

# In The Beginning Was The Word

John 4:20-38

## INTRODUCTION:

Samaria. In 721 B.C. the Northern Kingdom of Israel finally collapsed under the onslaught of the armies of Assyria. A large portion of the Hebrew population was deported into captivity. In the years that followed, refugees from other Assyrian conquests were resettled in this area so that they eventually began to intermarry with the surviving Hebrew population.

In 586 B.C. the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonian armies of Nebuchadnezzar and now these Jews also suffered a deportation to a foreign land.

However, the Babylonian Empire declined quickly in the years that followed and its fall came in 539 B.C., brought about through the conquests of Cyrus the Great.

Under Cyrus and his Persian Empire, the Jews were allowed to return to the land of Judah and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

When the Samaritan population offered to help in this rebuilding program, they were refused. This sparked off a dispute that was to last for the next 500 years.

1. In the years that followed, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim and instituted their own priesthood.
2. They rejected all of the Old Testament except for the Torah and they claimed to have a copy of the Torah which was older than any possessed by the Jews.
3. The Jews responded in kind, fanning the flames of prejudice.
4. In 128 B.C. John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean King of Judah, destroyed the temple at Gerizim.

The Roman conquest of Palestine did nothing to pacify the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans.

By the first century A.D. the Jews considered the Samaritans to be even lower than the Gentiles, and they were not even permitted to convert to Judaism.

It is upon this scene that we open our study of John 4. It is the story of a Jew breaking the barrier of 500 years of prejudice. It is the story of the incident which occurred at Sychar.

- The Samaritans had been worshiping on Mount Gerizim for hundreds of years. It was here that they had built their own temple, the ruins of which still lay at the top of the mountain.

The Samaritan woman and Jesus discuss worship. (V 20-26)

## **John 4:20-26**

<sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, **worship the Father.**

<sup>22</sup> **Ye worship ye know not what:** we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

<sup>23</sup> But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

<sup>24</sup> God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

<sup>25</sup> The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

<sup>26</sup> Jesus saith unto her, **I that speak unto thee am he.**

## **The Samaritan woman and Jesus examine worship**

### **A. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain:**

1. It is possible that this was a genuine source of confusion and a stumbling block to her.
2. But it is more likely that this simply was an evasion, trying to avoid the issue of her many prior husbands and her current non-husband.
3. The Lord has always guided and told the Jewish people where and how to worship him. Here in Deut 12:5 we see the Lord laying down his command of worship.

**Deuteronomy 12:**<sup>5</sup> *But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:*

- i. If she offered an argument about places of worship here, Jesus didn't take the bait.
- ii. Jesus was more interested in winning a soul than winning an argument.
- iii. People often skirt around the real issue when you get too close to their sin.
- iv. This woman was trying to direct the attention off her onto the place of worship which she thought was important and to throw the Lord off her tracks.
- v. So what if her for fathers worship in a place. It was more important to realize how to worship.

**B. You worship what you do not know:**

- i. The Samaritans believed that Moses commissioned an altar on Mount Gerazim, the mountain of blessing - this was their justification of their system of worship on that mountain.
- ii. But like all faith that tries to combine elements of different religions, they **worship what they do not know**.
- iii. The Lord was specific when he told Isaiah.

**Isaiah 2:3**

*<sup>3</sup> And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

- iv. The Lord wanted the people to come together to worship and not be scattered with every man to his own way.

**C. The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father:**

- i. Jesus pointed her to a time when worship would no longer be focused on places (neither Jerusalem nor Mount Gerazim).
- ii. The greater work of Jesus would bring a greater, more spiritual worship.
- iii. With our heart we should worship the Lord.

**D. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth:**

With these words Jesus described the basis for true worship: it is not found in places and paraphernalia such as high hats and golden robes, but **in spirit and in truth**.

**Acts 17:24-29**

*<sup>24</sup> God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;*

*<sup>25</sup> Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;*

*<sup>26</sup> And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;*

<sup>27</sup> *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:*

<sup>28</sup> *For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*

<sup>29</sup> *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*

- i. To worship **in spirit** means you are concerned with spiritual realities, not so much with places or outward sacrifices, cleansings, and trappings.
- ii. To worship **in truth** means you worship according to the whole counsel of God's word, especially in light of the New Testament revelation.
- iii. When we worship we need to know that it is worship in Jesus name that has saved us.
- iv. The spirit and truth is to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of all and has over all powers and principalities for those who believe in him.

**E. I who speak to you am He:**

- i. Though this woman was a sinner, Jesus revealed Himself to her.
- ii. Jesus reveals Himself to sinners.
- iii. The Lord came to seek and to save the spiritually lost. It was His mission that had been given to him by the father.
- iv. The greatest revelation is when the Lord reveals himself to those who will embrace him. Just like he revealed himself to the woman so he reveals himself today through his word.
- v. The woman had the blessing of seeing him face to face. We have the blessing of seeing him in his word. But one day the Lord says we will get to see him face to face.

**1 Corinthians 13:12**

*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then **face to face**: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

**1 John 3:2**

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him **as he is**.*

**The woman tells her neighbours. – v27-30**

- i. Most people when they have done something wrong will not go public and admit it, let alone admit it to someone close to them.
- ii. But this woman went public to show that how she was a woman caught up in sin, and how the Lord knew everything about her, and how the Lord was willing to help her.

- iii. She was a woman who was willing to tell the good news to everyone.

### **John 4:27-30**

<sup>27</sup> *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*

<sup>28</sup> *The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,*

<sup>29</sup> *Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

<sup>30</sup> *Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.*

#### **A. The disciples came, and they marvelled that He talked with a woman:**

- i. The disciples were surprised that Jesus stretched the limits of cultural respectability with the extended conversation with the Samaritan woman. Yet - probably sensing that it *was right and appropriate* - they did not question Jesus about this.
- ii. The fact that the disciples marvelled was that they were surprised that a Jewish man would actually engage in a conversation with a Samaritan woman let alone a Samaritan man.
- iii. They had no idea that Christianity could cut right through any racial boundaries and for that matter any across any racial tension.
- iv. The Lord had revealed to them something that they would never have entertained or done.
- v. This poor judgement on their part shows a lack of faith and lovingness in them that they would not see their fellow person as a potential convert to Christianity.
- vi. Their eyes had been opened wide now and they could do nothing but stare and as the scripture says they marvelled.
- vii. But that is exactly what the word of the Lord does. It causes us and others to marvel at his ability to save all mankind, and to give everyone a second chance.
- viii. No one had engaged with these people in over 500 years. What a lesson they had received. And what a lesson the Samaritan woman had received.
- ix. Are we not grateful that God gave us a second chance!

#### **B. The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city:**

- i. Perhaps sensing the silent awkwardness of the disciples, the woman left her conversation with Jesus and went back into the city of Sychar.
- ii. The fact that she left her water pot meant that she wanted to go and return quicker with the information that she now had.
- iii. The truth meant more to her than her water pot or she would not have left it there.

**B. Come, see a Man who told me all the things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?**

Jesus so impressed this woman that she was compelled to tell those in her city that *they* should come to the well and meet Jesus.

- i. According to what she said, several things must have impressed her. She was amazed that her life was so accurately described.
  - ii. The fact that the Lord had pointed out her sin to her, was amazing because she must have thought that she was the only one who had that information.
  - ii. She was overwhelmed by the sincerity and love that the Lord had shown her despite her condition.
  - iii. The act of worship discussion that she had been trying to introduce as a smokescreen had all vanished into thin air as the Lord revealed her sin to her.
  - iv. Even though the Lord had told her earlier in verse 26 that he was the Christ she still had not fully grasped the meaning of it all.
  - v. But now her common sense had started to kick in and re questioned herself as **“could this be the Christ”**.
  - vi. What a moment that must have been in her life.
  - vii. It was a moment when everything had come together.
- The possibility that He was indeed **the Christ**, the Messiah.

**C. Then they went out of the city and came to Him:**

The woman's invitation was *effective*. The people came when she told them who Jesus was and how He had impacted her life with their brief conversation.

- i. I see here in this great opportunity as the people that she had called to come and see the Lord, as a great moment in the Lords presence as He would look at the people with love and hoping that they too will see in Him what the Samaritan woman had just seen.
- ii. I think that is why the Lord answers his disciples in the way that he did. When he said to them in verse 35, to look and to see that the harvest fields are now ripe and ready to harvest.
- iii. There was no need to wait four months and harvest; it was now. The moment had arrived. The time of harvesting the witnesses was now.
- iv. He wanted the disciples to see for themselves and so engages with them in the verses that follow.

**Jesus teaches His disciples. (31-38)**

### **John 4:31-38**

<sup>31</sup> *In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.*

<sup>32</sup> *But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

<sup>33</sup> *Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?*

<sup>34</sup> *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

<sup>35</sup> ***Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest.***

<sup>36</sup> *And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.*

<sup>37</sup> *And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.*

<sup>38</sup> *I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*

#### **A. My meat (food) is to do the will of Him who sent Me:**

- i. Jesus was right. There is nothing more satisfying than doing the work of God.
- ii. And it was right before their eyes.

#### **B. Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!**

- i. The disciples could now reap a harvest immediately, and they reaped it from seeds that they didn't even sow.
- ii. Jesus sowed the seeds, and they had the opportunity to reap. Many times, this is how the work of God happens - one sows, and another reaps.

(1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

### **1 Corinthians 3:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.<sup>7</sup> So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.<sup>8</sup> Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*

The Lords departing words to us in the NT is that which was spelled out in Luke 2.

**Luke 10:2**

*<sup>2</sup> Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

PRAYER.....CLOSE