

# The Truth Part 12 The Truth Is Essential To Worship

*The Truth*

By Gary Shepard

**Bible Text:** John 4:23-24

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Service, a time of virtual service that we are broadcasting, live streaming from the church building but none of the hearers are present with us. We're doing this in order to adhere to the rules that have been laid out to try to stem the virus situation. We're all aware of it and it's calling for some rather unique measures and we bow to the wisdom of God in bringing this to pass in our lives, and as was said in one case when a young woman was inquiring about why things were the way they were and the man of God told her, he said, "Who knows why you're come into the kingdom for such a time as this," and who knows why that we are called in this hour to endure these things or experience them, but we trust the Lord. We pray for his will to be accomplished. We pray that he would have mercy and grace upon our nation and bring forth not only a physical healing but also a spiritual healing which we are in the greatest need of.

Let's bow our heads for prayer this morning.

*Our Father, we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as our priest, as our mediator, and we ask you in this hour, in this unique hour, special hour, that you would have mercy and grace upon us and cause us to see your hand in all that is done and to give you glory and praise in the midst of it. We ask that you would help us this morning that we might be enabled by your Spirit to worship, to hear your word and, Lord, by your gracious hand to believe your truth. We thank you for your goodness to us. We thank you for your watching and caring hand over all your people, and from the knowledge that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to your purpose, and they work that way because you engage your hand to work that way and everything that is done on this earth will be for their good and for your glory. We pray that you'd forgive us of our sins, great as they are, and cause us in Jesus Christ to find that forgiveness and that salvation that is in Christ crucified alone. We pray and ask in his name. Amen.*

I want you to turn with me this morning to the book of John, the book of John, the fourth chapter. I was thinking about this, this morning and this week, that many will not be able to go to the place that they normally do and to do what they call worship today, but the sad thing is, even if they were able to travel to so many of these places and hear so many of these preachers, they would still not be able to worship. They would not be able to

worship in the way that God commands us to worship him, and this is because they would be going places, going to religious places and hearing religious figures speak and yet not speak the truth. Not speak the truth.

So I continue this morning on this series, this concluding message on these essential elements of the truth by stating the truth is necessary for true worship. You must have and know the truth to worship truly. So look down with me in John 4:19. This woman is described in this text and in many conversations as the woman at the well.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. 25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

"I am he." This woman in response to Christ's words brings up this subject of worship. Why does she bring up this subject of worship? Well, because the depravity of her heart and the blindness of her mind, as in most cases, produced this nature response. She like most all had been influenced by religion and she quickly reverts back to the false refuge of that religion. It is obvious that she knew some true things but it is also obvious that she did not know the truth.

Christ has been speaking about God's gift. He's been talking about living waters. He's been speaking of everlasting life. But what keeps her from asking for these things, for inquiring about these things? It is solely her ignorance and her unbelief because though she is religious, she does not know the truth and here in our text Christ says to her, "If you knew." She's obviously in this blind ignorance. Look at verse 11,

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

She doesn't understand what he's talking about. She's thinking in natural terms, he's speaking in spiritual terms. Look at verse 12,

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

Do you see the difference? Look at verse 15,

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

She's always speaking about natural things, but Christ begins to speak very pointedly and very particularly concerning her sin and she responds by changing the subject to religious issues. He calls upon her to call for a husband. She says, "I have no husband." But that is only partly true and Christ knows the truth about her condition and tells her, "That is right," and she has had five husbands and the one she's living with now is not her husband. But she turns to these religious issues because that's the devil's ploy, that's the sinner's refuge. He runs to these diversions and controversies and such and denies the true issue. She tells him in verse 20, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." And she comes down to this situation that most every sinner comes to. They say, "One says one thing, one says the other thing. How does anybody know the truth? How does anybody know the truth?" They're like Pilate who said, asked Christ, he said, "What is truth?" But he never waited for him to say. He turned his back and walked away. There is no refuge hiding between the divisions and discussions of lost religious men and women. It is not what one group says, it is not what the other group says, it's always what God says. It is always according to his written truth.

When you read in verse 21, Christ says to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." He turns from the place of worship to the true nature of worship. In other words, one will not be a true worshiper of God based on whether he worships at or doesn't worship at Jerusalem or at any other place, and that's because worship doesn't have to do with places, worship doesn't have to do with holy places or the Holy Land or Jerusalem, or Mecca. It doesn't have to do with making pilgrimages and such as that. You can't worship where God has not ordained.

There was a tribe called the Danites and they went and stole a priest and an idol from a man in one place, they moved it back to their land and it could be asked where was God worshiped, was he worshiped at this house of this man when he had his priest and his idol, or was he worshiped over in the land of the Danites when they took that priest and idol over to their lands? Well, the truth is God was not worshiped in either place because the Scripture says in all the time the house of God was at Shiloh, and Shiloh is that word which is a type of Jesus Christ who is the only peace that there is, and all the time the worship of God is in not a place but in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same is true whenever God used that brazen serpent to heal those bitten of a fiery serpent. You might say it was much like the virus going around in our days people are so afraid of and they call for these measures and they call for these medications and such, and I all hope that they work but healing ultimately always comes from God, and they look to the means rather than to the one who blesses and heals, and when it was all over, the serpent that was made of brass and held up on a stick so that when they looked they'd be healed, they took that piece of serpent, that brazen serpent and they worshiped it because of ignorance. But God calls the man to call that piece of brass just exactly what it

was, it was Nehushtan, which meant a piece of brass. It's not the brass, it's the one that the brass represented which is a Christ that is crucified upon a cross, looking to him is our salvation. And there are always questions about denominations, about ordinances, about practice and disputes in every way, but the worship of God is not bound up in any of these things.

Look down at verse 22. He said, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." Salvation. There was a time when a man was in the temple who had been told that he would not die, the Spirit of God had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's salvation and one day a couple brought in a child in the rituals of the Jews, to do that which was prescribed, and when this old man beheld this child, he said, "Now, Lord, I'm ready to depart in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He was looking in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is salvation. Salvation is come from the Jews in the sense that Christ was born from among the Jews.

Look up in Romans 9 and listen. "Who are the Israelites," Paul says, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," all these things God gave through this Jewish nation. He says, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Christ was born a Jew but he is God's salvation to both Jew and Gentile alike, his elect people, this remnant of the election of grace out of every nation, tribe and tongue.

But why does Christ talk to her about salvation? Because she was a sinner. Because she was a needy and a lost sinner, and because there's no salvation without knowing Christ and there's no knowing Christ without knowing the true Gospel, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. No salvation in what Paul called another Jesus. No salvation, therefore no worshipers apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Bible says that he is there on this occasion because he must needs go through Samaria. The way he was going was not the nearest way but it was the way God had ordained in order that he meet this woman and reveal himself to her as her salvation, to show her that his salvation was not in going to a place or doing any kind of ritual but in the work that he would accomplish on her behalf.

The problem is not where to worship but who to worship and how can he be known, and that's what we come to in verse 23. Christ says, "Behold the hour cometh, and now is." We're not talking about something that's past, we're not talking about something that's future, we're talking about something that is a time, an hour that now is "when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Now there are many commands and many warnings in the Bible concerning the worship of God. Let me read you a few. Psalm 99, "Exalt the LORD your God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy." The Psalm again, "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Again, "Give unto the Lord the glory due his name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Again, "All nations whom thou hast made

shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name." A warning in Exodus, "For thou shalt worship no other god for the Lord whose name is jealous is a jealous God." And then in Deuteronomy, "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived and ye turn aside and serve other gods and worship them."

If there are true worshipers, there must be false worshipers, and instead of the unbelievable foolishness of some things that go on in the name of worship today, there is a much more clever counterfeit such as the Pharisees set forth in their day. They were not wild men, they were moral people. They were law-keepers they thought, but they added to the word of God. In Matthew 15, Christ speaks of them and he says, "But in vain they do worship me," they do worship God in vain. Is your worship vanity? All their worship was vanity, nothing.

He says, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Some people say, "Well, we ought not even have doctrine." No, we're to have true worship and in order to have true worship, we have to have true doctrine, but true doctrine is not the commandments of men. It has to do with the word of God.

One old writer said to worship God in spirit is to worship spiritually. To worship God in truth is to worship truly. They are not two different kinds of worship but two aspects of the same worship. To worship spiritually is the opposite of mere external rights which pertain to the flesh, instead it is to give to God the homage of an enlightened mind and an affectionate heart. To worship him truly is to worship him according to the truth in a manner suited to the revelation he has made of himself and no doubt it carries with it the force of worshiping truly, not in pretense but sincerely. It is to worship spiritually, that is, without all these aids, these religious paraphernalia, without signs and symbols and icons and buildings and cathedrals, all these things. It's to worship God spiritually so that whatever takes place such as is taking place in our day, right this day when you can't go to where your icon is, where you can't go to your holy place. But God is on the throne and he is spirit and no matter what takes place, we can worship him and do worship him but not according to our own ideas as who he is.

Every idol has begun in the imagination of fallen man. Every idol came forth from the imagination of a sinner, and the Bible says they make them out of wood and stone and gold and precious things, every different kind of way, but they cannot say and they that make them are like them. And a god you can make up in your mind and say, "Well, I think this is the way he is. I've got my own opinion. I have my own ideas about God." To think that is to surely be doomed for eternity.

We don't need a god to save us who's like us. That's why God had to come in human flesh and take upon himself a body and do what could not be done from heaven, which is to die for our sins as a sinless sacrifice. If all we needed was one like ourselves, he'd not had to do that. You see, what is called worship today is outward, it's spectacular, it involves a building, it involves ornate furnishings, it involves rituals, ceremonies, but when you look at God's design for the worship of Israel in the wilderness, what was it like? If you had seen the tabernacle, if you had beheld that tabernacle with your natural eye, you would

have said, "That's the ugliest thing I have ever seen." Draped about with skins, badger skins, black, ugly, weather-beaten, but inside that was the golden mercy seat, the cherubim where God met.

So the worship of God doesn't have to do with external things, it has to do with the things of Christ. All those things inside the tabernacle pointed to some aspect of Christ's glory, his person and his work, and right central to that work was the priest was to sprinkle that blood on the mercy seat there between the cherubim and that is the only way that the Lord will meet a sinner, that's the only way a sinner can be accepted by God, that's the only way that a sinner can worship God. But today's worship, so called, is physical. We go to church. It's emotional, it's all based on a feeling, how did we feel, did we feel inspired today. It's always sensational. These preachers have all these gimmicks and devices and all these tricks to get people in. I don't know what they're gonna do today, but they have all these things to get bodies into buildings and get the money. Sensationalism.

Today's worship has an unholy familiarity with God about it, that they talk about God like he's their buddy or their golf partner or something. They talk about Christ as if he's just another somebody, "Me and Jesus have got a good thing going." There's no reverence in it. Holy and reverend is his name but they take the name of reverend to title their preachers with. But when the Spirit has come, they say, "I felt the Spirit." No, you didn't, not if you did not have a revelation of the truth of Jesus Christ from his word to your heart so that you believe the truth, because Christ said when the Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth is come, he'll take the things of mine and show them unto you.

And who do true worshipers worship? It's a sad day when worship in the name of God goes on and the only one who's worshiped is man. It starts when you come in the door. "Whose birthday is it today? Stand up and be recognized. Be counted. Who did so-and-so, who gave so-and-so?" And then it gets even worse, the preacher says, "God has done everything he can for you, now it's up to you. It's your decision. It's your work. It's your move down the aisle. It's whether you pray a sinner's prayer." It has nothing to do with that which glorifies God and nothing to do with salvation. Salvation is something we can't do and since God alone can save, and since he alone has done it in Christ, he's the one that gets all the glory and he's the one to be worshiped.

Look here at verse 23, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." Have you ever heard Christ say something to you? Well, I'll tell you I haven't audibly but there came a day when God enabled me to hear him speak through this book, to believe what he said, and from that day forward I found myself wanting to and worshiping only him in spirit and in truth.

So here's the truth of it: no Gospel, no worship. No truth, no worship. Only idolatry. And in the book of Psalms in Psalm 119, two times the Psalmist says, "I regard your precepts, your word to be right in all things, and I hate every false way." The truth.

You might say that there are three musts I can think of right offhand. In John 3 when he says, "Ye must be born again." And John also where it says, "The Son of God must be lifted up." And here where it says he must be worshiped. If God is truly worshiped, it will be spiritual worship according to his truth. He doesn't bring worship about with lies. You can tell lies on God and still have great emotional thrills and such, but you won't be worshiping. The only place you can find God, the God who is to be worshiped is in the holy Scriptures. Just read Psalm 50 and see if that's God, see if that's your God. He's the object of worship and he seeketh the true worshipers, those who will by his grace be brought to ascribe all the glory in salvation to God. They'll be brought by his message of the Gospel to rest in the finished work of Christ, to attribute all the righteousness that God gives as a gift through his imputation of it to us, and to simply say and believe that Christ is all. We rest in Christ alone and we worship Christ alone. We don't need signs, crosses, symbols. We don't need slow music. We don't need emotional stories. We didn't need all that religion relishes so much. We need only to hear the truth about Christ and him crucified.

Tell me again who he is, God in the flesh. Tell me again how he was sinless and perfect so that he might be my substitute and die for my sins. Tell me what he actually accomplished when he came into this world and he hung on that cross. What did it mean when God raised him from the dead for our justification? Let me hear about his work. Don't tell me what I'm to do, that gives me no hope and peace and rest, especially in a time like this. Tell me about what he's done. Tell me about the greatness of God. Remind me that he's a sovereign Lord, that he works all things out after the counsel of his own will, that what's going on now is no accident but according to his purpose.

True worship is the evidence of new birth, that is that circumcision of the heart that Paul speaks about, and he writes to the Philippians in Philippians 3 and he says, "For we are the circumcision," that's the true Jew, that's the true Israel, these are the true worshipers. Don't believe me? Listen to this, "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We don't need all this paraphernalia. We don't need all these pictures of somebody who's not Jesus but is called Jesus. We worship him spiritually, not by rituals and ceremonies and such, we worship him spiritually and our joy and our rejoicing and the center of our worship and the focal point of our worship is Jesus Christ and we have no confidence in the flesh. No confidence in anything we've done at any time, or will do, or hope to do, or plan to do. Our hope is in what he has accomplished.

Turn over to Matthew. You see, they sighed and sorrowed when they were in Egypt, Israel did, but when he delivered them, they rejoiced. They had the song of Moses. But not only is it the evidence of the new heart, it's the attitude of that heart which is a heart of faith. Matthew 15, look at verse 8 and what Christ says, he says, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far

from me." He had all these people around him almost all his life that claimed to be worshiping God and he was right in the midst of them and they couldn't see him, and they hated him, and they hated what he said. That's why every place almost where you see that somebody rose up to kill Christ, it was because of something he said, his truth.

But look a little farther down, look a little bit farther down. Verse 22, it says, "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Naturally speaking, she didn't fit that criteria but spiritually speaking, according to God's electing grace that he purposed toward this woman, she did. She did.

"Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very day." Verse 25 said, "Then she came and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me." That word "worship" there means "come licking as a dog would to his master's hand." She worshiped him. She came as she really was to him as he really was, undeserving as she was, but his ability to grant what he would and she asked this, "Have mercy on me." She worshiped him, a sinner saying, "Lord, save me," as Peter, "or I perish."

And every time we come before God, if we know the truth, we come worshiping. We fall down on our faces. We honor him as a sovereign Lord. We speak the truth of what he says about himself and what he says about us. What he was saying is, "You don't deserve mercy." She said, "Truth, Lord, but mercy, sovereign mercy can be shown by you to whom you will because of your coming and dying."

An old writer said worship then, is the occupation of the heart with a known God, and everything else which attracts the flesh and its senses detracts from real worship. Real worship, true worship is not physical or emotional but this is where the emphasis is in our day with the candles and the ceremonies and the prayer warriors and then stupid stuff that's said and done in the name of God, but if we follow the law of first mention, that is in the Bible where we first find the first mention of worship, it's found in Genesis 22 and it's with a true worshiper, a man by the name of Abraham, the father of all who believe, the father of the faithful, the father of all true worshipers. Verse 5 of Genesis 22, "Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." We'll go up and worship. How was God to be worshiped in Abraham's day? It says, "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the

lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

God will not be worshiped without a sacrifice. Sacrifice for sin, whether it's the sin offering, the burnt offering, whatever you want to call it, it is the sacrifice for sins. So when Abraham went up to worship, he took that which just simply pictured Christ and him crucified. He didn't look to that wood or to that lamb or to that natural blood, he looked to what it pictured. The Scripture says, Christ said, "Abraham saw my day." He by faith saw the one that was promised and was represented in these things and when he got up on the mountain, he got another picture of what's involved in true worship, and that is when he laid his son Isaac on the altar and was about to put that dagger in his heart and slay him at God's command, God stepped in and put a substitute in his place, the ram, the male lamb that was caught by his horns in the thicket. God provided, God appointed a sacrifice, and all these things picture Christ.

So we can't worship apart from the truth of Christ, not only who he is but especially what he did. And when this woman in our text, when she found out who he was, when she gets around to who he is and only by grace do we ever do that, and that because the Spirit of truth causes us to, she goes forth and the only one she talks about, the only one she worships, the only thing she trusts in is Christ and Christ alone. Many will worship. No, they won't worship. There will be false worshipers, but those who worship, the true worshipers be they few are God's people and they worship according to the Spirit and the truth. No truth, no worship. No truth, no Spirit.

"God, make us true worshipers. Teach us the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Cause us to rest in his work. Give us the peace that passeth understanding even in these troubled times."

I was telling someone we let what's going on around us keep our eyes off of what the Lord is doing and we forget these overlying truths, one of which is God appoints the time of a man's death. "It is appointed unto man once to die." You don't make it. I don't make it. It's already appointed. Secondly, God ordains the instrument. He knows how I'm going to die because he's already ordained that instrument. Until that time comes, we know this, whatever's going on, he's working it together for our good. But mainly we know, for us to live is Christ and to die is gain.

*Father, we thank you this morning for your presence. Your omniscience is wonderful. Your omnipresence is so wonderful in these times, we're reminded. We pray that you'd teach us your truth and when we are taught the truth, we will rejoice in Christ Jesus, have no confidence in the flesh, and we'll worship you in spirit and in truth. We do it for your honor and glory alone. Amen. Amen.*