

Worship Depends Upon a Person

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[0:00] We're going to continue our look at how to worship the Lord using as our focal passage the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

! I want to read to you the last paragraph of the lesson we covered last time.! And then that will serve as a beginning point for this evening.

Suppose for a moment that Christ came physically back to this earth and examined the worship habits of every church. What do you suppose he would say?

To bring that closer to home, what would Jesus say about the worship of Highland Park Baptist Church? We're going to try and get some insight into that as we look in greater detail tonight at Christ and the woman at the well.

If Jesus were to come back physically and look at the big picture of Christianity, I wonder what kind of things he would say about modern Christian worship as it's practiced today.

[1:20] One writer has said that modern worship is at best Christianized Judaism and at worst veiled paganism.

Some have called it Christianized Judaism and at best Christianity. What we have in our day to day. In ancient Israel, of course, only the priests could conduct worship.

And today there are many in Christendom that believe only the clergy can conduct worship. If the modern priests went away in the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, it would shut down. They wouldn't know what to do. Old Testament priests, of course, wore distinctive clothing. Many in the clergy do today.

The modern church building has taken place of the tabernacle and the temple. We call those buildings sometimes the house of God. In reality, it is the place where the true house, the spirit-filled people, meet.

[2:30] I've said many times the church is not brick and mortar. And if we wake up Saturday from our nap and find out Holland Park's gone from a tornado or a bomb or whatever, we're going to worship Sunday.

We'll worship Sunday. The modern clergy in some quarters have become the sacred priests of the Old Testament. In Judaism, there was an altar. And today, of course, we talk about the altar call. In old times, there was an altar with a wafer that was kept there. People were told that's the body of Christ. That happens in our day.

Any copy of Judaism is formed in the New Testament. In many denominations, only the modern priests can administer the sacraments. Men in robes today burn incense and offer smoke from candles and incense in a roped-off area of the church.

People can look, but they can't approach. There are elaborate prayers and responses built in by rote so the audience can participate.

[3:40] It is all very mechanical. And as far from true worship as the Father desires from the Holy Spirit-filled people. I think if Jesus came back today, he would indict that kind of worship.

And a lot of what I'm referring to is both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. We had a Tulsa police officer killed in the early 90s. Gus Spanos, Greek heritage.

We went to the funeral of 4,000 police officers in Oklahoma. And it was an Eastern Orthodox. After about four hours, I was ready to go to the bathroom or something.

You know, I had smoke and going around. And it was quite an event for a little Baptist guy to behold. What would Jesus have to say about the more traditional Protestant patterns of worship? In some venues, they might be more like Samaritan worship. It was not as elaborate or ornate or sophisticated as Jewish worship. But they did offer worship of sorts.

[4:49] Samaritans didn't have a building to worship in. History teaches that a Jewish zealot went there with a group of men and destroyed their place of worship on Mount Gerizim.

But we do know that Samaritan worship was shallow. It was very indifferent. It did not follow scripture and it needed to be corrected. And in fact, history records that both the system of worship of the Jews and the Samaritans in this time frame were eliminated.

This correction that had to take place was the reason that Jesus went to the Samaritans in the first place. And as the scripture that was quoted by Jonathan Yesti, and I'm doing the more modern translation.

And he had to pass through Samaria. John 4.4. Very, very interesting passage of scripture. He had to pass through Samaria.

Samaria. There you have the reason why Jesus was in Samaria. He had to go there. He was there by divine appointment.

[6:07] He had an appointment with a very special woman. It happened to be a woman that God was seeking to be a true worshiper of Yahweh.

We said last time and the time before, God is the seeker in the New Testament era. God sought her out by sending his son, the Lord Jesus.

And not even through the normal route, they could have easily bypassed Samaria. I'm sure the disciples wanted to. They knew they were going to be unclean.

These unclean fishermen knew they were going to be unclean if they go to Samaria. But instead, God sends his son through Samaria.

And he ended up in a place called Sychar. And that, by the way, was an area that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. It is a place where Jacob's well was located.

[7:11] And that is where we pick up the story in John 4, verses 5 to 9. So he came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

And Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, 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 are going away into the city to buy food.

Therefore the Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, since I am a Samaritan woman?

Very interesting passage. It speaks volumes about social standing and status. This woman was totally taken aback.

[8:16] Absolutely taken aback. Her people, which were the Samaritans, had no relations with the Jews.

And in fact, a righteous Jew would not even drink out of a well used by Samaritans, or use the vessels that they used to hold water.

They would be unclean to do so. So who were these Samaritan people? How do they fit into the jigsaw puzzle here that continues to be the Middle East even to this day?

At one time, they were united under Saul, David, and Solomon. But because of disobedience, God allowed them to be conquered.

They were taken by force to Assyria. The only people left behind when they were taken were the very poorest of the Jews that lived there.

[9:22] After all, there's no reason if you're an Assyrian to take with you the welfare cases. Just leave them there. And when the mass of people left into captivity, the Babylonians and the other groups began to move in.

And as often happens, they intermarried. With the remaining class of very poor Jews. And this gave rise to a people who were half Jewish and half pagan.

And those were called Samaritans. They became the Samaritans and they were named after the capital city, Samaria. And they adopted, as you can imagine, a religion which was a combination of Judaism and paganism.

They borrowed from Judaism. They borrowed from paganism. And they formed a religion. Early on, they asked if they could have a Jewish priest come and lead them.

But this was utterly rejected by the Jews. So they did the best they could adopting a mixture of Judaism, as they understood it, with the pagan practices that had come into being.

[10:43] Seventy years went by and a remnant of Jews that had been taken into captivity came back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Samaritans showed up and expressed their desire to assist the ones because they considered these guys to be Jewish brothers.

And they wanted to help them in the construction project. In this, they were rejected. They were told, you're half-breed Jews, which means you're not Jewish at all.

If you've got any mixture in you that's not Jewish, you're not Jewish. Well, they were rebuffed. The Samaritans had nowhere to go. They wanted to worship in forms that they had kind of adopted and created.

So the next thing we see is they built a place of worship on Mount Gerizim. It was their own temple and they began to worship in their own way. And this went on.

The temple on Mount Gerizim for centuries until, as I say, a Jewish zealot led a revolt and journeyed to Mount Gerizim, totally destroyed the temple and it was never rebuilt.

[11:57] I'm told the ruins are there now. So the Samaritans traveled to the mountain to carry out worship under the sky. They thought they could only worship on Mount Gerizim.

And it's interesting, today, in 2016, there are about 200 Samaritans left in the world. 200 of them. You know where they go to worship? Mount Gerizim. They travel, and I doubt if they do it every Sunday or whatever day they choose, but they, these 200, make a pilgrimage, kind of like the Muslim hajj to Mecca, they make a pilgrimage to Mount Gerizim and there to carry out worship. Well, back in the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Samaritans were despised. They were looked down upon. They were hated by the Jews.

And the Jews had hatred down to a science, didn't they? They really did. They hated a lot of folks, including Yahweh. But they were hated by the Jews because of the Jewish zealots, there was to be no contact between the two groups.

[13:11] And that is really the key to understanding the exchange between Jesus and the woman at the well. Because she's so taken aback by the fact that a Jew and a Jewish rabbi is asking to give him a drink of water.

It was unthinkable in that culture. Verse 20, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. And you people, that's the Jews, you people, you Jewish people, say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

The woman is really, this is a form of a question. She's got a question here. And her question that she's really asking here is, who is worshipping in the correct place?

Is it in Jerusalem? Is it on Mount Gerizim? Is it in Salt Lake City? Is it in Brooklyn?

You may not understand that one. That's Jehovah Witness. I would never be part of a religion that was headquartered in Brooklyn. I've been to Brooklyn. They even claim Jesus has come back and is living and hiding in Brooklyn.

[14:29] Why would he pick? He could live in Copan. Why would you pick Brooklyn? So, where's the correct place to worship? Are the Jews correct to worship in Jerusalem or are the Samaritans correct in worshipping on Mount Gerizim?

Where, the woman is saying, where are we supposed to worship? Now, why was the woman asking this question? And to understand the answer, we've got to go back just a little.

Still in chapter 4, but in verse 10-15, Jesus answered and said to her, 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.

She said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water? He sparked an interest in her, but she's being very pragmatic, isn't she?

You don't have anything to draw the water out with. How can you draw out living water or dead water for that matter? You don't have anything to draw it with. And then she says, very perceptive, she says, You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well and drank of himself and his sons and his cattle.

[15:55] Jesus answered and said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst, but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.

And the woman said to him, Sir, give me this water so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw. Now she sort of missed the point here.

Jesus is giving a spiritual lesson and she's saying, Man, I'm not going to have to drink water anymore and I'm not going to have to come all the way out here and have to schedule it, by the way, because she couldn't go out there when there were women because she is a woman that's very disrespected, which we'll get to probably next time, but she's a loose woman.

In fact, she's rolling around like a bag of bolts. She's so loose. The woman is absolutely taken aback. We have a Jewish rabbi asking her for a drink of water.

Rabbis didn't even go through Samaria. Rabbis didn't ask Samaritans anything. A righteous rabbi wouldn't talk to a woman alone, one-on-one, and he sure wouldn't ask her for some help.

[17 : 18] Jesus, of course, responds that he, by the way, he's not under those rules, is he? Jesus responds that he has living water he could provide her for the asking.

And she is rightly confused, any of us would have been, because she could see that Jesus has no implements with which to draw out the water from the well. It's deep.

He doesn't have a bucket or rope or whatever you would need. She wants to know, and she asks him, where are you going to come up with this water? She then implies that, she probably didn't know his name yet, but she implies that Jesus could not possibly be greater than Jacob.

After all, Jacob had given them the well in the first place. It reminds me of when Jewish leadership and the Jewish people said, well, you're not greater than Moses. Moses, he fed us for 38 years. You only fed us one meal. And he fed the 5,000. And Jesus said, Moses didn't give you anything. It was my Father in heaven. He or she is saying, you can't possibly be greater than Jacob.

[18 : 29] He dug this well. People still drink from Jacob's well to this day. Jesus points out that whoever drinks of the water found in Jacob's well would thirst again.

And you certainly would. It's a hot, arid desert climate. I've been in that region, not in Israel, but I've been in that area. And when I was there, we were out in the desert. We took 38 gallons of water per person.

About seven of us and two land producers. The reason being, if we break down, we've got to have water. We've got to have water. I couldn't have gone two or three hours without taking a drink of water.

Arid. But Jesus, of course, had a different water offer. Totally different. He says, the water I have will be a spring.

They all like springs. But it's going to well up. Can you just visualize a spring and it just wells up? Into eternal life. That's the water Jesus is offering.

[19 : 38] Well, the woman totally missed the point. And asked for that type of water so that she would neither thirst nor wear herself out, lugging the heavy water pots around.

And they weren't heavy. Jesus was wanting to give her the very water first. But he had to point out a problem that she had. So he's going to address the problem and he does so by giving her a command.

Because he wants to address this problem. He says, alright, go call your husband and come here. The two of you come here. Now, she couldn't use her cell phone.

She had to go back into the village to get her husband and come out. Well, Jesus, this is a set up deal here. Okay? And I mean that in a good way.

Jesus has set her up for the greatest revelation that she would ever receive in her lifetime.

[20 : 40] The greatest revelation anyone can ever receive in their lifetime. Jesus knew she didn't have a husband but he wants her to confess the same.

Let's face it, it would have been easier for her to say, what? Well, my husband's sick or my husband's he's working in Babylon this week. A lot of things she could have said. But the scriptures say the woman answered and said, I have no husband.

And Jesus looks at her and says, you have correctly said I have no husband. And then he goes as we like to say Don and others, he went from preaching to meddling.

He says, for you have had five husbands and the one whom you now have, the guy you're living with and sharing a marital relationship with is not your husband.

So you've answered truly. You haven't lied to me. Well, that impressed the woman. And she said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

[21 : 51] Well, that's the understatement. Jesus essentially gives her her life story. Can you imagine? And she said, well, you've got to be a prophet to know my life story.

I don't know you. I've never met you. We don't run the same circle. She says, you've got to be a prophet. Well, that's good thinking on her part. She knows she's in the presence of somebody very special.

And then the Lord takes her right to the core and indicted her for her sin. And she's living in sin. As God, He knew every detail of her life. He knew every detail of her life. Only God would know this level of detail, right?

And there's principle here, fellas. Whatever we're hiding from our family and whatever we're hiding from our friends, we're not hiding from God.

[22 : 58] Okay? So if in fact there's anything that you need to deal with, deal with it before the Lord. He already knows. He's waiting for us to deal with it.

If in fact you have anything. And a prophet to that woman was a person who only knows the things that God knows because he's God's spokesperson. So she rightly says to Him, you've got to be a prophet.

You just have to be a prophet. So Jesus is really implying to her you really need to get your life right before God.

Married five times and now you're living with a guy out of wedlock. I remember on a call in program one time where this guy called in and said he'd been married five times and divorced five times could he be forgiven?

And the minister said, well, Billy Sunday once said sin is forgiven but stupid is forever. That's what he told him. Jesus places this woman under very deep conviction for the life she has been living.

[24 : 13] And she can't evade anything He has said to her because He knows. How can you evade? Everything has been precise down to the minutest detail.

the Lord has this woman on a path that's going to lead her to repentance and salvation. I'm convinced she's going to get saved here.

Now the problem with the woman is not knowing where to worship. And she told the Lord my people go up on Mount Gerizim. It's right there. You can see it. It's right here.

And the Jews had taught true worship can only occur in Jerusalem and Samaritans weren't allowed. So this woman is very confused.

She wants to worship. Where can I go to worship? And the Lord gives her a great revelation. He says in a little while worship will not depend on either one of those places.

[25 : 22] It won't matter. The location did not matter. Location was not the issue. The only issue this woman need concern herself with is the fact that she must worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

That's the core right there. Location didn't matter. the style, the manner, spirit and truth, worshipping the Father. That's what mattered.

And that issue, by the way, has not changed in the intervening years. We too must worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Now, like all believers, people under conviction, this woman had a knowledge of her sin. She knew she was sinning.

She wanted to deal with her sin. She doesn't know how. Should I go up, should I climb up on Mount Gerizim and deal with it? Can you sneak me into Jerusalem and I can deal with it?

[26 : 36] And she bought into a discrepancy that people still buy into. She thought worship could only occur at a set place and at a set time.

Guys, billions of people are under that illusion today. Muslims are under that illusion. Buddhists and Hindus and followers of Confucius.

All of today's world religions follow that error. But let me tell you something. There's a lot that passes for Christianity today that holds the same erroneous view.

Whether you worship a day, well no, this is Saturday. I can worship a day. Tomorrow's worship. We'll be there about 1030, 1045 at the later. We may be a little late tomorrow, but we'll be there. And if a pastor finishes by noon, we'll stay. That's Christianity light. Well, the Lord, to answer her perplexing question, launches into the greatest teaching on true worship anywhere.

[27 : 52] everywhere. And the first thing he does is to describe to her the object of worship. He tells her simply, you must worship the Father.

You must worship the Father. And, in fact, he tells her to worship the Father three times in five verses. He describes the Father as Spirit.

And he describes the Father as Father. We're to worship the Father as Spirit. One speaks of the relationship, then one speaks of his nature.

His nature is that he is a Spirit. His relationship is that he is Father. He's Father to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's Father to those who are hidden in Christ. So, we see here relationship and nature. And both of those are basic and essential to the true worship of God.

[29:02] Absolutely essential. So, how do we describe God as Spirit? This is the essential nature of God. We are commanded to worship God as Spirit.

I am told, authorities in the Greek language like Don, that verse 24 in the original Greek says, Spirit be God. He is one glorious Spirit.

Jesus told us that a spirit has neither flesh nor bones. Listen to Isaiah chapter 40. To whom then will you liken God?

God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him? Are you going to build something, you know, a statue to God the Father? What's He going to look like?

Those few words in Isaiah speak volumes. When we understand that Isaiah has just described the Father, we realize the folly of creating an image of God.

[30:09] How would you do that? You cannot make a spirit out of wood, stone, or paint. Can't do it.

Although I think Michelangelo tried in the Sistine Chapel. How do you even imagine a spirit? I've heard pastors being asked, Chuck Swindon, what's your vision when you're praying to God the Father?

You shouldn't have a vision. He's spirit. It can't be done. No one should have a mental image of God as spirit.

No one can reduce the true God to an image, though I would suggest to you that men have tried to do that for centuries. For centuries.

God is spirit, and that is how He must be worshipped. Well, what is all this saying to the woman at the well? This is the lesson for her and for us.

[31:12] You don't have to travel to a place to worship. You don't have to go to Mount Gerizim, you don't have to go to Jerusalem, you don't have to go to Rome, you don't have to go to Mecca, you don't have to travel to a place because God is spirit.

You don't have to travel at a point in time to worship. It's not 930 or midnight or whatever. God is spirit, and because God is spirit, He can be worshipped anywhere at any time.

And if you find yourself an astronaut, some of these young boys back here may go to Mars, trust me, you can worship, God will be there. God will be there.

And if we could just suddenly go to the farthest planet in the farthest galaxy, God will be there. He is everywhere, and because God is everywhere, He can be worshipped anywhere.

Now some of the cults teach that God is a man. And that is a very key lesson in Mormonism.

[32:29] they say this, as God was, we are. As God is, we can be. God was a man who was so good, He became God.

Don't go home and look for that between Genesis and Revelation. You're not going to find it.

There's a word for it, it's called blasphemy. Anyone who says that God is a man, in the sense that they're saying it, and I understand Christ is fully God and fully human, I understand that.

But anyone who wants to reduce God to being a mere man, is telling a lie out of the pit. And let me just say to you, this has happened in this church, Mike, you remember some of these, I hate it when I hear people talk about the man upstairs.

It just raises the hair on the back of my head. There is no man upstairs, there is a holy God in triunity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God is not an idol in a place. God is the infinite place. He is everywhere at all times.

[33:48] He cannot be confined to a specific place of time, and that's very important to grasp. You don't go somewhere at some particular time, so we hope we can find God, and if He shows up, then we will worship Him.

I still remember Apollo 8, which was the first mission to the moon where they circled the moon.

Some of you guys weren't even born yet. They circled the moon, and they read the Genesis account, and they had a very spiritual time.

Well, God was there. God was there. I was listening one evening on the way home from church or to church, I don't remember.

It was in northeast Oklahoma, I remember that, and this church was advertising that they were going to have three nights of revival, and they said, coming this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, we're going to have a Holy Ghost healing service.

how do they know? How do they know? What if the Spirit wanted to heal right then, and not wait until Friday, Saturday, or Thursday, or what if He wanted to wait ten years?

[35:04] He's God. He can do whatever He wants to. So what Jesus is saying to the woman is that the issue is not that worship is not here or there, because God is not here or there.

She was worried, well, does God show up on Mount Gerizim, or does He show up in Jerusalem? He can't be two places at one time, can you? That's why Jesus told her, He's Spirit. He's Spirit. That's why Abraham Lincoln, when he left for the White House, knowing he probably would never return alive, and he said, we serve a God who can remain here with you and go with me. Isn't that fantastic?

So Jesus is going to try and clear this up for the woman. And He does so by saying to her, woman, by the way, that was a term of endearment.

Justin, when he was six, called my wife a woman, and she led into him. I'm your mother. This is a term of your woman. Believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

[36:14] That was the gateway into further revelation, which we won't get to the next time. You'll be on the edge of your chairs till then. Or you can open up John chapter 4. Jesus is telling her that the end of those systems is upon the whole world.

Jerusalem was rapidly becoming irrelevant. And I think, Don, you touched on this two Sundays ago, but in 70 AD, God would wipe out basically the Temple Mountain and most of that city.

They're not any longer going to worship because of the presence of a dead animal. The time had come to worship God as spirit, and as spirit, he is everywhere.

And you know what? When God is everywhere, you know what else that means? He's available. He's available. I've said this before, I'll say it again. When you wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning, and you're looking at that dark ceiling, and you've got all kinds of problems with your kids, your finances, with your boss, and it seems like the world's caving in, always remember God's got VBE, very big ears, ears, and he can hear.

And if I can give you any counsel, at 3 in the afternoon, it's not quite as bad as at 3 in the morning, so just hold off 12 hours. Jesus is telling the woman that the old way of worship is over, and a new way has come.

[38:01] That is a change from the old to the new covenant, because she's under the old covenant. The Samaritans read the first five books of the Bible were penetrated. They thought everything else was bad.

The old sacrificial system was coming to a close. We do not enter into the presence of God through a dead animal. By the way, there are some churches that still do that.

We had one in Lake Copan meeting 20 years ago. Sacrificing chickens. I asked the guy, I said, what, do you fly him afterwards or do you just, he thought I was being blasphemed.

We don't enter through a dead animal, we enter through a living Savior, Christ Jesus. Christ is the living way and we can now worship God as spirit because of what Christ has done, which we'll be celebrating next Sunday.

Worship depends not on a place. Worship depends upon a person. That's what you need to take from here.

[39:17] It is not where you worship, but whom you worship. And we worship God as spirit. Thank you.