

The Results of Our Lord's Dialogue with the Samaritan Woman

John 4:24-42

John 4:24-42 - "God 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" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

²⁷ And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ²⁹ "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" ³⁰ Then they went out of the city and came to Him. ³¹ In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." ³³ Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! ³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

³⁹ And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of His own word. ⁴² Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Background Notes

If you were to go to Israel today, you would find Jacob's Well in the modern town of Nablus. A Greek Orthodox church has been built over the well, but it is still there, and you can still drink water from it. Nablus is situated between two mountains: Mount Ebal on the north, and Mount Gerizim on the south. These are the two mountains where the covenant between God and his people was ratified back in the days of Joshua. Mount Gerizim was known as the mountain of blessing, because the blessings of the Law were read from the slopes of that mountain. Mount Ebal was known as the mountain of cursing, because the cursings of the Law was read from the slopes of that mountain. Read all about it in Joshua 8.

When the Samaritan people came into existence in the 7th-8th century BC, they chose Mount Gerizim, the “mountain of blessing,” as their place of worship. The Samaritan woman referred in Mount Gerizim in verse 20: “*Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.*” The last time I was at Jacob’s Well, we sat in a little shady spot, and I read from John 4 to our group. I mentioned that the woman probably gestured toward Mount Gerizim as she said, “*Our fathers worshiped at this mountain*” - because there it is, Mt. Gerizim, right there! Just as I said that, of all things, a woman in Palestinian garb walked past, carrying a pot of water on her head. She was a Samaritan woman. My tour members were convinced that I had programmed all this!

Believe it or not, there are several hundred Samaritans still exist today in the area of Nablus, and they still worship on Mount Gerizim. In fact, once a year they sacrifice a lamb there (at least they did up until recent times). The Samaritans kept only the first five books of the Bible, the “Samaritan Pentateuch.” They reject the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures because the great prophetic books all talk about Jerusalem as the place where worship should take place. I once talked with a Samaritan priest, and I asked him specifically, “How do you view the Messiah? Do you still believe as the Samaritan woman in the Bible believed?” He responded, “Oh yes, we believe the Messiah is still coming. He’ll be like Moses – from the passage in Deuteronomy 18.”

Recently archeologists discovered the remains of a temple at the top of Mount Gerizim. They are hoping to find similarities to Solomon’s temple from this excavation. It’s possible that this temple could have been a replica of Solomon’s temple because the Samaritan worship was somewhat similar to, but also in contrast to, the true worship in Jerusalem.

This was the setting for our Lord’s dialogue with the Samaritan woman. She came to the well at midday, not the normal time to draw water. Normally people draw water in the morning or at night, but she probably came at noon to avoid contact with the other women because of her loose life and lifestyle. But she was right on schedule, as far as the Lord’s timetable goes!

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Worship of God must be in spirit and in truth.

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”(v23-24). Notice that the Father seeks worshipers. If you are a believer, you are in the family of God, and our heavenly Father seeks us to worship Him. God is our Father, and we are His children! Do you know that relationship? Worship begins with having and knowing that relationship with God as our heavenly Father.

What does this mean: “worship in spirit and in truth”? True worship is not merely outward forms and ceremonies. True worship does not need special buildings or clothes. True worship is not dependent on rituals and liturgies. True worship is **spiritual**. God is Spirit, and worship of the true God is therefore in the spiritual realm.

It is not wrong to have stained glass windows or candles or liturgies or organs or whatever, and they can help lead us to worship, but don't confuse them with worship! True worship does not depend on these things, nor is it defined by these things. Worship is from the heart and the mind; it must be in spirit, and it must be in truth. *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."*

Idolatry is not only the worship of false gods; it's also the false worship of the true God. The Samaritan people were certainly sincere in their worship, but they were **sincerely mistaken**.

The same is true today! Unitarians, for example, would claim they are worshipping God, but it is a false worship. Why? They aren't "worshipping in truth," because Unitarians do not acknowledge the truth that Jesus is fully God. **True worship will be Christ centered**. How could it be anything but Christ-centered when He saved us from hell?

One more point. Worshiping in truth involves scripturally intelligent worship. Thanking God the Father for dying for our sins is not scripturally intelligent worship. God the Father did not die on the cross for our sins – God the Son died on the cross for our sins. Now, of course the Lord understands our hearts and our intent, but let's try to be scripturally intelligent in our worship. Worship of God must be in spirit and in truth.

2. Service to God may be sowing or reaping.

"For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors"(v37-38).

In serving the Lord, it is always nice to be on the reaping end - seeing people receive Christ, and get their act together - seeing changed lives! But some Christians are called to be "sowers" - they plant the seed. The Lord said so: some sow and others reap. Let's not be jealous of one another's work for the kingdom. In Christian service, sometimes we sow the seed, and sometimes we reap - and sometimes we do both.

A number of years ago I was invited to speak to a high school Bible study. My friend who led the study had tried to lead one of the girls to Christ for about 2 years, but she still had not become a Christian. I gave a short devotional at the Bible study, and she became a Christian right then and there! I almost felt guilty – my friend had put in all the time, but God chose me to be the reaper. But, praise the Lord, there was no jealousy, because my friend understood the concept, and was overjoyed at her salvation. Sometimes one person does all the sowing, and someone else comes along and reaps. Let's not be jealous of one another's service for the Lord.

In this case the disciples were the reapers: *"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (v35).* Who is the "sower" in this case? Well, surely one of those who sowed the seed was John the Baptist. John 3:23 says, *"John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim because there was much water there."*

There's pretty good evidence that this baptismal spot was not too far from Jacob's Well, so John the Baptist certainly would be one of the sowers. But the disciples, along with the Lord, were doing the reaping. They stayed on in the area: *"So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days"*(v40). And many believed!

I'm sure the disciples came to know that there is spiritual fulfillment in doing the Lord's work. Remember the Lord said, *"I have food to eat of which you do not know"* (v32). Have you ever experienced that? There's great fulfillment in doing the Lord's work - reaping or sowing! So remember, service to God may be sowing or reaping.

Practical Application

Use your personal testimony to witness!

The Samaritan woman believed. She became a believer, and then she began to witness! *"The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him"* (v28-30).

She began to witness. You might say, "What did she know at that point? How could she be a good witness?" Or, "She wasn't raised in a Christian home - she hadn't been to Sunday school - she didn't have the privilege of going to Emmaus Bible College - she didn't even read the latest evangelical material on How to Evangelize!" No! What did she do? She just told others about how she met Jesus, and invited other people to come to Him.

And we should do the same. Don't wait! Start now! Don't say, "Yeah, but I don't have the answers to all those heavy theological questions." Or, "I'm just a new Christian - I'll put my foot in my mouth!" (Hey, welcome to the club - we all do that!) Just use your personal testimony to witness! Tell others about the result of your personal encounter with Jesus. It's a very effective tool for personal evangelism.

I remember driving with a man who was well known for leading many people to Christ. As we were driving, I said, "What technique do you use for personal evangelism?" He said, "I use my own testimony." I said, "Oh really? Let me hear it." It was like turning on a switch. He turned to me and treated me as if I was a non-believer sitting next to him. He told his personal testimony in three minutes! Let me tell you, his testimony was so effective that I felt like becoming a Christian all over again!

That man just shared his personal testimony. It's a **very** effective method of evangelism. Use your personal testimony to witness!