

John Chapter 4

Verses 1-26: The story of the Samaritan woman reinforces John's main theme that Jesus is the Messiah and son of God. The thrust of these verses is not so much her conversion but that Jesus is Messiah (verse 26).

While her conversion is clearly implied, the apostle's focus centers on Jesus' declaration foretold in the Scriptures (verse 25). Important also is the fact that this chapter demonstrates Jesus' love and understanding of people. His love for mankind involved no boundaries, for He lovingly and compassionately reached out to a woman who was a social outcast.

In contrast to the limitations of human love, Christ exhibits the character of divine love that is indiscriminate and all encompassing (3:16).

John 4:1 "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,"

These Pharisees opposed John the Baptist, but they were even more opposed to Jesus Himself. By this time word had filtered out to them that Jesus was baptizing even more than John. This angered the Pharisees.

John 4:2-3 "(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)" "He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee."

We see here in parentheses that it was actually Jesus' disciples who were doing the actual baptizing. Jesus was preaching, and His men were baptizing.

Jesus left these religious people of that day and went out to where His message would be more readily accepted. Jesus would go to the people themselves over the leaders of the temple.

John the Baptist and Jesus had official scrutiny focused on them because of their distinctive message regarding repentance and the kingdom. Most likely, Jesus wanted to avoid any possible trouble with John's disciples who were troubled with His growing popularity, and since the Pharisees were also focusing on His growing influence, Jesus decided to leave Judea and travel North in order to avoid any conflict.

John 4:4 "And he must needs go through Samaria."

Samaria means watch mountain. This had been an evil city. Ahab built a temple to Baal. Elisha and Elijah had ministered in Samaria also. This became a city that Philip preached in.

Several roads led from Judea to Galilee. One near the seacoast; another through the region of Perea; and one through the heart of Samaria. Even with the strong antipathy between Jews and Samaritans, the Jewish historian Josephus relates that the custom of Judeans at the time of the great festivals was to travel through the country of the Samaritans because it was the shortest

route. Although the verb “had to, or must needs go” may possibly refer to the fact that Jesus wanted to save time and needless steps. Because of the gospel’s emphasis on the Lord’s consciousness of fulfilling His Father’s plan, the apostle may have been highlighting divine, spiritual necessity. i.e., Jesus had an appointment with divine destiny in meeting the Samaritan woman, to whom He would reveal His messiahship.

We see here that Jesus passes through Samaria. This Samaria is probably the country of which the capital is the city of Samaria.

John 4:5 “Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.”

This and the next verse refer back to (Genesis 48:22), where Jacob bequeathed a section of land to Joseph which he had purchased from the “sons of Hamor”. When the Jews returned from Egypt, they buried Joseph’s bones in that land at Shechem. This area became the inheritance of Joseph’s descendants.

The precise location of “Jacob’s well” has been set by a firm tradition among Jews, Samaritans, Muslims, and Christians and lies today in the shadow of the crypt of an unfinished Orthodox church. The term used here for “well”, denotes a running spring, while in (11-12), John used another term for “well” that means “cistern” or “dug out well”, indicating that the well was both dug out and fed by an underground spring. This spring is still active today.

This word Sychar means town of drunkards or town of liars. There is no record of a town by this name, so many believe it was John’s way of telling of the sins of the city Shechem.

This town is probably identified with the modern village of Askar on the shoulder of Mt. Ebal, opposite Mt. Gerizim. A continuous line of tradition identifies Jacob’s well as lying about a half mile South of Askar.

In (Genesis 33:19), and in numerous other Scriptures, it appears it is the land of Shechem.

John 4:6 “Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.”

We see this then is about noon time (6th hour). John used Roman time so this would be about 6 p.m.

In the flesh, Jesus would get tired just as we do. He was weary from all this walking and in His humanity, would suffer from physical limitations. He sat down on the well to rest.

We read about Jacob having this well dug in Genesis.

John 4:7 “There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.”

Jesus here is speaking to a woman of not very high estate, because she is drawing water.

Jesus is a Jew and she is drawing water. Jesus is a Jew and she is a Samaritan. For a Jewish man to speak to a woman in public, let alone to ask from her, a Samaritan, for a drink was a definite breach of rigid social custom. As well as a marked departure for the social animosity that existed between the two groups.

Further, a “rabbi” and religious leader did not hold conversations with women of ill repute (verse 18).

Jesus asks her for a drink, so that He might bless her.

John 4:8 “(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)”

This tells us a few things about the disciples. They had money to buy with. They were not totally without funds. Jesus does not just make food appear every time they get hungry. When they can provide for themselves, He lets them.

This verse indicates that since Jesus and His disciples were willing to purchase food from Samaritans, they did not follow some of the self-imposed regulations of stricter Jews, who would have been unwilling to eat food handled by outcast Samaritans.

John 4:9 “Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

Had the disciples been with Jesus, this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman would have been harder. The disciples would not have wanted her speaking to Jesus.

Notice also here, that Jesus is where we are so that we might receive Him.

This woman was aware that the Jews thought themselves better than the Samaritans. She knew that many of the men of Samaria thought of women not too highly either, so she brought that up also. Jesus had a great deal to do with women. This was no barrier to Him.

Just as the churches in most of the cities of the U.S. today are about 75% women, a large part of Jesus' followers were women then including all of the Marys', Martha, Dorcas, Joanna, Susanna, and many others.

(Luke 8:2-3), mentions some of these women who helped Jesus.

John 4:10 “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

The Old Testament is the background for this term, which has important metaphorical significance. In (Jer. 2:13), Yahweh decries the disobedient Jews for rejecting Him, the “fountain of living waters.” The Old Testament prophets looked forward to a time when “living waters will flow out of Jerusalem” (Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:9).

The Old Testament metaphor spoke of the knowledge of God and His grace which provides cleansing, spiritual life, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

John applies these themes to Jesus Christ as the living water which is symbolic of eternal life mediated by the Holy Spirit from Him (verse 14; 6:35; 7:37-39). Jesus used the woman’s need for physical water to sustain life in this arid region in order to serve as an object lesson for their need for spiritual transformation.

The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ. We see from this that it is necessary to know who Jesus is before we can receive eternal life from Him.

This living water is the gift of the Holy Ghost. This water that springs inside of us never stops flowing. Jesus is telling her to ask and she will receive, if she believes.

John 4:11 “The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water.”

This woman, like so many of our modern day church members, can only see the physical. She rationalizes that the well is deep, and He has nothing to draw the water out with.

John 4:12 “Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?”

She is claiming to be a descendent of Jacob. Jacob through Joseph, through Ephraim, would have been the chain. What she doesn't realize is that Jesus was before Jacob and, in fact, is Jacob's God.

John 4:13-14 “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:” “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

This is the water of the Holy Spirit of God. There is a song called "There Is a River". It says in this song that this river flows from deep within. Water spoken of in many places in the Bible means the Word.

We see here then that Jesus is offering to her the water of life. She had been looking at the well of Jacob which brings water to quench the fleshly thirst. The water Jesus has is water of the Spirit.

John 4:15 “The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”

The woman, like (Nicodemus in 3:4), did not realize that Jesus was talking about her spiritual needs. Instead, in her mind, she wanted such water in order to avoid her frequent trips to Jacob’s well.

Jesus had told her (in verse 10), if she asked, He would give her this water. Here she asked. She is like many Christians who believe Jesus' gifts are to make our flesh feel better. Jesus' gifts are of the Spirit.

John 4:16 “Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.”

Since the woman failed to understand the nature of the living water He offered (verse 15), Jesus abruptly turned the dialogue to focus sharply on her real spiritual need for conversion and cleansing from sin. His intimate knowledge of her morally depraved life not only indicated His supernatural ability, but also focused on her spiritual condition.

This does not mean that her husband would have to come for her to receive salvation from God. It just shows us that Jesus knows she doesn't have a husband, and He says this to her to get her to repent of her sins. If you will, He is activating her conscience.

John 4:17-18 “The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:” “For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.”

She was living conjugally with a man who Jesus said was not her husband. By such an explicit statement, our Lord rejected the notion that when two people live together it constitutes marriage. Biblically, marriage is always restricted to a public, formal, official and recognized covenant.

Jesus knew all of this about her, before He ever began speaking to her. The wonderful thing to me in all of this is that even though her sins were scarlet, Jesus offered salvation to her. He accepts her penitent heart when she says “I have no husband”.

John 4:19 “The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”

Jesus’ knowledge of her life indicated that He had supernatural inspiration.

John 4:20 “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

Both Jews and Samaritans recognized that God had commanded their forefathers to identify a special place for worshipping Him (Deut. 12:5). The Jews, recognizing the entire Hebrew canon, chose Jerusalem. The Samaritans, recognizing only the Pentateuch, noted that the first place Abraham built an altar to God was at Shechem (Gen. 12:6-7), which was overlooked by Mt.

Gerizim, where the Israelites had shouted the blessings promised by God before they entered the Promised Land. As a result, they chose Mt. Gerizim for the place of their temple.

We see in this that this woman's people only believe the Pentateuch, or the first five books of Moses. For her to see that Jesus is a prophet is more than her people will accept.

They (the Samaritans), did not accept the prophetic books of the Bible as truth. Abraham and Jacob had built altars in this area, but they had been off and on with true worship.

We see that she is aware that the Jews thought mount Moriah should be where God's temple should be. For special celebrations, Jews from all over Israel came to Jerusalem to worship. Passover was one of those occasions.

John 4:21 “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”

There was no reason to debate locations, since both places would be obsolete soon and neither would have any role to play in the lives of those who genuinely worship God. Jerusalem would even be destroyed with its temple in 70 A.D. by General Titus of the Romans.

In a very few short years (about forty), the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.

John Chapter 4 Questions

1. When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had heard He was baptizing more than John, what did He do?
2. Who really was doing the actual baptizing?
3. What country did Jesus go through?
4. What does Samaria mean?
5. Who were two prominent prophets who had ministered here?
6. What was the name of the city where He came?
7. Who had Jacob given land to here?
8. What does Sychar mean?
9. What was John probably doing calling Shechem by this name?
10. Where did Jesus stop to rest His body?

11. What time of day was it when Jesus stopped to rest?
12. Who came to the well?
13. What did Jesus ask her for?
14. Where were the disciples when this happened?
15. What does this Scripture tell us about the needs of the disciples?
16. Who did she say the Jews had no dealings with?
17. Was the fact that she was a woman a barrier for Jesus?
18. "If thou knewest the _____ of _____ and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."
19. What is the gift of God?
20. Living water symbolizes what?
21. What two reasons did she give Jesus why He could not get water?
22. She asks Jesus "Art thou greater than our father _____."
23. Jesus told her, if she drank of this well water she would _____."
24. If she drinks of the water He gives her, what will happen?
25. In verse 15, she asks Jesus for what?
26. Who did Jesus tell her to call?
27. What is her answer?
28. How many husbands had she had?
29. What did she perceive Jesus was?
30. Where did the Jews say was the place to worship?
31. What did Jesus tell her would happen soon?