

Last week we began to look at the encounter of Jesus with the woman at the well. We saw how Jesus did not let cultural tradition or ethnic differences stop Him from engaging the woman. He did not let societal norms keep Him from witnessing to her. She was important to Him. It did not matter that she was a despised Samaritan, a woman, or an idolater. God had sent His Son to save the world, and she was about to experience the new birth Jesus had told Nicodemus about.

She came to the well to get water at midday to avoid confrontation with others. Instead, she found herself confronted by Jesus who first asked her for water, and then said He has living water – water that gives eternal life.

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Jesus condescended and engaged her in conversation that would otherwise not have taken place (v 7). He offered her unmerited grace (gift of God/living water v 10), and promised blessing (eternal life v 14).

We pick up the story in verse 15:

¹⁵ The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” ¹⁶He said to her, “Go, call your husband and come here.” ¹⁷The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.” ¹⁹The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship

Him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵ The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

Jesus took the conversation in a spiritual direction, but the woman does not seem to completely understand what He is talking about. She is still concerned with physical water and likes the idea of not having to carry water every day from the well.

Jesus offered living water to the woman, and she asked for it. It would seem that the next logical step would be for Jesus to give her the living water He has been talking about, but He doesn't. Instead, He brings up a sore subject; he tells her to go and get her husband.

Jesus, knowing what was in her heart (John 2:24), was forcing her to deal with her sin. She replied that she did not have a husband, hoping to avoid further questioning. Jesus then lays her sin bare. She does not have a husband, but she is living in adultery. She has had not one, but five husbands, likely meaning she has committed adultery at least that many times. *(Note that living together does not constitute marriage. Biblically, marriage is always restricted to a public, official, recognized covenant between one man and one woman.)*

We must repent from sin in order to come to Jesus. “Therefore **repent** and return, so that your sins may be wiped away” (Acts 3:19). Repentance is more than just acknowledging sin; it is a turning away from sin and pursuing righteousness.

This revelation of her sin shocks the woman. The conversation takes a decided turn at this point. All thought of physical water is forgotten. She comes to the realization that Jesus must be a prophet to have this kind of divine knowledge.

She now goes straight to the heart of the matter – worship. Worship here is synonymous with salvation. There are only two kinds of people. Those who worship God and those who do not. The saved are the ones who worship in spirit and truth, the unsaved do not.

Her heart has undergone a profound

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change, and she seeks to worship God. She wants to know where to worship. The differences between the Jews and the Samaritans comes up again.

When the Jews did not let the Samaritans help rebuild the temple the Samaritans went and built a rival temple. Their worship was mixed with false religion and was not true worship of God. They also only held to the first five books of the Bible, and thus did not have a full picture of who God was. They worshipped what they did not know.

The Jews did have the full Old Testament, so they knew who God was. They worshipped what they knew. Salvation (the Messiah – Jesus) would come through the Jews. This is not a commendation of Jewish worship, for their worship was full of ritual that had become empty. Jesus soundly condemns this worship again and again.

Jesus informed the woman that this false worship had to be abandoned. The hour had come to do away with this false worship and the true worshippers would not worship in either Mt. Gerizim (Samaritans) or Jerusalem (Jews). The place of worship would become irrelevant.

When Jesus died the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was torn in two. This symbolized the end of the Jewish sacrificial system. No longer was there a barrier between God and man. Anyone could have access to God through Jesus Christ.

Worship would end physically in Mt. Gerizim and the temple in Jerusalem as well. In 70 AD the Romans would come and destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and then go to Mt. Gerizim and destroy that temple as well.

Jesus was telling the woman that empty ritual and false religion had to be abandoned. True worshippers worship in spirit and truth.

To worship **in spirit** – is to worship from the heart with the right attitude. It is internal not external. Empty, mindless ritual is not worship.

To worship **in truth** – is worship that is consistent with what is revealed in Scripture and Jesus about God. “Worship” that is not based on the truth of who God is is not worship. It has been said that “one’s worship can only go as high as one’s knowledge of God is deep.” Superficial knowledge leads to superficial worship. Deep knowledge of God leads to true and lofty worship.

The systems of both the Jews and Samaritans focused on external ritual and sacrifice, and therefore were not true worship. God is seeking true worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth.

“God is spirit” is the classic Biblical definition of the nature of God. He is “the invisible God” Colossians 1:15. If He had not revealed Himself in Scripture and through Jesus Christ, He would be incomprehensible to us.

Those who worship God must do so from the inner spirit consistent with the truth of who He is as revealed in His Word (Scripture).

The woman at the well was still confused, but expressed her hope in the coming Messiah. The Messiah would be able to explain all these things to her. She knew enough of Scripture to know that there was a promised Messiah (Deuteronomy 18:18). She may have had that truth revealed to her when John the Baptist came through Samaria.

The story reaches its climax as Jesus responds to her “I who speak to you am.” There is no “He” in the original. This is a bold-faced claim by Jesus to be the “I AM” – the name God had revealed Himself to Moses.

This revelation must have shocked her to the core. What had started as an odd request from a stranger for a drink had led to her meeting the Messiah! God had revealed Himself to an adulterous, Samaritan, woman. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him might be saved.” He truly is the Savior of the world. Anyone, without distinction, is invited to believe in Jesus. We will look at her response to this revelation next time.



Bible Studies:

**7:00 am Tuesdays – Bible study –
Governor’s Large Conference Room – Open
to All: Legislators, Constitutional Officers,
Lobbyists, Staff**

**8:00 pm Tuesdays – Legislator Only Bible
Study – Perkins**

