

106 Jesus and Worship

Worship in Jesus' Day—Two competing systems existed

1] The Temple Scenario

A] The Negative Side

1) Its Income and Support It had become completely commercialized. *Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.* (Matt. 21:12,13)

2) Its Theology The Sadducees, priests of the most powerful priestly families, controlled the Temple and the Sanhedrin. They rejected any after-life, whether heaven or hell, any resurrection or rewards, angels or demons.

3) Its Politics The Temple authorities held close ties to Herod and his family and to the Roman command that controlled the land. See John 11:48.

B] The Positive Side

1) Temple worship brought Jews from far-flung places to mingle and fraternize. It gave them a unique international awareness of who they were and how they were different.

2) They became world citizens long before the term was devised. They had learned how to assimilate and yet not lose their own identity. *Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians* (Acts 2:9-11)

3) Focus was kept on substitutionary death

4) Jerusalem and the Temple offered an appropriate stage for Jesus and redemption's story *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Luke 9:51 *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things* Matt. 16:21.

2] The Synagogue Scenario

One source says that in Jesus' day Jerusalem had 394 synagogues. Another says 480.

The openness and informality were superb. Guests were often invited to speak. *He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them,* Luke 4:16-20

The synagogues had no full-time pastors or preachers. The "synagogue ruler" (Mk 5:22, Lk 8:41) was either a caretaker or head elder. Women and children did not sit with the men and older boys. One person present would read from the writings or the prophets and then comment on the portion. Open discussion followed.

Worship According to Jesus

Where and How?

1) The place in Jesus' day *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."* John 4:20

2) The Future Place *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.* John 4:21

3) God revealed himself to and through the Jews. *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* John 4:22

4) How to truly worship God *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* John 4:23

A) in truth = objectively, based on the facts, based on reality

B) in spirit = subjectively,, emotionally, with feeling

What is worship?

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. Matt 22:37-38 also found in Mk 12:30 and Lk 10:27 Worship is loving God with all your being, mental, emotional and physical.