

John Series: That You May Believe

#13: The Woman at the Well

Text: John 4:1-42

As His crowds become greater than John the Baptist's, and to avoid a premature confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus leaves the Judean countryside and journeys toward Galilee. He passes through Samaria by Divine appointment and reveals Himself to a woman, His disciples, and an entire village! In contrast to His reception in Jerusalem, He is received with faith by this village in Samaria.

I. Jesus Traveling to Galilee (vs 1-6)

1. Leaving Judea. (1-3) This could be after John the Baptist has been imprisoned. Now the Pharisees discover that they have a new "problem" in Jesus' growing ministry. Jesus knew that His hour had not yet come, so He left Judea. The term used (for "left") speaks of Jesus leaving them to their own devices.

2. Entering a Samaritan Town. (4-6) He "had to" pass through Samaria. Jesus walked in His Father's will. Jesus sits at Jacob's well to rest (see the humanity of Jesus!).

II. Jesus Talking With a Woman (vs 7-30).

1. A Matter of Prejudice. (7-9) Jesus took the time to speak to this woman. She didn't expect good treatment. The Maker of the Nile River asking for a drink! For insight into the ethnic tension see *History of the Samaritans*, following. John's parenthetical comment could be translated, Jews do not use vessels together with Samaritans.

2. A Thirsty Man Offering Water. (10-14) The strange, thirsty traveler is now offering water to the one with the bucket and the well.

3. Give Me This Water! (15) Again, the one with the bucket and well is asking the weary traveler for water! She wants what Jesus is offering, though she doesn't understand completely what He is offering.

4. Dealing With Sin. (16-18) She wanted what Jesus offered, but He did not give it to her until He dealt with the sin issue. This is a very important lesson for us as we follow Jesus in the labor of souls. Sin is the problem and it must always be dealt with. When Christ took her (gently but definitely) to the uncomfortable place in her life, this previously talkative woman grew silent, offering just an "I have no husband" half-truth answer. Her mouth had been stopped (Rom 3:19). Christ then gently revealed her sin to her. First comes conviction of sin and repentance, and then faith.

5. A Diversion. (19-24) The woman immediately tried to move the conversation away from the uncomfortable topic of her sin by using a religious question (where did Cain get his wife, etc). It's easier to discuss religion than to confess our sins! Christ dealt with her question without really answering it – taking the opportunity to give her increasing revelation about God and worshipping Him truly. In the process, Jesus reveals that not all religions are acceptable! Her question dealt with the correct place of worship. Most people when asked about their relationship with God will respond with a PLACE of worship ("I go to church over there.."). Place doesn't matter. Spirit and Truth.

6. A Revelation! (25-26) Once Christ had dealt with the SIN problem, He brought her to the question of faith in HIS PERSON. Gradual increase of faith: The woman saw Jesus as a "Jew," a prophet, the Messiah, and finally as the Savior of the world!

7. The Disciples Amazed. (27) It was against rabbinical custom for a Rabbi to talk with a strange woman publicly, much less a Samaritan! Jesus had previously spoken with a rich, honorable, Jewish man. Now He was showing love to a common, sinful Samaritan woman! No respecter of persons.

8. A New Witness! (28-30) The woman left her waterpot (finally ready to give Jesus the drink He asked for, or just now satisfied with the living water, or too excited to remember her routine) and ran to tell others. How long do you have to be a believer before you are a witness for Jesus?

III. Jesus Teaching His Disciples (vs 31-38).

1. Jesus' Food. (31-34) More than eating food, Jesus was hungry to obey His Father!

2. The Harvest. (35-38) Opportunities abound, right now! "Labor" in 4:38 is same Greek word as "wearied" in 4:6.

IV. Jesus Ministering to the Village (vs 39-42)

1. An Invitation. (39-40) The village invite Jesus to stay with them, and Jesus accepts! For 2 days He taught them. No miracles are recorded, only that He gave them the Word.

2. A Declaration of Faith! (41-42) Here is a glimpse of the great commission early in Jesus' ministry. Jew's rejecting, Gentiles receiving. Just as Christ declared we would do in Acts 1:8, His public ministry went from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and at Samaria He was declared the "Savior of the world."

History of the Samaritans (II Kings 17)

Israel's last king, Hoshea, stopped paying tribute to Assyria. Assyria sieged the city and overtook it. The Israelites were exiled to Assyria, with the poor remaining. The Assyrians brought in pagan foreigners to occupy the land. They intermarried with the Jews who remained in the city and a mixed race of Jew/Gentiles was created. Wild beasts attacked them as the worship of God ceased. The king of Assyria sent an Israelite priest to them in response, to teach them how to worship God, to appease Him and get rid of the wild beasts. A mixed religion resulted, combining worship of the true God with their pagan rituals.

When Zerubbabel led a remnant of exiles back to Jerusalem in the book of Ezra, these Samaritans wanted to help them build the temple. They were denied. They built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Rituals were carried out on Mt. Gerizim for about 2 centuries until it was destroyed. Worship continued on that mountain even after the temple was destroyed, and continues there to this day.