

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42

*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

John 4:24

The woman at the well in Samaria has much to teach us. We will hit the highlights and concentrate on a few points. There are some wonderful doctrinal truths that we could explore; but since we are concentrating on the woman of our study today, we will simply touch on them. First, let's look at a little background about Samaria.

Samaria

Samaria is the mid-section of Israel, and Shechem (Sychar in Jesus' time) was a city in it. Jacob spent time near Shechem and even bought a piece of land there. A tradition said that Jacob dug a well there. Samaria and Shechem were the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel after the split following Solomon's rule. The godless kings of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) established pagan idol worship as their religion, but claimed that they were following the God of the Bible because they held to the first five books of the Old Testament – with changes. They intermarried with various peoples of other nations, and were later considered “half-breeds” by the Jews.

In Jesus' time the Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Each claimed to be the true religion. Jesus would cut through it all as He talked with the woman at the well. This unnamed woman was religious but worldly; and immoral, confused and hungry for truth. She was rejected by the Jews, and her own people also shunned her. This is one reason why the end of our story is so remarkable.

John 4:1-42

John 4:1-4 Why did Jesus go through Samaria? Jews tried to avoid going through Samaria to get from central Israel to Northern Israel, and would go way around. But Jesus went straight through and even stopped in its capital mid-day. Very unusual.

Verse 4 *must needs* = compelled – Jesus was following His Father's instructions, and this was part of God's plan. It was very early in Jesus' ministry. He was on the way from Jerusalem, where the leadership had already rejected Him, to His great ministry in Galilee. AND He had an “appointment” with a spiritually hungry woman who would be a part of bringing the Gospel to Samaria, which was considered off limits for Jews. This showed the world that none were off limits to God.

John 4:5-9 Unusual events.

Verse 7 The woman came to the well at noon because she could not come in the evening with the others of her city. She was an outcast. We will see why.

Verse 9 Then a Jewish man showed up in Samaria at noon. And He spoke to the woman. Each of the underlined were very unusual.

This got her attention.

John 4:10-38 Jesus ministered to the woman.

This was a progression in faith for her. This shows us that Jesus ministers to each individual as he/she will receive.

Much “ground work” in the Word was laid before she “suddenly” believed. Isn’t it the same for us, and for those to whom we minister the Word?

Verses 10-12 She did not understand because of her confused religion.

The key question is in verse 12 about “Father Jacob.” This is the result of her confused religion.

Verses 13-15 She did not understand. She thought He was talking about physical water.

Verses 16-19 Now Jesus showed her her sinful state and also was beginning to show her that He is God. Here we see why she was shunned by the people of her city.

Verses 19-20 A prophet is one who speaks for God. She was beginning to believe. The woman was talking about where to worship. Jesus would speak to her about Who to worship and how.

Verses 21-24 Jesus then gave her His wonderful explanation of salvation, faith and worship.

Verses 25-26 Now her faith was more specific. Since she was now ready to hear it, He revealed Himself to her as God – “*I Am*”. Here Jesus answered the woman’s key question – are you greater than “Father Jacob.” And His answer was “yes” beyond anything she could have hoped for before He came along.

Jesus had said that salvation is of the Jews, and then told the woman some strong truths. This would have offended anyone who was not ready to receive salvation. She was ready! This was the moment that she “suddenly” believed.

Verses 27-30 The disciples asked, “why did you talk with her?” So that she would believe, as they would soon see.

Verses 31-38 Jesus’ words to the disciples and the events taking place answered all questions about Why now? Why here? How?

A harvest is coming – be ready! And don’t we hear that now in our troubled times? Be ready – sow and reap.

The woman even left her waterpot there to rush back to the city to tell others. And they heard her.

Verses 39-42 The woman was used by God to bring a harvest of souls. The way and place where it happened showed that it was a move of God. God is no respecter of persons, offering salvation to all. The men of the city understood this, which is seen by what they said: *And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* (verse 42)

We see this same truth, that salvation is offered to the whole world, in Acts 10:34-35 *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

### Conclusion

We have learned much from this unnamed woman. She was a shunned outcast who would have been considered “unsavable.” Yet as Jesus spoke the Words of Life to her, she saw that she was a sinner, saw who could take away her sin, and then believed unto salvation. AND she immediately became an evangelist. We can see the progression in her faith by what she called Jesus: Jew (v.9), sir (v.11,19), prophet (v.19), and then Messiah (26).

This example reminds us of how we came to salvation. It is also important to remember these things as we minister salvation to others.

Several years later, as the Gospel was spread abroad through the early church, Philip went to Samaria. There was a great move of God there – a harvest of souls and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As the first believer there, this unnamed woman helped to make it possible. Jesus had ministered the Word to her, she was saved, and she spread the Word of Jesus to all those there. Indeed the harvest of more souls was ready by the time Philip went there.

May we, too, go where God leads us and give the Word of Life to those needing salvation.

*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.*

John 4:35