

TRUE WORSHIPERS

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John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In the context of this passage, Jesus was teaching a Samaritan woman who asked Jesus which was the appropriate physical place to worship God: the mountain of Samaria as the Samaritans said, or Jerusalem as the Jews said. In John 4:20, the Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The answer that our Lord gave her reveals the kind of worshipers that God is seeking to find. John 4:21-24 says, "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers 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."

Worshipping in spirit

In his answer to the Samaritan woman, Jesus taught that God is a spiritual not a physical being. He pointed out that the woman was ignorant of the nature of God and thus of the appropriate nature of worship. He said of the Samaritans, and their physical understanding of God and worship: "*Ye worship ye know not what*" (John 4:22). Jesus plainly stated that "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit" (John 4:24). Because God is a spirit, not a physical being, our worship must be spiritual, not physical. Paul made the same point to the Athenians, as "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). Acts 17:22-25 says, "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Paul told the Athenians that they were ignorant of whom they worshipped. God is a spiritual being, the Creator of all things, and He does not dwell in a physical place. Paul plainly said that God is not worshiped with men's hands. Again, God is a spirit and must be worshiped spiritually, not physically. Malachi 3:3 foretold of the New Testament, when Christians, the spiritual "sons of Levi" would "*offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*" We see the fulfillment of this prophecy described in 1 Peter 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." As

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Christians, our offerings to God in worship must be spiritual in nature. Thus, our worship must come from the heart. Matthew 12:35 says, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Proper worship is an example of something good that must come from a good heart. If our heart is not right with God, our worship will be in vain (Matt 15:8-9). The specific actions that God commands as part of our worship require a proper heart, and are not to be mere physical actions. For example, our prayers are to be effectual and fervent (Jas 5:16). Christ commands us not to pray using "vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt 6:7). Our congregational singing is to be *in our hearts to the Lord* (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). Our giving on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2) is to be done by "*every man according as he purposeth in his heart*" (2 Cor 9:7). We are to partake of the Lord's supper every Sunday (Acts 2:42; 20:7) in a worthy manner, remembering Christ's death and examining ourselves (1 Cor 11:23-29). That is what it means to worship God in spirit.

Worshiping in truth

To be a true worshiper, we must also worship God in truth (John 4:23). In John 18:37-38, Jesus Christ said to Pontius Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, *What is truth?*" Jesus already had given Pilate the answer to the question when he said that "*everyone that is of the truth hears my voice.*" In his prayer to his Father on the eve of his crucifixion, the Lord said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). Psalm 119 contains several statements about the word of God being the truth. Psalm 119:142 says, "*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.*" Psalm 119:151 says, "*Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth.*" And Psalm 119:160 says, "*Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*" Therefore, to worship God in truth means to worship God according to God's word. If our worship is in violation of God's commandments, then it is in vain (Matt 15:9). Many people were killed in the Old Testament for worshiping God contrary to His commandments (Lev 10:1-2; Num 16:35-40; 1 Kgs 12:26-33; 13:34). Worshiping God in truth also includes respecting God's silence. That is, God's silence is restrictive, not permissive (Heb 1:5; 7:13-14). Therefore, we must not offer any kind of worship to God that is not authorized by God in His word. We need His authority to do *everything* that we do (Matt 28:18). Colossian 3:17 says, "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*"