

Woman of Samaria at the Well

John 4:5–7, 9, 10, 13–15 **Who so ever, 19** **I perceive, 25** **I know, 26, 28, 29**

“Jesus’ early ministry in the region of Judea was gaining increasing attention. The growing number of his disciples excited the curiosity of the Pharisees, who constituted the ruling religious class. The growth of any messianic movement could easily be interpreted as having political overtones, and Jesus did not want to become involved in any outward conflict with the state, whether Jewish or Roman. In order to avoid a direct clash, he left Judea and journeyed northward to Galilee. . . . The shortest route from Jerusalem to Galilee lay on the high road straight through Samaritan territory”
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5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Sychar: built by Omri, Jewish northern king

that Jacob gave to his son Joseph] Abraham bought the ground, Jacob gave it to Joseph, and Joseph was buried there. (“Cambridge Bible”)

6 Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

“Jacob's well - This is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was called "Jacob's well," probably, either because it was handed down by tradition that he dug it, or because it was near to the land which he gave to Joseph.

“Sat thus - Jesus was weary, and, being thus weary, sat down on the well. The word translated "on" here may denote also by - he sat down "by" the well, or near it.

“The sixth hour - About twelve o'clock noon. This was the common time of the Jewish meal, and this was the reason why his disciples were gone away to buy food. (Barnes' notes).

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

“The Samaritans are the descendants of two groups: (a) the remnant of the native Israelites who were not deported at the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.E.;

(b) foreign colonists brought in from Babylonia and Media by the Assyrian conquerors of Samaria (II Kings 17:24). There was theological opposition between these northerners and the Jews of the South because of the Samaritan refusal to worship at Jerusalem. . . . There was a general assumption that the Samaritans were ritually impure” (*AYB John i-xii.170*).

“Many Jews would not travel by that road, for they regarded any contact with Samaritans as defiling” (*EBC 9.54*).

“*Give me to drink*. This was in the heat of the day, and Jesus was weary with his journey” (Barnes 28).

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

“Undoubtedly the woman was surprised to find a man sitting by the well and doubly surprised to be addressed by a Jew. Jesus' initial approach was by a

simple request for water, which would presuppose a favorable response. One would hardly refuse a drink of cold water to a thirsty traveler in the heat of the day. The request did have a surprising element, however, for no Jewish rabbi would have volunteered to carry on a public conversation with a woman, nor would he have deigned to drink from a Samaritan's cup, as she implied by her answer" (*EBC* 9.54).

"The Jews have no dealings. Our Lord had broken down the barrier by asking a favor. He wished to encourage her to ask a favor of him, and so to give him an opportunity of leading her to the truth" (Dummelow 781).

"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!' Jesus paid no attention to her flippancy or to her bitterness. He was more interested in winning the woman than in winning an argument" (*EBC* 9.54).

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

"The gift of God. i.e. all the blessings offered to us in Christ, especially the gift of eternal life" (Dummelow 781).

"He appealed to her curiosity by the phrase 'If you knew.' He implied that because of the nature of his person he could bestow on her a gift of God that would be greater than any ordinary water. His allusion was intended to lift her level of thinking from that of material need to spiritual realities" (*EBC* 9.54).

"Jesus is speaking of the water of life; the woman is thinking of flowing water, so much more desirable than the flat water of cisterns" (*AYB John i-xii.170*).

"Living water. The Jews used the expression living water to denote springs, or fountains, or running streams, in opposition to dead and stagnant water. Jesus here means to denote by it his doctrine, or his grace and religion, in opposition to the impure and dead notions of the Jews and Samaritans" (Barnes 282).

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

“Jesus’ second reply emphasized the contrast between the water in the well and what he intended to give. The material water would allay thirst only temporarily; the spiritual water would quench the inner thirst forever. The water in the well had to be drawn up with hard labor; the spiritual water would bubble up from within. Because of her nonspiritual perspective, the woman’s interests were very selfish. All she wanted was something to save the effort of the long, hot trip from the village” (*EBC* 9.55).

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

“*The water that I shall give him.* Jesus here refers, without doubt, to his teaching, his grace, his Spirit, and the benefits which come into the soul that embraces his gospel. It is a striking image, and especially in eastern countries, where there are vast deserts, and often a great want of water. The soul by nature is like such a desert, or like a traveller wandering through such a desert. It is thirsting for happiness, and seeking it everywhere, and finds it not. It looks in all directions, tries all objects, but in vain. Nothing meets its desires. Though a sinner seeks for joy in wealth and pleasures, yet he is not satisfied. He still thirsts for more, and seeks still for happiness in some new enjoyment.

“*shall never thirst.* He shall be satisfied with this; and will not have a sense of want, a distressing feeling that it is not adapted to him. He who drinks this will not wish to seek for happiness in other objects. Satisfied with the grace of Christ, he will not desire the pleasures and amusements of this world. And this will be for ever—in this world, and the world to come . . . the grace of Christ shall be in his heart.

“*springing up.* This is a beautiful image. It shall bubble or spring up like a fountain. It is not like a stagnant pool; not like a deep well; but like an ever-living fountain that plays at all seasons of the year, in heat and cold, and in all external circumstances of weather, whether foul or fair, wet or dry. It is

eternal in its nature and supply, and will continue to live on for ever” (Barnes 282).

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

“These mocking words show that the woman was still unimpressed” (Dummelow 782).

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

“Finding her impervious to gentleness, our Lord uses stronger measures. He reveals himself to her as a prophet, and with a prophet’s authority reveals and rebukes her sin” (Dummelow 782).

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

“Realizing his superhuman knowledge, the woman called him a prophet; but then she tried to divert him. Since his probing was becoming uncomfortably personal, she began to argue a religious issue. She raised the old controversy between Jews and Samaritans, whether worship should be offered on Mount Gerizim, at the foot of which they stood, or at Jerusalem, where Solomon’s temple had been built” (*EBC* 9.55).

“The woman is ashamed, and seeks to change the conversation. Our Lord kindly permits it, knowing that the words he has spoken will bear fruit. She asks him, since he is a prophet, to pronounce upon the main point in dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans argue from Deut. 27:4 that Gerizim was the one divinely appointed place of sacrifice, because there God had commanded an altar to be raised and the Law inscribed” (Dummelow 782).

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

“The Samaritan idea of the Messiah was religious, not political, and hence Jesus could here proclaim himself as the Messiah without causing a political ferment: contrast his action among the Jews” (Dummelow 782).

“This is the one occasion when Jesus voluntarily declared his messiahship. The synoptic Gospels show that normally he did not make such a public claim; on the contrary, he urged his disciples to say nothing about it (Matt. 16:20; Mark 8:29-30; Luke 9:20-21). In Galilee, where there were many would-be Messiahs and a constant unrest based on the messianic hope, such a claim would have been dangerous. In Samaria the concept would probably have been regarded more as religious than political and would have elicited a ready hearing for his teaching rather than a subversive revolt” (*EBC* 9.56).

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

“As the disciples approached, the woman made her way back to Sychar to report the interview to her fellow villagers. She was so excited that she forgot her water pot. At the village she was bold enough to suggest that perhaps the new person she had met might be the Messiah. ‘You don’t suppose this could be the Messiah, do you?’ would be a fair translation of her words” (*EBC* 9.57).