

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Ch. 4

Written in late 1st century A.D. by the last *survivor* of Jesus' twelve disciples, John is the one closest to Jesus during His three-year teaching stint on earth.

The paranoid Pharisees are becoming uncomfortably aware of Jesus' growing fame. To avoid a rumble, Jesus hits the road for home up north. Opting not to take the five-day-long, desert detour *around* Samaria, He goes *through* this land that's off-limits to Jews. Samaria had long been a center of idolatry. In 721 B.C. King Sargon II of Assyria captured 27,000 of its citizens, terminating the northern kingdom. Assyria replaced Samaria's exiles with its own people, fusing religions.

Alexander captured it in 331 B.C., then destroyed it. Late in the 1st century B.C. King Herod revived the city which dates back to the early Bronze Age. Jews saw Samaritans as heretics. **Let's read ch. 4.**

DISCUSS:

Double Jeopardy: Samaria and a Woman

Engaging a scarlet-lettered Samaritan woman in conversation, Jesus displays God's love for all races, genders and social positions. *Where* these two meet is significant. Jacob's Well is at the base of Mt. Gerizim. 1,700 years earlier Jacob (whose name God changed to *Israel*), the founder of the Jewish faith and father of the "twelve tribes of Israel," dug this well to sustain his family, keeping alive the very roots of the Jewish race.

Mt. Gerizim was the Samaritans' sacred mountain where they'd built a temple to rival the one in Jerusalem. Gerizim symbolized the two groups' differing views of God and the Scriptures. Here, where two belief systems collide, Jesus chooses to bridge a religio-cultural chasm, introducing Himself as "the Water of life."

Tired and thirsty and showing His humanity, Jesus stops to chill at Jacob's Well. Striking a blow against injustice, He speaks with a person despised by Samaritans and Jews alike. Jewish law wouldn't permit a rabbi to talk to even his own wife or sister in public. But Jesus ignores political correctness to introduce "living water." She takes Jesus' water metaphor literally.

With this unnamed, notoriously immoral woman, Jesus raises the question of sin -- just as He'd done in ch. 3 with Nicodemus, a highly moral, religious big shot. Jesus says He alone can satisfy our thirst for purpose, stability and fulfillment. One sip of this Living Water -- taken by placing our personal faith, fortunes and future in Christ -- will give us what the Bible calls *eternal life*.

The woman admits having what really is a thirst for true, lasting love, and asks for Christ's amazing elixir. Men had left her empty. With her life on "empty," and she's ready for Truth.

By admitting that we're sinners who need a Savior, we, by faith, drink the Water of life and receive God's total forgiveness for all our sins -- past, present and future.

Touched by Jesus' insight, the woman acknowledges Him as a prophet, but, like us, she tries to steer the conversation away from her and onto religious minutiae. Not taking the bait, Jesus says "true worship" isn't about buildings, icons, robes or rituals. It's about letting God's Spirit take up residence in our hearts.

Jesus tells her He's the Messiah, putting the lie to any who insist He never claimed to be God. Hearing this, and having just experienced His gentle, heart-searching grace, she races into town, becoming the first evangelist to the Gentiles! A social leper becomes the aqueduct to bring spiritual life to an entire city.

She tells everyone about this man who'd told her all about her innermost self. The she winsomely asks them, "Could this be the Christ?" A question you and I also must answer.

DISCUSS:

“I’m home!”

Jesus had taken His message to Jerusalem, searching for kinder audiences. News of His homecoming reaches Capernaum where a government official, a nobleman, is grief-stricken over his deathly ill son. He seeks the best care. It just so happens God is nearby!

He hustles to Cana and asks the Messiah to return with him to heal his dying son, implying that Jesus, who'd *spoken* the universe into existence, had to actually be *with* the boy to pull this off. Jesus' response is shocking, saying that supernatural signs are NOT the point; *believing* in Him is.

Jesus wants to do more than heal the lad; He wants to transform his dad's life into one marked by a strong, lasting faith in Him.

With this second miracle Jesus graphically demonstrates that He's both the Lord of nature (turning water into aged wine) -- and the Lord of Life (authority over disease and death). He proves we can trust Him with everything. He reveals to us what the Father is like.

DISCUSS:

The Samaritan woman and the nobleman end their search when they meet Jesus. He brings meaning and fullness to their lives. In writing about these real people, John confronts us with the fact that JESUS IS GOD, something each of us must accept or reject. There's no middle ground.

If you've realized that Jesus, not you, has all the answers, pray, "God, I believe You love me, that You sent Your Son Jesus to pay for all my sins, and that You want to live right inside me. Come into my life right now. Thank You, Father. I'm asking this in Jesus' name.

His Deal

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