**True Worshipers**

*John 4:19-26*

**Introduction**

1. Whose worship does God acknowledge and accept, and what worship does God acknowledge and accept? (Two age-old, relevant questions – any who dismiss or dispute the relevancy of those questions haven’t paid attention to Scripture)
2. Worship is a profoundly important part of life lived for God. It is the proper response of the creature to the Creator **(cf. Romans 1:21).**
3. A life devoted to God will not simply find expression in everyday acts of faithful service according to God’s will but will regularly come before God with emphatic displays of orchestrated piety which are sanctified from the everyday mundanities of life, but which highlight the reasons for the ways we carry ourselves every day.
4. Christ discussed these questions with a Samaritan woman, revealing truths which must be understood today – **John 4:19-26**
5. True Worshipers are those born of the Spirit who have come to the Father through the Son.
6. Context
   1. The Samaritan woman acknowledged a divide between Jews and Samaritans – **John 4:9, 20** – ***“you”*** (plural, to Jesus in reference to all Jews)
      1. Jesus does not deny the divide – **John 4:22** – answers her specific question, but as a side point to His greater point.
      2. In His acknowledgment of the distinction, He also shows that the Samaritans’ worship is ignorant, thus, false.
   2. Jesus speaks of a future time that connects the Samaritans to worship of the Father, and implies others beyond their race that will constitute ***“true worshipers”*** – **John 4:21, 23**
      1. ***“you”*** (**v. 21**, plural) – as she used it in **verse 20**, so Jesus uses it now.
         1. ***“you will…worship the Father”*** – this is perhaps the most shocking statement in the entire context – connecting Jehovah to Samaritans as Father.
      2. **(v. 23)** – fleshes out the thought of **verse 21** – ***“true worshipers”*** is comprehensive, where ***“you”* (v. 21)** constituted a part.
         1. ***“hour is coming, and now is”*** – in consideration of the Messianic reign/kingdom.
         2. **Cf. Isaiah 2:2** – ALL nations – Samaritans, Jews, all Gentiles.
      3. Following discussion with Nicodemus – **John 3:3-8** – place of this true worship is the Messianic kingdom, true worshipers and their worship are spiritual, born of Spirit. (**cf. John 1:12-13** – born of God)
         1. **Hebrews 9:1** – earthly, pertaining to fleshly Israel.
         2. **1 Peter 2:5** – spiritual, pertaining to spiritual Israel.
   3. Within the context, Jesus is the key to this enigma of Samaritans and others being counted among Jews as God’s people offering true worship:
      1. **John 4:10, 13-14** – ***“the gift of God, and who…” – “everlasting life”* (v. 14**)
      2. ***“who”*** – the talk of a future time, and the implication of salvation for all brings the woman to mention ***“Messiah”*** – **John 4:25-26 (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-18)**
         1. **John 4:22** – ***“OF the Jews,”*** not FOR the Jews. (**cf. Romans 9:5)**
         2. **John 4:42** – Samaritans anticipated the Messiah as Savior of the WORLD.
      3. The ***“Spirit”*** (**cf. John 3:5**) would testify of Him – **John 15:26**
   4. True, spiritual worship of the Father is through the Son – **John 14:6; Hebrews 10:19-25**
7. ***“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit” (Philippians 3:3).***
   1. I.e. those who are circumcised spiritually, in the heart, are those who offer worship that is acceptable to God.
   2. God desires all to worship Him, but He desires ***“true worshipers”*** to do so – **John 4:23**
   3. Worship to God is a privilege of His people – **1 John 2:29; 3:22** (born of Him, obedient, prayers); **Acts 20:7** (disciples, break bread); **Colossians 3:12, 16** (elect of God, sing); **Ephesians 4:11-12** (body of Christ, evangelists, proclaim gospel); **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** (orders to the churches, storing up, contribution)
      1. **Cf. Hebrews 13:10-16** – His point is that the worship offered in the temple is irrelevant, and unrecognized by God any longer, because true worship is offered by those who follow Christ.
      2. This is true regarding any who claim to offer God worship, but do not belong to Him.
   4. Glory to God is in His church through His Son – **Ephesians 3:20-21; 4:4** – which there is only one.
      1. Some who seek inclusivity of all spiritual bodies, and who seek to validate their worship should remember this.
8. True Worshipers know what they worship.
9. Context
   1. Jesus implies that Mount Gerizim is not the true location of worship – **John 4:22** – their ignorance of God led them to make that mistake.
   2. NOTE: ***“what”*** – not Who – ***“Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:23, NASB)***
      1. Indicative of a lacking relationship with the person of God – the way they worship Him is not worthy of using “Who.”
      2. “he is “Savior of the world” (Jhn 4:42), but on the way to this conclusion it must be shown that Gentiles either worship false gods as idols (see Act 14:15; 1Th 1:9; Rom 1:21-23) or worship the true God in ignorance (as in Act 17:23). In the case of the Samaritans, only the latter course is possible.” (Michaels, J. Ramsey, NIC New Testament)
   3. God had said He would reveal the place of His choosing – **Deuteronomy 12:5; 2 Chronicles 6:6** – God chose Jerusalem.
      1. The Samaritans rejected the word of God beyond the Pentateuch.
      2. In rejecting God’s word, they rejected God.
         1. **Proverbs 13:13** – must fear the commandment.
         2. **Luke 24:44-45** – Law of Moses, Prophets, Psalms, Scriptures.
         3. **Proverbs 1:7** – fear of Lord leads to knowledge, but to reject revelations from God is foolish.
      3. It was not simply that they did not know the proper pattern of worship concerning the place, but they did not even know God, and their lives reflected it.
10. Knowing God is the Foundation of True Worshipers
    1. Knowing God requires knowing and following His word – **1 John 2:3-6** – this is not mere intellectual knowledge, but relational.
    2. There is a connection between true worship of God and everyday fellowship with God – **1 Timothy 2:8** – ***“holy hands”*** is indicative of a holy life before God – i.e. approaching God acceptably in worship, prayer in this case, we must be approaching from a holy life.
       1. **James 4:7-10** (“***Cleanse your hands…”*** = holy hands – indicative of life lived) – with all the contrast here, one of significance is that between humility and pride – sinful, doublemindedness is opposite of humility.
       2. **Worship** – *proskyneō* – “to prostrate oneself before (someone), do obeisance to, worship” (NIDNTTE)
          1. “a metaphor for a state of the heart. In the prophetic tradition of “Rend your hearts and not your garments” (Jol 2:13), he is saying that “the true worshipers” are known not by their bodily posture (any more than by their place of worship), but by the Spirit’s presence among them.” (Michaels, J. Ramsey, NIC New Testament)
       3. ***How can I prostrate myself before God in worship when my heart is high and lifted up against him in rebellious living?***
    3. Those who worship God from lives of unholiness (lacking fellowship with God) are not true worshipers (even if the form is there, they know not what/who they worship):
       1. **Psalm 50:7-23** – worship of Israel addressed, not because of improper sacrifices **(v. 8),** but improper attitude **(vv. 12-15),** and incongruent lives **(vv. 16-21**).
       2. **Micah 6:3-8** – no type of worship is pleasing when what the Lord desires and requires is being neglected.
       3. **Isaiah 1:10-17** – Israel’s character likened to Sodom and Gomorrah, and their worship sickens God because of it.
    4. Those who approach God in worship from unholy lives often do so at the expense of the true worship prescribed by God:
       1. There is an inseparable connection between worship and morality – the worship of those whose lives are not in line with God’s will in general will reflect the same sort of rebelliousness in deviating from prescribed pattern.
       2. **1 Samuel 13:7-11, 13-14** – Saul’s unlawful sacrifice was a result of a heart which was not after God’s.
       3. **1 Samuel 15:20-23** – Saul’s character shaped toward transgression led to offerings of illegitimate sacrifices in rebellion.
    5. ***If my life shows I don’t know God (not in fellowship with Him, cf. 1 John 1:5-7) how can I be a true worshiper of God?***
11. True Worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth.
12. Context
    1. The Samaritan woman asked concerning the proper location of worship – **John 4:20-21** – Jesus speaks of a future time when physical location has nothing to do with proper worship.
       1. ***“on (en) this mountain”*** an ***“in (en) Jerusalem”***
    2. Jesus answers her question of location in the negative (**v. 21**) and then in the positive – **John 4:23-24**
       1. ***“in (en) spirit and truth”***
       2. There was a time when the physical location mattered – **John 4:22; 2 Chronicles 6:6**
          1. Not because God was different back them – ***“God is Spirit”*** and always has been.
          2. **Hebrews 9:1, 8-10** – it was symbolic, indicative of greater and deeper truths, ***“until the time of reformation.”***
             1. Reformation – diorthōsis – “a process leading to a new order viewed as something yet to be realized, improvement, reformation, new order” (BDAG)
             2. The old – **Hebrews 8:7, 13; 9:8; 10:1, 19** – not faultless, vanishing away, way not manifest yet, not made perfect, enter by Jesus’ blood.
             3. I.e. all of the physical matters we read about, from the burning bush, to Sinai, to the tabernacle and temple all were meant to demonstrate a distance between God and man that was spiritual.
       3. Now, by virtue of the redemption through the Messiah, there is physically boundless worship (**cf. Galatians 3:28**) within the revealed spiritual boundaries – **John 4:24** – “spirit and truth”
    3. This does not prescribe some balance between inward and outward matters of worship. ***“Spirit and truth”*** are in relation to God – **John 4:23-24**
       1. **(v. 23)** – true worshipers worship this way and God is seeking true worshipers.
       2. **(v. 24)** – ***“spirit and truth”*** are tied to the statement ***“God is Spirit”***
       3. Worship that is spiritual and worship that is true, or pertaining to truth – these aren’t independent, as though one could exist without the other.
13. Worship in Spirit and Truth
    1. **Some make this a matter of balance which leads to false standards of value in worship:**
       1. Denominational sincerity – they are somewhat right.
       2. Kingdom form (devoid of sincerity, and incongruent with life) – they are somewhat right.
    2. **Some present false dichotomies showing their misunderstanding of Jesus’ point:**
       1. Would you rather worship with a church that does what the pattern reveals, but is lifeless and without heart?
       2. Or would you rather worship with a church who may not technically be doing exactly what the pattern reveals, but is on fire, sincere, and full of life?
       3. Why should those be the only two options?
    3. ***“the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23)*** – Jesus does not operate “in the middle” as though we can be loose, but not too loose, or strict, but not too strict – HE OPERATES WITHIN THE FATHER’S WILL.
    4. **1 Corinthians 2:10-16** – ***“combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” (v. 13, NASB)***
       1. What is revealed? – **(vv. 10-12)** – truth, what man knows, we might know.
       2. What is the nature of what is revealed? – **(vv. 13-14)** – spiritual things, spiritually discerned.
       3. What determines proper judgment of ***“all things?”*** (including proper worship) – (**vv. 15-16)** – one who has accepted spiritual revelation, one who has the mind of Christ.
    5. **Hebrews 8:4-5** – Moses was “divinely instructed” concerning the patter of the tabernacle.
       1. ***“divinely instructed”*** – pertains to spiritual revelation, or revelation from above.
       2. There was a pattern – ***“make all things according to the pattern shown you”*** – a divine pattern, from above.
       3. The pattern was a ***“copy and shadow of the heavenly things”*** – i.e. heavenly reality, spiritual reality, is only known by the pattern revealed.
       4. How can I worship the God of heaven in the way He seeks? How can I be a true worshiper of the God of heaven who is Spirit? BY HOLDING FAST TO THE PATTERN.
    6. **Colossians 3:1-4, 17** – Jesus is at the right hand of the Father above reigning as King, and our minds are set on Him above as we do all things in His name, by His authority – THIS IS A PARTICIPATION IN THE PATTERN OF WHAT CHRIST REVEALS FOR THE HEAVENLY THINGS.

**Conclusion**

1. God has clearly revealed Himself, and His will for our lives.
2. Within that will is His expressed desire for our worship to Him.
3. Worship is about God, and must adhere to His prescribed pattern of ***“spirit and truth.”***