

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-45

INTRODUCTION:

This morning, we are going to dive into one of the most popular and revealing passages of Scripture about Jesus. In this text, we are going to see cultural clashes, gender clashes, religious clashes, ethical clashes, and most of all, we are going to see the example of how Jesus dealt with all these matters. This is one of the most encouraging and intriguing passages from within Scripture in dealing with people.

Many Christians today do evangelism a bit suspect. Many try to sneak up on the individual, while others bring down the hammer of God's judgment (according to their own ideas) with their own force. What we are about to see in this text for the next couple of Sundays is a clinic in how to deal with people that you may have nothing in common with but who need the Gospel. Jesus gives us great insight if we only read closely and pay attention.

John 4:1-42

When Jesus knew that the Pharisees heard He was making and baptizing more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea and went again to Galilee. He had to travel through Samaria, so He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from His journey, sat down at the well. It was about six in the evening.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

"Give Me a drink," Jesus said to her, for His disciples had gone into town to buy food.

"How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked Him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would ask Him, and He would give you living water."

"Sir," said the woman, "You don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do You get this 'living water'? You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are You? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—

ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life.”

“Sir,” the woman said to Him, “give me this water so I won’t get thirsty and come here to draw water.”

“Go call your husband,” He told her, “and come back here.”

“I don’t have a husband,” she answered.

“You have correctly said, ‘I don’t have a husband,’ ” Jesus said. “For you’ve had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

“Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, yet you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus told her, “Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ).

“When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”

“I am He,” Jesus told her, “the One speaking to you.”

Just then His disciples arrived, and they were amazed that He was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, “What do You want?” or “Why are You talking with her?”

Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the men, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?” They left the town and made their way to Him.

In the meantime, the disciples kept urging Him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

But He said, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about.”

The disciples said to one another, “Could someone have brought Him something to eat?”

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work,” Jesus told them. “Don’t you say, ‘There are still four more months, then comes the harvest’? Listen to what I’m telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest. The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap what you didn’t labor for; others have labored, and you have benefited from their labor.”

Now many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of what the woman said when she testified, “He told me everything I ever did.” Therefore, when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. Many more believed because of what He said. And they told the woman, “We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world.”¹

This morning, we are going to be doing some background work. I hope as we study John 4:1-42 we learn from the text, but we also learn how to approach a text. This background work will give be our focus today.

I. The Setting

A. Where is Samaria?

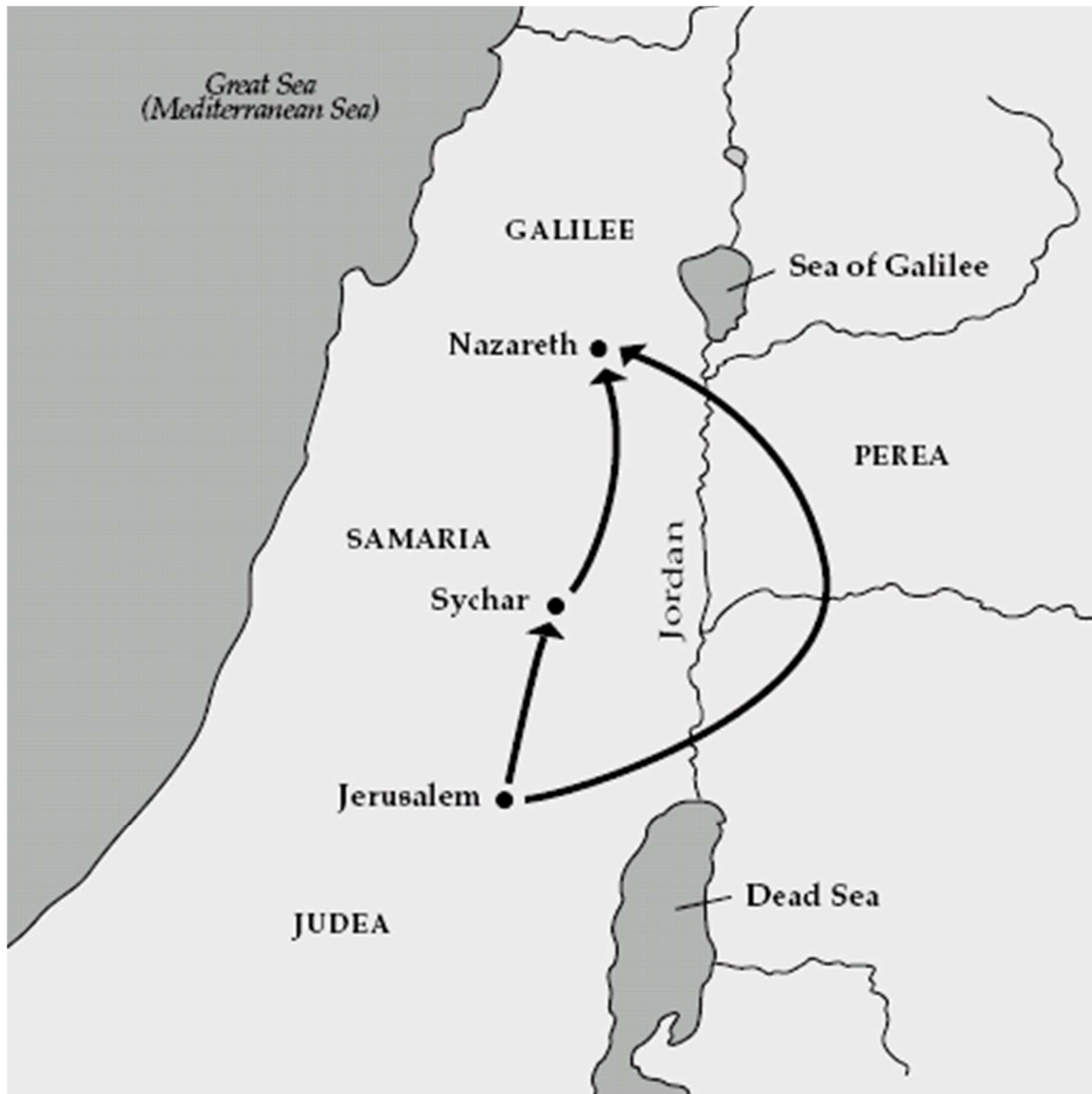
Samaria was between Judea and Galilee. Jesus makes the statement about going through Samaria, but it was tradition because of the friction between the Jews and the Samaritans that Jews traveling to Galilee would cross the Jordan to the east, go north, and then cross the Jordan entering Galilee just not to set foot within Samaria.

William Hendriksen states, “

There were several roads leading from Judea to Galilee: one near the seacoast, another through Perea, and one through the heart of Samaria. Josephus informs us, however, that it was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journey through the country of the Samaritans (*Antiquities*, XX, vi, 1). Besides, the shortest distance from the Jerusalem-Jericho region, where Jesus had been carrying on his ministry, to Cana in Galilee, his destination (4:46), was the road through Samaria.²

¹ [*The Holy Bible: Holman Christian standard version*](#). (Jn 4:1–42). (2009). Holman Bible Publishers.

² William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), Vol. 1, 155.



B. What was the history of Jacob's well?

Early in the text, it gives a specific town within Samaria where this interaction took place “near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there... (John 4:5-6 English Standard Version).” What is the importance of this spring of Jacob’s? Both Jewish and Samaritan lineages go back to Abraham through Jacob, also known as Israel. As Ferguson puts it regarding the Samaritans

being in commonality with the Jews, they shared a sense of being the chosen people with an attachment to the land given to the fathers (associated in their case with the Joseph tribes) which would have been Ephraim and Manasseh.³

According to Andreas Köstenberger, “The small town of Sychar probably was located at the site of modern Askar, about two miles east of Nablus, centrally situated just east of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal.⁴ This is significant because this is where Jacob, again also known as Israel, gives Joseph his inheritance. The book of Genesis states, “Then Israel said to Joseph, ‘Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers. Moreover, I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow (Genesis 48:21-22 ESV).” Later in the life of Joseph, before his death, Genesis states,

So, Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father’s house. Joseph lived 110 years. And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph’s own. And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” So, Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt (Genesis 50:22-26 ESV).

Joseph’s bones, later at the time of the Exodus, were carried out of Egypt when God liberated his people from the hands of Pharaoh. Joshua later records, “As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor

³ Ibid., 534.

⁴ Andreas Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 146.

the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph (Joshua 24:32 ESV).

C. Who are the Samaritans and what was the friction between the Jews and Samaritans?

In the days of the divided monarchy, Israel to the north and Judah to the south, Samaria fell into the northern kingdom of Israel. According to Everett Ferguson, “The origins of the Samaritans have traditionally been traced to the situation described in 2 Kings 17.”⁵ When looking back to this chapter, one reads how King Hoshea reigned for nine years doing evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 17:1-2). Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came to attack Hoshea even though once upon a time Hoshea had been a vassal to Shalmaneser and paid tribute to him, but later found out that Hoshea was a traitor by sending envoys to So, King of Egypt, and no longer paying tribute to the King of Assyria. Therefore, Shalmaneser seized Hoshea and threw him into prison and captured Samaria then deported the Israelites to Assyria (2 Kings 17:3-6). This was punishment for their stiff-necked ways of rebellion against God specifically turning away from God to worship other gods as their neighbors did. They abandoned the ways of the Lord and his commandments (2 Kings 17:7-23). Later the King of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. The people didn’t worship the Lord because they were foreign to the ways of worship, the Lord, therefore, sent lions among them, and many were killed. The Assyrian king then gave an order for a priest who had

⁵ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 534.

been taken captive to go back and teach the people ‘what the god of the land requires.’ Although the people incorporated the worship of the Lord, they did not abandon worshipping their gods following the customs of the nations from which they had come (2 Kings 17:24-41).

D. What about the place of worship?

Mount Gerizim is not specifically named in the passage, but it is implied. Jesus states, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. (John 4:21 ESV).” This is a major part of the text with significant implications for temple theology and Christ’s support of the Jews, but the question is “Why does a debate over worshipping on a mountain come up in this conversation?” According to Robert Utley the phrase “worship on this mountain” brings up “the theological argument as to where God (YHWH) should be worshiped. The Jews emphasized Mt. Moriah while the Samaritans emphasized Mt. Gerizim.”⁶ This was a major debate between the Jews and Samaritans which was the primary point of contention between them. So, how did this come about? According to D.A. Carson, “Both Jews and Samaritans recognized that God had commanded their forefathers ‘to seek the place the LORD your God [would] choose from among all [their] tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling’ (Dt. 12:5), but they drew conflicting conclusions from this authorization.”⁷ Carson later states, “They noted that Shechem, overlooked by Mount Gerizim, was the first place Abraham built an altar once he entered the promised land (Gn. 12:6–7). It was on Mount Gerizim that the blessings were to be shouted to the covenant community, once they had entered the promised land (Dt.

⁶ Robert Utley, *The Beloved Disciple’s Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1999), Volume 4, p. 44.

⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 222.

11:29–30; 27:2–7, 12; *cf.* Jos. 8:33).”⁸ So, one can see some of their conclusions about this debate, at least to a limited degree.

II. Situational Divisions

- A. Jesus was a man speaking to a woman. (Gender Divide)
- B. Jesus was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan. (National Divide)
- C. Jesus was perfect, and she had in her life five husbands and was then living with another. (Ethical Divide)
- D. The divides were many and deep, yet Jesus sought to have a conversation with this woman.
- E. We live in a day and time where the divides are many, and they are deep, and we use them to isolate and vilify.

III. A Seeking Savior

- A. One begins to understand why “he had to travel through Samaria.”
- B. Jesus came to stand within the division.
- C. Jesus came to bring unity through truth, not just for unity’s sake.
- D. There are a lot of people who can bring unity, but it is at the expense of truth.
- E. True unity is powerful because it stands in the truth, and the truth can bridge gaps if both parties in the division are open to the truth.
- F. The major issue in our society is that we see the truth as a product of our own lives rather than objective from God.
- G. Jesus came to meet her where she was in her brokenness. We often say this, but we forget that brokenness is the product of division. For example, if a pot is broken, you can tell its brokenness by how it is divided.

⁸ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 222.

CONCLUSION

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

Jesus Pursues The Lost by Steve Brown

Jesus is persistent in his pursuit. I love C.S. Lewis’ comment that when he received Christ, he was the most reluctant convert in all of England. Lewis said that he was being chased. Every time Lewis sat down to write, he sensed a presence behind him: “To say that I was seeking God is like saying that a mouse was searching for a cat.”

Little Dickie was a boy in the camp where my wife Anna and I worked one summer. He was one of the meanest kids I’ve ever known. They didn’t allow spanking at the camp and, after meeting Dickie, I understood why. I would have killed him! My wife, though, decided that no matter what Dickie did, she was going to love him...and she did. Anna pursued him with her love. On the last day of camp, Dickie gave my wife a flower. It was like saying, “I give up. Your love has won.”

The Father is like that in his pursuit of us. If you are his, your running is to no avail. You are simply wasting your time and energy. Give up. A man once told me, “I don’t like you very much, but I’m determined to like you until we’re friends...if that’s the last thing I do.”

The Shepherd never gives up. That is why you feel guilty, why you can’t sleep at night, why you just can’t turn your back. He will pursue you until you give up and you are his.