Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What Constitutes True Worship?
Scripture: John 4
Code: BQ6310

“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit andtruth.”(John 4:20–24)

“An hour is coming,” Jesus informed the woman, ‘and now is, when the trueworshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” Spirit does not refer to the Holy Spirit but the human spirit. Worship must be internal, not external conformity to ceremonies and rituals. It must be from the heart. Truth calls for this heart worship to be consistent with what Scripture teaches and centered on the incarnate Word. The worship of neither the Samaritans nor the Jews could be characterized as being in spirit and truth, even though the Jews had a more completeunderstanding of the **truth.** Both groups focused on external factors. They conformed outwardly to regulations, observed rituals, and offered sacrifices. But the time had arrived, since the Messiah had come, when true worshipers would no longer be identified by where they worshiped.

True worshipers are those who **worship the Father in spirit and truth.** Paul calls them “the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh”(Phil. 3:3). It is **such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers** by sovereignlydrawing them to Himself (6:44,65).

The phrase **God is spirit** is the classic biblical definition of the nature of God. Despite the heretical teaching of false cults, God is not an exalted man (Num. 23:19),“for a spirit does not have flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). He is “the invisible God” (Col. 1:15; cf. 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27),who “dwells in unapproachable light [cf. Ps. 104:2],whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Tim. 6:16; cf. Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46). Had He not revealed Himself in Scripture and in Jesus Christ, God would be utterly incomprehensible.

Because God is spirit, those who would truly worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. True worship does not consist of mere outward conformity to religious standards and duties (Isa. 29:13; 48:1;Jer. 12:1–2; Matt. 15:7–9),but emanates from the inner **spirit**. It must also be consistent with the

truth God has revealed about Himself in His Word. The extremes of dead orthodoxy (truth and no spirit) and zealous heterodoxy (spirit and no truth) must be avoided.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).