

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ deo ♦ gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

Authentic Worship

John 4:15-26

January 23, 2005

- Review John 4:7-14

Samaria and the Samaritans

During the time of Jesus, Samaria existed as a united political region under the Roman governor assigned to the area. However, both Jews (those from Judea) and Samaritans clearly understood their separate religious and historical backgrounds.

- In 1 Kings 16:24, King Omri named the capital of the Northern Kingdom (northern 10 Tribes) “Samaria.” The name was then taken to represent the region, and sometimes even the entire Northern Kingdom (usually simply called Israel).
- In 722-721 B.C., the city of Samaria (and the Northern Kingdom) fell to the Assyrians.
- The Assyrians then deported all Israelites of influence and promise and filled the land of the Northern Kingdom with foreigners who worshipped other gods.
- These foreigners then intermarried with the remaining Israelites
- When the Jews (from Judah) returned from Babylonian exile, they viewed the Samaritans as racial “half-breeds” and religiously unclean and wayward
- About 400 B.C., the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim (rivaling the Temple in Jerusalem)
- At the end of the 2nd Century, B.C., the temple at Mount Gerizim was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler in Judea
- By the 1st Century, the Samaritans had developed their own religious heritage that they based on the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (the Pentateuch).
 - They did not view the entire Old Testament as authoritative or canonical – only the Pentateuch
- At the time of Jesus, Samaritan worship was still centered around Mount Gerizim – not the Temple in Jerusalem
- Some Samaritans still exist today

- **Verse 15**
 - The woman, like Nicodemus in Chapter 3, focuses on her *physical* need

- Verse 16
 - Jesus abruptly shifts the topic from a discussion about water to the heart of her problem
 - Jesus knows her *real* need.
 - She needs Him.
- Verses 17-18
 - The woman claims she has no husband
 - Jesus acknowledges that this statement is technically true; however, He reveals to her His knowledge that there is more to the story:
 - **She has had five husbands**
 - It is unknown whether these five men had died or divorced her, or a combination of the two
 - Rabbinic opinion limited everyone to only three marriages, even if all three spouses died
 - **She is living with a man now (#6), who she is not married to**
 - This woman has a deep longing she is trying to fill, and Jesus pursues her and meets her where she is
- Verse 19
 - The woman states, “Sir, I perceive that You are a *prophet*.” [emphasis added]
 - This woman is now amazed at the supernatural knowledge of Jesus
 - This passage could be translated, “I can see that you are *the* prophet.”
 - The Samaritans only held to the Pentateuch (Gen.-Deut.) as authoritative
 - Therefore, they viewed Deuteronomy 18:15-19 as a reference to the future “messianic” figure
 - Deuteronomy 34:10 states, “Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”
 - Because of this, the Samaritans believed that there would be no prophet in Israel until the **second Moses**, or **Taheb** (the “restorer”) – the future Messiah

- Read John 1:21 – John denies that he is **the Prophet** – a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and 34:10
- Therefore, the Samaritan woman is making a possibly associating Jesus with **the Prophet** of Deuteronomy
- **Verse 20**
 - In this verse, the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman abruptly shifts topics
 - “The sudden change of subject has prompted many interpreters to suggest that the woman raises a disputed point of theology as a means to distract Jesus from the sin-question she finds so embarrassing...A simpler supposition is that the woman’s discovery that Jesus is some kind of Jewish prophet prompts her to raise the outstanding point of theological contention between Jews and Samaritans, as much to demonstrate her religious awareness as to set the stranger a testing challenge.”
D.A. Carson
 - Both Jew and Samaritan believed that God commanded their forefathers to build a temple (Deuteronomy 12:5); however, the two groups translated this passage differently:
 - **The Jews** (the accurate translation):
“But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.”
 - **The Samaritans:**
“But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God **has chosen** from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.” (emphasis added)
 - Verse 20 states, “**Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.**”
 - When the Samaritan woman states, *Our fathers*, she is “reminding” Jesus of the following events that both Jew and Samaritan held as sacred:
 - Abraham (Genesis 12:7) and Jacob (Genesis 33:20) built altars in the region of Mount Gerizim
 - The blessings of the people were shouted from Mount Gerizim when they came into the promised land (Deuteronomy 11:29; 27:12)

- NOTE: the Samaritans also believed (falsely) that the following additional events occurred on Mt. Gerizim:
 - An altar was commanded to be set up here in Deuteronomy 27:4 (although it was actually to be on Mount Ebal – across the valley from Mt. Gerizim)
 - Samaritan tradition stated that Abraham offered Issac on this mountain
 - Samaritans also believed that Abraham met Melchizedek here

- The Samaritan woman, then, contrasts *Our fathers* with *you people* – the **Jews**.
 - **Unlike the Samaritans, the Jews held to the entire Old Testament as authoritative and believed that Jerusalem was the holy place (of Deuteronomy 12:5):**
 - David determined to built the holy Temple there
 - God authorized King Solomon to construct it
 - Sacrifice was also commanded there
 - In Verse 20, the Samaritan woman seems to change to subject of the conversation to an unrelated topic – worship. However, God is in control of the conversation, and His purpose will be revealed – that Christ may reveal Himself to the Samaritan woman.

- Verse 21
 - The word, *woman*, is probably better translated as *madam*
 - an **hour** is coming
 - The word *hour* in John’s Gospel (*hora*) refers to the hour of Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation
 - Jesus is stating that His death, burial, and resurrection will usher in a time when the **physical location** of worship will be of little significance

- Verse 22
 - Jesus is stating that the **object** of the Samaritans’ worship is unknown to them.
 - The Samaritans did not hold to the last thirty-four (34) books of the Old Testament, and, therefore, did not know God
 - Acts 17:22-23, “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that your are very religious in all respects. For while I

was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you."

- The Jews, however, worship what they do know
 - Despite problems among the Jewish leadership, they worshipped a God that was known to them – Yahweh – revealed throughout the entire Old Testament
- for salvation is *from the Jews*
 - The promised Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, was promised to be from the Line of Judah
- **Verses 23-24**
 - "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth"
 - "It is not likely that 'spirit' here means the Holy Spirit (though the Spirit does help our worship, Romans 8:26ff.)" Leon Morris
 - These are NOT two separate characteristics of true worshipers, as many believe
 - How do most Christians interpret this verse?
 - Verse 23 should be interpreted in light of Verse 24: "God is Spirit"
 - God is Spirit describes what God is like – he is not flesh, like humans.
 - **God's essential nature is Spirit and the characteristic of authentic worship is that it is spiritual, as opposed to physical.**

"'God is Spirit' means that God is invisible, divine as opposed to human, life-giving and unknowable to human beings unless he chooses to reveal himself..."

There are not two separable characteristics of the worship that must be offered: it must be 'in spirit and truth,' i.e. essentially God-centered, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God's Word-made-flesh, the one who is God's 'truth', the faithful exposition and fulfillment of God and his saving purposes."
D.A. Carson

God is Spirit, and He has chosen to reveal Himself in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

To worship the Father “in spirit and truth” means to focus all energy and passion on the triune God, NOT on the physical, made-generated aspects of “worship”

- The critical aspect of worship is summed up in the phrase, “Worship is for God.”
 - ❖ **Therefore, if worship is for God, we should focus ourselves on what God desires – not what man does.**
- **1 Samuel 16:7b**, “for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
- **Romans 12:1-2** states, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”
- I can sit and gaze upon a cathedral with all its magnificence of architecture, and think what a wonderful exhibition of human skill; but what must that be to God, who piles the heavens, who digs the foundation of the deep...? Why, it must be to him the veriest trifle, a mere heap of stones. I delight to hear the swell of organs, the harmony of sweet voices, the Gregorian chant, but what is this artistic sound to him more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal? As a sight, I admire the choristers and priests, and the whole show of a grand ceremonial; but do you believe that God is imposed upon by those frocks and gowns of white, and blue, and scarlet, and fine linen? It seems to me as if such a notion brings down God to the level of a silly woman who is fond of finery. The infinite God, who spreads out the heavens and scatters stars with both his hands, whom heaven and earth cannot contain, to whom space is but a speck, and time is as nothing, do you think that he dwelleth in temples made with hands, that is to say, of man's building?

God himself, great as he is, does not despise the tear that drops from a repentant eye, nor does he neglect the sigh that comes from a sinner's soul. He thinks more of your repentance than of your incense, and more of your prayers than of your priesthoods. He views with pleasure your love and your faith, for these are spiritual things in which he can take delight; but your architecture, your music and your fine arts, though they lavish their treasures at his feet, are less than nothing and vanity.

I am afraid too that many of you are content with singing through the hymn; now all that singing which is not thought-singing is of no use; you may have very sweet voices but God does not regard your voice, he hears your heart, and if your heart does not sing you have not sung at all.

Charles Spurgeon

- Leonard Greenway states, "The aesthetic trend in our modern Churches is, in plain language, a menace to genuine forms of worship. It seems to localize the whole experience of worship within the orbit of man's psychological states. It put the worshipper in bondage to the fascination of massive pillars, lofty arches, long aisles, costly carvings, imposing ritual and impressive music."
- [O]ur worship of God includes all Persons of the Trinity, and of necessity that means Jesus Christ in all the fullness of His being and His work. The true character of Christian worship

thus corresponds to God's revelation of Himself. Further, the Christian believes that the inspired Word of God is adequate for everything from doctrine to righteous living, and this therefore includes worship!
John MacKenzie

- God himself is pure Spirit, and the worship in which he takes delight is accordingly spiritual worship – the sacrifice of a humble, contrite, grateful and adoring spirit. This affirmation of our Lord's was not entirely new; it but crowns the witness of psalmists and prophets in earlier ages, who saw that material things could at best be the vehicle of true worship but could never belong to its essence. Sincere heart-devotion, whenever and wherever found, is indispensable if men and woman would present to God worship which he can accept.
F.F. Bruce

- **What does worshipping in “spirit and in truth” reveal about the sufficiency of Scripture in worship?**

- Real-world example: the physical layout of St. George's – Tron, City Centre Church, Glasgow, Scotland.

- **Verse 25**

- The Samaritan woman still appears to be rather confused, and reveals her belief that the Messiah that she awaits will be the ultimate prophet – a teacher who will explain away all questions and confusion

- **Verse 26**

- **In this verse, Jesus, in the most powerful way, reveals Himself to the Samaritan woman**

- Notice: It appears that it wasn't until this point, when Jesus Christ finally reveals Himself to the Samaritan woman, that she fully accepts His testimony

- Literally, this passage reads, “I that speak to you, **I am.**” (emphasis added)

- The Greek for I am, *ego eimi* (εγω ειμι), is “in the style of deity”
- In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the phrase *ego eimi* (I am) as a statement to His deity – the great I AM

- This ties to the encounter Moses has with Yahweh at the burning bush:

- Exodus 3:14, “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”