



**“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...”**  
**2 Peter 1:21**

## Worshipping in Spirit and Truth

By Alex Hale

As Jesus converses with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4), the conversation shifts. They are at a well, and so Jesus naturally begins their discussion by speaking to her about water (v. 7-10). The conversation then moves from “small talk” to spiritual things (v. 13-15). Jesus then transitions from spiritual matters in a broad sense to talking specifically about this woman’s life (v. 16-18). In an attempt to change the subject from a discussion of her five past husbands, the Samaritan woman asks Jesus a question about worship, specifically the proper location for acceptable worship (v. 19-20). Though the woman’s question was possibly little more than a “smokescreen” designed to take the focus off of her, the Lord’s response is used even today as we seek to define worship. In the kingdom, Jesus says that the location of one’s worship is not of primary importance, but two particular elements are essential – spirit and truth (v. 21-24). What does it mean to worship in spirit and in truth?

### Worshipping God in Spirit

Some understand this to mean “to do so with sincerity” or “from the heart.” Indeed those things are important. However, within the context of John 4, Jesus is making a contrast between worship under the old law (which required a specific location) and New Testament worship, which would be done in places other than Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem (v. 21). If all Jesus is saying is that we are to worship sincerely or from the heart, there is no distinction between that and Old Testament worship. Sincerity and worship from the heart were required under the old law as well (Deut 6:4-7; Isa 1:10-18)! This leads us to believe that Jesus is saying something else here.

What Jesus is saying is that to worship in spirit is to “offer spiritual worship.” As Christians, we offer worship that is different from the physical or fleshly worship of the old law. Old Testament worship consisted of fleshly ordinances which appealed to the physical senses (Heb 9:1-10). These included a physical structure (first the tabernacle, then the temple), special clothing for priests, lampstands, the burning of incense, instrumental music, and animal sacrifices.

However, New Testament worship is focused on man’s spiritual side. God’s temple is spiritual, made up of believers (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:19-22). All Christians are priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15). Our prayers are as sweet incense (Rev 5:8). Our music is making melody with the heart (Eph 5:19). Physical ordinances of the Old Testament were to last until a “*time of reformation*” which occurred with the arrival of the new covenant (Heb 9:9-10).

### Worshipping God in Truth

The word of God is truth (John 17:17). It is the word of truth which saves us (Col 1:5; Eph 1:13). It is the word of truth which we are to handle correctly (2 Tim 2:15). This is to be our standard of acceptable worship. Our worship is to be in keeping with the commands of God. God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33). All things are to be done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40). When one worships according to his own desires, rather than in harmony with the New Testament, he is guilty of self-willed worship (Col 2:20-23). The question with our worship is not, “Do I like this?” but rather, “Will God be pleased by this?” The answer to that question can only be found in the revealed word.



## CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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### When We Meet

#### Sunday

Bible Classes – 9:00 am  
 Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm

#### Wednesday

Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

### Our Elders

R.D. Hopper  
 Norman Kemper

### Our Deacons

Troy Hunter  
 Kelly Kendall  
 Tony Ramick

### Our Preacher

Alex Hale