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Woman at the Well (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk by Steve Gregg, he discusses the interaction between Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4. He argues that the woman was not a perfect or holy person, but was instead living in an arrangement that was less than perfect. Despite this, Jesus engaged her in conversation and spoke to her about the true nature of salvation and worship. Gregg also explores the idea that true worship involves worshiping in spirit rather than location, and concludes by emphasizing the importance of remaining committed to faith even in times of doubt or struggle.

Transcript

I'm not suggesting that this woman was anything like perfect or living a holy life. Far from it. But who was? Only Jesus.

This was a woman who had been dealt some hard blows in life. She'd entrusted herself to five marriages. All of them had failed, very possibly through no fault of her own.

But even if it was through fault of her own, if it was through her own fault, then she had a prevailing problem. But even if she had been innocent in her five marriages, she was not innocent now. But as I said, one might understand how a person, you know, not aware of Christ, just a normal religious person, a woman who had been disillusioned in five marriages, how she might be tempted to opt for the arrangement she was now in, which was less than perfect.

But none of those things tell us whether she was spiritually minded or not. Because often a person who's living in sin is the non-Christian who is most convertible, the one who is the most susceptible to conversion. A non-Christian who is living a life that he regards to be righteous often becomes numb to his need for God and spiritual things, and God's far from his thinking.

When a person's lifestyle is a sinful one, and they know it to be so, they have recurring pangs of guilt. They have recurring moments of awareness that their relationship with God is not what it ought to be. Now I'm not saying that everyone who's living in sin is spiritually oriented, but some are.

Some feel quite bad about their sin. To some, the message of the gospel is like refreshing water. To other sinners, it's not refreshing at all.

It's like a flood of condemnation. Now Jesus indicated that what he had for her was going to be refreshing. It was going to satisfy a thirst that she had.

Certainly the living water of which he spoke was the Holy Spirit. We can deduce that by the fact that Jesus speaks of living water a second time in the gospel of John, in chapter 7. In verses 37 and 38, where he spoke at the feast and said, He that thirsts, let him come to me and drink, and I'll give him living waters. And John tells us in John 7, 39, that he spoke thus of the Holy Spirit.

So the living waters is a reference to the Holy Spirit. And he said, you know, you're coming to this well because you keep getting thirsty. But I have water, living water, which will satisfy your thirst permanently.

Now not everybody has such a thirst for the Holy Spirit. Not all sinners are eagerly looking for spiritual things. Some of them are quite happy to keep spiritual things far from their mind and find them an intrusion when they are forced upon them.

This woman, we must assume, or else Jesus was really barking up the wrong tree with his messenger, she was thirsty. She was desirous of spiritual things. She had a spiritual interest.

She wrestled with theological questions that were relevant to how to be right with God. And she seemed to be eager to ask such questions when she finally found a man who could answer them authoritatively. And the fact that he confronted her does not seem to make her less comfortable.

It makes her more excited. She goes off, she forgets her water pot. The very thing she came to do was to draw water.

She forgot what she had come for. She goes running off to town and she gets all her villagers and says, I think I found the Messiah. This woman does not strike me as your common floozy in town who is ashamed to be seen in society.

In fact, she wasn't ashamed to be seen. She went and talked to all the people in town and they came. They listened to her.

Now, if she was known to be a scandalous woman of questionable integrity, why would the people of town bother themselves to leave their occupation and what they were doing to come out and hear this guy that she told them about? They obviously credited her story with having some validity. They weren't ashamed to listen to this woman and to respond to her invitation, which suggests to me that she was not a woman of terrible reputation in town. All the things, notwithstanding, that have been said by preachers

about her, I think we've got a different picture here in the Bible of this woman than that.

Sure, she was living in sin. Who isn't when they're not Christian? But I don't know that her sin made her an object of scorn and scandal and gossip in town, as some people think, or that Jesus selected her because of that particular notoriety, or that she had come drawing water at noon in order to avoid the public. In fact, as I said, I don't think it was noon at all.

I think it was six in the morning. I think she was simply earlier than most in coming to the well. Most people from the town would be coming there to draw water.

Jesus had sent the disciples into town to get food, and while Jesus rested at the well, the woman came to draw water. And Jesus' first words to her in verse 7 were, give me a drink. That might seem a bit rude.

They hardly knew each other, and he's commanding her to share her water with him. Now, drawing water was a task. It was a deep well, as she herself acknowledged, and needed a long rope to get the water.

It took some energy and some muscle and some time and so forth, and yet it was not strange for a man to give commands to a woman in a situation like this. The strangeness was for a Jew to speak like this to a Samaritan, and it wasn't so much that a Jew would never speak to a Samaritan. It's that Jews would not drink from the same vessels as Samaritans.

And this being so, the woman was shocked that he, whom she immediately perceived to be a Jew by some means, that he, a Jew, would be willing to drink from her bucket. Now, let me just comment on how she might know he was a Jew. It's possible that Jesus had an extremely kosher appearance.

There are certain features that, even today, are associated with Jewishness. And while certainly it's wrong to stereotype Jewish people as if they all looked alike, they do not. There are Jews who look almost like, can look almost like anything.

But there is definitely a set of distinctives that when people have them, you would guess they are Jews. Sometimes they may not be, but there are many people who you'd say they look like a Jew. And that's not intended to be an insult, at least when I mention it, but some might mean it that way.

But Jesus might have looked like a Jew, and not like a Samaritan. But there's also the fact that he probably had a Galilean accent, not a Samaritan accent. The Galileans did have an accent.

This is mentioned in the Scripture. When Peter was warming himself at the fire and Jesus was on trial, and the people were saying, aren't you one of those people who were with

Jesus, and he denied Jesus three times, one of the people said, surely you were with him, your Galilean accent gives you away. Now, speaking of Peter, but Jesus was a Galilean also, and there must have been a local accent that was recognizable to others.

And she may have noticed by the way he spoke, that he wasn't a local. He was a Jew and not a local Samaritan. But it's also possible that Jesus wore that blue border around the bottom of his robe that the Jews were commanded in Exodus to wear, which, of course, the Samaritans would not be wearing.

And Jesus may have been, by his dress, had that distinctive mark of being a Jew. We don't know how she knew. There's many ways she might have, but she knew instantly.

As soon as she laid eyes on him or heard him speak, that he was a Jew and not a Samaritan. So she raises that issue. She said, how is it that you being a Jew ask a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For the Jews don't have any dealing to the Samaritans, it tells us.

Now, yes. Anyone remember? It's in Exodus, is it not? I believe it's in, you know, it could be in Leviticus, but I think it's in Exodus. I don't remember where it says that, but there is a command given to the Jews to wear a border of blue around the bottom of their garments.

Which was, as I understand it, to remind them of their heavenly, their spiritual calling, as it were. But, anyway, that's a bit of a side issue. My friend, Danny Lehman, who is, everything he teaches turns into a sermon about evangelism, because he is an evangelist and he teaches about evangelism.

He likes to talk about this story, the woman of the well, as a good sample of how evangelism can be done. Jesus, of course, would be the evangelist par excellence, there would be none who could do it better. And in this case he went over a whole city.

So it's obviously, it worked, whatever he did. And one thing Danny points out, he likes to talk about the use of what he calls interest doors in evangelism. It's kind of hard to just walk up to someone cold and say, you know, do you know your sins are forgiven? Or, you know, are you a Christian? Now, I'm not saying it's impossible to do that.

Some people do that fairly naturally and without much discomfort. But many people find that to be a little too sudden, a little too abrupt and confrontational. And would rather let the conversation swing around to spiritual things from some more comfortable point of origin.

And what Danny calls an interest door is to bring up a subject in conversation with a non-believer that is something in the natural. That they are likely to have an interest in. Danny himself, at least when he was younger, he may have changed now, but he didn't like sports.

He just wasn't into sports, he just thought they were worthless. But he found that a lot of people he wanted to reach were into sports. So he started reading sports magazines and the sports page and stuff, even though he had no interest whatsoever in sports.

So that he could open up conversations with people on the subject of sports. He did the same thing to learn about whatever rock stars were famous at the time with the newer generation. He wants to acquaint himself with what's culturally in.

Not that he conforms to it, but he wants to be conversant in it. Because he says that gives him the opportunity to open conversations, an interest door with people. To start with something you know they have an interest in.

When someone's coming to draw water, you know they're interested in drinking. That's why they're drawing water. They're thirsty.

And therefore Jesus starts the conversation by talking about water. Now he didn't just start out by talking about giving her living water. He started out by asking her if she would give him water.

And that, of course, there might be any number of reasons why he started the conversation that way. Probably the reason is he was thirsty. That may not have been part of some elaborate strategy to get her to come around to this point in the conversation.

We're told he was weary, he was thirsty, and he wanted a drink. And he had no prejudice against this woman. Most men would not speak publicly to a woman.

That was just custom of the Middle East. And she was not so much surprised though that he would speak to her as a woman. But that he, a Jew, would speak to her as a Samaritan.

And be willing to drink from her bucket. The disciples, however, we know, when they came back, were specifically told they were marveled that he spoke to a woman. In verse 27 it says that.

Because that just wasn't usually done. But Jesus wasn't one to stand on ceremony. And he was thirsty and she had water and he asked for some.

And, no doubt, he began to sense in his spirit that this was perhaps a person that God had divinely appointed for him to meet up with. I mean, here he was in a position to have a quiet conversation in a casual setting, unhurried. And besides, this woman could help him out.

He needed a drink. Now, when she registered her astonishment, he said, if you knew, verse 10. If you knew the gift of God and who it is who is saying to you, give me a drink.

You would have asked him and he would have given you living water. Now, he doesn't really answer directly her implied question. Her question is, how is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? He doesn't answer how it is that he, a Jew, is willing to drink from the bucket of a Samaritan.

Jesus always called the place in the conversations. He set the agendas. I mean, even with Nicodemus, he took the conversation in any direction he wanted it to go.

He didn't let Nicodemus decide. Jesus was always in charge in his dialogues. And he practically avoids her question and just says, listen, you think that's strange that I ask you for water? It is strange, because you ought to be asking me for water.

I could give you living water if you knew the gift of God. Now, by the way, the term, the gift of God, there in verse 10, it's not entirely clear precisely how he means that, because the gift of God could be a reference to himself. For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son.

Jesus is a gift of God. It's also possible that salvation could be the gift. We know that Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 says, By grace you have been saved through faith in that and not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. So, salvation is a gift of God. However, in all likelihood, the gift of God he's referring to here is the living water itself, which is the Holy Spirit, who is also referred to in Scripture as the gift.

Jesus referred to the coming of the Spirit in Luke 24 as the promise of the Father. But we also read of the gift of the Holy Spirit that is given. So, probably in this particular context, he's referring to the Holy Spirit, whom he has not precisely referred to by that name, but does in the same sentence refer to the living water that he would give.

That is the gift of God that you would wish to have if you knew it. And you would have asked me if you knew who I was, and if you knew what the gift of God was, you would have asked me to give you the gift of God, which is living water. Now, the term living water was a term that was used for running water in those days.

And there were two kinds of wells. There were wells that just had water that seeped into the bottom of them. You know, you dig a deep pit, and just the moisture in the soil seeps into it and collects in the bottom, and you get water that way.

But there were, of course, artesian wells also, where you dug a well and you'd have to be fortunate enough to hit a spring down there. So that even though there was in the shaft of the well standing water down deep enough, there was water running that was replenishing and keeping the well fresh, which was always more desirable. Running water, a spring of water, would sometimes be referred to as living water.

Living rather than stagnant. It was moving. It was active.

And apparently the woman, when he made reference to living water, didn't immediately assume that he had a spiritual meaning. She apparently felt that he was referring to the running water that could be had if you could go deep enough into the well. The well probably had a spring at its bottom.

And since he was really just talking about water and drinking and thirst and such, she had no reason at this point to think he had any other meaning than that he was talking about getting water to drink. He said, I could give you living water. Now, if he was sitting there with a bucket with a very long rope, that might be a sensible suggestion.

But she said to him, in verse 11, Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do you get this living water? So she just took it naturally. How are you going to get living water? You don't even have a bucket.

It's a deep well. The living water is pretty deep down there. And she said to him, Are you greater than our father Jacob? Now, this statement in verse 12 suggests that maybe she was suspecting that he did mean something else.

Maybe he didn't mean from this well. Maybe he had a well of his own somewhere. Maybe he had a well that had water that he was suggesting was better than the water he was asking her to give him.

However, the water he was asking her for was from Jacob's well. What well could he have that he could claim superior to that of this well that had such a wonderful history? Now, of course, the heritage of Jacob had nothing to do with the quality of the water. But Jesus was clearly suggesting that he could do better.

He could provide better water for her than she could provide for him. And she may have had a bit of a patriotic streak that made her think, Wait a minute, you Jew. You think your well that you have down at wherever it is you live, you think that's better water than what I have here? Jacob gave us this well.

You're saying you're better than that? And that's essentially what I hear in her reaction. Are you greater than our father Jacob? I mean, you Jews may think you're better than us Samaritans, but you don't think you're better than Jacob, certainly. And he's the one who gave us this well.

And he drank from it himself. But if it's good enough for Jacob, it's good enough for me. You're telling me you've got a better place to drink than this? Jacob fed his sons here and his animals here too.

And Jesus answered and said to her, Whoever drinks from this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I

shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

Now this point made it clear that he was not talking about natural water. This is the first thing he said that made it obvious. He's not talking about ordinary water.

And some people think that when the woman responded in verse 15, Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw, that she was being sarcastic. Like she thought she had a loony on her hands here. You know, I mean, this guy thinks he can give me water, but I'll never be thirsty again.

I know better than that. I've been around the block a few times. I'm not as stupid as I look.

He's trying to con me. Either that or he's just nuts himself. No matter what water you drink, you're going to get thirsty again.

And so some feel like she was kind of sizing him up like some kind of either a con artist or either a nut. And that she's kind of acting like she's playing on him. Oh, sure, okay, you got water.

But if I drink that water, I'll never thirst again? Right, right. Okay, why don't you give me some of that water? Because I just assume I don't have to come here and draw water anymore. That's how some people understand what was going on here.

I suspect that Jesus' comment here revealed for the first time that he had something spiritual that he was talking about. Up to this point, it was not at all clear that he had anything other than natural water in mind. But here it was clear.

I think this woman was kind of perceptive, to tell you the truth. And although she didn't have the advantage of knowing everything about Jesus, we do, and we, of course, knowing Jesus, we assume immediately he's talking about something spiritual, but she is only now beginning to realize that he's talking a little strange. And that he's talking a little different about something else.

But what he was saying was, first of all, the water he could give would become a well inside, spring up to everlasting life. Now, no one could think, first of all, that Jesus was suggesting as a desirable thing, having an actual geyser of actual water springing up out of your body. I mean, what would be the advantage of this? The closest thing you have to that is when you throw up, you know, and that's not exactly a pleasant experience.

I mean, she must know that he's not referring to natural water anymore, when he talks about a well of water springing up in you, and springing out of you, and so forth. And the fact that he mentions that it springs up to eternal life makes it clear that he's now moved from the area of the natural to the area of the supernatural. And putting that all together with the earlier part of the sentence, that those who drink this water, this natural water

from Jacob's well, good as it may be, prestigious as it may be that Jacob drank from this well, wonderful, excellent, but no matter how good natural water is, it doesn't finally satisfy.

Natural cravings are so designed that they return. And there is in this life no final satisfaction to the thirsts of the natural man. That does not have to be replenished.

But there is a water that I'm talking about, he said, which you will not thirst again. And when he goes on to say it will become a well springing up within you into eternal life, this was clear enough that he's talking about a thirst of another sort, and a water of another sort. And though she may not have fully understood all that was implied, and we can hardly expect that she would have, I think at this point she understood that he was talking about something deeper than just physical thirst.

He was talking about something deeper than natural stuff. He was talking about something supernatural. He was offering her eternal life.

He was offering her a cessation of a thirst of another sort. Only she could have known what kind of thirst she had besides a thirst for water. A thirst for love, one could suggest.

I mean, having had five failed marriages and yet still living with a guy, you could say this one was searching for love. But that's probably, it may have run through her mind. I wonder if that's the thirst he's talking about.

But that wouldn't really fit the facts. Because that doesn't have anything to do with eternal life. At least not obviously so.

But if she had a thirst of a spiritual sort, a thirst for God, a thirst to get right with God, that would explain her later asking him where to worship and other things that she said. I don't know to what degree, I mean, we can only judge by what's said. We're not given the background of what she was thinking.

But my thought is, she was not in any sense being sarcastic when she said, sir, give me this water so I don't have to come here and draw anymore. I think she really wanted that water. Although, again, I'm sure that she didn't have a grasp, a full grasp of what was being discussed here.

How could she? We wouldn't either if we hadn't read the whole story and even other passages that we cross-referenced with it. He said to her, go call your husband and come here. Now, this was not simply a way of getting her to admit she had no husband.

This would be a fairly natural thing to do. A man, a strange man, would not give gifts to a married woman of any kind. A rabbi wouldn't even teach a woman.

He would teach her husband. And then the husband, if he wished, could pass along to his

wife the things. It would be considered improper for a stranger to give a gift, a man to give a gift to a married woman.

And even if she understood that what he had for her was spiritual, like some spiritual lesson, like what a rabbi might convey, well, even that, it would be natural enough for him to say, well, I'm not going to talk to you until your husband's here. That just would be inappropriate. So the question wouldn't have struck her as a strange one for him to ask.

It would probably be the most natural thing a person in that situation would ask. If you're asking me to give you something, well, go get your husband and come back and I'll give it to you. And then she says, oh, well, I don't have a husband.

And that's where he reveals that he has supernatural insight into her life. And he says, that's true. You have no husband.

I know that. You've said it well. I'm glad you admitted that.

Because you've had five husbands and you're now living with a man who isn't your husband. Now the woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. That was the first thing she realized about him, other than that he was just a guy who was a Jew.

Her knowledge of Jesus increased as the conversation went on. Her first impression was just he was a thirsty Jew. She knew him to be a Jew.

And she was surprised that a Jew would ask a Samaritan to give him water. Then she says, oh, he's not just a Jew. He's a prophet.

Because prophets in the Bible often could tell people things about themselves or could see things about people or about their circumstances that could not be seen in the natural. Saul, when he was not yet king, was looking for his father's donkeys. Couldn't find him anywhere.

And his servant said, well, there's a prophet, a seer in this town. Why don't we go ask him? And sure enough, they went and they found Samuel there. And Samuel told him, well, your donkeys have been found.

How do you know that? Well, prophets know these things. Prophets sometimes have access to this kind of stuff. When Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, went out behind his master's back and got Naaman the Syrian to give him the reward that he had previously offered to Elisha, but Elisha had turned down, he did that secretly and he stowed the goods in his tent.

And when he came back to the presence of Elisha, Elisha says, shouldn't have done that and pronounced a curse of leprosy on him because he knew he had done it. Prophets

know those things. Prophets can see those things.

And so Jesus knew something about her that no one had told him. And that he as a stranger in town couldn't possibly have known. It was early enough in the day.

He hadn't met anyone in town to pass this along. It was clear his knowledge of this fact was supernatural. And her first assumption then would be that he was not just a Jew but a prophet.

Now her understanding of who he was even increased beyond that as time went on here. But having a prophet was good enough, as it were, to get some of her theological questions answered by someone who could really answer them, not just another rabbi who had another guess or not just another patriot who said our worship mountain is better than their worship mountain. She said, our fathers worshipped, verse 20, on this mountain.

And you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship what you do not know.

We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Now, a number of things about this. First of all, Jesus said, essentially what he said is, the place that you worship is not anywhere near as important as who you worship. You Samaritans, the problem you have is not that you worship in Mount Gerizim instead of Jerusalem, although that is bad.

Jerusalem is the right place. He does not tell her this, but we know this. Jerusalem was the right place.

Gerizim was the wrong place. But, Jesus, though he could have told her that, did not bother. He said, the real problem is not where you are worshiping, but who you are worshiping.

You Samaritans are worshiping a God you do not even know. At least we Jews, we know who God is. I mean, he has revealed himself through our prophets and everything.

I mean, we know who we are worshiping. You do not. Far more important than where you are worshiping is, do you know God? Knowing God is far more essential than being in the right place for worship.

It does not matter what denomination you are in, what label is on the can over the door

of the building you go to church at. Where you worship is of little consequence. It is who you worship and whether you know the one you are worshipping.

He says, you Samaritans, the problem you have is not where you worship, it is that you worship a God that you do not know. But we know him because salvation is of the Jews. That is to say, God will send salvation to the whole world through the agency of the Jews, which he did, of course, Jesus being a Jew, and the apostles being Jews.

Now, he also made this prediction in verse 21, the day is coming, the hour is coming, when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. But then he says in verse 23, the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Now notice this, there is the one statement, the hour is coming in verse 21, and in verse 23, the hour is coming and now is, in verse 23.

Notice over in the very next chapter, John chapter 5, verse 28 says, Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice. But look up at verse 25, same chapter, John 5, 25. Most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Now notice the difference between the hour is coming in verse 28, and the hour is coming and now is in verse 25. The statements sound similar, but they are not identical. In the one that says the hour is coming, he is referring to something that is strictly future.

It's coming, it's not here now, it's future. What? That all those who are in the graves are going to come out. He is talking about the physical resurrection of bodies out of the graves.

That is future. But in verse 25, most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. That now is means that this is not strictly future, something of this is already happening.

There are people already who are dead, hearing the voice of the Son of God and coming to life. He means that spiritually of course, because in the previous verse, John 5, 24, he says most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life. He shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

You were dead, but now you are alive if you have heard and believed in Jesus. That is a spiritual thing. Notice, he says the hour is coming and he talks about a physical thing.

The future thing I am talking about is physical. But the thing that now is, there is a sense that is already breaking into our present reality. And that is, whereas in the future the dead body is going to rise, even now spiritually speaking dead people are hearing the

voice of the Son of God and coming to life.

Now we have the same kind of speech here in John chapter 4. He says in verse 21, the hour is coming when people will not be worshipping at Mount Gerizion or Jerusalem. But in verse 23, the hour is coming and now is when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Now the hour is coming when they won't worship at Mount Gerizion or Jerusalem is a prediction that came true.

Not only was Jerusalem destroyed in 70 AD, but Mount Gerizion and the shrine there was as well. The whole region of Israel was wiped out by the Romans in the war there. So in fact the time came, within 40 years almost of the time that Jesus said this, that people no longer worship God in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizion.

That was a prediction of a future thing. It was fulfilled. But the question arises, well then where will they worship? The answer is in verse 23, they will worship in the spirit and in truth.

Not in Gerizion and in Jerusalem, but in the spirit and in truth. And that is something that will be of course, when Jerusalem and Gerizion are destroyed, no one will worship there anymore. The true worshippers will just worship in spirit and in truth.

And this worship in spirit and in truth is already happening. There have always been some, who in addition to worshipping in Jerusalem, were also worshipping in spirit and in truth. There has always been the remnant, who have circumcised their hearts and not just their foreskins.

Even Jeremiah spoke of that. Even Deuteronomy, Moses spoke of circumcising the heart. All Jews circumcised their foreskins, but only some, only a remnant had circumcised hearts.

There were many who worshipped God in the outward forms of the rituals performed at the temple in Jerusalem, but only a few. But there were some who worshipped him in spirit and in truth. Now what does it mean in spirit and in truth? One commentator I heard seemed to think that it meant that true worship of God must be of the heart and of the head.

That's what this guy thought it meant. I don't follow him in his interpretation, but it's an interesting thought. He thought in spirit means of the heart and in truth means of the head.

Comprehending truth, like theological truth. Now there would be some validity in this. I mean, certainly what is said is true.

Because he did say in verse 22, one of the problems was they didn't know God. And it's not that they didn't know there was a God, they just had wrong theology about God.

Everybody knows something about God, everyone at least has an opinion about God.

Everybody is a theologian. It's just some people are bad theologians, some are good theologians. Everyone either has good theology or bad theology.

Your theology is whatever you believe about God. The Samaritans had a theology, they just had bad theology. So to know good theology, it would be an important part of knowing the true God.

There is a place for head and heart in worship, and I agree with that. Though I'm not convinced that's what Jesus meant when he said you've got to worship in spirit and in truth. I think worship in spirit is in contrast with ritual.

And worship in truth, in truth means genuinely as opposed to hypocritically. In truth is a Hebraism, frequently used in the Bible, that simply means certainly or genuinely. Or this is honestly.

In truth means honestly. And we know from what Jesus said in his criticisms of his fellow Jews, the religious ones anyway, was that their religion was unacceptable because it was external and ritual on the one hand. They drew near to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

It was not spiritual, it was just a matter of outwardly keeping rituals. It had nothing to do with the spiritual man or the spiritual life. And a spiritual worship is in contrast to a ritual worship.

And another complaint Jesus had about the Pharisees' worship was that it was hypocritical. And he repeatedly said so. They pretended to be something they weren't.

And God's looking for people who worship Him honestly, in truth. Whose worship is not simply a thing to impress people. It's not hypocritical, it's genuine.

He's looking for genuine, heartfelt, interior worship. He wants people to worship not in ritual but in spirit. Not hypocritically but in truth, in reality in other words.

That is to say what God's looking for is not the same old kind of worship that was practiced by the Jews and Samaritans at the temples. Where they had the rituals of sacrifice and the rituals of cleanliness and uncleanness. And they had the rituals of diet and rituals of festivals and so forth.

Those rituals are not really what God's ever really been after. David knew this. He said so a couple of times in the Psalms.

He said to God, sacrifice and offerings you do not desire, else I would have brought them. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart. David knew this.

What God's looking for is something spiritual from people, not something ritual. Yeah, the rituals were required, but they weren't the essence of what God cared about. What God cared about is people whose hearts were His and who were honest about it.

And God's looking for that. God's looking for people like that. It looks like He doesn't have that easy a time finding that.

It's easy to find people worshipping ritually. People who define their worship in terms of what they do on Sunday morning by going to a building. But if Jesus taught anything here, it's certainly this.

It doesn't matter whether you're in a building. It doesn't matter what day of the week it is. It doesn't matter what city it is.

It doesn't matter where you're located. It matters where your heart's located. It's not a matter of are you worshipping in this location, but are you worshipping in spirit? Is it a spiritual thing? Now, a woman wasn't quite sure what to make of this.

And she said, well, I know that the Messiah is coming who is called the Christ. When He comes, He will tell us all things. And then Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am He.

Now, there's no doubt that the woman believed Him when He said this. Because when she came to the crowds in her city to invite them to come and hear Him, it says in verse 29, she said to the people of her town, come and see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ? So, we have a progression in her understanding.

She first perceived Him to be a Jew. Then she perceived Him to be a prophet. Now, at this point, she perceived Him to be Christ, the Messiah.

And so she goes and tells others. Now, before she gets away, the disciples come back with the food. It says they're shocked to find Jesus talking to a woman, but they don't dare to ask her, what do you seek? Or Him, why are you talking with her? In other words, they didn't speak to Him or to her, though those questions were on their minds.

They just watched. They were learning. They didn't always... Peter probably was not with them yet.

Because I don't know if he would have held his tongue in this case. And the woman left her waterpot, verse 28, and went her way into the city and said to the people the things that we just read a moment ago. She indicated to them that he told everything that she ever did.

Well, that's a bit of a hyperbole. But that simply illustrates how frequently in that society hyperboles were used. He didn't tell her everything she ever did.

But he could have. She had the impression. I mean, what he did tell her gave her the

impression there was nothing hid from him.

And could this be the Christ, she asked. And then they came to Him. And we hear nothing about that after verse 30 until verse 39.

In verses 31 through 38, we read of the disciples interacting with Jesus. They said, here, we got you some food. He says, that's all right, I've already eaten.

I have food to eat that you don't know about. And then they puzzled among themselves, what's he talking about? Did someone get here before we did and bring him food? And he said, my food, verse 34, is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. Quite obviously, Jesus was more concerned with the affairs of the kingdom of God than He was with eating.

Now, it's not as if He had really eaten anything. He hadn't. He was hungry.

He was weary. That's why He sent Him into town for food. However, He couldn't take time out to eat.

There was a big group of people coming from town wanting to hear Him. Taking time out to eat just wasn't going to be convenient. And it wasn't important to Him.

It's not that He didn't really need food. But other meals, the thing that He hungered for more was to be able to finish the will of His Father. To finish the work that God had given Him to do.

And I have a feeling that that's fairly natural among Christians too. I know it has been with me. And maybe I'm a person who doesn't get into food as much as some people do.

But there have been many a time when I was studying something or drawing a track or something. And I wouldn't look up from my work until hours past lunchtime and I hadn't even noticed it. I was so eager to get done the thing I was doing that it had sustained me without my having a sensation of hunger for food.

Of course, that's not only true of spiritual things. People can be that way about woodworking projects or whatever. They can just get into it and miss meals by accident.

But Jesus was into the ministry, into His Father's work that much that He wasn't ready to take time out to eat for it. He was getting sustained. He was getting strengthened from being involved in something else that didn't have room for Him to eat a meal right now.

Now, He said to His disciples in verses 35 through 38, Do you not say, there are still four months and then comes the harvest? This either means that this occurred in December or January, which is four months before harvest. Or else He's quoting sort of a saying. A little later He quotes a saying and He says so Himself.

Verse 37, He says, For in this the saying is true. And then He quotes the saying, One sows and another reaps. There were apparently a number of sayings related to agriculture that just became proverbial.

There's a lot of sayings that we use, you know. They become proverbs or idioms of our language because of their general applicability to a lot of situations. To say, four months and then the harvest comes would be a way of saying we've got to be patient.

You can't make the harvest come any sooner. If it's four months, you've got to wait four months. And likewise, the statement, One sows and another reaps, would be a saying about agriculture that is applicable to other situations in life.

And it may well have become a saying. In fact, it was. In verse 37, Jesus indicates this was a true saying that people say.

Apparently, they also said things like, There are four months and then comes the harvest. In other words, don't expect immediate results on your labors. You've got to wait like everyone else.

Things take time. But Jesus says, Isn't this what you say? Yet, behold, look, lift up your eyes on the fields, for already they are white for harvest. You don't have to wait for this one.

You're not going to have to go out and sow seeds and wait a while and harvest this one. I have sown these seeds. You're here to harvest.

He says in verse 36, And he who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, One sows and another reaps. I sent you out to reap that for which you have not labored.

Others have labored and you have entered into their labors. The works of the prophets before and all the groundwork they laid. And Jesus himself, his work talking to this woman, had planted the seeds and now there's going to be an immediate harvest.

And the disciples were there to participate in the harvest, bringing these people into the kingdom. Now, we read then in verses 39 through 42 that the people came, they heard Jesus, they persuaded him to stay two more days. And then they told the woman, Now we believe not because of your word, but because we've heard him for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

And that's a very important thing. Most people, of course, their first exposure to Jesus comes through being told by someone else. But it makes all the difference in the world once you have come to know Jesus personally.

And you can say to the person who led you to the Lord, It doesn't matter what you said anymore, I know for myself. If the person who led you to the Lord would come to you and say, You know what, I was joking, I was lying, I never did believe that stuff. I just felt like I better come clean and tell you.

I was just faking. I don't believe Jesus is real, there's no God. What would that do to you? It shouldn't do a thing.

Because you should have heard for yourself. It doesn't matter if the person who told you backslides, you should still be able to say, Well, you may think that, but I know the truth. I know God's real, I have a relationship with Jesus.

And that's what these people were saying to her. Not that she had backslidden, but they were saying that our belief in him no longer rests upon your testimony. It did at the beginning.

But now it rests upon our own experience. An experiential knowledge of him which we've seen for ourselves. And until we have that, of course, we can never really be very secure as Christians in our faith.

Because many times the people who tell us initially about Christ do backslide. But, of course, you have to cross that threshold from believing because your parents told you, because your Sunday school teacher, your friend told you, to a place where you know because you've met him yourself. Well, we've run out of time here, so we are done.