

Some Don't Want People to Kowtow to Them

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Much is written in the Bible about the adversary. In the book of Revelation, he is called "the great dragon, the serpent of old, the devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9 and 20:2).

Bible students are aware that one of his greater character flaws is his desire to have people to bow down to worship him. We see this revealed in his dealing with the Son of God—when he sought to influence the Son of God to sin.

Notice some highlights from Matthew's account of the temptation.

- "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3).
- "If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down" (verse 6).
- "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (verse 9).

This is merely one proof of the idea that the devil wants to be worshiped.

But this article is not primarily about spending time discussing scriptures about the devil. Rather, this article will notice scriptures about people who were tempted to exhibit the flawed character trait of the devil.

Following the wavelength

The devil wants to be worshiped. It should come as no surprise that people who are heavily influenced by the wavelength of the devil also want to be worshiped.

- Some people (including religious people) have a lust to be worshiped, and they overtly behave in a way to demonstrate their desire to be worshiped.
- Other people (including religious people) have a lust to be worshiped, but they are subtle in fulfilling their desire to be worshiped.
- And some other people (including religious people) do not have a burning desire to be worshiped, but they allow a group of people to draw them into sin.

Before we look at a few positive examples in the Bible about how some people reacted when other people sought to worship them, let's notice how easy it is to justify bad behavior.

Easy to justify

The Bible mentions that it is easy for people to justify their mistakes and sins.

- The heart is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9).
- People do wrong things thinking that they are serving God (John 16:2, Acts 8:3 and Acts 9:1-2).
- Paul described the ongoing struggle that people have with doing the right thing (Romans 7:15,19).

The Bible is filled with examples of people making bad choices. Let's notice how Aaron and Saul (of the Old Testament) justified their bad decisions.

Aaron's mistake

Bible students are well aware of the story of the golden calf (in Exodus 32).

- When Moses didn't come down from the mountain as quickly as the people expected, they approached Aaron to make a golden calf (Exodus 32:1-3).
- After Aaron was finished making the idol, he said: "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt" (verse 4).
- After Aaron built an altar, he made a proclamation: "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord" (verse 5).

When Moses returned, he confronted Aaron about his role in the matter.

Exodus 32:21—"And Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?' "

In Aaron's response, he partially blamed the people for influencing him.

Exodus 32:22-24—"So Aaron said, 'Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. For they said to me, "Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." And I said to them, "Whoever has any gold, let them break it off." So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.' "

Two of Saul's mistakes

Bible students are aware of the story about King Saul making an unauthorized offering (in 1 Samuel 13).

- After Saul led an army to victory over the Philistines, he remained at Gilgal (verses 1-7).
- While waiting for Samuel to come to offer a burnt offering and peace offerings, the people scattered from Saul (verse 8).
- Seeing the scattering, Saul offered the burnt offering (verse 9), and the Lord was not happy (verses 10-14).

Bible students are aware of the story about King Saul sparing the people of Amalek (in 1 Samuel 15).

- God gave specific instructions to King Saul (verse 3).
- Saul did not follow all of the instructions (verse 9).
- When Samuel confronted Saul about his not following the instructions (verse 14), Saul blamed the people (verse 15).

Five good responses

After looking at the mistakes of Aaron and Saul, let's look at five situations that engendered good responses.

- Peter in Caesarea
- Paul and Barnabas in Lystra
- An angel responding to John
- An angel again responding to John
- Gideon

Peter's reaction

In Acts 10, we find the story of Cornelius meeting Peter after both of them had visions.

- Cornelius was a centurion in the Italian Regiment (verse 1).
- Cornelius was a devout man (verse 2).
- Cornelius had a vision in which an angel of the Lord instructed him to send people to Joppa to see Peter (verses 3-8).
- As the traveling men were approaching Joppa, Peter had a vision while he was getting ready to eat (verses 9-16).
- As Peter was contemplating the meaning of the vision (verse 17), the three men communicated Cornelius's invitation for Peter to visit Caesarea (verses 18-22). Peter accepted the invitation and left Joppa (verse 23).

It was at this point that Cornelius made a mistake. Notice verse 25.

Acts 10:25—"As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him."

How did Peter react to Cornelius's mistake? See verse 26.

Acts 10:26—"But Peter lifted him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself am also a man.' "

Paul's and Barnabas's reaction

In Acts 14, we find the story of Paul and Barnabas being a part of the healing of a crippled man in Lystra.

- A man, who was crippled from birth and who had never walked, arose to his feet (verses 8-10)
- The people reacted to the healing by describing Paul and Barnabas in the following manner: "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men" (verse 11).
- The people called Barnabas Jupiter and called Paul Mercury—because Paul was the main speaker (verse 12).
- The priest of Zeus (whose temple was in front of their city) brought animals to the gates with the intent to sacrifice with the multitudes (verse 13).

How did Paul and Barnabas react to the priest of Zeus and the multitude in the city? Notice verses 14-17.

Acts 14:14-17—"But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' "

Angel's reaction

In Revelation 19, we find a portion of the account of John describing his visions.

- John described the heavenly host praising God (verses 1-6).
- John described the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper of the Lamb (verses 7-9).

It was at this point that John described his mistake. Notice the first part of verse 10.

Revelation 19:10—"And I fell at his feet to worship him."

How did the angel react to John's mistake? See the later part of verse 10.

Revelation 19:10—"But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Angel's reaction again

In Revelation 22, we find a continuation of the account of John describing his visions.

- John described the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-27).
- John described the river of life (Revelation 22:1-5).
- John described the idea of the Son of God returning (verses 6-7).

It was at this point that John described himself making the same mistake. Notice verse 8.

Revelation 22:8—"Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things."

How did the angel react to John's mistake? See verse 9.

Revelation 22:9—"Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.' "

Gideon's response

Do you remember the earlier Old Testament examples of Aaron and King Saul when they allowed the people to influence them to sin?

Well, let's now look at an Old Testament example where a man did not allow the desires of people to override his desire to please God. The man's name is Gideon and the story is found in Judges 8.

- Gideon led the army of Israel to subdue the Midianites (Judges 8:1-21).
- The men of Israel made a request (verse 22).

Judges 8:22—"Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.' "

- Notice how Gideon responded (verse 23).

Judges 8:23—"But Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.' "

How would you respond if other people came to you to ask you to rule over them?