

## 11. Jesus and the Woman at the Well

John 4:1 - 42

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptising more disciples than John,<sup>2</sup> although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but his disciples.

<sup>3</sup> When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

<sup>4</sup> Now he had to go through Samaria.<sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.<sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"<sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."<sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"<sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup> He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."<sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband."<sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet."<sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."<sup>21</sup> Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in

Jerusalem."<sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.<sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no-one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,<sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"<sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way towards him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."<sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."<sup>33</sup> Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"<sup>34</sup> "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."<sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.<sup>36</sup> Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.<sup>37</sup> Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true.<sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."

<sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.<sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers.

<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."

## NOTES

**“Had to go” -- 4** The shortest route from Jerusalem to Galilee lay on the high road straight through Samaritan territory. Many Jews would not travel by that road, for they regarded any contact with Samaritans as defiling. Immediately after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., the Assyrians had deported the Israelites from their land and had resettled it with captives from other countries. These had brought with them their own gods, whose worship they had combined with remnants of the worship of Jehovah and Baal in a mongrel type of religion. When the descendants of the southern captivity returned from Babylon in 539 B.C. to renew their worship under the Law, they found a complete rift between themselves and the inhabitants of Samaria, both religiously and politically.

**“The sixth hour” -- 6** (Noon) It was an unusual time for women to come to a village well for water. Perhaps the Samaritan woman had a sudden need, or perhaps she did not care to meet the other women of the community. In consideration of her general character, the other women may have shunned her.

**“Will you give me a drink” -- 7,8** The request was surprising. For no Jewish rabbi would have volunteered to carry on a public conversation with a woman, nor would he have deigned to drink from a Samaritan's cup, as she implied by her answer. *Jesus breaks all the barriers - religious, social, racial.*

**“If you knew.” -- 9-11** Jesus implied that he could give her a gift of God that would be greater than any ordinary water. His allusion was intended to lift her level of thinking from that of material need to spiritual realities. (As in “man shall not live by bread alone”) *Don't we constantly need to be reminded of this.*

**“You have nothing to draw with” -- 11** The woman heard his words but missed his meaning. "Living water" meant to her fresh spring water such as the well supplied. *We need to get people from the material, or even the religious, level onto the spiritual level. (Prayer helps “Open their eyes”)*

**“I can see you are a prophet” -- 19-20** Realizing his superhuman knowledge, the woman called him a prophet; but then she tried to divert him. Since his probing was becoming uncomfortably personal, she began to argue a religious issue as a red herring. *People still do this - we have to learn to turn their questions back into the gospel challenge.*

**“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” -- 24**  
This is one of the four descriptions of God found in the New Testament. The other three are "God is light" (1John 1:5), "God is love" (1John 4:8, 16), and "God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). Jesus was trying to convey to the woman that God cannot be confined to one place or thought of as a physical being. *Our faith is not just a list of rules, or even a lifestyle, or a philosophy. It is a supernatural encounter with the living God. Our worship, especially, should reflect this encounter. We worship “in spirit”.*

**“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did” -- 28, 29.** She was so excited that she forgot her water pot !! She went into the town and proved an effective Evangelist.

**'One sows and another reaps' - 36.**  
We may not always see the results of our witness.

**“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him” -- 39**  
The eagerness of the people the Jews regarded as alien and rejected showed that they were like grain ready for harvesting. The disciples would not have expected anyone to follow Jesus from a Samaritan village. Jesus proved them wrong. *We might think that this country is a difficult secular environment in which to witness about Jesus. Yet, the fields are ripe for harvest.*