

The Greatest Life Ever Lived

A Study in the Incarnate Life of Jesus Christ and An Exposition of the Four Gospels

LESSON XXVII : THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL — JESUS RETURNS TO GALILEE

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	related passages
4:12	1:14	3:19,20; 4:14	4:1-45	

John Cast into Prison — Jesus Leaves Judaea

Lk 3:19,20 But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison. : harmonies differ at this point, some giving in detail the account of John's imprisonment while others saving it till later and taking a "retrospective" approach. While chronologically it may fit here I will follow Robertson's account which saves the imprisonment until later, mainly because when the account is given, at least part of the account itself is given in retrospection as Herod looks back on what he had done.

Mt 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee;

Mk 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Lk 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about.

Jn 4:1-4a When therefore the LORD knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

Jesus leaves Judea not only because John had been cast into prison but that since John's imprisonment, He had gained in popularity which made Him the object even more so of the Pharisees' attention. Knowing His time was not at hand to be delivered up, He departed to allow events to smooth down.

Christ's humanity is captured in Jn 4:1: the word for *knew* could be translated *learned*, He had *come to know*, *He perceived*. Wuest: "Then, when the Lord came to know that the Pharisees heard that Jesus was constantly making and baptizing more disciples than John,..." This is the paradox woven throughout the scriptures but especially in the gospels: Jesus is the omniscient Son of God but in the state of His humility it is said He departed when He *learned* of the Pharisees' watching Him.

Jn 4:2 As mentioned in the last lesson, I personally believe Jesus never baptized anyone due to the reaction that would have had upon man's sinful pride. Vincent comments that the tense indicates that it was not Jesus' practice to baptize. But it is interesting to note that when His disciples were baptizing under the command of Jesus, it is said that Jesus was baptizing (Jn 4:1). The same holds true for His ministers today.

Mt 4:12, *was cast into prison*: the verb means, first, to *give*, or *hand over* to another. So, to *surrender* a city or a person, often with the accompanying notion of treachery; therefore, *was delivered up*. [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:1, Pharisees: the apostle John never alludes to the Sadducees by name. The Pharisees represented the opposition to Jesus, the most powerful and dangerous of the Jewish sects. [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jesus with the Samaritan Woman at the Well

Jn 4:4b And he must needs go through Samaria. : Jesus *had* to go through Samaria. There were several roads from Galilee to Judea: one on the coast, another through Perea, and another through the heart of Samaria. The road through Samaria was the shortest and often used by Jews going to the festivals. But strict Jews would cross the river Jordan, travel south on the eastern side of the river then cross it again as they approached Jerusalem. "If the need was pressing, they might go through Samaria, but not otherwise. The Jewish historian Josephus uses language much like that of John here when he says, 'For rapid travel it was necessary to take that route [i.e. through Samaria].' But only dire necessity would cause strict Jews to do this.... [It is] noteworthy that John says that Jesus 'had to' go through Samaria. We are surely to understand this as pertaining to His mission, not to the necessities of His journey. Jesus could scarcely have been in such a hurry that He had to take a shortcut. If He was, John tells us nothing about it. No, the necessity lay in who Jesus was and what He was doing. For the Son of God the bitterness that divided the two nations was not something to be complied with but something to be overcome. God loves the Samaritans as well as the Jews, and it was necessary accordingly that the Son of God should go through Samaria and meet the needs of Samaritans." [Morris, *John*]

Jn 4:5 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. : some identify Sychar with modern-day Nablous, regarded as a corruption of Sichem. Some modern authorities, however, argue that a place so famous as Schechem would not be referred to under another name and identify the site with Askar, about two miles east of Nablous. If Askar, then to the W.N.W. of is Gerizim, the mount of the blessing (Deut 27:12). Behind Askar and to the N.E. of Gerizim rises the more elevated Ebal, the mount of the curse (Deut 27:13). On the southern slope of Gerizim is a

synagogue which contains the scrolls of the Samaritan Pentateuch.

Jesus stopped about a half-mile S.S.W. of Sychar where according to Gen 33:19 was a large tract of land bought by Jacob for a hundred pieces of silver. It probably included the place where the well was dug which was therefore near the burial-lot of Joseph. Jacob later gave the lot to Joseph (Gen 48: 22). Years later when Joseph died in Egypt, he was embalmed to be buried in this lot after the return from Egypt by Israel (Gen 50:25,26; Josh 24:32).

“A city called Sychar: This city was anciently called Shechem. It seems to have been situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim, in the province of Samaria, on which the temple of the Samaritans was built. After the ruin of Samaria by Salmanezer, Sychar, or Shechem, became the capital of the Samaritans; and it continued so, according to Josephus, in the time of Alexander the Great. It was about ten miles from Shiloh, forty from Jerusalem, and fifty-two from Jericho. It probably got the name of Sychar, which signifies drunken, from the drunkenness of its inhabitants. With this crime the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 28:1,3,7,8) solemnly charges the Ephraimites, within whose limits the city stood. This place is remarkable in the Scriptures: 1. As being that where Abram first stopped on his coming from Haran to Canaan. 2. Where God first appeared to that patriarch, and promised to give the land to his seed. 3. The place where Abram first built an altar to the Lord, and called upon his name, Genesis 12:7.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Jn 4:6 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. : “Jews, Samaritans, Mohammedians, and Christians agree in associating this spring with the patriarch Jacob. There is not a good reason to doubt the truth of this tradition.” [Hendriksen, *John*] The well itself is more than 100 feet deep.

A couple different words are used here: the word used twice in this verse means a *fountain* or *spring*, as a *spring-fed well* and is also found in v14: the water that I shall give him shall be in him a *well (fountain)* of water springing up. Being spring-fed, the water in the bottom of the well bubbled up. The other word is found in v11,12 and is used of any well, whether spring-fed or not. Wuest: “Then Jesus, having become wearied to the point of exhaustion by reason of His journey, was sitting thus at the spring.”

Jesus’ humanity is evidenced here: He was tired, dusty and thirsty. All these were real and is not imagined; He felt as we would have felt after a day’s walk in the sun.

The sixth hour: if following the Jewish time-scheme, this would have been twelve noon. More likely however is that John is following the Roman time-scheme, making this six in the afternoon.

- this would agree with his probable usage in Jn 1:39 [see lesson 22]
- this method is definitely used in Jn 20:19 of the crucifixion
- this would have been a usual time for drawing water (Gen 24:11)
- there would have still been plenty of time for the events recorded later in the chapter
- it is more likely that there would have been more Samaritans which would have been free to come see Jesus; if at noon many would have still been at their work
- if it was near the evening we could understand the people’s request for Jesus to stay, which reminds us of the language in Lk 24:29 *abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.*

None of these arguments are conclusive and most of them may be used for either noon or six in the evening. Clarke gives the time as noon adding the mid-day heat would have contributed to the exhaustion of the Lord Jesus, and that noon was a common time for eating and accounts for the disciples buying food. Others states this was noon since the woman, being of ill-repute came at noon to avoid social contact. John Wesley agrees it was noon. Vincent wisely just states that this would be noon if used in the Jewish reckoning but 5-6 PM is using the Roman mode, although he does add that the evening was the usual time for drawing water. The exact time is unimportant.

Jn 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. : the comparison between the preceding chapter and this has often been brought forth:

John 3	John 4
dealing with a man	dealing with a woman
a Jew	a Samaritan
trained in the Scriptures	ignorant of much Biblical teaching
person of high moral standing	person of low repute

Quite a bit may be surmised of this woman from the narrative given. She was not from the city of Samaria itself but from the province of Samaria. If she lived in Samaria it would have been a two-hour walk to the well. Most likely she lived in Sychar (v5, 28). Her coming to fetch water was customary: “That this was the employment of the females, we see in different parts of the Sacred Writings. See Genesis 24:11, etc.; Exodus 2:16. The Jews say that those who wished to get wives went to the wells where young women were accustomed to come and draw water; and it is supposed that women of ill fame frequented such places also.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “A woman: Held in low esteem by the popular teachers; a Samaritan, and therefore despised by the Jews; poor, for drawing water was not, as in earlier times, performed by women of station (Genesis 24:15; 29:9). A Samaritan by race

and religion.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

In asking for a drink, it is reasonable to assume she had already drawn water from the well. More than a mere desire to quench His thirst (which was a real desire), this was an opening for a conversation.

As the master soul-winner, Jesus appealed to her **sympathy** (‘give Me a drink’), to her **curiosity** (‘if thou knewest...’), to her desire for **ultimate rest and satisfaction** (‘whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will in no way be thirsty forever’), and to her **conscience** (‘go, call your husband’). As a typical sinner that shrinks away from holiness, we will see how she tries to sidetrack Jesus by bringing up things of secondary importance rather than dealing with the real need of her soul.

Jn 4:8 (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) : John the apostle interjects a word of explanation as to why it would have been natural for Jesus to ask the woman, seeing that He was alone and had no means to draw water Himself. This also serves to balance the historical record of the Jewish / Samaritan relationship: the Jews and Samaritans were just short of being bitter enemies, and true loyal Jews avoided contact with them, however this was not to say there were no dealings at all since His disciples had gone to town to buy provisions.

Jn 4:9 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. : Perhaps by His accent or His style of dress, the woman immediately knew He was not a Samaritan and questioned His actions. This is not merely a matter of male-female conversing in public (see below, v27) but a Jewish-Samaritan issue. Summation:

- in 722 BC the Assyrians capture the northern kingdom of Israel, deporting the captives to foreign lands and bringing in other inhabitants to dwell in the conquered territory
- through intermarriage with the poor left in Israel with the foreigners came a half-breed race which was called Samaritan after the capital city of Samaria
- believing in national deities, the foreigners brought back a priest who would teach them the “law of the god of the land” since it was overrun with wild beasts. Judaism became adulterated with paganism (cp Catholicism)
- upon the return of Jews from the Babylonian captivity in 536 BC, the temple and city of Jerusalem began being rebuilt. Being refused to be allowed to help in this project, the Samaritans built a temple of their own on Mt Gerizim. Although the temple was destroyed by the Maccabees (about 128 BC), the Samaritans continued to offer sacrifices where the altar stood.
- concerning their beliefs, they rejected worship in Jerusalem and accepted only the Pentateuch as their scriptures.

The word translated “have (no) dealings with” may as well be translated “(do not) use [vessels] together with”, the sense being the Jews and Samaritans did have dealings to some extent (shown by the disciples going to town to buy food), yet a Jew would consider it unclean ceremonially to use the same vessels as a Samaritan. “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans: Perhaps better, Jews have no communion with Samaritans. These words appear to be added by the evangelist himself, in explanation of the woman’s question. The original word, sugxrōntai, has been variously translated and understood. It comes from *sun*, together, and *xraomai*, I use, or borrow: hence it has been understood to mean, the Jews will be under no kind of obligation to the Samaritans — will borrow nothing from them — will not drink out of the same cup or well with them — will not sit down to meals with them, nor eat out of the same vessel—will have no religious connection, no commercial dealings with them. The word communion, I think, fully expresses the sense of the original; and, being as extensive in its meaning as our word dealings, is capable of as general an interpretation. The deadly hatred that subsisted between these two nations is known to all. The Jews cursed them, and believed them to be accursed. Their most merciful wish to the Samaritans was, that they might have no part in the resurrection; or, in other words, that they might be annihilated.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “Have no dealings: have no familiar or friendly intercourse with. That they had dealings of some kind is shown by the disciples going into the city to buy provisions.... The Jews treated the Samaritans with every mark of contempt, and accused them of falsehood, folly, and irreligion. The Samaritans sold Jews into slavery when they had them in their power, lighted spurious signals for the beacon-fires kindled to announce the beginnings of months, and waylaid and killed pilgrims on their road to Jerusalem.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:10 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. : Jesus flames her curiosity to develop and direct the conversation. Jesus uses “living water” in a two-fold meaning. “Living water” was spring-water, bubbling up by itself, in distinction from rain water which had to be collected in cisterns. The woman takes the immediate meaning to be that Jesus would give of her the water at the very bottom of the well, not the water that had been sitting on the top for a while. Jesus uses this to picture everlasting life. “Living water: by this expression, which was common to the inhabitants both of the east and of the west, is always meant spring water, in opposition to dead, stagnant water contained in ponds, pools, tanks, or cisterns; and what our Lord means by it is evidently the Holy Spirit, as may be seen, John 7:38,39. As water quenches the thirst, refreshes and invigorates the body, purifies things defiled, and renders the earth fruitful, so it is an apt emblem of the gift of the Holy Ghost, which so satisfies the souls that receive it that they thirst no more for earthly good: it purifies also from all spiritual defilement, on which account it is emphatically styled the Holy Spirit; and it makes those who receive it fruitful in every good word and work.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

There is a mild rebuke in Jesus’ response as well: “I asked for a lesser gift, ordinary water which you hesitate to give; if you had

asked Me for a much greater gift of living water, the supreme gift of everlasting life, I would not have hesitated to give to you at once.” Jesus softens the rebuke by her ignorance of *who He was* and *what the gift of God was*.

The gift: only here in the Gospels, though Luke uses it in Acts four times, and the kindred adverb, *freely*, is found once in Matthew. The word carries the sense of a *bountiful, free, honorable* gift.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:11,12 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? : Thinking of the physical only, the woman is confused as to how He was to get this spring water from the bottom of the well. In referencing back to the patriarch through Joseph, she conveniently forgets her mixed heritage. Her question expects a negative answer, yet we see she is thinking along the lines of the greatness of this stranger she has met.

“*Thou hast nothing to draw with* : Thou hast no bucket. Good water is not plentiful in the east; and travelers are often obliged to carry leathern bottles or buckets with them, and a line also, to let them down into the deep wells, in order to draw up water. If the well was in our Lord’s time, as it was found by Mr. Maundrell, thirty-five yards deep, it would require a considerable line to reach it; and with such it is not likely that even the disciples of our Lord were provided. The woman might well say, The well is deep, and thou hast nothing to draw with; whence then hast thou that living water?” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

“Our father Jacob: the Samaritans claimed descent from Joseph, as representing the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:13,14 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 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. : Jesus appeals to her desire for ultimate rest and satisfaction.

Physical water from Jacob’s Well	Living Water which Jesus bestows
cannot prevent one from becoming thirsty again and again and again	makes one lose the inner thirst forever, giving lasting satisfaction; once a believer, always a believer, once reborn, always reborn
remaining outside of the soul, it is incapable of filling the needs of the soul	enters the soul and remaining within, as a source of spiritual satisfaction, fulfillment and refreshment
is limited in quantity, and lessens whenever we drink it	is living water, i.e. a self-perpetuating spring bubbling up from within

{ taken primarily from Hendriksen, *John* }

“Whosoever drinketh: The AV renders the two expressions in the same way, but there is a difference in the pronouns, indicated, though very vaguely, by *every one that* and *whosoever*, besides a more striking difference in the verb *drinketh*. In the former case [v13], the article with the participle indicates something *habitual*; every one that drinks *repeatedly*, as men ordinarily do on the recurrence of their thirst. In ver. 14 the definite aorist tense expresses a *single act*, something done once for all. Literally, *he who may have drunk*. [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “Answered Jesus and said to her, Everyone who keeps on drinking of this water shall thirst again. But whoever takes a drink of the water which I shall give him, shall positively not thirst, no, never, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water gushing up into life eternal.”

“Shall never thirst: the double negative is a very strong mode of statement, equivalent to *by no means*, or *in nowise*. It must not be understood, however, that the reception of the divine life by a believer does away with all further desire. On the contrary, it generates new desires. The drinking of the living water is put as a single act, in order to indicate the divine principle of life as containing *in itself alone* the satisfaction of all holy desires as they successively arise; in contrast with human sources, which are soon exhausted, and drive one to other fountains. Holy desire, no matter how large or how varied it may become, will always seek and find its satisfaction in Christ, and in Christ only.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. : the woman becomes interested in this water, although at this point she still believes it is physical water which would at least keep her from having to come daily to the well to refresh her supply.

Jn 4:16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. : Note the direction Jesus takes. Had He not told the woman that all she had to do was ask and she could have had this water (v10)? Then why does He not immediately comply with her request? This is comparable to many churches in our culture who gives the proper call, “believe on Jesus” but responds prior to the work of the Spirit being complete. She said yes but Jesus wanted more than a name on the records. Jesus knows that as of yet she had not seen the true nature of this spiritual gift He spoke of in v10 and therefore He continues to work to show the Samaritan that her real need was not physical or material but the sin within. **Unfortunately there are many today deceived in our churches who have done what over-zealous Christians have told them to do: “pray this prayer after me and thou shalt be saved” prior to seeing the real need of their soul. They sought Jesus for relief of physical needs while their true spiritual need remained unmet.** “Does the woman desire living water? Then there must be a thirst for this water. This thirst will not be truly awakened unless there be a sense of guilt, a consciousness of sin. The mention of her husband is the best means of reminding this woman of her immoral life.” [Hendriksen, *John*] “Our Lord appears to have spoken these words for two purposes: 1. To make

the woman consider her own state. 2. To show her that He knew her heart, and the secret actions of her life; and was therefore well qualified to teach her heavenly truths.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Jn 4:17, 18 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. : This is a critical junction, and the rest of the chapter would have been different if she would have run from her true self. **Note the absence of blaming others, or even lying to cover the truth of her life. She does not like it, but at least she responds truthfully.** That she has been struck to the soul is evidenced by her sudden close-mouthness. While being so talkative (note v9 she uses eleven words in the Gk, v15 she uses thirteen words, and in v11,12 she uses forty-two words!) but when confronted with her true need, she abruptly says “not I-have husband”, three words in the Greek. But in her answer, her guard is thrown up and the *full* truth is not told.

Jesus lays bare her immoral life of having five previous husbands and now living with one out of wedlock (is she an American?). Of course there’s the possibility that one or two had died, but the tone seems to indicate a life of divorce - remarriage. Among the most liberal of the Jews a man could divorce his wife for any reason in which she did not please him (Dt 24:1), and it should be assumed that the conditions among the Samaritans were not much better. Clarke however does bring an uncommon meaning here: “It is not clear that this woman was a prostitute: she might have been legally married to those five, and might have been divorced through some misbehavior of her own, not amounting to adultery; for the adulteress was to be put to death, both by the Jewish and Samaritan law, not divorced: or she might have been cast off through some caprice of her husband; for, in the time of our Lord, divorces were very common among the Jews, so that a man put away his wife for any fault.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] This however does not explain her living with another at the present time.

Jn 4:19,20 The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. : she calls Him a prophet, one who knows and reveals secrets. She then brings forth a question, probably for several reasons: (1) being a prophet He could now answer a longing question in her heart of spiritual things, but (2) as any sinner does, she could be bringing forth the question to divert the conversation from a course she does not like. **This is a common tactic of Satan and one at which many stumble when dealing with others about their souls. Maybe in the rush of showing off our biblical knowledge we forget our real purpose of the conversation in the first place?** If the conversation could be turned to matters of little import at this point, the salvation experience (humanly speaking) would be put off.

“I perceive: not immediate perception, but rather, *I perceive as I observe thee longer and more carefully.*” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “The woman says to Him, Sir, as I am carefully observing you, I am coming to the place where I see that you are a prophet.”

Jn 4:21-24 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. : Note how Jesus handles the diversionary tactic: He answers the question yet in such a manner to keep on the desired course. His goal is her soul. “Jesus answers that not *where* one worships matters but *the attitude of heart and mind and the obedience to God’s truth regarding the object and method of worship* is what matters. It is not the *where* but the *how* and the *what* that is all-important.” [Hendriksen, *John*] The sense is that it is not *exclusively* in this mountain nor *exclusively* in Jerusalem that men will worship.

The Samaritans, by rejecting all but the Pentateuch and by intermingling Pagan beliefs, have been worshipping something created rather than God as revealed in the scriptures. But *the* salvation, the sum-total of all God grants to us through the redemptive work of Christ, finds it’s source in the Jewish teaching. **How many today worship a god of their own creation rather than accepting Him as revealed in the scriptures?**

To Christ, all that is to come has come in Himself. The time was near when the veil of the temple would be torn in two and worship would find it’s center in the assembling of believers rather than at a single Temple. That worship would be:

- **spiritual** : worship worthy of His name is not hampered by physical considerations, whether one prays in this place or that place. This worship is spiritual, that which demands our inner-most being’s involvement.
- **based on the truth** : based on the clear and definite knowledge of God as revealed in His word and shown forth in obedience.

For God searches for such: not in the sense that God, having a need of worship, searches to and fro for those who have made themselves such worshippers. Rather the sense is that *He* does the searching for those of His chosen to *make them* such worshippers. **Our heart’s cry should be “Father, make it so in me!”**

God is spirit: in the sense that “completely spiritual in His essence is God. He is not a stone-deity or tree-deity, neither is He a mountain-deity so that He has to be worshiped on this or that specific mountain; e.g. Gerizim! He is an independent, incorporeal, personal Being.” [Hendriksen, *John*] “God is a Spirit: This is one of the first, the greatest, the most sublime, and necessary truths in the compass of nature! There is a God, the cause of all things — the fountain of all perfection — without parts or dimensions, for He is ETERNAL — filling the heavens and the earth — pervading, governing, and upholding all things: for He is an infinite

SPIRIT! This God can be pleased only with that which resembles Himself: therefore He must hate sin and sinfulness; and can delight in those only who are made partakers of His own Divine nature. As all creatures were made by Him, so all owe Him obedience and reverence; but, to be acceptable to this infinite Spirit, the worship must be of a spiritual nature — must spring from the heart, through the influence of the Holy Ghost: and it must be in TRUTH, not only in sincerity, but performed according to that Divine revelation which He has given men of Himself. A man worships God in spirit, when, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he brings all his affections, appetites, and desires to the throne of God; and he worships Him in truth, when every purpose and passion of his heart, and when every act of his religious worship, is guided and regulated by the word of God.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “God is a Spirit: Or, as Rev., in margins, *God is spirit*. *Spirit* is the emphatic word; *Spirit* is God. The phrase describes the *nature*, not the *personality* of God. Compare the expressions, *God is light*; *God is love* (1 John 1:5; 4:8).” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:25,26 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. : The woman’s thoughts are turned to the coming Messiah, although at this point she does not recognize Jesus as such. Jesus therefore discloses His identity to her, something He was careful not to do in Judea where their reaction would have led to His premature death. “I am He, literally, *I am*. The less political conception of the Samaritan Messiah made it possible for Jesus to announce Himself to the woman without fear of being misunderstood as He was by the Jews.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? : Note the providential timing of God: His disciples return not too early to interrupt the conversation, but not too late to miss His disclosure to the woman and His condescending to her for the sake of missions.

They were amazed for was He not a Rabbi, and the rabbinical rules was “Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no not with his own wife.” But out of reverence, none dared interrupt Him nor questioned His motives. “Marveled that he talked with the woman: Because it was contrary to the custom of the eastern countries; and there are many canons, among the rabbins, against it. To the present time, if a man meet even his own wife in the street, he does not speak to her; and this is done to keep up the appearance of a chastity and temperance of which the eastern world knows nothing... A great man has said, ‘Converse sparingly, if at all, with women; and never alone.’ Every minister of the Gospel will do well to attend to this advice.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “The woman; correctly, *a woman*. They were surprised, not at His talking with *that* woman, but that their teacher should converse with *any* woman in public. The Rabbinical writings taught that it was beneath a man’s dignity to converse with women. It was one of the six things which a Rabbi might not do. ‘Let no one,’ it is written, ‘converse with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife.’ It was also held in these writings that a woman was incapable of profound religious instruction. ‘Rather burn the sayings of the law than teach them to women.’ [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Jn 4:28-30 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him. : Typically it is said the woman was so excited she ran off forgetting her waterpot, which is possible. It is just as possible however that what Jesus was saying spoke to her heart and she intentionally left the waterpot for Him to drink, the wall between her and the Jews broken down. Either is possible but note it does not say “she forgot” but that “she left” the waterpot.

Returning to Sychar she gathered a crowd, perking their interest by giving her testimony then leaving the question with them: “He is not, perhaps, the Christ, is He?” “The Jews believed that one essential characteristic of the Messiah would be, that he should be able to tell the secrets of all hearts. This they believed was predicted, Isaiah 11:2, 3. When the famous impostor Barchochab, who rose up under the empire of Adrian, about a hundred years after the incarnation, professed himself to be the Messiah, after having been deceived by him for two years, they at last thought of putting his divinity to proof on this ground: they brought before him persons whom he did not know, some of whom were very vicious, and others of a different character; they desired him to point out who were the righteous, and who were the wicked; which when he could not do, they rose up and put him to death.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Jesus Speaks to His Few Disciples of the Harvest

Jn 4:31-34 In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. : Recovering from their amazement, their genuine concern for His welfare is shown by their urging Him to eat. But the burden in His soul supersedes His physical needs, and He stands unaware of His hunger. He replies that He has a spiritual hunger which consumes His being. As the woman did not immediately see the spiritual implications, they naturally take His answer at face value: “Jesus, please eat.” “No thanks, I’m not hungry. I have food that you are unaware of.” “What, did someone else give Him something to eat?” Without a doubt we would have replied the same.

My food — that which imparts satisfaction to me and in which My soul delights — is to do the will of My Sender and finish His work. In His High-Priestly prayer the night of the betrayal, Jesus states this work was accomplished (Jn 17:4). “In these words, our blessed Lord teaches a lesson of zeal and earnestness to His apostles, and to all their successors in the Christian ministry. Let the salvation of souls lie nearer your heart than life itself. Let eating and drinking, labor and rest, reading, thinking, study, prayer, and all things, be directed to the accomplishment of this great work. Ministers of Jesus! imitate your Lord! Souls are perishing for lack

of knowledge — God has given you the key of the kingdom, the knowledge of his word — O open unto them the gate of life! They are dropping by thousands into hell! O pluck the brands out of the burning!” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Jn 4:35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. : It is here that we may guess as to the length of His Judean ministry spoken of in the last lesson.

- Some take the four months literally. We found Jesus in Jerusalem during the Passover of probably AD 27 [March / April; see lessons 24,25], staying in Judea for further ministry opportunities [see lesson 26]. The harvest time in this region was late April / early May. If the four months spoken is literally four months, this would make Jesus’ Samaritan visit sometime in December / January, making His Judean stay a little more than eight months. Hendriksen says the seed-time is actually longer than four months and therefore the saying itself would be incorrect. He also adds that no known proverb of this sort has been found to substantiate the saying. He also states the wording seems to indicate this is not a proverb: if a proverb, one would probably say “there are four months between seedtime and harvest” or “there are four months, then the harvest”, but one would probably *not* say “there are *yet* four months and then the harvest.”
- Others take this to be a proverb and therefore of no use in timing, saying it was stated to emphasize the fact of the spiritual harvest being near. If this is true, there is no way of knowing the length of His time in Judea

While the *grain*-harvest may be still four months away, the *soul*-harvest is ripe for plucking. Look (= scan) the fields, the coming Samaritans, and consider them ready to be brought to the saving knowledge of the Messiah. Wuest: “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes at once, and view attentively the fields, that they are white for harvest.”

Jn 4:36-38 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors. : The reaper receives wages (a reward) and gathers fruit for everlasting life; therefore the sower and the reaper rejoices together. In the natural realm, the sower and the reaper is the same person although there are occasions where one may sow but not be present for the harvest, while another may reap what another had the toil of sowing. But in the spiritual realm, the sower and the reaper are often two different people. “Together: the construction is peculiar: *that both the sower may rejoice together and the reaper. Together* signifies not *in common*, but *simultaneously*. So quickly does the harvest follow the gospel-seed sown among the Samaritans, that the sower and the reaper rejoice together.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] “Already the heavenly sower, Jesus Christ, becomes the reaper of the produce of the seed which He had so lately sown; and receives the wages which He desired, the high gratification of saving immortal souls; and gathers in His fruit unto eternal life. So the sower and the reaper, who are here one and the same person, rejoiced together, having seen the seed time and the harvest take place on the same day. The sower had not time to leave the field which he had sown, till it was full time to gather in the harvest!” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

I sent you to reap — when? No previous commission is so recorded by Jesus, and it must be remembered that chronologically this is very early in the ministry of Christ. The most probable sense is that Jesus is referring to this very time when they were about to reap the harvest of Samaritans.

The Samaritans Return Unto Jesus

Jn 4:39-42 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. : As the people of the city of Sychar came, they received Him hospitably, believing in Him although this undoubtedly included those who believed in Him for the wrong reason. In keeping with the will of His Father, Jesus only remained two days in this one town then continued His journey to Galilee. Nothing here conflicts with the orders He would later give to go to the children of Israel only (Matt 10:5). It must also be kept in mind that this restriction was set aside and supplanted by the Great Commission in which there were no bounds.

Note that while the people came because of the testimony of the woman, they believed because of His word. Salvation requires a personal meeting of the Saviour and is not a second-hand experience.

The Samaritans recognized something the Jews themselves were hesitant to accept: although salvation is *from* the Jews, it is *for* the world, those elect from every nation.

Jesus Returns Into Galilee

Jn 4:43-45 Now after two days He departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country. Then when He was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received Him, having seen all the things that He did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast. : Jesus’ statement here has several interpretations [following Hendriksen, *John*] :

- *Jesus keeps with His plan to go to Galilee in spite of the fact that a prophet has no honor in his fatherland :* probably

not since the verse says Jesus went *because* He knew He would not get honor, not in spite of it.

■ *Jesus proceeds to Galilee because He knows that in His fatherland (i.e. Judea) His labor has been fruitless* : probably not since everywhere else the term “His own country” refers to Galilee and Nazareth (in Galilee) where He matured to manhood. Only His birth was in Judea (Bethlehem).

■ *Jesus goes into Galilee but not until He won esteem in Jerusalem, for He knew a prophet has no honor in His own country. Having won esteem in Judea, He finds Galilee ready to welcome Him* : this does do justice to the verses following in which He is accepted due to His wonderful works during the Passover, and it does call Galilee His fatherland, and it at least applies the causal relationship properly. But it may be reading too much into the text, since it does not say He went because now He knew He would be accepted. In accepting this assumes that Jesus did indeed receive honor in Galilee due to His works in Jerusalem. But in the other places this proverb is given, it has exactly the opposite meaning (Matt 13:54-58; Mk 6:1-6; Lk 4:16-30) where the people try to kill Him, not honor Him! Moreover it merely says in v45 that the people welcomed Him due to His works in Jerusalem. Considering Jesus’ comments in 4:48 this welcoming must have all been external and selfishly motivated, far from what we would consider to be “honoring” Jesus.

■ *Jesus went into Galilee because He knew He would not receive honor and therefore would not prematurely cause a collision between Himself and the Pharisees, allowing Him time to finish His work* : this does justice to Galilee being His own country, the causal reason as to why He returned into Galilee, and also coincides with what we know to have happened later. This also agrees with the reason for His leaving Judea, as given in 4:1-3 as fear for His growing popularity combined with the sentiments of the Jewish leaders. The Samaritan incident is in actually an interlude, something that happened on His return trip home.