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WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. (John 4. 24.)

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

At 43a, Broadway,

WALHAM GREEN.

11th. May, 1914.

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1. The Context in John 4.
2. The Privilege of Worship.
3. "Spirit" and "Truth" - a Bible Word Study.
4. Carnal "Worship", its Naturalness and Evil.
5. A Plea for Godly Solemnity.

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The subject of Worship must always occupy the mind of those who would please the Lord. It is deeply important inasmuch as God is incomparably so great that there SHOULD ever be worship. We can respect a man, but mere respect toward God is worse than incomplete. Worship, and worship only, is fitting. True, if we are saved, we are made intimately near in the person of our beloved Lord Jesus. True, we have passed out of death into life so that we can approach with a heart of grateful confidence, yet nevertheless God remains God. We were sinners, and still ARE creatures, and are only acceptable in the Accepted One. There is a distance, EXCEPT "IN CHRIST". Thanks be unto God, in one sense we need not view ourselves except in Christ with regard to worship, but it is well for us to know that albeit our mouths are open, yet all our prayerful completeness and all

our spiritual acceptancy are only because of that worthy Name which is called upon us. The context in John 4 brings before us much as to true worship. Moreover, it brings before us much else that is spiritually profitable for our consideration. Our beloved Lord, weary, possibly through the heat of an eastern sun, reaches Jacob's well. There He sits. Sits in a manner betokening His weariness, for we read "He sat **THUS** on the well". His disciples not entering into His strain, yet manifesting a true affection toward Him, albeit often mistaken, have gone into a neighbouring village that they may buy food. While He is waiting there on the slope of the Mount of Gerizim, (linked with blessing), there comes forth across the valley from the slope of Ebal, a woman of the city of Sychar. She has felt the journey to be a real one and therefore as she arrives she feels in that somewhat disagreeable condition which oftentimes accompanies weariness, unless there is grace in the heart to counteract this. Nor does she seem altogether pleased to behold sitting upon **HER** well, the **SAMARITANS'** well, One Whom she quickly recognizes, or thinks she recognizes as a Jewish stranger. But yet more surprising to her, This One sitting upon the well says, "Give Me to drink". It is a privilege to be able to use little things as important topics. There is a vast difference between this and the "Catchword" of a man-made sermon. It is the privilege of God's dear people to seek to open up conversation in a simple and direct way. Our beloved Lord wished to speak of other water but He spoke first of that

which was earthly, and we cannot hide our eyes from the fact that He FELT a need, for He had taken upon Him flesh, and flesh has weariness, and He FELT the strain, and water from the well was, indeed, refreshing. The woman curtly answered, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" and the sacred historian explains this, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans". But with infinite and customary tenderness our beloved Lord replies, "If thou knewest". She thought she knew. "Thou BEING a Jew" - "If thou knewest". We can well contrast with her intemperate rudeness, that meekness which Christ ever manifested. It will come before us again, if the Lord please, this evening, but even now we may well notice it. Abruptness and rudeness are natural and easy, yet our beloved Lord even amid real pain was never offended in a way that caused one unkind word to escape His lips. He was never grieving God. He rightly said, "I do ever those things that please Him", and we see the manner of words which will please the Father. Grace was poured over His lips, and so He spake. To return - the woman seeks to smother her discourtesy, but at the same time asks proudly, "Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep, from whence then hast Thou that living water?", and such a question leads her on to institute a comparison between the weary stranger and their father, their Samaritan father, Jacob, as they chose to claim. "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?"

And the Lord institutes a comparison, or rather, a contrast, not between Himself and Jacob, but between Jacob's well-water and His. "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst". Thus the Lord quickly turns aside to the precious subject of salvation by grace. We do well to notice this intense earnestness. We do well to notice how He put aside that which was physical. We do well to enter into that holy emphasis on a sense of sin which we find in the next added words. The Lord knew the state of this poor ruined woman, and His command was appointed to bring out the fact which she expressed in a sullen reply. Then He told her all things that ever she did, to use her own description of it. He revealed to her that the life that she thought unnoticed was visible before His eyes, and she found herself in the presence, not of a Jewish stranger, but of a Prophet, and more. Yet would she turn the subject. It was inconvenient to be reminded of sin in this way. Many like an argument, few desire reproof. "Sir", she says, "I perceive that Thou art a Prophet"; and then she speaks of Gerizim and pointing out, says "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye, (ye Jews), say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship". Thus the woman brings up the subject of worship with the idea of forgetting her sin, but the Lord uses it to teach US concerning worship, nor does He forget her sin, until her sin is dealt with. The privilege of worship thus stands forth on a very striking background. "Our fathers worshipped", she says, "in this

mountain". She does not say, "We worship", but "Our fathers worshipped", and the Lord's reply is "Ye worship ye know not what, we know what we worship, for Salvation is of the Jews". The link of the two sentences, the one concerning worship, and the other concerning salvation, makes clear that only those who are truly saved can rightly worship. "The Salvation", Christ Himself - spell with a capital "S" if you will! "The Salvation is out from the Jews" and only those who know HIM are capable of true worship. It is a marvellous privilege to be able to draw near to God; to approach the King of Kings is beyond all parallel; that He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, before Whom angels veil themselves, should nevertheless receive the adoration of those who are in themselves worth nothing, and whose only worthiness is that which is given them.

Yes, dear friends, it is a privilege to worship, yet we are sometimes occupied with our daily employment, or with our service unto the Lord as we call it, and we forget the quiet solemnity and the deep reality of worship. It is easy to be active with an activity which man can see, but God calls us more to the privilege of worship. "Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our MAKER" is an exhortation which speaks with twofold meaning to those who have been made anew in the NEW creation. The darkness of the sinful heart, the iniquity of man by nature, these things point to the greatness of God. Yet the believer having more realisation of that gloriousness and of that mercy may surely value the privilege of worship.

But our worship must be in Spirit and in Truth. Both these words are in the Scripture and both have several meanings wrapped up in them. Worship in Spirit. The Spirit of God is a Person, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and worship must undoubtedly be in the Spirit. But this is not all. Worship must be in the new nature, but this likewise does not explain all. Worship in Spirit has at least a double contrast. Spirit is contrasted with flesh, and contrasted with bare form. Fleshliness and formality are alike set on one side. "Worship in spirit". How often does the word "in spirit" occur in the Scriptures. We read of living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and mortifying by the Spirit the deeds of the body. In every case we might express part of the meaning by our English word "SPIRITUAL", that which is acceptable unto God must be done spiritually. The thought is oftentimes expressed among us, for we use the word "spiritual" for that which is well-pleasing. We see it has a contrast with "worldly". Worship must be spiritual. But the word "truth" is equally comprehensive. It is the contrast with a lie, it is also the opposite of a shadow. We read, for example, "Let us draw near with a true heart", and again, "A minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man". Worship in truth is that which is associated with reality, a reality of heart, and a reality of Divine working. Moreover, it is linked with The Truth, even the One Who says, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. Only those who are "in Christ" can worship, and the worship must be in truth, and in the Truth. In this connection we call to mind

passages which illustrate. The Spirit of God is called three or four times the Spirit of (the) Truth, and this is surely suggestive in connection with spirit and truth. For example in John 14 we read that our beloved Lord speaking to His beloved disciples said, "The Spirit of Truth Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you". Again in 15. 26, "But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me". 16.13 - "Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak and He will show you things to come". 1. John 4. 6 - "We are of God, He that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error". Thus in all these passages we have the link of the spirit and the truth. Where the Spirit of God is there is truth, and where the Truth really is there is the Spirit of God. While we have the 1st. of John open we may notice another illustration of the words "in truth". Says chapter 3. 18, "My little children let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth". Thus we see that love in truth is the opposite to love in tongue. Tongue-love is a miserable failure. True love is acceptable unto God. There is much tongue-love, there is much tongue-worship, but true love and true worship are those which please the Lord. The word "Truth" seems a favourite word with God's dear servant John. We read, for example,

in the second epistle, of those who have known the Truth, and those who receive grace in truth and love, and in the third epistle, "Thou walkest in the Truth", "My children walk in Truth". Thus we have brought before us that "in Truth" has the thought especially in this part of Scripture of reality, and thus it corroborates the word "Spirit" to show the nature of the worship which pleases God.

But perhaps we shall understand right worship the more if we contrast it with its counterfeit. Carnal worship, is very common. But what is carnal worship? Fleshly worship, it is NATURAL, but it is evil. God appointed to Israel a gorgeous temple with priestly officers, ornate services, instrumental music, and animal sacrifices. All these things were linked, in a pageant of display suggestive of the greatness of God and harmonising with an earthly calling. It was then fitting that there should be worship localised, it was then fitting that there should be worship with outward majesty. Doubtless, one idea of the words we are just learning, - Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, - Doubtless one thought is in connection with the temple, which was so named. It was indeed a place of the beauty of holiness. It was a place marked off by God for His worship. Not that even then the place made the worship, but God desired that Israel should go up to the place three times a year, and even when it lay in ruins Daniel afar off opened his window toward Jerusalem. This but illustrated the prayer of Solomon who had desired that prayer toward the appointed house might be heard by

God from His heavenly dwelling place, and that when He heard He might forgive. But NOW worship of this nature is not fitting. "Woman, believe Me the hour cometh that neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father". Our beloved Lord, doubtless, pointed to the ruined temple at Gerizim's top which the Samaritans had built and some of the Jews had thrown down. "Neither in this mountain", but what mean the added words "Nor yet at Jerusalem". "The hour cometh" is a striking statement. You will notice a contrast between verses 21 and 23. In the one case we read, "The hour cometh and now is"! In the other case we do NOT find the words "And now is". We have a parallel in John 5. There in verse 25 we read, "The hour is coming and now is", but in verse 28 "The hour is coming". "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live". Here we have a striking testimony that before Christ died, souls lived because of the efficacy of His certain work. But in verse 28 where we read "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice", the words could not be added "And now is", that hour had not yet come, nor has it yet been reached. It was on its way then, and is on its way now, for the glory of our Lord's return is never a distant future, but it IS future. The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, even the dead in their graves. But souls hear now; but bodies shall be raised then. Can it be that we have a similar contrast in John 4.⁷ The hour cometh and now is that the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. Yes, at that

period this was the true worship which was accepted. "But the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem". What does this signify? I suppose the Lord looked forward first to the time when He would say the solemn words "Your house is left unto you desolate". No longer "My Father's house" but "Your house". No longer marked out by God, but a wilderness. Moreover, He looked on to the time w-hen across Jerusalem's site should be driven the plough, not one stone being left upon another; and He looked on beyond this to a day when all who loved the Lord should be thrust out from Jerusalem or caused to flee. It is particularly declared that when the abomination of desolation shall be put up the redeemed of the Lord found in that city are to escape from the city, and then there will be no worshipping God in Jerusalem. On to that day Christ looked, but there is the primary general application signifying not in any earthly PLACE, but in a HEAVENLY sphere, in accord with GRACE. Carnal worship was localised; even when we use the word "carnal" with regard to the flesh and the types, without special reference to sin. The worship was at Jerusalem. But spiritual worship does not depend on a town, does not depend on a building, it is related to a spiritual heart, and cannot be made earthly. We must have a Heavenly place of worship, (Hebrews 10. 19-22). It is easy for men to desire to have pictures and images and stained windows around them, it is natural for them to wish to look on forms and ceremonies and to listen to the music that pours forth, whether from instruments of man's invention, or from the lips of those whose voices are trained. But God's people are not to have adopt these

so-called adjuncts to-day. God's people are not to have the elaborate worship that men naturally desire. There are some who will tell us that when they hear attractive music, and when they see beautiful sights, they feel more in the "spirit of worship". This is not the worship that God is seeking. A barn is equal to a cathedral, aye and better, for there will not be in it that which will pain the eye of those who desire to please God apart from men's ceremonies. No earthly building can be the real place of worship now. Those physically within it must be spiritually on high. The music of the heart is more harmonious than the music of the grandest choir, and the former is appointed, the latter is not. Love to the Lord keeps out discord, and any other removal of discord is poor and resultless. Nevertheless, carnal worship is still popular. Carnal worship is still desired. But oh, dear friends, our gracious Lord desires that which is the reverse, that His people should worship in spirit and in truth. We find among the early Christians how wondrously this was illustrated; when the Day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place. The upper room of a house in Jerusalem was blest. No longer was the ornate temple appointed. We find the crowded room at Troas where the disciples gathered together to break bread, since they were gathered in the Lord's own gracious wisdom and power, as we read, to break bread, and then there come the striking words which are not told us without a meaning, "A certain young man sat in a window". Why are these words given to us? To indicate, I feel sure, that there was no elaborate preparation of a grand building, it was an upper room,

full up. Nothing to attract, in the ordinary way, A crowded place, and there in a window a young man was sitting, and, doubtless, many other young men were sitting in the same place. Everything suggests the absence of any parade and one pities the lack of spiritual perception which seeks to make the many lights that were burning into an altar illumination. Probably those many lights may have included the lamps that more distant saints had brought on their journey - for the streets at Troas were not lit as the streets of London - and hence many lights were burning in that room. Everything was so simple. The Lord's presence is that which makes worship acceptable. The Lord's presence is that which makes worship enjoyable. We depend not on a thing but on HIM. Oh that there might be this attitude in all our gatherings.

A Plea for Godly Solemnity may not be out of place. We must avoid the danger of a revolt from ritual which means an absence of quietness. You follow the thought, dear friends. We say, "We do not desire forms and ceremonies, we do not want to have the outward parade", but yet the bending the knee may not be without its ^lspiritual benefit in that THIS is marked in Scripture. The bowed head, and the uplifted head and hand, may not be an empty form, but may express a real heart condition. We are not to say, "Oh I will put aside all ceremonies", and therefore lightly rush into God's presence, and with a flippancy of manner address Him Who is so altogether glorious. If we only had the Lord's supper once a year I suppose we should prepare for it with peculiar carefulness. If we could only pray once a month

how we should make ourselves ready for the special occasion. We have such a wondrously open way to the throne of grace, and we have such a constantness of access! Let us not misuse this privilege, let us not rush to where God is. Shall we approach an earthly king solemnly, and shall we approach the Kings of kings carelessly? Our nearness is in Christ, and the Holy Spirit Who exalts Christ will never teach us the absence of reverence. Sometimes one comes across those who appear so outwardly reverent, and one feels, knowing Christ as we do, we should have all the outward reverence they have, and more, not simply because of a "must" of religious chains, and of ritualistic order, but because of a sense of the glory of the Lord. We find in Patmos's Isle, that when John sees the glory of Christ he falls down. I know there is a hint in the context that he was in measure wandering from the Lord, a very slight measure, (comparatively), it is true. Where is the believer who can say there is not a slight measure of wandering in his experience? And inasmuch as there is some distance from the Lord that needs our being turned, it is befitting that we should specially check ourselves lest we hurriedly pray, and hurriedly rise from our prayer - I say "Rise from our prayer" - unless it be that we, when physically able to kneel, SIT in our meetings as though we were simply having a rest and taking an easy time and amusing ourselves instead of worshipping God. The book of Revelation emphasizes WORSHIP! "Worship God". Oh that these words might ring in our hearts, and that we might not need a number of regulations to make us reverent, but that our hearts might long in the enabling of the Holy Spirit, to be reverent, and

and that anything of irreverent prayer or irreverent manner in prayer might grate upon us and grieve us and pain us. Nearness to Christ is a great privilege, but never are we to have a "familiarity" in dealing with our God. There IS grace, but there is a THRONE of grace. Let us come BOLDLY, but let us also have gratitude whereby we may serve God acceptably with REVERENCE and godly fear. He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, but our God is a Consuming Fire. Worship in spirit and truth takes away the journey to a city centre, and makes it possible for pilgrims to pray everywhere. Worship in spirit and truth encourages even the brief prayers of the heart, unexpressed from the lips. But worship in spirit and truth never leads to a lightness, never leads to a boasting of the absence of form, never leads to a neglect of seasons of waiting on God. It is for us to seek that we may indeed BE led in powerful and prevailing prayer by Him Who graciously leads God's dear people upon the path into all truth.

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