



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA  
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# The Gospel of John

## The Woman at the Well

### [John 4:1-7](#)

**Related Topics:** The Humanity of Jesus; Samaria; Jacob's Well; Jews and Samaritans; Jesus Crossing Lines; Jesus Building Bridges Into Heart; Jesus Loving ; Conviction of Sin; Living Water; God Seeking Worshippers; Genuine Worship; Worship in Spirit; Worship In Truth; God Kissing Man; Man Turning to Kiss God; Jesus Reveals Himself as Messiah

We come this week to one of the most interesting and most informative moments in the life of Jesus. In John 3 we saw how Jesus dealt with a man named Nicodemus — a very rich, very religious, very powerful ruler in Israel.

Here at the beginning of John 4 we are going to see Jesus deal with a woman who was worlds apart from Nicodemus. She was spiritually ignorant, a social outcast, whose moral character was more than just bad. In His dealings with her we will see God Incarnate cross the lines of Race, Culture and Religious bigotry out of love for an abandoned, immoral woman! His dealings with her should cause us to:

- Love Him more than ever for the way he deals with such as us.
- Learn how He would have us to deal with the lost; the worst of the lost.

This incident occurs while Jesus is on His way back to Galilee.

**<sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup>(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), <sup>3</sup>he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.**

Jesus left Judea and went back once more to Galilee because He didn't want to argue with the religious leaders about the nature of his ministry.

**<sup>4</sup>And he had to pass through Samaria.**

The **KJV** reads this as — ***And he must needs go through Samaria.***

To fully understand Jesus in this moment, and fully appreciate what is happening here, we must answer the obvious question, why did Jesus need to go through Samaria? As we read this passage and consider the answer to that question we need to remember that nothing in the life of Jesus was by accident. Every step He took, every word He spoke, was **directed** by the Holy Spirit and **done in obedience** to and for the glory of the Father. Jesus did not have to go through Samaria because it was the shortest route to Galilee (which it was). To fully understand and appreciate what Jesus is doing we're going to invest a little time this morning in a geography and history lesson.

Israel is a piece of land about 263 miles in length and 71 miles at its widest point, bordered on the West by the Mediterranean Sea (About the size of New Jersey). In the day of Jesus it was divided into three distinct regions.



Each of those regions had a particular ethnic and religious identity. In the north was Galilee. In the south was Judea. In the middle was Samaria.

Samaria — and especially the locality in John 4 — went all the way back to the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. One of the patriarchs of Israel, Jacob, had purchased a piece of land for his family ([Genesis 33:18-19](#)). It was there that Jacob dug the well at which we find Jesus in John 4. While on his death-bed in Egypt Jacob bequeathed the land and the well to Joseph ([Genesis 48:22](#)). Before Joseph died he requested that his bones be carried out of Egypt and buried in Shechem, which was recorded in [Joshua 24:32](#). Near to Shechem was a town called Sychar.

Coming from Jerusalem, just short of Sychar, the road to Samaria forks. The one branch goes north-east to the Jordan Valley up towards the Galilee; the other goes west to Nablus and into Samaria. At the fork of the road there was the well known as **Jacob's well**.

This area was also revered by the Jews because both Abraham and Isaac had constructed altars there to worship God, and thank God for his provision and his presence in their lives. Shechem also laid at the foot of two mountains, Gerizim and Ebal. We read of them in the book of Deuteronomy.

*Deut. 27:12-13*<sup>11</sup> *That day Moses charged the people, saying,*<sup>12</sup> *“When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.”*<sup>13</sup> *And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.*



Samaria would become the center of the Northern Kingdom when Israel was divided. 720 years before Christ God judged the Northern kingdom for its idolatry at the hands of the Assyrians. The Assyrians were infamous for their cruelty — they would lead their vanquished enemies into exile with hooks through their noses and faces. They would kill the men and rape the women and try in every way to obliterate every aspect of their ethnicity and culture. It was the practice of conquering nations to deport their conquered foes — remove them from their families, their history, their community, and religion. The Assyrians transported practically the whole population to Media ([2Ki 17:6](#)). The Assyrians then brought 5 other pagan people groups into Samaria ([2Ki 17:24](#)). These peoples would take over the homes, agriculture and economies of the exiled people. The point of all of this was to cause the Jews to lose their ethnic and religious identity — lest a remnant could eventually have lots of children, build an army, and conquer their conquerors.

As they could not carry off all of the inhabitants of the Northern kingdom, there were some surviving Jews that remained in the Samaria. This Jewish remnant had a crucial decision to make — *Do we remain faithful to our God and to our convictions or do we compromise and fall into syncretism — a blending of our religious beliefs and practices with theirs?* What quickly transpired was intermarriage and a blending of their Judaism with pagan religious practices.

They kind of kept some of Jewish theological convictions. They kept the first five books of the Old Testament. But they got rid of the Psalms, the Prophets, the Wisdom literature and Historical books of the Old Testament. They created a mongrel priesthood for the God of Israel while they offered their children as sacrifices to their pagan deities. All the while they claimed to be descendants of Abraham.

Later, the southern kingdom, whose capital was Jerusalem, was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and carried off to Babylon. But they remained stubbornly and unalterably Jewish. After 70 years of captivity, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah a portion of the exiles returned to Jerusalem. Their immediate task was to repair and rebuild the shattered Temple, and the walls of the Jerusalem. The Samaritans came and offered their help. The Jews said — *you guys are mongrels, you don't know God, you can't touch the temple — go home, you have nothing to do in God's work. You guys are forever outside of Israel, what you have done is unforgivable that is it.*

Things got worse when a renegade Jew, Manasseh, married a daughter of the Samaritan Sanballat ([Neh 13:28](#)), he creates his own religion and creates his own temple and told the Samaritan people — *The Jews hate us and would not let us worship their God. That is okay. We have our own God, we have our own religion now, we have our own temple, our own priest, our own sacrifices, and we have our own world. We do not need theirs.*

Still later in the Maccabean days, in 129 B.C., a Jewish general led an attack against Samaria and destroyed the temple on Mount Gerizim.

By the time we get to John 4 there is over 400 years of hatred between the Jews and Samaritans. They hate each other on every level — race, culture, religion.

We have seen echoes of this in our own society at the height of racial prejudice. Racist, unloving, un-forgiving and unbending.

This animosity wasn't just one way, Jew against Samaritan. If a Jew tried to travel through Samaria, the Samaritan would try and punish, harass, and even incarcerate them.

**So we just looked at about a thousand years of history involving this geographical place and its inhabitants to understand Verse 4.**

**<sup>4</sup>And he had to — must needs — pass through Samaria.**

By the time of **John 4**, if you were a good Jew traveling from Judea to Galilee, you have Samaria in the middle. It will take you 2-3 days to walk from Judea to Galilee, or vice versa. It will take you up to 6 days to walk around, but you would walk around. You did not need to go through Samaria. But because you are a good Jewish man, **you did not NEED to go through Samaria, you needed to go around Samaria.**

**We now know** that Jesus *needed* to travel through Samaria. **NOT** to save time and distance. Jesus **NEEDED to go through Samaria** to save ONE WOMAN!

**<sup>5</sup>So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>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.**

Here is Jesus — And again our minds race back to John 1.

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made...*

*<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus is fully God — but He is also fully man. Jesus was tired!

**QUOTE: Alexander Maclaren** — *So the weariness of the Master stands forth for us as proof that it was no shadowy investiture with an **apparent** Manhood to which He stooped, but a real participation in our limitations and weaknesses.... The measure of His love is seen in that, long before Calvary, He entered into the humiliation and sufferings and sorrows of humanity;*

**QUOTE: John Ross Macduff** from *Noontide at Sychar* — *p.44-45*

**HUGE** — His union with our humanity and the physical frailties and sufferings of our humanity has implications on the ministry of Jesus to us at this very moment.

**QUOTE: John Ross Macduff** from *Noontide at Sychar* — p.45-46

**It also has implications upon the lives of those who profess to follow Jesus.**

The picture of Jesus absolutely fatigued, sitting on Jacob's Well, not only tells us about the greatness of His condescension and the determination to love us. **It tells us what we should be.** The willingness of Jesus to be brought to the point of physical exhaustion for this one woman forces those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ to ask some hard questions.

How willing have I been to give up **one** comfort, **one** moment of leisure, for the sake of Jesus and those He loves?

How willing have I been to make one sacrifice, one act of self-denial, for the sake of Jesus and those He loves?

How willing have I been to have my body ache and fatigued for the sake of Jesus and those He loves?

**QUOTE: Alexander Maclaren** — *The wearied Christ proclaims His manhood, proclaims His divinity and His love, and rebukes us who consent to 'walk in the way of His commandments' only on condition that it can be done without dust or heat; and who are ready to run the race that is set before us, only if we can come to the goal without perspiration.*

He has had a long day's journey in heat of the sun tired as he was from the journey sat down by the well.

**6 It was about the sixth hour** (that was about noon).

No one is out near the well at noon. If you live in the Middle East, noon is not a good time to go for a walk. It is hot. Jesus sits there tired and thirsty!

Then Verse 7

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

SHE is the reason Jesus NEEDED to go through Samaria!

**QUOTE: John Ross Macduff** from *Noontide at Sychar* — p.56-57; 57-58

There were circumstances, heartbreaking, self-destructive circumstances, that brought her to this moment with Jesus!

**FOLLOW ME HERE** — We're never told her name, but we got to know a great deal about her. All the other women came in the morning. She comes at noon. This gives you a window into where she is coming from and what things are going to go with this woman.

In that culture, the well was like a coffee shop. It was where everybody got together to hang out. You pretty much knew who would be there and when they would be there. (EXAMPLE: Pub across road from Old Smithy outside of Worcester, England. Went there to buy lunch every day during our sessions. It was like they were manikins in the same place, same posture, same persons next to them — every day!) Jacob's well is where the woman would come early in the morning before it got too hot to draw their water for the day. *How's your husband? You know how are your kids? How's your mini-van (camel)? Did you hear about the sale at Ezra's?*

This woman does not have that opportunity. She is there at noon all by herself. That is because everyone hates her. That was as low as it could go for a human being. The Samaritans were the most rejected of people and if they reject you, you're really all alone! She had descended to the absolute bottom of the social food chain to the place where no one would even walk to the well with her or draw water with her. No one will even visit with her on her way there, or on her way back. No one would be at the well when she got there. She has to go all by herself in the heat of the midday sun. This woman has a pathetic, lonely life. She is socially, emotionally and, above all, spiritually dead! But DEATH is going to MEET LIFE on this midday. REMEMBER John 1 In His was life. Jesus has been waiting for her from eternity past. He truly is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes after the 1 that's gone astray and comes again rejoicing. He's left the multitudes that were leaving John to follow Him to go after this one.

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

This is not a command! It could be translated, *Would you be so kind as to give me a drink?* This does not look like a big deal to us. But it was a HUGE deal on so many levels!

FIRST — He is a Jewish male. Men would not talk to women in public in that culture. He is considered a teacher, a rabbi. In the culture, a rabbi would not talk to his wife or his daughter in public; let alone a woman that he didn't know. For a Rabbi to be seen speaking to a woman in public was the end of his reputation — and yet Jesus spoke to this woman. William Barclay notes that there were certain men among the Pharisees called "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees" because they shut their eyes when they saw a woman on the street and so walked into walls and houses! Not only was she a woman; she was a Samaritan woman. Not just a Samaritan woman, but a very sexually loose, confused, wicked Samaritan woman. No decent Jewish man, let alone a Rabbi, would have been seen in her company, or even exchanging a word with her, and yet Jesus spoke to her.

**QUOTE: William Barclay** — *Here was the Son of God, tired and weary and thirsty. Here was the holiest of men, listening with understanding to a sorry story. Here was Jesus breaking through the barriers of nationality and orthodox Jewish custom. Here is.... God so loving the world, not in theory, but in action.*

It is amazing!

Jesus talks to her! This may be the first meaningful conversation this woman has had with anyone except for the man that was taking advantage of her — living and sleeping with her without loving her. This may be the first man who has sat down to speak with her that did not want her for sex. This may be the first theological conversation she has ever had. Jesus wanted to tell her about God's love for her.

**She is STUNNED by it all!** A man speaking to a woman, a rabbi talking to a sinful woman, a Jew talking to a Samaritan woman. **What kind of a man is this?** Oh, this man is the loving, gracious God, who came down from heaven because **this** woman needs to be genuinely loved — and Jesus wants to do that.

This is the target audience of Jesus. This is the demographic that drove Jesus to leave heaven, become a man, and as a man totally exhaust Himself to get to her, and then break every rule to begin a meaningful conversation with her that will end with her life being transformed!

**DON'T MISS THIS** — He has just completely obliterated his reputation. We live in a world where reputation way overvalued and holiness is completely undervalued. Jesus cares only about doing the will of the Father and that means loving people and showing them God's grace. He has zero concern for His reputation, absolute concern for the will of His Father. I'm gonna cheat here and jump down towards the end of the account

***<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.***

**HERE'S THE BIG IDEA** — If our lives are going to resemble Jesus, we need to recognize what Jesus did. He recognized that He was on a mission and that there His Father was the sender.

Before returning to heaven Jesus would say — *As the father has sent me — even so I send you. (John 20:21).*

We are SENT. We are on a MISSION. When we place the most trivial and monotonous bits of our daily routine (school work, work place, kitchen sink and laundry room) in that light, they are transformed. In that light, we should never complain that life is small, tiring and insignificant.

**QUOTE: Alexander Maclaren** — *As with pebbles in some clear brook with the sunshine on it, the water in which they are sunk glorifies and magnifies them. If you lift them out, they are but bits of dull stone; lying beneath the sunlit ripples they are jewels. Plunge.... your life,*

*and all its trivialities, into that great stream, and it will magnify and glorify the smallest and the homeliest. Absolute submission to the divine will, and the ever-present thrilling consciousness of doing it, were the secret of Christ's life, and ought to be the secret of ours.*

## **CLOSING**

There is SO much for us in this amazing encounter between Jesus and this woman. I could go on for another hour, but because we are having communion this morning we need to break off our study at this spot.

THINK ABOUT THIS, of all the pages and passages of Scripture, this is an amazing passage to start our new year! Should the Lord tarry, this year will more than once wear us out! **But on this first Sunday of 2010 we have learned that**

> Jesus — who is fully God, also became fully man — *not an **apparent** Manhood, but a real participation in our limitations and weaknesses. The measure of His love is seen in that, long before Calvary, He entered into the humiliation and sufferings and sorrows of humanity;*

> At this very moment, Jesus wears His humanity as He sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father. As John Ross Macduff said — *The wayfarer of Shechem is enthroned as King of saints. When you and I cry out to Him in our human suffering we get the response of a human heart!*

### **On this first Sunday of 2010 the REASON for His condescension:**

He NEEDED to go through Samaria to have a conversation with the lowest and the loneliest of the outcasts and rejects in Israel. LIFE wanted to confront DEATH!

THAT is our Jesus! He is *the same yesterday, today and forever.*

For those of you who know Jesus, Jesus still needs to go through Samaria. Only now He wants to do it through you and me. The Word still wants to become flesh in you and me. Apart from a living relationship with Jesus it simply is not in us to want to sacrifice or toil for anyone.

For those of you who don't know Jesus, this morning is midday day at Jacob's well.