

John 4:21–24

- <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.
- <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.
- <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.
- <sup>24</sup> God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

## **“True Worship” John 4:21-24**

INTRO:

The last time we were here we watched God the Holy Spirit work in the heart of the woman of Samaria. We saw how her perception of this stranger, who talked with her, changed. When she first saw Him, she recognized that He was a Jewish man. Then she realized that He was a teacher. After He asked about her personal life, she knew He was a prophet. Finally, she realized He was the Messiah and her Savior. In the midst of this conversation, the woman asks a theological question with great import. The Lord Jesus does not treat this question lightly. Rather, He answers it in a very intriguing way.

Today we are going to go back and explore this answer and seek to glean what Jesus was saying to this woman and what John was saying to us.

- I. Why This Is Vitally Important to Understand (v. 24)*
- II. Why We Should Want to Worship in This Way (v. 23)*

### *I. Why This Is Vitally Important to Understand (v. 24)*

A. In **verse 24**, the Lord Jesus, Himself, said **“God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”** The word that arrests our attention is the word **“must.”**

1. In the Old Testament we learn that God is very particular about how we come and worship Him. One example of this is found in **Leviticus 10:1-3** when Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron seek to worship God in their own way, not in God’s way.

***“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, ‘this is what the LORD spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.’ So Aaron held his peace.”***

2. The Lord Jesus says to us, if we are to worship God, if we are to be among the worshippers whom God seeks, we must, (it is required!) that we worship in ***“Spirit and truth.”***

B. So, then what does the phrase, ***“in Spirit and truth”*** mean?

1. Some say that this means we need to worship spiritually and sincerely. The two Greek words are not adverbs. Jesus is not stating, in essence how we are to worship. He is still dealing with the sense of where or in what realm we are to worship.

2. In this text, the statement ***“God is Spirit”*** must govern what the phrase ***“in Spirit and truth”*** means. D. A. Carson wrote: ***““God is spirit’ means that God is invisible, divine as opposed to human, life-giving, and unknowable . . . unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us.”***

3. If God is Spirit, then when we worship Him, we must worship Him in the place that He is and in His self-revelation. That means our worship takes place through the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives and in the Word of God. The only way our worship is acceptable is if God the Holy Spirit helps us worship. Carson wrote that worship must be ***“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 Lord Jesus Christ].”*** To do this, we must center our Worship in the written revelation of the Son of God, the Bible. Listen to how the Apostle Paul described those who are truly the covenant people of God in **Philippians 3:3**.

***“We are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”***

C. Now that we understand a little bit about what it means to worship in Spirit and truth, let us seek to understand why we should worship in this way.

## ***II. Why We Should Want to Worship in This Way (v. 21-23)***

***“Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship***

***what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” (John 4:21–23)***

A. Now that we understand where the Lord is going with His answer, let us go back and see what we can learn from the setting of His answer. You remember the question in **verse 20?**

***“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”***

The question was really about the place of worship. The Samaritans taught that Mt. Gerizim was the only right place to worship. Conversely, the Jewish Scriptures demanded worship happen only in Jerusalem at the Temple.

B. ***“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews’” (v.21-22).***

Jesus pointed out that the problem of Samaritan worship was not so much the place of worship, but the person Whom they sought to worship.

1. They did not really worship the living God. That is because the revelation of the God that is part of our worship is in the Bible. The Revelation of God came through the Jews and found its culmination in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

***“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.” Hebrews 1:1-2***

2. We can take from this we need to have a worship which is based in the Word of God. Acceptable worship is always worship based upon knowledge. We are not worshipping an unknown God like the Athenians. We worship the God of the Jews. We worship Him through the Jewish Messiah who is His Son!

C. Now we come to the verse at the heart of our text. **Verse 23** says, ***“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”***

1. You may wonder why we have spent the time in **verse 24** we did. The reason is this verse. The hour that Jesus spoke about is the very day in which we live. If we are to worship God now, we need to do it in the way that He described here. First, the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth. We now know that this means to worship in the relationship we have with Him through the

indwelling Holy Spirit and in the Word of God! He describes us as “*true worshippers*,” if we do this, meaning that those who seek to worship in any other way are not “*true worshippers*.”

2. Second, God the Father actually is seeking people like this to worship Him. While it is true we want our worship of the living God to be something which draws other people to God, it is far more important that our worship is something God desires to have. We want Him to want us to worship Him. If it is not this kind of worship, it is not worship at all.

D. What does this teach us about our worship?

1. We learn real worship is not a natural thing, it is a supernatural event. We tend to desire in our flesh that our worship in its essence be outward, visible, and tangible, because of the realm in which we largely exist.

2. While we have outward forms, true worship takes place only in the heart, inwardly, where the Spirit of God dwells. It also tells us that we do not worship in emotion alone. To be sure, there is emotion in worship as we express our love for our God. However, our emotion is born out of the truth of the Word of God. The God we see in the Bible is the God we love and serve.

3. We learn here the object of our worship is God himself. We cannot truly worship Him until we know Him in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. So, let us worship Him in spirit and truth. Look with me, in closing, at an example of worship.

## Psalm 100

***Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!  
Serve the LORD with gladness. Come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good. His mercy is everlasting. And His truth endures to all generations.***

Hymn #4 **How Great Thou Art**