



A few days ago, I received an email from someone who loves the Word and is continually reading and studying it. She had asked a question concerning the account that we read of in John 4 concerning “The Woman at the Well.”

First, I would like for us to read the account as found in John 4: 3-26. It is quite long but it is extremely important to be familiar with the whole account prior to studying and discussing it.

John 4:3-26 (KJV)

³ He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. ⁴ And he needed to go through Samaria. 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. 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.

⁷ There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, “Give me to drink.” ⁸ (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) ⁹ Then said the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knew the gift of God, and who it is that said to thee, Give me to drink; thou would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water.

¹¹ The woman said unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? ¹² Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

¹³ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: ¹⁴ But whosoever drinks 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. ¹⁵ The woman said unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

¹⁶ Jesus said unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. ¹⁷ The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: ¹⁸ For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that you said thou truly.

¹⁹ The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. ²¹ Jesus said unto her, Woman believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²² Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

²³ But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. ²⁴ God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. ²⁵ The woman said unto him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. ²⁶ Jesus said unto her, **I** that speak unto thee **am** he.”

Now, we have all read and have heard of this account. We have heard many different teachings on it. Of course we have all heard the verse as quoted in John 4:24 – “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” That has always been the main scripture that has come out of this account. It is primary to our faith and understanding of why we believe in Jesus as the Son of God and as our Lord and Savior. However, we must realize that there is so much more to this account. Let’ take a look at this account a little closer.

We know that the account ends with Jesus telling the woman, who is a Samaritan and not a Jew, that He actually was the Messiah. This is very interesting. Jesus' first actual, not implied, admission that He was the actual Messiah was to a Samaritan – a half Jew. Samaritans were not even looked upon as being anyone. They were thought of as being lower than the lowest. According to Jewish thought, on the scale of humanity, the Samaritans were “lower” than even the Romans and any other Gentile. Yet, Jesus went into Samaria, just so He could speak to this woman. We must be aware that nothing that Jesus did was by happenstance or just happened. Jesus knew every step He was taking and doing.

So what was the question or thoughts of this student of the Word who I had mentioned previously that started this inquiry into John 4? Her main question was as follows: “My big question is as to why this woman at the well is always portrayed as though she’s a harlot because it states she’s had 5 husbands - but in that day and age women were not allowed to divorce men- they had to be divorced by a man- so why is she portrayed as a harlot from the pulpit whenever I’ve heard this story told in church?”

This is a very good question so let’s try to take a look at the account, as written, and try to get some answers from the actual account and not from what any of us may think. The first thing that I would like to point out is that nowhere in these scriptures does it ever say that this woman was a harlot or prostitute. That is a supposition that many have made to make these scriptures fit into the way many would possibly think. We must remember that Jesus did not always meet up with women who were prostitutes.

Whenever Jesus does meet up with or ministers to a woman who is a prostitute the scripture always tells us. It doesn’t say anything in the account about this woman being a prostitute so why should we add that into the mix. It is just not there. I do not see where anyone would get the thought or idea that she was a harlot because that is nowhere mentioned in the text.

We see that this woman came to the well in the midday. This was because it would be the time when no one else would go to the well to get water. The women of the town would either come in the morning or in the early evening but not at midday. No one else, at least the woman thought, would be there. She came at that time because of her “situation.” Now, we know through the scriptures that she had five husbands. We are not told what happened and why she had five husbands. Did they all die or was this poor woman a victim of evil men who had all used her, divorced her and then left her abandoned.

The fact of the matter, I think, was that this woman was a woman who had suffered extreme rejection, abuse and abandonment. It was the men who obviously had “divorced” her that hurt her tremendously. Women were not really allowed to “divorce” men unless they were very, very prominent and wealthy – which was very rare at that time – especially for a Samaritan woman.

No, it was the men who had rejected her. The whole town knew her situation and ultimately talked about her – so much so that she went and got water in the hottest part of the day so she would not have to meet with the other Samaritan women. This woman was a victim as well as a very hurt individual. The man she was now with was not her husband. Again, thinking behind the scenes might make us really look at this woman as one who has been extremely hurt and rejected and was just looking for acceptance and a hint of love – from someone - anyone. Her emotions and self worth, it would seem, were in shambles.

Yet, we see that Jesus made it a point to go to the well at that exact time, in Samaria, send His disciples into town just so He could meet with her – alone. She was not a Jewish woman but a Samaritan - a person who He really was not to talk or have any type of relation with – except He was Jesus, the Son of God. This was a “divine appointment,” per se. This whole scenario was brought about by Jesus to express to this woman and to us today, what true compassion to others should be – no matter who they are or what their situation would be. We pick this up in their conversation. Let’s see.

Jesus initiates the conversation. The woman was surprised that a Jew would even talk to her. She was very wary of Him. Jesus had to truly get her attention. He asks her to get Him a drink. This would be a very rare thing to encounter – a Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman to give Him something to drink. It would seem as if it would be a demeaning thing to both, He and the Samaritan woman. She does reply with the standard answer, *“How is it that thou, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”*

This did not deter Jesus. He knew of the cultural situation of the times. However, He did get her to begin speaking with Him. Jesus then proceeded to tell her about the “living water” that she could actually receive. We know that she actually didn’t really understand what Jesus was telling her. She instead looked upon it as a way of not needing to come to this well anymore at this hour of the day. She looked at it as a way where she would not have to come to the well and be humiliated by the other women any more. She said, *“... Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.”*

Now we see that Jesus slowly but surely begins to get to the heart of the matter. He questions her about her life. He is well aware of her life. After all, He is God and, shall we say, has “connections” with Father God as He was walking this earth. Jesus knew exactly what her situation was. However, He also knew that she was deeply hurt by what was going on in her life. That was the real issue. Her real issue was that she was looking for the true God.

Jesus gets her to reveal the real issue that was truly in her heart by first exposing her current situation. He tells her that He knows about her five husbands and the man she is living with now. When she heard Him say that – something happened within her. She knew that she was talking to a “spiritual man.” Her demeanor began to change. Maybe, just maybe, this man could help her find the way to what she was really yearning for down deep within her heart - the true God.

We see that she was desperate. We see that because of her extreme inner hurt she was truly looking for help – God help. When Jesus said what He said, her thoughts went immediately to what she really wanted – the only one who could truly help her – the true and Living God. Wow. When we read this, doesn’t it make each of us think of those areas within our own lives that are truly the real issues that we have. She found someone who could possibly tell her the truth about who the true God was. Someone who could possibly tell her where she could get her true help from? Could Jesus really point her to the true God?

She immediately tells Him that she believes He is a prophet. Well no – He is actually the Son of God, but that was not the point. The point was that she needed to be set free. Someone was hurt and rejected. Someone, down deep within her heart was looking for the real, true God but could never find Him. Someone truly wanted to know the truth about the Living God. She thought and immediately knew that this was the opportunity that she had been searching for. Could she really find the true God? Could Jesus tell her who the true God was and how she could possibly find and truly connect with Him?

Jesus told her the truth as we see in John 4:23-24 - *“But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him.”²⁴ God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

In the scriptures before these we see Jesus tells her that the Samaritans were worshipping in the wrong place and worshipping the wrong God. The Jews were worshipping at the Temple but they still had no idea of who the true God was and what He really wanted. God desires relationship, not sacrifice. That is when Jesus tells her and each one of us today, that those who truly desire to worship God, will worship Him with a renewed (born-again) Spirit and in true reality – true truthfulness. That is only the time when an individual’s relationship with the true God would be real.

The woman does seem to believe in the coming of the Messiah for she states in verse 25 – “*I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*” You see in her background, even though she was a Samaritan, she did believe in the Messiah and that He would be soon coming. She believed that the Messiah would set all things straight and tell everyone the truth concerning God and His ways.

We must remember that it was the issue at that time. Everyone was looking for the Messiah to come at this time. We see that is why the three kings came from Persia at Jesus’ birth. They were not Jewish but they were looking and desiring the Jewish King to come because they believed in His ability to save those who would believe in Him. We see that even this Samaritan woman knew and was waiting anxiously for the Messiah. Yes, it was the time that many were looking for God’s Messiah to come. And there He was, right in front of her.

In the very next scripture, John 4:26, Jesus says it all quite plainly as He reveals Himself to this Samaritan woman. He tells her, “... *I that speak unto thee am he.*” If we look at the way it is written in the scriptures we really see Jesus say that He is the actual, I Am. Yes, he declared to this Samaritan woman, a half Jewish person, who was so hurt and down deep, deep in her heart was desperate for the true God. Could Jesus lead her to the hope that she had buried in her heart? The answer was yes. It was right in front of her.

Her heart leapt inside as she went and told the townspeople. They all came out to see Jesus and many of them did believe that He was the Messiah. We know that Jesus had to die before this true relationship between God and this woman and anyone else who would believe in Him could come to complete fruition. This was a start for this woman and I believe it did.

This is what Jesus did for this woman. He went out of His way specifically to meet up with her. He sent His disciples away so that He could spend quality “alone time” with her and minister to her to meet her need. That is who our Jesus is. He loves each one of us so very much. He wants to speak to each of us now, through the Holy Spirit.

I encourage each one of us to keep seeking more and more after our God. He gave us the Holy Spirit who is now available to each one of His children to be there to help, lead and guide us. The Holy Spirit was given to us to teach us more and more about our God and who He is and all that He will continue to do for His people. Yes, as Jesus told the woman and as He continues to teach us through His Word that, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*”

Revelation 22:17 (KJV)

¹⁷ *And the Spirit and the bride say, “**Come.**” And let him that hears say, “**Come.**” And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Revelation 22:20 (KJV)

²⁰ *He who testifies of these things says, “**Surely I come quickly.**” Amen. Even so, **come**, Lord Jesus.*