

## **Worship in Spirit and Truth**

### **John 4:19-24 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

**How would you define "worship"?**

**What was the woman's focus with regard to worship?**

The Samaritan woman was focused on the proper place to worship.

**Jesus indicates there was an old way and now a new way to worship.**

**What was the "old" way to worship?**

Worship was always centred on the temple which was located in Jerusalem. The temple was the place to bring sacrifices and offerings as a means to restore one's relationship with God. Along with the temple came the rest of the Law which set before Israel a holy standard of worship that they continually failed to live up to.

Because the temple in Jerusalem was the focal point, it created tension for the Samaritans who believed in God, yet were considered outcasts by the Jews.

**Why does Jesus say there is now a new way to worship? What brought about that change?**

### **John 2:18-19 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

**What is Jesus referring to in the above verse?**

His body is the true temple.

### **Revelation 21:22 (NIV)**

*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

**How does this relate to our conversation in John 4?**

Jesus replaced the temple as the focal point of worship. Worship is no longer focused on a place but on a person, Jesus Christ.

**How might focusing worship on a person change one's approach to worship?**

**How might this affect where, when and how we can worship?**

**In what ways might we be tempted to forget this principle in our worship?**

We might forget this principle when:

We can only worship in a certain manner

We can only worship comfortably in a certain place, building, etc.

We can only worship to a certain musical style

We cannot worship during our day at work or school

Etc.

**What do you think it means to worship in "spirit"?**

**John 3:3-7 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup> In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

<sup>4</sup> "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

**Note:** The Greek word (anōthen) translated "again" can also mean "from above". In this story Jesus is playing with words and Nicodemus is getting very confused. Jesus is saying that no one can get to heaven unless he is born "from above", but Nicodemus is hearing born "again".

**What is the issue determining whether one is born from below or born from above?**

The deciding factor as to whether or not someone is born from above is the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. If someone does not have the Spirit, they are of the earth. If someone does have the Spirit, they are of heaven.

**How does this understanding of the Holy Spirit affect our understanding of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman?**

John is once again separating life into the earthly and the heavenly. Under the Mosaic Law there was an earthly approach to worship, but now through Jesus and his Spirit, there is a new spiritual reality to worship. It is a spiritual issue and can only be realized on a spiritual level through the presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

It no longer has to do with a geographical location but a relationship with Jesus through the indwelling of his Spirit. In other words, only those with the Spirit-life are capable of truly worshipping God.

**TEACHER'S NOTE:** Teachers, the following is written simply to give you a broader perspective of what is happening in John's writing. John is very progressive in his writing. It would be very beneficial to familiarize yourself with the Gospel of John chapters 1-4 (the whole book in fact) to see how, through Jesus, there is a whole new way to understand and relate to God, the Father.

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| Chapter 1:14 | Jesus is the true tabernacle, the presence of God among his people.   |
| Chapter 2    | Jesus turns water to wine revealing his glory, the same glory that filled the tabernacle. Then Jesus declares that he is the true temple. |
| Chapter 3    | Salvation does not come through going to the earthly temple, but by receiving the Holy Spirit through the work of Christ.                 |
| Chapter 4    | Jesus is the one who gives the Holy Spirit which makes it possible to truly worship God.  |

**Why is it necessary to worship in spirit?**

God is spirit. Therefore, earthly worship (buildings, style, form) has no real connection to him. Worship must first and foremost be rooted in a spirit-based relationship with God as our spirit unites with his Spirit. This does not mean we do not have earthly expressions that flow from our worship, but that worship can only happen when we become indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**How does the presence of the Holy Spirit allow us to worship God as Father?**

The presence of the Holy Spirit allows us to be born "from above" bringing us into a new, intimate relationship with God as our Father. We are no longer simply a community of faith, but a family adoring our heavenly dad.

**In what ways might we be tempted to not worship in spirit?**

This could happen in a variety of ways:

- When we worship/live out of routine, with no focus on Jesus or being led by the Holy Spirit.
- When we are more concerned about externals (music, expectations, style etc.) than praising God.
- When our lifestyle contradicts our praise
- When I am more concerned with how I look/sound than I am with giving God honour.
- Etc.

**What do you think it means to worship in “truth”?**

Old Testament worship was centred on the temple and all the symbols attached to it. This included the altar and sacrifices, the temple furniture, the Holy of Holies, the priests and even Israel itself. All these however, were not the “real” thing. They were a shadow of the real focus of worship that was to come. Each “picture” or “type” prophesied about the coming Messiah who would fulfill all the requirements of God’s holiness and offer forgiveness to all people.

**Colossians 2:17 (NIV)**

*These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

**Hebrews 9:9-10 (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup> This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup> They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

**Hebrews 10:1 (NIV)**

*The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.*

**How might knowing this help us understand what it means to worship in truth?**

Jesus is calling us to worship the real thing, not the shadow. We easily get distracted by the earthly dynamics of worship and forget “who” it is we are to worship. The shadow was rooted in the earthly; the real thing is rooted in the heavenly and is only accessible through the spirit/Spirit. Worship in the Kingdom only happens when one turns to Jesus and receives his Spirit. Only then do we qualify to walk into the Holy of Holies (the throne room of God) and worship before his throne.

**John 14:6 (NIV)**

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

**How would understanding this have changed the Samaritan woman’s perspective about worship?**

Instead of being pre-occupied with where she should worship, she would have turned to Jesus as the focal point of her worship. Salvation did not come from the “pictures”, but from the person whom those pictures represented - Jesus.

**Hebrews 1:6 (NIV)**

*And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."*

**What are some ways we might “not” worship in truth?**

False worship occurs when we get distracted by lesser “earthly” things. It also occurs whenever we have a distorted understanding of God. We cannot worship truthfully because we have embraced lies about who he is, who we are and how he relates to us.

This is especially true when speaking of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the truth. Only by acknowledging his Lordship and submitting to it, are we able to worship in truth.

Therefore we do not worship in truth when:

We are not submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

We doubt the goodness and love of God.

When we value other things more than we do Jesus Christ

Etc.

**When we think of Old Testament worship we think of the temple, sacrifices, priests in flowing robes and animals being led through the crowds. What picture comes to your mind when you think of the worship today?**

**When Jesus talked about a new way to worship, do you think he was limiting it to a one hour worship service each week? How would you define worship in a broader sense?**

**In what way is every aspect of our life to be an act of worship?**

**Romans 12:1 (NIV)**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**How would you paraphrase the above verse?**

**Colossians 3:22-24 (NIV)**

<sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

**How were slaves to show worship to God?**

**What are some implications if we do not do whatever we do as if we were doing it for the Lord?**

**How might this perspective influence how we work and relate to others?**

**Ephesians 5:18-21 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**If we have not worshipped God in this way through our week, how might it affect how we worship on Sunday mornings?**

**How can we make everything we do an expression of worship this week?**

**What is one specific way you can change this week to bring glory to God through your life?**