**IN THE SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**

John 4:21-24

Key verse 24

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

**Introduction**



 Praise God who richly blessed our 2017 Spring Bible conference. After the conference, we wanted to study how to worship God based on John 4:24. We want to worship God in the way that pleases Him, not according to our own convenience or way. Today’s passage gives some clue as to how we can worship our Father in Heaven. John 3:16 says that God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son Jesus to save his people to let them restore their worship to God. In the early part of John 4, Jesus helped a Samaritan woman who did not know who to worship. It showed that Jesus knew her pain and inward suffering. Jesus taught her the secret of true satisfaction in life through worshipping God as a true worshipper in Jesus. May God bless us to be true worshipers so that we may worship God in spirit and in truth and be happy forever in Jesus! God is seeking worshippers who can offer Him true worship which is pleasing to Him. In this passage Jesus teaches what kind of worship God wants to receive. May God help us to know how we can offer worship that is pleasing to God.

**1.** **Read verse 21. What happened during a meeting between Jesus and a Samaritan woman? (1-19) What did the woman ask Jesus concerning worship? (20) What was Jesus’ answer? (21)**

**1-1.** **Read verse 21.**

 **“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem**

**1-2.** **What happened during a meeting between Jesus and a Samaritan woman? (1-19)**

· Jesus helped the Samaritan woman who was suffering from spiritual thirst to seek the living water, that is the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit could quench her thirst.

· Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)

· When Jesus told her about her husband, the woman recognized her sins and sensed that Jesus was a prophet. She then asked Jesus about worshipping God.

· “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” (John 4:19-20)

* Finally she realized that in order to satisfy her thirsty soul, she had indirectly worshiped men rather than God. To her, it was a great discovery about herself.
* Most people are too dull or indifferent that they cannot see how they’ve sinned against God.
* They do not care about worship. But when she had tasted the grace of Jesus, she was now ready to worship God with a right attitude.

**1-3.** **What did the woman ask Jesus concerning worship? (20)**

 ***Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”***

· The woman was concerned about the proper place to worship God.

· She had sincere desire to worship God. Even though it seemed she was only seeking a good husband, what her heart really desired was to worship God. Now she was willing to worship the One True God. She was ready to make amends with God by repenting of her sins and worshiping him at the altar of his grace and truth.

· When she didn’t know how to worship God properly, she suffered from spiritual thirst. She then tried to quench her thirst by having many good-looking husbands.

· She wanted to know the truth about how to worship God.

· The Samaritan temple was built by Sanballat. The place was mount Gerizim, the mount on which blessings were pronounced. It was her justification. Some people thought the place was where Abraham built his altar (Gen. 12:6, Gen. 12:7). Others thought it was the place where Jacob built an altar.

· The woman worshipped by following her ancestor’s tradition, but was confused because of the Jew’s argument concerning the temple.

· Jews argued that Jerusalem was the only place where people could worship God.

**1-4.** **What was Jesus’ answer? (21)**

 ***“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem***

* Though she asked Jesus and regarding the place of worship, Jesus didn’t get involved in a lengthy argument. This shows He was more interested in winning her soul rather than in winning an argument.
* A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.
* Jesus’ presence began this change from the old covenant to the new. Under the old way of worship, the place of worship was significant: all Jewish males had to appear before God in Jerusalem for the three annual feasts. But in the new way which Jesus inaugurated, He Himself became the temple. Believers are being built into a holy temple in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:21, 22 reads,

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1 Peter 2:5 also reads,

you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

* Thus where we gather to worship is secondary. **How and whom we worship is primary.**
* The definition of “worship” is to honor or reverence.
* So the object of worship is most important. This woman didn’t know who to worship, to honor, or to love with her heart. What she had worshipped turned out to be the wrong objects of worship.
* But Jesus helped her by revealing Himself to her as the Messiah, her true Husband, and the One true object worthy of her worship and full devotion.
* This is why Jesus took initiative in asking her to bring her husbands. It was to expose her misdirected worship towards the wrong thing and guide her to the One true object of her worship.

**2.** **Read verses 22-23a. How were the ways the Samaritans and Jews worshipped different? What did Jesus mean when he said that ‘salvation is from the Jews’ and that ‘the time has now come’?**

**2-1. Read verses 22-23a.**

 **You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth,**

**2-2. How were the ways the Samaritans and Jews worshipped different?**

**•** Again the object of worship is supposed to be God the Father. The Father is repeated three times in verses 21 and 23.

. We’re allowed to know the Father through personal Bible studies.

John 17:3 points out,

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

• But worshippers will not be tied to any place; neither here nor there.

• The worship of God is now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place and men can pray to God everywhere.

• Jesus said that the Samaritans were certainly in the wrong; not because they worshipped on this mountain, but because they worshipped the wrong object.

• If the worship itself had been as it should have been, its separation from Jerusalem might have been allowed, But Samaritans even worshipped whom they did not know.

• They worshipped the God of Israel, the true God ; but they were sunk into gross ignorance; they worshipped him as the God of that land (2 Ki. 17:27, 2 Ki. 17:33 ), as a local deity, like one of the gods of the nations. God must be served as God, as the universal cause and Lord.

• Ignorance is so far the issue and far from true devotion. Those that worship God ignorantly offer blindly, and it is the sacrifice of fools.

• The Jews were certainly in the right. For they knew God whom they worshipped. They knew God through the scriptures.

• Those who worshipped by the scriptures had obtained some knowledge of God. Their worship was acceptable to him, for they at least know whom to worship.

• But Christ condemns the corruption of the Jews’ worship (Mt. 15:9 ), and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be true although it is yet pure and entire.

**2-3. What did Jesus mean when he said that ‘salvation is from the Jews’ and that ‘the time has now come’?**

· Salvation is of the Jews; and therefore they knew whom to worship, and what grounds upon which to base their worship.

• The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them (Rom. 9:5), and is sent first to bless them.

• The means of eternal salvation was afforded to them.

• The word of salvation was of the Jews. It was delivered to them, and other nations derived it through them.

· The time has now come – The time came when people would offer true worship to God.

· The time had finally come as Jesus came to this world as the Messiah.

**3.** **Read verses 23b-24. What kind of worshipers does the Father seek? How must people worship God? Describe the ways we can worship in the Spirit and in truth.**

**3-1. Read verses 23b-24.**

 **Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his** worshipers **must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”**

**3-2. What kind of worshipers does the Father seek?**

· False worshipers either worship something other than God or they attempt to worship the true God, but do it in ways that actually dishonor Him. But either way, sincerity is not the only criterion for measuring true worship. All true worshipers are sincere, but all sincere worshipers are not true.

 For example, there are devout, sincere worshipers of Allah, Buddha, the Mormon god or the god of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. But they are in error, because they are not worshiping the only living and true God, who has revealed Himself in the Bible.

. There are also Christians who are sincere, but their worship is man-centered. Sometimes it’s patterned more after the entertainment world than after the Bible. It draws attention to the performers, but not to the Lord. Their hearts are not in submission to God. They mistakenly think that because they went through some rituals, they’re good for another week. They’re like the Jewish leaders of whom Jesus said in Mt 15:8. “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.” So we need to be careful not to fall into the category of false worshipers.

. Jesus describes the evangelical worship which alone God would accept and be well pleased with

· The emphasis is not to be laid upon the place where we worship God, but upon the state of mind in which we worship him.

· Before Jesus, worship was ceremonial (Heb. 9:1, 10). The worshippers were generally carnal, and strangers to the inward part of divine worship.

· The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. As His creatures, we worship the Father of all: as Christians, we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus.

· In the nature of the worship, Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in spiritual ordinances, consisting less in bodily exercise, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy.

• The legal services were mere figures of the true.

Hebrew 9:24 reads,

 Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.

• It is required of all who worship God that they should worship him in spirit and in truth.

Philippians 3:3 reads,

 Worship God in spirit “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh

• We must depend upon God’s Spirit for strength and assistance in our worship, laying our souls under his influences and work. We must devote our own spirit to the worship of God.

• We must worship him with fixedness of thought and a flame of affection, with all that is within us.

• Spirit is considered for the new nature, in opposition to the flesh, which is the corrupt nature.

• In truth, that is, in sincerity. God requires not only the inward part in our worship, but truth in the inward part.

• We must mind the power more than the form, must aim at God’s glory, and not to be seen of men; draw near with a true heart

Hebrew 10:21, 22 reads,

 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

**3-3. How must people worship God?**

***God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”***

**God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (KJV)**

* “**must** worship in the Spirit and truth” It’s a necessity. It isn’t optional; it’s essential. So far the word “must” appears a couple of times. “You must be born again” (3:7); the Son of Man must be lifted up (3:14) And now “those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (4:24). The first concerns the Spirit, who imparts the new birth. The second concerns the Son, who was lifted up on the cross as the atonement for our sins. And the third concerns the Father, the object of our worship. And the order is important. First, you must be born again by trusting in Christ’s death for you. Only then can you worship God properly.
* So the first point is that God is seeking you as a true worshiper. If you haven’t yet put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, start there. Then God wants you to become a true worshiper.

**•** Jesus mentioned the reasons why God must be worshipped in spirit and truth

- Because in the gospel of Jesus, the believers are considered the true worshippers and enabled to worship God in spirit and in truth.

- The gospel opened a spiritual way of worship. If people don’t worship God in spirit and truth, they cannot be true worshippers or believers.

- To be true worshipers, we must worship both in spirit and in truth. To worship in spirit without truth is to worship false gods. To worship in truth without spirit is not sufficient before God. We may be doctrinally correct, but we’re lifeless.

- God seeks such worshippers who worship in spirit and truth. But such worshippers could be rare.

- When God comes to inquire for worshippers, the question will not be, "Where and how often did they worship ?’’ but, "Who worshipped in spirit?’’

- God is greatly pleased with and graciously accepts such worshippers.

- There has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers. God is in all ages gathering unto himself a generation of spiritual worshippers.

- Because God is spirit. God is spirit, for he is an infinite and eternal mind, an intelligent being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible.

- If God were not spirit, he could not be perfect, infinite, eternal, independent, or the Father of spirits.

- The spirituality of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God, who is spirit, in the spirit, we neither give him glory due to his name, nor can we hope to obtain his favor and acceptance, and so we miss of the very end (or goal) of worship.

- Worship in spirit is, in part, emotional or felt. This is not to say that we should merely pump up our emotions with music or by fervor or a crowd. Genuine emotions for God stem from focusing our minds on the truth of who He is and what He has done for us at the cross.

* God has revealed Himself to us in His Word of truth and supremely in His Son, who is the truth. To worship God in truth means that we worship Him for all that He is in the majesty of His attributes as revealed in all of Scripture. We worship Him for His love, but also for His justice and righteousness.
* We worship Him for His kindness, but also for His truth. We worship Him for His sovereignty and for His grace. We worship Him when He gives, but also when He takes away, as in the case of Job. We worship Him for all His ways. The Bible is our only guide for worshiping in truth. Even worship in spirit flows out of worship in truth. Feeding your mind on the truth of God moves your spirit to praise and love God.
* True worship must engage the whole heart. Unless we have knowledge of the God we worship, there is no worship in truth. The best combination of both spirit and truth results in a joyous appreciation of God informed by Scripture. The more we know about God, the more we appreciate Him. The more we appreciate, the deeper our worship. The deeper our worship, the more God is glorified.
* This melding of spirit and truth in worship is summed up by [Jonathan Edwards](https://www.gotquestions.org/Jonathan-Edwards.html), the 18th-century American pastor and theologian. He said, “I should think myself in the way of my duty to raise the affections [emotions] of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth.” Edwards recognized that truth and only truth can properly influence the emotions in a way that brings honor to God. The truth of God, being of infinite value, is worthy of infinite passion.

Romans 12:1-2 reads,

 

 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**3-4. Describe the ways we can worship in the Spirit and in truth.**

· We can worship God in spirit and truth through Jesus Christ only.

· When we have deep fellowship with Jesus through his word and are filled with Holy Spirit, we can offer true worship to God.

· We need to make effort to offer worship to God that can please him.

. Also practically we prepare our hearts on Saturday night to prepare Sunday worship service. We better retire early on Saturday night so that it may help us to focus on God and worship him properly. We better avoid any big entertainment on Saturday night. Young people often missed Sunday morning worship service by oversleeping due to late night activities.

. We may also not supposed to distract others during worship service. We better come early enough to worship God instead of coming late, disturbing others. If you have a medical condition that requires you to use the restroom during the worship service, sit near the back and on an aisle so you don’t disturb others. If you’re thirsty, you can wait until the service is over to get a drink. If your little child is a distraction to others, take him to the nursery or out of the service.

· Offering true worship to God is the sole purpose of our spiritual life.

· Let’s examine how we are offering our worship to God and listen to what Jesus said.

**Conclusion**

 Often times people focus on getting something out of the church service. But their motive is wrong according to today’s words. Our focus should be to give praise, honor, and thanks to the God who gave His Son for us, along with all the saints. People often misunderstood that we are the audience, watching the worship leaders and the pastor give their presentation or performance. But the truth is that the congregation is the cast of actors, with the worship leaders including music servants, presider, and the pastor. The real audience is God and the entire presentation is offered to Him, for His pleasure and glory. So the issue when we come to church is not, “Did I get anything out of it?” but, “Did I give God the heartfelt praise and thanks and glory that He deserves?” That’s our aim as a church.Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is! Worship is ultimate, not missions. Our aim is to turn sinners into worshipers. That was Jesus’ aim with this sinful Samaritan woman. When we properly worship God, mission is also accomplished by God through the church. In short, we learned that God is pleased with true worshippers whose hearts are right before Him. True worshippers worship God in the Holy Spirit and in truth. May the Lord help us to renew our hearts and worship God with all our hearts and souls and spirits.

**One word “ In the Spirit and in truth**