

“Wellspring of Worship” (4:1-26)

1. Direction or Directive? (1-6)
 - a. No contest with John
 - b. Moving on to spread the message
 - c. Mission to Samaria! “needed or “must” = ironic. Wouldn’t it be obvious to take the shorter route? Or, it was avoided for safety and cleansing/prejudice. Note: our personal missions may not be sensational but common place.
2. Request and Reconnaissance (7-9)
 - a. Request
 - i. Not a condescending command but an invitation not unlike “follow me.”
 - ii. It is often understood (as I imagine) that Jesus didn’t just literally walk up to them initially and command such.
 - iii. Here w/ the woman, He is no doubt polite. “Give me to drink,” sounds abrupt, even impolite, but the narrative is bare, stripped of pleasantries and preliminaries. Dorothy Sayers, referring to those who “infer that He never said ‘Please’ or ‘Thank you,’ ” observed that “perhaps these common courtesies were left unrecorded precisely because they were common”¹
 - b. Reconnaissance
 - i. Vs. 4 likely indicative of mission to preach repentance with the good news.
 - ii. The command to repent (Acts 17:30) is an invitation to eternal life.
 - c. Reconciliation
 - i. Is she a respecter of persons? If prejudice, will it hinder her from truth?
 - ii. It is of note that this narrative compares and contrasts to that of Nicodemus’ encounter. E.g.:
 1. Nicodemus was a man, he is identified by name, a Jew, an esteemed pillar of Jews, comes to Jesus, yet Jesus is a bit cryptic and seemingly playing hard to get, acknowledged Jesus’ authority, comes at night (conveniently), desires to inquire truth from the Rabbi, two rabbis discussing the kingdom not controversial.
 2. The woman not man, unnamed, Samaritan, ashamed outcast in her society, Jesus comes to her, in middle of day (inconveniently), Jesus comes to her and seeks to inform her and plainly reveals Himself, she is unfamiliar w/ full biblical authority, speaking w/ woman – a Samaritan, outcast, and sharing a vessel would be scandalous.
 - iii. Eternal life is relevant to the elite Nicodemuses of the world and the no-named outcasts among us. Reconciliation is offered to all because God is no respecter of persons.
 - iv. Only here in the whole New Testament, ironically in the very act of doing what Jews do not normally do, is Jesus explicitly called “a Jew.” The writer implicitly endorses this label, yet a further irony remains. Jesus comes as an outsider and stranger to the whole world: to the Samaritan woman he is “a Jew,” yet four chapters later, to “the Jews” in Jerusalem he is “a Samaritan” (8:48). At the end of the present scene, this stranger to the world will be revealed as “Savior of the world” (v. 42).²
3. Preposterous or Profound? (10-14)

¹ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 238). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² Ibid. 240.

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- a. A tired and needful Jew who doesn't even have a vessel for drinking/dipping proclaims to provide living (flowing) water (10).
 - b. Vv. 11-12. She pointed out that he had nothing to draw with, the well is not flowing water, and how could he be greater than the great Jacob who dug the well which has fed all of his family and cattle till that day (and still exists today!).
 - c. She could not conceive that anyone could be greater than the venerated Jacob (*cf.* the similar inability of the Jews to conceive anyone greater than Abraham; 8:53).³ More on the differences and animosities later.
 - d. It is ironic that Jesus mimics her reasonable question w/ the profound statement.
 - e. Vv. 13-14. A different kind of living water. This water produces a fountain spring within which flows forevermore!
 - f. Though she, a Samaritan, would be ignorant of such prophesies, John's readers would likely make the connections. Read the following: ‘My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water’ (Je. 2:13)—that is, they have rejected the fresh, ‘running’ supply of God and his faithful goodness, choosing instead the stagnant waters of cisterns they themselves prepared, discovering even then that their cisterns were cracked, and leaving them with nothing to sustain life and blessing. But the prophets look forward to a time when ‘living water will flow out from Jerusalem’ (Zc. 14:8; *cf.* Ezk. 47:9).⁴
4. Taking the Bait or Calling the Bluff? (15-20)
 - a. First she is perplexed, then she is incredulous, and now she takes him up on the offer.
 - b. I'm careful not to attribute idiocy to the souls who encountered Jesus. It would have been apparent that He had no literal water. It may be that she is just calling his bluff as if to say, “OK, let's see this water of yours since you are obviously claiming to be greater than Jacob.”
 - c. Nevertheless, whatever He is promising may be the cure to her not having to make the daily noon day arduous trek to the well. Anything would be nice to avoid the trouble of having a reputation.
 - d. Just as she says and thinks it would be nice to suffer no more, Jesus prods into her personal life (16).
 - e. Her safe answer (w/o revealing too much) (17a).
 - f. Jesus reveals His credentials in part (17b-18). He also points out she has looked for love in all the wrong places.
 - g. She acknowledges He is a prophet and asks about worship (19-20).
 5. Worship via Whom not Where (21-26)
 - a. Location will not matter (21). A very big deal: “After the Assyrians captured Samaria in 722–721 BC, they deported all the Israelites of substance and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites and adhered to some form of their ancient religion (2 Ki. 17–18). After the exile, Jews returning to their homeland, the remains of the southern kingdom, viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels but as racial half-breeds whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements (Ne. 13; *cf.*

³ Guthrie, D. (1994). *John*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1033). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (pp. 218–219). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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Jos., *Ant.* xi. 297–347, esp. 340). About 400 BC the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim; toward the end of the second century BC this was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler in Judea. This combination of events fuelled religious and theological animosities. Certainly by the first century the Samaritans had developed their own religious heritage based on the Pentateuch (they did not accept the other books of the Hebrew Bible as canonical), continuing to focus their worship not on Jerusalem and its temple but on Mount Gerizim. A small number of Samaritans survives to this day.”⁵

- b. Location of Temple worship did matter. Samaritans only had the Pentateuch but the Jews had the canon of revelation (22).
- c. Soon, all who worship the Father will do so through the new Temple (23 cf. 2:19, 21).
- d. Soon and now is. The “now is” would be relevant even before the Cross because believing in Jesus is salvation because Jesus *is* salvation! Thus to have Jesus is to have eternal life (cf. 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54).
- e. “In Spirit and in truth” = through Messiah (24).
- f. An acknowledgement of Messiah to come (Deut. 18:18).
- g. “I am He.” Whereas the Jews had the OT canon (not merely the Pentateuch) they had the prescribed form of worship and the prophets and writings which pointed to the eschatological Temple of Jesus. So there was an indispensable obedience regarding location of the one Temple and priesthood therein following prescribed ceremonies which revealed guilt and pointed to atonement. Now, we find the necessary obedience of prescribed worship through Jesus alone! God made a way through the Son – God made His Son ***the Way!***

PC:

When I attempt to create witnessing opportunities, I find that people are not looking For God or His righteousness (Ro. 3:10-11). That is why I have to point to sin (theirs and mine) and the necessity for repentance, sacrifice, substitution, righteousness, and mercy. Jesus is the ONLY person (place) where all of these meet, and it was upon His cross that my sins’ penalty was paid in full. Therefore, He is the only “place” of accepted worship. Any worship done outside of Jesus is not worship of the living, pure, righteous, almighty God. People look for relief, peace, fulfillment, and purpose yet such cannot be found until one acknowledges and receives her Creator who designed her to find enjoyment in Him. The unnamed outcast woman at the well had looked for love in all the wrong places (multiple husbands), but when she found Christ, she found the love of God and the true “place” of worship.

Jos. Josephus (*Ant.*: *Antiquities*; *Ap.*: *Against Apion*; *Bel.*: *War*; *Vita*: *Life*).

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⁵ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 216). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.