



MBS185

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN



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Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.
John 4:13-14

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

As recorded in the fourth chapter of John, the subject of this study, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, offers a bit of contrast to John's earlier description of another messianic encounter, that of Jesus and Nicodemus.

This study can be divided into two separate sections: the departure for Galilee and the acceptance in Samaria.

I. THE DEPARTURE FOR GALILEE - JOHN 4:1-4

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs pass through Samaria.

There were three reasons why Yeshua (Jesus) and His disciples left Judea for Galilee. First, Luke 3:19-20 gives the account of Herod Antipas' imprisonment of John the Baptist. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. John was arrested because he was preaching against the marriage of Herod Antipas to Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother, Philip. This marriage took place while Philip was still living, thus violating the Law of Moses. This incident caused Jesus to leave Judea for Galilee.

Secondly, the Pharisees were beginning to take note of Him when they heard that Yeshua was making and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist. According to verse 2, Jesus Himself was not doing the baptizing, but since He was officiating, it was credited to Him. Verse 3 points out that it was His disciples who were actually doing the baptizing.

The third reason was that this was all part of the divine plan. Verse 4 states that *he must needs pass through Samaria*. The term “must needs” means that it was necessary because it is part of God’s divine plan. Luke 4:14 adds: *Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee*. This plan of God included two things: first, He had to pass through Samaria for the encounter with the Samaritan woman; and secondly, Yeshua took the shortcut to Galilee through Samaria rather than going the longer way around, because He had another miracle to perform in Cana—the healing of the nobleman’s son (Jn. 4:46-54).

II. THE ACCEPTANCE IN SAMARIA - JOHN 4:5-42

Two overall observations should be noted before looking at some of the details. First, one of the sub-themes in John’s Gospel is that the purpose of the First Coming of the Messiah was to reveal the Father to men. Here, in five specific steps, Yeshua is revealing the Father to men: First, He reveals a new kind of life to the Samaritan woman in verses 10-14; secondly, He reveals to her something about herself in verses 15-19; thirdly, there is a revelation of what constitutes true worship in verses 20-23; fourthly, there is the revelation of the Father in verse 24; and fifth, there is a revelation of His Messiahship in verses 25-26. In this way, Jesus reveals the nature of the Father and makes one key point: to know the Father, for Samaritans as well as all others, requires coming to Him through Yeshua the Messiah.

The second observation is the growth and development of faith on the part of the woman by the four ways she refers to Jesus. First, she refers to him as *a Jew* in verse 9. Coming from a Samaritan, that would not be particularly complimentary. Secondly, she then proceeded to a higher level of respect by calling Him *Sir* in verses 11, 15, and 19. Thirdly, she calls Him *a prophet* in verse 19. From the Samaritan perspective, the next prophet after Moses was to be the *Messiah*. And fourthly, she refers to Him as the Messiah in verses 25 and 29.

Verses 5-6 set the scene: *So he comes to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph: and Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

As Jesus passed through Samaria, He came to Sychar, a town south of Shechem located between the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. According to verse 8, He had sent His disciples into town to purchase food. In the meantime, He sat by the well of Sychar to rest.

The initial encounter took place when the Samaritan woman came to the well and Yeshua asked her for a drink in verses 7-8: *There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.*

The woman was a bit surprised by His request and responded with a question in verse 9: *The Samaritan woman therefore said unto him, How is it*

that you, being a Jew, ask drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

John adds a parenthetical statement: *(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans)*. There was a Jewish saying that said, "Let my eyes never set upon a Samaritan." John's comment that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans did not mean that they had no contact with them. Rather, Jewish law forbade Jews to be benefited in any way by Samaritans. The term no dealings meant that there were to be no acts that would obligate a Jew to a Samaritan; therefore, Jews were forbidden to give anything gratis, meaning without charge to a Samaritan. They were also forbidden to receive anything gratis, meaning without payment from a Samaritan. Therefore, the Samaritan woman was surprised by Yeshua's request for some water without an offer to pay, because it obligated Him to her in some measure.

The conflict with the Samaritans began when the Jews returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian Captivity and began rebuilding the Temple. The Samaritans wished to help them (Ezra 4). However, this was not allowed because the Samaritans were a mixed breed both racially and religiously. Racially, they were descendants of Gentiles who were forced to settle in the territory of Israel by the Assyrian Empire and then intermarried with the local Jewish population that had been left behind. Religiously, they brought the worship of the various gods of the countries from which they came into the Land of Israel. To solve a problem they were facing, they adopted Jehovah as the God of the Land, without repudiating the idolatry of the other gods (II Kg. 17:25-41). As a result, it was a mixed religious system. Although by the first century, the Samaritans were monotheistic, their origins could not be forgotten. In reaction to not being allowed to help in the rebuilding of the Temple, the Samaritan did two things. First, they made Mount Gerizim, one of the two mountains overshadowing Shechem and Sychar, the holy mountain in contrast to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. Secondly, they went through the five books of Moses and eliminated any possible reference to Jerusalem. Therefore, because of the corruption of the faith, the rabbis decreed limited contact with the Samaritans.

The Samaritans, of course, had equal animosity toward the Jews; actually, more so. Frequently, they would stop Jews from passing through Samaria going toward Jerusalem. However, they never stopped Jews from passing through Samaria coming from Jerusalem toward Galilee, as Yeshua was doing here. Later, however, when He tried to pass through Samaria on the way to Jerusalem, the Samaritans stopped Him (Lk. 9:51-56; Jn. 7:10). In fact, there are records of Samaritans killing Jews who passed through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem.

In response to her question of surprise, Yeshua began a progression of

steps dealing with her need for eternal life, beginning in verse 10: *Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water.*

Normally, the term *living water* refers to running water, such as a well that taps into an underground vein of flowing water. The water in this well was probably of that kind, not like a cistern. However, Jesus was speaking in spiritual terms; He was offering spiritual living water.

The woman did not yet understand that He was speaking in spiritual terms, as revealed in verses 11-12: *The woman said unto him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then have you that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?*

She questioned Yeshua as to His motivation, but she also revealed some things about Samaritan theology. After all, no one was greater than Jacob, the one who had been responsible for that particular well. According to Samaritan theology, Jacob himself had drunk of this water at some time, leading to another question, “Was Jesus claiming to be greater than Jacob?”

Yeshua began to move again from the physical to the spiritual in verses 13-14: *Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.*

He pointed out that everyone who drinks of the water from this well will eventually get thirsty again. However, the water Jesus offered would bring permanent satisfaction, not from physical thirst, but from spiritual thirst, because having this inner well means having eternal life.

Her response indicated that she still did not quite understand the issue in verse 15: *The woman said unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.*

It is important to note here that before anyone really understands their need for a savior, they first need to see themselves as God sees them: as sinners. In the case of this woman, this has not yet happened, for she is still thinking in literal terms. But Yeshua had already set the stage for the issue of her need for eternal life.

After pointing out her need and creating an interest, but before He showed her how this need could be met, Jesus proceeded to point out her sin in verses 16-18: *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You said well, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: this have you said truly.*

She had been married five times and, apparently, been divorced five times. Now she is living with a man as his mistress, not being legally married to him, and is, therefore, living in a state of immorality. By

pointing out her sin, He had just proved to her that He was greater than Jacob after all.

The Samaritan woman wished to change the discussion because she was not comfortable discussing her sin. She reverted to a tactic typically used by unbelievers: she raised a point of theology. When a believer points out an unbeliever's sin, he becomes uncomfortable. Suddenly, he prefers to talk theology and often asks silly questions such as "Well, where did Cain get his wife?" as if that has any relevance whatsoever to his own spiritual needs.

The woman introduced her theological issue in verses 19-20: *The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

Calling Him a prophet in verse 19, was a major step for her. In Samaritan theology, the next prophet after Moses would be the Messiah. That is why the Samaritans have only the Five Books of Moses as their Scriptures; they rejected the Prophets and the Writings. Even the Five Books of Moses had to be adjusted to avoid any reference to Jerusalem. So when she said: "I perceive that you are a prophet," she indicated that she already suspected that He might be the Messiah.

When she said this mountain in verse 20, she was referring specifically to Mount Gerizim. In retaliation for not being allowed to help in the rebuilding of the Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Where Genesis says that Abraham took Isaac to Mount Moriah, the Samaritan Torah reads that Abraham took Isaac to Mount Gerizim.

Yeshua did not ignore her question; He dealt with the theological issue and then went back to the main point in verses 21-23: *Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour comes, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such does the Father seek to be his worshippers.*

Jesus stated that the Samaritan theology on Mount Gerizim was totally wrong, and the Jewish theology about Jerusalem was correct. Samaritans worshipped what they did not know, but Jews worshipped what they did know. Under the Mosaic Law, wherever the Tabernacle or Temple stood was the proper place to worship. Initially, when they came into the Land, it was Shiloh. Ultimately, it became the City of Jerusalem, which remained the center of worship right up to the time of Yeshua's first-coming ministry. So on this issue, the Jews were correct and the Samaritans were wrong. Jesus went on to say that a time was coming when worship would no longer be limited to one specific geographical place because, eventually, a day would come

when people would be able to worship God anywhere, without having to travel to a specific place. That day came, of course, with the Messiah's death.

Yeshua returned to the real issue: her need to have eternal life; her need to have the living water; and her need to recognize true worship in verse 24: *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

The time was coming when, as a result of His work, there would be no central place of worship; neither Jerusalem nor Gerizim. True worship was going to be *in spirit and truth*. Thus, Jesus prophesied of this present age, the Dispensation of Grace, when one can worship God corporately anywhere in the world. That was not true under the Dispensation of Law. It will not be true in the Millennial Kingdom, because there will again be a centralized location to worship, the Millennial Temple. The City of Jerusalem will again become the center of world-wide worship, and Gentiles will make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship in that city (Zech. 14:16-21). Many prophets emphasized that Jerusalem will be the center of worship in the Kingdom, but there is no localized proper place to worship for this present age. So Yeshua brought the woman right back to the issue of what constitutes proper worship: in spirit and truth.

Finally, He revealed the true content of faith: what it is that she must believe in verses 25-26: *The woman said unto him, I know that Messiah comes (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am he.*

He clearly identified Himself as being the Messiah, although this Samaritan woman had already been a bit suspicious of that by calling Him a prophet earlier.

At this point in the conversation with the woman, the disciples returned from Sychar in verse 27: *And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seek you? or, Why speak you with her?*

They marvelled not only because she was a Samaritan, but because she was also a woman. This went contrary to Jewish practices

The Samaritan woman returned to the city, leaving her waterpot behind in verse 28-30: *So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and said to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ? They went out of the city, and were coming to him.*

She went proclaiming to the inhabitants of the city that she had met a man who had told her everything that she had ever done. He could read her mind! He could see exactly who she was, and what she was. Her conclusion was, "Could this possibly be the Messiah!" The inhabitants of the city came out to see Him.

Verses 31-38 record Yeshua's conversation with His disciples. The

disciples offered Him some of the fresh food they obtained in the city and urged Him to eat in verses 31-34: *In the mean while the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not. The disciples therefore said one to another, Has any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.*

Here again, Yeshua moved from the physical to the spiritual by saying that He had already had some meat. His discussion with the Samaritan woman had brought her to saving faith. He had indeed done the work the Father had given Him, and that was His meat.

Furthermore, Jesus stated in verse 35: *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.*

This is a reference to the four-month interval between the spring and fall festivals, mentioned in Leviticus 23:22. It pictures the Church Age and is symbolic of the obligation of the Church to do the work of gospel evangelism.

Jesus taught them the principle of evangelism and salvation in verses 36-38: *He that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal; that he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. For herein is the saying true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor.*

The principle of evangelism comes in two basic steps: One sows, and another reaps. Both should rejoice together that the fruit of eternal life has been produced. Applying it to the apostles, they were already in the process of reaping because John 4:1-4 states that Jesus was gaining more disciples than John the Baptist. The disciples of Yeshua were baptizing these new followers and were at the end of the process for they were reaping what others had sown before them. This included John the Baptist, who had preceded the first-coming ministry of the Messiah.

After Yeshua had taught them the principle of sowing and reaping, the disciples saw this principle in action in verses 39-42: *And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified, He told me all things that ever I did. So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his word; and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of your speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.*

In verse 39, the woman did the sowing, but Jesus did the reaping. In fact, the woman fit both categories—sometimes sowing, and sometimes reaping, sometimes doing both. Many Samaritans believed because she had shared the gospel with them. So she was both the sower and the reaper among some of the Samaritans.

In verse 40, Yeshua stayed there for two days in order to reap the

harvest that came as a result of the Samaritan woman's response to His claims.

In verses 41-42, many more believed because of his word. Here she was the sower, while He was the reaper. Some were convinced that He was Saviour of the world because of what they heard Him say, not because of what she said.✠

NOTES

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