

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

The Kind of Worship God Desires, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-355

Now again I want to have you open your Bible, if you will, to a text that is a starting point for our discussion of worship. We're talking about acceptable true spiritual worship, what worship really is.

I remember when I first came to Grace Church and did something that was a little bit rare in those days, that is I preached for an hour, Sunday morning and Sunday night, sometimes even longer than that. There are some sermons on record that went an hour and thirty minutes and maybe a couple an hour and 45 minutes. And I remember a person saying to me, and the question came up a number of times, but I remember a particular conversation where someone said to me, "With such long sermons with so much time taking up and preaching, how much can your church really worship?"

Well the answer to that is to pose a question to the questioner, "With so little time given to preaching, how is it possible for your church to worship?" Because worship is not a matter of time, it's a matter of content. Adding another verse to the song, or another five verses or repeating the verses again and again, or adding more songs does not necessarily increase worship. More music does not necessarily enrich worship. Worship is enriched by what the worshiper knows. Worship is a mental experience. It is not an emotional experience, emotion follows. But we worship when we praise the Lord, that's one way, corporately. And our praise is informed with revelation. Truth informs and therefore increases worship.

So again, the question is not how can you worship with so much time taken up in preaching, but rather, how can you worship with so little time taken up in preaching? Our text speaks to that issue, John 4 verse 21, Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know, we worship that which we know." Therein is the essence of true worship compared with false worship. False worship is an emotional involvement without knowledge. True worship is based on knowledge.

It goes on to say, "For salvation is from the Jews, but an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes in spirit, with the full expression of human emotion. But also in truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The Samaritans worshiped in spirit void of truth. You might say the Jews worshiped with truth void of spirit. But the Father seeks those who worship Him with fully engaged expressions of praise as well as fully informed minds.

To worship God is the response to a recognition of who He is and what He has done. The more you know about God and the more you know of His revelation, the more informed your worship is. Worship actually...is an English word that comes from an old, old English word worth ship, an old Anglo-Saxon word, that is to ascribe worth to someone. Worship is simply ascribing to God that which you know to be true about Him. And if you have a limited understanding of God, then you have a limited capacity to ascribe worth to Him. If you have a rich and fully informed understanding of the nature of God, then you have the capacity to ascribe to Him full worth as full as has been revealed.

We want to be those kinds of worshipers, fully informed so that what we express in praise with our emotion is in response to the full understanding of the God we worship, who He is and what He has done. Therefore, we go back to our question, how can you worship with so little content? There's a lot of talk about worship today and there is an emphasis on worship that in many cases has replaced preaching and theology...and thus worship is an uninformed expression when it should be a fully informed expression.

Well worship is foundational. And just to review a little bit what we said last week, some introductory thoughts. The importance of worship is where we began...the importance of worship, or the priority of worship. And four reasons for considering worship as a priority, number one, Scripture is filled with worship. Another way to say that is the people of Scripture are worshipers. From the beginning to the end, the people of God are marked by worship. And God accommodates that worship by designing it into His redemptive purpose and into His covenants. The Ten Commandments begin with a true adoration and worship of God alone and no other God. The Great Commandment which is another way to express that first commandment about having no other gods and worshiping only the true God says, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." That is to gather all your faculties around the reality of who God is and love Him for who He is.

In the middle of Israel there was a tabernacle and the tabernacle was the place where God dwelt in the Holy of Holies and the tabernacle was the very centerpiece of life in Israel. The tribes were placed around the tabernacle, three on each of the four sides so that life focused on the tabernacle because God was to be the focus, worship was to be the focus of their life. When the temple was constructed, the temple became the focal point of life in Israel. All things went in the direction of the temple. The Old Testament is then marked by worship.

And you follow the history of Israel even before Abraham and before Israel, you have the patriarchs building altars...Abraham building altars everywhere he traveled, and worshiping God as Noah had and others before him, and even Abel who worshiped God acceptably at an altar in the book of Genesis. Worship dominates the Old Testament. It also is central to the New Testament. Romans 12 says, "We are to offer to God spiritual worship which is acceptable to God." First Peter 2:5, "We are to give spiritual sacrifices which are again acceptable to God."

If you were to study the Old Testament and watch the flow of it, you would see that when the people of God worshiped God in an acceptable way, they are blessed, and when they don't, they are punished. The same would be true of the New Testament where God carves out the redeemed church, a group of true worshipers who thus experience His blessing. When you look into the future into heaven, heaven is marked by worship. The best glimpse of heaven, found in Revelation 4 and 5, marks worship as the dominant feature of our eternal life.

So, Scripture is filled with worship from Genesis right through to Revelation. Secondly, worship touches all of life...worship touches all of life. It is a way of life. It is not a once a week experience, it is a way of life. And we have to get it right. I shared with you last time some unacceptable kinds of worship, the worship of false gods, that's unacceptable. The worship of the true God in a false form, that's unacceptable. The worship of the true God in a self-styled manner, that's unacceptable. And the worship of the true God with a wrong attitude, that also is unacceptable. And because one's view of God dominates life, touches all of life, we have to worship God in an acceptable way.

We looked at examples of those who worshiped false gods. We looked at examples of those who worship the true God in a wrong form...such as in Exodus 32 when the children of Israel put God in the form of a golden calf. We saw illustrations of the worship of the true God in a self-styled manner, thinking you can worship God any way you wanted such as Cain bringing the fruit of the ground, when the instruction clearly had to have been to bring a sacrifice, or Nadab and Abihu, or Uzzah or Saul. We also looked at illustrations of worshipping the true God with a wrong attitude. We looked at Malachi and saw the wrong attitude of the people of Israel in their worship.

That led us to talk a little bit about acceptable worship. We have to avoid all of those things which means acceptable worship is to worship the true God in the form that He exists as a spirit in the manner that He has required us to worship Him, and with the right heart attitude. This makes us true worshipers. And this becomes the dominating element of our lives. Beyond all other things, we are worshipers. Our hearts continually boil over, overflow with expressions of worship toward God.

Now when does this begin? If we say it's a way of life, for whom is it a way of life? And the answer to that is for those who have been redeemed...for those who have been regenerated...for those who have been born again...for those who have been converted, justified, whatever salvific term you want to use. Acceptable worship occurs only in the heart of one who has been transformed. Salvation launches us into the capability of worshipping God. That is to say, no one apart from salvation can worship God. People might think they worship God, they do not. The Jews who talk about worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob do not truly worship Him because there is no access to worshipping Him, there is no acceptable worship to be offered to Him apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

I remember a couple of years ago when I was talking to some Russian pastors about Allah and they were under the illusion, and had been for many years, that Allah was just another name for God and

that Muslims worshiped the true God. They do not worship the true God. You cannot worship the true God unless you have been redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ. Acceptable worship belongs only to those who are saved, only those redeemed, justified and regenerated. That's when the capacity to worship begins. We are the true worshipers, all the rest is false worship of the true God. There is worship of false gods, and there is false worship of the true God. And so, being saved then opens up for us the opportunity and the privilege and the responsibility and the duty of true worship.

Now what are we talking about when we talk about "worship touches all of life?" Well, for us who have been redeemed, just about everything we do that could be labeled righteous is a form of worship. And I mentioned this briefly but I want to look a little more closely at it. Turn, if you will, to a few Scriptures with me, Romans 14:18...Romans 14:18. In Romans chapter 14, the Apostle Paul has been talking about how we treat our fellow believers. We...verse 13...don't put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. We don't do anything that's going to harm another believer. And coming on down to verse 18, Paul writes, "For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God."

Now remember that little phrase "acceptable to God" is very often connected to worship, such as in Romans 12 and 1 Peter 2. So here is a form of that worship that is acceptable to God and it is this, the way you treat your fellow Christian endeavoring never to cause your fellow Christian to stumble into sin. That is to say, having a godly influence on others becomes a form of worship which is acceptable to God.

Chapter 15 of Romans and verse 16, Paul says that he was given grace from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Paul says, when I preach the gospel and people respond and believe and those people are then offered to God as a offering, this is acceptable to God. Here then is another form of worship, that is leading someone to the knowledge of Christ causes you to have the privilege of offering, as it were, that person to God as an acceptable sacrifice.

Worship is not just corporate praise. Worship is how we treat other believers and taking the gospel to non-believers who respond. In Ephesians chapter 5, we look a little more broadly at the concept of worship. Paul is talking about how we are to walk in the light, verse 8, walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, instead, expose them. Walking in the light is pleasing to the Lord. Walking in the light is acceptable to the Lord. Walking in the light which means goodness and righteousness and truth is an acceptable form of worship. Again you can see how it touches all of life, how we deal with fellow believers, how we deal with non-believers, our own commitment to goodness and righteousness and truth.

Philippians chapter 1, Paul prays that, in verse 9, your love may still abound more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. And then this, "Having been filled with the fruit of

righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Personal righteousness is what is in view here, a life lived in love abounding, in real knowledge, consequently in discernment, approving things that are excellent, sincere, blameless, filled with the fruit of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. Personal holiness is acceptable worship. Personal righteousness is a form of worship.

In 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 3, we read this, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior." Notice that each of these passages has in it the idea of being acceptable to God or pleasing to God. And what is he talking about? Verse 1, "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." And not only is it an acceptable offering to God, or an acceptable expression of worship to pray for the salvation of others, including all that are over us, but to lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. It matters to God how we live in society in a virtuous and godly way, praying for the salvation of those around us and responsible for us. This too is acceptable worship.

In 1 Timothy chapter 5 it says in verse 3, "Honor widows who are real widows, genuine widows. If any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents for this is acceptable in the sight of God."

What an interesting statement. It is acceptable worship in the sight of God to care for widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren, it is acceptable worship offered to God to care for that widow. In 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 20, it says, "When you do what is right...in the middle of the verse...and suffer for it and patiently endure it, this is acceptable with God," or "This finds favor with God."

All these things are ways to worship and they consume our lives...how we treat fellow believers is an expression of worship to God. There is a way to treat them that becomes acceptable worship. Winning the lost by means of preaching the gospel is a way to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God. Walking in the light, that is in goodness and righteousness and truth is acceptable worship. Personal holiness is acceptable worship. Prayer for the lost and living godly lives is acceptable worship. Caring for widows is acceptable worship. Suffering for righteousness is acceptable worship.

So when I say...worship touches all of life...that's exactly what it means. All of these things expressed something toward God which is acceptable worship. But we want to talk specifically about the aspects of praise as acceptable worship. So for a moment, look at Hebrews chapter 13.

This is not, as I've just pointed out, the only way to worship, it is one among many. It is a part of the panoply of worship. It is part of the spectrum of worship. But it is not all there is. It, however, is the

dominating expression of worship. Even when there is no believer around, even when there is no unbeliever around, I can still offer praise to God. This is the endless expression of worship at all times and all places in all circumstances by all God's people. Hebrews 13:15, "Through Him...that is Jesus Christ...through Him the one who has given the sacrifice to make worship possible, through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that gives thanks to His name. Do not neglect doing good and sharing the things we've just talked about, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. He is pleased with all forms of sacrifice, all forms of worship, "But continually let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God the fruit of lips that gives thanks to His name."

God desires us to express worship to Him all the time...all the time. Praise and adoration personally and in the assembly of God's people.

So, the importance of worship, our first point...it dominates Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Secondly, it touches all of life. It is the way we live our lives. Thirdly, the importance of worship can be seen in that worship is the major theme in redemptive history. And this builds on what we've already said. It is the major theme in redemptive history. That is to say, we're being redeemed with a view to being worshipers. Nehemiah 9:6, "The host of heaven worships Thee." That's what all the holy angels in glory do.

When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden, they were there as expressions of His creative power for the purpose of worshipping Him. They, however, decided to turn from Him and worship something else. In the case of Eve, she worshiped the serpent, that is she entrusted her destiny to him as someone who was more truthful with her than God. And Adam, I guess you could say, in a sense, worshiped her cause he followed her into sin. And so, God then ordained redemption which He immediately demonstrated after the Fall by killing an animal, taking the skin and covering the sinner. He would cover their sin. There was the possibility of sin being covered. There was also the promise that one would come who would bruise the serpent's head, crush Satan for his evil deeds, once and for all finally. That launched redemptive history and redemptive history is God recovering worshipers.

The Fall came when Adam and Eve chose not to worship God. The first division among men was the division between Cain and Abel and it was a severe division in which Cain killed Abel, that's how much hostility there was in that relationship. And all of that hostility can be traced right back to the issue of worship. Cain worshiped unacceptably, his offering was rejected. Abel worshiped acceptably, his offering was received and it was this issue of acceptable and non-acceptable offerings that led to this murder.

If you follow the history of the plan of redemption into the patriarchal period, you will see that God demonstrated Himself to the patriarchs again and again. And as I said earlier, Abraham on occasion after occasion built an altar at which point he worshiped God, as other patriarchs did. And when the patriarchs worshiped God properly, they were blessed. And when they did not, they were punished.

When God then out of the loins of Abraham brought into existence the nation of Israel, as long as Israel worshiped God acceptably, they were blessed, and when they did not, they were punished. The nation Israel escaping out of their incarceration for 400 years in Egypt went into the wilderness. When they got into the wilderness they made the golden calf, violating God's instruction for worship and were condemned to 40 years of wandering and dying in the desert without ever entering the promised land. Even Moses never was able to enter the promised land because he refused to worship God the way God said He was to be worshiped. And he expressed an act that was in defiance of God's clear instruction, he worshiped God by obedience...Moses violated that, never entered the land.

When Israel went into the land after the older generation died, every time they worshiped God rightly, every time they offered God acceptable worship, they were blessed. There are illustrations of this, of course, maybe just give you one that comes to mind, 1 Chronicles 29. "Then David said to all the assembly, 'Now bless the Lord your God,' and all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the Lord and to the king. And the next day they made sacrifices the Lord and offered burnt offerings to the Lord, a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, a thousand lambs with their libations and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. So they ate and drank that day before the Lord with great gladness. And they made Solomon, the son of David, king a second time and they anointed him ruler for the Lord, and Zadok as priest. Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father and he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. And all the officials, the mighty men, and also all the sons of David pledged allegiance to King Solomon, and the Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel, bestowed on him royal majesty which had not been on any king before him in Israel."

Everything went well when they offered God true homage and worship. And when they did not, they were, as you well know, severely punished. This was part of what Stephen said in his testimony in Acts 7, "Stephen rehearsing the history of Israel, reminds them that they had made a calf, verse 41 of Acts 7, and brought a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets, it was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices 40 years in the wilderness, was it O house of Israel? You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship them. I also will remove you beyond Babylon."

They dragged into the land the idols and they worshiped the idols. And we all know the history of the kingdom, the united kingdom and the divided kingdom and all the idolatry that dominated them and led to the Babylonian captivity. The worship of Israel was corrupted at that point and always there was a remnant, there were pure worshipers. But the nation apostatized and remained that way even until Jesus' time. There were as a revival at the end of the Old Testament era under Nehemiah and Ezra, great revival indicated in the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah. But for the most part, theirs was a history of failing to worship God acceptably. And Jesus came and began His ministry. The first thing He did in John's gospel was to go to the temple and clean it out. It was corrupt. It was dominated by corruption. And Jesus called for true worshipers. At the end of His ministry, He did the

same thing again, cleaning out that corrupt place and calling for true worshipers. There was always blessings on those who truly worship, always judgment on those who do not.

When the church was born, it was born as an assembly of true worshipers who worship, as we saw in Philippians 3:3, who worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit of God. Scripture then is dominated by worship. Life is dominated by worship and redemptive history is dominated by the call to true worship. And again, scenes in heaven are always in the future. Go to the book of Revelation chapter 4, 5, 11, 14, 15, 19, 22, scenes in heaven are always scenes of worship.

One other thing to say, as if it needed to be said, worship is commanded. It not only dominates Scripture, it not only dominates life, not only dominates redemptive history, but it is commanded. Matthew 4:10...Matthew 4:10, and Jesus recites the command. He is, as you remember, drawn away into temptation and under the temptation of Satan He quotes from Deuteronomy. In Matthew 4:10, "Be gone, Satan, for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." Worship is commanded.

Now look back at our text for a moment in John chapter 4. We see here the essence of this command, and I can show you a lot of other Scriptures on that, but for the moment, verse 24. "God is Spirit and those who worship Him...here's the key word...must worship in Spirit and truth." It is a must because it is a command.

Now do you remember the scene that is going on in John 4, as long as we're there? Do you remember what's going on here? Jesus is talking to a Samaritan harlot, a woman who has had, to put it mildly, a very sorted life. She has had a handful of husbands. She has been engaged in what you would call today serial monogamy. But it's more than that because she is now living in a situation of adultery or fornication because she's living with a man who is not her husband. Jesus is not talking to an advanced believer, but to a very immoral woman. He's not talking to some kind of Old Testament saint, not talking to a theologian, He's talking to, from a Jewish perspective, a half-breed harlot. He is evangelizing the lowest of the low, hated because she was a half-breed, hated more by any who maintained any kind of standard of morality because she was a harlot, Jesus is evangelizing this woman by calling her to become a true worshiper. He demands worship from her because God demands worship from her.

This is what it is to be saved. It is to become a worshiper. That is the essence of evangelism. It is not just that we seek men in order that we might call them to be worshipers, but look at verse 23, end of the verse, "The Father seeks worshipers." This is a divine enterprise. I don't hear this in contemporary approaches to evangelism. I don't hear a lot of things that are characteristic of gospel evangelism, biblical evangelism. I don't hear people being told to become slaves of Jesus Christ. I don't hear an emphasis on repenting from sin and confessing Jesus as Lord, denying oneself, taking up a cross and following Him in total obedience. And I don't hear the call to become one who is consumed with worshiping God, the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father seeks worshipers. Therefore, as

we go out to evangelize our friends and family, people we meet, we are calling them to become worshipers of the true God who worship the true God in the true way. The Father seeks efficaciously, by the way, effectively true worshipers so that when a person becomes a believer, he or she becomes immediately a worshiper. True believers worship God. True believers worship Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 4:15, Paul says, "All things are for your sakes," he's talking about his preaching of the gospel of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. He says, "All things are for your sakes that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God." That's worship. When someone is truly converted, their heart is literally overflowing with gratitude to God that comes forth in praise to His glory.

So acceptable worship is not some additional element of Christian experience, it is what it means to be a Christian. There's no such thing as being a Christian and not being a true worshiper. The Father seeks efficaciously, effectively, savingly to create worshipers whose passion is to worship Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why I don't think we have to tell true believers to come and worship, to come and praise the Lord, to come and sing hymns to His glory and His honor. That's the truest expression of their transformed nature. And where that doesn't exist, we have every right to question the claim to a transformation. Worship is the delight of the believer. It is the delight of the Christian. It has been generated by the work of God in the heart.

And so, when you come to Christ, you become not only self-denying, obedient, confessing Jesus as Lord and you as His slave, but you become a willing, eager, glad worshiper. That's why you love to sing. That's why you love to serve. That's why you love to go, you love to care. That's why you're concerned about how you treat another believer. That's why you are concerned about righteousness, godliness, virtue, truth because all of these are the supernatural evidences of the new creation. This is the fruit of the work of God in your heart. And this is only the beginning, folks, because we will engage in this worship throughout eternity.

Well, that's kind of an introduction to why worship is important. Let's go back to chapter 4 for a minute and set the scene. We'll get just a little bit into this, but I want to at least make one other point tonight, and I hope this text will maybe tear down some false conceptions and replace them with true ones as we think about worship.

We begin the scene in verse 4 where Jesus had to pass through Samaria. He had to because He had a divine appointment. "He came to a city of Samaria, verse 5, called Sychar near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. And Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied from His journey was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask for a

drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

A little background. The Kingdom of Israel had split, as you know, into the Northern Kingdom known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom known as Judah. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, which was made up of Judah, the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, didn't go into captivity until 597 to 586 B.C. But long before that, the Northern Kingdom was taken captive, 722 B.C. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken by Sargon. Most of the people were driven out, they were carried as captives to Assyria, many other places, cities of the Medes. You can read about it in 2 Kings 17.

The conquerors of the Northern Kingdom were content, the Assyrians, were content to leave the very low people in the land. So they took away for slaves or to sell off to others the best and they left the lowest of the low. The poor then remained in the land, the land began to be infiltrated by pagans coming from other nations. They intermarried with the remaining Jews in the land. They were given the name Samaritans after the capital city Samaria. This then becomes a mixed race of people who are also mixed in their religion. They have a combination of elements of Judaism mingled with various forms of paganism that make up this kind of Samaritan religion that exists when our Lord meets this woman.

They wanted to be accepted by the Jews later on when the Jews came back from captivity and reconstituted the Southern Kingdom. They wanted to be allowed to reenter and to have some dealings with the Jews. They were not allowed to do that.

In fact, you remember when the remnant came back from Babylonian captivity, began to rebuild the temple, the dispossessed and disdained Samaritans and their allies tried to stop the work. Remember that? Ezra writes about it. The reason they did was because the Samaritans had been refused permission to cooperate with them in the rebuilding. They wanted to be accepted but they were not allowed to be accepted so they tried to stop it. They had said, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do." And the answer from the Jews was, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God. Get out of here."

This blunt refusal exacerbated the animosity between the Samaritan and the Jews, and so they went back to Samaria and back to a mountain in their own area called Gerizim and there they built their own temple. And that temple lasted until 128 B.C. when it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus who was one of the Maccabean leaders. Even after that temple was destroyed, Samaritans continued to offer their worship on that hill where their temple once stood. And some still do even into the modern era.

They accept only the Pentateuch, historically, and not the rest of the Old Testament. By the time you come to the period of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are a hated people, they are a despised people. When Jews have to travel north, they will literally go around and across the Jordan and up another way much more sequitous(?) to avoid going through Samaria. But Jesus goes through Samaria because He has an appointment with this woman. This is the key to understanding the passage and

it's why she says, "Why are You talking to me since I am a Samaritan woman and You are a Jew and Jews have no dealings with Samaritans?"

Then Christ reveals to her who He is. "Jesus answered and said to her...in verse 10... 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.'" Don't you know, dear woman, that I am the very one you and your people have long to know for all these centuries of your alienation? I am the one that you have longed to know, the God that you have wished to know and not been allowed to know? I am the one who can give you living water.

"She said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? You're not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well and drank from it himself and his sons and his cattle.' Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again. Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water so I'll not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.'" He said to her, 'Go call your husband and come here.' The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You well said I have no husband, you have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband. This you have said truly.' And the woman said to Him, 'I perceive that You are a prophet.'"

She doesn't deny His remarks about her immoral life. In fact, she calls Him a prophet, one who spoke for God and could read secrets. She admits her guilt. In fact, in verse 29 she reports to others, "Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done. This is not the Christ or the Messiah, is it?" She knows this could be the long-awaited Messiah.

Now please notice. This is a revelation of Christ to one who is not even seeking, a revelation of Christ who is not an awakened sinner. He awakens her to her sin and reveals Himself to her, as it were, out of nowhere. She responds with the most burning question. Verse 20, and this sets up the discussion on worship, "Our fathers worship in this mountain and You people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

That really is a question though it doesn't take the form of a question. The question is this, where are we supposed to worship? If You're a prophet and You must be because You just told me all the things that You could never know about me, if You are a prophet and You speak for God, sir, please answer one question...where do we worship?

You understand that the assumption in the mind of this uninformed ignorant harlot is that true religion is a matter of worship? I mean, that's the first thing out of her mouth. That is the first question. The first question from her is not what are You going to do for me? Can You solve my problems? Can You give me a better life? Can You make me more happy, more successful? There's one compelling

overarching penetrating question and it is this, where do we worship? The assumption of all religion is that you worship the deity. How can we ever lose sight of this? That's what we're doing is calling people to be worshipers, even people who are uninformed know that. Her conscience is pricked. Her soul is pierced. She affirms her sin. Now she wants to make it right. She wants to approach God. But where? How?

And now comes the answer that is so very important. The answer is, it's not where, it is whom. Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father..."

Wait a minute. Neither place is His answer. Neither place. "You worship that which you don't know. We worship that which we know." You don't have the revelation, we have the revelation. For salvation is from the Jews. We have been the source of saving truth about God. We've been the repository of divine revelation and you have not. But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth. And that's how you must worship, verse 24.

So what He says to her is it's not about a place, it's about a person. It's not here in Mount Gerrizim, and it's not even in Jerusalem. And an hour is coming very soon when even Jerusalem is going to disappear as a place of worship. Most likely referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

So Jesus focuses her off the place on to the person. That text focuses on the second main point that I want to give you, the object of worship...the object of worship. And it simply says, "You shall...verse 21...worship the Father." Verse 23, "True worshipers shall worship the Father." End of the verse, "For such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." Verse 24, "Those who worship Him." It's not where, it's whom.

And I think we understand this. But this is huge to them...to her...to the religious world. We worship a God who is Spirit. Verse 24, "God is Spirit." Literally, Spirit, the God, the God who is one glorious Spirit. This deals with God's essential nature. This gets us into theology proper, as it is called.

You say, "Well what's the point?" Well the point is, this is a world of idols and they all had a location and they all had a physical form. We don't worship a form in a place. We worship a God who is Spirit, not form. As Jesus said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me have." We worship the immaterial divine Father, the God who is spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being. You cannot be conceived in form in any material form.

In Jeremiah 23 verse 23, "Am I a God who is near, declares the Lord, and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places? Do I not see him...declares the Lord...listen to this...do I not fill the heavens and the earth, declares the Lord?" Jesus says to this woman, "You're not worshipping someone who is somewhere."

In Isaiah chapter 40, “And this is the essential reality about God, that He is spirit.” Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18, “To whom then will you liken God or what likeness will you compare with Him? As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, a goldsmith plates it with gold, and a silversmith fashions chains of silver. He who is too impoverished for such an offering selects a tree that does not rot, seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter. Do you not know, have you not heard, has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the vault of the earth. And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. It is He who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, He merely blows on them and they wither. The storm carries them away like stubble. To whom then will you liken Me that I should be his equal?, says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name. Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.”

We’re not talking about a God who can be reduced to gold or wood or metal. We’re talking about a God who is far beyond that.

In Isaiah 44, after a discussion of the stupidity of making a God out of wood, verse 18 says of those who do that, “They do not know nor do they understand. He has smeared over their eyes so they cannot see in their hearts so they cannot comprehend. And they fall down...verse 19 says...before a block of wood and feed on ashes. A deceived heart characterizes them.”

Verse 24, “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the One who formed you from the womb, I the Lord am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself.” This is the great transcendent God. God is not an idol and doesn’t want to be compared to an idol.

In 1 Samuel 5, I think one of the most interesting moments in the history of Israel. The Philistines took the ark of God which was not an idol form of God but simply a case holding some of the important memorabilia of Israel’s history as a reminder of God’s faithfulness. But the Philistines saw it simply as Israel’s God. And the Philistines warring with Israel stole the ark of God and brought up to Ashdod. They took the ark of God, brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon.

Well, Dagon, the fish god, related, of course, to the Philistines’ love for the sea.

Well now they had Israel’s God, so they just took Israel’s God and stuck Him in the temple with Dagon. This is where the gods were so they put the ark there.

God did not look favorably on that comparison. When the Ashdodites rose early the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. Who...the conversation was...who knocked Dagon over? And so they took Dagon and set him up again.

And when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord and this time the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold and only the trunk of Dagon was left to him...which was God's supernatural way of saying, "Don't pick this thing up again."

Sure, verse 5 makes sense. "Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day." The worship of Dagon seriously declined. God is never pleased to be compared to an idol. Worship is not in a place, not in this mount, not in Jerusalem because God is not confined to a place. God is Spirit.

Temples? Sure. Those were symbols, not representations of God. The ark was not a representation of God, it was a symbol of God's presence. The temple was a symbol of God's presence and power, the place where people could go and gather and worship God in ways which He had prescribed as acceptable to Him. Only ignorant Jews confined God to the temple. Even the Syrians didn't confine the God of Israel to the temple. The Syrians called the God of Israel the God of the hills. They knew He was not confined to that building. Their gods, they believed, were the gods of the valleys. Some thought their gods were the gods of the groves. But even the ignorant Syrians knew that the temple was not placed where God was confined but only the place where God was represented. And the wise Jews certainly knew it if the Syrians knew it. God was not confined to a place. He is a place. He is every place. There is no place without God. God is everywhere at all times.

Acts 17:28, "In Him we live and move and exist." His essence fills all space and time, all eternity and all infinity. He may express Himself in an act, in a unique location, at a specific time, but He is infinite. This is why Christianity has never had a temple.

You say, "Well I used to go to Temple Baptist Church." I know, that is a terrible name for a church...temple? This is not a temple, this is not the house of God, you are the house of God. So, when it comes to worship, we're concerned about the importance of worship and we're concerned about the object of worship, and the object of worship is the infinite transcendent eternal God who is spirit. Now you can follow this up on your own throughout Scripture and you will find references to God's infinity, God's eternity, God as spirit many, many places. It is clear that true believers have always understood that. We worship the God who is a spirit so we are never confined to a place.

But there's more. It is not just a God who is spirit, but it is the God who is revealed as to the truth of His nature. He is spirit by nature, but what are the attributes that make up His nature? We have to be accurate about them as well. There are some people who think the God of the Old Testament was evil, angry, hostile, vicious. No, the same God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament, there's only one true God. Worship is exclusive to the one God who is that eternal spirit who is defined as to His nature as spirit and as to His attributes by all of those glorious characteristics

that are disclosed to us in Scripture. The dominant one being His holiness and this is where we'll pick it up next time.

Our Father, as we think about all these wonderful, wonderful basic and foundational truths that define our worship, we're so thankful that worship is a way of life and that You can be worshiped at all times in all places by all who love You. We're not limited to arriving at a building. True worship rises from the heart from anyone who is simply Yours by salvation. Songs of gratitude, songs of thanks, prayers of praise can rise from our hearts at all times. We thank You for that availability, that accessibility. We thank You for the joy of corporate praise and how it motivates us and enriches us and inspires us. We thank You that we can worship You and that the more truth that we know about You, the more informed our worship becomes, the more enthusiastic it becomes. The more spirit it has, the more truth it knows. We want to be those true worshipers. You are worthy to be worshiped. Thank You for making us true worshipers. May we worship You in every possible avenue by thinking, speaking and doing only those things that are acceptable that find favor with You as acts of worship. This we ask that Christ might be honored. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 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>).