

“BE RESOLVED: WORSHIP GOD”

John 4:19-24

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January 3, 2016.

INTRODUCTION:

1) That's what God's people did in the OT time: “The Lord appeared to Abram and said: To your offspring, I will give you this land. So he built an altar there to the Lord. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel. There he built another altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.” (Genesis 12:7-8) Many people, including some Christians, don't really understand why do we come to church to worship God so often. This record of worshipping God early in the Bible shows us how God's people connected with God each step of his life. Many of us dream and desire a close relationship with God like Abraham had, and the blessings God bestowed on him, then we need to do what he did all his life, his pursuit of worshipping God wherever he went. God knows who is worthy of his blessing and who loves him enough to put Him first in their schedule of life. Here we see that the first thing Abram did when he arrives at a new place, he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord, God. He made worshipping God first in his life.

2) That's what God's people did in the NT time: “Those who accepted the message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to there numbers that day. They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching, to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyday they continue to meet together in the temple court. They broke bread in their homes.” (Acts 2:41-42, 46) Many Christians envy and desire the spiritual power and the growth of the new church and Christians in the first century. Here we have a glimpse of what they did and how they gained that spiritual and numerical growth. They were fervent in worshipping God, in Bible study, in prayer and in Christian fellowship in the temple (church) and in their homes. Growth in spiritual and number will come naturally when God's people are fervent in doing the right thing: Make worship

God, Bible study, prayer and fellowship priority in our daily schedule will bring us to that level.

MAKE WORSHIP A NEW PRIORITY:

1) God desires to meet with his people: “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet, give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said: My name shall be there, so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.” (1 Kings 8:27-29) In all the prayers in the Bible, this prayer by King Solomon is the most earnest and humble prayer as he dedicated the new temple to God. There are many very important lessons in this prayer, and the most important is the fact that this temple is built in the name of God and God promised his presence with his people. Decades earlier while the Israelis were wondering in the desert, God told Moses to build a tabernacle among the camps of the people, so people will see that God was with them.

2) God's people desires to meet with God: When Paul was called to bring the gospel message to the people he traveled from city to city where he presented the gospel in synagogues where God's people congregated. Later in history, God's people want to have a place where they can meet with God and others to worship, to study, to fellowship with one another. Yes, God is Spirit and he doesn't need a place called church to meet his people, but we are human beings, we need a place built in the name of God so we can come to meet with him. Since very early in history, churches were built with the sacrifices of people, like this church, so, God's people can congregate to meet God.

3) God's people in modern days on worship: Traditionally, Christians treasure church worship so much that it has become the most

important activity in a church. Today we still see this in our culture: Many Christians may not participate in other activities of a church but they still do their best to attend the worship service. We see worship as the most important part of our spiritual life, the most solemn hour of the week when we meet with God, listen to His word and offer our prayer and dedication to him. That is why we have the highest number of attendance in most churches at the worship than any other activities. Going to church on Sundays is a special thing in the life of most Christians. People will prepare the time, get up early in the morning, dress up a little and be ready to worship God and fellowship with other saints in the God's house. Most of these people will concentrate their attention in singing praises to God, offer prayers and offerings to God as well as listening attentively to the expounding of God's word. Many of them receive the most Bible knowledge and spiritual nourishment on that day.

NEW MEANING ON WORSHIPING GOD: (John 4:19-21)

1) The importance of a new faith: “Believe me, woman.” (4:21) Since both the Jews and the Samaritans had worshiped God in the OT tradition of the Mosaic Law for hundreds of years, now Jesus has come to bring them a new focus of worship, not by the law, but by faith. Christians worship God on Sunday because that is the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead. So, the worship focus is no longer on the law, but on expressing our faith in the risen Christ. Faith is the key to a meaningful worship experience. In Romans 10:11-13 the Bible says, “Anyone who believe in him will never be put to shame...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Worship in the OT time may be routine and legalistic and lose meaning to the worshipers. But now it is a new age, a new horizon that demands a new faith in the Lord. Every time we come to worship God, to sing praises to Him and to pray to him, faith is the center of all these we do. Decades later, Paul made it very clear on the importance of faith when we come to worship God in

Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

2) The importance of a new start: “A time is coming and it has come.” (4:23) In fact, both the Jews and the Samaritans had worshiped God for centuries first in Shiloh, then in Jerusalem and in Samaria, but Jesus wasn't talking about the chronology or the location of worship. Jesus talked about the meaning of worship: Every worship experience must be a new start to make it meaningful. He was talking about the coming of a new age, a new focus because God has descent from heaven to earth to bring new hope for mankind. We all need to look at a worship service in a new way with new desires for growth and closer relationship with God. Some may come to worship as a routine with little or no new desire, no expectation, just to fulfill the duties of being a Christian, but that isn't what Jesus wants us to have. So, next time when you prepare yourself to come to worship, see it as a new time and a new opportunity with new expectation and a renewed commitment, then it will be a whole new experience to enrich your spiritual, emotional and mental life. A new start of the day, the week, and a new year like today, is a very important.

3) The importance of a new relationship: “When you will worship the Father” (4:21b) is a new relationship in worship. Jesus is the first person to address God as his Father, and here, he introduced this new concept of God as Father to the Samaritan woman and to all who believe in him. By addressing God as Father, it brings a close life relationship between sinful men and a holy God. When we come to worship on Sundays, we don't just come to worship God as the great creator, the redeemer, but the loving and caring Father. This is a new relationship Jesus has brought to all us those who believe in him, so we can call God our Father. Early in the gospel of John 1:12, “To all who received Him, to those who believe in His name, he gave them the right to become children of God.” In a society today, many children

have a very marginal or distant relationship with their father and mother that created many social problems in family relationship. Let us pay more attention and do more to promote and strengthen our relationship with God as our Father through worship.

NEW ATTITUDE ON WORSHIPING GOD: (4:22-23)

1) The attitude of learning: “You Samaritans worship what you do not know, we worship what we do know.” (4:22) Samaritans worshiped in the mountains in Samaria not because of the command of God but because of political decision in the divided kingdoms. They just follow the tradition to do what everyone else did. I am afraid that today, some people come to worship are with that same attitude: They don't know what and why they do that. Many, if not most, Christians do not have their personal Bible study time in their everyday life. Many of them don't come to Bible study or discipleship classes. The teaching from the pulpit at a worship service becomes the prime time of learning for many of these people. The reason we provide an outline is to help you listen attentively and fill in the blanks, keep in your Bible and go to it again during the week to study it deeper to know more on God's Word. In some fast growing churches, they use the sermon from the Sunday before as their group study to deepen understanding of the Word of God. The best time to do that is during the Friday night discipleship class time. Do not come to worship because it is a Sunday tradition. Come with a humble heart to learn more what God wants us to know His will and so we can follow.

2) The attitude of spiritual growth: “A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit.” (4:23a) Worship God in spirit means to worship God with the spiritual drive and ability to see one's soul, seeking the most intimate communion and fellowship with God. It is that spiritual core in one's life and being gets connected with the spirit of God in the deepest sense. One illustration may explain this better: When Mary heard

from the angel the announcements of God's plan to send a Savior through her womb, although she didn't comprehend the full meaning of it, but she burst into joy and her response was: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47) Everything in a worship including the praises, the prayer, the reading and expounding of His Word, with the saints of God in His house, all uplifts our soul closer to God no other things we do on our own may achieve. That is worship in spirit.

3) The attitude of honest sincerity: "The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." (4:23b) The word truth means many things in the Bible including the gospel doctrine. But truth here, *aletheia*, means sincere, to act and maintain truthful in words or deed. So, our attitude to worship must be honest, sincere and truthful without the mixture of anything that may cut into the core value of worshiping God. When we come to worship, we come to worship God, not for anything else. No one should come to a worship service for the purpose of meeting friends, to chat with people, to build connection for selfish purpose or to show off his/her talents or piety, etc. We also need to come well prepared with a full heart of reverence and desire to meet God, not in halfhearted or in sleepy eyes.

WHY DO WE WANT TO WORSHIP GOD:

1) God loves to see us worship Him: "For they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." (4:23c) "Seek" means to look for. God loves his people come to worship Him, and He particularly looks for those who come to worship him to pursue spiritual connection with Him, and come in utmost sincerity and honesty. Many of us will pray and sing that "I love you, Lord" and that is great. But how do we express what we pray and sing is true and honest? Jesus shows us a simple way: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21) If you

truly love God, do what he loves to see you do: Come to worship him in spirit and truth.

2) It maximizes our fruitful life: “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) Many of us long for a real good spiritual life so we can bear much spiritual fruit. Jesus gives us a formula: Abide in him, get connected with him. The first act we can do is come to his house to worship him all the time, well prepared in spirit and in sincerity. Do not allow things in this world tangled you up like work, business, school homework, parties, or anything else takes priority over worshiping God. Paul advised the early Christians: “Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)