

“...THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH”

In John 4:26 Jesus makes it very clear in a statement as He was speaking to a woman He had met at a well while He was in Samaria. He very clearly states in response to a query that this woman had presented to Him. She makes the statement, “...I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.”

We can almost tell, based on their conversation, that this was more of an inquiry than an actual statement. This was in the midst of their conversation. Jesus was telling her all about herself. He did not know her, yet there He was, telling her everything about herself. She may have been thinking within herself, Could this be... the Messiah. She is the one who brings up the Messiah. Could this “man” be...?

Jesus then gives her His profound answer as He very clearly tells her in John 4:25, “...I that speak unto thee **am he.**” Yes, Jesus very clearly makes it official. He very clearly states that, yes, He was absolutely and positively the One who she was truly looking for. Yes, He was the Messiah.

However, this account begins back in John 4:4. We see that Jesus was first in Galilee which is in the central and somewhat northern part of Israel. Galilee was most definitely a Jewish area. We see in verse 4, however, that it states, “He must need to go through Samaria.” Why did Jesus **have to** or even “**need to go**” through Samaria? After all, Samaria was not a Jewish area.

At that time, the religious “status” as seen by the Jewish people was – the Jewish people then the Gentiles and then there were the Samaritans. We must remember that the Samaritans were last on the “totem pole” as far as the Jewish people were concerned yet we read that Jesus **needed to go to Samaria.**

The whole concept of the “Samaritans” began in the time when the Kingdom of Israel was divided – not by God – but by the two sons of Solomon. They divided the Kingdom into two sections – the Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom was made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Northern Kingdom was comprised of the ten other tribes of Israel. The Northern Kingdom was defeated and taken away from their land by the Assyrian Empire. However, before the Assyrians could capture the Southern Kingdom of Israel, the Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonian Empire.

The Babylonian Empire ultimately did conquer the Southern Kingdom. They took most of the people who were in Judah and Benjamin away as captives back to Babylon. Babylon was then conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. It was at that time that those of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and Benjamin who were in Babylon were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and their Temple. They became known as “Jews” simply because the majority of them were from Judah – hence they were referred to as “Jews” or “Jewish” from the word Judah.

It was also at this time that those who were from the tribes of the “Northern Kingdom” began to come back to Israel from old Assyria. Unfortunately, those tribes who were from the Northern Kingdom became assimilated into the pagan culture of the Assyrian people. They intermarried and lost their true heritage.

Those who began to return to Israel from the region of old Assyria brought with them many of the pagan gods and much of the lifestyle of the pagan Assyrian people. They were not “allowed” back into Jerusalem by those Jewish people who had returned from Babylon for these people from old Assyria were not “looked upon” as true Jewish people anymore. Therefore, they set up their own worship system in Samaria – which was about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. Hence, they became known as “Samaritans.”

As mentioned previously, they were looked upon by the Jewish people who were in Jerusalem as “half-breeds” and really most Jewish people did not think or look at them as being Jewish at all. They remain in this fashion even to this very day.

Yes, there are Samaritans that live in the region of “Samaria” in Israel, known today as Sebaste, a town in central Israel about 25-30 miles north of Jerusalem. It is not under Jewish control. It is very near to the temporary “capital” of the Palestinian people. The Samaritans **are not** Palestinian. They are a very small group of people. They are still allowed to live there by the Palestinians, because they do not call themselves Israelites. Now, that we have had our brief “history” lesson, let us return to the text as found in John 4.

In John 4:8 we see that Jesus had His disciples (all of them) leave Him to go into the village to get themselves food. Now, the Samaritan woman comes and finds Jesus at the well. Normally, the woman would not even go near a Jewish person neither would a Jewish man go near a Samaritan person, especially a woman. Because of her “situation” she was literally forced to go at this “late” time of day, at noon, to go to this well and get her water. We will discuss this later on in this essay.

We see that it is Jesus who initiates the conversation by asking her to, “*Give me to drink.*” The woman immediately states the situation – why would He, a Jewish man ask her, a Samaritan, for a drink. Actually, a Jewish man would not even speak to a Samaritan – needless to say, a Samaritan woman.

Obviously, Jesus got her attention. He then asks her to give Him some “living water.” Wow. Do you see what Jesus did? He immediately got her attention by asking for “living water” – which He then tells her He already has. She must have been a little befuddled at this whole situation. First, a Jewish man asks her for water and now He is telling her that He has “living water” to give to her.

Jesus has her attention. However, as we continue on reading their discourse with each other we begin to see that this was not a simple random meeting. Actually, as far as Jesus was concerned, nothing was ever random or happenstance. He went to this well to meet this Samaritan woman who, in her heart, which He knew, was seeking after truth.

Jesus tells her that, “*Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*” Her immediate response was, “*Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*”

We know that Jesus exposes her whole life in front of her – she was married five times and she is presently living with another man. That was why she had to go to the well at this “late” time of day. The other Samaritan ladies had ostracized her because of her marital situation. However, Jesus did not bring this up to “expose” her sinfulness. What it really does is expose to the reader her desire for true joy and peace.

She was seeking after the “real thing.” She was truly seeking after true joy and ultimately, the “truth” - but could never find it. We see that this woman does represent to us a person who has tried everything to give her that true joy but had not yet found it. Now she meets this “Jewish man” who is willing to have a discourse with her and possibly may have the answer that she has been looking for her whole life.

In John 4:19, she begins to truly open herself up to Jesus. She sees and expresses her belief that Jesus is a “prophet.” But could He be more than a prophet? Hmmm.... She grasps at the opportunity to now ask what has truly been on her heart but could never truly trust anyone to give her the correct answer. She “asks” Jesus a question by making a statement, “*Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*” She was truly

seeking truth. She wanted to know how and where she could find and worship the true Living God. Yes, she was truly seeking...

This woman's life had been wrecked with hardships which ultimately caused her to dig deep within her heart to truly find the truth. Now, she thought, she could truly open up, ask and find out what the truth might be or actually was. She was trusting in Jesus to tell her the truth. However, the truth was nothing that she would have expected. To her it had seemed simple, "Who was seeking the true God?" Was it the Samaritans and their worship in Samaria or were the Jewish people correct in worshipping their God at the Temple in Jerusalem.

As I had mentioned, the answer was nothing that she had expected. The question itself tells us that it wasn't that she was asking "who" was correct, the Samaritans or the Jews. Rather she really wanted to know the truth so that she herself would be able to enter into a true relationship with the true God. She was desperately looking for the true God.

Jesus plainly tells her that the Samaritans and their thoughts of what "worship" was and what they were doing was totally incorrect. He goes on to state that the Jewish people knew the One they were worshipping but.... there was more – much more. You see, Jesus was saying that they both were missing out on truly worshipping and knowing the true God.

We see this by the use of the first word in John 4:23. The word is, "*But...*" He goes on to say, "***But the hour cometh, and now is...***" Jesus was stating that a "new day" had dawned and it was **now**. It was "**now**" simply because He was there – **now**. He goes on to say, "*...the **true worshippers** shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*"

Wow!!! Jesus profoundly speaks out that this is the time for the "**true worshipper**" to now worship the Father in "spirit and in truth." What does Jesus mean by the term "true worshipper?" The term "true" here is an adjective. It means to be real and genuine. It means the total opposite of being imperfect, frail, defective or uncertain.

The term "worshipper" used here simply means - "one who recognizes, yields to and adores the one they are turning towards." Now, this time that Jesus had come, was the time for those who genuinely desired to turn towards God to do so. Jesus will be and is, the One who will lead us to the Father's heart. Jesus will be the One who will lead us into His Kingdom so that we can now genuinely turn towards and have a true and real relationship with the Living God.

Jesus continues by stating that this "true worshipper" shall and must worship the Father (God) in "spirit and truth." When Jesus refers to worshipping "in spirit" He is referring to those who will worship their Father God in and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He is referencing here to those who will have a "born again" spirit by accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. When Jesus uses the term "in...truth" He is referring to the "true worshipper" who, after they become "born again," will now be able to worship God in a true and brand new "reality."

The individual's worship would be real and genuine – not out of religious practice - but rather out of a genuine, true and real relationship with the Father. This "true worship" would now be accomplished through having a real one to one relationship with the Father. This "real" relationship with the Father is only available through a "born again" spirit. Then and only then, will a person be able to truly, not only be able to worship God, but they would now have a true relationship with the one and only true Living God.

The woman, after hearing all of this, states that she was looking forward to the Messiah who would ultimately tell her and everyone the truth. Jesus very plainly states in John 4:26, "...I that speak unto thee am He." Yes, He was the Messiah. He was the one who would reveal all "truth" to the people. Jesus was the one who would lead anyone who wanted to truly know and worship God, the Father and who truly wanted to believe in who He was as the Messiah, to have a "born again" spirit. It would only be through Jesus that anyone who truly wanted to worship the one true God would be able to do so.

This was not really a new concept. God had shown us the beginnings of this back in the Old Testament. He tells us that Abram (Abraham) had originally come from a region known as "Eber." The name "Eber" literally means "the land or region beyond." The name "Eber" is from the Hebrew word "eber" (pronounced ā•ver) whose root etymology is the word "abar" (pronounced ä•var"). This word "abar" literally means "to cause to pass over, to cause to bring over, to cause to cross over, to make over; to dedicate and/or devote; to cause to pass through; to cause to pass by or beyond or under, let pass by; to cause to pass away, to cause to take away."

In simplified terms we can say that it means "to cross over" or it refers to "a crossing over." Our "true worship" has everything to do with "crossing over" into the realm where God is – the spirit realm. Jesus expressed what "true worship" really was in John 4:24 as He states that the true worshipper must "*worship Him in spirit and truth.*" We must realize and understand that the "real world" is actually the "spirit realm."

Through Jesus we are able to "crossover" into God's domain - that "region beyond," the Spirit realm. This worship brings us into the very presence of our God. When we worship as the "true worshipper" that Jesus referred to - from out of our "born again" spirit and in truth, being real before the Living God - our time with God becomes a wonderful time of real relationship and oneness with Him. We enter into, express and experience a "true, first love" relationship with the Father.

Sometimes I feel that we as Christians have it backwards. In our gatherings, when we enter into "times of worship," we are so set in our desire to want God to come into our midst. Now, I am not saying that that is a bad thing. However, could it be possible that when we do enter into that time of true, "attitude of the heart" worship that the Father is seeking after that, maybe, just maybe, He becomes so delighted with us that He comes and desires to take us "to His place?" Hmm.....

Worship today is an attitude of heart that is lived out as **a lifestyle** of worshipping the Lord **in all that we do**, in every aspect of our lives. It flows out of a regenerated spirit that the believer now has become. It is accomplished in reality (truth). Each of us needs to be and must be "real" before our God as we worship Him from our born again spirit to Him who is Spirit.

It does not depend on who you are, where you are from, or what culture you come out of. Together we come as one, led by the Holy Spirit, to worship God as the "One New Man in Christ" worshipping Him in "spirit and truth." God is a God of oneness in the midst of diversity. The gift we bring is to be a gift of love and adoration unto our God in response to His "Gift" of love to us - His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Remember, it does not matter what the box is wrapped with as long as the "gift" inside blesses the heart of our King.

Just as with the woman at the well in John 4, Jesus will go to a specific place to meet with someone who truly has a heart for and is truly seeking Him. I pray that He has truly met with each one of us. He does if you truly have a desire for God's Spirit and for His truth. It is not a "one time" thing, however. It is an everyday desire for more and more of Him. We are called to seek after Him in spirit and in truth **everyday** and **every moment** of our lives.

I encourage those of us who may have sought after Him once and received Him that we continue to seek after more and more of Him. It is the “sanctification process.” The sanctification process is a continuous process until the day when we actually are with Him. It is a lifestyle condition of continually seeking after God, His truth, His ways and His life. It never ends. We never have received and attained it all. There is always more of God for us to partake in, enjoy and experience.

We are to always be reminded that each one of us as His people must always continually seek after Him as His “true worshipper.” We are to continually seek after Him with a “born again” spirit in which He gives to the true believer. We must always be real and truthful with Him. We must always remember that they that worship Him must “*worship Him in spirit and in truth.*”