

## CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter is a gold mine! There are spiritual treasures here to enrich any soul who will search and dig. Take a look at these nuggets — The Humanity of Jesus, The Deity of Jesus, The Universality of the Gospel, Spontaneous Evangelism, True Worship Defined, A Missionary Vision, and other equally precious lessons. Chapter Four is included in the First Year of Public Ministry and is outlined thusly:

- II The Word Manifested to the Jews, and Their Rejection of Him 1:19-12:50 (cont.)
  - B. The Public Ministry — First Year 2:13-4:54 (cont.)
    - 4. Labors in Samaria 4:1-42
      - a. Withdrawl from Judea — arrival in Samaria 4:1-6
      - b. Jesus and the living water 4:7-14
      - c. Jesus searches out a woman's secret 4:15-18
      - d. True worshippers of God 4:19-26
      - e. Spontaneous evangelism 4:27-30
      - f. Fields white unto harvest 4:31-38
      - g. Reaping the harvest 4:39-42
    - 5. Labors in Galilee 4:43-54
      - a. Public teaching in Galilee 4:43-45 (cf. Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 4:14)
      - b. Healing a nobleman's son at Capernaum 4:46-54

## WITHDRAWL FROM JUDEA — ARRIVAL IN SAMARIA

*Text 4:1-6*

- 1 When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John
- 2 (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples),
- 3 he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.
- 4 And he must needs pass through Samaria.
- 5 So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the

parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

### *Queries*

- a. Why would the situation in verses 1-3 cause Jesus to leave Judea?
- b. Where is Sychar?
- c. What significance is there in Jesus being "wearied"?

### *Paraphrase*

So when the Lord learned that the Pharisees had heard that He was making and immersing more disciples than John the Baptist (although Jesus Himself was not immersing but His disciples were), He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. It was necessary for him to pass through Samaria. He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground which Jacob gave to Joseph, his son, and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, having become tired from His journey, was sitting wearily by the well. It was about six p.m.

### *Summary*

To avoid a premature crisis with the Pharisees, Jesus departs Judea for Galilee, stopping to rest during the journey at Jacob's well near Sychar, a city of Samaria.

### *Comment*

The gospel writer now resumes the chronology of the story where he left it in 3:22-23. He has paused in telling the movements of Jesus to tell of the testimony of John the Baptist, but now he takes up the story of Jesus' travels again.

Beginning with His cleansing of the temple of Jerusalem (Jn. 2:13-22), including a considerable public ministry in the environs of Jerusalem and ending with the Lord's departure into Galilee, a period of approximately eight or nine months have transpired. Jesus arrived in Jerusalem at Passover-time (2:13 — also "harvest-time"). The next notice of time is "yet four months, and then cometh the harvest" (4:35 — which would be four months away from the next Passover-time). Thus we conclude that Jesus spent approximately eight months in Judea — from one Passover-time until about four months before the next Passover-time.

Just prior to the Lord's departure into Galilee, John the Baptist is imprisoned (cf. Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 3:19-20). The Baptist's arrest probably also influenced Jesus' decision, as recorded here (4:1-3), to go into Galilee. There are two probable reasons for His change of location: (a) He may have feared a premature death at the hands of the authorities. This would not allow Him to fulfill the earthly ministry which the Father had sent Him to accomplish; (b) or, possibly, He feared a reaction from the multitudes much like that which was to happen later in Galilee (Jn. 6:15). He must yet teach the multitudes of the spiritual nature of His kingdom. Political revolution and bloodshed must be restrained. In His Divine mission a definite time had been appointed for the supreme crisis — He must avoid a premature crisis. So Jesus withdrew from His work of baptizing in the Jordan (somewhere near Jericho) and traveled toward Galilee.

The parenthetical statement of verse 2 is to explain that Jesus did not personally baptize, but is said to have baptized through His agents — the disciples. Compare our comments on John 3:22.

Why does John say Jesus "must needs pass through Samaria"? A brief geographical survey might offer one possible answer. There were three geographical divisions of the land of Palestine in Jesus' day: Galilee in the north, Judea in the south, and Samaria in between (see maps in the back of any Bible).

At first, it would appear to be the natural route of travel to Galilee. If Jesus was in Judea and wanted to reach Galilee, naturally He would have to go through Samaria. But due to an age-old hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans, the usual route of travel between Judea and Galilee was not so. The Jew going north usually crossed to the eastern side of the Jordan river (probably at the Jericho ford) and went up the Jordan Valley to avoid Samaria, and re-crossed the river into Galilee (probably at Bethabara).

There are two possibilities as to why Jesus *must* go through Samaria: (a) it was the shortest route to Galilee, and He was not restricted by the prejudices of the Jews, or (b) He purposely passed through there to "break down barriers" and plant the seed of the gospel that Philip might later reap (Acts 8).

Traveling the Roman road that leads through Samaria, Jesus would come to a fork in the road. At this fork in the road there is a well called Jacob's Well. About one-half mile northwest is the village of Sychar. About the same distance to the west

are Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, a short distance north of Gerizim, with a natural amphitheatre in between where Joshua stood and shouted the blessings and curses of the Law to the nation assembled on the slopes of these two mountains (cf. Deut. 27:12-13; Josh. 8:33-35). Also in the immediate vicinity is a burial plot, purchased by Jacob but given to his son Joseph, and Joseph subsequently had his bones buried there (cf. Gen. 33:18-19; 48:22; Josh. 24:32).

This location is of great significance in Jewish history. Nearly all archaeologists and scholars of the geography of Palestine agree that Jacob's Well is one place to which we may point with certainty and say, "Jesus sat on these stones." Grooves are worn deep into the stones around the opening of the well where ropes have, for centuries, been let down and pulled up drawing water for thirsty Palestinians.

In verse 6 we meet again the problem of John's method of counting time. This problem was discussed briefly in our comments on John 1:39. There can be little doubt that John counts time by the Roman method (modern method), i.e., from twelve-midnight to twelve-midnight. Some commentators have a problem with the account of the crucifixion. Jesus was crucified at 9 a.m. and died at 3 p.m. John 19:14 describes the trial in progress at the "sixth hour" (6 a.m.). Such an hour (6 a.m.) is *not* too early for sentence to be pronounced and it does *not* leave too long a lapse between sentence and crucifixion as some think. Do not forget the many events that took place between the sentence and crucifixion. Jesus struggled under the burden of the heavy cross probably a mile or more; large crowds pressed on every side slowing progress; He stopped to allow Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross part of the way; He held at least one conversation with some women. Do not forget also that the gospel accounts are fragmentary. After Pilate had pronounced sentence at six a.m., considerably more conversation and discussion may have transpired between Jesus and Pilate, or Jesus and the Sanhedrin.

We are to conclude, until better information comes forth, that John followed the Roman method of counting time. Thus, when Jesus sat by the well "about the sixth hour," it was either 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. The later hour fits the circumstances better.

The significant phrase of verse 6, however, is "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well." The Gospel of John is "the Gospel of Deity," that is, its primary purpose seems to be to prove the deity of Jesus. But the Fourth Gospel also shows

very clearly the humanity of Jesus. He knew exhaustion, thirst, sorrow, joy, temptation; He Who "left an example that we should follow his steps" knew suffering, poverty and opposition, and yet he was without sin. He took the form of a servant and the vessel of human flesh for a number of reasons: (a) that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17); (b) that He might be able to succor them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18); (c) that He might be touched with our infirmities and give us help in time of need (Heb. 4:15-16); (d) that He might deliver us from the bondage of the fear of death; (Heb. 2:15); (e) and especially that He might condemn sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Incidentally, this passage shows the writer to have been an eyewitness to what he wrote. The mention of the Lord's posture, and even the hour of day shows the deep impression the events in Samaria must have made on John. Peter and John later enjoyed quite an extensive preaching tour in the land of Samaria (Acts 8:14-25).

### Quiz

1. How long was Jesus' first Judean ministry? How do we know?
2. What two possible reasons may be given for His decision to leave Judea and go into Galilee?
3. What are two possible explanations for "He must needs go through Samaria"?
4. Locate Jacob's Well.
5. What time of the day did Jesus stop at the well?
6. Give three reasons for Christ's taking the human form.

## JESUS AND THE LIVING WATER

### *Text 4:7-14*

**7** There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

**8** For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.

**9** The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans).

**10** Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Everyone that drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

### *Queries*

- a. What called forth the woman's first question?
- b. What or Who is the "gift of God"?
- c. How does the "living water" become a "well of water springing up into eternal life"?

### *Paraphrase*

Presently a woman of Samaria comes all alone to draw water. Jesus says to her, Give me a drink (for His disciples were gone away into the city to buy food). The Samaritan woman asks Him, incredulously, How can you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink — I am a Samaritan and a woman also! (This she said because Jews do not use vessels together with Samaritans). Jesus said to her, If you only knew the gift of God and Who it is that is saying to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. The woman replied, Sir, you have no bucket and the well is very deep, where will you get this living water? Surely you do not mean to say that you are greater than our illustrious ancestor Jacob, who never sought any better water than this, either for himself or for his sons or for his cattle!? Jesus answered and said to her, Everyone who drinks this water will grow thirsty again; but whoever shall drink the water that I, Myself, shall give him, he will never, no never, be thirsty again, but to the contrary, the water that I shall give him will become within him a bubbling spring of water welling up unto eternal life.

### *Summary*

Jesus, out of His need for natural water and a woman's need for "living water," teaches His messiahship in Samaria.

*Comment*

The woman evidently came from the city of Sychar. Every day she would walk half a mile or so to the well, and as far back again carrying her waterpot either on her head or her shoulder. According to the custom, the women of those days met at a certain time of the day at the public watering place to exchange news and "small-talk" as they drew the next day's supply of water. This woman came alone! From subsequent information concerning her adulterous situation we assume she was a social outcast. None of the respectable citizens dared associate with her. She was an outcast—an unclean adulteress—a Samaritan—a woman! How would Jesus approach her? How would He overcome these barriers and reach her without raising more barriers?

The Master Teacher uses His need as an opening to gain her interest. He is tired and thirsty, and He asks her for a drink. It is a natural request, and one which could not raise any barrier. Had His disciples been there, they would have provided for His thirst. But they had gone away into one of Samaritan cities to "market" for food. (The Greek word translated "buy" is from the same word which is often translated "market.")

In verse 9 we see that for Jesus to ask a drink, even to speak to her, was not the ordinary custom of that day. The woman is plainly astonished. She probably recognizes Jesus as a Jew either from His speech or His dress.

Part of her astonishment comes from the fact that Jews did not use the same vessels as Samaritans. They considered the Samaritans as unclean as the Gentiles, and, according to Pharisaic interpretation, they would have to purify themselves ceremonially should they thus defile themselves. If Jesus is to get a drink He will have to drink from her bucket, for He has none of His own. The above interpretation is better than "have no dealings with" and this is evident from the fact that the disciples did go into a Samaritan city and did purchase food from the market-place.

A brief history of Samaria is in order here to show why the Jews considered the Samaritans unclean. When the kingdom of Israel was divided in about 926 B.C. (I Kings 12), the northern kingdom, under Jeroboam, embraced all the territory originally allotted to the ten northern tribes. This kingdom was known as Israel, and encompassed the provinces of Samaria and Galilee. Hoshea, Israel's last king, spurned the powerful nation of Assyria and made a political alliance with Egypt. About the year 722 B.C. the Assyrian king besieged the capitol city and later carried

nearly all the people of the northern kingdom away into slavery and captivity ((II Kings 17). A small remnant of the ten tribes was left. The Assyrians, in order to better control the conquered territory, imported foreign peoples into Samaria (II Kings 17:24). The remnant of Jews intermarried with the foreign peoples, and this mixed people was given the name Samaritan.

This heathen mixture worshipped idols. God sent wild beasts, and many Samaritans were slain. They attributed the plague of lions to their failure to know the Law of Jehovah, and they appealed to the king of Assyria for help. He sent them a Jewish priest "to teach them the manner of the God of the land." Although the Samaritan religion was very nearly the same as that handed down by Moses, it was probably tainted with some paganism. This would be one reason for the aversion of the Jew toward the Samaritan.

Approximately 200 years after the captivity of the northern tribes, the kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Babylon. Judah was subsequently allowed to return to her homeland in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The first thing the people of Judah did was begin reconstruction of the Temple at Jerusalem. In the fourth chapter of the book of Ezra we are told the Samaritans wanted to join the Jews in rebuilding the Temple. The Samaritans were told with contempt, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God." The ire of the Samaritans was aroused against the Jew.

Hostility continued and increased between the Jew and the Samaritan. About 409 B.C. Manasseh built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim. The Samaritans were generally inhospitable toward pilgrims from Galilee going to Jerusalem for the feasts (cf. Lk. 9:52-53), and many of these pilgrims journeyed to the feast by the way of the eastern side of the Jordan valley. The rivalry became so intense that the Samaritans would often set rival fires to perplex and confuse the Jews as they watched for their own signal fires which were to announce the rising of the Passover moon. Someone has written, "The Samaritan was publicly cursed in the synagogues of the Jews . . . and was thus, so far as the Jew could affect his position, excluded from eternal life."

In addition to this centuries-old hostility, no Jew would speak to any woman in public—not even his own wife or daughter. This foolish tradition was carried to such an extreme that some Pharisees would close their eyes when they saw a woman on the city streets. As a result, they often bumped into walls and houses,



and they came to be known as "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees." Thus we can see the woman's astonishment that Jesus should even speak to her. If He had been a normal Jewish rabbi, He would have gone home immediately and washed himself because He had been in her presence.

The Greek idiom of verse 10 gives us an insight into the thoughts of Jesus. He sees a certain pathos in the woman's situation. He is saying to her, "If you only knew (but you do not) Who it is . . . He would have given you living water (but He cannot because you know Him not)." No man can receive the living water until he "knows" Jesus. Faith comes by hearing, and the hearing that brings faith comes from the Word of God (cf. Rom. 10:17; Phil. 3:8-11). Jesus is the source of life, and we must partake of Him (cf. Jn. 6:53, 63) through His word to have that life!

Notice how, having gained her sympathy, He gradually raises her thoughts from the temporal to the spiritual, ever holding her interest and ever leading (not driving) her into new light.

The woman is a little cynical in her reply. Jesus implies He can supply her with some sort of perpetual source of water better than what is in this well. Yet, even the great patriarch Jacob used this well. Does He insinuate He is greater than their ancestors (they claimed descent from Joseph and his two sons)?

The water the woman is thinking of (v. 13-14) never completely quenches even the physical thirst. But the water which Jesus gives completely and perpetually quenches the soul's thirst. This is what Paul meant when he said, "our inward man is renewed day by day."

The Old Testament is permeated with the idea of God supplying His new people with living water. Jesus was not uttering a new idea. Of course, the Jews rejected the idea that the Nazarene could be the "living water," just as they rejected anything connecting Him with the Messiah. Jesus was claiming to be the fulfillment of these messianic prophecies concerning the "living water" (cf. Isa. 12:3; 35:7; 44:3; 49:10; 55:1; Psalm 42:1; 36:9; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 13:1; 14:8). Read these references; they are important!

Some commentators do not connect this living water with the living water of John 7:37-39. But it is improper to disconnect the two. In 7:37-39 Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the living

water, and adds, "this life-source shall flow out from the believer." Neither passage, 4:13-14 or 7:37-39, is contradictory of the other.

### Quiz

1. What were some of the barriers Jesus broke by talking to this woman?
2. Why may we assume that Jews *did* have some dealings with Samaritans?
3. Where did the Samaritan people originate?
4. What was the beginning of hostilities between Jew and Samaritan?
5. Why was Jesus unable to give this woman living water?
6. What was Jesus claiming when He claimed to be able to give living water? Give 5 Old Testament references.
7. What does John 7:37-39 add about the living water?

### JESUS SEARCHES OUT A WOMAN'S SECRET

#### *Text 4:15-18*

**15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.**

**16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.**

**17 The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband:**

**18 for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly.**

#### *Queries*

- a. Is the woman's answer sincere?
- b. Why does Jesus change the subject?
- c. What made the woman say, "I have no husband"?

#### *Paraphrase*

The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this living water, that I may never thirst again nor have to come here day after day to draw a new supply of water. Jesus replied, Go call your husband and come here. The woman answered, I have no husband. Jesus then said to her, You have said well, A husband I have not, for you have had five husbands, and the man whom you now have is not your husband. This is indeed a true thing you have said!

*Summary*

The woman fails to comprehend the nature of the living water, and does not realize her need for it. Jesus shows her that she ought to be thirsting for righteousness.

*Comment*

Is the woman's request (v. 15) sincere, or is it cynical? It is easier to assume that she is sincere. Whatever be her attitude, she has missed the point! She interprets Jesus as speaking of physical water. She has made the same mistake the great crowds made later when Jesus said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled" (Jn. 6:26).

In verse 16 comes the next approach of the Master Teacher. He must use more dramatic and personal means of bringing the woman to an understanding of the living water. First He must make her soul thirsty for this refreshing and revitalizing water. The truth of God reveals two things: (a) our sinful and unrighteous state that causes the honest-hearted to thirst after righteousness; (b) it reveals God, manifested in Jesus, as the Living Water which quenches that thirst (cf. Mt. 5:6; Jn. 6:35; 7:37; Rev. 7:16).

Before men and women can be saved, they must be lost! The man who has not recognized his lost estate cannot be saved. This Samaritan woman must have the full light of God's perfect standard focused upon her immoral life to show her the need for living water. The gospel, of course, can be rejected. When the light of God's truth shines upon good and honest hearts, they will become thirsty and hungry to partake of the nature of God. But the results are different with evil hearts — they are increased in their hardness the longer they reject.

Jesus cannot give the woman of Samaria the living water until she has a thirst for it. Thus Jesus with His omniscient perception forces the woman to see herself as one who needs this vivifying water. Without a word of forewarning, Jesus casts a thunderbolt into the conversation. He says, "Go fetch your husband!"

Verse 17 stands in sharp contrast with the other verses narrating the woman's speech. Before, she had been very eager to converse. Suddenly she becomes very reticent. She speaks (in the Greek) only three words.

A few scholars believe the woman to be making a humble confession of her sin rather than seeking to conceal the fact that she was living with a man in an adulterous relationship. The entire narrative, however, seems to point to a studied attempt by the woman to evade the issue. In fact, her very next move was to raise a theological question for dispute concerning the two national religions.

The reply of Jesus (v. 17-18) is very sagacious. He continues to probe. He knows just how to proceed. The construction of the sentence in the original language gives emphasis to the word "husband." It is as if Jesus is saying, "You were correct when you said, 'I do not have a *husband*.'" She is living with a man, but he is *not* her husband.

Jesus then proceeds to tell her the story of her life. There are two important blessings this woman receives. Jesus, by His power to search her heart and reveal her past has (a) revealed her sin and made her desirous of righteousness, and (b) manifested, to some extent, His omniscient and divine nature, and thus provided her the way to righteousness.

### Quiz

1. How does the woman interpret Jesus' "living water"?
2. What two things does the truth of God reveal?
3. What must a person recognize before one may be saved?
4. How does the woman react when Jesus reveals her sin?
5. What is the significance of Jesus' answer (v. 17-18)?

### TRUE WORSHIPPERS OF GOD

#### *Text 4:19-26*

19 The woman saith 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 saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.

22 Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers

shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

### *Queries*

- a. Why did the woman ask about the place of worship?
- b. How is salvation "from the Jews"?
- c. What is worship "in spirit and truth"?

### *Paraphrase*

The woman then said to Him, Sir, I can see that You are a prophet. Our forefathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship. Jesus says to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You Samaritans are worshipping what you do not know. We are worshipping what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour comes, in fact that hour has arrived, when the genuine worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father is seeking just such people as these to be worshippers of Him. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman says to Him, I understand that Messiah is coming, the One called Christ, and when He has come He will declare plainly to us everything we need to know. Jesus said to her, I, the One speaking to you, am He!

### *Summary*

Jesus takes a definite side in a religious controversy. The worship of the Samaritans is condemned because it is contrary to God's revealed truth. Worship of the One True God must be in spirit and truth.

### *Comment*

Undoubtedly the woman was visibly shocked. It is characteristically human to try to justify one's sins or change the subject. Notice that this woman does not deny what Jesus has

revealed concerning her life. She realizes that Jesus must have some supernatural power — in fact, she thinks Him to be a prophet!

There are two popular interpretations of the motives behind the woman's interjection of the question about the proper place of worship: (a) some believe the woman to have asked the question because she was intensely interested in the question, while others hold that (b) she was still evading the very embarrassing subject of her sins. When Jesus had before asked her to call her husband she deftly evaded the truth and said, "I have no husband." Thus the second interpretation seems to be the most plausible. It is possible, however, that she would also be interested in the proper place to worship.

By saying, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," she evidently refers to the erection of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim nearly 400 years before her time. However, she may also be referring to the fact that Jacob built altars at Shechem (which was practically on the slopes of Gerizim) (cf. Gen. 33:20). Of course, the Samaritans would be constantly preached to by the Jews that the scriptural place of worship was in the Temple at Jerusalem.

According to the Old Testament Scriptures, which were even then the rule of faith and practice for God's people, there was only ONE place of worship. Moses legislated that there was to be just ONE acceptable altar (cf. Deut. 12:1-14). Later the tribes east of the Jordan (Gad, Reuben and Manasseh) built their own altar, but they made it plain they did not intend to erect an altar upon which to sacrifice (Josh. 22). Still later, in the time of Hezekiah, Judah is reminded of the ONE place to worship God (cf. II Kings 18:22; II Chron. 32:12; Isa. 36:7).

But, according to Jesus in verse 21, the time is coming when it will not be a question of the proper *place*. The time is coming when God will "break down the middle wall of partition," and "abolish . . . the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances," that all who seek to worship God may "have access in one Spirit unto the Father."

For the present, however, He reminds her (v. 22) that the Samaritan people are worshipping in ignorance. On the other hand, the Jews are worshipping that which they know. This is strikingly true when we realize the Samaritans only recognized the first five books of the Old Testament as authoritative. How could the Samaritans know of the prophetic promises concerning

salvation from the Jews through God's suffering Servant? How could they know the devotion and prophecies of the Psalms? That salvation comes exclusively from the Jews is abundantly verified in practically all the prophetic books.

Jesus does not mean to say in verse 23 that at that moment it was permissible to worship God anywhere. He uses the phrase "the hour is coming, and now is," because in His mind the future is already perfected, (cf. also Jn. 5:25; 16:32). In just a few short months He will have fulfilled the Law, and the veil in the Temple will have been rent from top to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and the "hour will have come" when men will no longer be required to worship at ONE place.

What does Jesus mean by worshipping "in spirit and truth"? What has He just been explaining to the woman? It is that (a) the time will soon come when *place* makes no difference and (b) the Samaritans are wrong because they worship in opposition to revealed truth. Thus, to worship in spirit and truth is (a) to make it a matter of the heart, the will, the spirit and the emotion and not merely a matter of physical atmosphere, and, (b) to worship in accordance with the revealed will of God in the New Testament. Some believers have over-emphasized one or the other, spirit or truth, and such unbalanced worship is wrong. Any worship which is contrary to what is revealed in the New Testament is divisive and disobedient. It is true that mere formalism is as surely an abomination before God.

William Barclay makes the following lucid remarks in his commentary, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, pages 152-154:

"1. A false worship selects what it wishes to know and understand about God, and omits what it does not wish. One of the most dangerous things in the world is a one-sided religion.

"2. A false worship is an ignorant worship . . . In the last analysis religion is never safe until a man can tell, not only what he believes, but why he believes it.

"3. A false worship is a superstitious worship. It is a worship given, not out of a sense of need nor out of any real desire, but basically because a man feels that it might be dangerous not to give it . . . There is too much religion which is a kind of superstitious ritual to avert the possible wrath of the unpredictable gods.

"If God is Spirit, God is not confined to things; . . . if God is Spirit, God is not confined to places; . . . if God is Spirit, a man's gift to God must be gifts of the spirit . . . True and genuine

worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible."

God has always yearned for heart-felt worship that is according to truth from His people. He has always abhorred ritualism and formalism, and has sought "willing and obedient" worship (cf. Isaiah, chapter one). Paul says essentially this same thing in Phil. 3:3 and Rom. 2:28-29.

What would a Samaritan know of the Messiah? Josephus, the Jewish historian, seems to indicate there was a vague messianic expectation among the Samaritans (*The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, 18:4:1). They were not so far removed from the Jewish nation that they could not be well aware of the general teaching of the Prophets through what little intercourse they had between themselves.

The woman has had her thirst aroused for living water. She wants to know how she may overcome her sin and be cleansed. So, she says, "When Messiah is come, He shall reveal these things to me." She has recognized Jesus as a prophet, but not yet as *The Prophet* — the Messiah.

Jesus, knowing she has now come to a realization of her need and is, in fact, yearning for the One who can supply that need, declares Himself to be the Living Water . . . the Gift of God . . . the Messiah.

What did the woman do? Evidently she did not say anything more to Jesus, but rushed into town, forgetting her water-jar to spread the good news (cf. v. 28).

### Quiz

1. What motive do you think the woman had for asking the question about the proper place of worship (v. 20)?
2. Who were correct — according to the Old Testament — the Jews or the Samaritans? Why?
3. Why were the Samaritans worshipping in ignorance?
4. When did the "hour come" that God's people were no longer required to worship in one place?
5. What is worshipping "in spirit and truth"?
6. Name three characteristics of false religion.



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
SPONTANEOUS EVANGELISM

4:27-30

*Text 4:27-30*

27 And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her?

28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people,

29 Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?

30 They went out of the city, and were coming to him.

*Queries*

- a. Why were the returning disciples reticent?
- b. What was the significance of the forgotten waterpot?

*Paraphrase*

At this junction His disciples returned from the market, and they were astonished to find Him talking to a woman. However, none of them asked Him, What do you want? or, Why are you talking with her? The woman, forgetting her waterjar, hurried off unto the city and began telling the people, Come, see a Man Who has told me everything that I ever did. You don't think this Man could be the Christ, do you? So the people came out from the city and were coming toward Him in a continual procession.

*Summary*

The Woman hurries excitedly into the city telling her discovery. The townspeople come immediately in search of a man who may be the Messiah.

*Comment*

This is one of the first examples of spontaneous evangelism. Perhaps a better title would be "Evangelism by Compulsion." Certainly, as will be discussed later, this woman was "constrained" to tell of the One she had met at the well.

When the disciples returned from market they were taken aback to find Him freely conversing with a woman. The restrictive barriers between men and women were discussed in our comments on 4:9.

One noteworthy statement of the gospel writer in verse 27 is the reticence of the disciples to question openly the Master's actions. Either their respect for His wisdom would not allow them to brazenly question Him; or they feared He might upbraid them. The disciples were momentarily interested in eating (v. 31) and not in a long discourse on the emancipation of women. Perhaps this accounts for their silence.

Their conversation having been interrupted by the returning disciples, the woman hastens off to tell the townspeople of her experience (v. 28). In her excitement and soul-gripping conviction she forgets the waterjar sitting on the well-curb, and rushes off down the road toward the city. The verb used by John here, *apheken*, lends itself to the idea that she forgot the vessel. It is the same word which is translated remission, forgiveness, and means a forgetting of our sins by God.

Verse 29 records for us, at least partially, her testimony to the people of the city. We also receive insight into the compelling force that causes her to testify. She had just undergone what some people might call "a religious experience." This experience, as we have commented before (vs. 15-18), consisted in a personal conviction of her sin and a beginning trust in His person as the omniscient One. These two factors were the motivating and compelling force that caused "spontaneous evangelism" in her life. As the apostle Paul said, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," . . . and, "the love of Christ constraineth us . . ." (cf. II Cor. 5:11, 14).

In the concluding phrase of verse 29 the woman puts the question in a hesitant form. As Robertson says, "With a woman's intuition she . . . does not take sides, but piques their curiosity." She is in no social position to make theological decisions and dogmatic conclusions. Who would accept her convictions — a woman who is an outcast of the community! So she deftly plants the seed of curiosity and allows them to form their own conclusions.

The tense of the verb *erchonto* (were coming) in verse 30 is one of John's word pictures. The picture is of a long stream of excited people coming toward Jacob's Well.

*Quiz*

1. Why do you think the disciples hesitated to question Jesus openly?
2. What caused the woman to leave her water pot?
3. What are two factors which form motivation for spontaneous evangelism?

## FIELDS WHITE UNTO HARVEST

*Text 4:31-38*

31 In the meanwhile the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not.

33 The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.

36 He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 For herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into thier labor.

*Queries*

- a. What lesson does Jesus teach the disciples in verses 31-35?
- b. Who are "he that reapeth" and "he that soweth"?
- c. How may the disciples "reap where they have not labored"?

*Paraphrase*

In the meantime the disciples continued to beseech him, saying, Master, eat something! But He said to them, I have food to eat which you do not understand. The disciples therefore said among themselves, Has anyone brought Him something to eat?

Jesus replied, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to completely fulfill His work. Will you not say that it is yet four months and the harvest comes? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and contemplate the fields, that they are white already for harvest. He that reaps receives and gathers fruit unto life eternal, in order that the one sowing and the one reaping may rejoice together. In this way the saying is true, One sows and another reaps. I have sent you to reap a harvest which your labor did not produce. Others have labored and you have entered in to reap the result of their labor.

### *Summary*

Jesus teaches the disciples two lessons: (a) Doing the will of God is spiritual food more satisfying and sustaining than physical food; (b) It is not important whether a disciple be a reaper or a sower — only that he be a laborer in the Lord's field. Both sower and reaper rejoice when the harvest is gathered.

### *Comment*

Jesus sits in silent meditation watching the woman reach the city, and then watching the crowds begin to come. The disciples have set the meal in order. They are hungry and, knowing He must be also, they hesitantly interrupt His meditation, advising Him to eat.

The Master's reply (v. 32) is beyond their perception. Jesus is so engrossed in the great opportunities and apparent victories in Samaria He has only the appetite for a food which the disciples do not comprehend. He is anxious for the crowds to arrive so that He may begin imparting living water to them also. His whole being is so immersed in His mission of saving souls He can think of nothing else.

The disciples either speak loudly enough (v. 33) for Jesus to hear, or He reads their thoughts. Theirs is a natural reaction of Jesus' statement (v. 32). Perhaps they think the woman had left Him something to eat. But Jesus very deliberately explains to them what His food was.

In verse 34 Jesus indicated how completely saturated He was in the will of the Father (cf. Jn. 2:17). We have a saying today illustrative of this. We say, "That person eats and sleeps his occupation." Doing the will of God was the very essence of Jesus' being. He was sustained by it. The Word and will of God was the bread upon which He fed (cf. Mt. 4:4). Barclay

points out two blessings in doing the will of God (a) peace, and (b) power. These blessings become obvious when one beholds the perfect peace and victorious power which Christ enjoyed. It is also obvious that He enjoyed these blessings because of His complete submission to, and harmony with, the will of the Father. We shall gain or lose these two blessings in proportion to our unreserved trust in His will (cf. Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; Heb. 10:7-9). The "accomplishment" of God's work means the fulfillment or completion of the Son's mission upon earth. Jesus, in His atoning death and justifying resurrection, completes and fulfills God's mission for Him (cf. Jn. 17:4; 19:28).

Verse 35 has been the subject of much discussion among Biblical scholars. Was this a proverbial saying quoted by Jesus, or was it actually "yet four months" until the harvest? Nearly all commentators agree that no such proverb has been found to exist. The best interpretation has Jesus implying a question to which He expects the disciples to answer, "Yes." Jesus says to the disciples, "You will probably say that in four months it will be time to harvest, won't you? But I am telling you to open your eyes to the spiritual fields which are ripe *already* for harvest."

Another question of interpreters concerning this verse is "Where does the word *already* belong, to verse 35 or 36?" As R. C. H. Lenski points out, "The contrast is between the attitudes of Christ and the disciples." "You will say yet four months . . . but I say already . . ." Thus, the word *already* rightfully belongs in verse 35.

The spiritual impact of this verse (v. 35) is apparent when we remember Jesus' constant reminder to the disciples of the overabundance of harvest and pathetic lack of laborers. Near the end of His second year of ministry Jesus was "moved with compassion" for the multitudes "because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." There, as He traveled among the cities and villages of Galilee, He said to the disciples, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest" (cf. Mt. 9:35-38). This is certainly one prayer the church needs to pray today, but one which is appallingly absent.

Jesus has been deep in thought concerning the opportunities soon to be available for harvesting souls. His next instruction (v. 36) to the disciples is to combat jealousy among them as co-

laborers in the Lord's fields. They are about to reap a harvest here in Samaria where they had not sown. Others had even sown before Jesus, i.e., the prophets and John the Baptist. In this verse, the emphasis is upon the mutual sharing of the reward by both sower and reaper.

The one reaping receives a reward. What is this reward? The rewards of the spiritual laborer are the souls harvested. Paul's crown and glory were to consist of his converts at the Lord's coming (cf. Phil. 2:14-16; I Thess. 2:19-20). But even Paul reaped at times where others had sown. And, vice-versa, he sowed where others later reaped. In the spiritual realm, both sower and reaper rejoice together at the harvest, for both shared in it. This was John the Baptist's understanding also when he spoke of rejoicing that the Bridegroom had come (cf. Jn. 2:29-30). This was the principle Paul announced in his letter to Corinth, "Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6-9).

The saying of verse 37 is interpreted in a number of ways. Verses 36, 37, and 38 must all be taken into account in interpreting this saying. The burden of the Lord's teaching is to instruct the reaper not to exalt himself as the one solely responsible for the harvest of souls. There have been sowers doing their work in advance of the reaper. They are equally responsible for the harvest, and they shall be equally rewarded. So in the spiritual sphere it is true: one sows and another reaps where he has not sown, but both rejoice together at the harvest.

What does Jesus mean by the past tense (v. 38), "I *sent* you to reap . . ." ? There are two possible answers: (a) Jesus was using prophetic past tenses, i.e., the disciples would soon reap this Samaritan harvest where they had not sown, but Jesus speaks now of their reaping as already past; or (b) He speaks only of their previous reaping when they "made and baptized more disciples than John" (Jn. 4:1-2). They had not sown this earlier harvest of 4:1-2 either, but others, such as the Baptist, had sown, and they reaped.

The first interpretation seems to fit this context better. Jesus had just exhorted His disciples (v. 35) to get a vision of the field which was even at that moment ripe unto harvest. Is not this a form of commissioning, a sending forth? Certainly, the disciples had not labored in these fields, for they had gone away to buy food. But now, as the multitudes approach, and, in the two days to follow, the disciples would act as reapers. Jesus and

the woman were the sowers, and the disciples would "enter into their labor." There would be others following these first disciples to reap these same fields (Acts 8:5-7, 14ff). The disciples reaped, but they also sowed seed which those who followed them would reap.

It is true in our day also. The Sunday school teacher sows, and the minister reaps, or the minister sows and the revival evangelist reaps—but both should continually rejoice together in view of the harvest. In the last day, when the accounts are rendered, it will not be a question of how many talents one possessed—but what he accomplished with the talents he did possess. There will be no asking by Christ whether we were sowers or reapers—only whether we labored or not!

### Quiz

1. What was the food which Jesus had to eat?
2. Name two blessings derived from doing the will of God.
3. What contrast does Jesus make by His question concerning the harvest (v. 35)?
4. Matthew.....also speaks of "harvest" and "laborers."
5. What is the emphasis of verse 36?
6. How should the past tense "I sent" (v. 38) be interpreted?
7. How is this passage of Scripture (v. 31-38) applicable to Christians today?

### REAPING THE HARVEST

#### *Text* 4:39-42

**39** And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified, He told me all things that ever I did.

**40** So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days.

**41** And many more believed because of his word;

**42** and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.

### Queries

- a. How could the people believe "because of" the woman's testimony?

- b. What was the significance of their "hearing for themselves"?
- c. Why do they say "Saviour of the world"?

### *Paraphrase*

And many of the Samaritan people from that city trusted and obeyed Jesus because of the personal witness of the woman who testified, He told me all things which I ever did. When the Samaritans came to Him they begged Him to stay with them. So Jesus remained there two days. And many trusted and obeyed because of His reasoning, and they told the woman, We no longer believe merely through your testimony, but we have heard Him for ourselves and know that this One is truly the Saviour of the world.

### *Summary*

Many of the Samaritans are firmly persuaded that Jesus is the looked-for Saviour, because of both the woman's testimony and Jesus' reasoning with them.

### *Comment*

B. F. Westcott points out the great contrast between these Samaritans and the people of Jerusalem who believed on Him. The Samaritans had, so far as we know, only the testimony of the woman and Christ's reasoning with them for the ground of their faith. On the other hand, the Jerusalem believers had many miracles and signs (Jn. 2:23) upon which to ground their belief. The woman told the townspeople of Jesus' prophetic insight, but they had to trust her testimony, for they had not witnessed the conversation.

Why would they trust her? When one considers her probable reputation, it seems little short of amazing that they would believe her. Doubtless her enthusiasm played a major part in gaining their ears. Furthermore, she would be unlikely to admit that Jesus had prophetically revealed her immoral past, were it not true! But they did not rest their trust in Him solely upon her story, but investigated for themselves. They were like noble Bereans (cf. Acts 17:11).

Verse 40 presents another contrast. Contrast the hospitality of the Samaritans now and the uncharitable attitude of some Samaritans later in the ministry of Jesus (cf. Lk. 9:51-56). Of course, Jesus made disciples only in this one city, and the return



trip spoken of in the ninth chapter of Luke may have taken Him through other cities.

One note of interest here is John's taking almost the entire fourth chapter to record only two days' happenings while the timeless events of eternity are grappled with in eighteen short verses of Chapter One!

Some see in the Lord's evangelistic efforts here a contradiction of His later commission to the apostles to "not enter into a city of the Samaritans; but go rather unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 10:5-6). But the commission of Matthew 10 was: (a) subsequent to the Samaritan event; (b) temporary in nature; (c) cancelled by even later commissions in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. It is also well to remember that Jesus stopped in only one village of the Samaritans, and then only after their continued insistence!

In verse 41, the Samaritans state definitely the cause for their belief—the word of Jesus. The Greek word which has been translated word is *logos*, which may also be translated as discourse of instruction, or expression of reasoning. (See our comments on 1:1-18). In two days' time He had ample opportunity to present His claims and show His fulfillment of the Pentateuch. This incident is illustrative of the principle stated by Paul . . . "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Lenski makes a good point in verse 42 by contrasting two kinds of faith: (a) the fledgling's faith based on the testimony of others, and (b) the satisfying faith based on personal investigation and experience. The former is the faith of many children who have been taught by parents and Sunday School teachers; the latter is the type of faith into which the former should grow—a faith which is firmly grounded in one's own personal investigation and contact with Christ and His Word.

Those critics who wish to deny the historicity of the Fourth Gospel claim the Samaritans did not say "we know that this is the Saviour of the world," but that John puts these words into their mouths on his own accord. This is absurd! Jesus told the woman (v. 26) that He was the Messiah. Would not two days be sufficient for Jesus to tell this city of His universal Redemptorship? This universality is really the lesson He proceeds to teach the woman in verses 20 through 26! As is usually the case, the destructive critics have failed to read and understand the context!

*Quiz*

1. How do these Samaritans compare with the believers of Jerusalem (2:23)?
2. Give two reasons to show that Jesus does not contradict His commission of Matt. 10:5-6 by entering a Samaritan city.
3. Would it be possible for the Samaritans to understand Jesus to be a universal Saviour? Explain.

## PUBLIC TEACHING IN GALILEE

*Text 4:43-45*

43 And after the two days he went forth from thence into Galilee.

44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.

45 So when he came into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

*Queries*

- a. Why did Jesus say "a prophet hath no honor . . . "?
- b. How did the Galileans receive Him?

*Paraphrase*

After these two days Jesus went out from Samaria into the province of Galilee. He Himself declared as the reason, A prophet is not famous in his own country. But when He came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him with acclaim, having seen everything that He did in Jerusalem during the Feast of Passover, for they also had attended the Feast.

*Summary*

Jesus goes to Galilee anticipating an unpretentious arrival, but receives public acclaim.

*Comment*

In verse 43 the Lord seems to be in a hurry to get to Galilee. With such success in Samaria, He is in danger again of arousing the jealousy of the Pharisees. He proposes to go into Galilee, His home country. The Pharisees were not above following His every movement in order to force the issue, for they later do just that.

Verses 43 and 44 are John's way of resuming the narrative where he left it in 4:1-3. Jesus left Judea originally because His growing popularity was about to bring about a premature collision between Him and the rulers (see our comments on 4:1-3). Add to this the recent success in Samaria, and one begins to understand His determination to go into Galilee. To avoid further antagonizing the rulers, He departs for His own country where He anticipates a quiet arrival, for no prophet is overly-honored in His own country.

He will not always seek to avoid this clash, however, for when the appointed time comes for Him to fulfill all things, He will "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," and force the issue with the jealously blind leaders there.

When Jesus arrived in Galilee, however, the people welcomed Him openly (v. 45). They had been to the Passover (2:23) and seen the many signs He did there. Again we see the contrast between the Galileans and the Samaritans. Those of Samaria eagerly welcomed Jesus into their homes, although they had been given no signs; the Galileans received Him primarily because He was a "wonder-worker" (cf. 4:48 also).

So Jesus now embarks on a public ministry in Galilee. The ministry which follows, however, seems to speak of a "guarded revelation of Himself" as compared with the open declaration of Himself in Samaria as "the Messiah — the Saviour of the world." This Galilean ministry will last approximately sixteen months. There will be only one interruption — a brief trip to Jerusalem for a Passover feast recorded in John 5. It is a ministry almost completely left out of John's gospel except for John 4:43-54 and 6:1-7:10. But this early Galilean ministry is reported extensively by the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mt. chapters 4-14; Mk. 1-6; Lk. 4-9). See Map No. 3, page 170.

### Quiz

1. Why did Jesus go into Galilee?
2. What does He mean by saying "a prophet hath no honor in his own country?"
3. Why was Jesus popular in Galilee?
4. How long is the Galilean ministry to last?
5. What portion of the great Galilean ministry is reported by John?

## HEALING A NOBLEMAN'S SON AT CAPERNAUM

*Text 4:46-54*

46 He came therefore again unto Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

48 Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, saying that his son lived.

52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said therefore unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second sign that Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee.

*Queries*

- a. Why would this nobleman think Jesus could heal his son?
- b. What degree of faith did this man display?
- c. What is the significance of Jesus' manner of healing here?

*Paraphrase*

So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water into wine. Now there was a certain royal official whose son was desperately ill in Capernaum. This official, hearing that Jesus had come from Judea back into Galilee, went to Him and begged Him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son, for the boy was at the point of death. Jesus said to the man, Unless you Galileans see signs and wonders you will never believe. But

the official said to Him, Sir, please come down at once before my little boy dies. Jesus replied to him, Go your way, your son lives! The man trusted what Jesus had said to him and began his journey home. But while he was still on his way home, his servants met him and said, Your little boy lives! So he immediately inquired of them the time when his son began to improve. They answered, Yesterday evening, about seven, the fever left him. Then the father knew that it was at that very hour when Jesus had said to him, Your son lives. Then the nobleman and his entire household believed on Jesus. This is the second sign which Jesus did after He had come from Judea into Galilee.

### Summary

A desperate father seeks the Man of Whom it is rumored, that He is a miracle-worker. Jesus fans the spark of faith within this man and heals his little boy. This, incidentally, is His second miracle in Galilee.

### Comment

Why would Jesus go to Cana? (a) He had friends there. Perhaps the same family who invited Him to the wedding feast (2:1-2) had opened their home to Him now; (b) Cana was the home of Nathanael (21:2); (c) There would be better opportunity to preach there first since He had already performed one great miracle there.

Jesus seems to have been in Cana a day or so before the nobleman came, at least long enough for the royal officer to learn of His whereabouts and come seeking Him. The word translated nobleman is *basilikos* (related to *basileus* which means king) and means an official of the King's court. This royal official lived at Capernaum about twenty miles distant from Cana over mountain terrain.

News of the Nazarene's arrival back in Cana, where He had once made water into wine, would spread swiftly from village to village. This nobleman of Capernaum heard that Jesus had come to Galilee and went away from his son's bedside seeking the miracle-worker. The courtier may have already spent great sums on physicians to no avail (cf. Lk. 8:43). His son was "at the very point of death."

What would cause this man to go to Jesus? (a) First, his desperate situation. What parent cannot sympathize with him? (b) All of Galilee would be filled with the reports of Jesus'

amazing miracles performed at Cana and Jerusalem. It is not impossible for this officer to have been at the feast in Jerusalem himself when Jesus performed many miracles (2:23).

It is uncharitable to say the man had no faith to begin with, yet his faith is imperfect at the start. He is persuaded that Jesus can heal only if He come to his son's bedside.

Verse 48 shows again the Lord's perfect method of fanning the tiniest spark of faith into a reckless, burning trust. Jesus replies seemingly unconcerned, "Unless you Galileans see signs and wonders you will never believe." As one commentator points out, however, Jesus is not so unconcerned and unsympathetic as it may seem. He has a way of testing men and women to determine the sincerity of their faith. He tested the Syro-Phoenician woman severely. Had this royal official turned away in exasperation and indignation, his faith would have been shown to be superficial, not able to stand testing. Notice the plural "ye" in verse 48. Jesus addresses the thrill-seeking crowds as well as the nobleman. Theirs indeed does turn out to be a superficial, pleasure-seeking faith.

But the nobleman will not be denied. He cries out to Jesus with the clutching intensity of a drowning man. The Nazarene is his last hope. "Come down ere my child dies!"

What faith is exemplified in the man's action! It must be evident from this incident that faith without implicit obedience is dead, useless and no faith at all. Jesus' words of verse 50 are a mighty test of the nobleman's faith. The Nazarene bade him "Go thy way, thy son liveth." This certainly shows that faith means both trust and obedience. The man believed Jesus and started immediately for home.

The incidental mention of "as he was . . . going down" shows the author of the Fourth Gospel to be familiar with the topography. Cana is approximately 2850 feet above normal sea level. Capernaum is on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee which is 682 feet below sea level. The man would truly be "going down" to Capernaum.

Verse 52 raises again the question of John's method of counting time. We must remember, however, he here reports the words of the servants. Since they were probably Jewish, this mention of time might be the Jewish seventh hour, which would mean the boy was healed at 1:00 p.m. the day before. The Jews counted their new day as beginning after sunset. It would take the man at least eight hours to walk the short, though

mountainous, 20 miles. He would then, according to Jewish reckoning, be near Capernaum the next day, although shortly after sunset. John could also have used the Roman method of time. Had Jesus pronounced the word of healing at 7:00 p.m., the nobleman would not near Capernaum until early the next morning, approximately 3:00 a.m.

As he approached the city, his servants ran to meet him and excitedly related to him the strangely instantaneous recovery of the young lad. The joyous father's faith took another leap forward. This man had found another King and had surrendered to His service. He related the wonderful story of Jesus to his family, and they too surrendered to Him. We would like to hear more about this nobleman. How difficult it must have been to maintain a Christian witness in the court of Herod! How would his Jewish associates receive his testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth? But John is not writing a story of men, but a history of the Son of God.

There are four exemplary traits in this nobleman which all men would do well to copy: (a) He did not let position, pride or effort prevent him from coming to seek Christ's aid; (b) He stood the test of his faith; (c) He showed the reckless type of faith (not ignorant) which Jesus desires — the only way to receive the full benefit of the promises of God's Word is to believe in Jesus unreservedly; (d) He became a witness for the Lord.

There are number of facts which make this a notable miracle: (a) it was a cure performed at a distance from the sick child; (b) it was performed for a distinguished officer of the king's court; (c) Jesus said no peculiar "healing formula"; (d) the child evidently did not have any faith in Jesus; (e) the child was at the point of death.

Modern faith-healers are not known for any such miracles. Today's "healers" insist that faith is an established condition for healing. Search the Gospels as you will, and you will find only one time in thirty-one instances of healing where the Lord required faith (cf. Mt. 9:28). In nine cases of healing there is no evidence at all of faith; in four instances faith is very unlikely; in four other healings performed by Jesus there is no faith possible! (cf. Lk. 7:11-17; Jn. 5:2-13; Jn. 11:1-46; Mt. 9:18-26).

Others have attacked this miracle upon the grounds that it was not a miracle at all but Jesus was merely giving the father a reassuring word, like any modern physician, that his son would "pull through." But John definitely states that it is a miracle.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### *Quiz*

1. Give three reasons for Jesus' going first to Cana.
2. Can you locate Cana and Capernaum on the map of Palestine?
3. What was the degree of illness of the son?
4. Why did Jesus answer as He did in verse 48?
5. List four traits of the nobleman worthy of practicing.
6. Give four reasons why this is a notable miracle.

## EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 4

John, Chapter 4

"YOU CAN BE A SOUL WINNER"

### *Introduction*

- I THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST BE SOUL WINNER.  
Plainly commanded (Mt. 28:18-20; John 15:1-6).
- II REALIZATION OF DUTY, NOT THE PROBLEM  
Some realize, but are downright lazy and indifferent.  
These will have blood of many souls on their heads (Ezek. 18 and 30).
  - B. Most Christians lack confidence or courage.  
"Me, a personal witness . . . I just couldn't . . . How?"
  - C. Every Christian who really wants to can be a soul winner.  
There is nothing in the New Testament that says you cannot get a decision, hear a person's confession of Christ, and baptize him yourself!
- III JESUS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A SOUL WINNER IN JOHN 4
  - A. He had a deep LOVE FOR THE SOULS OF MEN.
  - B. He was PREPARED.
  - C. He was UNSELFISH.

### *Discussion*

- I HE LOVED THE SOULS OF MEN AND WOMEN.
  - A. Not just "interested in people" . . . but having an OUT-GOING LOVE
  - B. He let nothing stand in His way of speaking a word to her soul.
    1. Not hunger, not race, not social barriers



## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### 2. WE LET MANY THINGS STAND IN OUR WAY.

- a. How many outcasts of society have gone to Christless graves because we loved our reputation more than their souls? . . . JESUS WENT INTO THE HOMES OF TRAITORS, PROSTITUTES, INSANE, BEGGERS, ETC.
- b. How many of the upper class have died without the Lord because we have been ashamed to witness (Rom. 1:16)?

### C. Jesus found a way to begin witnessing.

1. How does one start?
2. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Give me a drink."  
To Mary and Martha He used the subject of their beloved Brother's recent death!
3. Paul in Athens mentioned the city's idols
4. Most parents can be reached through their children

## II CHRIST WAS PREPARED

### A. Unpreparedness is the major reason people lack confidence.

#### WE MUST DRILL ON THE SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE PLAN OF SALVATION

It is shocking the number of long-time Christians who do not know where to find these Scriptures!

### B. He knew His prospect (by divine insight).

1. We must get to know people.
  - a. Their fears (of water, etc.), their beliefs
  - b. Must build up and encourage, not tear down what little faith some do have
  - c. Must win people's confidence and trust
  - d. Must, many times, dissolve barriers others erect
2. Jesus knew how to keep on the subject

### C. He knew His message

1. The woman tried to bring up old family traditions
2. Jesus did not compromise the truth
3. He did not argue, but always came back to her personal responsibility!
4. Peter said, "BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH THEE CONCERNING THE HOPE THAT IS WITHIN THEE."

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

We need to learn by heart these basic things :

- a. How to show the Bible as the word of God, infallible
- b. How to show the New Testament as the Book for Christians
- c. How to show the Scriptures explaining the plan of salvation
- d. How to show that this is the only gospel (Gal. 1:8-9)
- e. How to show that Christ demands unity in essentials of all who profess belief in Him.

HE HAD A MESSAGE WHICH HE KNEW MEN NEEDED MORE THAN THEY NEEDED EVEN FOOD AND CLOTHING, AND HE WAS CONSUMED WITH A DESIRE TO GIVE THEM THIS WORD.

III HE WAS UNSELFISH IN HIS VISION OF THE LOST

- A. This holds many Christians back from witnessing.
- B. His vision encompassed the world.

What will the Lord say about expensive church buildings while millions are going into their building simply out of pride? The church should have adequate space and up-to-date facilities, but there must be good stewardship here as well as anywhere else.

- C. He was not jealous
  1. Told His disciples :
    - a. They would reap where they hadn't sown.
    - b. They would sow and others would reap.
  2. Many a Christian has sown, never seeing results, and as a result has ceased to sow.

MUCH OF EVERY PREACHER'S REAPING IN ANY CHURCH IS DUE TO SOWING BY BIBLE SCHOOL TEACHERS, ELDERS AND OTHER MEMBERS.

IF ONE SOWER DOES NOT SEE RESULTS, OTHERS WILL . . . LET US REJOICE TOGETHER!

3. Paul said he rejoiced over men preaching the gospel even if they tried to defame him and take honor away from him . . . still they were converting people to Christ (Phil. 1:15-19).
4. Few people get more jealous than preachers and church members.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SELFISHNESS, JEALOUSY OR DESPAIR IN CHRISTIAN SOUL WINNING . . . THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO REWARD HIS FAITHFUL SOLDIERS. SOME MAY GO UNNOTICED BY ANYONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD, BUT THE LORD KNOWS HIS OWN, AND THEIR WORKS OF LOVE!

### *Conclusion*

#### I THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF REWARD

- A. Heavenly reward not able to be expressed in human language says Paul (II Cor. 12:2-4)
- B. Neither can we know fully the terrors of Hell!

#### II THERE WAS A MAN WHO DECIDED TO BE A SOUL WINNER . . . ALAS, TOO LATE!

- A. Parable of Lazarus and rich man . . . "just let me go tell my brothers."
- B. We must work the works of God while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work.
- C. Paul said, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men."

#### III JESUS NEVER MADE UP ANYONE'S MIND FOR THEM.

He presented the glad tidings, and he presented the only alternative. THEN HE LET MEN AND WOMEN MAKE THEIR OWN DECISION. *WHAT IS YOUR DECISION?*

MAP NO. 3—SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

1. Jerusalem—Second Passover, lame man healed at pool, Jn. 5
2. Near Capernaum—plucking grain on Sabbath—heals withered arm in Synagogue on Sabbath, controversy, Mt. 12; Mk. 2-3; Lk. 6
3. Near Capernaum—names 12 disciples, Mk. 3; Lk. 6
4. Unknown Mountain—Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 5-6-7; Lk. 6; heals centurion's servant, Mt. 8; Lk. 7
5. Nain—Raises widow's dead son, Lk. 7
6. Capernaum—Question from John the Baptist—forgives sinful woman in house of Pharisee, Mt. 11; Lk. 7
7. Galilean tour—Charge of league with Satan—sign of Jonah given—Mother anxious for him—sermon in parables—high cost of discipleship, Mt. 12-13; Mk. 3-4; Lk. 8-9
8. Sea of Galilee—stills tempest, Mt. 8; Mk. 4; Lk. 8  
Gergesa—Casts demons into swine, Mt. 8; Mk. 5; Lk. 8
9. Capernaum—Heals woman with issue of blood—Raises Jairus' daughter from dead, Mt. 9; Mk. 5; Lk. 8
10. Nazareth—last recorded visit, could not do miracles, unbelief, Mt. 13; Mk. 6
11. Galilean tour—12 disciples sent out in pairs, Mt. 10; Mk. 6; Lk. 9  
Herod alarmed, Mt. 14, Mk. 6; Lk. 9
12. Bethsaida Julius—third Passover night—feeding of 5000, Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Lk. 9; Jn. 6

