

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

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CHAPTER 23

Worship and Jesus' Disciples

Before His Resurrection

After walking on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus joined a boatful of terrified disciples.¹ After a violent storm they worshiped Him saying what unclean spirits had essentially said as their host fell on their face before Him. Demoniacs shouted, *“You are the Son of God!”*² Jesus' disciples said, *“You are certainly God's Son!”*³ This account describes the only biblical record of Jesus receiving worship from His chosen disciples before His resurrection.



On a high mountain with Moses and Elijah, Jesus radiated dazzling light from His face and clothes. Transfigured before Peter, James, and John, our Heavenly Father reiterated what they had confessed at sea. He elaborated saying, *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!”*⁴ The disciples instantly fell facedown, overcome with terror. Exposed to the audiovisual truth about God, three of Jesus' closest followers could not stand on their feet until He urged them to arise and abandon their frightened pose. Overtones of worship may or may not have accompanied their response during this encounter; the text does not mention a word for reverence, honor, veneration, or worship. Matthew indicates that terror motivated their conduct as they fell down.

¹ Mark 6:45-56; John 6:16-21

² Mark 3:11 NAS

³ Matthew 14:33 NAS

⁴ Matthew 17:5 NAS

In each situation, a supernatural appearance triggered a spontaneous response, once at sea and once on a mountain. Primed with fearful emotions, veteran disciples connected with the truth about Jesus and either responded or reacted. At sea, they worshiped and articulated the truth. On the mountain, they reacted with facedown fear. When the disciples saw Jesus strolling on the sea,

*they were **terrified** [tarasso], and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in **fear** [phobos]. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” ...And those who were in the boat **worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”**⁵*

When the three disciples heard God the Father reiterate what they said at sea,

*they **fell** [pipto] **facedown** to the ground and were **terrified** [phobeo]. And Jesus came to them and **touched** [hapto] them and said, “**Get up, and do not be afraid** [phobeo].”⁶*

At sea, the disciples were terrified (*tarasso*),⁷ which means agitated, disturbed, and troubled. They responded in fear (*phobos*),⁸ a noun meaning dread or terror. On the mountain, the disciples were terrified (*phobeo*),⁹ a verb meaning seized with alarm, struck with terror, put to flight (scared away), startled with amazement, afraid of harm, or reacting with deference and reverential obedience.

Aware of these strong emotions on the mountain, Jesus did more than extend a comforting hand to Peter, James, and John. The word “*touched*” implies more than casual contact. Translated from Greek, the word *hapto*¹⁰ means to fasten or adhere to someone. Jesus’ touch activated a dynamic connection. He released supernatural energy to cement their union. *Hapto* also means to fasten fire to something or to kindle and set on fire. When Jesus touched Peter, James, and John, He forged a fiery bond with them.

Disciples Worshiping Jesus after His Resurrection

After Jesus rose from the dead, the Bible describes Mary Magdalene, another Mary, and various disciples worshiping Him in three biblical accounts. One report occurred shortly after the resurrection and two coincide with His ascension.

⁵ Matthew 14:26-27, 33 NAS

⁶ Matthew 17:6-7 NAS

⁷ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/tarasso.html> (accessed 3-16-21)

⁸ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/phobos.html> (accessed 3-16-21)

⁹ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/phobeo.html> (accessed 3-16-21)

¹⁰ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/hapto.html> (accessed 3-16-21)

DISCIPLES Worshiping Jesus BEFORE and AFTER His Resurrection				
Worshippers	Times	Greek	Response	NAS Verse
The Disciples in a boat on the Sea of Galilee	1	Proskuneo	Worshiped Jesus the Son of God	Mat 14:33
Man healed of blindness not mentioned as a disciple	1	Proskuneo	Worshiped Jesus the Son of Man	John 9:38
Mary Magdalene and Mary mother of James	1	Proskuneo	Worshiped the Resurrected Christ	Mat 28:9
Eleven Disciples	1	Proskuneo	Worshiped the Resurrected Christ before Ascension	Mat 28:17
Eleven Disciples with others	1	Proskuneo		Luke 24:52

Worship before the Resurrection

1. Only one account mentions any disciples worshiping Jesus before His resurrection. After watching Jesus walk on water, they worshiped Him in a boat at sea.

*And those who were in the boat **worshiped** [proskuneo] Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" (Matthew 14:33 NAS)*

2. A blind man whom Jesus had healed (not identified as a disciple).

*And he [Jesus] said, "Lord, I believe." And he **worshiped** [proskuneo] Him [as the Son of Man]. (John 9:38 NAS)*

Worship after the Resurrection

3. Mary Magdalene, another Mary, and other women worshiped Jesus near His tomb.

*And behold, Jesus met them [shortly after His resurrection] and greeted them. And they came up and **took hold of His feet** and **worshiped** [proskuneo] Him. (Matthew 28:9 NAS)*

Without mentioning any reference to worship, Mark 16:1 identifies Mary as the mother of James and includes Salome while Luke 24:10 identifies Mary as the mother of James, mentions Joanna, and includes a reference to other women.

4. Eleven unnamed Disciples worshiped Jesus just prior to His ascension into heaven. Others may have joined them on this mountain near Galilee (Matthew 28:16).

*When they saw Him, they **worshiped** [proskuneo] Him; but some were doubtful. (Matthew 28:17 NAS)*

5. After receiving a blessing, Eleven Disciples with others, including Cleopas and his companion from the road to Emmaus, worshiped in response to Christ's ascension.

*And they, after **worshiping** [proskuneo] Him [resurrected Christ], returned to Jerusalem with great joy, (Luke 24:52 NAS)*

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