

God Came Down

(The Fourth Gospel)

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Jesus in Samaria (4:1-42)

This Act consists of six scenes: (1) Setting for the discussion with the Samaritan woman (4:1-6), (2) the discourse on living water (4:7-19), (3) the discourse on worship (4:20-26), (4) the woman tells of her discovery (4:27-30), (5) Jesus' discussion with his disciples (4:31-38), and (6) response of the Samaritan village (4:39-42). In these scenes, the reader should look for the continuing presence of the belief theme. The Samaritan woman realizes who Jesus is, she runs to the village with her discovery; the people of the village come to see for themselves and believe.

Scene One (4:1-6): Setting for the Discussion with the Samaritan Woman

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, ²although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. ⁴Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The players in this scene are the Pharisees, Jesus, and John (v 1), and Jesus' disciples (v 2). Concerning the setting and the action, Jesus and his disciples are making and baptizing disciples in Judea, which he leaves to return to Galilee (v 3). In route to Galilee, he passes through a small Samaritan village called Sychar (vv 4-5), and sets down at a place called Jacob's well (v 6). This event follows Jesus activity in Judea following the

Passover of the year 28 AD. This event likely occurred a short time after the Passover of that year, because Jesus makes reference to four months until the harvest (4:35). The wheat harvest is in June or July and the vineyard or fruit harvest is in September or October, given seasonal conditions. Jesus reference to the fields being white unto harvest would indicate that he was talking about the wheat harvest, but this harvest would be in just two month at the outside, given that the Passover had just occurred (3:13, 23) and Jesus was in route to Galilee from that feast. If Jesus was talking about the vineyard harvest of September, why does he refer to white fields? Unless Jesus is speaking hyperbolically here, it is difficult to determine the time of this event of John 4. The text reads as though Jesus has left Judea after a short stay and stopped at Samaria on his way. The earliest this could be, to give the "four months until harvest" reference credibility, would be late April, with the wheat harvest conjectured to occur in early August, which would be possible given seasonal conditions. If Jesus is talking about the vineyard or fruit harvest, then that would date this event in May of that year. John also tells us it was the sixth hour of the day (12 noon).

Palestine is 120 miles long from North to South, which, in the time of Jesus, was divided into three sections. In the North lay Galilee, in the South lay Judaea, and in between lay Samaria. The quickest way from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria. Just short of Sychar, Jesus and his disciples would have come to a fork in the main road. One branch went northeast the other went west. At the fork of the road there stands to this day a historical site known as Jacob's well. This piece of ground had been bought by Jacob (Gen.33:18-19). Jacob had bequeathed that ground to Joseph (Gen.48:22). The well itself was more than 100 feet deep; so deep that no one could gain water from it unless he had something with which to draw. This is the scene of the meeting between Jesus and a woman of the village of Sychar.

This text is an editorial narrative given to set the stage for the discussion between Jesus and a woman who comes to the well to draw water, thus there is no dialogue and the players, setting, and action are given to the reader rather than being portrayed on stage. There are, however, a number of themes or motifs present. A motif is a recurrent thematic element or unifying idea found within a composition. In this scene we have the motifs and/or themes of the Pharisees watching Jesus (v1), Jesus making and baptizing disciples (v 1), growth in the following of Jesus (v 1), Jesus' presence in Samaria (v 4), the historical location is given (v 5), Jesus' grows tired from his journey, a human characteristic motif (v 6).

In terms of interpretation, John (the writer) is setting the stage for Jesus' encounter with the people of Samaria. These were a disenfranchised people by the Jews due to the mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish blood by those Jews who intermarried with non-Jews after the 722 BC Babylonian captivity. What happens in this scene is of major significance as relates to the prejudice, bigotry, and racism of the Jews of Judea. Jesus here in this text steps across the line of racial and gender prejudice, the stage of which is set in these verses.

Scene Two (4:7-19): Discourse on Living Water

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"¹² "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.¹⁸ Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.

The players here are Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The setting is Jacobs Well a half-mile from the village of Sychar in Samaria. The action is that of a dialogue between Jesus and this woman in which he attempts to lead her into a deeper level of conversation than that of his thirst. His comments are of such a nature that her interest is aroused in a very significant way. "I have water to give you that will quench your thirst

forever,” Jesus tells her. This is the primary theme of this scene.

Jesus we know, but who is this woman? Jacobs well is more than half-a-mile from Sychar; the woman’s trip to the well in the noonday heat would have been especially difficult. Perhaps she came at that time of day because she was a moral outcast due to the fact that she was living with a man to whom she was not married. Most importantly, however, she was a Samaritan and the Jews had no dealings with them. She was also a woman and Rabbis were not supposed to address a woman in public. She was also a moral outcast, due to the fact that she had been married five times and was currently living with a man to whom she was not married. Socially speaking, there was no good reason for Jesus to speak to her and every good reason not to speak to her. The social taboos would have been very formidable.

Why would her being a Samaritan have been an issue? There was an ongoing feud of 400 years between the Jews and the Samaritans. The problem goes back to the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah and the estrangement that existed between the two kingdoms. The greater issue, however, was rooted in the restoration period of Nehemiah and Ezra. In 722 BC, the Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom, which included Samaria, and transported most of the population to Media in Persia (2 Kings.17:6). The Assyrians brought people from other areas of their realm and settled them in Samaria to administer and work the land (2 Kgs.17:24). Some of the people of the Northern Kingdom were left and over time inter-married with the foreigners, thereby losing their racial purity

The Southern Kingdom was invaded in 586 BC and its inhabitants carried off to Babylon. They, however, did not lose their identity; they remained unalterably Jewish by setting in place activities and, eventually, institutions such as the synagogue, to insure that the Jewish captives remember who they were and remain faithful to their heritage.

When Nehemiah, Ezra, and the exiles returned to Jerusalem some 70 years later, they immediately set out to rebuild the Temple. The Samaritans opposed the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple and gathered forces to stop them. The Jews had to be both laborers and warriors in order to finish their task. When Ezra, the priest and scribe, arrived in Jerusalem, he instructed all the people of the land who had inter-married with foreigners to send away their non-Jewish mates and children. Those

who refused to do so were considered neither Jew nor Gentile; rather, they were “something neuter singular or plural,” a thing or things. Later, a Jew named Manasseh, the son of Joida the High Priest in Jerusalem, married a daughter of Sanballat, the Persian governor of Samaria (Neh.13:28). When the Jews of Jerusalem denounced him for his apostasy, Sanballat designated him High Priest of the Samaritans and built rival temple on Mount Gerizim in the centre of the Samaritan territory.

During the Maccabean wars, in 129 B.C., John Hyrcanus, the Jewish General and Maccabean leader, destroyed the temple on Mount Gerizim. In the time of Jesus, the Samaritans continued to offer sacrifice on this site. For over 400 years Jewish-Samaritan relationships were filled with hatred and prejudice. It was small wonder that the Samaritan woman was astonished that Jesus, a Jew, should speak to her, a Samaritan.

The Theme of Living Water

Here we have one of John’s most powerful messianic themes, that of “living water,” which Jesus uses again in John 7. In this part of the world, living water was running water. It was the water of the running stream in contradistinction to the standing water of a cistern, well, or pool. Since water was such a blessing to the people of this culture, it was used in a metaphorical way for a blessing or blessings from God. The biblical writers often spoke of the thirst of the soul for God and for the salvation of God.

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. **My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?** (Psalms 42:1-2)*

*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; **my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water** (Psalms 63:1).*

*I spread out my hands to you; **my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah** (Psalms 143:6).*

The Usage of Living Water Imagery and the Salvation God.

In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you

were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. ² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." ³ With joy you will draw **water from the wells of salvation** (Isaiah 12:1-3).

The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. ¹⁸ I will **make rivers flow** on barren heights, and **springs within the valleys**. I will turn the desert into **pools of water**, and the parched ground into **springs** (Isaiah 41:17-18).

But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. ² This is what the LORD says- he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. ³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and **streams on the dry ground**; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴ They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by **flowing streams** (Isaiah 44:1-3).

This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, ⁹ to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!' "They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. ¹⁰ **They will neither hunger nor thirst**, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and **lead them beside springs of water** (Isaiah 49:6-10).

Come, **all you who are thirsty, come to the waters**; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare (Isaiah 55:1-2). (This was the text from which the concept of the messianic banquet was drawn.)

*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, **the spring of living water**, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water (Jer 2:13).*

*O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, **the spring of living water** (Jeremiah 17:13).*

The day of salvation was depicted by Zechariah as the opening of a fountain: "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity." (Zech 13:1). In chapter 14 he calls the day of salvation a day in which, "living water will flow out from Jerusalem."

*On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives . . . Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. ⁶On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. ⁷It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. ⁸ On that day **living water will flow out from Jerusalem**, half to the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) and half to the western sea, (the Mediterranean Sea) in summer and in winter (Zech 14:4-8).*

What is Jesus saying to this woman with this imagery? He offers here living water that would quench her thirst forever. The woman took this literally; but in reality Jesus was saying something of far greater significance to her about what he had to give her.

Later, this same author, in the book of Revelation, uses this same imagery to speak of the flowing forth of the salvation of God. The Lamb will lead those who thirst to **springs of living waters** (Rev.7:17), In 21:6, God promises, "To the thirsty I will give water without price from **the fountain of the water of life**" (Rev.21:6). In 22:1, John writes,

*Then the angel showed me **the river of the water of life**, as clear as crystal, **flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb** ²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every*

month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The prevalent belief within Judaism, and great numbers of others of this region was that the salvation of God was to come with the appearing of the Messiah. The Messianic age was dawning and Jesus was offering this person, who was a Samaritan, a woman, and a moral outcast, the gift of living water, from which would attain life into eternity. Jesus will use this same imagery again in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-39).

Clearly, in this scene, we see Jesus giving this woman every reason to believe that he is the expected one, the Messiah who will teach all things that are hidden. He aroused her interest with a simple request for a drink of water. By doing this he stepped across barriers drawn by racial prejudice, sexism or male chauvinism, and social taboos, which had been firmly established by longevity of racism, elitism, classism, traditionalism, dogmatism, and general bigotry. These barriers appear to have been firmly entrenched by those living on both sides of the walls. Jesus' attitude toward walls erected to separate people was to simply ignore the walls. This woman was a person in need of a savior; she was someone who hoped for the coming of the Messiah. Why should his identity as the Messiah not be made know to her? There was, obviously, no reason God would respect. Jesus' offer of living water to this woman is an invitation to her to pursue the interest he had aroused in her by the request for a drink of water – an invitation to investigate.

Scene Three (4:20-26): Discourse on Worship

Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for

salvation is from the Jews. ²³*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.* ²⁴*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*" ²⁵*The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."* ²⁶*Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."*

The players here are still Jesus and the Samaritan woman; the setting is the same. The action is that of a conversation between Jesus the woman, but here in the form of a dialogue. Perceiving that Jesus was a prophet, the woman raises a question concerning a topic of controversy between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews insisted that the Temple in Jerusalem was the only place acceptable sacrifice could be offered to God. The Samaritans offered sacrifice at the site of the destroyed temple on Mt. Gerizim. Finding herself in the presence of a prophet, one who has access to the mind of God, she asked him about this issue. Out of this dialogue develops a number of themes: our fathers, this mountain, you Jews (v 20), a change in worship (vv 21, 23), worship of what you know, that salvation is of the Jews (v 22), true worshippers (v 23), God is Spirit, worship in spirit and in truth (v 24), a messianic expectation, the Messiah will declare all things to us (v 25), the christological claim of Jesus (v 26). In terms of interpretation, here is an example of how Jesus used a point of theological interest to expand the discussion, which led to an even greater discovery. In all of this, Jesus is leading this woman to faith.

True Worship

We have discussed the issue of “the fathers” (the patriarchal figures), “this mountain” (Gerizim), and “you Jews” (the controversy between the Jews and Samaritans). Here a new topic is introduced, the subject of worship. The woman, being aware that she was in the presence of a man of God, asked him the question of uppermost concern to her. “Is Jerusalem the only place worship may be offered to God, or is it acceptable to worship God in other places?” Jesus, in his answer, gives some of the most insightful teaching on the subject of worship to be found in the whole of Scripture. He responds to the woman’s question by taking up the term she has used for worship, *proskuneo*, the generic term for worship in Greek. Jesus, no doubt, spoke both Aramaic and Greek. Galilee and Samaria would have been bilingual cultures, the language of trade, however, was Greek,

most everyone could speak the colloquial style of Greek known as *koine* (common) Greek. For someone from Galilee to address someone he did not know in Samaria, the common language of the culture would have been the most natural language to use. Although Hebrew is the official language of modern Israel, and a number of other languages spoken, most conversation and communication occurs in English. In fact, if one is involved in the trade industry, he must be able to speak English, so also with Greek in the time of Jesus. The reason for emphasizing this point is found in the uniqueness of the term used here in this text to discuss the subject of worship.

There are several words for worship in the Greek language, three that are of significance here. The word Jesus and the woman use is *proskuneo*, the most generic term for worship. This word is a compound of two other words: the preposition *pros*, meaning, “to or toward,” and the verb, *kuneo*, meaning, “to kiss or show affection.” With *proskuneo*, we have a word picture; i.e., that of proceeding toward with expressions of affection.” The word picture can be seen in the Middle Eastern gesture of bowing before someone, taking the hand from the forehead (the seat of authority), to the mouth where a kiss is placed on the fingers (a sign of affection), then extending the hand toward the monarch, deity, or person receiving the expression, as a sign of submission to and adoration of the figure receiving the worship. This definition of *proskuneo* is given by the linguistic scholar Herman Cremer:

To submit oneself to God and acknowledge oneself as in subjection to him; to exalt him, to praise him, to adore him, to celebrate him, to recognize and confess him as Lord. (H. Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of NT Greek*, pp 755-57.)

The concept of worship communicated by *proskuneo* is that of an action rooted in the emotions that is extended to an outward expression of these emotions. The emotion here is affection or adoration, rather than fear and trembling. In fact, there is another word for the expression of that emotion in worship. The word here is *sebomai*, which is lexically defined as, “to homage down, to revere, to worship out of fear and trembling.” It is, perhaps, the oldest word for worship in that it has its roots in the most primitive religious expression of man, that of fear. The meaning of *sebomai* is reverential fear of God, fear of his anger, his power, or his judgment. It is a worship rooted in the dread of displeasing him. The word from which *sebomai* derives is *phobos* – fear. This is a legitimate type of worship, but

there are higher concepts of worship, which are expressed in different Greek terms.

Another Greek term for worship is *latreuo*, which is, essentially, ritual service. In fact, our word “liturgical” is taken from this Greek word. *Latreuo* is defined as, “performing sacred service, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship.” This is the word for the ritualistic worship of the Torah (i.e., the law of Moses), which was common to the Levitical priesthood and activity of the priests in carrying out the duties of Tabernacle and Temple worship.

No doubt, Jesus recognized the concepts of worship associated with *sebomai* and *latreuo*, and the word *latreuo* would have been more appropriate for the question the woman was asking. “Is the Temple in Jerusalem the only legitimate place to offer sacrifices to God?” This is what this woman wanted to know. Jesus responds to her question using *proskuneo* as his term for worship.

“Believe me,” says Jesus, “the time is coming when all of you will worship, neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem.” The “you” of verses 21 and 22 is plural in the Greek text. This statement has universal applicability. “You (the Samaritans) worship what you do not know,” he says, “we (the Jews) worship what we know.” The word for “know” here is *oida* – acquired knowledge. The worship of the Samaritans was not rooted in what they had acquired from God; the worship of the Jews, however, was. But all of this was to change; in fact, this change had already been set in motion. When the kingdom of God was in place, those who offered worship to the Father would be “true worshippers,” (v 23). What does he mean by this? *Proskuneo* means to approach God with expressions of affection or adoration; the attempt to consciously enter or envision oneself as entering into the presence of God. True worshippers are those who approach God out of the true emotions of *proskuneo*, and true expression of those emotions. It is not the prostration of fear, nor the habitual repetition and perpetuation of ritual that God wishes to receive. In fact, Jesus said precisely this in Matt 12:7 when rebuking the leaders of the Jews who would rank ritual or dogma above care for people. “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent,” says Jesus. The text he quoted is Hosea 6:6, which reads:

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather

than burnt offerings. Like Adam, they have broken the covenant - they were unfaithful to me there (Hosea 6:6-7).

In Mark 12, in response to the question of which is the greatest commandment of the law, Jesus quotes the *shema* of Deut 6:4. In response to his answer, a teacher of the law said to him, “

Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

The text goes on to tell us, “When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." What did this man say that made Jesus see in him a nearness to the reign of God? True affection for God and for those created in his image was more desirable to God than any amount of observance of ritual. This is likely the meaning of Jesus’ words to the woman of Samaria, “God desires true worshippers to worship him,” (v 23).

Also worthy of note is the significance of Jesus’ expression, “will worship the Father” (v 23) and “his worshippers,” (v 24). In these two constructions, the direct object of *proskuneo* is God. The worship of which Jesus’ speaks here is the worship of God, as expressed in the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-6; Deut 5:7-10, 6: 4-6, 13). Deut 6:13 is the text quoted to Satan in the temptations, “Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship (*proskuneo*) the Lord your God, and serve (*latreuo*) him only," (Matt 4:10).

The worship of which Jesus speaks is the expression of adoration directed toward the object of that adoration. The object of that adoration is, and can only be, the one in whom our faith centers, God. Our worship, then, must be centered in our faith; it is a celebration of our faith. Any and all actions we wish to call worship must be directed to God. This is why worship directed toward any other object of devotion is called “idolatry.” A sure characteristic of worship having idolatrous tendencies is worship that has as its object, someone or something other than God. It is often the case that much of what is called worship directed to God is, in reality, activity which is directed toward those who are assembled for worship. This is what

the ritual of the Second Temple had become in the last century before birth of Christ. The focus of the ritual was the dogma of the ritual, not God. So much was this the case that, in the last decade of the second century BC, a massacre of 6,000 Jewish worshippers occurred at the Feast of Tabernacles over a dispute concerning the proper way to perform libation ritual. When the priest poured out the libation of water before the alter, in keeping with the ritual dogma of the Sadducees, the Pharisees began to riot. This led to a seven-year civil war in which 50,000 people died. Something had clearly gone wrong with the worship of these people.

Those God seeks to be his worshippers are those who will worship him in spirit and in truth. These Jesus calls, “the true worshippers” (v 23). To stand before God in truth is to stand before God without hidden agendas, whether expressed or unexpressed. Our self-centered thoughts, emotions, and motives, can become hidden agendas in our expressions of worship to God. Such God does not seek to come into his presence in the name of “worship.”

God Is Spirit

One of the most significant statements of Jesus found in this conversation is, “God is Spirit” (v 24). God is not a being of flesh with the passions associated with the flesh. He is pure spirit, Hebrew - *ruach*, Greek - *penuma*. In the Talmudic writings of Judaism, the Rabbis always referred to God in such a way as to not be considered a violation of the third commandment. One of the expressions used was *Ha Ruach Elohim*, which they interpreted as, “the breath (spirit) of God.” The breath of God is the life force of God. God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul. Man is a spiritual being and he is a being whose body has been formed out of the earth. Man, as a being created in the image of God, must approach God as such. It is not man’s “physical image” that is under consideration here. Since God is spirit, it must be his spiritual image which man carries in his existence. What, then, is his spiritual image? God has revealed himself to his creation as he is; i.e., a spiritual being whose existence is characterized by holiness and his goodness – his moral nature.

He is a holy God and a good God, and he created man to be holy and good. In order to reflect the image of God we must reflect in our lives what he has shown us of himself. If he has revealed himself to us as a holy God, we must reflect that characteristic back to him in our lives. If he has

revealed himself to us as a good God, we must reflect that characteristic back to him in our lives. Reflecting the nature of God as he has revealed himself to us is what gives us our connection to God. He is a being who possesses intelligence, emotion, and volition in his behavior. So also are we intelligent, emotional, and volitional beings, who reflect in our lives these very characteristics. Unlike God, however, we are beings limited in the expression of our nature. God is not so limited; his being can only be spoken of as supernatural. His supernatural nature is not something man may possess. Our realization of this is essential to a proper relationship to him. We must be willing to be one with God in his will and in the expression of his will in our lives. His role as our Creator is that of lordship, our role as beings created by God is that of servanthood. We may not be equal to God, we may only reflect the image of God in our existence, and in this way bring ourselves into union or oneness with God.

Given this understanding of our relationship to God, it becomes clear that what Jesus is saying to this woman is that God desires his creation to seek his presence and to come into his presence in a spirit of affection and reverence. His response to us will be consistent with our response to him. Affection and respect begets the same. God does love and respect that which he created, but only when his creation reflects the nature of its Creator. Man is a being created in the image of God; he is most at one with God when he reflects the image of his Creator in his own existence. This is how one worships God in spirit and in truth, by coming into his presence as a spiritual being who is created in the image of God, and by coming into his presence as a true reflection of what he created man to be. Man is only true to himself when he is “in truth” what he was created to be.

Never having heard a man speak as this one was speaking, the woman’s curiosity was heightened even more, “I know that the Messiah is coming,” she says. “He has come,” replies Jesus, “and you are speaking with him!” (v 25) A common belief of the first century was that all questions too difficult for the Rabbis to answer would be answered by the Messiah when he came. This belief must have been shared by the Samaritans, as is evident from the woman’s words of verse 25, “when he is come, he will explain everything to us.” Here the theme of John is clear, the Messiah was coming and he would explain the deep things of God to man. In this person, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah had come, and he had given insights to this woman beyond what any Jewish Rabbi may have claimed to know.

Scene Four (4:27-30): The Woman Tells the Village of Her Discovery

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah [Christ]?"³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

The players in this scene are Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Jesus' disciples (v 27), and the people of the village (v28). The setting is the same as well as the action of discourse between Jesus and the woman, with the addition of the return of Jesus' disciples. At verse 28, however, the woman exits the well setting to run into the village to tell of her discovery, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (v 28-29).

Here we see the presence of the scenario of "interest aroused, investigation, and discovery," as a model of the evangelistic method of Jesus. This method of reaching people is seen in Jesus' encounter with Andrew and Peter, as well as Philip and Nathaniel in chapter one. It is seen in chapter three in the encounter of Jesus with Nicodemus, and this same scenario is present here in John four with the woman of Samaria, as well as the people of the village. In each case, what aroused the interest of the players of the texts concerned the identity of Jesus. So strong was the curiosity concerning his identity aroused in each of those encountering him that further information was always sought. In each case the investigation led to a discovery of his messianic identity.

It is also curious to note the reaction of Jesus' disciples upon seeing him talking to this woman. As mention, it was socially unacceptable for a Jew to converse with a Samaritan. It was also unacceptable for a man to converse publicly with a woman not his wife; and further, it would have been a taboo of no little significance for Jesus, who was called Teacher and Rabbi, to be talking to a woman with such a questionable reputation. Verse 27 tells us that the disciples were surprised to find him talking with a woman, but no one was presumptuous enough to question Jesus or the woman about what they were doing. They were, no doubt, concerned about

his apparent disregard for social issues. In this one activity Jesus violated racial taboos, social convention, and the ritual purity laws of the Rabbis, but no one dared say anything to Jesus about it. Wonder why?

Scene Five (4:31-38): Jesus' Discussion with His Disciples

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." ³³Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" ³⁴"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. ³⁸I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

This text has long been difficult for biblical interpreters. Why does Jesus have this conversation about farming with his disciples? The disciples had gone into town to buy food for the group. Upon their return they present Jesus with food and encourage him to eat, but he responds by telling them that he had other food to eat and his major concern at the moment was to do the will of the one who has sent him and finish his work (verses 31-34). He then begins to talk to them about farming. He tells them that it is four months until harvest time, but the fields were already ripe for harvest. "Even now the reaper draws his wage," he says. What does he mean by this? The harvest he speaks of will be a harvest that will last into the ages. What did his disciples think he was talking about here? Because of this harvest, the sower and reaper alike would both be glad, the one sowing, the other reaping, and they will both be rewarded by the harvest.

He then turns this agricultural analogy on his disciples. "I sent you to reap," he says, "but you haven't sown anything to reap." "Others have done the hard work of sowing," he says to them, "and you will reap their harvest." What was he talking about? This was, no doubt, the question in the minds of his disciples. They were fishermen. They hadn't sown seed into any fields. Neither were they interested in harvesting what anyone else had sown. Why was Jesus talking to them about farming?

This text only makes sense if interpreted in the context of Jesus' discussion with this woman and her immediate reaction of running to the village to tell of what she had discovered. Who was this reaper Jesus spoke of? The reaper of Jesus analogy could be anyone who might gather grain from a field that was ripe for harvesting. Who was the sower of whom Jesus spoke? He could be anyone who sowed seed into a field where it could grow into a crop. Where were these fields that were white unto harvest? If harvest time for this Middle Eastern agrarian culture was four months away, what fields did Jesus have reference to that were white unto harvest?

Perhaps Jesus was trying to make these disciples see fields ready for harvesting that they were, seemingly, not capable of seeing. Could it have been their reaction to his conversation with this woman that prompted this discourse? Was he not sowing the seeds of the kingdom everywhere throughout Galilee, Judea, and Samaria? Every seed of interest planted in every person he encountered had the potential of taking root and bringing them to faith. If his sowing eventually brought belief who would be the one to reap the harvest of these believers? Who would gather them in? It would appear that the work of harvesting these fields was to be the work of these men he called his disciples. What he had been doing while they were off buying food was planting seeds for a harvest of souls. Would they be incapable of seeing the field of souls Jesus was cultivating for them? It is curious to note that after Jesus' resurrection he gave a commission to these men to carry the gospel into Judea and Samaria, sowing and reaping in those fields (Acts 1:8). Not one of them, however, became sowers or reaper in Samaria; rather, it was Philip, one of the ministers of the Jerusalem church, who carried the gospel to Samaria (Acts 8:4-8).

Scene Six (4:39-42): Response of the Samaritan Village

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹And because of his words many more became believers. ⁴²They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Here the players are the same with addition of the people of the village, however, the scene changes as well as the action and dialogue. The

players are the woman, the people of the Samaritan village, and Jesus. The scene is the village from which the woman came to draw water at the well of Jacob. The action is that of the woman spreading the excitement of her discovery throughout this Samaritan village. The dialogue takes the form of the woman's claims that she has found the Messiah, followed by conversation between the people of Samaria and Jesus, and the following confession of these people that they believed the woman's testimony and had come to their own belief that he was indeed the Savior of the world.

Jesus' method of reaching people is consistently portrayed throughout this Gospel. Jesus simply experiences life and, in the process, experiences people. He touches them, not only with his healing hands, but with his accepting eyes, his comforting voice, with his enrapturing words, and with his exemplary life. Every experience one had with Jesus aroused interest concerning his identity. This interest was always taken to another level where inquiry took place. An honest and genuine investigation always led to a discovery which resulted in belief that he was the one they suspected him of being, the Messiah. Not all, however, came to this conclusion. Some refused to take their interest to the next level and remained in their disbelief. But the example of this woman has given her a place in Scripture. When her interest was aroused by the simple request of Jesus for a drink of water, she acted upon the interest aroused by Jesus and took it to the next level of inquiry, which resulted in her discovery.

"I know that the Messiah is coming" said the woman. "He has come," Jesus replied, "and you are speaking with him!" The woman, having pursued her interest realized her discovery and immediately ran back into the village crying, "Come and see this man, he may be the Messiah," and thus aroused the interest of the people of her village, who also came to investigate for themselves what the woman claimed she had discovered. Following their inquiry they come to their conclusion, they had indeed discovered the Messiah.

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