

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY, JOHN 2:1-12:50

JESUS' MINISTRY IN SAMARIA, JOHN 4:1-42

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of the *Gospel of John* (1:1-4:42)

1. Prologue (1:1-18)
2. Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:19-51)
3. Jesus' Ministry (2:1-20:31)
 - a. His public ministry (2:1-12:50)
 - 1) Jesus' ministry in Judea (2:1-3:36)
 - 2) Jesus' ministry in Samaria (4:1-42)

B. Notes

- Thomas Constable, *The writer now showed Jesus moving north, from Judea into Samaria, where He had another important conversation with a person who was completely different from Nicodemus. As in the previous chapter, theological explanation follows personal encounter in this one.*
- Leon Morris, *Nicodemus was an eminent representative of orthodox Judaism. Now John records an interview Jesus had with one who stood for a class that was wholeheartedly despised by orthodox Judaism. From the point of view of the orthodox Jew there were three strikes against her: she was a Samaritan, a woman, and a sexual sinner.*
- R. V. G. Tasker, *The Samaritan woman is a timeless figure—not only a typical Samaritan but a typical human being.*
- Charles Swindoll, *The time had come for them to glimpse their future as evangelists. Jesus, the Jewish reformer, would become Jesus, the missionary, and show His students how to reach the world outside of Judaism. Between Galilee to the north and Judea in the south, a lost and forsaken people lived in a spiritual no-man's-land called Samaria—and they, too, needed to hear the good news.*
- Grant Osborne, *Jesus now heads to Galilee for the second time (the first was in 2:1) and in obedience to the Father goes through Samaria, engaging in the first mission outside Jewish territory recorded in the Bible since Jonah and initiating the prophetic launch of God's mission to the world.*

JESUS MINISTRY TO THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, JOHN 4:1-26

A. Jesus departed for Galilee (1-6)

1. His departure from Judea (1-3), ***Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.***
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 3:26, *And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."*
 - 2) John 2:11, *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus returned to Galilee from Judea, where He had been baptizing with His disciples, because the Pharisees were becoming increasingly aware of His broadening influence among the Jews. He wanted to avoid unnecessary premature conflict with them—not for fear of them, but because they would interfere with His ministry and schedule.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *The sudden prominence of Jesus, evidenced by the growth of His followers, caused the Pharisees to take special notice of Him. Since Jesus was working on God's schedule, He knew how His ministry would end. Until that appointed time, He must live carefully, so He withdrew from the conflict until His "hour" (7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; cf. 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).*
 - 3) F. F. Bruce, *If there was any likelihood of an attempt to drive a wedge between his work and John's, Jesus would forestall it. His regard for John was such that he could not tolerate the very possibility or appearance of a cleavage, so he withdrew from Judaea and returned to Galilee, which he had left some months before to attend the Passover in Jerusalem (John 2:13).*

2. His stop in Samaria (4-6), *And he had to pass through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

a. Related verses

- 1) Luke 13:33, *Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.*
- 2) Genesis 33:19, *And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent.*
- 3) Matthew 21:18, *In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry.*

b. Comments

1) *And he had to pass through Samaria*

- a) It was the most direct route from Judah to Galilee. Some believe the statement meant it was most expedient others believe it was God's divine call to minister to the Samaritans.
- b) Thomas Constable, *Wicked King Omri had purchased the hill on which he built Samaria as the new capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 16:24) ... The name Samaria eventually came to describe the district in which the city stood, and later even the whole former Northern Kingdom ... After the Assyrians captured the city and terminated the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., they deported the substantial citizens and imported foreigners who intermarried with the remaining Israelites. Most of these foreigners continued to worship their pagan gods (2 Kings 17-18) ... The Samaritans continued to worship on Mt. Gerizim, and they accepted only the Pentateuch as canonical and authoritative.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *The Samaritans were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile, that grew out of the Assyrian captivity of the ten northern tribes in 727 B.C. Rejected by the Jews because they could not prove their genealogy, the Samaritans established their own temple and religious services on Mt. Gerizim. This only fanned the fires of prejudice. So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans that some of the Pharisees prayed that no Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection! When His enemies wanted to call Jesus an insulting name, they called Him a Samaritan (John 8:48).*
- d) Edwin Blum, *In Jesus' day the Jews, because of their hatred for the Samaritans, normally took the eastern route in order to avoid Samaria. But Jesus chose the route through Samaria in order to reach the despised people of that region. As the Savior of the world He seeks out and saves the despised and outcasts (cf. Luke 19:10) ... The people were racially mixed and their religion resulted from syncretism and schism from Judaism.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *To avoid "contamination," most Jews traveling between Galilee and Judea chose to cross the Jordan River and go around Samaria to the east rather than journey straight through. So to say, "It was necessary to pass through Samaria," suggests some need other than geographical.*

2) *So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar ...*

- a) Thomas Constable, *The site of Sychar is fairly certain because of unbroken tradition and the presence of a water source there (v. 6). It was very near the Old Testament town of Shechem, which was Joseph's burial site, near the base of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (cf. Gen. 33:19; 48:22; Josh. 24:32). Today the modern town of Nablus stands nearby.*
- b) Warren Wiersbe, *He was weary, hungry, and thirsty. John not only presents Jesus as the Son of God but also as true man. Our Lord entered into all the normal experiences of our lives and is able to identify with us in each of them.*
- c) Charles Swindoll, *Samaria had no major rivers to supply water, only wadis (natural drainage channels), which brought seasonal rains and then dried up for months at a time. Jeremiah used the wadi as an image of deceit (Jer. 15:18). The historic location and the presence of Jacob's well gave Jesus (and therefore, John) another perfect opportunity to draw on the familiar symbol of life: water.*
- d) Merrill Tenney, *The time is given as the sixth hour (6) ... which would make the sixth hour to be twelve o'clock noon ... Although noon was not the customary hour for women to visit the well, the presence of the Samaritan may be explained plausibly by supposing that she was in ill repute among the women of her village, and so preferred to come for water at a time when others would not be there.*

B. Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman (7-26)

1. The initial interaction (7-15)

a. He makes a request of the woman (7-8), *A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)*

1) *Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink"*

- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus took the initiative to speak to the woman. It was unusual for a woman to come to draw water alone, and to come in the heat of the day. Perhaps this woman's immorality led her to shun the company of other women and to seek solitude at the expense of comfort (cf. v. 18).*
- b) Edwin Blum, *The woman was shocked to hear a Jewish man ask for a drink from her. The normal prejudices of the day prohibited public conversation between men and women, between Jews and Samaritans, and especially between strangers. A Jewish Rabbi would rather go thirsty than violate these proprieties.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *In that day, it was not considered proper for any man, especially a rabbi, to speak in public to a strange woman (John 4:27). But our Lord set social customs aside because a soul's eternal salvation was at stake.*
- d) William Barclay, *Why she should come to that well is something of a mystery, for it was more than half a mile from Sychar where she must have lived, and there was water there. Might it be that she was so much of a moral outcast that the women even drove her away from the village well and she had to come here to draw water?*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *He had come to redeem this woman and He knew how to reach her. She wore the emotional armor of a woman beaten down by the morality of the righteous. He honored her closely guarded vulnerability by appealing to her kindness.*

2) *For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food*

- a) Leon Morris, *It was probably Jesus' weariness that led the disciples to leave him while they went into the village to buy food. He was thus at the well, possibly alone, when the woman came to draw water.*
- b) William Barclay, *His disciples went on ahead to buy some food in the Samaritan town. Something must have been beginning to happen to them. Before they had met Jesus it is entirely unlikely that they would have even thought of buying food in any Samaritan town. Little by little, perhaps even unconsciously, the barriers were going down.*
- c) R. Kent Hughes, *The great glory of the church is that the gospel of Christ crosses barriers! ... Many believers today insist that pragmatically it is otherwise. Doctors best evangelize doctors, athletes best evangelize athletes, and ethnics best evangelize their own race, they say ... Jesus calls us to have a ministering heart, to reach out to others regardless of the barriers, and that is the mark of an authentically enlarged heart—the heart of Jesus—the heart of Paul ... Perhaps we need to cross some barriers in our lives. Maybe we have never shared Christ with some people with whom we rub elbows because they are not like us. Perhaps our Lord is asking us to have a ministering heart.*

b. The woman was surprised that a Jew would speak to her (9), *The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)*

- 1) Thomas Constable, *The Jews typically regarded the Samaritans as unclean apostates.*
- 2) Merrill Tenney, *There was a trace of sarcasm in the woman's reply, as if she meant, 'We Samaritans are the dirt under your feet until you want something; then we are good enough!'*
- 3) F. F. Bruce, *The Evangelist's explanation of her surprise ... "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans," but more specifically ... "Jews and Samaritans, it should be noted, do not use vessels in common." If the woman complied with Jesus' request, he would have had to drink from her vessel, since he had none of his own. This would have involved a risk of ceremonial pollution for a Jew.*
- 4) William Barclay, *Here was the Son of God, tired and weary and thirsty. Here was the holiest of men ... breaking through the barriers of nationality and orthodox Jewish custom. Here is the beginning of the universality of the gospel; here is God so loving the world, not in theory, but in action.*
- 5) Grant Osborne, *The gospel rises above all taboos, for the salvation of souls has priority over religious concerns.*

- c. Jesus responded with a curious offer (10), *Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”*
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 7:38, *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’*
 - b) Jeremiah 2:13, *for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*
 - c) Jeremiah 17:13, *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) *If you knew the gift of God*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *She had drawn attention both to the gift of water that Jesus was requesting, and to the identity of Jesus as a Jew. Jesus picked up on both subjects and used them to whet the woman’s curiosity. Jesus implied that God had a greater gift (Gr. dorea) for her, and that He had the authority to give it to her. The word that Jesus used for gift occurs only here in the Gospels. It stressed the freeness of God’s gift.*
 - 2] Charles Swindoll, *“Gift of God?” “Know who He is?” “Living water?” What an enigmatic statement! He deliberately laced His comment with enticing phrases and then delivered it with casual ease. This was no less outrageous than if I were to drop the following line into normal conversation: “Well, back on Mars, where I’m from, everyone has free cable TV.” People would think I was joking ... He clearly intended to excite her curiosity.*
 - b) *who it is that is saying to you ...*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *By saying “If you knew ... who it is” He implied that it is God who gives the water of life ... He then captured her curiosity by implying that He was not just the person that He appeared to be, and that He could give her something very valuable though free. She would have wondered: Who is this, what is this gift of God, and what is this living water?*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *Having captured her attention and stimulated her curiosity, Jesus then spoke an enigmatic saying to cause her to think. It was as if He had said, “Your shock would be infinitely greater if you really knew who I am. You—not I—would be asking!”*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *Had the woman been aware of the realities of the situation in which she found herself, and especially of the fact that she was speaking to him whom God had sent to give life to the world, the asking would have been the other way around.*
 - 4] Grant Osborne, *She is not speaking just to a Jewish male or even a prophet, as she thinks, but to the One who extends the gift of salvation from God to her.*
 - c) *he would have given you living water*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *The living water that Jesus promised has two meanings: Literally it refers to flowing water in contrast to stagnant water. Metaphorically it refers to the cleansing and refreshing grace that the Holy Spirit brings as a result of a proper relationship with God (7:38–39; cf. Isa. 1:16–18; Ezek. 36:25–27; Zech. 14:8; John 3:5). The Old Testament used water to symbolize teaching or doctrine, and living water as a metaphor for God (cf. Ps. 36:9; Isa. 55:1; Jer. 2:13; 17:13).*
 - 2] Leon Morris, *The living water that flows from within the believer is later explained in terms of the Holy Spirit (7:38–39), and something similar is required here. Jesus is speaking of the new life that he will give, a life connected with the activity of the Spirit.*
 - 3] William Barclay, *In ordinary language, to a Jew, living water was running water. It was the water of the running stream as against the water of the stagnant cistern or pool. This well, as we have seen, was not a springing well, but a well into which the water percolated from the subsoil. To a Jew, running, living water from the stream was always better. So the woman is saying: ‘You are offering me pure stream water. Where are you going to get it?’*
 - 4] Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus pointed out to her that she was ignorant of three important facts: Who He was, what He had to offer, and how she could receive it. Here was eternal God speaking to her, offering her eternal life!*
 - 5] F. F. Bruce, *Running water aptly illustrated the fresh and perennial supply of God’s grace, as it does in these words of Jesus.*

- d. The woman questioned His offer (11-12), ***The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”***
- 1) *Where do you get that living water?*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The woman responded by trying to find out how Jesus could give her that living water, and who He was. Jesus had no bucket, so how could He given her the running water from the spring at the bottom of the well. She apparently thought that Jesus was teasing her.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *Since Jacob’s well was so deep how could Jesus get this living water? Today this well is identified by archeologists as one of the deepest in Palestine.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus was speaking about spiritual water, but she interpreted His words to mean literal water. Again, we see how easily people confuse the material and the spiritual. Furthermore, this woman was concerned about how He would obtain this water, instead of simply asking Him to give her a drink of it.*
 - 2) *Are you greater than our father Jacob?*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *She could not see how He could be greater than the patriarch (“our father”) Jacob ... Her reference to “our father Jacob” was probably another barb designed to remind this Jew that Jacob was the Samaritans’ ancestor as well as the Jews’. The Samaritans traced their descent from Jacob through Joseph and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *Are You greater than our father Jacob? she asked. In Greek this question expects a negative answer. She could not conceive of Him as greater than Jacob. Her claim “our father Jacob” is interesting in light of the fact that the Jews claim him as the founder of their nation.*
 - c) Leon Morris, *In the woman’s attitude there appears to be something of a sense of outrage. She was content with her patriarchal well. How dare a mere stranger claim to produce anything better than that?*
 - d) William Barclay, *The woman is in effect saying to Jesus: ‘This is blasphemous talk. Jacob, our great ancestor, when he came here, had to dig this well to gain water for his family and his cattle. Are you claiming to be able to get fresh, running stream water? If you are, you are claiming to be wiser and more powerful than Jacob. That is a claim that no one has any right to make.’*
 - e) F. F. Bruce, *The woman’s failure to comprehend Jesus’ words about living water is comparable to Nicodemus’s failure to comprehend his words about the new birth (John 3:4). Any one who could make and fulfill such a promise must indeed be greater than Jacob, and this the woman thought unlikely.*
 - f) Charles Swindoll, *This is an intelligent woman with a delightful sense of humor, but a rough life had ground her wit to a razor’s edge. Undoubtedly, many men had charmed her and then left her broken. Now, any man who thinks he’s God’s gift should be careful. Most men would have gotten the message and backed off. But Jesus didn’t want her like other men wanted her.*
- e. Jesus told her that He was offering living water (13-14), ***Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 6:35, *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*
 - b) John 7:37, *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*
 - c) Revelation 7:16, *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus explained that He was not really speaking about literal water but about a spiritual source of refreshment and fulfillment that satisfied completely. To be able to provide such water Jesus would indeed have to be greater than Jacob ... As in His conversation with Nicodemus (3:5), Jesus again alluded to the Old Testament passages that promised salvation pouring forth like satisfying water (e.g., Isa. 12:3; 44:3; 49:10; 55:1–7; Jer. 31:29–34; Ezek. 36:25–27; Joel 2:28–32).*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *This water from Jacob’s well would satisfy only bodily thirst for a time. But the water Jesus gives provides continual satisfaction of needs and desires ... This inner spring contrasts with the water from the well, which required hard work to acquire. Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit who brings salvation to a person who believes and through Him offers salvation to others.*

- c) Leon Morris, *Jesus' response contrasts the impermanent result of drinking water from the well with the permanent consequences of receiving water from him. Water from Jacob's well might quench a thirst, but it could not prevent thirst from rising again. The living water that Jesus gives is such that those who receive it are permanently satisfied (cf. Matt. 5:6) ... The life that Jesus gives is no tame and stagnant thing. It is much more than merely the entrance into a new state, that of being saved instead of lost. It is the abundant life (10:10), and the living Spirit within people is evidence of this.*
 - d) Grant Osborne, *The Greek word behind "welling" or "bubbling" is a strong one, picturing a geyser leaping up, a picture often found in the Old Testament (Isa 49:10; 55:1-3). Those who partake of this water "never thirst" again, with the Greek meaning "never again for eternity," for new life will literally explode out of this messianic spring. The result is not just a prolonged earthly life but "eternal life."*
 - e) William Barclay, *We are never safe from the longing for eternity which God has put into the human soul. There is a thirst which only Jesus Christ can satisfy.*
 - f) Charles Swindoll, *Those who trust in Christ never need to look outside themselves for satisfaction because He dwells within them, supplying every emotional and spiritual need. They will never be without water again.*
- f. The woman asks for that water (15), ***The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *The woman did not pretend to understand what Jesus was talking about, but she did want to avoid the tiresome work involved in drawing water from Jacob's well. Since Jesus had offered it, she asked Him to give her whatever it was that He had (cf. 3:4; 6:34).*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *The woman could not grasp this dark saying because of her sin and materialism. All she could understand was that if she had a spring she would not get thirsty and would not have to work so hard.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The woman's immediate response was to ask for this gift, but she did not know what she was saying. The seed of the Word fell on shallow soil, and the shoots that sprang up had no root (Matt. 13:20-21). She had made progress, but she still had a long way to go; so Jesus patiently dealt with her.*
 - 4) Charles Swindoll, *Either the woman was spiritually tone-deaf, or she was deliberately avoiding the real issue. Often people avoid talking about spiritual matters because physical needs are easier to satisfy and frequently provide the illusion of deeper satisfaction. That's what drives all sorts of compulsions and addictions. They also avoid spiritual discussions because they are too painfully personal and they have learned to cope with their hopelessness; they don't want anyone upsetting the delicate balance they have worked so hard to achieve ... Regardless, the woman took the conversation back into the shallows, where she felt more comfortable.*
 - 5) F. F. Bruce, *If the stranger can really do what he says, then certainly he is greater than Jacob. But the woman's thought continues to move on the mundane plane; she still imagines that Jesus is talking about material water and bodily thirst.*
 - 6) Grant Osborne, *We cannot know whether she actually believes what he is saying at a basic level or is slightly mocking, but she wants a part in the action if there is any truth to it at all.*

2. Jesus' interrogation of the woman (16-24)

a. Jesus exposed her past (16-18)

- 1) He made a request of the woman (16), ***Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."***
 - a) Related verse, John 16:8, *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*
 - b) Comments
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *So far the woman thought only of her physical need for water and rest. Jesus now took the conversation in a different direction in order to help her realize that she had greater needs than physical needs, which He could meet (cf. 2:24-25). Jesus' instruction to call her husband was proper, because if He was really going to give her something valuable, her husband needed to be present ... If Jesus had not told the woman to call her husband, she might have suspected that He wanted sexual favors in return for His gift.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *Jesus suggested she get her husband and bring him back with her. This suggestion was designed to show her that He knew everything about her (cf. John 2:24-25).*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *The only way to prepare the soil of the heart for the seed is to plow it up with conviction. That was why Jesus told her to go get her husband: He forced her to admit her sin. There can be no conversion without conviction.*

- 4] William Barclay, *We have seen how the woman jestingly asked Jesus to give her the living water in order that she should not thirst again and might be spared the tiring journey to the well. Suddenly ... the time for jesting was over. 'Go,' said Jesus, 'and fetch your husband and come back with him.'* *The woman stiffened as if a sudden pain had caught her; she recoiled as if hit by a sudden shock; she grew white as one who had seen a sudden apparition; and so indeed she had, for she had suddenly caught sight of herself.*
- 5] Charles Swindoll, *Of course Jesus knew her situation. He knew all about her sexually promiscuous life. And He went directly for her need. He appealed to her deepest personal longing.*
- 2) She unknowingly revealed her sinfulness (17-18), ***The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.***
- a) Thomas Constable, *The woman wanted Jesus' gift, so she admitted that she had no husband. She probably hoped that He would now give it to her. Instead, however, Jesus gave her a shocking revelation. He knew about her marital relations intimately, but He related what He knew tastefully. He commended her twice for telling the truth about her present marital status, but He also unmasked her past.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *... in a few words Jesus had revealed her life of sin and her need for salvation.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *"I have no husband" was the shortest statement she made during the entire conversation! Why? Because now she was under conviction and her "mouth was stopped" (Rom. 3:19). But this was the best thing that could have happened to her!*
- d) William Barclay, *She was suddenly compelled to face herself and the looseness and immorality and total inadequacy of her life. There are two revelations in Christianity: the revelation of God and the revelation of ourselves. We never really see ourselves until we see ourselves in the presence of Christ; and then we are appalled at the sight. There is another way of putting it—Christianity begins with a sense of sin. It begins with the sudden realization that life as we are living it will not do. We awake to ourselves and we awake to our need of God.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *It is noteworthy that He didn't condemn her or shame her or exploit her sinfulness. He merely stated the truth and let it stand on its own.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *... the stranger obviously knew much more about her than she suspected; he knew that her statement was the truth so far as it went, but that it was not the whole truth, so he proceeded to let her understand just how much he did know about her.*
- g) Grant Osborne, *His intention is to force her to come face to face with not only who she is (which she knows) but with who Jesus himself is ... Before she could partake of the living water, she must come to grips with her moral condition.*
- b. The woman declared that Jesus must be a prophet with differing views of worship (19-20), ***The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."***
- 1) Related verses
- a) John 6:14, *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"*
- b) Deuteronomy 11:29, *And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.*
- c) Judges 9:7, *When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and cried aloud and said to them, "Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, that God may listen to you.*
- d) Deuteronomy 12:5, *But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go,*
- 2) Comments
- a) *I perceive that you are a prophet*
- 1] Grant Osborne, *This is a turning point in the dialogue, for she is now thinking on the spiritual plane, and the discussion turns to worship.*
- 2] Thomas Constable, *Probably she had become used to dealing with people who knew about her sinful life, so she coolly observed that Jesus must be a prophet. She believed that He could not have known these things without special insight (cf. v. 29; Luke 7:39).*

- 3] Leon Morris, *The Samaritans acknowledged no prophet after Moses other than the one spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:18, and him they regarded as the Messiah ... For her to speak of Jesus as a prophet was thus to move into the area of messianic speculation.*
 - 4] Edwin Blum, *Her response was most interesting! Jesus was not just a passing Jewish Rabbi. Since He had supernatural knowledge, He must be a prophet of God.*
 - 5] Warren Wiersbe, ... *instead of listening to Jesus, she tried to get Him on a "detour" by discussing the differences between the Jewish and the Samaritan religions. It is much more comfortable to discuss religion than to face one's sins!*
 - 6] Charles Swindoll, *The woman obviously didn't feel so threatened as to run away. Exposing the source of someone's shame too quickly leaves him or her feeling emotionally stripped naked, and the only natural response is to run for cover. But Jesus' timing was perfect. He established a rapport. He allowed the woman to see His genuine concern for her as a person, not an object. He treated her with uncommon dignity and spoke compassionately to her spiritual need. He didn't allow her to distract Him from the real issues involved, including her attempt to flatter Him and then engage in a pointless theological debate.*
- b) *Our fathers ... but you say ...*
- 1] Thomas Constable, *Being a woman of the world, she had probably learned that many "religious people" enjoy discussing controversial theological issues. She took the opportunity to divert the conversation, which was becoming uncomfortably convicting, hoping that Jesus would follow her new subject. She must have thought that surely He could not resist the temptation to argue Jewish supremacy in the age-old Samaritan/Jewish debate.*
 - 2] F. F. Bruce, *There are some people who cannot engage in a religious conversation with a person of a different persuasion without bringing up the points on which they differ.*
 - 3] Edwin Blum, ... *instead of confessing her sin and repenting, she threw out an intellectual "red herring." Could He solve an ancient dispute? Samaritan religion held that the one place of divinely ordered worship was on top of nearby Mount Gerizim, whereas the Jews said it was on the temple mount in Jerusalem. Who was right in this controversy?*
- c) *Concerning Mt. Gerizim*
- 1] Thomas Constable, *Part of the old Jewish/Samaritan controversy involved the proper place of worship. In Deuteronomy 12:5 God had said that His people were to seek the place that He would choose among their tribes where He would dwell among them. The Jews, accepting all the Old Testament as authoritative, saw God doing this later when He commanded David to build the temple in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kings 11:13; 14:21; 2 Chron. 6:6; 12:13) ... The Samaritans, who acknowledged only the authority of the Torah (Pentateuch), believed that Mount Gerizim near Shechem was the place that God had appointed. They based this belief on the fact that God had told the Israelites to worship Him on Mt. Gerizim after they entered the Promised Land (Deut. 11:29–30; 27:2–7, 12). In the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Israelites are said to have built their altar on Mt. Gerizim, not on Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:4).*
 - 2] Leon Morris, *They [the Samaritans] had a tradition that Abraham's offering of Isaac took place on this mountain [Gen: 22:2, 9] and they held that it was here that Abraham met Melchizedek [Gen. 14:17]. In fact, most of the blessed events in the time of the patriarchs seem to have been linked with Gerizim!*
- c. *Jesus proclaimed a new system of worship (21-24)*
- 1) *True worship does not take place only on a mountain (21), **Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.***
 - a) Thomas Constable, *He told the woman that the real issue was not where God's people had worshipped Him in the past, but how they would worship Him in the future. This was the more important issue since Messiah had come and would terminate worship as both the Jews and the Samaritans knew it. Jesus urged her to believe Him. After all, she had already acknowledged Him as a prophet ... The hour (Gr. hora) or time that Jesus referred to was the time of His passion.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *A time is coming (cf. v. 23) referred to the coming death of Jesus which would inaugurate a new phase of worship in God's economy. In the Church Age, because of the work of the Spirit, worship is no longer centered in temples like those on Mount Gerizim and Mount Zion.*
 - c) Leon Morris, *The woman had appealed to the example of "our fathers"; Jesus points her to the one Father.*

- d) William Barclay, *Jesus' answer was that the day of the old rivalries between peoples was coming to an end; and the time was on the way when God would be found everywhere. It had been Zephaniah's vision that every nation shall worship God 'each in its place' (Zephaniah 2:11). It was Malachi's dream that in every place incense would be offered as a pure offering to the name of God (Malachi 1:11). Jesus' answer to the woman was that she did not need to go anywhere special to find God, neither to Mount Gerizim nor to Mount Zion. She did not need to offer sacrifice in some special place; true worship finds God in every place.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *He neither indulged her ruse nor ignored her question. He used her distraction to get the conversation back to the real issue. Her problem—as with most people in John's account—was not intellectual, but volitional. Jesus responded by appealing to her will.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *The answer the woman received was quite different from anything that she could have expected. The time when there was any point in the argument about the claims of Gerizim versus those of Zion had come to an end. A new order was now being introduced which rendered such questions out of date and meaningless. The important question is not where people worship God but how they worship him.*
- g) Grant Osborne, *... he makes a prophetic claim regarding a coming "time" or "hour," pointing to an apocalyptic event in the future when Jewish worship in Jerusalem or Samaritan worship on Mount Gerizim will be no more ... the new era of salvation inaugurated by Jesus' death and resurrection. Access to the Father will be direct (see Heb 8:10–11), and neither Mount Gerizim nor Jerusalem will be important. Moreover, he hints that Jews and Samaritans will worship together, not separately and in conflict with one another.*
- 2) Salvation truth is from the Jews (22), ***You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.***
- a) *You worship what you do not know*
- 1] Thomas Constable, *By "you" Jesus meant the Samaritans (plural "you" in Gr.). They worshipped a God whom they did not really know. The reason for this was their rejection of most of His revelation in the Old Testament. On top of this, the Samaritans had added pagan concepts to their faith that came from their Gentile forefathers.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *The Samaritan religion was confused and in error: You Samaritans worship what you do not know. They were not the vehicle for the salvation of mankind. Israel was the nation chosen by God to have great privileges (Rom. 9:4–5).*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *... Jesus once again revealed her spiritual ignorance: she did not know who to worship, where to worship, or how to worship! He made it clear that all religions are not equally acceptable before God, that some worshipers act in ignorance and unbelief.*
 - 4] Leon Morris, *When we consider that they rejected the writings of the Prophets, the Psalms, the historical books of the Old Testament, and much more we realize that their knowledge of God was, of necessity, very limited. Jesus says that they do not know what they worship (cf. Acts 17:23).*
- b) *we worship what we know*
- 1] Thomas Constable, *By contrast, the Jews accepted all of God's revelation in the Old Testament, and they therefore knew the God whom they worshipped. Additionally, they were the people through whom that revelation had come ... Jesus did not take sides on the question of the place of worship, but He did clarify the proper basis of authority as being the whole Old Testament.*
 - 2] Grant Osborne, *In 4:22 he answers her question more directly, stating that the Samaritans "do not know" the true object of worship, God, while the Jews "worship what we [Jesus includes himself] do know," namely, the God of the Old Testament whose true temple is in Jerusalem.*
- c) *for salvation is from the Jews*
- 1] Thomas Constable, *God intended His revelation to result in salvation for humankind (cf. 3:17). In that sense, salvation had come from the Jews (cf. Rom. 3:2; 9:4–5). Salvation also came from the Jews in that Messiah came from Judah's tribe (Gen. 49:10), whereas the Samaritans traced their ancestry through Joseph.*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *The only faith that God will accept is that which came through the Jews. The Bible is of Jewish origin, and our Saviour was a Jew.*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *... there is an article with "salvation" that is probably significant. It is "the" salvation of which Jesus speaks. That is to say, the messianic salvation comes from this nation ("from" them, "not in them, or by them" [Marsh, p. 217]). The Messiah is a Jew.*

- 3) Worship is to take place in spirit and truth (23), ***But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.***
- a] Related verses
- 1] Philippians 3:3, *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—*
 - 2] Psalm 145:18, *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*
- b] Comments
- 1] *But the hour is coming, and is now here*
 - a] Thomas Constable, *The hour that was coming was the hour of Jesus' passion, when the old way of worship would end. That hour was already present in the sense that since Messiah had come, His followers could begin to worship according to the new way.*
 - b] Edwin Blum, *With the advent of the Messiah the time came for a new order of worship.*
 - c] Grant Osborne, *For the second time Jesus tells her, "a time is coming," but in verse 23 he adds "and has now come." The hour of destiny in John (see 2:4; 4:21) always refers to the God-appointed time of Jesus' passion. The point here is that the new age of salvation has now arrived in Jesus.*
 - 2] *true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*
 - a] Thomas Constable, *"True worshippers" are not those who will worship in the future, contrasted with those who have worshipped in the past. The distinction is not between Jews and Samaritans either. "True worshippers" are those from either time or group that worship God in spirit and truth.*
 - b] Leon Morris, *The combination 'spirit and truth' points to the need for complete sincerity and complete reality in our approach to God.*
 - c] Edwin Blum, *True worshipers are those who realize that Jesus is the Truth of God (3:21; 14:6) and the one and only Way to the Father (Acts 4:12). To worship in truth is to worship God through Jesus. To worship in Spirit is to worship in the new realm which God has revealed to people. The Father is seeking true worshipers because He wants people to live in reality, not in falsehood.*
 - d] William Barclay, *True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part within us, speaks to and meets with God, himself immortal and invisible.*
 - 3] *the Father is seeking such people to worship him*
 - a] Thomas Constable, *What does it mean to worship "in spirit and truth"? The Greek text has one preposition (translated "in") that governs both nouns ("spirit" and "truth"), linked by the conjunction (translated "and," cf. 3:5; 4:24). This means that Jesus was describing one characteristic with two nouns, not two separate characteristics of worship. We could translate the phrase: truly spiritual ... What is truly spiritual worship? ... It rises from the "spirit" of the worshipper, not just his or her mouth. In other words, it is heartfelt. In addition, truly spiritual worship proceeds from a person who has spiritual life because of the new birth that the Holy Spirit has affected. It passes from believers to God through a spiritual mediator, namely, Jesus Christ ...it does not consist of merely physical actions but involves the interaction of the human spirit with the divine spirit ... It is also worship that is in harmony with the truth that God has revealed in His Word.*
 - b] Consider a song by Matt Redman, *Heart of Worship, I'll bring You more than a song, because the song itself is not what You've required. You search much deeper within than the way things appear. You're looking into my heart.*
 - c] Leon Morris, *One must worship, not simply outwardly by being in the right place and taking up the right attitude, but in one's spirit ... It is not simply that he accepts such worship when it is brought to him. He is a God of love, a God who seeks the best for people, and therefore a God who actively seeks them out.*
 - d] Grant Osborne, *The Father wants only those whose heartfelt worship is Spirit-driven and Spirit-centered. This worship is trinitarian, as all three members of the Godhead are involved in such true worship.*

- 4) Spiritual worship is centered in the nature of God (24), **God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**
- a] Thomas Constable, *He is invisible, divine, and essentially unknowable. Nevertheless He has chosen to reveal Himself (1:1–18). Since He is a spiritual rather than a corporeal being (having a body), those who worship Him must do so in a spiritual rather than a material way. A spiritual (new) birth (3:5) is prerequisite for true spiritual worship.*
 - b] Ronald Allen, *The words ‘in spirit and truth’ relate both to the inner person [the heart] and to the outward acts. These must occur together, and when they do, true worship occurs.*
 - c] Edwin Blum, *God is not one Spirit among many. This is a declaration of His invisible nature. He is not confined to one location. Worship of God can be done only through the One (Jesus) who expresses God’s invisible nature (1:18) and by virtue of the Holy Spirit who opens to a believer the new realm of the kingdom (cf. 3:3, 5; 7:38–39).*
 - d] Leon Morris, ... *God’s essential nature is spirit ... Since he is essentially spirit it follows that the worship brought to him must be essentially of a spiritual kind. Notice the word “must.” Jesus is not speaking of a merely desirable element in worship. He is speaking of something that is absolutely necessary ... People cannot dictate the “how” or the “where” of worship. They must come only in the way that the Spirit of God opens for them.*
 - e] R. Kent Hughes, ... *Jesus is not talking about worshiping in the Holy Spirit. He is talking about worshiping with or in the human spirit. What our Lord means is, he is not only looking for those who will worship him in the truth of who he is, but also in the very depth of their inner being—in spirit. Authentic worship happens only when the very core of our being is employed in worshiping God!*
 - f] Charles Spurgeon, *God does not regard our voices, he hears our hearts, and if our hearts do not sing we have not sung at all.*
 - g] C. S. Lewis, *The perfect church service would be the one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.*
 - h] Grant Osborne, *The new birth is “from above” (3:3), and Jesus is “from above” (3:31), so true worship is heaven-enabled and heaven-centered, taking place when we are seeking and thinking “on things above” (Col 3:1–2). Those in the Spirit worship with all their soul, heart, mind, and strength.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING

3. Jesus’ identification of Himself (25-26)