

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." – John 4:24.

WORSHIP is that outward manifestation of reverence for holy things which is pleasing to God, if done in a proper manner and from the right motive. But it is possible to assume the attitude of worship, and yet not offer worship that would be acceptable to God. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman, our Lord is declaring the manner of worship which the Father would accept. One might worship and bow down, and yet not be acceptable to the Father. And so the Lord indicates here that acceptable worship is that which is offered to God in Spirit and in Truth.

Our Lord makes a distinction between worship in *Spirit* and worship in *Truth*. We might have the Truth and know a great deal about the Lord; but if we did not go to Him in Spirit – in the right attitude of heart – our worship would not be acceptable, no matter how much we might know. On the other hand, a man might be a heathen and yet have a great deal of the Spirit of worship, but he could not render acceptable worship unless he had the Truth. Take, for example, Cornelius, the centurion. He prayed often and gave much alms to the poor, but he was a Gentile. He had the real *heart intention* to come near to God, but God did not accept him at that time. Why not? Because he did not have the Truth, and could not receive it until the due time for the Gentiles. But we find that when the right time came, this Gentile was the first one to receive from God the knowledge of the Truth, so that he might worship, not only in *Spirit*, but in *Truth* also. He received the assurance that his prayers were now accepted by God.

The Truth which was sent to Cornelius is the essential thing that we must all have to come near to God and be acceptable. This

Truth necessary to Cornelius was that though he was a sinner, God had provided in Jesus a Redeemer, a satisfaction for sin. He learned that by becoming a follower of Jesus and seeking to do the will of God as expressed by Jesus, he would be in harmony with God's arrangement. This was the *great Truth* made known to Cornelius. He received the Holy Spirit, and came into the family of God.

The same principle holds good today. There are people in heathen lands who have the *Spirit* of worship, but they are without the *Truth* respecting Jesus. And this Truth must be known to the person before he can be a worshiper of God in the proper sense.

This was true also in respect to the Samaritans, to one of whom the words of our text were addressed. The Samaritans were a Gentile people, who worshiped God in Mount Gerizim, the mountain of Samaria. And they took delight in thinking that God was *their* God. When this woman of Samaria inquired of Jesus she said, We worship God in this mountain of Samaria, but you Jews say that the only place to worship God is in Jerusalem.

Jesus explained to her, saying in substance, Ye worship ye know not what, but we Jews have the Truth on this subject – we *know* what we worship. We Jews may worship God because, under the Divine Covenant made with **[R5321 : page 295]** our nation, we have the privilege of coming to God in prayer, and of having God hear and answer prayer. We are worshiping according to God's directions. And He might have added, Many of you have the spirit of worship, but you do not have the Truth on the subject. It would have been possible for the Samaritans to become proselyte Jews. But they did not know the necessity for this; hence they did not come in.

During the Gospel Age we, through Christ, have the privilege of becoming joint-heirs with Him. Some have thus come into God's family. If, however, we should come with this Truth, but not in the proper spirit, our prayers would not rise above our heads. It is those

only who have come into proper relationship with God as children of the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord, who can worship in Spirit and in Truth. These and these only will receive the fulfilment of the exceeding great and precious promises.

