

## IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

Read John 4:19-24 and Mark 12:28-31

Here are questions by two different people in two different places –

### 1/A woman of Samaria

- A woman of doubtful morality
- Her question concerns religious observance
- Should we worship on Mt Gerizim or Mount Moriah?
- Mt Gerizim was sacred to the Samaritans (Deuteronomy 27:12) who believed it was there, not Mount Ebal, that Moses commanded an altar to be built (Deuteronomy 27:4-6). They built a temple there around 400 B.C. which was later destroyed by the Jews.
- Mt Moriah, in Jerusalem, was sacred to the Jews – the place where Abraham took Isaac (the ‘mountain of the Lord’ – Genesis 22:14) and where they built their temple (Micah 4:2)..

### We must worship in spirit and in truth

- Jesus answers that it is not a matter of *place* or *procedure*
- We must worship in spirit and in truth
- Spirit is a matter of the heart (attitude)
- Truth is a matter of the mind (understanding)
- ‘Worship’ literally = ‘fall down’
- Cf a leper who ‘worshiped’ Jesus (Matt 8:2) ie. bowed down before Him
- But Jesus reminds us it is kneeling on the inside that is most important
- ‘This people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me’ (Isaiah 29:13)

### Praise and worship

- Praise = action
- Worship = attitude
- Anyone can *praise* the Lord (action) but only sincere believers can *worship* the Lord (attitude)
- Hearts are softened by the Spirit of God (Rom 5:5)
- Minds are sharpened by the Word of God (Psalm 119).
- *Are our hearts soft?*
- My Pentecostal heritage taught me how important it is to have a soft heart to be sensitive to the Spirit of God
- *Are our minds clear?*
- My Baptist heritage taught me how important it is to have a sharp mind to understand the Word of God

### 2/A scribe

- Knowledgeable

## Prayer – In Spirit and In Truth

- Impeccable life style
- A righteous man
- His question concerns behaviour
- Jesus gives him the great command that was originally laid down by Moses

How can love be commanded?

- Not affection
- Not romance
- Not compassion
- But unconditional love
- The original word is *agape*
- ‘Love is not just something I feel, it’s something I choose to do.’
- Eg in the Fifth Century, in translating John 3:16, Jerome avoided the Latin verb *amare* (to love) because of its romantic connotations and selected the word that means ‘choose’. So he wrote, ‘God so chose the world...’

Four ways to love

- With all your heart – Emotional (passion)
- With all your soul – Volitional (the will)
- With all your mind – Intellectual (thought)
- With all your strength – Personal (determination)
- It takes strength to serve the Lord: tough decisions; courageous behaviour; bold choices.

Which one are we?

- Like the woman – living in sin but still wanting somehow to worship God
- Like the scribe – upright, but still not in the kingdom

Jesus is the answer

- Jesus is the answer for both
- Jesus lived and died and rose again for us
- He came to reveal the Father to us
- His Spirit enables us to worship in spirit and in truth with all our heart, soul, mind and strength

Our primary purpose

- To glorify God is our primary purpose. To worship anything else will never satisfy.
- Thomas Watson (c.1620-1686) wrote – ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever’ – *A Body of Divinity*
- Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) said: ‘There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus’ – *Pensees*

Jesus said...

- But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, *for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

- Will you bow before the Father and worship Him today?

### **SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT**

**Remember:** You don't have to answer all the questions: choose those that seem most relevant.

**Read:** John 4:19-24; Mark 12:28-24

#### Biblical

1. Use a map to locate Samaria and in particular Mount Gerizim
2. The Samaritans only used the Pentateuch (ie the first five books of the Bible). Which words of Jesus indicate that this was not enough? (John 4:22)
3. Why did Jesus say that the time had *already* come for a change of worship? (23)
4. What is the definition of a 'true worshiper'? (23)
5. Which word does Jesus use three times here to demonstrate a new, more intimate relationship with God? (21-24)
6. What are the advantages of calling God 'Father' rather than just 'God'?
7. Why do you think Jesus added the phrase 'with all your mind' to the original command of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:4)

#### Personal and practical

8. If this conversation had taken place this year, what might the woman have said?
9. What does worshiping 'in spirit' mean for you?
10. How does the Holy Spirit help us to love God better? What has been your experience?
11. Imagine you are invited to attend an Islamic or a Mormon service of worship. How would Jesus' statement affect your participation in the service?
12. Think about Jesus' command in Mark 12:30. In each of the four areas of love Jesus mentions, give one example of how it affects your life. (Be specific here. Don't just say, 'I would pray more intelligently,' but, 'I would pray with my Bible open and read various translations and commentaries to be sure I was loving God with all my mind...' And so on for each one).

Pray: Ask God to soften your heart and to fill you with the Holy Spirit so you may love Him better. The ask Him to sharpen your mind so you can serve Him with greater understanding.

## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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