

Joh 4:1-4 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria.

This, apparently, was immediately after the incident in chapter 3. It was in the month of December and probably near December 27. This was the time that John the Baptist was in prison. When John was imprisoned, Jesus left Judea and went back into Galilee.

Why did He retire from Judea? Well, He did not want to precipitate a crisis. You see, the Lord Jesus was moving according to schedule, a heavenly schedule set by the Father. He has made it very clear that He came to do the Father's will. Speaking of His own life, He said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (Joh_10:18). They can't touch Him until His time has come. When we reach the thirteenth chapter of John, we will see that His time had then come. "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father ..." (Joh_13:1)—you see, He's moving on His Father's schedule, friend; He has come to do the Father's will.

So He departed again into Galilee. He went back up where His headquarters were, which, we believe, were in the city of Capernaum. – McGee

Joh 4:5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Joseph's tomb is nearby. At the fork of the old Roman road south of Sychar He meets the woman at the well. Mount Gerizim is to the northwest, and the synagogue of the Samaritans is on the slope of Mount Gerizim. I've been at that spot and have taken pictures there. This is the place to which our Lord comes. - McGee

Joh 4:6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The sixth hour according to Roman time would be six o'clock in the evening, but we are following Jewish time here and the sixth hour was twelve noon. He was weary with His journey. How perfectly human He was. You see, John presents Him as the Son of God, as God manifest in the flesh. "The Word was made flesh" (Joh_1:14). Friend, although the language is simple, it expresses something that is overwhelming. Think of it! The God of eternity came down to this earth. The Word was made flesh and dwelled among us—He pitched His tent here among us. He went through Samaria and sat down at a well in order that He might reach this woman of Samaria!

The Samaritans were a group of poor people in that day. – McGee

Joh 4:7-8 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

This woman is obviously a dissolute woman. I think she is probably as common as pig tracks. She's rude and immoral. We would call her today a hussy or a broad, if you please.

What a contrast she is to the man, Nicodemus, we saw in the preceding chapter. And notice how differently our Lord deals with her. With Nicodemus, a man who was religious to his fingertips, our Lord was harsh and blunt, but see how gentle He is with this woman. He asks a favor of her. He appeals to her sympathy—He is thirsty and asks for a drink. What condescension on His part! He is the Water of Life and He asks her for water.

John 4 – The Woman at the Well

It is noon and His disciples have gone to the city to buy food. The fact that they were buying the Samaritans' food also reveals Jesus' total rejection of the Jewish prejudice which considered Samaritan food unclean, even as swine's flesh. – McGee

Do you think the disciples were focused more on the food than the ministry? You got to wonder if John or one of the other disciples wanted to stay there with Jesus, but gave into either peer pressure or his growling stomach.

Joh 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.

Twice she refuses His request. She's rude here, and insolent, impudent, and impertinent—she tosses her pert and saucy head. She makes this racial distinction. It is said that the Samaritans would sell to the Jews, but they wouldn't drink from the same vessel with them.

You see what our Lord is doing here. He is coming to the very lowest place to which He can come. But watch how the Lord deals with her. He is very skillful and sympathetic, but He also talks with her forcefully, faithfully, and factually. He doesn't give her a lecture on integration or civil rights. He isn't a candidate for some office. He just appeals to her womanly curiosity. He creates an interest and a thirst.

Joh 4:10-12 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." 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? 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?"

As He appeals to her curiosity, her attitude immediately changes.

The woman calls Him "Sir" which she had left out before. Then she was impudent and rude, but now there is a difference. The whole point here is that this woman is thinking in terms of the physical; her thinking could get no higher than the water level down in the well.

Notice that she identifies herself with Jacob. She does this purposely, as racially the Samaritans were Jacob's descendants who had intermarried with peoples from the north following the Assyrian Captivity of Israel in 721 B.C. – McGee.

Joh 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 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."

Jesus makes it clear that He is not talking about water in Jacob's well. Rather, He is making a contrast, you see. Today the crowds are going to the water holes of this world, seeking satisfaction. They also are constantly looking for the physical, not the spiritual satisfaction. But now Jesus has created a desire in this woman's heart for the spiritual water.

Joh 4:15-16 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

She's thirsty for spiritual water, but then her thinking goes right back down into that well again. This is the master stroke. Although the water is available for all, there is a condition to be met—there must be a thirst, a need. She must, therefore, recognize that she is a sinner. So, our Lord says to her, "Go call your husband." That is a touchy subject. She becomes flippant again.

Joh 4:17-18 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."

She was accurate about that. She had had five husbands, but she didn't have one then. She was living with a man in adultery. Our Lord insists that, when you come to Him, you must deal with sin. All secrets must come out before Him. Here was a sinner. One of the reasons she was not so popular with the women of the town was because she was too popular with the men of the town.

The woman was actually shocked into reverence. But then she wanted to change the subject by opening a religious argument.

Joh 4:19-20 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Now that will make a good religious argument, friend. Where are you going to worship? In this mountain or in Jerusalem? That caused many an argument in that day.

There are many people today who want to argue religion, but they don't want to live it. I'm convinced that most of the superficiality in our churches today is there as a cover-up of sin. Unfortunately our churches are honey-combed with hypocrisy, a compromise with evil, and a refusal to face up to sin. You know, it's easy to preach about the sin of the Moabites which they committed about 4,000 years ago, but what about our sins today? It was the brother of Henry Ward Beecher who said, "I like a sermon where one man is the preacher and one man is the congregation so that when the preacher says, 'Thou art the man,' there's no mistaking whom he's talking about." There are many ministers today who are afraid to preach on the sins of Christians. This was confirmed to me several years ago. I was speaking in a summer conference on the first eight chapters of Romans. This is not often used as a subject because Paul deals with sin. At first I could actually feel a resentment. By the middle of the week, the Holy Spirit began to break up hard hearts and a fellow who seemed to be the most pompous and pious saint came to me wanting to confess his sins. I told him not to confess them to me, but to go to the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus. He would hear him when he confessed, and He would forgive him. What a change took place in this man! At that same conference two ministers came to me, personally and privately, asking, "Do you preach like this in your own church?" Well, I did preach like that, but I found out there was a little cell of super-duper saints who liked to criticize the preacher so as to take the attention off themselves. They really wanted to be active—in fact, they wanted to run the church—but they did not want to deal with sin in their lives.

Our Lord did not avoid or sidestep the issue of personal sin. I believe that if you really have honest questions or doubts, the Lord will reveal the solution to you. And our Lord dealt with this woman on the question she had raised. - McGee

Joh 4:21-22 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."

When the Lord said, "You worship what you do not know," He condemned the Samaritan mode of worship. This is in marked contrast to those religious teachers today who say that all religions are good and that they all lead to heaven at last. The Lord Jesus informed this woman that the worship of the Samaritans was not authorized by God, neither was it approved by Him. It had been invented by man and carried on without the sanction of the Word of God. This was not so with the worship of the Jews. God had set apart the Jewish people as His chosen earthly people. He had given them complete instructions on the way to worship Him.

Telling someone that they worship what they do not know is rather blunt. Do you think this hard truth is something our society accepts today?

In saying that “salvation is of the Jews,” the Lord was teaching that the Jewish people were appointed by God to be His messengers, and it was to them that the Scriptures had been given. Also, it was through the Jewish nation that the Messiah was given. He was born of a Jewish mother. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Joh 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.

The Jewish people had reduced worship to outward forms and ceremonies. They thought that by religiously adhering to the letter of the law, and going through certain rituals, they were worshiping the Father. But theirs was not a worship of the spirit. It was outward, not inward. Their bodies might be bowed down on the ground but their hearts were not right before God. Perhaps they were oppressing the poor, or using deceitful business methods.

The Samaritans, on the other hand, had a form of worship, but it was false. It had no scriptural authority. They had started their own religion and were carrying out ordinances of their own invention. Thus, when the Lord said that worship must be in spirit and truth, He was rebuking both Jews and Samaritans. But He was also informing them that, now that He had come, it was possible for men to draw near to God through Him in true and sincere worship. Ponder this! The Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is interested in the adoration of His people. Does He receive this from me? – Believers Bible Commentary

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

It is irrelevant, therefore, where you worship God. It is not where but how you worship Him that is important. Our Lord answered her very adequately. God is a Spirit. You don't have to run to this place or that place. True worshipers worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Joh 4:25-27 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." And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

4:25 As the woman of Samaria had listened to the Lord, she had been made to think of the coming Messiah. The Holy Spirit of God had stirred up within her a desire that the Messiah should come. She expressed the confidence that when He did come, He would teach all things. In this statement, she showed a very clear understanding of one of the great purposes of Christ's coming.

Do we have the same confidence in the second coming that this woman had almost 2,000 years ago?

The expression “Messiah ... who is called Christ” is simply an explanation of the fact that these two words mean the same. Messiah is the Hebrew word for God's Anointed One; Christ is the Greek equivalent. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

4:26 What Jesus said to her was literally, “I who speak to you am.” The word He is not a part of the original text. Although the sentence is clearer with the word He included, yet there is a deep significance to the actual words of the Lord Jesus. In using the words “I am” He used one of the names which God applied to Himself in the OT. He said, “I AM is speaking to you,” or, in other words, “Jehovah is the one who is speaking to you.” He was announcing to her the startling truth that the One who was speaking to her was the Messiah for whom she had been looking and that He was also God Himself. The Jehovah of the OT is the Jesus of the NT. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

John 4 – The Woman at the Well

4:27 When the disciples returned from Sychar they found Jesus talking with this woman. They were surprised that He would speak with her, for she was a Samaritan. Also, they could possibly discern that she was a sinful woman. Yet no one asked the Lord what he was seeking from the woman or why He was talking with her. It has been well said, “The disciples marvel that He talks with the woman; they would have been better employed wondering that He talked with them!” – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Are we like the disciples, judging from a far based on perceptions and appearance? You can almost hear the tone in the question, “why are You talking to her?” (It screams the Gospel should be reserved for our kind only!)

Joh 4:28-30 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

The woman then left her waterpot! It symbolized the various things in life which she had used in an effort to satisfy her deepest longings. They had all failed. Now that she had found the Lord Jesus, she had no more need for the things which had formerly been so prominent in her life.

She not only **left her waterpot** but she **went her way into the city**. Whenever a person is saved, he or she immediately begins to think of others who are in need of the water of life. J. Hudson Taylor said, “Some are jealous to be successors of the Apostles; I would rather be a successor of the Samaritan woman, who, while they went for food, forgot her waterpot in her zeal for souls.” – Believers’ Bible Commentary

The woman had turned in faith to the Lord Jesus, so now she rushes into the city to tell others. Notice that she doesn't talk to the women because she's not on speaking terms with them. Some of those men were involved with her, and they are very much interested in knowing whether He could tell all things that she had done. So here is what happened. - McGee

Her witness was simple but effective. She invited all the townspeople to come and see a Man who told her all things that she ever did. Also, she aroused within their hearts the possibility that this Man might indeed be the Messiah. In her own mind, there could be little doubt because He had already announced Himself to her as the Christ. But she raised the question in their minds so that they might go to Jesus and find out for themselves. Doubtless this woman was well known in the village for her sin and shame. How startling it must have been for the people to see her standing in the public places now, bearing public witness to the Lord Jesus Christ! The testimony of the woman was effective. The people of the village left their homes and their work and began to go out to find Jesus. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Have you ever had an authentic encounter with Christ? Based on the Samaritan woman’s experience, how can you tell if people have had an encounter with Christ?