

## Living Water

### Introduction

Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well in [John 4](#) is one of the most memorable scenes in John's Gospel.

I believe that one of the reasons for this is due to the number of profound resonances that John has placed in this scene.

Jesus meets this Samaritan woman at a well.

Abraham's most trusted servant met Rebekah at a well when Abraham sent him to find a bride for Isaac.

Jacob met Rachel at a well (and Jesus is at Jacob's well)

And Moses met Zipporah at a well in Midian.

When a prominent biblical figure meets a woman at well it typically means a wedding isn't too far away.

But John's Gospel does with the Samaritan woman what it does with most of Jesus' significant encounters with women.

The *woman* isn't named, she's just referred to as "woman".

This is how Jesus refers to his own mother at the wedding in Cana, "Woman, my time has not yet come."

It's also how he speaks to his mother from the cross in [John 19](#), "Woman, behold your son."

And, it is how Jesus addresses Mary Magdalene in the garden after the Resurrection, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

This isn't because Jesus is being disrespectful toward women in John's Gospel.

Quite the opposite!

These women stand in for "the woman" in a symbolic way.

These women symbolically represent Eve, "the mother of all living, and the Church, "the bride of Christ".

And, in the Bible, there is a strong connection between women and water.

And this doesn't only have to do with the well.

Biblically, water is a source of life and deliverance.

And women are the source of life for all humanity, who deliver children through a trial of water and blood.

It is for this reason that John's Gospel presents these parallel themes of women and water; and this morning I want to focus on water.

Of all the gospels, John's gospel is most interested in water.

In [John 2](#), Jesus turns water into wine

In [John 3](#), Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and of the Spirit.

In [John 7](#), at the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus declares, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

In [John 19](#), water and blood flow from the pierced side of Jesus.

And of course, here in [John 4](#), Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman of "Living Water".

It is these "Living Waters" that I want to highlight in this morning's sermon.

And I'd like to do so by making two points:

1. Living Waters Cleanse
2. Living Waters Glorify

Living Waters Cleanse

Old Testament Background

Water possesses a broad sweep of symbolic meanings in the Old Testament.

In [Genesis 1](#) water is the first created substance that is mentioned, and all else comes from these primordial waters.

Water is the source of all life and without water things will eventually die.

However, the Old Testament also describes water in threatening language.

In the OT, the waters are a chaotic and untamed substance that threatens to overwhelm the life that has come from it, that is unless God tames the waters and assigns them a boundary.

In the Old Testament, Yahweh is portrayed as the creator and tamer of the life-giving but dangerous waters.

## **The Flood**

Perhaps the single most revealing event in the Old Testament that highlights these themes is that of the Flood.

[Genesis 7:11](#) states that "the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened."

The boundaries that God had placed on the "tehôm" (which is literally the "deep uncontrollable and chaotic sea") are burst open and the earth is submerged back into the waters from whence it originally came.

But it is also in the Flood where we begin to see that waters are cleansing.

[Genesis 6](#) explains why the flood needed to happen.

The earth had become corrupt and polluted in God's sight.

The earth was filled with violence and corruption and, in response, God tells Noah that he will send the flood.

The Flood cleanses and purifies the earth.

### **Levitical Purification**

This cleansing nature of water continues to play itself out in the purifications rites of the Levitical system.

Throughout the Levitical system, persons could become unclean or impure for various reasons.

And, most often, someone is purified by water.

There were numerous ritual washings and sprinklings of water that made the "unclean" "clean" or made someone "holy" for levitical service.

Interestingly enough, there were a couple forms of uncleanness that called for cleansing in fresh, running water (or "living water").

#### Cleansing Living Water

This Old Testament background isn't simply necessary for understanding [John 4](#), it is necessary for understanding the way the New Testament speaks of cleansing more generally.

The NT teaches that, when *you* come to Jesus, *he* cleanses you of all your sins and uncleanness.

This is especially present in the way the New Testament describes baptism.

In [Acts 22:16](#) Paul recounts his own conversion and how Ananias told him, "Rise and be baptized *and wash away your sins*, calling on his name."

Then in [Titus 3:5](#), a passage cited in the Westminster Standards' teaching on baptism, Paul writes that Jesus, "saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by *the washing* of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,"

And finally, in [1 Peter 3:21](#), Peter, speaking about the Flood, states "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,"

Waters cleanse and baptism is a picture and conduit of this cleansing.

As we consider the cleansing of the Samaritan woman you must consider *your own* cleansing by Christ.

He has made you clean.

## The Cleansing of the Samaritan Woman

These ideas of cleansing should be your mind as we consider the Samaritan woman.

She is unclean and she needs Jesus' cleansing.

The first clue of this is that the woman *is a Samaritan* and, as verse 9 states, Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

After the Exile in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, there is conflict between the Jews returning from Exile in Babylon and the Samaritans who opposed the rebuilding of the Temple.

This led to a long history of conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans.

But, to focus on our passage of [John 4](#), this Samaritan woman is being presented as unclean.

She's unclean in some measure *because* she's a Samaritan and she's unclean relationally.

### The Six Men and the Seventh Man

In verses 16-18 Jesus reveals that this Samaritan woman has had five husbands but is now with a man who is not her husband.

Often, people understand this to mean that the Samaritan woman is a "loose woman".

But it is far more likely that she is a type of the mistreated woman described in the divorce legislation of [Deuteronomy 24](#).

[Deuteronomy 24](#) forbids a man who has previously divorced a woman from taking her again to be his wife if she has remarried and been divorced again.

What's going on here [John 4](#) is that you have a woman who is being taken advantage of by men and their ability to marry and divorce her.

This was a problem that Jesus was likely speaking to in his day.

Women need the protection of men and are therefore vulnerable.

Men could take advantage of this by taking a woman in marriage and receiving her dowry only to divorce her after a time and do the same thing with another woman.

This woman is presented as a victim of 6 men who are taking advantage of her vulnerability.

And because of this she is in need of cleansing.

Jesus shows up at the sixth hour of the day to a woman who has been made unclean by six men.

But Jesus shows up as the *seventh man*, the true husband, who will cleanse her by the washing of water with the word, for he is the word made flesh.

But the seventh and true husband will not only cleanse his bride, he will also glorify her!

Living Waters Glorify

In the Bible living waters don't simply cleanse what is disordered, they also restore things to their original purpose.

And, beyond this, they glorify things beyond their original state.

This is the second point, Living Waters Glorify.

But, to get this, you must understand two things:

First, as I've already alluded to, women are associated with water in the Bible.

And, second, you must understand what the Bible teaches about men and women.

### Women and Water

I've already noted the connection between wells in the Bible and women.

But much of the connection between water and women in the Bible is due to the fact that both water and women are generative.

In the Bible, the Land is feminine.

And, when God waters the land, life comes forth from the land.

Further, in the Bible, passing through water is described as a birth.

This is alluded to in several places, but the most obvious place is in the Exodus.

Israel is *delivered* (birthing language) through the *waters* of the Red Sea (blood).

This is a rich and complex theme woven throughout the Scriptures but the gist you are to understand is this connection between water and women.

### Protological Man and Eschatological Woman

But the second thing to understand is something the Bible teaches about men and women.

In the Bible *man* is *protological* and *woman* is *eschatological*.

What this means is that man comes first and initiates and woman comes second and finishes or glorifies.

Woman is ordered toward the man's mission.

Adam needs Eve to accomplish his mission.

But, in this, Eve is the *glory* of man.

This is what Paul has in mind when he states in [1 Corinthians 11](#) that woman is the glory of man.

Woman takes what is given her by man and brings it into a greater glory.

This is true at the deepest of levels of reality.

Remember, the land is feminine.

When you give the land a bare seed this feminine land brings forth beauty and fruit.

The same is true in the human relationship between man and woman in the bringing forth of children.

The woman brings forth life and glory in her body.

And this entire process is associated with water and blood.

Man and Woman in [John 4](#)

If you bring all this to bear on [John 4](#) much comes to light.

When Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well he is meeting a type of the bride.

She stands in for the Church, the bride of Christ.

Jesus, the bridegroom, cleanses her with his living water and blood.

But she also becomes within herself a well of living water welling up to eternal life.

You see this in the Samaritan woman.

After her interaction with Jesus, she goes and bears witness to Jesus before her whole town, and they come out to Jesus.

All of this connects with the Spirit.

Jesus is the one who has the Spirit without measure, and as people come to him, they become Spirit-bearers.

They well up with the life giving water of the Spirit, which flows out into the world to cleanse and glorify.

As the bride of Christ, the Church, receives the living water of the Spirit, she not only possesses eternal life herself, but she also becomes a source of eternal life unto others.

The Samaritan woman shows us what the Church *is*: a possessor of and source of eternal life for the world.

But in all this we also see that bride is glorified.

The bride is ordered toward the bridegroom but the bride is the bridegroom's glory.

This is the image we see at the end of the Scriptures.

The city of New Jerusalem descending from heaven as a spotless and glorious bride.

This glory does not compete with the glory of Jesus the bridegroom, but is rather a display of his glory.

Jesus' glory is on display in the spotless glory of his bride!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!