**True Worship**

*John 4:23-24*

**Introduction**

1. Passing through Samaria on His way to Galilee, wearied from His journey, Jesus stopped at Jacob’s well in Sychar. There He encountered a woman, and He asked her for a drink. He then offered her living water (spiritual), and proof that He had such water to give (facts about her life He couldn’t know without Divine knowledge).
2. Having her sin pointed out by Jesus, perceiving Him to be a prophet, she changed the subject to an age-old dispute between the Samaritans and Jews concerning the proper place of worship. **(cf. John 4:19-20)**
   1. OT contemplated a Divinely prescribed place of worship – **Deuteronomy 12:5**.
   2. Under Divine guidance, Solomon built the temple, the house of worship, in Jerusalem – **cf. 1 Kings 5-8**.
   3. The Samaritans only accepted the Pentateuch, and falsely claimed the place of worship was Mount Gerizim – Which mount Jesus and the woman could look up to see in person at Jacob’s well.
3. Jesus told her plainly that the Samaritans were wrong about the place of worship, and the Jews were right – **John 4:22**.
   1. Salvation would come through the Jewish people – Messiah would be a Jew.
   2. The tutor pointing to Christ was the Jewish law – **cf. Galatians 3:24**.
   3. The Jews were the people under direct guidance of God for the proper worship. (Israel was the only true Theocracy in existence – only one God, and He was the God of the Israelite nation.)
4. Regardless, Jesus looked forward to a time when the age-old dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews concerning the proper place of worship would be moot, because His kingdom would prescribe worship in spirit and truth, regardless of the location (**vv. 21, 23-24).**
5. ***“True worshipers”*** implies a true worship – namely, worship in spirit and truth. This also implies a false worship exists:
   1. **Ignorant worship** – **John 4:22; Acts 17:22-23** – not knowing God, therefore not knowing what worship is acceptable.
   2. **Will worship** – **Colossians 2:20-23** – such ignorance leads to self-prescribed worship.
   3. **Vain worship** – **Matthew 15:7-9** – any worship to God prescribed by man is vain.
6. What is true worship? – Ultimately, what is authorized worship?
7. Object of Worship
8. God is Spirit
   1. **John 4:24** – Jesus gave a foundation for His assertion about the correct form of worship – spirit and truth – BECAUSE GOD IS SPIRIT. *(It matters how God is viewed and represented.)*
      1. **Spirit** – primarily denotes "the wind" (akin to *pneo*, "to breathe, blow"); also "breath;" then, especially "the spirit," which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful. (Vine)
      2. **Cf. John 3:8** – Jesus’ explanation of those born of the Spirit.
      3. Transcends the physical universe – **cf. Ecclesiastes 11:5**
   2. God in relation to creation:
      1. Creator greater than creation – **Acts 17:24-25** – He created, thus is not the one in need – if these things emanate from Him, then He is not sustained by them, but them by Him (**cf. Hebrews 1:3** – upholds them by His word).
      2. Worship without the consideration of its object – **Psalm 50:7-15** – Israel missed the point of worship – God didn’t NEED it, but they needed Him.
   3. **Worship to God cannot be reduced in our MIND or PRACTICE to anything less than the nature of God Himself – Who is Spirit.**
      1. God is not physical, but neither is He simply an emotional entity.
      2. He is an intelligent self-existent eternal being whose ways and desires cannot be ascertained except through revelation – **cf. Isaiah 55:8-9**. 🡪
9. God is Revealed (Truth)
   1. True worship transcends the mere elements and actions in worship prescribed by God – **cf. Psalm 51:16-17** (*Sacrifices and offerings were prescribed by God, but the essence of worship was in the countenance of man’s spirit*.).
   2. However, worship that is merely sincere is not pleasing to God if it is not according to the elements and actions prescribed (**cf. John 4:22** – for God is only pleased by worship ordained by Him, and we cannot know such without His revelation.)
   3. **1 Corinthians 2:11-13** – Worship that is spiritual must be known, but cannot be known except through revelation.
      1. **God is Spirit, but He is also a God of truth** – these are interrelated because we cannot understand the spiritual without the revealed truth of God.
      2. ***(v. 13) – “which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”*** (NASB)
      3. **(v. 16)** – We cannot instruct God concerning spiritual truths – He instructs us by revelation, thus, the mind of Christ of which Paul speaks.
         1. Those who approach God, especially in worship, with a mindset that claims to better emphasize the fact that God is Spirit, but dismisses precept, miss the point.
         2. These individuals claim to know God better than those who insist on closely following His revelation, but in doing so they claim to know God better than He knows Himself.
         3. **Following precept closely does not negate the spiritual side of worship. Rather, it supports it!**
10. Form of Worship
11. In Spirit and Truth
    1. True worship – **John 4:23-24** – worship in spirit and truth.
       1. **Not a consideration of BALANCE** – gives the idea of compromise. (Picture a scale, taking away or adding to each side until there is balance.)
       2. **COEXISTENCE** – Worship in spirit is worship in truth, and worship in truth is worship in spirit.
       3. **This relationship between spirit and truth is manifest in the object of said worship, God Himself. (As seen before – how can we know Him who is SPIRIT, and approach Him in a spiritual way, without His revelation of TRUTH.)**
    2. The example of rebellious Israel (**Exodus 32:1-6** – impatient at Sinai):
       1. Moses’ delay led the people to request a representation of God’s presence – **(v. 1):**
          1. Moses on the mount for 40 days and 40 nights.
          2. Is God with them? (God gave several proofs that He was.)
             1. The Exodus (cf. Exodus 14:31).
             2. Bitter waters turned sweet (cf. Exodus 15:22-27).
             3. Manna and Quail (cf. Exodus 16:6-7).
             4. Water from the rock (cf. Exodus 17:7).
             5. The Cloud and voice (cf. Exodus 19:9; Even when Moses ascended the mount – Exodus 24:16-18).
          3. **Despite the facts of the past that illustrated God’s presence among them, they wanted a physical representation of God because they didn’t think of Him in a spiritual way. (GOD IS NOT SEEN – cf. 1 John 4:12, 20)**
       2. Aaron complies with the people’s request – (**vv. 2-4):**
          1. Aaron made a golden calf for them.
          2. **(v. 4b)** – ***“this is your god”*** – *’elôhîym*; gods in the ordinary sense (Strong).
             1. Used in reference to the supreme God. (Plural – trinity)
             2. Here used generally.
       3. Aaron’s approach of compromise concerning the worship of Jehovah – **(vv. 5-6):**
          1. ***“SO WHEN AARON SAW IT”*** (going further than expected, so Aaron seeks to direct attention back to God) – **(v. 5)** – **LORD** – *yhwh;* (the) self-Existent or Eternal; name of God (Strong).
             1. “a remarkable circumstance, strongly confirmatory of the view that they had not renounced the worship of Jehovah, but in accordance with Egyptian notions, had formed an image with which they had been familiar, to be the visible symbol of the divine presence.” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary – Exodus 32:5-6)
             2. “Yet he calls it a feast to Jehovah; for, brutish as they were, they did not imagine that this image was itself a god, nor did they design to terminate their adoration in the image, but they made it for a representation of the true God, whom they intended to worship in and through this image; and yet this did not excuse them from gross idolatry, any more than it will excuse the papists, whose plea it is that they do not worship the image, but God by the image, so making themselves just such idolaters as the worshippers of the golden calf, whose feast was a feast to Jehovah, and proclaimed to be so, that the most ignorant and unthinking might not mistake it.” (Matthew Henry: Commentary on Exodus 32)
          2. **(v. 6)** – They worshiped before the alter and image – claimed to worship Jehovah, but really were not:
             1. Reduced Jehovah, who is Spirit **(cf. John 4:24),** to an image.
             2. **Cf. Psalm 106:19-22** – In doing so, they did not pay homage to God, or do reverence to Him, but in actuality forgot Him.
             3. THEIR JOVIAL CONCOCTION WAS NEITHER IN SPIRIT NOR TRUTH SINCE THEY HAD ABANDONED THE VERY NATURE OF GOD HIMSELF – such worship was self-made, not Divinely appointed.
             4. **(vv. 7-10, 17-21)** – What they were doing was obviously wrong – NOT IN SPIRIT OR TRUTH.
       4. **What was right with their actions?**
          1. **Worship in spirit?** – Some would say so, for look at their energy! But how could it be when they disobeyed an explicit command of God who is Spirit? (**cf. Exodus 20:3-4)**
          2. **Worship in truth?** – Obviously not, as they were doing something unlawful, and untrue to God.
    3. **Worship in spirit and truth:**
       1. Worship that is sincere and thoughtful, not simply, but in its seeking to do reverence to God who IS SPIRIT.
       2. Worship that is according to the revealed truth of God.
       3. **These coexist. If one or the other is missing the worship will not be acceptable to God, and is therefore unauthorized worship.**
          1. There is no compromise here.
          2. Spirit and truth worship are intimately related to the point of being inseparable in their totality.
12. Authorized Worship
    1. **Preaching:**
       1. **Acts 2:42a** – The newly functioning church had a need for continued instruction in the Lord’s ways.
       2. **Acts 20:7** – When they gathered on the 1st day of the week it was not simply to observe the LS, but to hear God’s word proclaimed.
       3. **1 Corinthians 14:5, 12, 26** – Emphasis on prophecy in spiritual gifts for the EDIFICATION of the church.
       4. **Ephesians 3:9-11, 20-21** – The proclamation of God’s word manifests His wisdom, and brings Him glory in the church.
       5. **Spirit and truth?**
          1. More emotions provoked the more spiritual?
          2. More scripture and exegesis less spiritual?
          3. Is YOUR involvement in spirit and truth? – Just because the preacher is preaching doesn’t mean your part is accomplished? (**cf. Acts 17:11**)
          4. As long as the preacher is sincere and honest the subject matter is not important? False doctrine?
    2. **Praying:**
       1. **Acts 2:42** – Prayer needed in the first century church.
       2. **1 Corinthians 14:15-17** – Prayers that are understood, and acceptable to God – leading in prayer, others need the understanding to say “Amen.”
       3. **Spirit and truth?**
          1. More spiritual if the one praying is moved to tears? (Less spiritual if little emotion is detected?)
          2. Eloquence makes more spiritual?
          3. It doesn’t matter if the thoughts are scriptural, and sound more denominational if it is sincere? (**cf. Matthew 6:9** – instruction on prayer)
    3. **Singing:**
       1. **Colossians 3:16-17** – Rooted in the word of Christ, and according to the authority of the Lord.
       2. **Ephesians 5:18-20** – Speaking. The melody is in our heart (not on a mechanical instrument).
       3. **Spirit and truth?**
          1. Acapella is simply traditional, and instruments are okay as long as you are sincere? (NO authority for instruments – all scripture talks about is singing.)
          2. Instruments make the worship more meaningful and spiritual? (Emotions are not spiritual).
          3. Emphasis on the melody instead of the words – spiritual side of singing is the way the music moves you? (The words are the spiritual side as well as the truth.)
    4. **Lord’s Supper:**
       1. **1 Corinthians 11:23-29** – A memorial of the Lord’s death – body and blood – discern His body!
       2. **Spirit and truth?**
          1. This part of worship should be highly emotional so that it is more meaningful and spiritual? (**cf. Malachi 2:13** – emotions for the sake of emotions are not pleasing to God**; 1 Kings 18:27-29** – prophets of Baal – emotionalism is closer to idolatry)
          2. We need dramatization in order to truly reflect on the Lord’s death? (What of scripture? Is it a production, or a message read and understood?)
          3. Every Sunday is too often? We need to make the time in between longer so it does not become mundane? (**cf. Acts 20:7** – The bible shows they did it EVERY 1st day of the week – HOW CAN THE DEATH OF JESUS GET OLD?)
    5. **Giving:**
       1. **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** – Command to be observed every 1st day of the week.
       2. **2 Corinthians 8:5; 9:6-15** – An obvious aspect of worship, not merely something that is done on the 1st day of the week, but something done in worship, as a form of worship.
       3. **Spirit and truth?**
          1. My involvement in this part of worship is simply putting the money in the collection plate? No thoughts or reflection?
          2. The more you give the more spiritual you show yourself to be? (**cf. Mark 12:41-44** – the widow and her two mites.)
          3. The point of giving is to make the church’s wallet fat? Fundraisers will be pleasing to God? (God’s way of the treasury is free-will offerings of the members.)

**Conclusion**

1. We must understand that it matters how we worship God.
2. Our worship to God is heavily reliant upon how we view God **(cf. John 4:24).**
3. **Our worship is to be in spirit and truth. WE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANS.**
4. Are we worshiping God in spirit and truth?