

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

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CHAPTER 26

Worshipping Idols Results in Bloodshed and Warfare

Throughout biblical history, idol worship has triggered bloodshed and warfare. Venerating concocted deities ignites God's wrath with fatal consequences.

Worship Associated with BLOODSHED and/or WARFARE				
Individuals	Times	Hebrew Greek	Association	NAS Verse
Levite Priests killed 3,000 men	1	Shachah	For Worshiping a molten calf	Exo 32:8 Exo 32:27-28
God divided Israel and Judah	1	Shachah	For worshipping Ashtoreth, Milcom, and Chemosh	1 Ki 11:31-33
Herod used a guise of worship to locate Christ	1	Proskuneo	A disingenuous appeal ended in mass murder	Mat 2:8
Roman soldiers beat Jesus	1	Proskuneo	Mock worship	Mark 15:19

1. For worshipping a molten calf in the wilderness, God commanded Levite Priests to execute 3,000 men.

While Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, Israel engaged in an unmitigated display of idolatry. God's response was immediate and severe. He confided in Moses saying,

*"They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a **molten calf**, and have **worshiped** [shachah] it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" (Exodus 32:8 NAS)*

He [Moses] said to them [Levite Priests], "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go, back and forth from

gate to gate in the camp, and **kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.**” So **the sons of Levi** did as Moses instructed, and **about three thousand men of the people fell that day.** (Exodus 32:27-28 NAS)

2. After King Solomon’s death, **Israel and Judah became warring factions**; God divided them because they worshiped Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom idols. Abijah succeeded Rehoboam (his father and Solomon’s son) as King of Judah. Throughout his reign, Judah was at war with Israel (1 Kings 15:1-8). Though Abijah’s son Asa burned idols and cut down Asherah poles he remained constantly at war with Israel (1 Kings 15:9-16).

*He [the prophet Ahijah] said to Jeroboam [Solomon’s servant] ... ‘Behold, **I will tear the kingdom** out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes (but he [Solomon] will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), **because they** [Israel] **have forsaken Me, and have worshiped** [shachah] **Ashtoreth** the goddess of the Sidonians, **Chemosh** the god of Moab, and **Milcom** the god of the sons of Ammon (1 Kings 11:31-32 NAS).*

3. **Herod used the guise of worship while attempting to locate and destroy Jesus.**

Motivated by jealousy, pride, fear, and rage, he ordered the brutal slaughter of all male children less than three years old in the vicinity of Bethlehem.¹

*And he [Herod] sent them [the Magi] to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and **worship** [proskuneo] Him.” (Matthew 2:8 NAS)*

4. **Mock worship and a brutal beating**

After Pilate released Barabbas, he discharged Jesus to the executioners. Before crucifixion, a full Roman cohort (500 to 1000 soldiers) met Him in Herod’s Roman-occupied Praetorium Palace where they mixed mock worship with a crown of thorns and a brutal beating.²

*They [Roman soldiers] kept **beating** His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and **kneeling** [gonu] and **bowing** [proskuneo] before Him. (Mark 15:19 NAS)*

¹ Matthew 2:16-18

² Mark 15:16

Idols Provoke God to Jealousy

The Hebrew adjective *qanna'* refers exclusively to God's type of jealousy. Characterized by perfect love, zeal, passion, fervor and security, it appears in the Hebrew text six times in five verses. God is jealous for us to receive His best. The Hebrew verb *qana'* refers to human jealousy. Distinguished by envy, greed, resentment, and insecurity, it appears in the Hebrew text 32 times in 29 verses. Selfish ambition motivates human jealousy for self-centered advantages.

God becomes jealous when we worship idols because rejecting the truth about Him triggers detrimental consequences—for us. Jealousy signifies a dimension of God's righteous character; His name is Jealousy.

for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous [adjective qanna'] is a jealous [adjective qanna'] God (Exodus 34:14)

"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God... (Exodus 20:3-5a and Deut 5:7-9a)

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deut 4:24)

for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. Deut 6:15

While beholding God's glory, Ezekiel saw a vision of an idol that provoked God to jealousy. This idol sat at the northern gate by the Temple's inner court, north of the altar gate. While sitting in his house with the elders of Judah, the hand of the Lord fell on Ezekiel:

*Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward there was the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal. He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the **idol of jealousy** [noun *qin'ah*], which **provokes to jealousy**, [verb *quna'*] was located. (Ezekiel 8:2-3 NAS)*

Ezekiel's vision continues in the inner court of the temple entrance between the porch and the altar where he observes about twenty-five men with their

backs to the temple. They prostrated [*shachah*] themselves toward the sun in the east (Ezekiel 8:16 NAS).

God considers idol worship an abomination that warrants discipline. It provoked God to vacate His sanctuary and activate an uncharacteristic response executed with relentless wrath.³

“Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them.”
(Ezekiel 8:18 NAS)

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³ Ezekiel 8:6