

# COMMENTARY ON JOHN

## LESSON NUMBER 46

John 4:19 *“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. <sup>21</sup> Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.”* .....(John 4:19-22)

### **SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

When it comes to the worship of God, men do not have the option of being wrong in their perception of it. Today there is an approach to *“worship”* that leaves a person thinking that worship itself has a sanctifying influence. Thus some teach that *“worship”* opens up a “portal” into heaven through which Divine communication and visitation is realized. Thus, worship is viewed as a starting point, and an objective. However, this is not true. **Worship is the result of knowing, believing, and loving the Lord!** Apostolic doctrine teaches that those in Christ *“worship God in the Spirit”* (Phil 3:3) – not that they should worship Him. Some teach that every person worships God in their own way. Our text will tell us something of the Samaritan way, which Jesus summarily rejects. The Samaritan woman with whom Jesus is speaking now seeks to divert the attention from herself to a subject with which the Samaritans and the Jews were at variance. Jesus answers her in a manner that challenges the thinking of men to this very day. This confirms that there is still a great need for understanding in this area. This is particularly seen in view of our Lord’s response to Satan’s suggesting that Christ worship him: *“it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve”* (Luke 4:8). This is based on Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20, where the word *“fear”* is used in the place of *“worship.”* This also presents a different view of *“worship”* than is common in our time. It will be instructive to note the manner in which our Lord answers this woman’s inquiry. It will shed light on the role of the Jews, the real status of Samaritan worship, and what God absolutely requires in worship. You will probably perceive that contemporary perceptions of *“worship”* relate more closely to the manners and customs of the Samaritans, than to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This strongly suggests that Satan is very limited in the perspectives he seeks to promote.

#### **“I PERCEIVE THAT THOU ART A PROPHET**

John 4:19 *“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”*

**SIR, I PERCEIVE THAT THOU ART A PROPHET.** Behold how quickly this woman turns the attention from what Jesus declared to her. In a very unapparent way, she has

admitted Jesus has spoken the truth about her. She makes no effort to defend herself, or to explain her situation.

The Samaritan's received the writings of Moses, whose prophecy of the Messiah was that He would be a "*Prophet*" (Deut 18:15,18). Moses also refers to "prophets" twelve times in his writings, including the coming Messiah, legitimate prophets, and false prophets. In fact, Moses is the one who introduced the concept of a prophet. Abraham is the first person who was called a "prophet" (Gen 20:7). Aaron was declared to be Moses' prophet (Ex 7:1). Moses described "prophets" as those upon whom "*the Lord would put His Spirit*" (Num 11:29). He affirmed that he "*would God that all the Lord's people were prophets*" (Num 11:29). Moses himself was described as a unique prophet: "*And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face*" (Deut 34:10).

Here, the woman did not associate a "*prophet*" with declaring the future, but with knowing the true circumstance of an individual. When Jesus told her of living water, she did not say He was a "*prophet.*" She saw him as the kind of prophet Elisha was, although the Samaritans did not recognize him. He knew the words the king of Syria spoke in his bedchamber (2 Kgs 6:12). Paul presented a possible scenario to the Corinthians where every one prophesied, and their utterances revealed the secrets of a stranger's heart that came among them (1 Cor 14:25). That is what has taken place at Jacob's well.

**OUR FATHER'S WORSHIPED IN THIS MOUNTAIN.** Some have conjectured that this referred to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is rather a reference to the Samaritan "*fathers,*" not Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for they did not worship in one location. They built altars several places: the plain of Moreh (Gen 12:7), Bethel (Gen 12:8), the plain of Mamre (Gen 13:18), Mount Moriah (Gen 22:9), Beersheba (Gn 26:25), and a field near the city of Shalem (Gen 33:20). Until the Jews settled in the land, there was not a specific place designated for worship.

After being expelled from the land, a priest was located to teach the people imported into Canaan from heathen locations (2 Kgs 17:27). However, the people "*made gods of their own*" after the manner of the cities from which they were taken (2 Kgs 17:29). There we have an example of corrupted worship in Canaan. Of these "*fathers*" it is written, "*They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel*" (2 Kgs 17:33-34).

The mountain of reference is Mount Gerizim, upon which a blessing was to be put when the Jews first entered the land (Deut 11:29). All of the blessings of the Law were read to the people from that mountain (Deut 27:12). Now, the mountain had been corrupted by false worship, and it was the Samaritan's "*fathers*" that originated it.

We ought to note that all false religion has its "*fathers,*" and they are most frequently exalted to unlawful positions. Every movement has its "*fathers,*" and the traditions of that movement are tied to its "*fathers.*"

**YE SAY THAT JERUSALEM IS THE PLACE TO WORSHIP.** In saying "*ye say,*" the woman meant the Jews, not Jesus in particular. When it came to the worship of God, although both the Samaritans and the Jews claimed to be doing so, there was a stark difference between the two – and it was a very real and legitimate difference.

Note that this women did not associate the city of Jerusalem with the God who

chose that city, to place His name there (1 Kgs 11:36; 14:21). Jesus Himself said that Jerusalem *"is the city of the Great King"* (Matt 5:35). Solomon, as he was commanded, built the Temple *"in Jerusalem"* (1 Chron 6:10). The Psalmist said that is where the Temple was located (Psa 68:29). When the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, it was rebuilt (Neh 2-4). When the Temple was destroyed, it was rebuilt by Cyrus by the commandment of God (2 Chron 36:23), Ezra (Ezra 1:1-4). At the time of this text, Jerusalem was the center of the worship of God (Psa 122:3-5; John 5:1; 7:2; 12:20). Yet, the woman is looking at this as a custom of the Jews, not relating it to the God of heaven at all.

When it comes to the service of God, this is what the traditions of men do. They blind men to the truth of God, and when truth contradicts their customs, they can only see it as a differing custom. Perhaps, like this woman, they would like to have a satisfactory answer. We will find from the answer of Jesus that He will not credit people with the worship of God when they do not know what they are doing. This is a Jesus with whom the present Christian world is rapidly becoming unacquainted.

### **THE HOUR IS COMING**

*"<sup>21</sup> Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."*

**WOMAN, BELIEVE ME.** As with all of Christ's words, this word is accompanied with the power to do what is said. Think of *"Believe Me"* as having all of the power involved in *"Stretch forth thy hand"* (Mk 3:5), or *"Arise, take up thy bed and walk"* (Mk 2:9). Words similar to this are, *"Fear not"* (Lk 12:32), and *"Be not faithless but believing"* (John 20:27). There are different ways to view words such as this. One is to consider them much like a law that is to be obeyed. That has its value. However, it seems to me that it is better to view the Lord's words as doable simply because it is He who spoken them.

**THE HOUR COMETH.** Other versions read, *"a time is coming."*<sup>NIV</sup> The word translated *"hour"* [hora] means, *"ANY DEFINITE TIME, POINT OF TIME, MOMENT."*<sup>THAYER</sup> *"THE TIME SET FOR SOMETHING, HOUR, APPOINTED TIME."*<sup>FRIBERG</sup> This is an appointed time, **determined by God, who alone can set times and seasons** (Acts 1:7). Just as certain times and seasons have been determined in nature—i.e. *"Day"* and *"night"* (Gen 1:5), and *"Seedtime and harvest"* (Gen 8:22), so there are certain periods during which God deals with men in certain manners: from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and after Christ. Viewed from another perspective, without the Law (Rom 5:13), with the Law (John 1:17; Gal 3:24), and the *"better covenant"* (Heb 8:6).

There are key periods of time that supercede all other periods. Life is best lived in view of those seasons. Ultimately, there is the time of *"the end"* (1 Cor 14:24), the coming of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2), the resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29), and the day of judgment (Acts 17:31). Those are all times when men will not be able to make any adjustment or preparation. In view of this, they must ever be in our thinking, compelling us to be diligently preparing for them.

But there are also other periods – spiritual epochs that bring unspeakable advantages and benefits. The entrance of the Lord into the world was one of those (Lk 2:11). The commencement of the ministry of Jesus was another (John 18:37). Now Jesus will refer to one of those times as *"the hour."* It was the era of the New Covenant, when He would commence bringing many sons to glory from heaven (Heb 2:10). It would be a time of a new involvement of the people with the Living God (Heb 8:10-12), a time when men would have access to God (Eph 3:12), and to His grace (Rom 5:2) – a time of

reconciliation to God (Rom 5:10), fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and the receiving of the Holy Spirit of God in copious measure (Tit 3:5-6). This is the era that commenced on the day of Pentecost. It was the time promised to Abraham during which all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3). Jesus will speak to this woman in view of that time, that era, that *"hour."*

**A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN.** Jesus will emphasize the better thing. He will not spend time elaborating on the covenant that would be obviated by the new, or make this woman conscious of the present requirements of worship. During the administration of the Old Covenant, such things were in order. Now, however, was the time to emphasize what was *"at hand"* – the Kingdom of God (Mk 1:15; Lk 10:9,11).

**NEITHER IN THIS MOUNTAIN, NOR YET AT JERUSALEM.** Up to this time, geographical and topographical places were specified: Canaan, Jerusalem, the Temple, and the synagogue. Because there was not yet a joining of the human spirit with God, there had to be places where Divine communication could be realized. This even included altars. Jesus would later speak of a time when two or more believers would gather together, and He would be with them (Matt 18:20), regardless of the place where that gathering occurred. During His ministry, Jesus lived this out before the people, being with them and teaching them by the Sea, on a mountain, in a plain, and in a desert. Once He was enthroned in glory, men would have access to God wherever they were. There would be no more arrangements as existed under the Law.

**WORSHIP THE FATHER.** Other versions read, *"do obeisance to the Father."* <sup>ABP</sup> What does it mean to *"worship the Father?"* When John the apostle fell down at the feet of an angel, the angel responded, *"worship God"* (Rev 19:0; 22:9). This is a physical posture befitting of God. Paul said he *"bowed his knees" unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Eph 3:14). There are references to people bowing their head before the Lord (Gen 24:26,48; Ex 4:31; 12:27; 34:8; Num 22:31; 2 Chron 20:18; 29:20,30; Neh 8:6). This is why we bow our heads when we pray – not out of a sense of Law, but because of reverence for God, and to show our awareness of His awesome Presence. People who look about during prayer are dishonoring God, and admitting to their lack of the awareness of His presence.

Those in Christ are said to *"worship God"* (Phil 3:3). The word *"worship"* in all of its forms occurs six times from Romans thru Hebrews. It occurs fourteen times in the Revelation – a consistent response to the working of God. In this *"day of salvation"* (2 Cor 6:2), men are made *"worshippers"* – *"true worshippers."* Their *"worship"* is not driven by times and places, but by their nature, which includes a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26), newness of life (Rom 6:4), and being a new creation (2 Cor 5:17).

### **WE KNOW WHAT WE WORSHIP**

*" 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. "*

**YE WORSHIP, YE KNOW NOT WHAT.** Other versions read, *"You worship what you do not know,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"without knowledge of what you are worshipping,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"You people worship what you do not understand,"* <sup>NAB</sup> *"You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"what ye have not known,"* <sup>YLT</sup> *"you Samaritans know so little about Him, worshipping blindly,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"You worship One of whom you know nothing,"* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *"don't really know the one you worship,"* <sup>CEV</sup> *"You worship something you know nothing about,"* <sup>GOODSPEED</sup> *"You worship guessing in the dark,"* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> and *"You [Samaritans] do not know*

*what you are worshiping [you worship what you do not comprehend].* " <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

If you have ever wondered how candidly Jesus speaks, take special note of His response to the woman at the well. He has told her about herself (John 4:17-18), and now He tells her about her religion. There is no need for anyone to be offended by the forthright manner in which Jesus speaks. His words, He apprised us, *"are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). They are mingled with grace and mercy, which the individual who gives heed to them, will receive. However His words may be perceived, Jesus assured us that if we love Him and keep His words, He and His Father will come and make their abide with us (John 14:23). O, the blessedness of such an arrangement – and it is not theoretical, but is a Divinely orchestrated arrangement.

**WE KNOW WHAT WE WORSHIP.** Other versions read, *"we worship that which we know,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"we give worship to what we have knowledge of,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"We Jews know what we're worshipping,"* <sup>GWN</sup> *"we worship what we understand,"* <sup>NAB</sup> *"we worship what we have known,"* <sup>YLT</sup> *"We worship One whom we know,"* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *"we do obeisance to whom we know,"* <sup>ABP</sup> *"But we Jews do know the God we worship,"* <sup>CEV</sup> *"we Jews worship in the clear light of day,"* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> and *"We do know what we are worshiping [we worship what we have knowledge of and understand]."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The reason for the Jews knowing who they worshiped was because their's was a revealed religion. The Samaritan's religion was a humanly-devised one. The God whom the Jew worshiped had revealed Himself to them. Nothing remotely like this had been given to the Samaritans.

It ought to be noted here that God is selective concerning who comes to know Him. All men have been made to, and admonished to, seek the Lord (Acts 17:27). However, from the beginning, God has chosen those to whom He revealed Himself, as demonstrated in Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Israel, the prophets, etc. Zophar posed the question, *"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"* (Job 11:7). The Psalmist observed, *"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known"* (Psa 77:19). No one can study nature and arrive at the knowledge of God, which is eternal life. Deep thought and profound reasoning will not produce an acquaintance with the unrevealed God. Not even a disciplined study of the Scriptures themselves will yield the knowledge of God that must be possessed if one is to have eternal life. **This knowledge – knowing who they worshiped – was the result of revelation.**

**SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS.** Other versions read, *"salvation is from the Jews,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"salvation comes from the Jews,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"salvation comes to the world through the Jews,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"Salvation comes from the Jewish people,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"and by using us, God will save the world,"* <sup>CEV</sup> *"God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews,"* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> and *"life is from the Jews."* <sup>MURDOCK</sup>

The Jews, a created and chosen race, are the vehicle through whom salvation has been made available to men. This is not a race of people that resulted from a natural process. They are not a body of people formed by geographical location, natural origin, or a political process. This nation came by means of an impotent man and a barren woman. The man was singled out from an idolatrous family. Everything he came to know about God was revealed to him. From the very first, Abraham was told what God would do through him: *"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."* (Gen 12:3). The first part of that promise guaranteed that no other people, or group of people, would be able to remove Abraham's

seed from the earth. The latter part confirmed that God determined men would be rescued from a fallen state. The Divine attention was so singularly focused on the Jews that it is written of them, *"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; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"* (Rom 9:4-5). That is a breakdown of some of the key components of salvation.

This is the first of two times Jesus is recorded as using the word *"salvation."* The other time is when He said to Zaccheus, *"This day is **salvation** come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham"* (Luke 19:9). Salvation speaks of deliverance, transformation, conformity to the image of Christ, an eternal inheritance, and reigning with Christ.