

Intro

The woman of Sychar has never talked with anyone like Jesus, and when their conversation enters a critical moment, He reveals His identity to her. She runs to the village to tell the men that she thinks Messiah has come. In the meantime, Jesus is having a conversation with the disciples about true food and true work.

245 The Thirsty Woman – Part 3

Jesus, a Jewish man, and an unnamed woman from Samaria entered deep into a conversation about water beside the village well. The woman came to the well to get water for her household needs. Jesus came to the well to speak to her about the living water that would meet her deepest needs.

Jesus offered her living water – and not just water but a well of water that would never run dry. The woman eagerly asked him for his living water, for his well, but Jesus was not so quick to grant her request. She didn't grasp all that He was talking about, and so He asked her to do something quite uncomfortable. He asked her to go and bring her husband to him.

This would have been a simple request for most women. But not for her. She had been married five times and now was living with another man.

"I have no husband," she tells him.

But Jesus was not fooled. He knew he was putting his finger on a place of pain in her life – a place she must face if she was to quench her deepest thirst. But the woman evades him yet again. She attempts to sidestep her pain by asking him a religious question, "Where is the right place to worship God?" Should she worship on Mt. Gerizim where her people said they should go, or should she worship in Jerusalem where the Jews said people should go?

Even if she wanted to get her life right, she wouldn't be sure where to go or what to do. And this is when Jesus spoke to her about a greater reality that had come into the world that would solve her problems and the problems of all the people of the earth.

God was spirit – not an image made by man – and God could not be located in and limited to one place. God was looking for people who would worship Him from anywhere, if it was worship in spirit and in truth

Let's listen to these amazing words of Jesus again:

"Believe me, woman, a time is coming and has even now started, when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain in Samaria nor in Jerusalem. I must set the record straight - you Samaritans do not worship properly. The true temple was not to be on Mt. Gerizim. Salvation does come from Israel. Yet, all that is now in the past. The time has now come when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. These are the worshipers God seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman had never heard anything like this in her life and it was liberating. She was so tired of the religious conflict in her part of the world, so tired of being told where she should go or not go to worship God, what she should do or not do to please him. And now, she was hearing that God was approaching people and looking into their heart and longing for people to worship him from their heart. Her heart – how she wanted her heart to come alive. Her heart had been squashed so many times by the disappointments of life, by the insensitivities of men, by her own foolish choices.

Was this man telling her the truth? Should she believe him? Should she trust his words? How would she know if he was telling the truth?

She had heard that Messiah was coming, and that Messiah would set all things right. Surely this man was not the Messiah, was he and so she said,

"I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

The Samaritans believed that a Messiah-like figure would come and bring the truth to them. They called him "The Prophet" based upon the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 that God would raise up another prophet like Him who would speak God's message to the people. In ancient Samaria there was a reform movement in their synagogues that looked for this prophet to come. A man by the name of Dositheus claimed to be this prophet but he only disappointed. Another man called the people to follow him to Mt. Gerizim where he said God would reveal to him ancient sacred vessels of the tabernacle that Moses had hidden, but his treasure hunt ended in vain. Still, the people looked for one to come who would reveal everything to them and so she said,

"I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

I must admit, I find her statement astounding – that she would say this to Jesus! Had he not just revealed her deepest secrets? Had he not just made her religious issue of no consequence when He told her that the Gerizim/Jerusalem debate was outdated because God was looking upon the heart of people and not the place of worship?

Yet she still holds him at arms-length.

Jesus had broken down so many barriers to get to her true heart. Was there a gender issue, a male/female issue? Jesus broke it down by talking with her.

Was there a cultural issue – a Samaritan/Jewish issue – Jesus broke that down by speaking with her.

Was there a sin issue – her living with her sixth man? Jesus broke it down by pinpointing the problem yet without condemnation.

Was there a religious issue – the Samaritan/Jewish debate on the proper place to worship? Jesus had solved this issue by pointing to a higher reality of what God really wanted.

What more could she ask of Him, and yet she tried to brush him off one last time by saying, "I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

But because Jesus loved her so much, He would not be brushed off and so He said, "I who speak to you am he."

There it was finally. Everything in the conversation had pointed to this moment when Jesus would reveal to her who He really was – He was the Messiah. He was the one that Jews and Samaritans were looking for. She knew that he was no ordinary man. She had asked early in the conversation if he were greater than the patriarch Jacob and he was. She had told him later in their conversation that she perceived he was a prophet and he was that too. But he was greater. He was the promised one. He was the one that all Jews and all Samaritans and all people of the world looked for.

And when he said that to her, her heart began to flood with joy – as if a well of water was gushing through her. She set down her water pot and without a word ran back to the village.

As she ran, she noticed that same group of Jewish men who had been in the village buying food and who were now making their way to the very same well where Jesus was. Who were those men? It didn't matter. She had others to whom she must talk. She ran breathlessly into the village and started telling all the men she knew about Jesus.

You will notice in the story that she went to the men. Because of her tainted past she was very familiar with the men in the village and could speak to them, but she wasn't on good terms with the women. She ran to the men and said, "You need to come and see a man who told me everything that I have done!"

"Slow down, woman. We've had a lot of strange Jewish men in our village today. Let's start from the beginning. Who are you talking about?"

"A man, yes, a Jewish man. I've been talking with him at the well. I have never talked with anyone like him. He revealed my deepest secrets, yet without condemnation. He is like a prophet and he said he is the Messiah!"

"A Jewish man? You know we have nothing to do with the Jewish people."

"Yes, I know," she said, "but this man told me everything. I was there to draw water and he offered me a different kind of water, water that cleanses the heart of all sin and that if a man drinks from it he will never thirst again."

The men listened – their hearts were thirsty too. "Go on," they said. "Then, he talked to me about my sin. Somehow, he knew that I had been married to you, and to you, and to you, and to you, and to you! And he knew that I was living with you – right now." The men began to grow pale. They knew they were at fault as much as this woman.

"How much did you tell him," they demanded.

“Tell him? I didn’t reveal anything. He knew it all, already. He is a prophet and then when I asked him about our temple on Gerizim and the temple in Jerusalem he had the most wonderful answer. He said a time had even now started in the world where it didn’t matter where people worshipped. He explained that God is spirit and He cannot be confined to one place. God is not looking at the outward place. He is looking at the heart and He wants people to worship in spirit and truth. And then, when I told him that Messiah would bring all the truth to us he said, ‘I am the Messiah.’”

“This is not the Messiah is it? You have to come and see.” And so, the men left the village and followed the thirsty woman to the village well.