

Worshipping God in Spirit and Truth: A Biblical Interpretation on John 4:19-24 in Constructing a Design of Theological Worship

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Abstract

The narrative of Jesus's conversation with a Samaritan woman in John 4 begins with the topic of Living Water. In the middle of the conversation, there was a change within the Samaritan woman. She suddenly called Jesus a prophet because He knew about her life in detail. Whether because she confessed Jesus' prophethood or she was indeed a diligent worshiper, the Samaritan woman brought up a new topic about the Jewish and the Samaritans' worship place. Both Jews nor the Samaritans acknowledged each other. She claimed that Samaritan ancestors worshiped on "this mountain" - possibly referring to the Mount Gerizim, then questioned the claims of Jews about their worship place, Jerusalem. Instead of confirming one of the two places, Jesus answered her by introducing true worship, that is, worshiping the Father in Spirit and truth. There is no following explanation of the phrase "worshiping the Father in spirit and truth" in this narrative except a very short clue that God is Spirit. Therefore, this paper will explore and interpret the text of John 4:19-24 to offer a design of theology concerning worship.

Keywords: Jesus, Jewish, Samaritan, Worship, Father, Spirit, Truth, Theology.

Introduction

It is only in the Gospel of John one can find the story of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman about living water. This fact raises questions about the historicity of the narrative. Some experts believe that this story happened, but some think that this story results from a narrative construction solely to support evangelism's mission to the Samaria region.¹ According to Susan Miller, the plethora of narratives about Samaritans in the Johannine Gospel shows the Johannine community's connectedness with the Samaritans while acknowledging that the Samaritans are indeed under Jacob's.²

Regardless of whether this story is historical or not, it is fascinating. In the middle of a conversation about the water of life, there was a change in Samaria's woman: he mentions Jesus as a prophet because he knew his life's details. Furthermore, whether based on the confession of Jesus' prophethood or because he is diligent in worship, the Samaritan woman led to a new topic about where the worship of the Jews and Samaritan who incidentally are not mutually recognized. She claimed that Samaritan ancestors worshiped on "mountain" - probably refers to the hill Gerizim,³ and then questioned the claims of Jews who worship in Jerusalem. Interestingly, Jesus responded by not justifying one of the two places of worship. He indeed teaches the essence of true worship, that worship the Father in Spirit and truth.

There is no further explanation in this narrative of the expression "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" other than that God is Spirit. The word "worship" in the text is the same as the air-worship. Nevertheless, because John's day is very past, the whole phrase's meaning is not necessarily easy to

¹ Susan Miller, "The Woman at the Well: John's Portrayal of the Samaritan Mission," in *John, Jesus, and History*, ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, Society of Biblical Literature symposium series 44 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 73.

² *Ibid.*, 74.

³ Thomas et al., *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Thomas Aquinas in translation (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 221.

understand. Therefore, this essay will examine John 4: 19 -24 to offer a design theology of worship with hermeneutics' help.

Centering of Worship in Ancient Israel

The most ancient veneration in the worship of Israel is the altar.⁴ Anywhere Yahweh revealed himself, Israel respects Him in that place by establishing the altar. Generally, they used the altar as a burnt offering or communion, but sometimes to have a meal together after worship.⁵ Therefore, the absolute relationship between Yahweh's Revelation and worship not only occurs in the temple, for Yahweh can reveal himself in any place He chooses. So, it is such an exaggeration asserting about the temple without talking about the altar in Israel's worship discourse.⁶

It was only in later developments, under the influence of the Canaanite religions, that Israel began to build a temple for Yahweh. At least there are four types of temples they founded. Firstly, private chapels. This individual chapel dated back to the patriarchal period (Gen. 31) and throughout the Yahwistic period. Micah, Gideon, and David likely had that kind of chapel. In certain circumstances, one can turn an individual's chapel into a place of common worship.⁷ Second, the ancient temples for El worship, such as the temples at Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba, and Mahanaim. Since patriarchal times, the Israelites have recognized it and shared it with the Kanaani.⁸ Third, the high places of worship, or "bamoths," were open places of worship in the villages.⁹ Fourth, Yahwistic places of worship. Usually, the Israelites built a temple to Yahweh when they opened new villages, for example, at Gilgal. They also occasionally established temples on the ruins of the former city of Kanaani, such as at Silo and Nob.¹⁰

⁴ Th.C. Vriezen, *Agama Israel Kuno* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 180.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

During Saul's leadership, there was no centralization of Israeli politics. It seems that Saul was not a king in the monarchical sense, but only a charismatic leader.¹¹ David was the one who initiated the absolute monarchy of Israel after conquering the city of Jerusalem with his troops.¹² For the sake of territorial expansion, David tax the entire population for military purposes. As David's political triumph, temples underwent significant development in Israel. Temples are no longer just centers of worship but are also used as law and court centers, as Toras kept in these temples.¹³ Those soldiers who will go to war always gathered beforehand at the temple. Every day the shrine is getting more and more visited to become the center of cultural and religious life. There appeared temple officials such as priests, Levites, and even prophets.¹⁴

During the reign of Solomon, wars did not happen again. This calm condition raises questions about the allocation of tax revenue. If previously taxes were allocated for military purposes, the allocation is no longer relevant in the absence of war. However, Solomon did not removed the the tax. He focused his attention on domestic development and collecting taxes for development in various sectors. He transformed Israel's formerly nomadic society into permanent citizens by establishing cities such as Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, and others. He built these cities as giant fortresses for the central city, namely Jerusalem.¹⁵ Solomon also built a new city on the ruins of the old city. Such rapid development was at that time, Sennacherib noted in 701 BC that there were 46 fortress cities and countless villages.¹⁶

To complement the kingdom of Israel, which had turned into a giant, rich, healthy, and respected monarchy, Solomon planned to build a state temple. In the fourth year since he ascended to the throne, he built a large temple in Jerusalem as a worship house for the state. The building that completed in seven years

¹¹ Ulrich Duchrow, *Mengubah Kapitalisme Dunia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 164.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Vriezen, *Agama Israel Kuno*, 186.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 190.

¹⁶ Ibid.

and referred to as the temple. Since the inauguration, the Jerusalem Temple claimed as a center of worship to God.¹⁷

Jewish tension with Samaria

In John 8, we find Jesus' conversation with the Jews in the temple. There Jesus criticized the incompatibility of the faith and way of life of the Jews with Abraham whom they claimed to be the Father. The Jews were angry and accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan possessed by demons (8:48). The relationship of anger with the accusation indicates the intense hatred of the Jews for the Samaritans. But the Samaritans were also displeased with the Jews, this is evident in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4, especially verses 9 and 21. This tension certainly has a cause. According to modern Samaritans,¹⁸ they were direct descendants of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, were not exiled in the 8th century BC, and never intermarried with other tribes, including those brought by the king of Assyria to Samaria during the exile. Their claim does not agree with the narrative in 2 Kings 17: 5-6, 24. This text is the primary perspective of the Jews against the Samaritans.¹⁹ There is the impression that the Samaritans were the result of intermarriage between the inhabitants of Samaria who were not outcasts, and the foreigners whom the king of Assyria brought to Samaria [city] in the 8th century BC. Therefore, though Samaritans also embraced Judaism, the Jews and religion they profess are no longer pure.²⁰

Another text in the Old Testament also triggers a quarrel with the Jewish communities of Samaria, which Esra 4. In that text, some communities claim as immigrants on the orders of the king of Assyria. The text did not write explicitly that the community was the Samaritans, even called them "enemies of

¹⁷ Duchrow, *Mengubah Kapitalisme Dunia*, 165.

¹⁸ According to Lisbeth S. Fried, modern Samaritans live in Kiryat Luza on the Gerizim hill near Nablus (Shechem), partly in the city of Holon outside Tel Aviv. Their number in 2011 was not less than eight hundred people. Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition* (Univ of South Carolina Press, 2014), 123.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Yonky Karman, "Gereja bagi Sesama," in *Merentang Sejarah, Memaknai Kemandirian: Menjadi Gereja Bagi Sesama*, ed. Supriatno, Onesimus Dani, and Daryatno (BPK Gunung Mulia, 2009), 4.

Judah and Benjamin." Nevertheless, it seems to refer to the Samaritans (Ezr. 4:1-2). Then Ezra's book also does not recognize the Samaritans as descended from Israel.²¹ According to David F. Hinson, it was since then that the "not going into exile" broke away from the official religious community of the Israelites and formed a new religious community called "the Samaritans."²²

The culmination of the tensions between the Jewish and Samaritan is the separation of the center of worship. Jews choose to re-establish the Temple of Jerusalem, but the Samaritans chose to establish a worship center on Mount Gerizim.²³ Later on, this difference in place was no longer interpreted politically but turned into historical-theological. Each community made arguments to claim that God was only present in their place of worship, not in other places.

Early Church Worship

The testimony in the Acts of the Apostles tells that after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, the disciples along with several women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers, persevered with one heart in prayer (Acts 1:12-14).²⁴ The disciples pray every day (Acts 2:46) while being alone (Acts 10:9) or being together (Acts 2:46). They prayed at home, in the Temple, and the Synagogue.²⁵ Later on, praying become very much practiced by the disciples. The early church passed on this tradition.

The prayer of the early church usually simple. For instance, "Iesous Khristos Kyrios." This short prayer also at once as their

²¹ Fried, *Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition*, 124.

²² David F. Hinson, *Sejarah Israel Pada Zaman Alkitab* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2010), 224.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Paul F. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church: A Study of the Origin and Early Development of the Divine Office* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 23.

²⁵ Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 4.

confession of faith.²⁶ Later the prayer was developed and filled with petitions, that God would deliver them from temptation, that God would forgive the sins of their persecutors, give salvation to Israel, bless the evangelistic mission, bless the government, pour out the Holy Spirit, and that the Kingdom of God will come soon. They offered prayers in the name of Jesus (Col. 3:17).²⁷ The prayer habits of the early church also have deep roots in Jewish traditions. At the beginning, the still went to the Temple and the Synagogue to worship. However, the Jews often persecuted them at the places because of preaching about Jesus. So, they created their community, the forerunner of the founding of the Church.²⁸ Since the Synagogue and Church separation, the congregation continued several Jewish worship traditions, such as daily prayer. Nevertheless, the worship of the early church was not all about praying. From Didache, we know that they also practice catechism, baptism, fasting, eucharist, reconciliation, ministry, and uphold Church discipline.²⁹

In the pre-Constantinian era (before 313), Christians worshiped in private congregational homes. Such a place is called a house-church (*domus-ecclesiae*).³⁰ Their attention is not on the building, priestly clothes, or good things to the eye, but on the communion (assembly) between them and fellowship with God. Because there are no altars, official houses of worship and sacrifices, the other religions often accused them as atheists.³¹ Another possibility that causes them are not so concerned with the house of worship is incessant persecution and persecution of Christians since the emperor Nero.³²

²⁶ Rasid Rachman, *Pembimbing Ke Dalam Sejarah Liturgi* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2015), 21.

²⁷ Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ Frank C. Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 17.

³⁰ Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 68.

³¹ W.D. Killen, *The Ancient Church: Its History, Doctrine, Worship, and Constitution* (London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 183.

³² A. Kenneth Kurtis, *100 Peristiwa Penting Dalam Sejarah Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2007), 2.

The historicity of the Gospel of John

In the New Testament, there are five books named John. They are the Gospel of John, three letters of John, and the Revelation to John. These five books are called Johannine literature. In the Book of Revelation, the name of John is written explicitly as the author. Meanwhile, the writer of the letters of John only refers to himself as an elder. Unlike the writer of the Bible, he did not include his name at all. For more than a century since the Gospel of John was used by the churches in Rome, Alexandria, and Egypt, no one has ever questioned who the author was. Discussions of Johannine literature emerge in the second half of the second century.³³

B.F. Wescott proposes that the writer of the Gospel of John is a Jew from Palestine, an eyewitness to the life of Jesus, and an apostle. He based those three criteria on consideration of the richness of information about Judaism in the Gospel of John, plus the instructions in John 21:24.³⁴ Wescott concluded that the writer of the Gospel of John was the apostle John, son of Zebedee.³⁵ It was Irenaeus who firstly arose the name of the apostle John. He suggests that the apostle John wrote the Gospel while in Ephesus during the emperor Trajan. Wescott and many experts trust Irenaeus's opinions because since childhood Irenaeus already know Polycarp, the bishop Smyrna, supposedly a disciple directly from the apostle John.³⁶ C.H. Dodd is challenging to accept the view of Irenaeus. First,

³³ E. Earle Ellis, *The World of St. John: The Gospel and The Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1984), 13.

³⁴ The beloved disciple in John 21:24 according to Timothy JM Ling was most likely not one of the twelve disciples, but a “disciple of Jerusalem,” a former disciple of John the Baptist’s ministry, an unnamed disciple at John 1: 35 ff, have in-depth knowledge of the household of the High Priest (18: 15-17), own a house in Jerusalem (19:27). Ling assumed that it was in this house that the ‘beloved disciple’ acted as host of the last supper, in which he leaned on Jesus’ chest (13:23). Timothy J. M. Ling, *The Judaeon Poor and the Fourth Gospel*, Society for New Testament Studies monograph series 136 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 169.

³⁵ C. H Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 13.

³⁶ Raymond. E Brown, *Tafsir Perjanjian Baru 3: Injil Dan Surat-Surat Yohanes*, trans. Tim Lembaga Biblika Indonesia (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1989), 10.

Irenaeus's opinion about the apostle John who lived in Ephesus at the time of Emperor Trajan, contrary to the popular theory that the apostle John was martyred at a young age.³⁷ Second, Irenaeus never said that Polycarp informed him that "John the disciple of Jesus," wrote the Gospel.

It is odd that Polycarp, who shows acquaintance with almost every other book of the New Testament, has no clear reminiscence of the Fourth Gospel. That may not argue that he did not know of its existence (which would be hard to believe, since he cites the First Epistle of John, which is in all probability later than the Fourth Gospel), but if he knew it, and knew it to be the work of his old master, could he have failed to bring it in?³⁸

C.K. Barret said that the apostle John is more possibly the author of the Book of Revelation than the Gospels and Letters.³⁹ However, ES Fiorenza says Book of Revelation is closer to Pauline's texts than to Johannine's literature. John Painter, paying attention to the general vocabulary, phrases, viewpoints, and general views between the Gospels and the Letters, said that first John is closer to the Gospel than second and third John. However, he also saw the similarities between first John and second John than first John and third John.⁴⁰ The similarity in these differences leads Painter to conclude that a specific school has written all Johannine's literature.⁴¹ Therefore, one can conclude that someone who knows well the tradition of Johannine has written the Gospel of John. However, his writings that have come to us now have undergone some editions.

Clement of Alexandria called the Gospel of John a philosophical and spiritual gospel. He said, "other gospels have informed

³⁷ Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁹ John Painter, "Johannine Literature: The Gospel and Letters of John," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 344.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

biological data, so the authors of John feel the need for a gospel that emphasizes the spirituality aspect.”⁴² Clement's assumption is consistent with John 20:31 (NIV), "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." The use of the pronoun "you" in this verse implies the existence of a particular entity as the address for the writing of the Bible (first reader).⁴³ The first reader may have known some parts of the story about Jesus, but it was incomplete and disorganized. The Gospel of John complements their knowledge and understanding.⁴⁴ There is no agreement on the authors' concrete locations or the first readers, but they likely lived in the East at the turn of the first century.⁴⁵

Hermeneutics of John 4:19-24 (NIV)

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."
(Verses 19-20, NIV)

The calling "Sir" in this verse sounded more polite than at the beginning of the conversation. It seems that the Samaritan woman was surprised because Jesus knew her life in detail, so now she becomes more polite because she feels that she has met not only an ordinary Jew but with a prophet. In Israel's tradition, who can see hidden things is the prophet (prophetess). Other sources say that the Samaritans rejected prophets other than Moses to prophets like Moses as written in Deuteronomy 18:18. Thus, the prophet to the Samaritan was a restorer, a messianic figure.⁴⁶

⁴² David K. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 16.

⁴³ Fernando F. Segovia, ed., *What Is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1996), 5.

⁴⁴ Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 10.

⁴⁵ Willi Marxsen, *Pengantar Perjanjian Baru* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008), 327.

⁴⁶ Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 610.

Still shocking because she met a prophet, she thought it was the right time to ask the quarrels between Jews and Samaria about worship places (houses of worship). The woman's question was not without reason because the Samaritans and the Jews both recognized the Mosaic Torah, but they did not recognize each other in terms of worship. The hill in this verse is most likely Gerizim hill, where the Samaritans built their worship houses. The woman did not base her question on the post-exilic Jewish-Samaritan schism, but on a more distant time, namely the ancestors' time (patères). Maybe it refers to the events of Exodus in Deuteronomy 11:29. This further period reference, apart from giving the impression that the Samaritans were very ancestral and thus obedient to the Torah, is also an auto-confirmation that they are Jacob's descendants. However, the Jews had a different view. After they returned from exile, they rebuilt the Jerusalem Temple and assumed that God resided there. Craig S. Keener said,

Jerusalem was the holiest place in the Holy Land, the only place worthy of the temple or altars. Whatever the date of other traditions surrounding Jerusalem, Jerusalem's great holiness was undoubtedly highly regarded by the first century. According to some later traditions, in the world to come, Jerusalem would be the size of Eretz current world's size of the current world. The principle of holy land applied especially to the holiest site of all, the Jerusalem temple. Thus when Jewish teachers spoke of a progression of holiness, the holiest site in the Holy Land's holy city was the temple.⁴⁷

For the Jews, the Book of Kingd and the Book of Ezra were sufficient grounds to distance themselves from the Samaritans and their worship. That is why for the Jews, the hill of Gerizim was a place of false worship. On the other hand, the Samaritans thought Jerusalem was wrong. Each of them assumed that God was only present in their house of worship. According to Cyril of Alexandria (378-444), it shows that both Jews and

⁴⁷ Ibid., 614.

Samaritans forget that humans cannot domesticate God into any container in the world.⁴⁸

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. (Verse 21-22, NIV)

This verse has a prophetic character that one day the woman and her people will worship the Father, not on Mount Gerizim nor in the Jerusalem Temple. Jesus did not justify either of the two groups questioning places of worship, but instead offered a new essence of worship, better than the two opposing religious teachings. This prophecy is also a kind of call for both Jews and Samaritans to perform "higher" worship, beyond geographical and ethnic particularities.⁴⁹ Since John wrote the Gospel at the end of the first century, it is likely that the Johannine community worshiped in the *Domus-Ecclesiae* and shared in feeling the imperial persecution. John wrote the words of Jesus in this verse as a strength to them. *Domus-ecclesiae* is not permanent like the synagogue they have left, not as beautiful as the Temple in Jerusalem or the Synagogue of the Samaritans on the hill Gerizim. Nevertheless, it is precisely the nomadism of *Domus-Ecclesiae* that has helped them avoid to sanctifying any particular place.

As if contradicting verse 21, Jesus' sentence in verse 22 emphasizes his Judaism, even saying the Samaritans did not know what they were worshipping. But with the phrase "salvation is from the Jews" it becomes clear that Jesus' goal was not to share in degrading the Samaritans but to preach salvation. Salvation in the eyes of the Samaritans was incomplete because they only recognized Moses and the Torah. They did not know the prophecies regarding the promise of the coming of the Messiah, who was born of David's line. Craig S. Keener explains, "Because the Samaritans accepted only Moses but rejected the Judean aspect of salvation history, including

⁴⁸ Cyril, *Commentary on John* (Downers Grove, Illionis: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 123.

⁴⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 611.

the Davidic messiah, they necessarily held an incomplete view of salvation and salvation history by Jewish and Christian standards."⁵⁰

Through this verse, John also wanted to show that Jesus was the salvation that came from the Jews. Jesus' identity is not just a prophet, as the woman thought.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (Verses 23-24, NIV)

The clause "a time is coming and has now come" indicates the time in progress and will be present again (present progressive). On the one hand, this text fulfills the prophecy in verse 21. On the other hand, it is also a further prophecy. The salvation that came from the Jewish occurred while that conversation was taking place and will continue. In that salvation, the Jews and the Samaritans will know that worship's main essence is to worship the Father in Spirit and truth. God desires true worshipers.

There is 118 times the word "Father" appears in the Gospel of John. According to D. A. Lee, in general, the Gospel of John uses the word "Father" to refer to God. Therefore, worshipping the Father means worshipping God. The use of the word "Father" does not mean to show that God is a man. Even though it is in the masculine form, the word Father here is more symbolic, to show its relationship with the son, namely Jesus.⁵¹ By calling God as Father, people who worship in Jesus also have a very close relationship with God, such as with their parents.

Two meanings can occur in the expression "in Spirit and truth." First, humans must worship with a passionate spirit. Second, people must worship in the Spirit of God. The second one indicated that God is Spirit. This clue provides a way to

⁵⁰ Ibid., 610–611.

⁵¹ Dorothy Ann Lee, "The Symbol of Divine Fatherhood," in *God The Father in the Gospel of John*, ed. Adele Reinhartz, Semeia 85 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 177.

understand that God is a spirit who can fill any place. We can not confine the Spirit in particular places, either in the Jerusalem Temple, the House of Worship on the hill of Gerizim, or all the worship houses in this world. So, John here refers to worship, which is empowered by the Spirit, not based on place.⁵²

Worship "in truth" means true worship. When connected with John 14:6, it seems that the truth here is a term referring to Jesus himself. In other words, worshiping God in truth is only possible when done in the Spirit and Jesus. The link between "Spirit" and "truth" here maybe because Jesus is the [source] of truth (14:6; cf. 1:14, 17; 8:32; 18:37), and the truth is also connected to the Spirit which inspires and enlightens by pointing back to Jesus (14:26; 16:13–15). The interconnection emphasizes the importance of divine inspiration in religious activities, while its foundation there in the person of Jesus.⁵³

Design of Theological Worship and Contextualization

Based on John 4:19-24, this essay offers three theological designs related to worship. First, God is the center of worship. Therefore, worship is not in the context of culturing a particular place or geographic location. The Jews understood the Jerusalem Temple to be holy and holier than any other place. Likewise, the Samaritans understood the hill of Gerizim to be a holy hill. Such cults lead them to an excessively chauvinist attitude, to look down on other places.

Second, worshipping God in truth can only be done in Jesus because He is the [source] of truth. Apart from Jesus, humans can do nothing. Third, God is Spirit. He can present everywhere. We cannot limit His presence in physical things, such as church buildings. Keener said,

The earthly temple and Holy Land may be temporarily possessed by the world (Rev 11: 2), but true worship is continuing in the heavenly temple, as noted above. Like Paul (Phil 3: 3), John may contrast true worship in the Spirit

⁵² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 614.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 618.

with traditional measures of religious devotion, in this instance sacrifices and rituals in the temple; the use of "true" in 1:47 may support this contrast. Such a contrast would not be surprising given John's teachings about God's house elsewhere in the Gospel (2: 16–17; 8:35; 14: 2); the believer becomes the place where the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit make their home. (14:23).⁵⁴

With the above understanding, worshiping the Father can be done anywhere because He is present everywhere. Humans cannot domesticate God in a particular place. During the Covid-19 pandemic, worship can also be done in a virtual space, not only in a physical space.

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⁵⁴ Ibid., 617.

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