

“GOD IS SPIRIT”

Jno.4:24

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Looking at the text in context, we learn that while passing through Samaria Jesus engages a local woman in conversation at Jacob’s well.
 - a. Jesus asks the woman for a drink of water from the well since he is without utensils for drawing water, Vv.7,11.
 - b. This arouses her curiosity since he is a Jew and she is a Samaritan, V.9.
 - c. Jesus seizes the opportunity and suggests to her that he is truly someone important to her, possessing that which she desperately needs – living water, v.10.
2. Speaking of living water Jesus identifies himself as the source of all spiritual life, Vv.10-14.
 - a. The woman misunderstood, thinking he refers to actual water, V.11.
 - b. Jesus offers the woman eternal life, and she accepts the offer, V.15.
3. That which follows is both a sign and a convicting revelation, Vv.16-19.
 - a. A sign, because Jesus could not know this information except by revelation.
 - b. A convicting revelation, because his woman knew what Jesus said was true – she was an adulteress – a sinner needing forgiveness – the water of life.
4. The woman convinced of Jesus’ prophetic office turns the dialogue to the most important religious question she could think of – **How should we worship God?**
 - a. The Jews and the Samaritans since the days of Zerubbabel had been in conflict over the right manner and place at which to worship Jehovah. (See Ezra 4:1-6; Neh.2:17-20)
 - b. By asking this question, this woman is seeking to know what she should do in order to please God.
 - c. Jesus clearly takes up the truth – Salvation is of the Jews, God’s covenant is with us and not the Samaritans and the perverted calf worship of this hill in Samaria, Vv.21-24.

- (1) In these verses, Jesus instructs this woman in the greater truth that while salvation is *of*, that is, “out of,” “from” or “through” the Jews, the time has come for it to reach even to her and all men.
 - (2) Salvation in Christ – the living water he offers – is not dependent upon race or geography which was formerly bound up in the shadows and types of Judaism; rather, it is grounded in the boundless God of heaven and the truth of his New Covenant in Christ ready to be established.
 - (3) Thus he reveals to her that the time has come “when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him,” V.23.
 - (4) Then he declares unto her a most important truth: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,” V.24.
5. Upon hearing this news the woman says she knows that Messiah is coming who will reveal all of God’s will for all of mankind, V.25 (see Deut.18:15-19). Jesus says to her, “I am He,” V.26.
 6. With this look at the text in context we are ready to discuss the meaning of V.24, its affect on our worship of God, and on our daily conduct when believed and obeyed.

II. DISCUSSION

A. FIRST, THE MEANING OF THE WORD “SPIRIT” AND THEN ITS APPLICATION TO GOD, THE FATHER.

1. What is the meaning of the word “spirit” in its primary use in the N.T.? To what and to whom is it applied in its primary use?
 - a. The original Gr. term for “spirit” – **pneuma** – primarily denotes “**the wind**”...; also “**breath**”; then, especially “the spirit,” which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful. (*Vine’s Expository Dict. of Biblical Words*)
 - (1) Jno.3:8: “The *wind* bloweth were it listeth.”
 - Jno.6:18: “And the sea arose by reason of a great *wind* that blew.”
 - Ac.2:2: “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty *wind*.”
 - Mt.7:25-27.

- (2) In this sense it is also applied to the *breath*, as of the mouth. “And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the *breath* of his mouth...” 2Th.2:8 (ASV). KJV: “spirit of his mouth”
- b. By analogy or figuratively the word spirit:
 - (1) Is applied to the *vital* principle which resides in and animates the body.
 - (a) Mt.27:50: “Jesus yielded up the ghost (spirit).”
 - (b) Lk.8:55: “And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway...”
 - (2) Has the sense of *apparition or specter*.
 - (a) Lk.24:37: “But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.”
 - (b) Lk.24:39: “...a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”
 - (3) Applies to the soul or spirit of man – the rational, immortal principle by which man is distinguished from the brute creation.
 - (a) Lk.23:46, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”
 - (b) Ac.7:59, “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
 - (c) Heb.12:9, “...shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”
 - (4) Is used of angels and demons who are called spirits Mt.10:1; Mk.1:23; Lk.4:36; Ac.5:16; Heb.114.
- 2. In Jno.4:24, in a very specific sense, the term Spirit is applied to Deity, to God the Father, “God is a Spirit,” KJV.
 - a. Rather, “God is Spirit,” the article “a” is omitted in the original. So rendered by other versions: NKJV; Goodspeed; ASV, marg.
 - b. Here the term Spirit is applied to Deity, as the sole, absolute, and uncreated Spirit, and expresses the pure infinite perfection and glory of the Divine nature.
 - c. This declaration is fundamental.

- (1) God is not material, or flesh, according to the gross conception of the pagans.
 - (2) He has no fleshly limitations. For this reason he is not to be regarded as restricted to mountains, to temples or holy shrines made with hands.
 - (3) He is not a material force, nor an abstract force as some scientists urge.
 - (4) Nor is he a kind of blind, impersonal power.
 - (5) He is Spirit, fills the universe, is omnipresent, and hence can be worshipped anywhere, because he is everywhere.
- d. Jno.4:24 is a reference, not to his personality, but rather to his essence, his nature. Cf. Isa.31:3a, “Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.”
 - e. He is the God of the living, the Father of our spirits, the source of all life, Gen.1:1,2,26,27; Heb.12:9; Ac.14:15.

B. THE TRUTH JESUS DECLARED IN JNO.4:23,24 THAT “GOD IS SPIRIT” DIRECTLY AFFECTS OUR WORSHIP OF GOD.

1. To the idea of a living God, living worship and service must be added.
 - a. Heb.9:13,14.
 - b. Rom.12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...”
2. Since God, the Father, is Spirit, he must be worshipped in spirit.
 - a. A material worship, a worship in form, is not in harmony with his nature.
 - b. The heart and spirit of the worshipper must be lifted to God in worship.
 - c. The way, means and manner in which we are to worship God who is Spirit are specified giving us no liberty to worship God in any way or manner or by any means we may choose. Cf. The O.T. ordinance of the water of cleansing and the “red heifer”.
3. God is Spirit, the One who ***must*** be worshipped, a worship that ***must*** be both in spirit and in truth.

- a. God or Deity is to be worshipped, not men, or humanity, nor idols made by man's hands.
 - (1) Mt.4:10, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
 - (2) Ac.10:25,26; 14:11-15; Rev.19:9,10;22:8,9.
 - b. To worship in spirit and in truth are not two different kinds of worship, but two aspects of the same worship God seeks of true worshippers.
 - c. To worship God in spirit is to worship spiritually, rationally, sincerely, from the heart.
 - (1) Such spiritual worship is the opposite of mere extreme rites which pertain to the flesh.
 - (2) Instead, it is to give God, the Father, the homage of an enlightened mind (enlightened by the written word) and an affectionate, loving heart influenced by the power of that written word.
 - d. To worship God in truth is to worship as his word, the written word, the N.T., directs, i.e., in a manner and means suited to the written revelation he has made of himself.
 - (1) And only those who do this are assured of divine approval, Col.3:17; Jno.17:17; 12:48-50; Heb.5:8,9; Mt.15:9; Lk.6:46.
4. What Jno.4:23,24 plainly reveals that God desires, seeks, and requires **must** be done is so shamefully misunderstood or flagrantly ignored by so many in our day among professed believers.
- a. So much of what is termed "worship" today is fleshly rather than spiritual; is external and spectacular, rather than internal and reverential.
 - b. Is for man's benefit (for entertainment purposes and for show), rather than worship of God.
5. We are not and can not worship in spirit and in truth:
- a. By building, adorning and admiring grand architecture.
 - b. By listening to the peals or melodious sounds of a costly organ or the anthems of a highly trained choir or to the sweet voice a soloist or the hymns sung by a quartet.
 - c. By playing a mechanical instrument of music.
 - d. By gazing at pictures, smelling of incense, or counting of beads.

- e. By simply being a spectator; we are required to be participators.
 - f. By engaging in a man-centered rather than a God-centered worship!
6. Moreover, spiritual worship *must* be distinguished sharply from what some have designated *soulful or soulical* worship, which is what much of modern-day so-called spiritual worship is.
- a. By soulful or soulical worship we mean emotional, or more accurately described as emotionalism.
 - (1) Of course, there is and must be emotion, strong feeling and passion in all worship that is in spirit and in truth.
 - (2) But soulical worship goes beyond that and becomes emotionalism, which is “The cultivation of superficial emotions; the tendency to yield to the emotions or to exalt the emotions; to view matters from the standpoint of feeling than of reason...” – Web.
 - b. The soulical worship of our time may include such things as:
 - (1) Music designed to make the worshipper “feel good.”
 - (2) Touching anecdotes (entertaining or interesting incidents) which draws tears or bursts of laughter.
 - (3) The magic oratory of a speaker which thrills the “worshippers” even drawing responses of loud amens, shouts, clapping of hands, even spontaneous singing from one or more in the audience.
 - (4) The clever showmanship of professional, entertaining evangelists and singers whose aim is to “produce an atmosphere”, mood or feeling for worship (?) designed to move the varied emotions of those in attendance.
 - (5) These and other things are examples of what is called soulical worship, which is not spiritual at all ... thus not acceptable to the Lord. Cf. Mt.15:9; Col.2:18-23.

C. COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF AND FAITH IN THE TRUTH THAT GOD IS SPIRIT WILL ALSO DETERMINE OUR DAILY CONDUCT.

1. Conviction concerning God's Spirit nature would transform our awareness about his presence and our being in his presence.
 - a. For many "seeing is believing." However, 2Cor.5;7.
 - b. While God is invisible, evidence of his existence and presence with us abounds.
 - (1) Rom.1:20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Cf. Psal.19:1; Heb.3:4.
 - (2) Ac.14:17, "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons..."
 - (3) Ac.17:27, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."
 - (4) Mt.18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
 - c. Job addressed this reality concerning God's nearness to us. "Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not."
 - d. Because we cannot see God we may mistakenly conclude that he does not see us.
 - (1) Job22:13, "And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?"
 - (2) Speaking of the unbelieving wicked, Psal.10:11 says, "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it."
 - e. It has been said that character is how we behave when we know no one is watching.
 - (1) The reality is that someone is always watching; that someone is God. Cf. Psal.139:1-12.
2. Being confident of God's invisibility and ever being present with us enables us to endure suffering better as did faithful O.T. and N.T. characters.

- a. Job so expressed his thoughts, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”
- b. So do we when we think of such comforting passages as 1Cor.10:13; Heb.13:5.
- c. Grounded in the reality of God’s presence we can and will make the bold decisions necessary to serve as so many faithful Bible character have done before us; such as those of Heb.11.

III. CONCLUSION

- 1. Never lose sight of the fact that “God is Spirit” who is to be worshipped according to his nature and the essence of his Being.
- 2. The implications of God’s Spirit nature are:
 - a. He must be worshipped with a spiritual worship in harmony with his revealed truth in his written word.
 - b. He cannot be seen or felt in the material realm; however, immateriality does not preclude reality.
- 3. All who truly understand this with strong conviction concerning it do not hesitate to worship him in spirit and in truth after having entered the kingdom by means of the new birth in obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 4. Question: Are you one of the true worshippers of God?
- 5. If not, do you have the faith and the conviction necessary to become one now?