

The Identification of Worship

John 4: 19-24

This is a portion of a very familiar passage of Scripture. I'm sure that most of us have heard the account of the woman at the well many times. She was a woman who was shunned and rejected by those who knew her. She was an outcast of society due to the promiscuous lifestyle that she lived. But her destiny was about to change as she met Jesus who gave her living water that she might never thirst again. Every time I read this passage, I rejoice for the day that Jesus came by my way. I too was thirsty for the water that only Jesus could give.

There is a beautiful lesson regarding salvation in the text, but we can also learn much about worship. Jesus taught the Samaritan woman much concerning worship as He talked with her by the well. Jesus spoke of two different and very distinct [types](#) of worship. As we conclude our study on worship, I want to preach on the thought: [The Identification of Worship](#).

I. Religious Worship – This is a type of worship that was very prevalent in Jesus' day and it remains prevalent in our day as well. Much of the worship in our day falls under this category. We discover it is:

A. Worship that is Earnest (20) – The Samaritan woman revealed their fathers had worshiped upon a particular mountain. They had been very sincere in their worship. They had been faithful to worship God in a particular place. She seemed to have a sense of pride in the fact that generations of Samaritans had been faithful unto worshipping God.

- In our day, many are earnest in their worship. They are faithful to worship and deeply committed to that worship. A lot of people are sincere in their worship. Sadly, hell will be filled with sincerely religious people, those who were earnest in their religion and all of its traditions. Religious worship cannot save.

B. Worship that is Established (20) – She was not involved in some new age movement. She was influenced and involved in worship that had been established for generations. There was no doubt in her mind that she was right in her approach to worship. The Samaritans had an established form of religion, one she had embraced and endorsed.

- We continue to see that in our day as well. There is a lot of established religion around the world. There are those who are worshipping the same way their fathers have for thousands of years. They hold firmly to the same traditions and rituals their worship has always demanded.

- A form of religion that has been established and endured for hundreds or thousands of years does not necessarily make it right in the eyes of God. Men can be sincere in their worship and yet be sincerely wrong. There is much even in Baptist churches that is held to because of tradition rather than a biblical basis. Often these traditions are harder to change than fundamental doctrine. Folks are often unwilling to change their worship simply because that is the way they have always done it. We must not become slaves to tradition and man-made rituals or formalities. Our worship should be dictated of God.

C. Worship that is Exclusive (20) – Often this goes hand in hand with established religion. The Samaritan woman was quick to notice that Jesus was a Jew. There had been a long running feud between Samaritans and Jews. She pointed out that the Jews worshiped only in Jerusalem, and they worshiped only upon the mountain, Mt. Gerizim. [Our fathers worshipped in this mountain](#). She was not interested in hearing from a Jew about worship. She felt as if the Samaritans were worshiping in the only place that God dwelt.

- I am in no way implying that we ought to allow the world or other religious groups to dictate how we worship. I am not saying that we ought to abandon the fundamental truths of the Bible. In fact, our worship ought to be exclusive, exclusively founded and built upon the Word of God. However, if we are to worship exclusively by what the Bible dictates, then we must be willing to conform our worship to the Word of God.

D. Worship that is Empty (22a) – [Ye worship ye know not what](#). Jesus revealed that all she possessed was an empty form of vain religion. She was faithful to go through the motions and attend a religious service, but she had no idea why she did those things. She worshiped simply because of tradition. It was of no benefit to her spiritually.

- There are a lot of religious people who are faithful to a form of worship, but there is no help for their souls. They attend service after service and leave as empty as they came. Worship is an exercise rather than an experience. Genuine worship unto the true and living God is the only way to experience real communion with Him.

II. Righteous Worship – After Jesus spoke of religious worship, He then turned His attention to genuine worship, righteous worship. This is the type of worship we need to engage. Notice:

A. The Place of Worship (20-21) – The Samaritan woman was focused on the mountain as the only place of worship. She believed if she did not worship there, then she couldn't worship. Jesus

revealed there was coming a time when men would neither worship in that mountain or in Jerusalem. He was eluding to the cross and the sacrifice that would be made for the sins of mankind. As Jesus died upon the cross, the veil of separation was torn in two. Men no longer have to go to the temple in order to seek the presence of the Lord and worship Him. Our worship is not defined by a particular place, but rather the condition of the heart. It is good to worship at the house of God, but this is not the only place we can worship!

B. The Person of Worship (21b) – She had spoken much of the mountain, her fathers, the differences in Jews and Samaritans, and even worship, but she had not mentioned the object of her worship. Jesus wanted her to realize that her perception of worship was a distorted one. All of the things she placed emphasis on were actually idols. These were not things that deserved her worship. Worship is reserved for God and Him alone.

- I know that seems ridiculous, but it still happens today. If I were to ask among our church whom we worship, I know that the answer would be overwhelmingly that we worship Jesus. But, do we really worship Him? Is Jesus the object of our worship services? Have we come to honor and worship Him as the Lord and Savior of our lives? Men often worship traditions, buildings, programs, and even people, rather than the Lord. Jesus is why we are here today!

C. The Principle of Worship (22) – Here Jesus revealed a sad truth to this woman. She didn't even know what she worshiped. The only reason she practiced religion was because of her fathers and their traditions. She thought she was worshiping God, but there can be no real worship apart from salvation. Jesus was born a virgin of the lineage of David. He was a Jew and salvation would come to all through the Jews. He was simply saying to her that one must know Him if they are to worship.

- There is a lot labeled worship in our day, but much of it really isn't genuine worship. The principle Jesus revealed has not changed. If we are not born again, we cannot worship God. You may come and sit on a pew in a Baptist church all your life, but if you are not saved, you cannot worship the Lord. There must be a personal relationship with Jesus if we are to worship Him.

D. The Provision of Worship (23a) – This was very early in Jesus' ministry and He was already looking to the cross. He was looking forward to the time when He would give Himself as the sacrifice for sin. That is why He came to this earth. For thousands of years priests had offered sacrifices for sin, but they could never fully atone. Jesus had come to fulfill the law and bring salvation to humanity. He would rid the veil of separation; through His blood the saved have access to the throne of God.

- We have the privilege to worship because of the provision Jesus made for us. He is the only way to God. All who were ever saved have come by faith in the finished work of Christ. Had Jesus not died for our sin, we would still be dead in sin. I can worship because I belong to Him.

E. The Presence of Worship (23-24) – Jesus further confirms that worship is not reserved to a particular place; it is not achieved through rituals, formalities, or genealogies. Those who worship the Lord must worship in spirit and in truth. We must worship the Lord with a pure spirit – a heart that is right toward Him. We must worship Him in truth – believing the gospel message and embracing the cross. We must see ourselves as worthless and undone without Him. Worship cannot be achieved without the proper presence.

- Many in our day never realize this fundamental truth. They live their lives as they please, never dealing with sin. They go throughout each week and never give any thought to the Lord. There is resentment and discord with others. Their hearts are not right with God and yet they come to the house of God and expect to worship because they attended the service. If we are to worship, we too must worship in spirit and in truth. Our hearts must be right with God. Worship is not based on the outward actions; it is achieved through an inward devotion to the Lord.

F. The Passion of Worship (23b) – **for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.** Isn't that a blessing and a challenge to our hearts? God seeks those who will worship Him. Jesus desired this Samaritan woman to worship and He desires that we worship. The Lord is seeking those right now who will worship Him.

- Think of all that the Lord has done for each of us. What could we possibly offer Him in return? There is no way we could work out or earn our salvation, but we can return our praise and worship to the Lord who saved us. **Heb.13:15 – By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.** We can live holy lives so that we are able to worship when we gather in His house. I stand amazed that the Lord desires anything from me, but I want to be in a position to give Him what He desires!

Conclusion: This has been a challenging study regarding worship. We need to be reminded of the dangers of religious worship. We need to learn to achieve and offer righteous worship. How is your relationship with Christ? Can you worship the Lord in spirit and in truth? Do you know Him as your personal Savior? If not, you can. If there are needs, bring them before the Lord.