

## ***The Woman at the Well: Part Two***

Jesus' conversation with the woman in John 4:1-26 ended, and verses 27-30 reveal its effects: the disciples are surprised, the woman is filled with hope, and her countrymen are moved by her enthusiasm (Westcott, 162).

***4:27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"***

The disciples were astonished that Jesus was talking to a woman since most Jews believed that a man should not even talk to his own wife on the street on account of what others might say. Any respectable teacher considered a conversation with a woman a complete waste of time (Bruce, 112); it was said that it was better that the words of the law be burned than to be delivered to a woman (Westcott, 162; Kent, 79; Bruce, 112; Carson, 227). Nevertheless, in spite of what they may have been thinking the disciples did not question their Master.

***4:28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men,  
4:29 "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"***

We don't know why the woman left her water pot, but some have suggested that she simply forgot it in her excitement or haste. Others think she left it deliberately for Jesus to get His drink, or so she wouldn't be encumbered by it. In either case, it hints of the fact that she will return.

During the heat of the day the men were not working, so she found them readily (Bernard I, 152). Most commentators think that the woman believed that Jesus was the Messiah (Jn. 4:25-26; see notes on verses 35-38) so her question was not really expressing her uncertainty about who Jesus was but reflected her tact. Her life did not hold the authority to speak about spiritual matters, so her words were deliberately cautious to avoid antagonism. She suggested that they ought to see Jesus and decide who He was for themselves, rather than acting as if she was an authority on spiritual truth herself (Kent, 79-80).

The woman's shameful past (Jn. 3:16-18) is no longer seen as something to hide, but as a tool that can be used to draw others to the goodness of God.

***4:30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.  
4:31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."***

The imperfect tense verb "were coming" pictures the process of the people approaching while the conversation between Jesus and the disciples was taking place (Bernard I, 153; Morris, 276); people came out of the city and kept coming to Jesus.

The trust of her hearers is a measure of her zeal (Westcott, 164). The woman, though she had just met Jesus, was already bringing people to Jesus; the disciples who had just been to town and had known their Master better and far longer, only brought bread (Morris, 276, n. 73).

***4:32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."***

***4:33 So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?"***

The disciples' question expects a negative answer. Though the disciples were still thinking in terms of physical food, it opens the door for Jesus to teach a valuable precept (Morris, 277): the will of the Father fulfilled Jesus more than food could ever do.

***4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."***

The Messianic consciousness of Jesus was clear and steady (5:30; 6:38; RWP). Jesus had come to do the Father's will. He could do no less (Jn. 8:29).

Part of the Father's work that Jesus was to accomplish was to offer "the gift of God" (Jn. 3:10) to the woman at Sychar. Having done so brought more satisfaction than physical bread could bring (Bruce, 113-114; Westcott, 165). It was the fulfillment of His mission, not the filling of His belly that gave Jesus strength and joy. That was His food.

To do God's will is the supreme obligation of man at every moment of his life, and it is attached to supreme reward (Mk. 3:35; Matt. 7:21; Jn. 7:17; 9:31; Bernard I, 154-155). The Psalmist said, "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:7, 8; Heb. 10:7, and Jn. 5:30; 6:38).

To do God's will is within the reach of every believer, but to complete it perfectly is only possible with Christ. The perfectness with which He accomplished His mission bears witness to His uniqueness. Jesus alone can say to the Father, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (Jn. 17:4).

***4:35 "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.***

***4:36 "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.***

***4:37 "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.'***

***4:38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."***

Verse 35 is probably not intended to be taken literally that in four months it would be harvest season or Jesus would have simply said, "There are four months until harvest"; rather, He simply means that it is commonly accepted that there is an interval between sowing and the harvest (Kent, 80). However, what is true of physical laws does not apply to spiritual ones. The spiritual harvest that happened at Sychar followed immediately after the sowing; the woman's receptiveness demonstrates that the harvest is ready, and the wages are there, so no one needs to wait months for the fields to ripen (Morris, 280; Carson, 230).

In the natural order men sow with tears (sowing was hard wearisome work - Morris, 280), and reap with joy afterward (Ps. 126:5, 6) (Bernard I, 158). But the spiritual harvester works the field and gathers fruit unto eternal life alongside the one sowing. This was predicted in Leviticus 26:5 that says, "Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time." Likewise, Amos said, "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed" (Amos 9:13). These images prefigure the blessing of miraculous and unceasing fertility and prosperity (Carson, 230). The abundance of crops shall be so great that the idle intervals between agricultural seasons will disappear (Brown I, 182), and it is already happening in the spiritual realm. The disciples only need to lift their eyes to see it.

God has the sower and reaper working together for a reason. This reason is stated in verse 36, namely, that they may rejoice together. While one may sow and another reap, both are necessary if a crop is to be harvested. That is why both can share in the joy of the harvest (Bruce, 115).

Every worker works for wages. The wages spoken of in verse 36 are the anticipated reward of the labor. Normally wages come after the day's labor is done, but with the woman coming to faith, Jesus had already received the reward He wanted.

The sower sows anticipating the harvest to come, and the reaper must not forget that the harvest he enjoys is the fruit of another's toil (Carson, 230). That a man can reap where he did not sow is a matter of particular thankfulness on his part (Deut. 6:11; Josh. 24:13).

The fact that some sow and others reap is true of us in other areas as well. Each Christian worker is dependent for success on the labors of his predecessors (Morris, 281, n. 90). No Christian harvester should ever forget that (1) success in reaping normally depends on others who have gone before him (2) and that those rare instances where reaping and harvesting seem to occur at the same time is but a foretaste of the blessings yet to come (Carson, 231).

***4:39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done."***

***4:40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.***

***4:41 Many more believed because of His word;***

***4:42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."***

The rivers of living water which the woman had received from Jesus certainly became an overflowing fountain in her life and others were coming to share the refreshment that she was beginning to enjoy (Bruce).

The Samaritans rejoiced in what Jesus had to say, asked Him to stay longer, and the harvest extended beyond those who came as a result of the woman's testimony (Carson, 232). Unlike the Jews in Jerusalem, the Samaritans had seen no miracle nor received much teaching. Jesus had even spoken against Samaritan claims (Jn. 3:22), but these people were still receptive (Plummer, 125).

The confession that Jesus is the Savior of the world anticipates the fact that the gospel was to spread to the uttermost corners of the world, a pattern that was commanded by Christ (Acts 1:8) and followed by the early church (Carson, 232). God sent His Son into the world that He might save it (Jn. 3:16, 17; Bruce, 116).

If it were not for the woman's witness her fellow townsfolk would never had come to know Jesus. But hearsay about Him cannot substitute for personal knowledge. Now they knew for themselves that all she had said was true. The initial stages of belief may be brought about by the report of others, but the belief which is complete and assured depends on personal contact and association with Christ (Bernard I, 161).

## ***Jesus Heals the Official's Son***

***4:43 After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee.***

***4:44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.***

***4:45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.***

The "for" of verse 44 introduces the theme of the entire story that follows. It gives *the preliminary* explanation of Jesus' comment in 4:48: "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe". It stresses the contrast between the Samaritans who simply believed Jesus' word (Jn. 4:41-42) and Jesus' own countrymen who had believed in Him because of the signs and miracles He had performed (4:45, 48; Alford, 736-737). It reiterates John's introduction to the entire book: "He came to His own (country), and His own (people) did not receive Him" (Jn. 1:11).

Jesus' "own country" is Galilee and Judea (Jewish turf) as opposed to Samaria. In Samaria Jesus had just met His first taste of success. Now He returns to His own people, and the response to Him is ambiguous at best.

Though the disciples put their faith in Him (Jn. 2:11) the Jews opposed Him (Jn. 2:18, 20), and many who appeared to believe were spurious converts (Jn. 2:23-25) stimulated by a small number of miracles. Even Nicodemus is not very hopeful at this point (Jn. 3:10) (Carson, 236).

The word "received" in verse 45 has the air of welcome, like that of welcoming a guest (Morris, 286, n. 105) but the Galileans attitude was conditioned by what they had heard and seen in Jerusalem (Jn. 2:23; 3:2; Morris, 287). These were people who welcomed Jesus on account of His fame (Alford, 737) and were attracted to His miracles, not those who honored Christ for His teaching.

The Samaritans didn't go up to Jerusalem for the feasts, so Jesus and His activities were unknown to them. The "words" of Jesus alone without signs were enough to convince them (Bernard I, 165).

***4:46 Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.***

***4:47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.***

***4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."***

When the official comes to Jesus, Jesus detects a man who desires a cure but not a man who truly trusts Him. Indeed the man's approach exemplifies what Jesus views as wrong with the Galileans as a whole: Jesus' rebuke, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe" (Jn. 4:48) is in the plural, addressing both the man and the people at large (Carson).

If this understanding of this passage is correct, the significance of verses 43-54 become clear in the development of the Gospel of John. The Samaritan interlude reminds the reader that Jesus is the Messiah (Jn. 4:25-26), the one who was sent by the Father to reap a crop of eternal life (Jn. 4:34-36). He is the savior of the world (Jn. 4:42). It also makes the failure of the Jews even more tragic. The despised Samaritans turn to Christ, while those in the chosen community either actively oppose Him or can't get beyond their fascination for miracles and politics. He may be popular in Samaria, but among His own people, public sentiment would ultimately lead Him to the cross. This also helps explain why the account of the Samaritan woman is found in a book that is attempting to win Jews. John is attempting to make some of his readers envious (Ro. 11:13-14). While Jesus' blessings and forgiveness are going to others, the Jews are in danger of being passed by (Carson, 236).

***4:49 The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."***

The official's faith required the support of sight (Westcott, 172); he believed Jesus had to be present for a miracle to happen.

Jesus knew that faith based on miracles was not lasting (Jn. 2:23-25), and many who followed Him because of miracles soon drifted away (Jn. 6:26, 66) (Kent, 83). In John's gospel, too much interest in miracles is seen to be dangerous (Jn. 2:23-25; 6:26). Miracles cannot compel genuine faith (Jn. 11:45, 46), but Jesus can encourage faith based on miracles as is the case here (Jn. 10:38; 14:11; Carson, 238,239). Therefore, Jesus continues His Messianic work of healing whether He is trusted or not (Carson, 238).

***4:50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off.***

Jesus' answer tests the father's faith severely. The man had received no sign from Jesus. When the father left the boy he was near death, now he returns with only the word of Jesus (Bernard I, 169). Nevertheless, he rises to the implied demand of faith. He believes what Jesus says and goes his way (Morris, 291). His immature faith has grown into something better (Dods, 734). This act of taking Jesus at His word is called belief (Tenny, 98; also see notes on 6:63).

***4:51 As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living.***

***4:52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."***

***4:53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household.***

The seventh hour was 1:00p.m.

The first act of the official's faith was borne of necessity. It was a reluctant faith, which had no other course of action but to believe Jesus at His word. It was an act of faith evoked by a father's desperate plight and Jesus' seeming severity. But in verse 53 a change takes place; there his faith is voluntary, prompted out of gratitude. When the nobleman realized that Jesus could be trusted with his son, he and his family believed in Him (Tenny, 99).

***4:54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.***

The first sign that Jesus had performed in Galilee was the turning of water into wine in Cana (Jn. 2). Though Jesus had performed many signs before this, this is only the second one in Galilee.