

WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS. NO. 1.

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."
– John 4:23.

THESE words of our Lord, it will be remembered, were addressed to the woman of Samaria. She had found him sitting upon the well, and he had improved the opportunity by preaching her a discourse on the "water of life." Finally convinced that her teacher was no ordinary person, but a "prophet" of extraordinary wisdom, she improved the opportunity by asking a question which had long been in dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mixed people, not of pure Israelitish stock, nor fully conformed to all the laws and customs of the Jews. Hence the Jews had "no dealings with the Samaritans," – considering them Gentiles. Indeed, our Lord indicated that he also esteemed them as Gentiles, outside the covenants and promises made to Israel; for we recall that when sending forth the disciples to preach the Kingdom of heaven at hand, he charged them straightly, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not;" "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." – Matt. 10:5; 15:24.

The disputed question the woman thought she could now have answered for her by a truly good prophet, who, although a stranger to her, could tell her more of her own affairs than she supposed any one knew. She would now ask this prophet whether the Jews were right or the Samaritans. The Jews claimed to be in the Lord's hand, under divine guidance, as the seed of Abraham, in preparation as God's instruments for the blessing of all the families of the earth; and following the divine leading they had at first prepared the tabernacle, or the Lord's tent, and afterward the temple, or the Lord's house, which they recognized as the most appropriate place for worship, and hence, wherever they were,

they worshiped facing toward the temple in Jerusalem, the city of the great King. And the pious ones sought to come at least once every year to the temple there to present themselves before the Lord for his blessing. The Samaritans, on the contrary, held that the simplicity of worship observed by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob without tabernacle or temple, but in the mountain was the proper method of approach to God; and they apparently thought that Israel had drifted into a mere formalism of worship, and that they, the Samaritans, worshiped the Lord with greater acceptance than the Jews. This, then, was the important question as between Jews and Samaritans, and now apparently a most favorable opportunity had come to have an authoritative expression upon the subject from one whose wisdom in holy things had been demonstrated. And so she put the question, Which is the proper place to worship, in this mountain where we Samaritans worship, or in Jerusalem in the temple where the Jews worship?

Our Lord's answer makes clear two things: (1) that up to that time the Jews were right in their place and manner of worship – they were in harmony with the divine arrangement; their worship was according to a knowledge of the divine law. You Samaritans know not what you worship, you are guided not by the divine **[R2069 : page 284]** Word, but by your own impressions, while we Jews do know what we worship, we are following the divine injunctions; for God has ordained that salvation (the blessing of mankind through an opportunity of a deliverance from the curse, by the promised "seed" of Abraham) is to come through the Jews. God prepared that nation, its laws and arrangements for the development of the Savior.

Our Lord did not tell the woman that he himself was the great Jew, "born under the law" and justified by the law, the forepromised and foreshadowed "seed" of Abraham through whom the blessings were to come to mankind. Nor did he tell her that when he should finish his testing and prove himself worthy by obedience in the things which he suffered as man's redemption **[R2070 : page 284]** price, he would be the God-seed and Heir of the Abrahamic promises, and qualified and

empowered to bless the world. Neither did he tell her that when glorified he would seek a Church as his bride or members of his body, to be joint-heirs with him in this work of blessing the world, and that to the Jews first would come this honor and privilege of sharing his sufferings and afterward his glory. Nor did he tell her that only a remnant of Israel would esteem the privilege, and that the remainder, the great mass, would be blinded for a time to spiritual things and rejected from divine favor, while that favor would be turned to the Gentiles, including the Samaritans, to complete the elect Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife. These truths, so forcibly set forth by the apostles, were not yet due to be preached nor to be understood; nor would they be until our Lord had finished his sacrifice and ascended up into glory, and presented that sacrifice before the Father as the ransom price for the sins of the whole world, and until the Father had accepted it, and as a consequence shed forth the holy spirit upon the consecrated believers in Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Then would be the proper time for the riches of divine grace to be revealed and for the call to joint-heirship with Christ ("the mystery which hath been hid from ages" – Col. 1:26,27) to be made clearly known.

But although it was not due time and hence not proper to declare that "mystery," it was due time and a proper occasion to answer to some extent the honest inquiry of the woman respecting the proprieties of worship. Hence, while telling her that the Jews had done right in the matter of temple worship, he does not advise her to become a Jew, but tells her that a change of dispensation is at hand and points her to it as the proper thing henceforth: The hour is coming, and now is (at hand), when neither this mountain nor Jerusalem will be favored for worshiping the Father. The new dispensation will be a spirit dispensation, and those who in that dispensation will draw near to God and be accepted of him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The Lord does not say that there never had been previously true worshipers; quite to the contrary, the Scriptures teach that there were holy men of old whose prayers were acceptable before God and

answered, yet they did not "worship in *spirit*" (for "the holy spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified," – John 7:39); neither had they worshiped in the truth, for the truth would only be revealed by the spirit's guiding them into it. – John 14:16,17.

The fact that we now are granted the "sealing" or "adoption" as sons of God, by the holy spirit, and a clearer knowledge of the truth as a result, and consequently possibilities of a more spiritual and intelligent worship, in no sense implies that we are more worthy of the favors than were *some* of the ancient worthies. Neither did the giving of the Law to all Israel prove that all of that people were more worthy of God's favors than *some* amongst the heathen who were left with less advantage every way. (Rom. 3:2.) When the due time came to send types of coming favors, God chose the nation of Israel as his agent in fore-*shadowing* Gospel blessings which would follow. But as it is not the hearer but the doer of a law that is justified by it, so it is not the one who has the greater opportunities as a worshiper that is blest most, but the one who uses his greater privileges and renders worship in accord with the *spirit* and the *truth* received.

Indeed, special honor is due to the ancient worthies, mentioned by the Apostle in Hebrews 11, who, living before the Spirit dispensation commenced, saw not the *truth*, but merely its shadows and types, and who nevertheless laid hold upon what they did see with such zeal that they were enabled thereby to be faithful, even unto death; and who not only thus win our admiration, but God's approval; – although "they without us [the Christ] should not be made perfect," God having provided a "better thing," higher privileges, for us. – Heb. 11:40.

The holy spirit, as heretofore shown,* is the name for any divine energy, whatever its manifestation. Operating upon the prophets of old, it caused them to speak and write the divine Word without comprehending the meaning of their own utterances in full, and sometimes not even in part. (1 Pet. 1:12.) Nevertheless, in obedience they had a blessing, and the people who heard with respect and

endeavored to render obedience, so far as they understood, had a blessing from contact with the holy Word and holy power of God thus manifested amongst them. Yet the testimony is that very generally the people *resisted* what of the holy spirit they did appreciate and come in contact with, as the majority do to-day. – Acts 7:51.

*See our issue of June, '92.

[R2070 : page 285]

Since the great antitypical sacrifice of the Atonement has made *actual* reconciliation for iniquity, it made possible the acceptance of consecrated believers as *sons of God* (See John 1:12), and accordingly made possible for *sons* the highest manifestation of the holy spirit, as a spirit of adoption, which in due time, the Millennial age, shall be poured upon all reconciled to God (of all flesh, regardless of national lines), under the New Covenant. (Joel 2:28.) During this Gospel age, this spirit of adoption is restricted to the class of sons, the "brethren" and "joint-heirs" with Christ, now being selected, "partakers of the divine nature," begotten of the holy spirit as "new creatures." The disciples came in contact with the holy spirit in our Lord (who had it in fullest measure), and they were greatly blessed, because they (except Judas) did not resist its influence. Yet our Lord assured them that, with all their spiritual advantages, a still greater blessing would come to them as the result of his sacrifice and its presentation to the Father. He assured them that in his name the Father would send them the Comforter, the holy spirit, and that they should then have more than a contact with it; for it would abide *in them*. Through them it would exert an influence *upon* others (Acts 24:25), but none others than the "sons" could *receive* it, as an indwelling power, nor even become acquainted with it, for it is a seal or mark of sonship. – John 14:16,17.

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Those who receive this spirit are to grow, by the truth which it enables them to appreciate, to the full stature of spiritual development; and to be

"filled with the spirit" of the truth. From the very first these spirit-begotten and instructed ones may come with faith and confidence to the throne of grace as worshipers, "accepted in the Beloved;" and they may continue to grow in divine favor, as with increasing knowledge, faith and devotion they follow the footsteps of their Lord as worshipers in spirit and in truth, whose every act and sentiment is obedience to the divine will. – Heb. 4:16.

The Gentiles up to the beginning of this Gospel age had been "without God" and "having no hope in the world" (Eph. 2:12), while the Jews, God's favored people, to whom he had given the law, and to whom "were committed the oracles of God," and who had advantages "much every way" (Rom. 3:2), had not received the spirit of the truth, the spirit of adoption, but had merely in their law and through their prophets the shadows of good things coming after. Their temple was a typical temple only; their priesthood a typical priesthood only; and their high priest a typical high priest; their sacrifices were but types of the better sacrifices to follow them. Their promises were only earthly promises, and they at very most merely foreshadowed the heavenly promises to the spiritual Israel not yet called. What they knew of God outside of these shadows of coming mercy and blessing was chiefly his justice and his power. They knew little of the love of God, for it had not yet been fully revealed; as it is written, "In this was *manifested the love* of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." – 1 John 4:9.

No wonder then that with the love of God, the great and all important key to the divine character and plan, not yet clearly revealed, and the plan of God for human salvation still a "mystery hid," and the sacrifice of Christ not yet completed, and the new covenant not yet sealed, and the holy spirit not yet given; – no wonder that none up to that time except our Lord himself had ever worshiped the Father in the full degree since made possible to those granted the spirit of adoption and a knowledge of the truth. But our Lord declares that the Father seeketh no longer the worship of blind faith and reverence, nor the

worship of forms and ceremony however reverential; nor the rent garments and prostrate bodies; but he seeks for and will now qualify true worshipers with knowledge and the spirit, that they may worship him with intelligent appreciation and not merely with reverence for his greatness and humble appreciation of their own insignificance; with bowed knee, but also with bowed heart. And more than all this, he seeks those whose worship will be not merely because of his power and favor, but because of an appreciation, to some extent, of the lengths and breadths, the heights and depths of the love of God which passeth (human) understanding. To this end he has not only provided the ransom whereby all the true-hearted may by faith approach him under the justification of Christ's imputed righteousness, but for such he has also provided the seal of sonship, the spirit of adoption, whereby they may recognize him, and whereby they may cry to him as a Father. And in addition to this, and through this agency of the spirit, he has provided that they may "know the truth," so that although it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered [R2071 : page 285] into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," yet "God hath revealed them [these hidden things] unto us by his spirit;" for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep (hidden) things of God. – 1 Cor. 2:9,10.

It thus appears that it is by reason of the spirit of adoption, and through the spirit of adoption, and our knowledge of the divine character and plan, that the Church during this Gospel age, the real members of the body of Christ, are enabled to worship God still more [R2071 : page 286] pleasingly than could the ancient worthies. The hour came with Pentecost, and the time has continued for the past eighteen centuries, in which these sons of God (John 1:12) have thus been permitted to worship God in spirit and in truth. But, alas! how few even of those who have heard the Gospel, how few even of those who have named the name of Christ, have by full consecration become partakers of the spirit of adoption, and then as adopted sons, through intimate fellowship of spirit with the Redeemer and with the Father, and through the study of the Word of God, have come to that degree of

development which enables them to worship him in harmony with his truth and in the very spirit of it.

That a worshipful attitude of heart is necessary before being introduced to a knowledge of the divine plan, and before being begotten by the spirit as sons of God, is made very evident by the Lord's dealings at the time of the introduction of the new worship in spirit and in truth in contrast with the former worship in faith, reverence, ceremony and dim knowledge.

Take, for instance, Nathanael. Notice how our Lord addressed him as an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile. He was sincere, a true worshiper according to the limited light and opportunities of his time; hence he was one of the very kind that the Lord sought as worshipers in spirit and in truth in the new dispensation. Hence, instead of addressing him in parables and dark sayings, that hearing he might hear and not understand, and seeing he might see and not believe, as when he taught the masses, who were not Israelites indeed, our Lord on the contrary made very plain to Nathanael his supernatural knowledge. And so when Nathanael inquired, Why do you, a stranger, speak so confidently with reference to my character as an Israelite indeed, our Lord answered, "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." We are not informed that Nathanael had prayed under the fig tree, but we think it not an unreasonable surmise that, having heard of Jesus as the Messiah, Nathanael had sought heavenly grace and wisdom on that very day just before coming to see the Lord. He may indeed have asked for some divine instruction and guidance whereby he might be kept from deception and might know whether this were the very Christ or not. If so, our Lord's words would have a hundred fold more significance as the answer to his prayer, as a proof that Jesus was to such an extent the Father's representative, that even the sacred thoughts of his heart were known to him, and that he was approved and acceptable as an earnest seeker for the truth, and Israelite indeed. Nothing further of Nathanael's life is furnished us in the history but our Lord's testimony to his real heart character. We may safely assume that he was one of the "five

hundred brethren" privileged to see the Lord after his resurrection, that he was one of those who waited in the upper room for the Pentecostal blessing; that thus from being a member of the house of servants under Moses he became a member of the house of sons under Christ (Heb. 3:5,6); that having been begotten of the spirit he might progress in the knowledge of the truth, growing from a "babe in Christ" to the "stature of a man" in grace and knowledge; that meanwhile from the beginning of his experience as a new creature in Christ Jesus (as a babe in Christ) he was privileged to worship God in spirit and in truth, and that this worship grew and became more and more complete as he neared the "stature of a man in Christ."

Another illustration about that same time was Cornelius. As the Centurion whose servant was sick, he had already manifested faith in the Lord Jesus to such an extent that our Lord said of him, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The testimony respecting him was, that he was a just man, that he feared God, that he prayed and that he had been kind to God's people. More could not be said of him as a worshiper of God because, first, he was a Gentile without God and having no hope in the world; secondly, he had neither the truth nor the spirit of the truth which would have permitted him to offer any higher worship than that of fear and obedience. But we note how the Lord marked such characters not only in Israel but outside of Israel; and when the time was fully come (at the end of the seventy weeks of special favor to Israel – three and one-half years after the cross), when the time came that the Gospel might be preached to the whole world for a witness, and the barrier between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, this same man, Cornelius, who worshiped to the best of his knowledge, was the first one to be favored outside of Israel. Although he prayed, gave much alms, feared God, and was just, yet before he could be called and accepted of the Lord or become a worshiper of the kind the Lord seeketh to worship him, he must be instructed – he must have the truth, and he must have the spirit of the truth. Hence by divine direction he sent men to Joppa to call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall *tell thee words* whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. (Acts 11:13-16.)

He obeyed, he heard the words of eternal life, "the truth," he was ready for it and believed, and God immediately sealed him with the spirit of adoption as one of the sons of God. Then, as a spiritual "babe in Christ," being instructed in the truth and sealed by its spirit, he became a worshiper of God in spirit and in truth; and we doubt not he continued to grow in grace and knowledge, and consequently to grow more and more to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Another worshiper of God under the Law according [R2071 : page 287] to the shadow of good things to come, but not a worshiper in spirit and in the truth, because not possessed of the truth nor sealed by the spirit, was Lydia, a business woman to whom the Apostle Paul was directed soon after his arrival at the city of Philippi. Being a true worshiper according to her past opportunities, she was ripe for the truth. While other ears were closed to it, she heard the Gospel; while other hearts were unmoved by it, God "opened her heart," already consecrated and waiting, and thus she was received into the house of sons and became a worshiper in the truth and in its spirit. – Acts 16:14.

We might mention also Justus, who as a believer entertained Paul at Corinth, of whom it is declared that he "worshiped God," and who on this account was esteemed worthy of the truth and its spirit and its privileges. – Acts 18:7.

Indeed, in our Lord's declaration, "The Father seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth," we see that the whole mission of the Gospel may be properly understood to be for the purpose of seeking out from amongst mankind in general these true worshipers; and, properly enough, the early ministers of the Gospel sought first those who seemed to be earnest worshipers, and the message which they bore became a test to those who heard it, separating between the worshipers in form and those who truly and reverentially sought the Lord. Thus the Apostle Paul's ministry was summed up by his accusers in these words: "This fellow *persuadeth men to worship God* contrary to the law. – Acts 18:13.

Worship in spirit and in truth does not apply simply to prayer, praise, supplication and thanksgiving. It goes deeper than all these and takes hold upon the affections, upon the heart, and hence signifies not an "act of worship" but rather a life of worship – a life in which, through the begetting of the spirit and the knowledge of the divine plan, the individual becomes so *at-one* with God and so in unison with the law of God and all the features of the plan of God that it is, in the words of our Lord, his meat and his drink to do the Father's will. This is worship in spirit and in truth. It will find its expression in bended knee and in orderly and reverential demeanor in approach to God in personal prayer, in family prayer and in company with the household of faith; and it will find its expression also in all the acts and words of life. The captivated heart will seek to bring every talent of the body into complete subjection to the will of God and of Christ. The whole of this is the worship which God seeketh; and, surely, only those who are thus captivated to the Lord in heart, and who serve him in spirit and in truth and endeavor to have his will done in their hearts, words and conduct, are in the full sense the true worshipers whom the Lord seeketh; the "little flock," the faithful "royal priesthood."
