

## Altared, A Biblical History

### Message Six

#### Worship as a Way of Life

***Genesis 26: 17-25 So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there.***

***18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them.***

***19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water,***

***20 the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.***

***21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah.***

***22 And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."***

***23 From there he went up to Beersheba.***

***24 And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."***

***25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.***

Genesis is the book of beginnings.

Genesis shows us the beginning of many things—

creation,

humanity,

sin,

family,

even nations.

Genesis also shows us the beginning of worship.

For example, the last verse of chapter 4 tells us, ***“At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.” (4:26)***

Wouldn't you think that we ought to be able to learn something about worship from this book of beginnings.

A recurring phrase in the book is “built an altar.”

We are looking at each of these texts as we examine how worship changes us or how we are “Altered by the Altar.”

Thus far, we have talked about the altar that Noah built after he exited the ark.

Then, we discovered the altars that Abraham built as he moved from place to place.

At one point, we examined the altar that Abraham built by God's command to offer up his son Isaac.

Today, we will examine ***Genesis 26*** and the altar built by Isaac.

For generations, the people of God, when referring to God, would refer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The story of this family including Jacob's son, Joseph, dominates the remaining chapters of Genesis.

As we have seen in recent messages, the faith of Abraham is amazing.

God said, “Get up and go” and he got up and went.

God told him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the seashore, but at 100 years old, Abraham has no son, let alone descendants as numerous as the stars and sand pebbles.

When that son is finally born, God commanded Abraham to offer that son up as a sacrifice to Him.

In an amazing display of faith, Abraham walks up Mount Moriah, builds an altar, binds his son, and raises the knife before God says, "That's enough, now I know that you fear God."

But, what about Isaac?

We actually don't have as much information about Isaac, but again, in the record of the Old Testament, God is consistently referred to as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

I have often described Isaac's faith as quiet faith.

As the editors of the Daily Walk Bible point out about him, "He generally did what God told him to do.

How would you like your epitaph to read: 'He generally did what God told him to do?'

There's not a lot of glamour in quiet faithfulness, but as far as God is concerned, it's more important than just about anything else.

Maybe that's one reason Isaac gets equal billing with his father and son every time God identifies himself as 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'"

Isaac is the bridge between Abraham and Jacob.

Isaac's story is in part important because he passed down what had been passed down to him.

When we consider the altar built by Isaac, he is passing down what he learned from Abraham.



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I have told you that there would probably be some overlapping lessons that we learn as we study the altars of the Bible.

We shouldn't be surprised by this.

God is the God who never changes.

God wanted Isaac to learn and to know the same lessons that Noah learned and that his father Abraham had learned.

When we read that Isaac built an altar, I think we read between the lines that he was doing what he had learned to do.

He was doing what had become a "way of life."

That's what I want to talk to you about today, "Worship as a Way of Life."

A lot of what happened in Abraham's life is repeated in Isaac.

That is not necessarily all good.

He did not always trust God as he should.

He did not always obey.

He took matters in his own hands, even making the same mistake as Abraham and pretending that his wife is his sister.

But, what is good, is that it appears that the worship of the one true God is passed down.

Here we are reminded once again of our obligation to pass down to the next generation "the faith that was delivered to the saints" as Jude put it.

So, notice these things in Isaac's story as we think about "worship as a way of life."

The purpose of worship is passed down to the next generation.

Isaac worshipped,



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pitched his tent,  
and dug wells.

Why did he do this?

Why did he worship?

In understanding the reasons he worshipped we learn something about the purpose of our worship.

**Verse 24** clearly points out two reasons that Isaac worshipped.

***24 And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."***

**Isaac worshipped because:**

- **God met with him and God's presence guides us.**

Just as He did to Abraham, God appears to Isaac.

He makes Isaac the same promise—I am with you.

Because of that promise, God can also say, "Don't be afraid."

Perhaps, there are many who need to hear that same promise today.

- **God had met his needs because God's promises sustain us.**

God reiterates the promise of blessing of offspring.

In addition, Isaac had just experienced the blessing of God in providing a water well.

These two provisions—**God's meeting him** and **meeting his needs** seem to be the two primary reasons we worship.

Nothing has changed.

We worship because God has met us.

Now, He has met us through coming down to us and walking among us in Jesus and then assures His presence through the ongoing presence of His spirit.

In addition, He has promised to provide for us our daily needs, but He has also promised us our greatest need—the forgiveness of sin—and with that the assurance of peace with God and a place with God forever.

That's why we worship!

The priority of worship should be passed down to the next generation.

Isaac worshipped, pitched his tent, and dug wells.

Note the order of these actions.

Just as we saw with Noah and Abraham, there seems to be in the telling of the story, an emphasis on the priority of building the altar for the purposes of worshipping God.

Worship through the pain is passed down to the next generation.

Again, Isaac worshipped, pitched his tent, and dug wells.

This is how Isaac was altered by the altar. O-op

He was committed to the place where God had placed him.

He would in this place trust God.

Pitching the tents and digging the wells are signs that he intended to stay.

All was not well.

He had some pain.

The preceding verses tell us of conflict over wells he had built in other areas.



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The end verse of this chapter tells us that his life was made bitter by the marital choices of his son Esau.

Yet, in these things, in these problems, in this pain, Isaac was committed to a life of worship.

Worship was a way of life for him not when things were good, but in everything.

I love the song, "Blessed Be Your Name."

Blessed Be Your Name

In the land that is plentiful

Where Your streams of abundance flow

Blessed be Your name

Blessed Be Your name

When I'm found in the desert place

Though I walk through the wilderness

Blessed Be Your name

Every blessing You pour out

I'll turn back to praise

When the darkness closes in, Lord

Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be Your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name

When the sun's shining down on me

When the world's 'all as it should be'

Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name

On the road marked with suffering

Though there's pain in the offering

Blessed be Your name

You give and take away

You give and take away

My heart will choose to say

Lord, blessed be Your name!



It's easy to worship when "all is as it should be," but not so easy to worship when "the darkness closes in."

Are you able to say "Blessed Be Your Name" all the time? It is what I call this morning the ability to "worship no matter what."

### **What are you passing down about worship?**

- **What does your worship say to the next generation about the purpose of worship?**

Sometimes I have heard people criticize others for letting worship entertain them.

Most of the time that comes from the traditional worship crowd saying to the contemporary worship crowd, "They just want to be entertained."

Truthfully, though, this cuts both ways.

If you think right worship is according to the style that you prefer, you are just as guilty of being entertained in worship as those whose worship style you do not agree.

- **What does your worship say to the next generation about the priority of worship?**

There is one conversation that ought to never happen at your home on Saturday night or Sunday morning.

There should never be the conversation as to whether your family is coming to worship.

That ought to be assumed by everyone in your family.

- **What does your worship say about worshipping through the pain of life?**

Tony Dungy, former football coach of the Colts and the Buccaneers, talked about in his autobiography, "Doing what we do."

He means by that phrase that some people do this and some people do that, but you have to know what you do.

What do you do?

What does your family do?

Do you worship no matter what?

If you do worship no matter what, you will have made a choice to worship no matter what.



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