

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Dr. Russell Duke's Message of December 27, 2009
"Worship in Spirit and Truth"**

[What is true worship? Jesus tells us that it's not where you worship, but whom you worship and how you worship.]

[Topics: Worship in Spirit and Truth; Living Water; Messiah; Salvation]

Excerpt: There's a Nigerian proverb that says: "When a mouse smiles at the cat, there's a hole nearby." Dr. Duke has his interest in mice and cats renewed of late because his granddaughters love "Tom and Jerry." And all the antics that go on as the mouse pesters the cat and always has some way to escape.

We can't help think of the Samaritan woman at the well, who does this little cat and mouse game with Jesus. She believes, as the Samaritans did then and some 700 Samaritans do today, that Mount Garizem is a place of worship. And also that is where the Messiah would come.

So let's pick up on the story in **John 4:1-9**. The Samaritan woman feels she has her support from the Pentateuch – **Deut. 27**, as to where worship should take place. She sees Jesus as a Jewish teacher as they start this encounter.

1) Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), 3) He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

4) And He had to pass through Samaria. 5) So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6) and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7) There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9) Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.)
[New American Standard Bible]

So this dialogue sets up this bitter rivalry between the Samaritans and the Jews – a rivalry that goes back several centuries. Her comment is interesting because later in John, Jesus was thought to be a Samaritan by the Jews. So Jesus is kind of in between both groups. The Jews don't accept him as their teacher and the Samaritan woman clearly sees him as a Jew. The custom of the day was that men didn't speak to women especially women they didn't know. And, in certain quarters, men didn't even speak to their wives in public.

10) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." Now "living water" back then was water from a spring, water that was moving and not stagnant.

Now, as we understand it, this gift of God, this living water would come through Jesus. But the woman is taking Jesus' words literally. She is totally misunderstanding him.

11) She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?" She obviously didn't understand what he was talking about.

12) "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" Notice that the Samaritans traced their lineage back to Jacob even though ethnic intermarrying took place.

13) Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;" Water is a great quencher of thirst, but we continue to be thirsty. We continue to dehydrate, to continue to lose water.

14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

So, once again Jesus is talking figuratively and talking about salvation – the gift of God through Jesus Christ, who was a Jew. The Samaritan woman didn't understand that Jesus was both human and divine.

Jesus is saying that once you've taste the water of Jesus, you will never seek another means of quenching your spiritual thirst. That Jesus brings that satisfaction, that quenching of thirst for the venue of life and for eternal life.

15) The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." The Samaritan woman thinks she has caught Jesus in an impossible lie. She thinks to herself, "How can he give me "living water" in which I'll never be thirsty again when I live in an environment that demands water in order to live?"

She is also thinking, I won't have to ever come here again to draw water for the cattle and for all the meals that I need to prepare. My life will be so much easier now that I've found the "living water."

16) He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17) The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19) The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

So, here's Jesus, whom she has never met before, who has identified that she has had 5 previous husbands and is now not living with a husband, but living with a man. So her life style is identified as not being full of "living water", not being full of the commitment that Jesus would expect.

20) "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

She is saying that the Samaritans worship in Gerezim, which they felt they had support from the Old Testament. Now of course, there are all kinds of evidence in the Prophets on the importance of Jerusalem, and Solomon builds a temple in Jerusalem and God's name is placed in Jerusalem.

So it leads to the question: where is and what is true worship in her discussion with Jesus? So what is true worship since we have this conflict between Samaritans and the Jews? (At this point Dr. Duke shows a map of Samaria, which shows the site of Sychar – the site of Jacob's well, where this incident takes place – is at the base of Mount Gerezim and Mount Ebal. The two mountains overlook this valley in between. Mount Gerezim is about 2900 feet and Mount Ebal is about 3000 feet above sea level.

Next Dr. Duke showed a slide of a Dead Sea Scroll fragment – one of the five fragments that Azusa Pacific University (APU) just recently bought. They will be on display from mid-May through July. These are part of the findings in 1947 in Qumran, which is to the east of Jerusalem right there by the Dead Sea. The Essenes were living in Qumran at that time

These fragments and even some full scrolls were preserved in caves above the city. Of course these are copies of copies or copies of original text. In 1960 some of the fragments were sent out of Israel and owned by private corporations or individuals.

Now one of the fragments that Azusa Pacific bought is a variant reading of the dominant number of texts. It's only through infrared lighting that you can see the text. The question is whether the altar was built on Mount Gerezim or Mount Ebal isn't a huge issue to us. We still see the Bible as true and infallible. We view the Bible as giving us the story of God and Jesus Christ and leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as stated in **2 Tim. 3:16**.

Deut. 27 is very important to the Samaritan, because they accepted the Pentateuch and rejected the Prophets. The Samaritans believed that only the first five books of the Bible were inspired by God.

Deut. 27: 1) Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2) "So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with plaster

3) and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

4) "So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with plaster. 5) "Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them.

6) "You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; 7) and you shall sacrifice peace offerings

and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. 8) "You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very clearly."

The fragment that APU has that will be a part of this exhibit is of verse 4. Also on exhibit are five original printings of the King James Bible. 1611 is the first one that they have and the last one was printed in 1640. APU will also have on display 11th century Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in Greek. Our denomination, Grace Communion International, owns it. Also on display, we will have a leaf of the Guttenberg Bible of 1453.

Now back to the fragment of **Deut. 27:4**. It reads in the Received Text, in other words the King James and the New Revised Standard, etc. **"So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with plaster.**

But is this how the text original was read? The text from the Dead Sea collection reads, **you shall set up on Mount Gerezim, these stones**. So the question is, did some scribe change the text to protect the Samaritans?

The other theory is that this pre-dates the Received Text and that the original was Mount Gerezim, because it stands to reason of what is said in **Deut. 12**. There, God said that they were to announce the blessings and cursings to all the people. The people on Mount Gerezim were to proclaim the blessings. And the people on Mount Ebal were to proclaim the cursings.

So the question is when the Israel comes into the land, why would they put the altar on the mountain of cursings instead of the mountain of blessings? Or might you put them on both mountains?

Here is an excerpt from a paper written by the researchers at APU who are working on this manuscript. *"The witnesses that agree with our fragment – meaning Gerezim as the center of worship. By locating the altar on Gerezim are the Samaritan Pentateuch, one Greek manuscript, one Latin manuscript, and the Samaritan Targams. All other witnesses locate the altar on Ebal."*

So if you were to strictly take the number of texts that say Mount Ebal, there's no question it's Mount Ebal. But that's not the way you determine the original text. You have to look at what is the earliest text and what is the more problematic. It was particularly problematic for the Jewish scribes, because there was this animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews. The Samaritans had built their temple up on Mount Gerezim.

Now here's a brief history looking at the Samaritans. They came from Babylon brought over by the Assyrians to repopulate the city of Samaria. They intermarried with the Israelites and claimed the heritage of the Israelites.

Judah and Jerusalem later fell to the Babylonians and the Temple was destroyed in about 587 BC. So while this is taking place the Samaritans are actually growing. When Judah came back from exile, they were sent by Cyrus to rebuild the temple. Work was started by Zerrubabel, the foundation is laid, and then the building is stopped for a while.

When the construction started again, the Samaritans came and said, “Let us help you rebuild the Temple. Let’s rebuild it together since this is part of our heritage.” And the Jews told them, “NO!” To the Jews, the purity of the race was important to them and so they rejected the Samaritan offer because of being mixed racially.

The Samaritans then went back to Samaria and read in the Pentateuch that the blessings came from Mount Gerezim and the altar was built there as well. Strained relations between the two continued. Nehemiah rebuilds the wall at Jerusalem, which the Samaritans and the Edomites oppose it.

At 331 BC, Alexander the Great conquered the Mediterranean world and spread the Greek culture to Judea. At that time, the Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerezim, based on Deut. 27:4. They felt that this was the place that the word of God would come from. And so they held that Gerezim was the most holy place to worship God.

The Jews of course by this time used everything written by the prophets to focus that the place of worship is Jerusalem. And Solomon had built the temple there, as well. Now on the side of the Jews is the fact that in **Deut 12:5**, it reads that, “**You shall go to the place where God will choose to place his name.**” Thus they say it’s futuristic.

However, in the Samaritans Pentateuch, that Scripture reads, “**the place God chose to place his name, Mount Gerezim.**” So there is a little bit of political play with the text here between two peoples, because they want to support their position. They want to support their version of what they consider true worship.

So for the Samaritans, true worship could only take place on Mount Gerezim. For the Jews, true worship, in its purist form, could only take place in Jerusalem, because that’s the place they believed God placed his name.

To deepen the animosity, John Hyrcanus, one of the priests – he never took the name of king, but he actually was the leader of the army, back when Judah become independent about 142 BC. A few years later, he went up to Samaria and destroyed the temple on Mount Gerezim, because it was in opposition to the temple in Jerusalem.

The Dead Sea Scroll fragment that APU has now was written about 50 BC. Continuing from the APU paper. *“Despite the fact that the minority of witnesses preserve the Gerezim reading, most scholars accept it as the earliest reading of the two. Given this logic, it’s difficult to understand why the Israelites would build an altar on the mountain of cursing rather than on the mountain of blessing.”*

“It seems more reasonable in the opinion of most to suppose that the altar was originally to be built upon Gerezim as this fragment preserves. Yet later scribes of the early Masoretic Text switched this location as anti-Samaritan polemic. However, this alteration would have occurred quite early in order for it to become the dominate reading represented in the vast majority of witnesses.”

All of this analysis is in its preliminary stages. You can go on line at ijco.org to read the complete article. In about a year there will be an official APU publication about all five fragments.

So now let's go back to **John 4:20** and pick up again the story between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. **"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."**

And she is correct, that to the Jews, Jerusalem is the most holy of all creation. As you leave Jerusalem, things are holy, because God created them, but they are less holy than Jerusalem is, which is less holy than the Temple Mount, which is less holy than the Holy Place.

And of course the most holy place is the Holy Place. That's of course why many in Israel today want to have control of the Temple Mount, because they do want to rebuild the Temple, because the Jews believe the Messiah will come there.

21) Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. So we see the prophetic side of Jesus comes out here. One is that Jerusalem is going to be taken and razed and the Temple will be lost in 70 AD. But he's also pointing to true worship.

He's pointing to the fact that it doesn't make any difference if you are worshipping at Gerezim, which was considered a holy place in Israel's history. But Jesus is saying that no longer will places be significant for worship. Jesus also said the time would come when they wouldn't necessarily be worshipping in Jerusalem, either. So it's not where you worship, but who you worship.

22) "You worship what you do not know; The Greek here is a neuter term for God – that. **we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.** Of course this is true. Salvation did come through the Jews, because Jesus is a Jew. And it's through the humanity of Jesus that we have salvation.

23) "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

So Jesus tells us that God is seeking us to worship him. But, not based on what place we go to or where we are. One of the changes in our denomination is that we acknowledge that the kingdom of God is wide and far and is that seed that has grown and grown.

And the seed is not just in one particular place. Nor is it in one particular doctrine, for that matter. Unfortunately, some denominations say that they are the only one that worships in spirit and in truth. Jesus is telling the Samaritan woman that the Samaritans and the Jews can worship the Father in spirit and truth.

And that's a message for all denominations today, be that Catholic or Protestant, Greek Orthodox or Protestant.

24) "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Now we know that God is spirit in being. The emphasis here is that God is spirit in action. He is light and gives light to darkness. As he is love and gives love to hatred. So God is spirit so that his spirit can emanate into all of us and through all of us.

25) The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." This was not only a typical response from the Samaritans but also from the Jews. They were both looking for a Messiah to come, because they would then worship the Messiah.

So here's Jesus' response. **26) Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."** It is *Ego eimi* or "I am" in the Greek. This phrase refers to the divinity of the Messiah.

This sets the stage for the interaction with the Samaritans. The 12 disciples were warned early on not to go into the land of the Samaritans, because they were hostile. And Jesus didn't want their beginning ministry to be hurt because people would have been so inhospitable to them.

So after they have been trained for a while, then Jesus takes them to Samaria and guess what. The Samaritans were not hospitable at all, because they didn't like Jews. This is the time when James and John were so upset at the lack of hospitality that they wanted to bring lightning and thunder down and zap the Samaritans. They felt that was the way to teach them to be inhospitable.

Jesus corrects their thinking by telling them, **"The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56 KJV).** It's Jesus who is the one who provides the escape. Jesus is the source of living water as we worship him in spirit and truth.

Jesus went through the land of Judah and healed 10 lepers. Now who came back to thank Jesus? The one Samaritan. It was someone other than Jesus ethnic stock who could recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

And then of course, we have the story of the Good Samaritan, who cares for others, who binds the wounds and takes the man to the inn. And he pays the price for the pain and for the suffering and to heal the one who has been hurt. Certainly the Good Samaritan we know is Jesus.

And the response of those understanding that saving power of Jesus follow his command when Jesus said to "Go and do likewise." So we are that extension of Jesus to go and do likewise – to be the Good Samaritan and to take care of those in need.

So the tremendous history of the Old Testament accounts and the early first century action all lead NOT to a place of worship, NOT to a specific ethnic population, but rather leads to true worship in spirit and in truth in the one who is both divine and human, the one who told us that he is Way, he is the Truth and the Life – and to live in his gift of the Spirit.

General Group Question: Since the coming of Jesus, which is more important: worshipping God at a specific place or worshipping him in spirit and in truth? Briefly explain your answer.

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. Why was it unusual for a Jewish male to talk to a woman, especially a Samaritan woman, in a public place?

2. What did the Samaritan woman think Jesus was talking about when he spoke of “living water”? What was Jesus really talking about?
3. Why was Mount Gerezim such an important place for the Samaritans to worship?
4. Why is Deut. 27 such an important section of verse in this discussion about worshipping on Mount Gerezim?
5. What is the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls concerning Deut. 27:4?
6. What is the controversy concerning the placement of the altar to God on Mount Ebal or Mount Gerezim?
7. How did Jesus say people would now worship the Father?
8. What kind of worshippers does God seek?
9. How can we worship God in Spirit and truth?