

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL
THE RESCUE *begins*
GOD AMONG US
Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Jesus dealt with individuals in a variety of ways. He was willing to do whatever it took to bring people to Himself. Today's passage is a tremendous study of a woman who came to a 'fork in the road' and made the right decision to listen to the Lord and obey Him. The woman's life is still a picture of people without Christ today. When Jesus spoke with Nicodemus by night, the rescue was initiated for a moral Jewish ruler; when Jesus entered Samaria, the rescue moved to a nameless immoral Samaritan!

Shortly after the rule of King Solomon, problems arose between the 12 tribes of Israel and ten tribes split off and formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel while two tribes formed the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Eventually, the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom and exiled the Israelites; however, a remnant of Israelites remained in the land. Assyrian captives from distant places settled among those who remained. This led to the intermarriage of some, though not all, Israelites with Gentiles and to their widespread worship of foreign gods. These people became known as Samaritans. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was eventually exiled to Babylon. When they were allowed to return to Jerusalem 70 years later to settle in their homeland and rebuild the temple and the wall of Jerusalem, the Samaritans in the area opposed this work. The old antagonism between Israel to the north and Judah to the south intensified the quarrel.

Jesus came with the purpose of binding people together – not tearing them apart as an unlikely Samaritan woman of mixed race was about to discover.

The ministry of Jesus was growing. The Pharisees knew that Jesus was baptizing more and more disciples. Jesus did not perform the actual rite of baptism Himself. His disciples performed the baptisms. If Jesus had baptized some, knowing human nature as we do, it would have become a source of contention between those who were literally baptized by Jesus and those who were not. There was coming a more excellent form of baptism by Jesus – the baptism of the Holy Spirit that would come to all believers after Jesus' ascension into heaven.

Already opposition was rising against Jesus, especially from the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the largest and most influential religious-political party during Jesus' time. They resented Jesus' popularity as well as His message, which challenged much of their teachings. Because Jesus was just beginning His ministry, it was not time for Him to confront those leaders openly; so He left Jerusalem and traveled north toward Galilee. This route took Jesus through the Northern Kingdom whose capital was Samaria located 42 miles north of Jerusalem.

Jesus gives the living water that satisfies us forever.

Read John 4:3-11 (ESV) ³ he [meaning Jesus] left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. 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. 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."

Scripture tells us Jesus **had to pass** through Samaria. Jesus *had to* go there on a 'rescue mission'; otherwise, He would never have encountered the woman at the well which led to her salvation as well as the salvation of others. Was this rescue mission unique to the life of Jesus alone? I don't think so. Each of us who has accepted Christ as Lord and Savior is called to participate in similar 'rescue missions' that is, to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The question is – will we be active members on the Lord's 'rescue team' for the purpose of reaching the lost for Christ?

An interesting historical note for this passage is that Jacob's well is one of the few Biblical sites about which there is no dispute. Some say that it may be the only place on earth where one can draw a circle of a few feet, and say confidently that the feet of Jesus literally stood on that piece of earth!

As the Samaritan woman drew closer to the well, she would have known that the man there was a Jew by the ribbon of blue that went around the border of His robe. Ironside comments, "At once all her being would be stirred with indignation. What business did He have sitting there on their well? She probably said to herself, 'If he dares to say anything insulting to me, I will give him back as good as he gives.' But oh, how surprised she must have been when He looked up very kindly and said, 'Give Me to drink.'"

We see that even though Jesus was tired He began a conversation for the purpose of making a rescue. The woman realized that the ordinary Jew would have dashed the cup to the ground even if she had offered it; and here was a Jew asking drink of her. In that day, it was not considered proper for any man, especially a rabbi, to speak in public to a strange woman. But as usual our Lord was setting aside social customs because a soul's eternal salvation was at stake.

When the woman questioned Jesus' motives, He said, "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." Do you know that salvation is the gift of God? Eternal life is a gift – not something we bargain or work towards.

Jesus described His gift as **living** water. As our bodies hunger and thirst, so do our souls. Our souls need spiritual food and living water. The woman confused the two kinds of water, perhaps because no one had ever talked with her about her spiritual hunger and thirst before. **Romans 10:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ How then will they call on

him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

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.”*

H.A. Ironside personally relates his own visit to this well. “The well, as it is today, is about 78 feet deep. I saw them letting a candle down into it and they dropped it until it had gone down 78 feet. And the woman said, “*The well is deep, and you have nothing to draw with.*” The woman, like Nicodemus when Jesus mentioned being born again, was taking Jesus’ words literally. She was thinking only of natural water. Jesus was speaking of spiritual water. His spiritual well is far deeper than that any earthly well. It is as deep as the heart of God.

We can only suppose that what she said was true of Jacob and his family drinking from this well. It is not mentioned in scripture. However, even if this comment was true, she left out some facts. First, Samaritans with their mixed blood were not the legitimate seed of Jacob. Second, she claimed the well to be Jacob’s gift – overlooking that every good gift is from above. **James 1:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* Yes, ma’am, Jesus is greater from Jacob!

His water surpasses even life giving earthly water. This water of Jesus becomes a spring — an inner well of water! *The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life* That’s why you never get thirsty again — not because one drink is enough, but because one true drink produces a well for an eternal supply of drinks!

When the Holy Spirit prompts you to assist in a ‘rescue mission assignment’ by speaking to someone about Jesus – who is the Living Water – remember that in every human soul God has placed a longing towards God even though sin and time may have caused that longing to be buried deep. **Psalm 42:1 (ESV)** ¹ *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.* It may take more than one rescue attempt to complete the mission and many others may be involved along the way. Jesus is the Prophet who makes true worship possible.

Read John 4:16-24 (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.”* 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.”* 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.”*

Jesus bringing up the woman’s husband caused the woman to admit she had no husband. Jesus’ comments regarding her marital status caused her to realize that this Prophet knew more about her than she would like and she tried to change the subject by bringing up the long-term differences between the Jews and the Samaritans.

The first Jewish temple had been build in Jerusalem by King David. The Samaritans built a temple for themselves on “Mount Gerizim,” which the Samaritans insisted was designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Among other things, the Samaritans accepted only the five books of Moses and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions. The Samaritan woman preferred to discuss ‘religion’ rather than to face her own sin. We will encounter the same obstacles in our rescue missions today.

When Jesus said that *salvation was of the Jews*, He meant that the only faith that God will accept is the faith which came through the Jewish nation. The Bible is of Jewish origin, and our Savior was a Jew. The first Christians were Jews.

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 love **John 4:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

As the conversation continued, we realize that the woman did have enough spiritual background to recognize that the Messiah was coming and Jesus, the Messiah, revealed Himself to the woman and she accepted Him as Savior. Jesus is the Messiah who sends us on our mission.

Read John 4:39-42 (ESV) ³⁹ *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”* ⁴⁰ *So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.* ⁴¹ *And many more believed because of his word.* 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.”*

It is interesting that these ‘half-blood’ Samaritans had a greater understanding of Jesus the Jewish Messiah than their full-blood Jewish counterparts. They said of Jesus: *this is indeed the Savior of the world*. This group of Samaritans recognized the true power of the Holy Spirit. This is how the gospel of Jesus Christ advances, that is through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in **Acts 1:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Come to the water and be filled!