sinners. We were sinners, but now we are saints. Much of the church still walks in the sinner identity instead of the saint identity. We are to live holy lives because we are holy.

Many people live in guilt and condemnation. God says that there is "therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." We have a new identity and we are not to live in guilt and condemnation. Our old life was crucified with Christ and we have been raised up a new creation. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul wrote, "*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*" We have to embrace our new identity. God reminded Jacob of his new identity, and He reminds us of that many times in His word.

God's second reminder to Jacob was that he was going to be fruitful and multiply. He charged Jacob saying, "*Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you.*" It was not just a charge, but it was a prophetic declaration over Jacob and his descendants that he would be fruitful and multiply. In Genesis 28:14, God had said "*Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will 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.*" This was just a reiteration of what He had already said.

The third reminder to Jacob was that he and his descendants would inherit the land which He had given to Abraham and Isaac. God made a covenant with Abraham and to his descendants. Isaac was the first born and the covenant promise went through Isaac. Jacob now has the birthright and blessing, and he and his descendants will be the ones that inherit the land.

After God had spoken these reminders to Jacob, He went up from him. Then Jacob set up a pillar in the place where God had spoken to him, poured out a drink offering on it, and then poured oil on it. The Law had not been given yet, but Jacob must have had an understanding of what a drink offering was. In Numbers 15:3-7, there were a couple of different drink offerings. A freewill offering included a fourth of a hin of wine for the drink offering. For a burnt offering of a lamb, a fourth of a hin of wine was required, but a burnt offering of a ram required a third of a hin. In Leviticus 23:13 a drink offering was also given with a grain offering and a fourth of a hin was used for that drink offering. For those of us who do not think in terms of hin measurements, a hin was an ancient Hebrew unit of liquid measure equal to about 1.5 U.S. gallons (5.7 liters). So, one third of a hin was about half of a gallon and a fourth of a hin is three eighths of a gallon. The various offerings, including the drink offering were to be a soothing aroma to the Lord.

(Gen 35:14-15) "Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. {15} So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel."

(Lev 23:13) "Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine."

(Num 15:3-7) "then make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a freewill offering or in your appointed times, to make a soothing aroma to the LORD, from the herd or from the flock. {4} The one who presents his offering shall present to the LORD a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil, {5} and you shall prepare wine for the drink offering, one-fourth of a hin, with the burnt offering or for the sacrifice, for each lamb. {6} Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; {7} and for the drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a soothing aroma to the LORD."

Symbolically, Jesus is the rock. He is the cornerstone. He prophesied that if they destroyed the temple, it would be rebuilt in three days. He was obviously talking about His body being the temple and that He would resurrect from the dead in three days. Jesus is the Messiah. The Hebrew word for Messiah comes from meshach, which means to rub or smear, and it means the anointed one. Jesus is the Christ, which is the Greek word for anointed one. What was used for anointing someone or something? It was oil. Jacob anointed the rock with oil, and said this is none other than the house of God.

Jacob also poured out a drink offering, which was wine. The wine represents the blood of Christ and the new covenant. Jacob's drink offering was symbolic of Jesus' blood being poured out as an offering for us. This was a prophetic picture of what the Messiah was going to come and do.

Conclusion and Applications

Over the past couple of weeks we have been looking at worship. God initiated the worship by telling Jacob to go to Bethel and to build an altar. Jacob was obedient to God and he prepared himself and his family to worship God. They put away their idols, purified themselves and put on clean garments. God made provision for their worship. He provided protection to them. He also provided the wealth that they were to give offerings from. God provided a covering for their sins so that they could come before Him. Then, we saw that there were some interruptions in the midst of their journey to worship God. Jacob and his family dealt with the interruption and then went back to worshipping God. Finally, we saw that God responded to their worship and spoke to them. He reminded Israel that his name had been changed. Jacob had a new name and identity; he was now Israel. God reminded them of the promises that He had made to Abraham, Isaac and now to Jacob about their inheritance, and that they would be fruitful and multiply. Worship was not a passive thing to observe. Worship was something that both God and us participate in.

This morning, God is calling His church to come and worship Him. He is calling His church to build an altar and offer sacrifices to Him. He is calling the church to put away idols and to worship Him with a whole heart. He is not just calling the church, He is calling us as individuals to fellowship with Him and to worship Him. In Revelations 3:20 He says that He is standing at

the door and knocking. He wants you and I to open the door so that He can come into our hearts and dine with us. Have you opened up your heart to God? Have you received Christ into your life? Have you received your new identity in Christ? Have you put away all false idols? Have you brought acceptable sacrifices to God?

(Rev 3:20) "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."

This week, build an altar and present daily sacrifices to the Lord. Consecrate yourself and present your offerings to the Lord. Listen to what the Lord may speak to you. Write it down; we call that journaling. May the Lord bless all of you this week as you spend time worshipping the Lord.

Introduction (Gen 35:1-15)

- 1. God Initiates Worship** (Gen 35:1, Rev 4:9-11, Ps 14:1-3, John 6:65, Rom 5:8, John 3:16, 1 John 4:7, 10, 19)

- 2. God Provides For Worship** (Gen 28:20-22, 35:5, Rom 11:33-36, Gen 3:7-8, 21, Is 53:6, 2 Cor 5:21, Tit 3:5, Rom 6:23, John 1:29, Mark 15:37-38)

- 3. God Responds To Worship** (Ps 23:4, 2 Cor 1:3, Gen 35:8, 9-12, Gen 28:13-14, 32:27-28, Gen 41:32, Rom 15:15, 1 Cor 4:17, 2 Tim 1:6, 2 Tim 2:14, Tit 3:1, 2 Pet 1:12-15, 2 Cor 5:21, 5:17, Gen 28:14, Num 15:3-7 Lev 23:13, Gen 35:14-15)

Conclusion and Applications (Rev 3:20)