

Jesus Gives Living Water John 4 (04)

Augustine's Confessions, "Great are you, O Lord, and greatly to be praised. You have prompted us that we should delight to praise you, for you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until it comes to rest in thee." (I paraphrased for clarity)

Jesus in John 3 and 4

1. Remember that John 1:1-18 functions like a **blueprint** for this Gospel
2. John 3-4 are **closely connected** together: both people need salvation
3. John 3 is about Jesus speaking with a **reluctant Jew** named Nicodemus
4. John 4 is about Jesus speaking to **Gentiles** who respond in saving faith
5. John 3-4 **anticipates** Acts 1:8 (*Jerusalem, Samaria, to the ends of the earth*)
6. John 4 subtly **reinforces** how many Jews blindly missed Jesus as Messiah
7. John 4 contains deep theology as well as very **practical** evangelism lessons
8. Racial-ethnic prejudice **contradicts** the Gospel and has no place in the Church
9. Worshipping in *spirit and truth* is **not** referring to our personal attitude in worship
10. Sadly, the 2nd sign (4:43-54) characterizes **fascination** with signs without faith

Eschatology in John – Eschatology refers to the End-times. However, in John the End-time has *already* arrived in Jesus Christ, but is *not yet* consummated in fullness. Jesus is fulfilling ancient prophetic promises about the new creation.

I. Evangelize the Lost (4:1-15)

A. Tell people about Jesus (4:1-6)

1. Make time for the lost (4:1-5)

- a. We want to focus on verse 4, Jesus **had** to pass through Samaria. Another way to translate this verse, "It was necessary that Jesus travel through Samaria." Verse 4 is more than a simple comment about geography and travel directions. We all know that the shortest distance between two points (two locations) is a straight line. Jesus is just outside of Jerusalem and he needs to travel north to Galilee. The shortest and fastest way to get from Judah to Galilee is to pass through Samaria. The Greek word (*dei*) behind the word "had" in verse 4 always refers to a divine necessity in the Gospel of John (**3:7 – you must be born again (from above)**, **14 – the son of man must be lifted up**, **30 – he must increase, but I must decrease**, 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; **20:9 – he must rise from the dead**). So, this little phrase in verse 4 is talks about geography to teach us something about theology and salvation. John tells us that Jesus understood his travel to Samaria to be a divine necessity. This was a **Gentile** region.
- b. When Jesus arrived in Samaria he stopped at **Jacob's well**. This town rich heritage filled with important events in the life of the patriarchs and Israel's history. The greater point for us is to remember that this village was located at Jacob's well (book of Genesis) as well as Mt. Gerizim (book of Deuteronomy). Evidently Jacob had given this land to Joseph (Genesis 48:22). Perhaps the bones of Joseph were buried in this area. This probably became his inheritance (Joshua 24:32; Genesis 33:19). **This was a place of great historical significance.** Today, we still know the location of Jacob's well. To summarize, Sychar probably replaced ancient Shechem. In other words, Sychar – at this point – is probably the most important Samaritan city. This makes Sychar **representative** of all of Samaria. What happens between Jesus and the Samaritan woman applies to every Samaritan (remember 1:11-12). Devout Jews **would not travel** through Samaria, but would intentionally take a longer detour around Samaria so they could avoid traveling through Gentile territory. So why is it necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria? **Not simply because it is the shortest route, but to demonstrate he is the Savior of the world.** John begins by telling us that it was completely necessary that Jesus had to go to Samaria. Again, John is emphasizing that everywhere Jesus goes and everything Jesus does is according to God's divine plan and purpose for His life. This is a practical challenge to each of us in our own lives. **Jesus had to stop in Samaria because he knew that the promises of Abraham need to be fulfilled, "In you shall all the families (nations) of the world be blessed."**

2. Remember Jesus is human (4:6)

- a. This point could be easy to miss, but it is an important reminder. Many passages in John will emphasize the deity and divinity of Jesus Christ, but here John reminds us of the humanity of Jesus. When we studied the Prologue of John (1:1-18), we spoke briefly about the nature of Jesus Christ. We believe the Bible teaches that Jesus is fully divine and fully human. Here we wish to emphasize and remind ourselves of the real humanity of Jesus. He became tired, weary, hungry, and thirsty just like anyone else.
- b. We must always believe that Jesus was a real human. The book of Hebrews tells us this is important because it reminds us that Jesus is able to fully sympathize with us when we go through trials and difficulties in life. When Jesus arrived at Jacob's well a high noon, he was worn out, tired, and thirsty. He needed to sit down and rest.
- c. We will now begin to see how Jesus uses his own human weakness when he became tired and thirsty to use as opportunities to open up conversations about the real spiritual needs of people. John tells us it was about the sixth hour – which means it was noon (lunchtime), one of the hottest parts of the day. Human thirst is among one of the most intense human cravings. Jesus uses a “**felt need**” to reveal a “**greater, spiritual need**”. Scripture uses thirst metaphorically for spiritual desire (Psalm 42:2; 63:1; 143:6; Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 5:6). **John 4 teaches us that Jesus is the One sent by God to satisfy the spiritual thirst of God's people** (Ridderbos). Before the cross, we see the deep agony of Jesus' humanness in the garden.

B. Meet sinners where they are in life (4:7-15)

1. Break social barriers to evangelize (4:7-9)

- a. A couple of things we notice from these verses and this passage. **First**, the time is around lunchtime, a hot part of the day. Normally people went to the well to draw water earlier in the day or perhaps in the evening when the temperature was a bit cooler. **Second**, this woman of Samaria comes to draw water from the well apparently all alone. **Third**, Jesus asked her for a drink of water. This lady probably came alone to this well at this time of day for a reason. This might be the **first clue** that something is **not quite right** in our story (i.e. maybe she has a problem in her life and wants to come to the well to draw water when no one is around?). Maybe this lady does not have a good reputation and let's assume for a moment that she knows that her life is filled with problems. Maybe she came to the well in the middle of the day to avoid people. Perhaps she was tired of her neighbors gossiping about the problems in her life.
- b. **Furthermore**, based on the last parenthetical comment in verse 9 (for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans) we now know why it was so shocking that Jesus would ask her for a drink! **To help us understand the great significance of verses 7-9 we need to recall an important history lesson.** Let's start by asking ourselves, “Who are the Samaritans” and “Where did they come from?” If God gave the Promised Land to Israel, why are there Samaritans living in it? Here is a very short and direct answer. You can study this more on your own later. **Ethnically**, the Samaritans were “**half-breeds**” a mixture of Jewish and Gentile blood. This caused enormous problems between the Jews and the Samaritans. **Historically**, we have to go back into the Old Testament times to answer these questions. After the death of King Solomon, the nation of Israel divided into two nations. Ten of the northern tribes left Solomon (the king with the Davidic promises), and they created their own apostate kingdom. They become known as Israel or the Northern Kingdom (as opposed to Judah or the Southern Kingdom). Eventually they established their own political and religious capital at Samaria. But sometimes around the year **722 B.C.** the Assyrian Empire defeated this Northern Kingdom and carried many Israelites off into exile (many never returned). But the Assyrians did something else. They imported people from their empire (Mesopotamians) to live and settle in and around Samaria. Over the years the Israelites who were left intermarried with these Assyrian people and further created and modified Israelite religion. They built their own temple and had their own priests. Their “Bible” was not the Bible of the Jewish people (Genesis – Malachi, or our Old Testament) but consisted only of the first five books of the Bible (the Torah). **This is known as the Samaritan Pentateuch.**
- c. **This helps us to understand why there would be so much hatred, mistrust, and animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews.** This also helps explain why

devout Jews would rather walk longer to avoid traveling through Samaritan territory (they were fearful they would be **ceremonially defiled**). Jewish people viewed Samaritans and all Gentiles as always being in a state of ritual impurity. Historically, around the year 400B.C. the Samaritans built a rival temple on **Mt. Gerizim** (this is the mountain of blessing described in the book of Deuteronomy). It did not help Jewish-Samaritan relations when John Hyrcannus attacked and destroyed this temple somewhere around the year 108 B.C. This did not help restore good relations between these two groups. So there were ethnic tensions, racial prejudice, hostility, rival religious viewpoints, - these two groups of people were socially, religiously, and politically enemies of each other. And to think that Jesus, who had no drinking vessel to draw water, asked her for a drink! Everyone would have assumed that Jesus was endangering himself to becoming ceremonially unclean. Imagine, Jesus drinking from the same vessel of water as a Samaritan! Disgusting. Do you see the risk involved here? And Jesus decides to shatter all social barriers and not only travel into Samaritan territory, but stop and talk to a woman of questionable character. The “evangelism” in chapter 4 of John is radical.

- d. **Some Applications:** **First**, do not let cultural or social barriers prevent you from telling another person about Jesus Christ. **Second**, most if not many of we need to **learn to initiate** a conversation. **Third**, you don’t have to be of the same social class or culture to evangelize a person. **Fourth**, we should be ready for evangelistic opportunities in our day to day lives (**1 Peter 3:15**). **Fifth**, don’t ever say to yourself, “I don’t want to share to Gospel with this person” (for whatever reason). In other words, we must not neglect to share the Gospel message with **marginalized** people in society.

2. Stay focused on Jesus (4:10-15)

- a. Jesus used his physical thirst for water to transition to the greater issue of living water. At different points in the Old Testament water is a common symbol for salvation. **Jeremiah 2:13; Isaiah 12:3**. This is a prophetic statement about the living waters of salvation that the prophets envisioned would happen in the last days. Jesus is indicating that the **Final Age** (the Last Days) has finally arrived. The new creation, end-time blessing that many of the prophets wrote about long ago was being inaugurated (launched) by Jesus (Zechariah 14:8; Ezekiel 47:9). **Numbers 24:7; Isaiah 44:3; 49:10 (ancient “water prophecies”)**. The **living water** which Jesus is speaking will be revealed in a few chapters to be **the Holy Spirit** which wells up inside of us.
- b. Jesus just shared the truth about living water and she **misunderstood** what he was talking about. In fact she interprets everything Jesus says **literally** and thinks Jesus has a better and perhaps easier way to get water. “Are you trying to tell me that you know about a better well than Jacob’s well and that I don’t have to walk all this way every day in the hot weather.” But Jesus had a way of **stimulating curiosity in a conversation**. He shows us here how he takes a physical need (water to drink) and uses this need to teach her about the greater spiritual need of living water for salvation. This helps us to know that we can capitalize on a situation in the life of an unbeliever and use this as a bridge to explain the Gospel message. Her misunderstanding was a temptation to get “side-tracked” in why He had come to this well in the first place.
- c. **Application** – when you evangelize stay focused on the issue on why Jesus came to rescue us from sin and give us salvation (the good news of the Gospel). Stop and think about this for a moment. Remember, earlier I said that the Samaritans only believed five books to be the standard of God’s revelation (Genesis – Deuteronomy). That was their Bible, but Jesus did not get sidetracked and involved in rebuking her about the contents of her “Bible”. He chose to wisely overlook this and perhaps for good reasons.

II. Worship in Spirit and Truth (4:16-54)

A. Show Compassion to the Broken (4:16-26)

1. Expose sin with God’s Law (4:16-19)

- a. Jesus subtly shifts from the subject of living water to the issue of sin. Notice how his comment about calling her husband is basically related to the Ten Commands, the law of God. But this is **no arbitrary change of subject**. It is a **calculated move to expose the sin in her life**.

- b. The way she answered Jesus, “*I have no husband*” is revealing, especially since we already know about her past. One commentator writes, “Her answer was meant to end the conversation.” At this point she was clinging desperately to her privacy and whatever semblance of respect. **But the truth was, her life was a mess, a broken series of false beginnings and shattered hopes** (Kostenberger).
- c. Notice how Jesus uses the law of God (Moral Law) in evangelization (C.S. Lewis taught us this from *Mere Christianity*). Maybe she was a bit surprised that Jesus would say this. She quickly and perhaps defensively says, “I don’t have a husband.” When Jesus exposed her past life with such clarity, we begin to wonder if this was the beginning of the turning point in her life when her eyes are soon opened to believe this is the Messiah. The law of God exposes our sinfulness so that the grace of the Gospel can heal us. Discussion of the Law of God (Moral Law) often makes people very uncomfortable. She replied, “*Sir, I perceive that you might be a prophet*” is a significant statement because remember the only Bible she believes in are the first five books of the Bible, therefore she must be referring to **Deuteronomy 18**.

2. Worship follows belief (4:20-26)

- a. Why does she suddenly change the topic at this point? She is bringing up the differences between the Samaritan religion with the Jewish religion. I’m not entirely sure why she changes the topic so quickly. Did Jesus convict her of her personal sin? Whatever her reason, she brings up an old dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans about worship. She says to Jesus, “Which mountain is the correct mountain to gather for worship? Is it our mountain, here at Mt. Gerizim or is it the one in Jerusalem that the Jews claim was God’s choice?” **Just note, back in Deuteronomy 12:5** we read, *But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go.* **In the Samaritan version of Deuteronomy** it reads, “*the place that the Lord your God has chosen*”. They interpreted this verse to mean Mt. Gerizim. **Listen Jesus**, “*Our fathers worshipped on this mountain*”. She is right about this. This was ancient location of Shechem and this was the first place **Abraham** built an altar on his entry into the Promised Land (Genesis 12:6ff.). **Jacob** worshipped here (Genesis 33:20). **Moses** blessed God’s people here (Deuteronomy 11:29; 27:12). It was here at Mt. Gerizim that the blessings were pronounced on Israel after the settlement in **Joshua’s day** (Joshua 8:33; Deuteronomy 27:12).
- b. **Verses 21-24 contain important teaching about fulfillment and replacement (prophetically and eschatologically).** These four verses are classic verses about replacement and fulfillment (they build upon what we already learned in John 1:14, 51, and in 2:19-22). Notice that Jesus did not answer her question. F.F. Bruce puts it like this, “The answer the woman received was quite different from anything she could have expected. The time when there was any point in the argument about the claims of Gerizim versus those of Zion had come to an end. A new order was now being introduced which rendered such questions out-of-date and meaningless. The important question is **not where** people worship **but how** they worship him.”
- c. **Notice how Jesus corrected her ignorance.** Verse 22, *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* That must have been a bit of a shock for her to hear. He goes on to **correct** and **clarify** that God revealed Himself to the Jewish people by giving them His revelation. God did not reveal Himself to the Samaritans in this way (nor to any other people or nation). The Jews were given a prominent and sovereign place in the history of God’s revelation.
- d. In other words, if I were to answer your outdated question of which mountain, then it would have to be Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, but not even these differences matter anymore! Keep all of the truth from John 3 and 4 together at this point. Kostenberger writes, “Just as Judaism was branded as lacking in experiential knowledge of true spiritual regeneration in John 3 (with Nicodemus serving as the paradigmatic representative), so here Samaritanism is described as devoid of knowledge of what constitutes the true worship that God requires.” **F.F. Bruce**, “The prophets had spoken of a coming day when not one central sanctuary alone, but the whole earth, would be the habitation of the name and glory of God.” This is what Jesus is describing! **So in verse 23 when Jesus says, “But the hour is coming, and is now here”** we have another classic statement of eschatological (prophetic) fulfillment in John’s Gospel. Jesus is

saying that the End-time, Final-days world Temple is now a reality when it comes to worship. To worship in Spirit and truth is to worship the Father through Jesus because Jesus is the true temple. This is the great turning point of eschatology in history. All of this will come to final fulfillment in Revelation 21:22.

B. Believe that God still saves (4:27-54)

1. Rejoice in God's Harvest (4:27-42) [This illustrates the beauty of John 3:16]

- a. The disciples were away buying some food and when they returned they saw their master talking to a Gentile-Samaritan woman. Among some pious Jews, some of the rabbis in the past have been noted for making comments like this, "Prolong no conversation with a woman" (Yose ben Yohanan, second century A.D). At another point this rabbi writes, "He who prolongs conversation with a woman brings evil upon himself." It appears here that the disciples of Jesus were not very impressed and not very enthusiastic to return seeing Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. Did they think she was "below" them? **Point – No one is a "waste of time."**
- b. This is the second example in this chapter when the disciples misunderstand Jesus by taking him too literally. The response of Jesus seems almost certainly connected or related to **Deuteronomy 8:3 – we do not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God.** **D.A. Carson** writes, "**No one has ever exemplified the truth of Deuteronomy 8:3 like Jesus.**" Everything Jesus did should always be understood as Him doing the will of His Father. Later Jesus will pray to His Father, "***I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do***".
- c. Normally when a crop is planted it takes three to four months for the crop to mature to full growth before you can harvest it. But Jesus is teaching us about the eschatological harvest now that the hour of salvation has arrived. In this harvest, you can sow and reap on the same day! **Evangelism is participating in the new age harvest.** God may use you to sow the seed of the Gospel and on the same day you witness the Spirit's power harvesting a soul by grace. Jesus is teaching us that in the sowing and reaping of the Gospel there is something no time of waiting in between.
- d. **Verse 42 is a central verse of chapter 4.** "The living water which the woman received from Jesus had become an overflowing fountain in her life, and others were welcome to share the refreshment that she had begun to enjoy" (**F.F. Bruce**). This verse reminds us that the Father sent Jesus into this world to reap a crop for eternal life (vv. 34-36). Now many other Samaritans believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

2. Develop faith in God's Word (4:43-54)

- a. First, Jesus says that a prophet has no honor in his hometown and second, it says that the Galileans welcomed Jesus back from Jerusalem and Samaria. But this is not what John is saying. John is being **ironic** (almost sarcastic) when he says that the people of Galilee "**welcomed Jesus**". John uses irony to communicate the opposite. Unlike the Samaritans who really did welcome Jesus because they saw their spiritual need (they knew they needed a savior), the people of Galilee "welcomed" Jesus because they were more fascinated with the signs Jesus did than the faith they needed to quench their spiritual thirst. **Challenge** – There will always be people who will be willing to use Jesus just to make them feel better about themselves.
- b. **Again, this chapter is about real "Gentile faith" is not over.** We have one final story of a nobleman (probably a Gentile) who expresses real faith in Jesus. This final paragraph contains the 2nd of Jesus' signs which revealed His glory. Although progress has been made in chapter 4 (many Samaritans believed), we come to an end here and are forced to recognize that in some ways we are right back where we started this Cana Cycle in John 2-4. We are back in the same little village with most of the Jewish people still finding entertainment value in hearing about these signs and miracles of Jesus.
- c. We don't know the reason why this nobleman came to Jesus asking for healing for his sick son. It seems that man people are willing to "use Jesus" to get something for themselves. He certainly seems desperate. Maybe someone told him that this "Jewish abalario" is back in town and you should go see him. People may try to use Jesus for their own benefit, but God can use it for His glory. **John 2-4 anticipates Acts 1:8**

Has Jesus satisfied your spiritual thirst? Isaiah 55