

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

Living Water! It's A Gift!

From *Genesis* to *Revelation* we find pictures of *living water*. In the Middle East, water is scarce and precious. During much of the Old Testament time in Israel, people survived on stagnant water stored in cisterns in the ground. When rain did fall, it was a gift from God. Physical *living water* was either rainwater or water flowing from a natural spring. Spiritual *Living Water* came directly from God and was associated with the presence of God.

What was so bad about being a Samaritan?

The nation of Israel came into existence through the descendents of the 12 sons of Jacob. These tribes were famous for not getting along. Shortly after the death of King Solomon, the tribes split into two separate nations – ten tribes making up the Northern Kingdom of Israel with two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) forming the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

When the Assyrians conquered Israel and exiled the Israelites, a “remnant of Israel” remained in the land. Assyrian captives from distant places also settled there. This led to intermarriage between Israelites and Gentiles and to widespread worship of foreign gods. These people of mixed blood became known as Samaritans.

The kingdom of Judah was later captured by the Babylonians; however, the kingdom of Judah did not intermarry with the Babylonians and they eventually returned to the land as ‘pure-blooded’. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and the walls, Ezra and Nehemiah refused to allow the Samaritans to share in the experience due to their worship of false gods.

Because of this ‘ancient history’ there was a longstanding hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. David Jeremiah comments that a popular prayer among southern kingdom Jews was, “Lord, do not remember the Samaritans in the resurrection.” They may have been ‘pure-blooded’ but their hearts were not pure.

Today, we come to an unlikely encounter where Jesus speaks of *living water*. He spoke of this *living water* with a woman of all people and to make it even worse in the eyes of the Jews – a Samaritan woman!

Read John 4:1-4 (ESV) ¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria.

The ministry of Jesus was growing. The Pharisees knew that Jesus was baptizing more and more disciples and they were zeroing in on Him so He left for Galilee. Notice that Scripture tells that Jesus *had to pass through* Samaria. This would not be the normal route for orthodox Jews, who sought to avoid contact with Samaritans. Jesus was in the business of meeting spiritual needs over practicing ungodly social and racial divisions. Jesus

had to meet His ‘divine appointment’ in Samaria. Each of us who has accepted Christ as Lord and Savior has similar divine appointments – God-ordained times to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The question is – will we be willing to initiate contact with the hearts that the Lord is preparing for each of us to reach?

Read John 4:5-6 (ESV) ⁵ *So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ 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.*

Jesus stopped at a Samaritan town where Jacob’s well was located. Jesus chose to make His encounter at the well, a place of common ground between Jews and Samaritans since both revered Jacob. We should do the same when working to share the good news of Jesus – look for common ground in our personal encounters with others for the purpose of sharing the gospel story.

Jesus sat down to rest because he was worn out. The distance from where Jesus had been baptizing to Sychar was about 40 miles by road. Jesus and the disciples would have walked a full day and a half to arrive there around the sixth hour (which most scholars conclude was noon).

Jesus was tired. The Apostle John emphasized the full deity of Jesus in **John 1:1**. Here John reveals the full humanity of Jesus by mentioning that Jesus was *wearied*. A big theological term for the uniting of the divine and human natures in one person (Jesus Christ) is the **hypostatic union**. At the birth of Christ, the human nature was added to the divine nature of Jesus – making Him fully God and fully Man. We see that even though Jesus was tired He began a conversation for the purpose of telling His hearer about *living water*.

Read John 4:7-10 (ESV) ⁷ *A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 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.) 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.”*

This woman of Samaria came to draw water indicating her poverty. She had no servant to draw water reminding us that God comes to the lowly and humble. Jesus the Man was poor as well. He asked for water. Paul would later write of Him in **2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* The disciples being gone to buy food opened the door for Jesus to have a private conversation with the woman at the well.

The woman was surprised when Jesus made His request. She was very aware of the ongoing feud between Jews and Samaritans. The woman realized that any ordinary Jew would have thrown her cup to the ground even if she had offered it; and now a Jew was asking to drink from her cup! If we desire to be like Jesus, we are compelled by His example to seek out ‘unlikely’ people for the purpose of sharing the good news of salvation. We should never make the snap judgment that someone is not interested in God’s great salvation because of the way they look, who their family is, their employment history or any other superficial thing!

The woman was guilty of judging as well. She saw him only as a tired poor traveler. When Jesus saw her – He loved her and wanted her to know more. Jesus Christ is the gift of God, the richest token of God's love to us... a gift, a free gift!

As we read further, we realize the woman did not 'get it' at first. She was thinking strictly in the physical realm and not the spiritual.

Read John 4:11-15 (ESV) 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?"* ¹² *Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."* ¹³ *Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,"* ¹⁴ *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."* 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."*

Notice how she brings up *Jacob*. Jesus was not there to speak with her of their forefathers. Of course Jesus is greater than Jacob—and greater than Jacob's well! Jesus was clear when He said that the things of this world never completely satisfy. In hell today, people are crying, "I thirst!"

As we progress through John, we will study the topic of *living* water again. But, I want to focus on it from today's passage as well. *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.* Notice that Jesus does not say that He is the living water, but that He would give living water. Jesus does not tell her what the living water is! For that, we must go to another passage of Scripture.

Read John 7:37-39 (ESV) ³⁷ *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."* ³⁸ *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'* ³⁹ *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

The Holy Spirit Is the Living Water

The external influence of the Spirit was given in the conversion and sanctification of the Old Testament saints and prophets, but the gift of the Spirit who would indwell believers had not yet been given and received (**Acts 10:44-45**).

Although many people say that Jesus is the living water, Jesus Himself intended the phrase to mean the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers and seals us for salvation is the living water (**Ephesians 1:13-14**). It is the ministry of the Spirit, flowing out of a heart redeemed by God, that blesses believers.

The woman next asked for this gift, but she did not know what she was saying. So far, the seed of the Word had fallen on shallow soil (**Matt. 13:20-21**). She had made progress, but she still had a long way to go; so Jesus patiently dealt with her.

Read John 4:16-18 (ESV) ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” ¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

The only way to prepare the soil of the heart for the seed of the Word is to plow it up with conviction. That was why Jesus told her to go get her husband. His comment forced her to admit her sin. There can be no conversion without conviction and repentance. Jesus had aroused her mind and stirred her emotions, but He also had to touch her conscience, and that meant dealing with her sin. Jesus bringing up the woman’s husband was a gentle way to cause the woman to admit her sin. Like many still today, the Samaritan woman preferred to discuss religion and traditions rather than to face her own sin.

Read John 4:19-21 (ESV) ¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” 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.

The woman brought up a popular theological issue—the correct place to worship. But her question was a smoke screen to keep Jesus away from her deepest need. Jesus directed the conversation to a much more important point: The *location* of worship is not nearly as important as the *attitude* of the worshipers. – Life Application Study Bible.

Read John 4:22-26 (ESV) ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ 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. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 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.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

When Jesus said, *for salvation is from the Jews*, he meant that only through the Jewish Messiah would the whole world find salvation. God had promised that through the Jewish race the whole earth would be blessed (**Genesis 12:3**). The Old Testament prophets had called the Jews to be a light to the world, bringing them to a knowledge of God; and they had predicted the Messiah's coming. The woman at the well may have known of these passages and was expecting the Messiah, but she didn't realize that she was talking to Him!

Jesus’ words *the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth* may have shocked the Samaritan woman but they would certainly shock the Jewish religious leaders even more. Worship not being limited to the Jewish temple would ring as blasphemy to the ‘religious’ Pharisees. I have always loved this verse: *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*. To worship in Spirit means to have a heart filled with Living Water that pursues an intimate spiritual relationship with the God who is Spirit. To worship God in truth is to worship him in a biblically accurate way. Tony Evans comments that God is on the hunt for those who will worship Him spiritually through Jesus Christ based on the truth of his Word. Living Water is a Gift. But, it is only a Gift if you choose to receive it!