

“JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#7: “Jesus and the Woman of Samaria”

SCRIPTURE: 4:1-45

INTRO:

John tells us that Jesus decided to leave Judea and return to Galilee on a route which necessitated passing through the region of Samaria.

Just as He was getting comfortable, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. His conversation with this woman provides the material for today’s lesson.

First of all,

WHO WERE THE SAMARITANS?

What do we know about Samaria? Samaria became the home of the northern ten tribes when Israel was divided after the reign of Solomon. The other two tribes were in Judea. The men of Samaria intermarried with foreign non-Jewish women, which resulted in Samaritans becoming a mixed race “contaminated” by foreign blood and pagan worship. Orthodox Jews shunned Samaritans. When traveling between Galilee and Judea, they would cross the Jordan and detour around Samaria.

The straw that broke the camel’s back, so to speak, when it came to the division was the Samaritans’ construction of a rival temple on Mount Gerizim in Shechem, claiming it as the true house of God instead of the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus did not avoid Samaria, as his fellow Jews would have. And as He came to the city of Sychar, which was near Jacob’s well, He decided to rest awhile beside the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus says, ***“Give me a drink.”*** The woman was taken by surprise because she didn’t expect a Jew to speak to her. A conversation about the water took place.

WHAT WAS THE “LIVING WATER” JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT?

John relates: ***Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”*** What was Jesus saying to her? What was this ***“living water”*** he could have given her?

Notice that she takes Him literally, saying, ***“Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?”***

The church I ministered with for twenty years in Round Rock, Texas met out in the county on Sam Bass Road, named for the outlaw, Sam Bass, who was fatally shot in a botched hold-up plan in 1878. We had a well and two septic systems. The well was 400 feet deep. Fortunately, we didn't have to draw the water with a bucket.

Jacob's well still exists in Palestine. It's more than 131 feet deep. In order to draw water from the well, a clay pot was fastened to a rope and lowered into the well. Just imagine lowering a heavy clay pot 131+ feet into the well and then lifting it up, hand over hand.

The well was about a half-mile from the city, so the water pot filled with water from the well had to be carried that half-mile back to the city. Those Samaritan women must have been a hardy bunch!

Of course, the *"living water"* Jesus said He could give her was not H₂O. It was "spiritual" water; it was the eternal life that He came to give.

But she didn't understand, and we can't really blame her. We have the same trouble sometimes. We don't understand spiritual truth because we think only in terms of our earthly existence and our finite experiences. We tend to take literally what we should understand spiritually and metaphorically and take spiritually and metaphorically what we should understand literally.

So, she says, *"Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."* Don't you just imagine Jesus chuckled to himself as she asked Him for the water she thought He spoke of?

Second,

JESUS TELLS HER TO GO AND BRING HER HUSBAND TO HIM.

This, of course, forces her to tell Him what He already knew: She was an adulteress five times over! (Now we know why she had come to the well alone. The women usually all came to the well at the same time, together. It was, no doubt, like today's beauty shop: a place where one could find out all the latest news and gossip.) She came alone because the other ladies didn't want anything to do with her.

She doesn't call her husband, but she decides that Jesus is a holy man – a prophet – and she points out that He and his people, the Jews, claim Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, to be the place of worship, and her people, the Samaritans, worship in Shechem, on Mount Gerizim. Now, this is what I referred to earlier. The Samaritans worshiped with the ten northern tribes of Israel, while orthodox Jews, of the two southern tribes, worshiped in Jerusalem.

Jesus tells her that the time was coming when God's people would worship in neither place. He, of course, was referring to the coming kingdom that would be called the "ecclesia," or church.

Third,

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY "SALVATION IS FROM THE JEWS?"

The Samaritans looked to the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Old Testament, but they rejected the rest of the Old Covenant Scriptures, like the books of history, poetry, and prophecy, so, they didn't have the expectation of a Messiah as the Jews did, nor did they understand that He would come from a Jewish lineage. Their rejection of the Scriptures beyond the Pentateuch also meant that they missed out on the full knowledge of salvation which the prophets, apostles, and other inspired writers provided. The Samaritans worshiped without knowledge, which had led to the worship of Baal and other idols.

So, to say that salvation is from the Jews was to say two things:

1. The Messiah who brought salvation was from the Jews, both in the flesh and in the Spirit; and
2. The knowledge of salvation and God's will had also come from the Jews.

Fourth,

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE TOLD HER THAT "THE HOUR IS COMING, AND IS NOW HERE, WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPERS WILL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH"?

The hour of true worship was "*now here*" because the Messiah had arrived. The Messiah was Jesus. Those who would recognize Him as the Christ would accept Him and become true worshipers of God. Those who don't accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, cannot be true worshipers of God. In other words, to believe in God but reject Jesus as His Son is vain, empty worship. There is no salvation associated with it.

There are many who profess to believe in God yet reject Jesus as His Son. Muslims believe in God, but they don't accept Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah. Their faith is in vain. There is no salvation for Muslims. Many people in the United States and Europe profess belief in God, but they don't accept Jesus as the Son of God and their Lord. Their faith is vain. There is no salvation for them. Unless people are brought to faith in Jesus as the Christ, they cannot be saved.

To "*worship the Father in spirit and truth*" is to reverence, adore, and submit to God through belief in Jesus as His Son and in knowledge of the divine

plan of redemption. The word *“spirit”* here does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the nature of our worship. To worship in spirit is to worship with our whole being. *“Truth”* is, well, truth – what God has actually said and done and why He did what He did. To worship in truth is to worship with the awareness and knowledge of God’s redemptive plan.

The woman’s response was to say, *“I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will tell us all things.”* And Jesus responded, *“I who speak to you am he.”* I’m sure the woman didn’t comprehend all that Jesus said, but she did realize that He was the one they were looking for, so she left her water jar and headed back into Sychar and told everyone she saw about a man who knew everything about her, who was possibly the Messiah.

Fifth,

THE DISCIPLES WERE PUZZLED ABOUT JESUS’ RESPONSE TO THEIR URGINGS TO EAT.

They came back from Sychar, where they had been replenishing their food supplies, and began to urge Jesus to eat something. His response was *“I have food to eat that you do not know about.”* When they appeared puzzled, He said, *“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”* Then He gave them a short lecture on the subject of evangelism.

NOTE THE RESPONSE IN SYCHAR WHEN THE WOMAN TOLD OF HER ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS.

“Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’

And when *“He stayed there two days, many more believed because of his word.”* And they said, *“We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”*

The point of this part of John’s narrative seems to be that of how faith in Jesus is not to be based only in the miraculous things He did but in the truths he taught. This would be the case of His followers in the future – disciples like you and me – who could not witness His miracles nor hear Him teach in person.

IN CLOSING...

Verses 43 through 45 provide a means of moving on to the next event in the narrative – a continuation of what he started to relate in verses 1 through 3 of this chapter. It also provides a means of pointing out the teaching of Jesus *“...that a prophet has no honor in his own country.”* What do you think He meant by that? One answer is that people tend to hold a lesser respect for those with whom they have been brought up with and have lived on familiar terms. Preachers are commonly least regarded and less envied in their own country.

According to Matthew 4:13, Jesus left Nazareth, where He was rejected, and began his teaching ministry in Capernaum, where He was accepted.

From there, He went to Galilee where He would teach for sixteen months. We'll begin there next week...