

## That You May Continue to Believe...



### AN EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## The Samaritan Woman at the Well John 4:4-45

I have a little book in my library by Joachim Jeremias entitled *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus*. Jeremias was a world-class scholar and was considered by many to be the utmost authority on the political and social conditions in Palestine during the time of Jesus. He has in his book an interesting arrangement of the various social classes around Jerusalem during the first century. In fact, he ranks the various classes of people in and around Jerusalem starting with the most favored class of people and ending with the dregs of society. At the top of the stack, he lists the clergy that is the priests and the priestly class. After them, he lists the lay nobility followed by the scribes and Pharisees. After the Pharisees, he lists Israelites who were still pure in their bloodlines but who were otherwise unremarkable. Then Jeremias turns to the lower segments of society. He lists those who worked in despised trades and engaged in things like the collection of dung, or were butchers or practiced bloodletting or surgery. After them he lists Jewish slaves and the Jews, even lower, who were born out of wedlock or were physically blemished. Finally, Jeremias writes about the scum of Jewish society. There he lists Gentile slaves and then the last and most despised group where he writes,

**“Descending to the lowest degree of the scale we come, *at last*, to the Samaritans.<sup>1</sup>”**

Now, according to Jeremias there were only two possible ways a person could be lower than a Samaritan. One was to be a Samaritan woman. The other was lower still and that was to be an immoral Samaritan woman. Now, let that soak in for a minute. I think in that sense, the Jews felt about the Samaritans like we felt about the Taliban right after 9/11 except for the fact that the Taliban were far away and ignorant. I mean if you think about it, there was here even in our country a public outcry of sympathy for Taliban women. The ancient Jews never felt sorry for Samaritan women. They despised them. You might get a better sense of how they felt about Samaritans if you let me use an analogy. I want you to imagine for a moment a vile, dirty, shameless streetwalker. No let me change it a bit. Imagine for a moment, a vile, dirty, shameless, crack-smoking streetwalking prostitute with aids who bore two children both brain damaged because of crack and both infected with aids. Do you feel that sense of disgust and enmity that just welled up in the pit of your stomach? That feeling pretty much gets to the heart of how the Jews felt about the Samaritans.

Now you have to understand that hatred, that deep, inherent sense of loathing that Jews felt for Samaritans for this story to come alive. You have to understand how despicable they thought the Samaritans were, how they viewed them as unclean in order to have any inkling of just how extraordinary the actions of our Savior were. Leon Morris included in his commentary the following quotes that might help us to understand something of the pervasive attitude toward the Samaritans.<sup>2</sup>

**“A Samaritan conveys uncleanness by what he lies, sits, or rides on, by his spittle (including the phlegm of his lungs, throat, or nose) and by his urine...”**

**“He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine” (Sheb. 8:10).**

**“The daughters of the Samaritans are deemed perpetually unclean as menstruous from the cradle” (Mishnah, *Nidd.* 4:1);**

Now you might be asking the question, **“Why did they hate them so much?”** It is a good question and worthy of an answer. But before I answer it, I have to tell you that the hatred went both ways. The hated the Samaritans and the Samaritans hated them in return.

The reason for the hatred, according to the Scripture goes back to the time when the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms, one in the north called Israel and one in the south called Judah. Jeroboam, the king of the north, encouraged the northern tribes not to return to Jerusalem, which was in the south, to worship. Instead, he set up an alternative place to worship in Samaria and encouraged them to worship there<sup>3</sup>. Eventually, God grew tired of their rebellious worship and sent the Assyrians to take them into captivity. Now here is what is interesting. The Assyrian king took only the best of the people into captivity, He left the poor and the uneducated Israelites there and he brought in people from other conquered countries that eventually commingled with the Israelites not only religiously but also physically. You can get a sense of that from 2 Kings 17:22-34.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Kings 17:22...**The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, <sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. <sup>24</sup> And the king of Assyria brought people

from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. <sup>25</sup> And at the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the LORD. Therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. <sup>26</sup> So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land. Therefore he has sent lions among them, and behold, they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." <sup>27</sup> Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there, and let him go and dwell there and teach them the law of the god of the land." <sup>28</sup> So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the LORD. <sup>29</sup> But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. <sup>30</sup> The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, <sup>31</sup> and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. <sup>32</sup> They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. <sup>33</sup> So they feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. <sup>34</sup> To this day they do according to the former manner. They do not fear the LORD, and they do not follow the statutes or the rules or the law or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel.

Now eventually, the southern kingdom also went into captivity. However, when it went into captivity it maintained its identity and refused to intermarry with foreign nations or to worship foreign gods. If you want an example, think of Daniel. Finally, when the southern kingdom was allowed to come back into the land under such men as Ezra and Nehemiah they arose a conflict between the two groups.

The northern group, the Israelites who had intermingled with the nations sent in by the Assyrians had already made Mount Gerizim in the north their sacred

place of worship. When the southern Jews came back, the northern people tried to discourage them from rebuilding Jerusalem or the temple there. The southern Jews would not allow the mongrel group from the north to help rebuild Jerusalem or its temple and they would not accept Mount Gerizim as an appropriate place of worship. They rejected the northern mongrel people and applied to them the slanderous name Samaritans.

Eventually, when the southern people, the people of Judah, gained enough military strength they marched into Samaria and destroyed the Samaritan temple, which they thought was idolatrous. Needless, to say, the Samaritans were unable to get over that and even though their temple was destroyed they still worshipped on Mount Gerizim even in the days of Jesus. Occasionally, they did things to get even with the Jews. They often attacked travelers through their land and once, around 6 AD, some Samaritans went up to Jerusalem at Passover and spread human bones throughout the temple complex at night, which pretty much ended Passover early that year<sup>4</sup>.

In the days of Jesus, Roman rule had pretty much ended the bloodshed between the two groups but not the hatred. The Jews viewed the Samaritans as idolatrous, which they almost certainly were. I say that even though it seems that in the days of Jesus, the Samaritans had largely abandoned all the other religions and had returned to a modified form of YHWH worship which still focused on Gerizim. They held to a modified Torah only and believed that the Jews had adulterated the true worship of YHWH.

On the other hand, the Samaritans viewed the Jews as snobs, which they certainly were. The Jews even used the term Samaritan to represent the vileness

and demon-possession. You can see what I mean in John 8, where the Jews tell Jesus...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 8:48**...The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

So there was a great gulf between the two people. In fact, the Jews who lived in Galilee and went down to Jerusalem for Passover often made it a point to avoid Samaria altogether even though it was the quickest route. That did that primarily to avoid ritual uncleanness. It was possible to pick up this ritual uncleanness from coming into contact with a Samaritan, or a Samaritan's cups, bowls, saucers or waterpots. So, in order to risk such uncleanness, Jews traveling from Galilee to Judea and Jerusalem often crossed over the Jordan into Gentile territory and passed down through Perea in order to avoid Samaria altogether. I would be somewhat like driving all the way to New Mexico and then straight up from Albuquerque to Colorado instead of going up through Borger and across the Oklahoma panhandle just to avoid Oklahoma.

Now all that having been said, let's look at the text starting in verse 4.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:4**...And he had to pass through Samaria.<sup>5</sup>

You should notice that phrase "**had to**." It implies as I said last week the idea of divine necessity in John. Jesus did not have to go through Samaria geographically. There were other routes to Galilee. He had to go through Samaria because He was out there doing the work of the Father. He was out there fulfilling the task that the Father had given Him and that task involved

meeting an immoral Samaritan woman at a lonely well in the forbidden land of Samaria.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:5**...So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

Most scholars understand the town Sychar to be the same as the town named Shechem mentioned many times in the Old Testament. There is no Old Testament record of Jacob ever digging a well near Shechem but there is an account of Jacob giving a certain ridge of land to Joseph in Genesis 48.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 48:22**...Moreover, I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow."

At any rate, Jesus tired as He was, sat down (according to the Greek) upon the well. Now there is something that I think should come immediately to your mind at the mention of Jacob. What would that be? The thing that I think should come to your mind is the reference to Jacob that occurred in chapter one. Jesus made there an elliptical reference to Jacob when dealing with Nathanael. You will remember Jesus talked about the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man and in doing so hinted that even greater things than had happened to Jacob would happen with and through Him.

Of course, the other thing you ought to notice is that Jesus was human. He was tired and He sat down. The thing you might miss is that it was about noon, the hottest part of the day. We get that from the phrase, the sixth hour. The Jews

measured time from sunrise to sunset. The sixth hour meant that it was about six hours after sunrise.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:7**...A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)

Now, you probably ought to know that noon was an unusual time to draw water. The text doesn't state that but it is a fairly well attested fact. Most people either drew water early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Part of that had to do with preparation for the day and part of that had to do with the heat. The Samaritan woman came to draw water by herself at noon. This act may have had something to do with her social status. It may have been that she was a social outcast based on the immoral life she had lived. It's hard to know with certainty. At any rate, Jesus asks her straight out for a drink.

Now I think you can see based upon the introduction what an extraordinary thing that was for Jesus to do. Remember, just speaking to a Samaritan could defile a person. Remember, all Samaritan women were viewed as continuously unclean. Remember, anything she touched would have been unclean to any self-respecting Jew. Still, Jesus asks, "**Would you give me a drink?**" Here's the point. It didn't matter to Jesus.

Of course, it mattered to her and she was quick to point out the issue.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:9**...The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Now how she knew He was a Jew is not clear from the text. Obviously, though it had something to do with physical appearance. Perhaps, it was His clothes. Perhaps, it was his hair or beard. Perhaps, it was the color of His skin. Still, she knew He was a Jew and she casts her question based on her perception of the snobbery of the Jews toward the Samaritans. But notice, Jesus lets the insult just go right on by. Instead, He does the same thing to her that He did to Nicodemus. He turns the conversation to a whole different plane.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:10**...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."

Now, I want you to notice the phrase "**living water**." It is a phrase that was used in ancient Israel to describe running water. Let me see if I can make that clearer. Most of you know that Israel is a fairly, dry and arid land. The rivers there are like Texas rivers. That is, they are hardly rivers at all. In fact, most of the streambeds and creeks stay dry year round. The people have relied on wells and cisterns for generations.

Now, I don't know if you have ever had water from a cistern or not. A cistern is a big hole in the ground that is usually lined with clay or cement. Whenever it rains, the rain is diverted into the cistern and stored there for later usage. Of course, over time the rainwater stored in a cistern can get pretty nasty. I remember once when I was a boy, my dad and I helped a neighbor do some repair work on his cistern. It was a creepy place and after I came out of it I can tell you I wanted living water. Preferably water out of the end of a garden hose hooked to a pump hooked to some cool, mountain stream in Colorado. Now here is the interesting thing, the water in Jacobs well is living water. The well, which

is still there, is about a hundred feet deep and at the bottom of the well is a refreshing free flowing spring that keeps the water there, even to this day, light and refreshing.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:11**...The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

Now, you ought to notice right off the misunderstanding of the woman. Clearly Jesus is not talking about regular water, not even "spring water". Instead, he is talking about something else altogether. But the woman doesn't get it. Now who does that remind you of? Of course, it reminds you of Nicodemus and it is a literary tool that John the Beloved will use over and over again in this gospel. Jesus will make a statement. That statement will be misunderstood and then Jesus will correct the misunderstanding by giving further light.

Of course, it is impossible to miss the question that the woman asks Jesus. She basically says, **"You have no bucket. You are not able to produce magic springs of water are you? You are not greater than our father Jacob are you?"** It is impossible to tell whether she was being sarcastic or not but I suspect she was. You will remember that so far Jesus has been demonstrated to be greater than the ceremonial law, greater than the temple, greater than the wisdom of Judaism and now He is asked a very simple question, **"Are you greater than the Patriarchs? Are you greater than Jacob? I mean look here, Jacob drank from this well and so did His children and His animals. Are you going to beat that?"**

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:13**...Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be

thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Now, I want you to notice Jesus' answer. What would you say, **"Is it a yes or a no?"** It is a resounding, **"Yes."** I mean think about what Jesus actually said. Basically, it was something like this. **"Yes, Jacob gave you this well and the water here is good. But it's temporal. You drink it and you have to come back and get more later on. The water I give you can take with you and it will stay with you and satisfy you all the days of your life. It will be like a gushing spring that wells up over and over again and always remains fresh and alive and satisfying. So which water do you want?"**

Now, it's pretty easy to see that the woman though she did not understand everything understood at least this much. Whatever Jesus was offering was better than what she had. Look at her answer.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:15**...The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Did she get it? No, she did not. She is still thinking like Nicodemus. She is thinking physical, earthly thoughts and Jesus is trying to lift her thoughts upward.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:16**...Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

Now, I wish for a moment you could see the beauty of the Greek language here and if you will forgive me I want to try to show it to you. In Greek the way you

emphasize something is to move it forward in the sentence. Greek does not depend on word order like English does. In English, word order makes everything make sense. Usually, you have a subject, then a verb and then an object. In Greek all those things are indicated by the endings on the words. So is easy to emphasize something just by moving it forward in the sentence. She places the order of her response this way, **“No have a husband.”** Jesus takes here words and changes the order to **“A husband not you have.”** She emphasizes the lack focusing on the word “not.” Jesus emphasizes the quantity focusing on the word “a” and in doing so He cuts her right to the quick. She says, **“No. I have not a husband.”** You are right about that, **“You don’t have “a” husband. You have had a ton of husbands and the one you have now is not even your husband.”**

Now, it is impossible to know whether He is focusing on the fact that the man she now has is married to someone else or is just not married to her. But whatever He intended hits home.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:19...**The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

Her response is remarkable. Now it is funny to us that she was so uncomfortable. Of course, it was not funny to her at all and she pushes His analysis of her to the background by diverting the discussion to an important debate of the day. But before we look at that, I want you to think through the progression of thought that she has undergone so far.

In verse 9, she says, **“You are a Jew...”**

In verse 11, she changes her tone a bit and calls Him **“Sir...”**

In verse 15, she makes it more reverent but still she uses the phrase **“Sir...”**

In verse 19, she says, **“O.K. you are a prophet...”**

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:20**...Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

Do you get the question? The question is **“O.K. since you are prophet, where should we worship? Who is right the Jews or the Samaritans?”**

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:21**...Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Jesus answers the question this way, **“Up until this time the Jews have been more on the right track than the Samaritans. But now, right now everything has changed. God is not tying us to a particular physical location. Worship must be spiritually directed. It must be right of heart and mind. The physical location is nothing. It must be tied to the spiritual nature of God Himself is spirit.”**

I love the woman's answer.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:25**...The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."

Basically, her answer is this and I get this from F.F. Bruce, **“A day is coming when all these religious problems will be cleared up for us.”**<sup>8</sup> What she is saying is that the Messiah will sort all this out.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:26**...Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Now tell me can that be said any plainer?

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:27**...Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"<sup>9</sup>

Now appealing to the Greek again, I have to tell you that the disciples are totally appalled that Jesus would be engaged in a conversation with a Samaritan woman. The verb is an imperfect tense verb and the idea is that of continuous action. That is, they just kept on being amazed that He was talking to her. Of course, they weren't stupid enough to interrupt Him and then as abruptly as she had come the Samaritan woman gets up and departs and I want you to notice the little touch that John adds, **“She left her waterpot.”**<sup>10</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:28**...So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,<sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"<sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Now notice the progression in the woman's thought.

In verse 9, she says, **“You are a Jew...”**

In verses 11 and 15 she changes her tone a bit and calls Him **“Sir...”**

In verse 19, she says, **"O.K. you are a prophet..."**

Now here is verse 28 its, **"He may be the Christ."**

You should note, I think, that the ESV gets it completely wrong here in that it says, **"She went back to the town and said to the people."** The NAS is exactly right when it says, **"she went back and said to the men."** **That's important because it is in keeping with the woman's lifestyle.**

Finally, the way she pitches the question to the men shows that she was pretty much an expert on men. Notice, what she says, **"This man told me everything I ever did. I know I am just a woman but you don't think that this man could be the Messiah do you? Of course, you big, strong, intelligent men will have to go judge for yourselves and let me know because that kind of analysis would be well beyond a woman like me."**

Now finally, let me ask you what do you think is the significance of the fact that she left the water pot right there at the well? I think it is John's way of saying that the old has been left behind. Everything for this woman is new. In fact, to put it in Jesus' terms she doesn't need that water anymore. She now has living water.

Then the story switches back to the well. I can just imagine Jesus sitting there with His arm upon the water pot of the Samaritan woman. Of course, the disciples tried to take care of Him.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:31**...Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup>

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Now the confusion switches from the Samaritan woman to the disciples. They just flat don't get it. Jesus' work was to do the will of the Father. That is why He had to go to Samaria. That is why He had to meet this woman at the well. His work was extraordinary and it was difficult and tiring but it is what sustained Him. Later on in this gospel, John is going to tell us what our work is...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:29**..."that you believe in him whom he has sent."

But here Jesus reminds the disciples that their work is to harvest,

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:35**...Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Now the point that Jesus is making is not about wheat or barley. It is about the Samaritans coming out of the town toward Him.<sup>11</sup> At the end of verse 30, John makes the point that they were continually coming out to Jesus. I think Jesus looks up and says, **"Here is the harvest. One man sows and another man reaps. Today you have the joy of seeing the sowing and the reaping occur at the same time. This is genuine joy."**

Now let's quickly look at the last 6 verses. Notice just as there was a transition in the faith of the woman, so there is a transition in the faith of the Samaritans.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:39**...Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word.

**First, they believe because of what the woman said. Then they believe because of His words in and of themselves. And notice their conclusion on verse 42.**

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:42**...They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

**You will notice that the transition is now fully complete.**

In verse 9, she says, **"You are a Jew..."**

In verses 11 and 15 she changes her tone a bit and calls Him **"Sir..."**

In verse 19, she says, **"O.K. you are a prophet..."**

In verse 28, its **"He is the Christ."**

Now here in verse 42, it's, **"He's the Savior of the World."**<sup>12</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:43**...After the two days he departed for Galilee. <sup>44</sup> (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) <sup>45</sup> So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

You can sense I think the cumulative weight of all of the evidence gathered on behalf of Jesus. He is greater than the prophets. He is greater than Jacob, the founder of Israel, and all the patriarchs. He is greater than any temple location, whether it be in Samaria or evening Jerusalem. I think you can gather how this

particular story might fit into the theme of the book as it has thus far been laid out.

What I have tried to point out thus far is that the Gospel of John was written to encourage those first century Jewish believers who were straddling the fence between the synagogue and Jesus. It was written to encourage them to keep on believing in Him and I think you can see what application they might have drawn from this story. You see the point was that God was no longer tied to a geographical location. If He was going to be worshipped rightly, he had to be worshipped by those that understood God is spirit. He transcends the temple. Of course, He also transcends the synagogue. Even the idolatrous Samaritans had enough insight to recognize the Savior of the world when they saw Him. They were willing to relax their grip on the importance of Mount Gerizim because they heard His words. They saw His beauty. What John is asking here is this, **“If they could see His beauty and leave the old behind can’t you having seen His beauty do the same?”**

Of course, beyond that there is the eminently practical application of the Samaritan woman herself. Her story tells us that moral failure is not an issue to separate one from Jesus. Nicodemus was not too spiritual to be reached and this Samaritan woman was not too sinful to be reached. He was willing to meet here where she was. Of course, He never dressed up her sin or glossed it over. But He was the place where one could get living water and He could forgive sin and change a life with the presence of His abiding Spirit.

You know every time I think about that I think back to one time when I was eating in the lunchroom when I was worked at Joshua’s. There was a group of

three or four ladies engaged in some serious conversation. One my dear friends, let's call her Sue, was one of the ladies in the conversation. One of the girls in the group had gotten involved in a sinful relationship and Sue was encouraging her to turn from her sin and to do what was right. This young girl looked at Sue and said, **"Really Sue what do you know about sin. You live an absolutely impeccable life. You are wise and intelligent and so lady-like. You don't know what its like to be out there struggling to keep a man...you don't know what it's like to be a sinner."**

I remember Sue smiled and then she leaned down pretty close to the girl and said, **"You know what. I used to be a drug addict. I've done heroin, cocaine, speed, you name it. I've been married almost more times than I can count. I've slept around and the truth of the matter is that whatever sophistication you see whatever godliness you see, you see because Jesus covered over all my sins and gave me a new heart and a new desire for righteousness. SO I can tell you...from experience...He'll satisfy you heart if you'll cast your cares on Him."**

I think that was Sue's way of saying, **"He gives out living water to all that seek it. Are you thirsty?"**

So let me ask you, **"Are you? Are you thirsty?"**

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 352.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 229.

<sup>3</sup> **1 Kings 12:2-31**...Then Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there he went out and built up Peniel. Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam." After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremias, 353. See also Josephus, *Antiquities XVIII. 2*, He writes: "As the Jews were celebrating the feast of unleavened bread, which we call the Passover, it was customary for the priests to open the temple-gates just after midnight. When, therefore, those gates were first opened, some of the Samaritans came privately into Jerusalem, and threw about dead men's bodies, in the cloisters; on which account the Jews afterward excluded them out of the temple, which they had not used to do at such festivals; and on other accounts also they watched the temple more carefully than they had formerly done."

<sup>5</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Life of Josephus*. ¶52. He writes: "I then wrote to my friends in Samaria, to take care that they might safely pass through the country: for Samaria was already under the Romans, and it was absolutely necessary for those that go quickly [to Jerusalem] to pass through that country; for in that road you may, in three days' time, go from Galilee to Jerusalem. See also. Josephus, Flavius, *Antiquities XX.6*. He writes: Now there arose a quarrel between the Samaritans and the Jews on the occasion following: It was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans; and at this time there lay, in the road they took, a village that was called Gina, which was situated in the limits of Samaria and the great plain, where certain persons thereto belonging fought with the Galileans, and killed a great many of them."

<sup>6</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *Gospel of John V.29* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 169. He writes: *Jacob's well*. A well about 100 feet deep is first mentioned in this area in Christian pilgrim sources of the 4th century; Jacob's well is not mentioned in the OT. The site presently identified as Jacob's well at the foot of Mount Gerizim can be accepted with confidence. The descriptions of ch. iv show a good knowledge of the local Palestinian scene.

<sup>7</sup> <sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 26:19**...But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water,

<sup>8</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 111.

<sup>9</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 36: John*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher) 1998. See comment on verse 27 where he quotes Billerbeck quoting ancient Jewish sources. "Billerbeck cites, among other extraordinary examples, 'One should not talk with

a woman on the street, not even with his own wife, and certainly not with somebody's else's wife, because of the gossip of men,' and 'It is forbidden to give a woman any greeting'"

<sup>10</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 414. "The conversation between the woman and the Samaritans (iv. 28–30,39) moves within the limits of popular messianic concepts. She goes to the town with the idea that Jesus may indeed be the Messiah, as He has claimed to be. The Messiah she takes to be the One who will announce the whole truth in matters of religion—for such is the implication, in the context, of the *ωροδοσαναγγελει ημιν απαντα*. Of Jesus she can attest that He has shown complete knowledge of her own past: a knowledge which is at least the mark of a prophet (iv. 19), and may be more. Upon such grounds many of the Samaritans accept the claims of Jesus. But meanwhile (and here we have an example of the Johannine irony) the conversation of Jesus with His disciples has indicated how much more than that the Messiahship of Jesus means."

<sup>11</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 1, 173. "In the mind of Jesus there is a close relationship — though also a contrast (see on 4:86, 37) — between the physical and the spiritual harvest. In the verses, which follow, the Lord bases his remarks upon this relationship. We should bear in mind that by this time the procession of Samaritans (4:30) was becoming plainly visible as coming across the fields it approached the well. Pointing at this harvest of faith (4:39) Jesus says to his disciples. Look, lift up your eyes, and scan the fields, that they are white for harvesting (4:35). Though the grain-harvest may still be four months off, the *soul harvest* is ripe for the plucking even now! When Jesus tells the disciples to ponder the spectacle of the approaching Samaritans, and to consider them to be ready for harvesting, does this not clearly imply that he is sending out his disciples to gather this harvest?"

<sup>12</sup> B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 77. "It does not appear that the Samaritans go asked for signs like the Jews (comp. 'v. 48), or that any outward miracles were wrought among them. *the Christ, the Saviour of the world...*The words *the Christ* must be omitted, in accordance with an overwhelming concurrence of ancient authorities. The simple title, *the Saviour of the world* is found once again in 1 John iv.14; and it is a significant fact that this magnificent conception of the work of Christ was first expressed by a Samaritan, for whom the hope of a Deliverer had not been shaped to suit national ambition. So at last faith rose to the level of the promise, v. 21. The "salvation" (v. 22) sprang from the Jews, and was recognized by Samaritans."