

The Lesson God Desires Us to Learn from the Pandemic

A pastor from New England, whom I had never met, invited me to speak in their Sunday morning and Sunday evening services. He said he decided to contact me after visiting a revival center and purchasing a copy of my book, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*. He also said his church was experiencing revival.

As I prayed over these services, I received a clear word from the Lord. I heard Him say, "I want them to take the revival outside the four walls of their church." The passage He gave for this message was John 4:21-24, where Jesus said to the woman of Samaria:

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. Yet the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

These words of Jesus were prompted by the Samaritan woman's question concerning the right place to worship. The Jews and Samaritans were deeply divided over this issue, with the Samaritans claiming that Mt. Gerizim, where they had built their own temple, was the God-appointed place for sacrifice and worship.

The Jews, on the other hand, insisted that their temple in Jerusalem was the God-appointed place for sacrifice and worship. So incensed were they with the Samaritan claim that, in 128 B.C., a Jewish army destroyed the Samaritan temple. The

Samaritans, however, still considered its ruins a sacred site and place of worship, and they outright rejected the temple and priesthood in Jerusalem.

The Big Question

The woman was prompted to ask this question when Jesus told her things about herself that He had no way of knowing. When he asked her to call her husband and bring him to the well where they talked, she replied, "I have no husband."

Jesus responded by saying she had spoken the truth—for she had had five husbands, and the man with whom she now lived was not her husband. The woman was amazed and said, "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet."

It was at this point that she decided to ask Jesus the theological question on which Jews and Samaritans were so deeply divided. Where is the right place to worship?

Is not her question just as relevant today? Indeed, many in the 21st century are asking, "Where is the right place to worship?" Is it the Roman Catholic Church? Is it the Baptist Church? Is it the Methodist Church? Is it the Pentecostal Church?

Jesus proceeded to tell her that the time had come when true worship could no longer be identified with a building or geographic location. Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem were now irrelative. God is seeking those, Jesus said, who will worship Him in spirit and truth. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

By saying "God is Spirit," Jesus was emphasizing that God is not confined to a corporeal, physical body nor to any man-made building or temple. Worship, therefore, cannot be confined to a building, a geographic location or a certain time of the week.

Jesus made it clear that God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit from a sincere heart, and the location is unimportant. It might be driving down the highway or working in the kitchen or a gathering on the beach.

I was recently walking through Walmart when an old hymn came to mind, and I began to softly sing, "The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows." I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes as my heart overflowed with a sense of His goodness and grace. Walmart had become a place of worship for me.

They Failed the Test

Sue and I arrived at the revival church on Sunday morning as Sunday school was ending, and people were filling the auditorium. The auditorium was soon packed with about 300 people.

I was excited to share with them the message I had received about Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria and how He wanted them to take their revival outside the four walls of their church building.

Suddenly, someone reported that there was a strange smell coming from one of the Sunday school rooms. A fireman in the congregation rushed home and came back with an instrument for measuring such fumes. He then announced that the church should be vacated until a more sophisticated measuring device could be brought from the fire department.

In a few minutes, the entire congregation was standing in an open field behind the church building. I noted that there was a small porch on the back of the church that would make an ideal platform from which to preach. I was excited, for it seemed that God had set things up for my message that they were to take their revival outside the four walls of their church building.

I approached the pastor and said to him, "I will be very happy

to preach to the people from the porch.”

He replied, “Let me talk to the elders.”

In a few minutes he returned and said, “We have decided to send the people home.”

I was both disappointed and amazed that they were not willing to worship and hear the preaching of God’s Word outside the four walls of their church building. I sensed the Holy Spirit speak in my heart, “This was a test, and they failed the test.”

For the rest of this article, visit . {eoa}

Dr. Eddie Hyatt is the author of *1726: The Year that Defined America*, which documents how America was birthed out of a Great Awakening that also unleashed the moral outrage and spiritual strength that brought about the end of slavery on this continent. His books are available from Amazon and his website at .

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