

The Woman at the Well: Christian Satisfaction, Worship and Service

John 4:1-42

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Jesus Makes Room for John in Judea (4:1-3)

CHAPTER 4

¶ When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus makes and baptises more disciples than John **v.1** Once the Pharisees learned of the proportion of the Lord's ministry compared to John's, they were going to use it to stir up rivalry between the disciples of the Lord and of John. John 3:22-36 is an example of the rivalry that the Pharisees' wanted to gender, but also of how the spirit of grace in John put an end to it.

2 (however, Jesus himself did not baptise, but his disciples), **v.2**

There are a number of possible reasons why the Lord did not baptise personally. First, by refraining from baptizing Himself, the Lord headed off any occasion for the Pharisees to stir up rivalry between His disciples and John's. Secondly, the disciples viewed the Lord (and baptized to Him) as the *Messiah* of Israel; but Jesus knew from the beginning that He must suffer and die as the *Son of man* (broader title). True Christian baptism would be after the ascension, and "unto" His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). This could be another reason why the Lord refrained from baptizing personally. Thirdly, and admittedly less likely, it could be that Jesus wanted to avoid a hierarchy of those who were baptized. It would be natural for those who were baptized by Jesus personally to think more highly of themselves than those baptized by Peter, for example. Baptism is about the person we are baptized to, not about the actual baptizer.

[3 he left Judaea and went away again unto Galilee.](#) **v.3** Even for Jesus to stay in the vicinity of Judea would have put Him beside John as a kind of party leader in men's eyes, similar in principle to the error of the Corinthians who coupled the name of Christ with their party leaders (1 Cor. 1:12). This would never do. So Jesus departed from Judea and went into *Galilee*, which is where His public ministry would properly begin.

The Woman at the Well: Christian Satisfaction and Worship (4:4-30)

A degraded Gentile woman is just the object that the Lord would use to teach grace. Jesus often [taught by contrast](#). He reveals to her:

1. *The greatest heavenly blessing* - the indwelling Spirit of God (Eph. 1:13), which is the power to enjoy eternal life.
2. *The greatest heavenly privilege* - worshipping the Father in spirit and truth.

Naturally, we would have thought that the Lord would use Nicodemus who was "*the teacher*" in Israel to teach the privileges of Christian worship, but instead He used this degraded Gentile woman who could not lay claim to any true worship. On the other hand, we would have thought that the Lord would use this degraded Gentile woman to teach man's need of new birth, but instead Jesus used the most upright of the Pharisees, and thereby shows that even *he* needed to be born again! "*For my thoughts are not your*

thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah" (Isa. 55:8).

A Thirsty Sinner and a Thirsty Savior Meet (vv.4-8)

4 *And he must needs pass through Samaria.* **v.4** It says that Jesus "*must needs go*" through Samaria. The reason was not merely geographical. His love brought Him here. The direct route to Galilee lay through Samaria, but due to the racial divide, Jews were known to go out around through Perea across Jordan to bypass Samaria (see [map](#) below). The reason was love. The grace of God imposed upon Him a path that brought Him to a particular city (v.4) at a particular time (v.5). The Lord Jesus is deeply interested in individuals, and will involve Himself in the details of our lives.

5 *He comes therefore to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near to the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph.* **v.5** There is no coincidence to these details. Sychar, now called 'Askar', lies half a mile north of the well. It was a small town, the name meaning "*town of the sepulcher*", and Joseph's tomb being about one hundred yards east of it. It was adjoined to the land which Jacob gave to Joseph (Gen. 33:19; 47:22; Josh. 24:32). The Lord Jesus is about to fulfill in picture the type of Joseph as "*a fruitful bough by a well; his branches shoot over the wall*" (Gen. 49:22).

6 *Now a fountain of Jacob's was there; Jesus therefore, being wearied with the way he had come, sat just as he was at the fountain. It was about the sixth hour.* **v.6** We find something beautiful here; Jesus was "*wearied with his journey*". He was fully a man. He passed through all the circumstances we pass through. He knew what it was to be thirsty and weary. This leg of the journey was about 20 miles! The time is recorded as "*the sixth hour*", and since John reckons time as the Romans did, this is our 6:00 AM. It was an unusual time to draw water, and it would seem that the woman who came at this time did so to be alone on account of her reputation.

Jesus as a humbled man. In this account, it is remarkable that Jesus is not only presented in His official character (Messiah) but as a humble man, weary and thirsty from His journey. Jesus walked an estimated 3,125 miles during His three years of public ministry. He waited a long time, and took a verbal beating from this woman, but He never got His drink. It is Christ in this character that feeds our souls while we pass through this wilderness pathway. In John 6, the Lord presents the truth of this to the Jews, saying, "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven*" (John 6:51). Jesus showed that, as a man on the earth, He was the antitype of the manna that fed Israel. We can and must feed on Christ in this way, occupying ourselves with Him in His humility and perfect grace. It was Jesus in this

character that occupied the mind of J.G. Bellett at the end of his life; [see excerpt](#). This “manna” is one of the three spiritual foods we are to feed on; the passover, the manna, and the old corn of the land ([read more...](#)).

7 [A woman comes out of Samaria to draw water. Jesus says to her, Give me to drink](#) **v.7** Jesus Himself made all the water in the universe, and here He was thirsty. He would never perform a miracle to satisfy His own need. He waited on the Father to satisfy His needs. Every miracle He did was for the blessing of others. Jesus was here for her salvation... *“Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings...that publisheth salvation.”* (Isa. 52:7). Yet the Lord says to her, *“Give me to drink”*, showing that He wanted to be refreshed by fellowship with His creature.

8 [\(for his disciples had gone away into the city that they might buy provisions\)](#). **v.8** The Lord Jesus was alone too. A lonely sinner and a lonely Saviour meet at this well. The Lord begins a work in the soul of this woman, through many oppositions, resulting on the salvation of her soul. The Lord works, not by doing an external miracle before her eyes, but simply by the Son of God speaking in Divine love. No sign is needed, and her conscience and heart are reached! The salvation of this woman and the teaching of Christ surrounding it speaks of Christianity.

Five Objections are raised by the woman in the course of the interaction. Each one of them is met by the Lord in perfect wisdom. We see the Lord working as a master with souls. The five objections:

- 1st Objection: The Racial Divide Between Jew and Gentile (vv.9-10)... *“I’m too far away from God.”*
- 2nd Objection: Doubting The Greatness of Our Lord (vv.11-14)... *“God isn’t able to save me.”*
- 3rd Objection: Living Water Can’t Solve My Real-World Problems (vv.15-19)... *“My problems are too big for a spiritual solution.”*
- 4th Objection: We Have Our Own System of “Worship” (vv.20-24)... *“There are many religions, who’s to say your religion is right?”*
- 5th objection: Nothing but a Person Can Satisfy My Needs (vv.25-30)... *“If only God would speak to me personally, then I would believe.”*

The Lord graciously treats all her objections as “requests for more information”. This is a good lesson for evangelists.

1st Objection: The Racial Divide Between Jew and Gentile (vv.9-10)

The Jews and the Samaritans. Why did the Jews have “*no dealings*” with the Samaritans? 2 Kings 17 tells us that, after the ten tribes were taken away by Assyria, Gentiles were transplanted into the northern kingdom. They worshipped idols, so the Lord sent lions among them to make them fear Him. The result was a hybrid worship of Jehovah and idolatry carried out in Mt. Gerazim. They worshipped the Lord out of superstition and fear. The Jews held racist hatred for them and tried to justify it with scripture.

9 The Samaritan woman therefore says to him, How dost thou, being a Jew, ask to drink of me who am a Samaritan woman? for Jews have no intercourse with Samaritans. **v.9 Objection #1.** “*I’m too far away from God.*” The Samaritan woman’s first objection reveals that the natural heart of man *does not understand grace*. A racial divide existed between the Jews and Samaritans. She had expected Him to totally ignore her, as Jews did generally. The Lord was that fruitful bough by a well; His branches were shooting over the wall of racial dissention to meet her needs. She could not comprehend grace.

10 Jesus answered and said to her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. **v.10 Reply #1.** The Lord’s reply was not a direct answer to her question, but it addressed her heart. If only she knew two things: “*the gift of God*” - if she knew God as the giving God He is, His heart just longing to bless, and “*who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink*” - if she knew the glorious Person who was speaking to her in such gentle grace, then she would have asked Him to satisfy the need of her lonely, thirsty soul, and He would have given her “*living water*”. Living water is water that satisfies in a spiritual sense. It speaks of the enjoyment of eternal life by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:2; Rev. 22:1).¹

2nd Objection: Doubting the Greatness of Our Lord (vv.11-14)

11 The woman says to him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou the living water? **12** Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle? **vv.11-12 Objection #2.** “*God isn’t able to meet my needs.*” Her first question (v.11) was more of an honest question. Her second question (v.12) was an insult. She assumed that

the living water would come from the well. The Lord didn't have rope or bucket... she couldn't see how He could bring up the water. She then questioned the Lord's greatness. The greatest person to her (Jacob) was one who could provide a well of physical water that could only satisfy him, his household, and his livestock. Did this travelling Man really think He was able to do more than Jacob? This was an insult, but the Lord passed over it in grace. He did not tell her how much greater than Jacob He really was, because He knew instead how to lead her along to find this out for herself.

13 Jesus answered and said to her, *Every one who drinks of this water shall thirst again; v.13 Reply #2.* The Lord didn't answer either of her questions; Instead, His answer gave her what her heart really needed. Physical water, no matter how pure, may refresh for a time, but thirst will come again. God has ordered it to be this way for the creature so true satisfaction can not be had apart from God.

14 *but whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life. v.14* But when one is given to drink into the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), the refreshment never diminishes. Christ gives the Holy Ghost to the believer to be in us an always-fresh fountain of Divine enjoyment! It is by the Spirit that we enjoy eternal life, by the "*communion of the Holy Spirit*" (2 Cor. 13:14) that we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is precisely this character of life that the Lord Jesus communicated to the disciples in John 20:22 when, "*he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" It is to this character of life that Jesus referred when He spoke of "*life more abundantly*" (John 10:10).

The springing fountain. There are [seven figures](#) of the Spirit of God used in John's gospel. The word "well" should be translated "*fountain*", and has the thought of a geyser, which springs up of its own accord with "inboard" power. The Spirit of God, in the aspect of the fountain, is the internal source of satisfaction and joy in the believer, which results in worship. The fullness of this could not be known until the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent down (Acts 2). We read in John 7:39 that "*the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*"

3rd Objection: Living Water Can't Solve My Real-World Problems (vv.15-19)

15 *The woman says to him, Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst nor come here to*

draw. v.15 Objection #3. “*My problems are too big for a spiritual solution.*” The woman stated her third objection as a form of sarcasm. She was as much as saying, “if your living water can solve my physical thirst so I can stop making this 6:00 AM trek to the well, then I’ll take it.” She did not believe that the Lord could actually fill and satisfy her heart. She was attracted to this man, but His words were still not making a serious impression.

16 Jesus says to her, Go, call thy husband, and come here. v.16 Reply #3. This is the *critical turning point*. In order for her soul to be won for God, He must shine light upon her *conscience*. The Lord brought up the subject of her moral state, drawing her into the light. The words “*Go call thy husband*” were for her *conscience*; the words “*come hither*” were for her *heart*. He wasn’t casting her out, He wanted her company. Jesus is the manifestation of the heart of God; grace and truth, light and love. Love takes away what the light exposes.

17 The woman answered and said, I have not a husband. Jesus says to her, Thou hast well said, I have not a husband; 18 for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom now thou hast is not thy husband: this thou hast spoken truly vv.17-18 She replied with half the truth, trying to hide the full truth. It was important that not only “*grace*” (replies #1 & #2) but “*truth*” also (reply #3) should enter her ears for her to be saved. Jesus exposed the evil, fallen, depraved state of her soul. She had been through five husbands in her search for satisfaction, drawing her into lower and lower depths of sin. She was currently living common-law with a man. This made the Lord Jesus the seventh man in her life. If you have tried to find love and failed, there is a man you need to meet. There will never be an eighth man, for Jesus will fill your heart!

19 The woman says to him, Sir, I see that thou art a prophet. v.19 The Word touched her conscience, and the immediate response was to identify the Lord as a *prophet*. Prophecy has several different characteristics. Sometimes it is foretelling events, and other times it is that class of ministry which reaches the conscience. It may result in edification, exhortation, or comfort (1 Cor. 14:3). In every case, prophecy is a word from God for the time, and it brings the soul into the presence of God. We see this character in the Lord’s reply in vv.16-18. Her heart may have been touched before v.16, but not her conscience until the Lord (who was “that Prophet”) spoke to her in this special capacity. After this, she began making real progress in her soul, because her conscience had been reached. Her objections from this point on take on a different tone. They are less scornful and insulting.

A progression is seen in this woman’s apprehension of the Person of our Lord through the chapter. She sees Him as:

- A Jew (v.9) - initially views Him with disdain
- A prophet (v.19) - knows He has touched her conscience
- The Messiah (v.29) - knows Him as the object of prophecy
- The Savior of the world (v.42) - knows Him as Savior.

4th Objection: We Have Our Own System of “Worship” (vv.20-24)

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where one must worship. **v.20 Objection #4.** “There are many religions, who’s to say your religion is right?” She next tried to change the subject! Whenever the conscience is pricked about sin, the natural response is to backpedal. She was really saying, “you have your religion and I have mine, and who is to say which one is right?” How often when speaking with sinners will they interrupt to ask “what church do you go to?” It is a way of undercutting the spoken word, by making the voice of God just one of many “voices” in this world. The Samaritans had their own system of worship. They worshiped in “*this mountain*”, referring to mount Gerizim. The Jews worshiped in Jerusalem. Even the way she said “*ye say*” was calculated to cast religion as a matter of relative opinion, not of absolute fact.

vv.21-24 Four great differences between Judaistic and Christian worship:

1. A change in the place of worship (v.21a)
2. A change in the relationship with the Person they worshiped (v.21b)
3. A change in the character of worship (vv.22-23a)
4. A change in the attitude of the worshipper (v.23b)

21 Jesus says to her, Woman, believe me, *the hour is coming when ye shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father.* **v.21 Reply #4.** The Lord’s response was beautiful. If it were me, I might have pushed back against her changing the subject. But the Lord knew He had gone far enough (see the evident repentance in v.29). Instead, the Lord spoke to her of true worship, and gave four characteristics which we too must “*believe*” if we are to worship rightly today. The first two changes:

1. A change in the place of worship (v.21a). In Christianity, worship is no longer at a geographical place. Both the Jews and the Samaritans worshipped in physical places, and the Christian’s place of worship is not a building or a congregation, but the very presence of God, the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8-10), “*within the veil*”. We come

into His presence by simple faith. This is where we worship. God had been looking forward to this “hour” of Christian worship since the beginning of time! (See note on [seven “hours” in John’s Gospel](#)). This would put the Jewish-Samaritan dispute to rest.

*Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before the throne we prostrate fall,
And worship Thee, O God.*

2. A change in the relationship with the Person they worshiped (v.21b). Jews and even Samaritans worshipped *Jehovah*. Now it would be God as *Father*... the character of God coming forth to His children in love and grace. In Christ, we have been made to share all the relationships that Christ has, including knowing God as our Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. **23a** But *the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth*; **vv.22-23a** The third change:

1. A change in the character of worship (vv.22-23a). The Samaritans’ worship was unintelligent. They had some mixture of idolatry and worshipping *Jehovah*. But the Jews at least knew they worshipped a moral lawgiver, although this was still a very limited revelation of God. The “hour” of Christian worship had almost arrived (see note on [seven “hours” in John’s Gospel](#)). The new character of worship would be “*in spirit*” (spiritual) and “*in truth*” (according to the revelation of God). Jews worshipped with their hands (not in spirit) but they did have limited truth. The Samaritans had neither.

23b for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers. **v.23b** The fourth change:

1. A change in the attitude of the worshipper (v.23b). True worshippers are *sought* by the Father. We cannot worship from a framework of human efforts. We must bow before sovereign grace. There is a longing in the Father’s heart for intelligent, spiritual worship. He wants His creatures to refresh His heart with thoughts of His Son. The Son is seeking sinners, and the Father is seeking worshippers.

24 God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship *him* in spirit and

truth. v.24 Why is true worship “in spirit”? It is not capital “S”, as in the Spirit of God; although we do worship by the Holy Spirit (Phil. 3:3). True worship is not generated through the body or the soul (emotions) but rather in the spirit; i.e. the part of our being which is God-conscious. It is in contrast to fleshly worship. God wants to hear the overflow of our hearts! If the heart is not engaged, it isn’t true worship. True worship comes from God and goes to God. That which is physical or strictly emotional is of human design and not true worship. However, true worship will affect the soul and produce emotion. Depending on the composure of the individual, the emotion may even affect the body; e.g. tears. This is natural and to be expected; however, we should never forget that the emotion produced is *not* worship. The Word of God is able to discern what is spiritual and what is soulish; i.e. *“the dividing asunder of soul and spirit”* (Hebrews 4:12).

What is worship? This is hard to answer definitively, but perhaps the Lord’s discourse in John 4 helps. Jesus wanted *“a drink”* from this woman. In a similar way, God wants something from His creature to refresh His heart... this is worship. The character of worship is in spirit and in truth. Worship is the overflowing of the human spirit that refreshes the heart of God. What could refresh His heart more than to hear our opinion of His Son? *“And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen”* (Gen. 45:13). And yet all of God’s thoughts about His Son are fully formed in His Word; therefore our worship is *“in truth”*.

5th objection: Nothing but a Person Can Satisfy My Needs (vv.25-30)

25 The woman says to him, *I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when “he” comes he will tell us all things.* **v.25 Objection #5.** *“If only God would speak to me personally, then I would believe.”* The Samaritan woman knew that the Messiah was coming, and that He was the One who could settle every question as to God. She wasn’t looking to a religion anymore. She was willing to admit that there is something wrong with her ecclesiastical system. It was to this point that the Pharisees came, but went no further. They thought they had hit the nail on the head when they had exposed the insufficiencies of Samaritan worship. The woman is now occupied with a man, not a system. But she did not understand that Jesus was that man. She thought the Messiah’s coming was yet future. There are some people who object to Christianity because they believe it is not direct enough. The truth is, it couldn’t be more direct than it is! The fullness of the Godhead has come down to man in the Person of the Son; the Word made flesh. What more can man want?

26 Jesus says to her, I who speak to thee am *he*. **v.26 Reply #5.** The only thing left to do was to connect the dots! This thirsty Man who had attracted her heart and touched her conscience was *Himself* the Christ! The final piece of the puzzle slid into place... her heart was full!

27 And upon this came his disciples, and wondered that he spoke with a woman; yet no one said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her? **v.27** The disciples returned and couldn't understand why the Lord was speaking to this degraded woman. The fruitful bough was reaching over the wall, and their Jewish minds could not process it. "*He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*" Still, they knew enough not to voice their consternation. We might wonder why the Lord would tell the disciples to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and not to Gentiles or Samaritans in Matt. 10:5. The answer might be the context of John's gospel. In John's gospel the rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel is assumed from the beginning, and so the Lord is seen going out to the Gentiles in a wider sphere of grace. It is not in Judea or Galilee but in *Samaria* where Jesus says "*behold the fields... already white to harvest*" (v.35). In the synoptic gospels it isn't until the end that the Lord tells the disciples to go into all nations (Matt. 28:19).

28 The woman then left her waterpot and went away into the city, and says to the men, **v.28** The expositor J.N. Darby said, "she left her waterpot and went away with a well". The *waterpot* is a symbol of daily toil; those monotonous activities that persons in bondage take up, never to find satisfaction in them. Finally, through Christ she is able to leave those things behind, because she has someone, a Person, who can satisfy her thirsty soul, and who has the power to put within her a fountain of living waters.

29 Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ? **v.29** She didn't say "come see a new religion!" but "come see a man!" Christianity is really not a religion, but a relationship with a Person. Notice that she spoke of things "*that ever I did*"; i.e. past tense. After conversion, she looked at all those things as a past life; "*and such were some of you...*" (1 Cor. 6:11). The Lord's grace toward her did not cause the Samaritan woman to present a twisted view of His Person. He had exposed her condition, but then filled her heart. This kind of testimony has power (v.30)!

30 They went out of the city and came to him. **v.30** The testimony had a great effect. This woman was so attracted to the Person of Christ as the object of her heart that others were interested in seeking Him as well. In the words of the Shulamite; "*Draw me [singular], we [plural] will run after thee*" (Song. 1:4). Attraction to Christ is infectious.

Service to the Father's Will & It's Connection with Satisfaction (4:31-38)

Using Physical examples to illustrate spiritual truth. The Lord often did this. He was the greatest teacher the world has ever heard, and He didn't shy away from object lessons:

- Physical wine (ch.2) - spiritual and lasting joy
- Physical wind (ch.3) - the Spirit of God
- Physical water (ch.4, 7) - spiritual satisfaction and refreshment
- Physical food (ch.4) - His own satisfaction
- Physical harvest (ch.4) - a harvest of souls
- Physical handicap (ch.5) - man's total depravity
- Physical bread (ch.6) - Christ as food for our souls
- Physical light (ch.8) - Christ as the Light of the world
- Physical blindness (ch.9) - man's spiritual blindness
- Physical door (ch.10) - Christ as a spiritual door
- Physical shepherd (ch.10) - a spiritual shepherd
- Physical wheat (ch.12) - Christ's death & resurrection
- Physical washing (ch.13) - moral cleansing
- Physical vine (ch.15) - Christ as the true vine (energy)

The Example of Christ's Service (v.31-34)

¶ **31** But meanwhile the disciples asked him saying, Rabbi, eat. **v.31** We see a contrast between what the disciples were doing and what the woman was doing. She went into the city to tell the citizens "come see a man!", but the disciples were frowning on the Lord's interaction with her and totally occupied with physical food. The Lord rebukes them in v.32.

32 But he said to them, I have food to eat which ye do not know. **v.32** The Lord would have them take their minds off the physical and the temporal, and see the spiritual and eternal sphere that Jesus walked in. He had "meat" or satisfaction in something that they were completely oblivious to. This is generally true of the life of Christ inside each believer.

33 The disciples therefore said to one another, Has any one brought him *anything* to

eat? **v.33** Even though they were disciples of the Lord and had walked with Him, they had no concept of this kind of food.

34 Jesus says to them, *My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work.* **v.34** What really *satisfied* the Lord and gave Him *joy* was to do the Father's will, and in this case the Father's will was for Him to speak to the woman at the well.

The Lord's "meat" or satisfaction. The Lord gives us the key to His joy. He loved to do the Father's will. From this chapter on to the cross He mentions it over and over, until finally He says, *"it is finished."* See John 4:34, John 5:30, John 6:38, John 17:4, and John 19:30. In Heb. 12:2 the cross is linked to *"the joy lying before him"*... the joy of fulfilling the expression of His devotion to the Father by going down into the dust of death in perfect obedience and submission.

Exhortations for Christian Service (vv.35-38)

35 Do not ye say, that there are yet four months and the harvest comes? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and behold the fields, for they are already white to harvest. **v.35** **The time for service is now.** In a natural harvest there is always cycle... a slow time, and later a busy time when the harvest is ready. This is not true in spiritual things. The full millennial harvest of Gentiles may be *"four months"* away, but the fields are already white for Christian evangelists! *Note:* it may be that the Lord was pointing to the Samaritans, coming across the fields in their white garments to meet Him (v.40). The Lord used the occasion to exhort His disciples to be diligent in service. The time for service is now. It is not in Judea but in *Samaria*, a city of the Gentiles.

36a He that reaps receives wages and gathers fruit unto life eternal, **v.36a** **There is a coming day of reward.** The coming day of reward is set before us as *"wages"* (2 John 8), which will be distributed at the *"bema"* seat. These rewards are spoken of now as encouragements for our service. The expression *"fruit unto life eternal"* denotes more souls brought into fellowship with God (1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

36b that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. **v.36b** **There is a certain kinship between all involved in the harvest.** The *"sowers"* were the Old Testament prophets who awakened in souls the expectation of the Lord's coming (e.g. v.25). The *"reapers"* are the New Testament evangelists who present Christ as Savior (vv.26, 42). They have a common joy in the salvation of others.

37 For in this is *verified* the true saying, It is one who sows and another who reaps. **38** I have sent you to reap that on which ye have not laboured; others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours. **vv.37-38 Reapers in the harvest need to have a humble attitude.** The twelve apostles needed to understand that they couldn't take credit for the harvest, because it was a joint effort between Old and New Testament servants. As Isaac Newton said in 1676; "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants". This knowledge will keep the Christian servant humble in spirit.

Why are we "reapers" instead of "sowers"? In Matt. 13 the Lord speaks of sowing the good seed, but generally speaking, the Christian evangelist is "*reaping*" or being used to finalize a work in a soul that was begun earlier; by the sovereign action of God in new birth, "*sowing*". In this case it was the Old Testament prophets who sowed, because the Word written by them was used to quicken their readers, and it was the New Testament evangelists who reaped! We see in Acts (especially acts 8) a tremendous reaping among the Samaritans by the apostles. There was great joy in the city of Samaria (although this was not the same city as Sychar).

"Two Days" in Samaria: The Period of Gentile Blessing (4:39-42)

Four Things That Characterize the Present Period (vv.39-42)

¶ **39** But many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him because of the word of the woman who bore witness, He told me all things that I had ever done. **v.39 Point #1: An understanding of God's grace not sacrificing His holiness.** This evangelical work which began through personal testimonies, and largely it still continues that way today. The Lord can use one insignificant sinner to work a great blessing. It began also with an understanding of grace that was not at the expense of God's holiness. The woman wanted others to be attracted to One who had exposed her own wickedness.

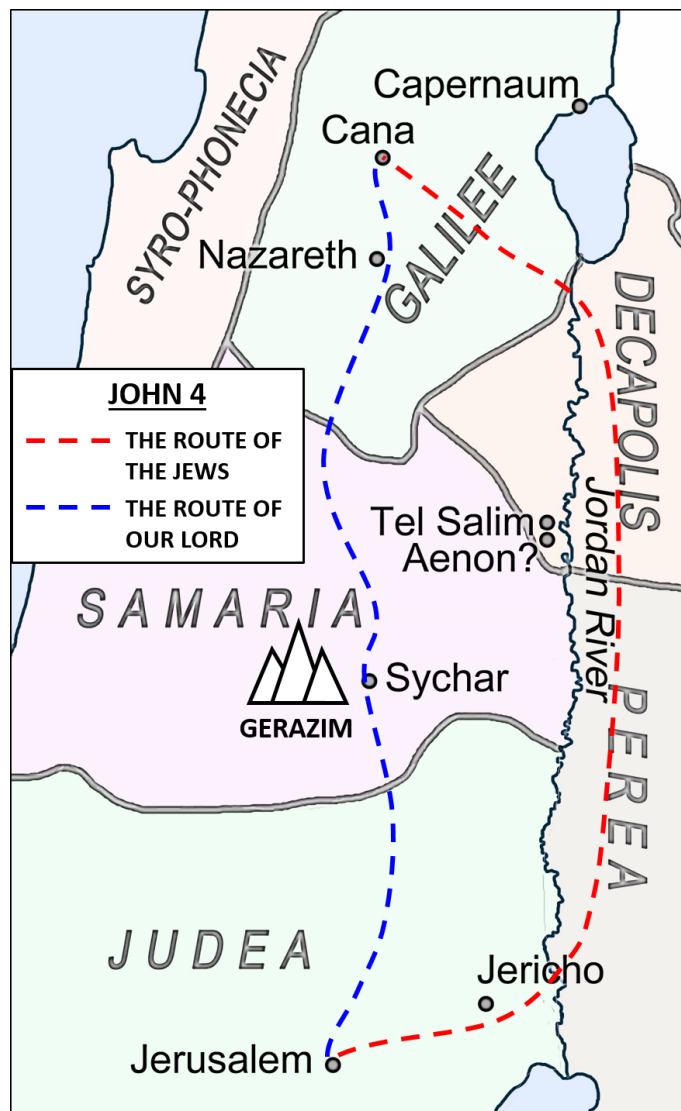
40 When therefore the Samaritans came to him they asked him to abide with them, and he abode there two days. **v.40 The period would last "two days", as adequate witness to**

God's grace. These “*two days*” represent the two thousand years in which God did “*visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name*” (Acts 15:14). Two days are often used to picture the Church period (Luke 10:35), which in terms of “*one day is as a thousand years*” (2 Pet. 3:8), speaks of roughly two-thousand years.

41 And more a great deal believed on account of his word; **42a** and they said to the woman, *It is no longer on account of thy saying that we believe, for we have heard him ourselves, vv.41-42a* **The work would grow rapidly through the spread of the Word.** What was used for the conversion of many was “*his own word*”. Nothing is mentioned about miracles; it was what Jesus said that brought about the salvation of a great multitude. This is what characterizes the Christian dispensation; many saved through the spread of the Word. The charismatic movement is *not* an improvement on this!

42b and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world. **v.42b** **The believers know Him not only as Messiah but as Savior.** What we have pictured is a time when Jesus is known, not only as the Messiah, but as the Savior of the world, because the gospel has gone out full and free to Jew and Gentile alike. A Jew would never say this. They would only see the Messiah as the one who would “*save his people*”, but the saved Gentiles have in some ways a deeper understanding of grace, and see that He is “*the savior of the world*”.

Map of the Region



Footnotes

1. Next, what this gift of God was is revealed, that is, the present enjoyment, by the power of the Holy Ghost, of eternal life in heaven. Darby, J.N. *On the Gospel of John*. Collected Writings, Vol. 33.