

WORSHIP OF GOD

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” —JOHN 4:20

There is a marked difference between the Old and New Testaments in their description of the worship of God. In the Old Testament, worship was centered on a place, a time and rituals that had to be observed. It focused on the externals, but in the New Testament, worship is entirely focused upon the internals – the heart and life of the worshiper.

In the above verse, the woman of Samaria compared Samaritan worship, which took place on Mount Gerizim, to Jewish worship, centered in the temple at Jerusalem. In her eyes, it was about geography, but Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks” (John 4:21 & 23).

To the Pharisees, Jesus said, “I tell you that one greater than the temple is here” (Matthew 12:6). He is referring to Himself, of course, and is saying the place where men and women are going to meet with God is not in a building, but in Him. That doesn’t mean churches, structures and forms are unnecessary. Ephesians 4:11 says, “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.” We need structure, especially corporately, as it is a means whereby we meet together as the body of Christ to worship God.

Although we are pleased to have churches, we cannot confuse the house of God or the place we meet with God simply because of the nature of the building. The church in the New Testament is not a building; it is people. Under the Old Covenant, people did not have the indwelling life of Christ, and worship was built around the externals, but under the New Covenant, worship is internalized. John Piper, who has authored several books about worship writes, “What we find in the New Testament is an utterly stunning degree of indifference to worship as an outward form and an utterly radical intensification of worship as an inward experience of the heart.”

To worship in spirit and truth is a disposition towards God. To worship in spirit comes from the inner core of our being, directed by the Holy Spirit’s activity within us. To worship in truth is a response to a true knowledge and understanding we have of God. Worship of God can take place anytime anywhere because it doesn’t originate in buildings, rituals, forms or liturgy, but in our hearts.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for indwelling my heart. You are my life, and I want to live every day in praise and worship of You.

TO REFLECT UPON: Is my worship of God confined to church?