

John (Part 8)

Jesus Christ's Encounter with the Woman of Samaria

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Given 11-Nov-86; Sermon #BS-JO08

Let us go back to John 4:1. We will get a running start just to review a few things at the first part of the chapter. I think we made it up to about verse 7 or 8—somewhere around there. But at the beginning of chapter 4, we find Him leaving the area of Judea and going on to Galilee. The reason that He left, apparently rather abruptly, is stated there in verse 1: "When the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John."

That instigated the rapid removal from Judea. He did not want to be taken and arrested before His job was finished, and already He was beginning to incur the anger and displeasure of the Sanhedrin. That is why Nicodemus came to Him. So whenever it began to become pretty apparent that He was adding disciples very rapidly, He knew that the Pharisees and the scribes and the Sanhedrin were beginning to get upset—feel very uneasy—and fear the competition that was coming from Him. So, fearing that He would be arrested and taken, He got out of there as quickly as possible. He had much more work to do—this was really right near the beginning of His ministry—and He had not really preached the gospel in Judea very adequately at all. So the best thing to do was just to get out of there. That was the wise thing to do. Then He went back toward Galilee.

I mentioned to you that to travel up to Galilee would be about a three-day journey from where He was. There was at least one other way He could have gotten there, and that was to cross the Jordan River to the east, go up the east side, and then come back into Galilee moving west. But He decided to go straight ahead, as it says in verse 4. He needed to go through Samaria. It shows, the way it is worded there, that He was in a good deal of haste. It says "He needed to go through" (John 4:4). He really did not *need* to, unless He was in a hurry to get to Galilee, or unless He was in a hurry to get out of Judea. I think it was the other one—He was in a hurry to get out of Judea before anything further occurred, and they would have more reason to accuse Him of fomenting a rebellion. So He went straight north, up through Samaria, and we find the episode that takes up most of this chapter happening in the town of Sychar.

Sychar has a very interesting background. I believe that I mentioned this to you, but if I did not, I am going to remind you that it is the same town that in the Old Testament is called Shechem. Through the years it had come to be called Sychar. That name is kind of interesting, because it means "drunkard," or it means something like "a rebel" or "an

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unstable person." It is very likely, from what I was able to find out in a Bible encyclopedia, that the Jews gave that name to the place. It may not have been what the Samaritans called it.

But the Jews called it Sychar because they applied kind of nasty names to everything that had to do with the Samaritans. They felt that the Samaritans acted like drunks all the time (that was their prejudiced view) so they called the name of this town Sychar. This town still exists to this day; only today it is called Nablus. If you ever look on a modern map and you find the town of Nablus, you know that is Sychar, and you know that is Shechem.

That town was just half a mile north of the fork in the road that ran up through that area. If you went to the left, you went up toward Megiddo. If you went to the right, you continued on up toward the Sea of Galilee. Jesus undoubtedly would have taken the fork to the right, but He arrived there at "the sixth hour" (John 4:5), so it was noontime. It says that He was weary.

The episode then unfolds with that kind of a background. Let us pick it up in verse 7:

John 4:7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

I mentioned it to you last time, but it is kind of interesting why the woman would be coming to that well, because there were wells inside the town that she could have gone to unless she was such a social outcast, because it is pretty obvious from later on—she had five husbands, and the man that she was living with was not her husband either—she would have been looked on as being pretty immoral. It could be that she was excluded from use of the wells in town simply because nobody wanted to have anything to do with her. So she went outside the town.

It is also interesting—kind of adds a little bit of evidence to this—that it was the sixth hour, and according, again, to the commentaries, it was customary for Jewish women to draw water in the evening. Part of the reason was that it was more comfortable to do so then, and more convenient to do so rather than do it early in the morning when they were getting everybody off to work, and they would have the water then for the evening bathing or any morning use. So they went to the wells normally in the evening time, and there they discussed the events of the day. That is when they passed all the gossip around, and then they went back to their homes and to their families.

But this lady went out there at noontime, which indicates that she was excluded from the normal social affairs of the town. There begins to unfold a very interesting byplay. It is interesting partly because she is a woman, and partly because she is a Samaritan. The Jews, as we are going to see, had no dealings with the Samaritans. We will see that is a little too strong of a statement, because the Jews would have dealings with anybody who they could make money from. They overlooked their prejudices whenever it came to making money. There was a reason why she said what she did, and it did have a bit of truth behind it.

Secondarily, there was the fact that she was a woman. Again, as I told you last week, the rabbis considered it not good at all to talk to a woman on the street—not even your wife! There is plenty of evidence in their religious books to support that. I guess they could talk to them in their home without any problem, but out on the street, it just was not kosher for a rabbi to do that. As I mentioned to you, they even argued as to whether a woman had a soul. We would say today that they even argued whether a woman had any hope of a future life—whether she could be born into the Kingdom of God. You can see what kind of an attitude they had toward women.

Jesus is confronting these things. It is very interesting, because we have very strong prejudices based upon a continuous conflict between these two people. In one sense, the Jews rightly considered the Samaritans to not be living in the right place. I say "rightly" in the sense that historically that land belonged to the Israelitish people, but they were there as a result of the captivity into which the Israelites were taken, and they were put into the land by the Assyrians. This had been going on for hundreds of years—from about 721 BC up to the present (in chapter 4), and that would have been about 700 years. You can see a little bit of it in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra, where there was conflict between the Jews and the Moabites. (One of the main persons was a man by the name of Sanballat.)

Jesus is confronting this—and how casually! He just enters into it without any kind of an indication that there was anything unusual about what He was doing. It is interesting, first of all, because it shows you that God makes the initial effort. This follows through with our calling as well.

There is another thing I might interject here that you can be thinking about as we go along. There is no doubt in my mind that this was a real occurrence. There are some scholars who feel this is just an allegory—something that was made up to teach a lesson. I believe it goes much further than that. It is too human to be an allegory. Everything just fits beautifully. I do not think that it was made up at all. This was a real woman. It was a real occurrence. But there is no doubt that there is *some symbolism*

here that is interesting.

Some have considered her as a representative of all the false churches. That is a possibility—that she is the arch-type of Semiramus. We can throw that out—I do not know how true it is. I think, in a broader sense, she represents the whole unconverted world. I think really it is better to consider it that way, because there are a lot of lessons to be learned from this encounter.

So Jesus makes the original contact with the woman. He initiates the discussion, and He actually puts her in a position to serve Him—which is what God does with His calling of us. His calling puts us in a position to serve Him. Her service of Him would have benefitted her as well as it would Him, so our calling also is a benefit to us really more than it is a benefit to God.

It says in verse 6 that He was weary, and then in verse 7 He asked her for a drink, and in verse 8 it says that His disciples had gone away to the city to buy food. This is interesting because here was a Man who was able to feed 5,000 on one occasion, and 4,000 on another occasion, simply by asking God to multiply the food that was available. Yet when it came to Himself, He did not use His powers to serve Himself. That is an awesome lesson. He got tired, just like anybody else, and He understood that God was going to require of Him that He do for Himself what He could.

There are some of us who develop what we might call a welfare mentality. We expect others to take care of us. We expect the church to take care of us. We expect the state to take care of us. Christ did not expect the state to do for Him—the state being God and the Kingdom of God—what He could do for Himself, even though He was *very* tired and even though He was that state's representative. You might think of your position in relation to God, and the things that you ask of God, as to whether or not you might be asking God for something to consume it on your own lusts (James 4:1), and simply be avoiding your own responsibility to get out there and pound the pavement, hit the doors, and do something in order to make your situation better.

It is obvious that Jesus did not use His powers for His own good. He always used them for the good of others, and the good of the Kingdom of God and the message that was given to Him to give.

In verse 8, I do want to pick up on something else because it shows very early in the ministry of Christ that the disciples, because of their contact with Him, were already beginning to undergo some changes. Notice what it says:

John 4:8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Again, it is written that Jews considered getting food from a Samaritan equal to eating something unclean—not that the food was unclean, but because a Samaritan had something to do with the preparation of it, or had touched it, they considered it to be unclean. That is how deep their hatred was. It was far deeper than most of the prejudices that we carry today. This was something that was burning, and alive within them.

The disciples were Jews. They were not very far removed from not having any contact with Christ. They could not have been much more than six or eight months into knowing Christ, and here they were, going into a Samaritan town to buy food—and probably not even giving it a second thought. Their prejudices were beginning to dissolve, simply from their contact with Christ.

It begins to show something else. There is no indication that if Jesus said to them, "Go into town and buy some food" they even questioned it—which is also indication. They did not say, "Well, Master, this is a Samaritan town. Can't we wait until we get across the border? Can't we make do with what we already have?" But it was not like that. There is no indication that they questioned.

It is just a little a little thing as you pass by. There is some instruction there: as we are in contact with Christ—as we associate with Him; as we fellowship with Him—that is going to begin to change us. If we just begin to yield to the things that we are learning, we will begin to change. It is part of what the phrases "abiding in Him," "living in Him," and "continuing with Him" mean.

John 4:9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

As I mentioned to you before, that translation is just a little bit strong. What it really intends is, "We [Samaritans and Jews] do not share things in common." They could not share the same water bag. They could not share the same cup. Maybe they would not even go to the same well, unless it was the only thing they could do, and maybe one would wait until the other was done so they would not seem to be dipping their goatskins into the water at the same time. I do not know. There were prejudices on both sides.

Incidentally, I want to add this too: Do not get the idea that this prejudice was one-sided. Again, there are many indications in history that the prejudices of the Samaritans were just as strong against the Jews as the Jews' were against the Samaritans. It was something that went both ways, and whenever one got the opportunity to throw stones at the other, they did not pass it by.

That is why she said what she did—"We do not share things in common." Another way of saying it a little more commonly would be, "Well, we can't use the same bucket." Maybe that is a little more colloquial, but nonetheless that is what was intended in what she said.

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

There is the problem: "*If you knew. . .*" If this woman represents the whole world, she *did not* know, and neither does the world know. We are going to see later on that this woman had her own ideas about religion. So she had ideas about religion, and the world has ideas about religion. We are going to see that this woman *thought* she was worshipping God. In all sincerity, she *thought* that she had the truth. But she did not have the truth. Neither did we until God initiated, like He did with this woman—put her in a position where she could serve Him.

So the questioning begins to go back and forth. The response of Christ—or, let us say the byplay, the dialogue that takes place here—is very similar to what took place with Nicodemus. You are going to find as we go through the book of John that this is God's way of teaching. Jesus is revealing God.

Jesus makes a statement, or He responds to a question. He responds by not directly answering the question, but rather He makes a statement that can be taken a couple of different ways. In this case it could be taken carnally, or it could be taken spiritually. In every case, the person who asked the original question takes it carnally. They completely misjudge what He says, and they come back with another question, and Jesus comes back with another statement that is even more mystifying than the first one that He said.

This is really a wonderful way to teach. It is not the way that we would *like* for it to be done, because really, by nature, we would like things to be handed to us on a silver platter. We would like things to be spelled out so clearly that we cannot mistake what

the teaching is.

Let us remove the "silver platter" idea, because God is showing us a very effective way of teaching. It *has* to be done this way, because the things that He is dealing with concern eternal life. We cannot afford to just *accept* things. We have to *understand* things. We have to *prove* things.

The best way to do that is to be led to a place where we are figuring it out for ourselves. He is putting us through a reasoning process—not just handing us the answer, but giving us answers that will inspire thinking. Even though it puzzles us, it makes us think, and gradually we are led to the place where we understand rather than just accept. We are going to run into this again and again in the book of John.

Since Christ revealed the Father, what we are finding out here is the way that God will commonly teach. Does not He say back in the book of Proverbs that we have to *dig* for wisdom, like silver and gold? It is not going to just be lying around. He wants us to make an effort because there is much wisdom in making the effort. There is much good there.

The pattern is this: the person receives Christ's statement in a purely physical way. Then he comes back with another question, and then Christ responds with something that is as equally mystifying as the first statement that He made.

In verse 10, it says, "He would have given you living water." Jacob's Well needs to be explained here just a bit. It helps to understand why Jesus apparently chose that kind of a description. Jacob's Well is over 100 feet below the ground now. Apparently the water table through the years has continued to fall. What it was in those days, I do not know. Apparently it was pretty deep in the ground even in those days.

Jacob's Well was the kind where the water percolated in from underneath. Apparently it was running down from a higher source, and where it percolated up through the ground, it was the same level as where the source was—maybe up in the mountains somewhere.

The "living water" equates to waters that were coming from a stream—something that is running, moving, "living" as opposed to something that is *still*. It was a part of their understanding—their culture; their thinking—that "living waters," that is, waters that came out of a stream and that were moving, were better than waters that came up out of a still well. That may or may not be scientifically true. Water in a moving stream could be contaminated, whereas water coming up out of a well could be perfectly pure because it had never come into contact with anything that would contaminate it. But that

is what they thought—that moving water was better than still water.

Jesus took advantage of that. He said, "If you knew who it was, you would ask Him 'Give me to drink' and He would give you living water."—in other words, something far better than this water that was in this well.

John 4:11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"

She took His statement completely carnally. She looked at it and said, "You do not even have a goatskin. How are you going to give me any water? If I wanted water out of the well, you would at least have to have a goatskin—you do not even have that! How can you give me living water"—that is, water that is moving—"when you're not even carrying anything?" She looked at it physically. She looked around for His bag, and there was nothing there. So then she asked another question:

John 4:12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

The interesting thing here is that this Samaritan woman calls Jacob her father. There might have been a skinny possibility of that, in that maybe she had some Israelitish blood in her, but it is highly unlikely. It begins to reveal a little bit as to why the Jews had this hatred against the Samaritans. First of all, these were not the people of the land. They had been put there by the Assyrians, so they were a foreign people in the land that belonged to the Israelitish people. Historically, the Jews knew that.

To make matters worse, if we go back to the story there in II Kings, when the Samaritans got in the land, they had all kinds of trouble with the wild animals, and they felt that the God of the land was angry with them. So they had a Levite shipped back in to teach them how to worship the God of the land. This was the first step in the Samaritans then producing a religion that became pretty much a carbon-copy of Judaism.

They went to the extent of building their own temple on Mount Gerizim. They took the stories out of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—the stories that had to do with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses—and they transplanted them into the land of Samaria, so that they had Abraham offering his son Isaac on Mount Gerizim (rather than Mount Moriah). They did the same thing with nearly every story. They

transplanted the action up into Samaria—up into Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal and those places—and even went to the extent of copying the dress of the priests down in Judea. They copied the service. They sacrificed the same kind of animals. They tried to do everything they possibly could.

The Jews considered them to be nothing but counterfeits—fakes. That added to the problems between the two. Not only were they foreigners in a land that was not theirs, but they even claimed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were their fathers, and had the same religion. So to the Jews, the Samaritans were fakes.

How much of that the woman was aware of, I do not know. I really do not believe that she was aware of the truth, but rather she was sincerely deceived. If you extrapolate this out into the whole world, there is a large world out there calling themselves "Christian," and their spiritual fathers, they say, are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have produced a counterfeit of true Christianity, to virtually every extent. They have gone into every area. And they are sincerely deceived. They *think* that they are the true church, but they just do not know.

There is another side of this. It is a dirty side—it is a black side; it is a scary side. That is, if you begin to carry this analogy out—if the woman represents the world, then the Jews represent the church. My question back to you is: what kind of an attitude do you have toward the world? Would it be the same kind of an attitude that the Jews had toward the Samaritans? Do we have a thinly disguised hatred toward them? Are we prejudiced against them? Do we look down on them?

Jesus is giving us instructions here. Do you see how easily He moved in amongst them with no prejudice at all? There was no feeling of discomfort, and no feeling of antagonism. He was just looking at her, apparently, like "here is another potential son of God." There is a lot of lessons here that are very interesting to consider. So she said,

John 4:12-14 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well [he dug the original well], and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, [here comes the second statement that is even more puzzling than the first one:] but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

That last phrase could be, "It will become in him a spring of water welling up." If you can,

imagine water just suddenly coming up out of the ground and filling up a whole well. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters," and those waters that well up then become a source of life to others as well. It is as though the spring is inside the person, so he does not need sustenance from the outside. Jesus is showing that His way of life is something that wells up from the inside and comes out. It is not dependent upon externals. That is why the Bible always speaks of God living in us, or Christ taking up His abode in us. The way of God is something that is from the inside out. The conversion is something that takes place on the inside, and it issues forth in works, or in the production of life, on the outside.

Notice also that it is something that is given, as the Spirit of God is given. That is really what He is talking about here.

John 4:15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

You can see, again, that she took His second statement in a crude literalism, just as she had His first. She was getting nowhere fast. As a matter of fact, it is interesting to consider how she might have said this. That is something that is kind of difficult to do with the Bible, because it does not always give you an indication of what the attitude was like, or the mood of the person. What kind of inflection was in her voice? How did she say this?

If we were in a position like this, I would say that we would be one of two ways. We would be either totally puzzled, but we would see that what this Person was offering would be good for us if we could just have it. On the other hand, we could be thinking, "This guy's pulling my leg. What am I talking to here?—some kind of a crazy man?"

If you were a person accustomed to living in the world, and you had seen everything and nobody was going to sell you the Brooklyn Bridge, and here this guy comes along and He tries to sell you the Brooklyn Bridge (or something similar)—water that you could drink and you would never get thirsty—who is ever going to believe that? She was a wise woman of the world; she was a streetwise person with five husbands, and living with a sixth one. She had moved in some pretty sleazy company, and she had known a great deal. So nobody was going to pull the wool over her eyes.

She might have said, "C'mon, fella, give me some of this water." She might have been half in fun—half serious, half in fun. She was intrigued; there is no doubt about it.

Either way, Jesus really brought her up short, like "the time to get serious is right now," because He cut through all the folderol. He said, "Woman, go tell your husband to come here." Do not ask me what moved Him to ask that question. It may be that we are only seeing a tiny portion of the dialogue that took place between the two of them, and that other things were said that indicated to Him the kind of woman with whom He was speaking. But the time for jesting, the time for playing around, was over. Now he was going to drive something home to this woman.

John 4:17-19 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

The conversation has taken a different turn very quickly. Before, she was mystified. Now the light is beginning to dawn.

There is something interesting to consider here. There is no indication from any other portion of the Bible that I know of that this woman was ever converted, but there is no doubt that she was on her way to *believing*. Maybe she did become converted later on after Christ had died, because she was a Gentile and the preaching did not go to the Gentiles until Acts 10. So maybe this played a part in her conversion. We can only guess at that. But there is, again, a lesson here that is very important, because it is evident from what happened in the rest of the chapter that she did believe, at the very least, that He was a prophet, and there is every indication that she was being brought to the place where she understood that He was indeed the Messiah.

She was not converted yet, but I want you to see what He did to her. This is important to anybody who is going to be converted: (1) He began to *reveal Himself to her* and, (2) He began to *reveal her to herself*.

Before a person can be converted, both of those things have to occur. Remember what Job said there at the end of the book of Job? God took 41 chapters to bring this man to a conviction. Job said in Job 42, "I have heard of you with the hearing of my ears, but now my eye sees you." For the first time in his life, Job really saw God. It was not just an intellectual grasp. It was not just, "Oh, yeah, I believe there is a God of creation." Somewhere in the heart of his hearts, Job began to get a perception of how pure, how holy, how powerful, how intelligent, how wise, how great, how majestic God is. It caused Job to begin to shrivel up. Job called himself an old windbag. He said, "Who is this that has been saying all these words?" Well, it was Job.

That is what happened to this woman. Maybe it did not last really long. But for a while there, she caught a glimpse, in the heart of her heart, of the glory of God. She began to see herself in reference to this God. That was the second part. That is why she said, "I perceive that you are a prophet." Then we are going to see that He said to her directly that He was the Christ.

Then another reaction took place. What I am talking about here is what we, whenever we are talking to people about baptism, about repentance, tell people what God is after. It is not just that we repent of what we have *done*. Rather, we have to repent of what we *are*. A person cannot do that unless he begins to catch a glimpse of what God is, and what we are in relation to that God.

Our approach to Him has to be completely and totally on His terms. There is no meeting God half way—it is total and unconditional surrender. A person cannot do that unless he sees himself. That is where this woman was being led. Just in a flash it exploded on her mind how immoral and rotten and wretched she was—five husbands, and living with a sixth. All the folderol was gone. Now she was serious, suddenly. Now she was in a position where Jesus could begin to teach her.

John 4:20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Why do you think she came out with that statement? Why would she suddenly seemingly switch the subject? It is because of what I just told you: the first thing that came to her mind was that she was so filthy, she better *do* something. The only thing she knew to do was to make a sacrifice. That was the way she was going to worship God, because that is what they did—they sacrificed something. That opened the door for Jesus to inject something else that is very important.

John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Mount Gerizim, or Mount Zion—which one? Well, what Jesus said to her amounted to this: "Neither one of those places is worth a hill of beans."

John 4:22 You [meaning, "you Samaritans"; and we could say the whole rest of the world] worship what you do not know. . .

They do not know that they are worshipping demons. They do not know that they are worshipping Satan. They do not know that they are worshipping idols. They are worshipping ignorantly, just the way this woman was. She was deceived; she did not know any better. They had smatterings of truth—little bits here and there, things that they had borrowed or taken from the Jews, just the same as "Christianity" has taken things from the Bible—but they do not have the truth. They do not know what they are worshipping.

John 4:22 . . .we [meaning, "we Jews"] know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

What He told that woman is, "The Jews are way ahead of you. They don't have the full truth either, but they are way ahead of you Samaritans." In addition to that, salvation is of the Jews—because Jesus was a Jew, and He was the Savior of the world, and therefore salvation was going to come through a Jew. As Paul explains in Romans 2 and 3, we have to become spiritual Jews. When we come into the church we become a spiritual Jew. Back in Revelation 3, God again brings it into the picture about those who say they are Jews, and are not. Those people are going to have to come and worship.

There is something that needs to be interjected here. Christ gave her a glimpse, you might say, of God. I do not mean literally. But it started to explode onto her mind as she began to realize that this was no ordinary person. In an instant she began to see herself and God. I do not mean literally, I mean in her mind's eye. There were ideas, concepts. She was beginning to realize and understand something. The first thing she wanted to do was to find a way, a means, to worship God. In this very immoral woman, there was this longing within her.

Undoubtedly she had been trying to seek happiness and fulfillment out of life, and she had not yet found it—even though she had had all those husbands, all those experiences in whatever her life consisted of. This is the way all of mankind is: we seek fulfillment through idols.

All of us do it—still. It is what we have to get away from. I do not mean that we literally get down on our knees to worship something, but without realizing it we can get drawn into trying to find satisfaction out of everything from money, traveling, clothing, sex—you name it—anything that might be physical. Some people try to get all of their satisfaction out of their work and become workaholics. So we give ourselves over to those things, and they occupy a higher priority in our life than they really need to.

I feel certain that this woman still did not get the full picture. In fact, I know that she did not. But she was beginning to get on the right track. After the second response of Jesus, she began to take the approach that she wanted what Christ could give her. Her reasoning at that time was still selfish. She wanted the water so that she would be better off herself. That was better than she was before, but it was still not good.

So often, when people are coming toward baptism, they want to get baptized so they can *get* the Holy Spirit, because they want that power. Maybe their reasoning is that they want that power so they can overcome, and that is not entirely wrong. But that is not the reason to get baptized. There is a selfishness behind that: we are giving ourselves to God in order to *get* things from Him. You might say we give ourselves to God in order to be better off. After all, "God will heal us." "God will protect us." "God will give us His Holy Spirit." "God will give us eternal life." Certainly He will, but that is not the reason to be baptized. You get baptized to *give* yourself to God; to *give yourself*—not to *get* things from Him, but to *give* things.

If we approach God with the idea of making ourselves better off by these things which He can give us, we are going to squirm and find life very difficult, and God begins to try to teach us to be loving, loyal, devoted, obedient, generous, kind, truthful, faithful—all of those spiritual qualities that are a part of what He is. Brethren, that is what life consists of. That is what life *is*—the abundant life. It is in those qualities.

Those other things—even healings, as great as a gift as that is—are only temporary. It will only satisfy for a moment, in terms of eternity. It is here today and gone tomorrow. You get healed, and a couple months later you are sick again. You have to understand this. That is not what this game is about. That is a *benefit* that God gives. God is after the things that surround you: faith, loyalty, devotion, obedience, sympathy, empathy, generosity—that is what God is trying to put into us, because that is what life is. Those are the things that really satisfy. Those are the things that make life fulfilling and abundant. That is what eternal life consists of.

She was beginning to see herself. She had that revelation, so now she was confronted with what to do. So she wanted to worship.

Let us understand what Jesus said here:

John 4:23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

A little more background on the Samaritans: I mentioned that they had taken things out of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Well would you believe that they had rejected the whole rest of the Bible? How can you worship God in truth if you only have part of it? What about all of the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; all of the Psalms; the writings of the twelve; the writings of Solomon, Esther, Samuel, Ezra, and Nehemiah—all of the wonderful truths that are contained within those books? They knew that those things were available, but they rejected them. You cannot worship God if you are rejecting a portion of His Word.

I want you to look, ever so briefly, at modern Christianity. They use the New Testament, and give, at very best, lip-service to the Old Testament. That is pretty selective, is it not? There are some groups—like the Church of Christ—where they will only accept the writings of Paul. Thomas Jefferson had his own religion: he went through the Bible and he blue-penciled everything he did not like, and he put his own Bible together! It is a good thing he was not the first President. I think there was some Divine guidance in leading George Washington to be the first President. He was a very level-headed man.

This is the way the churches of this world have approached the Bible—very selectively. They have thrown out the fourth commandment, and come up with specious arguments as to why it does not have to be kept. The lesson to you and me is that we have got to be awfully careful that we do not approach the Bible in the same way. There might be something in the teaching of God that is awfully hard for us to accept. Or we might see that it is true, but disregard it because it is *difficult* for us to do. Is that worshipping God in truth?

I have never really taken a survey of all the people that Mr. Contardi and I might see making contact with the church, and how many actually come in. There are scores and scores that we visit, who never get past the first visit. In many cases, they begin to see that this is more complex or more difficult—there are things that they do not like, so they become selective. That is the way false worship is: it is selective. God has to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Jesus said, "You worship what you do not know." That is another aspect of false worship. We have to be careful of this too, because when we are coming into the church—in the process of being converted—we generally make a pretty good, sincere, honest, sustained effort at studying God's Word. We have the Correspondence Course to guide us, and we will spend a half-, three-quarters, an hour a day, studying. But then we come into the church, and as often as not our study begins to trail off. I am not saying that we need to study with that same kind of intensity all of our life, but on the

other hand our study does need to be maintained. We have to go beyond what we had at the beginning.

Peter tells us to "*grow* in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ." Paul tells us that the purpose of the ministry is to bring the Body of Christ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We cannot stand still. So we cannot worship God in ignorance; we have to be growing. If we are going to become like our Father—if we are going to be like our Elder Brother—we are going to have to know not just *what* we believe, but *why* we believe it. Not just what we believe, but to be able to *explain* why we believe it. That takes thought, study, meditation. God is patient—He gives us time.

Because the Samaritans were selective, they were also in ignorance of what they were worshipping. The Jews were the same way, only it was not to the same degree. They were much closer to the truth.

There is one final thing here about this woman, and having this desire—this urge—to worship God. Because of their selectivity, and because of their ignorance, much worship—I am sure of this woman, and also in this world—in "Christianity" is done out of superstition. People carry crucifixes, crosses, St. Christophers, amulets of one kind or another, around with them. They really have no reason, or no real understanding as to why they are doing it. You watch a ball game on television, and the guy steps up into the batter's box, and he crosses himself, and then strikes out! But if he gets a hit every once in a while, he will just keep on doing it. If you ask the guy why he did it, if he was honest, he would probably tell you, "for good luck." It would be at least an honest reply.

I think what is behind superstitious worship is not a real, fervent desire to worship God, but rather maybe an unrealized fear that "there might just be something to this, so I am going to do this *just in case*." It is the equivalent of being careful that black cats do not go across your path, or making sure that you do not step on a crack (and break your mother's back). Superstitious worship is nothing more than a response to a vague fear. That kind of worship is not worshipping God in truth, and it does not mean very much to God. So we have got to be careful that we are not doing that—that we are not worshipping God because we are afraid not to, and "there might just be something to this God thing."

The three of them go together: selectivity in worship, superstition in worship, and ignorance in worship. God has to be worshipped in truth, and Jesus said that if you do that, it will set you free. It will set you free from guilt, set you free from fear, give you peace, and on and on it goes. See, that is where life is. Real life is to be found in the truthful worship of God.

Now there is the word "spirit" that we have to deal with here, because we have to worship Him not only in truth, but also in spirit. There is a possibility that can be translated, "by means of spirit," or "through the spirit." That is, that God has to be worshipped by one possessing the Spirit of God. There is nothing wrong with that, because it certainly gives impetus to the other word about worshipping God in truth, because it is only those who have the Spirit of God who are going to have the truth, and are going to have the possibility of having truth to such an extent that they can actually become *like* God.

The word "spirit" is used in many different ways. In fact, if I recall right, Bullinger's *Companion Bible* says that the word "spirit" is used in eight different senses in the Bible. One of these is indicating attitude, in the sense of "with all your heart," or "wholeheartedly"—with complete and total sincerity, with nothing held back.

Another one is, and this is the one that is probably the correct one, that Jesus is here referring to the fact that God is omniscient. That is, that God is everywhere at once—that God is so great that He has contact with every part of His creation at the same time, and nothing escapes Him. What this means (and this is why I say I think that this is the one intended here) is because He mentions a place of worship, and it is mentioned in reference to her desire to worship.

The common way of worship in those days was to go up to a place and make a sacrifice. You go to a holy place, and you make an offering of an animal, and that is the way God is worshipped. Jesus said, "The time is coming when you will go neither to Mount Gerizim, or to Mount Zion" (where Jerusalem is). You do not go to either of those places, but rather you can worship God any place, anytime, anywhere. You do not need to do those things. God is available, like Mr. Blackwell said, hanging by your foot, upside down in a well.

Those who have the Spirit of God are free to worship God anytime, anywhere, and that is the way God wants it. The true worship of God is something that is carried through the person's life—all the time, every day. The person's whole life is lived in respect of God. It is not something that he just does on Sabbath when he goes to the Temple. So he is living in truth and worshipping God *everywhere*, and is honoring the name of God by his life everywhere. That will please God mightily.

He is not saying here that He does *not* want us to go to special places. He is only saying that God cannot be contained within a building.

There is one more aspect to this and it is beautiful too. You cannot worship God by

sacrificing an animal, and yet sacrifices are required. So if a person is going to worship God in spirit, the sacrifices also have to be spiritual—but they can be done anywhere. Those are the sacrifices of humility, of love, of devotion, loyalty, fidelity, honor, respect, responsibility, duty, obligation for the commands of God. That can be done anywhere. We might add here: Bible study, prayer, service to God and to the brethren—the church—spiritual sacrifices to a spiritual God in every aspect of life. Then you are worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The King James says "God is a spirit." That is not correct. The article "a" is not there. It is just simply "God is spirit." To say "a spirit" would be to equate Him with any other spirit—no better than an angel. But He is the Spirit above all spirits—He *is* Spirit, and all life, and all strength, and all power, and all law, and everything flows from Him.

John 4:25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ).

There is a parenthetical statement there, and it is evident that it was injected by John. It is not part of her statement, but it was put there in order to instruct the Greek-educated audience to whom this was written.

John 4:25-26 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

I just happened to think of this—I should have checked this out—but I think that she is the first one to whom He directly said this. He talked to John the Baptist, but even John had it revealed to him by the Father. Maybe you can make that a project—read from the beginning of John 1, and see if Jesus said that to anybody else before her. It is kind of interesting that He said it to a woman; He said it to a Samaritan. It was to a Gentile that He first revealed Himself verbally: "I am the Christ."

There is something there, too. He is showing by His action through this whole thing that God is opening salvation to everyone. Even though salvation is of the Jews, God is going to be the God of the Gentiles as well. He is the God of all.

John 4:27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman [we see that all that prejudice was not gone yet]; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

They were questioning that He would be doing this—that was a pretty bold thing—yet they were learning not to question Him about what He did. They were beginning to slowly learn that there was a good reason why He did everything. They were slowly on their way to conversion.

John 4:28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men. . .

That is an interesting little sidelight. Why did he have to tell us that she left her waterpot? He could have just said that she left and went into the city, and maybe we would have assumed that she took her waterpot with her. See, he did it because he wanted to convey to you and me that now this woman had a mission. She was excited. She was going to become an evangelist here—and she did!

This is another thing to think about: in a sense, this might have occurred before Matthew 10. Do you know what happens in Matthew 10? Jesus sends the disciples out. She might have been the first one to go out and begin to evangelize, because the whole town came out on the strength of her word. That is also very interesting: this immoral woman goes into town, and suddenly everybody listens to her.

That is another thing to think about. Undoubtedly, this woman believed Him—she was excited by what she had heard, by the explosion of knowledge that came into her mind. When you think of her background, really seemingly nothing more than a prostitute, and probably—as is indicated here, or at least implied—shunned by the rest of the city, or the nicey-nice people in town. She was undoubtedly aware of what we see here is a shameful past, because she came out alone in the heat of the day, ashamed, really, to associate with the others in the city. But when she believed Christ, it seems like she lost her shame. She was not afraid to proclaim Christ to her neighbors, but became **bold**.

John 4:29-32 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did [that was probably an exaggeration, but it got the point across]. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

Here we go again. "Come on and eat!" But He, instead of making a simple statement, said something that they did not understand. You and I would not have understood it either.

John 4:33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"

That is no different from Nicodemus. That is no different from the woman. They were just as puzzled to His response to their questions as anybody else was.

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

Again, there is good instruction there, and that is that Jesus was energized by what He was doing. He came there tired, but this statement indicates that He forgot all about His tiredness. He forgot all about being thirsty. He was so taken up by this woman, and teaching her some of the truth of God, that all of that weariness just evaporated away, and now He was on top of the world. "Let's get going again!"

That is good to see that. He was human. That is the way you and I are. You know very well that sometimes when you have a task before you that you do not want to do, and you kind of go grumping around, doing everything you possibly can to avoid the thing. You walk around the job about six times, and finally you decide, "Well, I gotta do it. It's not going to get done. If it's not done, the boss is going to get on my case. I don't want him on my case, so I better do the job." So we jump into it, and the feeling comes right back, and the first thing you know, you are totally absorbed in what you are doing, and you begin to enjoy what you are doing. Maybe that does not happen to you, but it happens to me.

That is what happened here. He was suddenly all energized here. He was ready to get going. It led into something else:

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? ...

That is a little bit unwieldy. What He was doing was He was quoting a proverb—not one of the proverbs out of the book of Proverbs, but just a local saying. What He was saying was, "Don't you have a saying, 'There are still four months till the harvest?'" What it meant was, there are four months between the planting of the seed and the reaping of the harvest. He had just planted the seed in this woman's mind. He was excited by that. When you look at this whole chapter, beginning with the first verse, He was in a hurry to get away from Judea because things were beginning to take shape there that He did not like. His intention was to go to Galilee, so it says that He "needed" to go through Samaria. He did not intend to stop there. He did not intend to preach to that woman. He did not intend to get involved. He was going to go right through there, go to Galilee, and begin His ministry up there. But instead, God took Him on this digression. Now He was all energized.

That tells you something about Him. He did not know *everything* that was going to happen. He had to be led by God's Spirit. He had to figure things out logically, using the Bible as the guide. Later on we find—in Matthew 10—where He says, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But by this time He had already been to Samaria, and in the meantime He had concluded that it was not His responsibility to go to the Gentiles.

This digression was something that was led of God. There is no indication that anybody was ever converted out of it—at least during the ministry of Christ—yet still Christ saw that the seed was planted.

I want to ask you something. In Acts 8, to where did the apostles first go to begin to preach the gospel in the area of the Gentiles? To Samaria, where Jesus had already gone. You can look back on this now and see that Jesus perceived that the seed was already planted. He said,

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

The harvest did not come until *years* later. But Jesus had vision. He knew that there was going to be conversions out of this, even though He may not actually live to see it. You see, there is an approach here for you and me to understand.

John 4:36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps *may* rejoice together.

Maybe not. But maybe those who sow and those who reap *may* rejoice together.

John 4:37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'

That is ordinarily the way that it was done. One person sowed the seed, and another person came along and reaped the harvest. But Jesus is saying, "Maybe this is a time that both the sower and the reaper are going to rejoice together—because we will begin to see a harvest right away."

John 4:38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. . .

Others had gone on before and planted a seed, the most recent being John the Baptist. John the Baptist went around and he prepared the way for Christ. He sowed, and now we see at the beginning of chapter 4 Jesus is beginning to reap the harvest that John the Baptist sowed.

John 4:38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

We could reach back anciently into the lives of the prophets, and all who have gone on before, and see that they had laid seed all along the way. When the church came into being, the fruits of their labors began to show.

John 4:39-40 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

He did not intend to. That was not His plan. But something was unfolding, and so He yielded to it.

John 4:41-42 And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

I think that you and I are the fruits of the labors of many people. The latest is Mr. Herbert Armstrong, but before him are the fruits of all these people who are written in the Bible. That is a part of us now, too. They, along with Mr. Armstrong, helped to plant the seed, along with all of those people who labored with those people, and made it possible for the church to do its responsibility. Now we are the ones who are going around and planting the seed.

I think it is evident from Revelation 7 that the harvest—the great harvest—from the seed that we are planting is going to come *after* the Tribulation—through the Tribulation, and after the Tribulation—the great, innumerable multitude that God says no man could number. Maybe, in a way, we will be able to be a part of fulfilling this, where it says in verse 36, "he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together," because we are going to have the opportunity to watch that harvest come to fruition. We will get to experience that, and not many have been able to do that. We see a small portion of it here, but we will have a great harvest then.