

# OpenTheo

## Woman at the Well (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In "Woman at the Well (Part 1)" by Steve Gregg, Gregg analyzes the story of the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. He notes that Samaritans were not considered pure by Jews, and many Jewish people avoided traveling through Samaria. Despite this, Jesus chose to make contact with a Samaritan village and spoke with the woman at the well, who was likely shunned by her community due to her scandalous reputation. Gregg emphasizes that while the woman's history may not reflect positively on her character, the Bible does not give a solely negative portrayal of her.

### **Transcript**

Let's look at John chapter 4. We're going to start at the very beginning of this chapter. It's one long story up through verse 42. I think I'll read all 42 verses, so that going back and commenting on the individual verses, I can do so knowing that you're familiar with some of the later points, and take that for granted in my comments.

So, John 4.1. Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples, he left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But he needed to go through Samaria. So he came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Now, Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, sat by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Then the woman of Samaria said, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.

Where do you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock? Jesus answered and said to her, Whoever drinks of 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. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.

Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You have said, Well, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband.

In that you spoke truly. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped 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 the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ.

When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. And at this point his disciples came, and they marveled that he talked with a woman.

Yet no one said, what do you seek? Or, why are you talking with her? The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ? Then they went out to the city and came to him. In the meantime, his disciples urged him, saying, Rabbi, eat.

But he said to them, I have food to eat of which you do not know. Therefore, the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought him anything to eat? Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work. Do you not say, There are still four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look at the fields, for they are already white for the harvest.

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 to reap that for which you have not labored.

Others have labored, and you have entered into their labors. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified, who told me, excuse me, he told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans had

come to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.

And many more believed because of his own word. Then they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. And that ends the story, and the next verse tells of his going into Galilee, which is what he set out to do at the beginning of this chapter.

In verses one through four, we have the introduction to what it was that brought him into contact with this Samaritan village. He had to go through Samaria, the reason being that he was in Judea, and he was determined to get to Galilee. Now, I think a basic knowledge of the geography of Israel is probably universal among us.

We know that Judea was the southern district. Galilee was the northern district in that long, narrow country. And in between the northern and the southern areas of Galilee and Judea respectively was this district called Samaria.

Samaria was inhabited by persons who were of mixed race. The Jews in Judea were largely pure, at least regarded themselves as pure, of Jewish background. The word Judea came from the name Judah.

Most of the people from there were of the tribe of Judah, although in the time when the kingdom was divided between the northern and southern kingdom, that region had been Judah's portion, but many people from the other tribes to the north defected from the northern kingdom and came down and became part of Judea, or Judah. They were carried away into Babylon later and then came back from Babylon. For the most part, the people who lived in that region were fairly pure in their bloodline, had at least made an effort to remain pure in their bloodline.

Up in Galilee, there were also pure-blooded Jews, like Jesus himself, who was from that area, and probably his disciples. There were also a lot of Gentiles in Galilee, but they were not intermixed. They lived in the same areas.

In fact, Galilee had more Gentiles than Jews living in it. Although it was, technically speaking, one of the provinces within Israel, it was sometimes referred to, even in the Bible, as Galilee of the Gentiles, because Galilee was more thickly populated with Gentiles than with Jews. Nonetheless, the Jews and Gentiles were not mixed racially.

They simply lived among each other. But the Samaritans were a people of mixed race. They were inhabiting the property between Galilee and Judea.

They were largely the descendants of persons of the northern ten tribes who, in about 700 B.C., a little earlier than that, the Assyrians came in 722 B.C. The Assyrians came and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and deported a great number of the people there. And the ones that were left in the land were joined by people deported by

the Assyrians from other lands they had conquered. So there was a mixture of peoples in this territory, which was engineered by the Assyrians as part of their relocation of peoples they had conquered.

And these Jewish people who were left behind ended up intermarrying with the Gentiles from other regions that the Assyrians had sent in there. And therefore, hundreds of years now later, in the days of Jesus, the persons living in that area were mostly of mixed race. They had some Jewish and some Gentile ancestry.

This mixture was looked down on by the pure Jews of Judea especially, and even the Galileans. And not just looked down on, but they held Samaritans in utter contempt. In fact, the word Samaritan even became a term of contempt.

Although no one really believed Jesus was literally a Samaritan by birth or race, he was referred to as a Samaritan simply as a derogatory term. In John chapter 8, his opponents in conversation with him said, were we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon? Well, to say you are a Samaritan in that case was not a reference to his actual ancestry because they knew better, I think. At least there was no evidence that they had that he was from Samaria, which he was not.

But it was just a way of being insulting to call him a Samaritan. Actually, the Jews held Samaria in such contempt that most of them would not even wish to get its dust up on their shoes. And although Samaria lay directly on the direct route from Galilee to Jerusalem and so forth, and because Jews from Galilee continually several times a year had to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the simplest route between Galilee and Jerusalem would be through Samaria.

But most Jews decided not to go that way. It was possible for those in Galilee to cross over the Jordan, to leave the country actually, and to move southward beyond the borders of Samaria and then cross the Jordan back into the country in Judea and so to avoid altogether any passage through Samaria. And most Jews did this.

The most popularly traveled route of the pilgrims to Jerusalem was a bypass of Samaria, even though the most direct route would be through that territory. Now, we read even in this account an acknowledgement, for instance in verse 9, that the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. That was just customary.

They wouldn't drink from the same vessels. They wouldn't have any dealings with them. They hated them.

But Jesus obviously broke the mold and he was a Jew and he was obviously so. The woman immediately recognized him as a Jew when he spoke to her. And he was very Jewish, but he didn't care that this was Samaria.

He must needs go through Samaria. Now, when it says he needed to go through

Samaria, that doesn't mean that there was no other way that he could get to Galilee. He had to go through Samaria because he had to have this encounter.

He had to visit this village. Now, he may not have understood that he was going to have this particular encounter, but Jesus always dictated his motions by divine guidance. He did what his father told him to do.

What he saw the father doing, he imitated. He did nothing of himself. So, he says repeatedly, even in the next chapter in John chapter 5, he makes reference to the fact that he did nothing of himself.

He did what his father dictated and therefore his need to go through Samaria was not really because that was the only way to get to Galilee. Actually, most Jews who made the trip frequently didn't go that way. But he had to because there was a divine appointment waiting to be made.

Again, whether he was aware of the nature of that appointment at this time or whether he simply knew his father's calling to go this route, he had to go that way. And we know because of what happened there that it was, of course, the will of God that Jesus meet this woman and the people of her village. Now, what motivated Jesus to make this trip? He'd been in Judea for a while.

He had a conversation with Nicodemus there and had cleansed the temple. And we're told that Jesus made this decision upon learning that the Pharisees had heard, verse 1 says, that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. Now, it's not at all obvious why his hearing of this news would be incentive for him to go to Galilee.

Though, if you understand that Galilee was the place where the Sanhedrin and the most powerful enemies of John the Baptist and of Jesus did not have any legal power, it may be that he went to Galilee to basically diffuse an explosive and volatile situation. If the Pharisees were hearing that Jesus was becoming more popular than John was, and they had been threatened by John, they would be more inclined to be threatened by Jesus as he was the rising star of the populist movement. And John had been critical of the Pharisees and called them vipers and so forth, and they hadn't liked him much, and now they find that the same rabble that were going to John are following this guy Jesus in greater numbers.

Jesus, being aware of this information reaching those people, no doubt anticipated that his presence was going to aggravate them more, and if he just kind of laid low for a while, he could have an extended ministry without much interference from these people. But if he stayed around in those regions, they were definitely going to be trying to hem him in and do the things which they later, in fact, did do. Now, they didn't have jurisdiction in Galilee.

Galilee was under the control of Herod, who was a Roman-appointed descendant of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas. He's the one, in fact, who arrested John the Baptist. He had jurisdiction over Galilee.

The Sanhedrin did not have as much power over the Jews up there. They were ruling in Jerusalem and over Judea. Therefore, it would appear that Jesus made his move toward Galilee because things were heating up down there in Judea because he was getting attention, and the attention was coming not only to favorable people but to unfavorable people.

Now, I pointed out in an earlier lecture that the other Gospels, in speaking of Jesus' decision to go to Galilee and to begin his Galilean ministry, give another time marker, and that, for example, is found in Mark 1, verse 14. It has a parallel in Matthew 4, verse 12. It says in Mark 1, verse 14, Now, after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

This coming of Jesus to Galilee in Mark 1, verse 14 is the same coming of Jesus to Galilee that we're reading of now in chapter 4. Jesus relocating the activity of his ministry from Judea up to Galilee. It marks the beginning of what scholars of the life of Christ usually refer to as the great Galilean ministry. Great because it was where the most number of miracles were.

The largest crowds followed him. The feeding of the 5,000, for example, happened in that region. And also because it was extended over probably a little better than a year.

It was the year of popularity for Jesus as opposed to the year of obscurity which we've been referring to up to this point. This was the beginning of his public fame. And he was most famous and most well-received in Galilee.

He was a Galilean himself. Now, it tells us in Mark that Jesus came to Galilee when John had been put in prison. It doesn't tell us in Mark 1, verse 14 that Jesus went to Galilee because John was put in prison or because he had heard that John was put in prison.

It's just that Mark tells us that Jesus coming to Galilee coincided with or actually followed the occasion of John being put in prison. That John's imprisonment could have been part of a motivation for Jesus going to Galilee is not necessarily stated or implied but could be considered. John had been ministering publicly but now he was in prison.

It may be that Jesus felt that Galilee now had a vacuum where John had been ministering before. It now required him to pick up the torch that had fallen to the ground with John's imprisonment and to carry that torch and to bring that message of the kingdom of God which John had himself preached and to go about Galilee so that Herod, by arresting John, in no sense was able to silence the message of the kingdom. We are told, however, in John what the other Gospels do not tell us is that Jesus seems to have been motivated

by a concern over the growing popularity of himself in Judea and the attention this brought to hostile parties.

All these things may be reasons for concern because if John had recently been put in prison this could encourage the enemies of John and Jesus that maybe they could get Jesus in prison too. Of course, the imprisonment of John was not done by the Pharisees. It was done by Herod and Herod and the Pharisees had very little love for each other.

But no doubt the Pharisees felt relieved by John being in prison because he called them names and stuff and he was more popular than they were and he was a threat. And now that he was put in prison that set a bit of a precedent. If this Jesus was very much associated with John or very much like him he also might be arrestable.

He also might be one who could be overcome through the courts. And since his popularity was becoming a concern to them they might have been plotting along these lines. Jesus probably anticipated some response like this on their part.

He didn't wait around to find out what they might do. He departed. He left Judea in verse 3, John 4, 3 and departed to Galilee.

And in the story that we've read in this chapter we do not read of his arrival in Galilee. That happens in verse 46 but we will save that for a later lecture. We need to talk about what happened en route.

As he came through Samaria he came to a village that's called Sychar. This is to be identified with the well-known Canaanite city of Shechem. Well known to us if we've read Genesis because Jacob encamped at Shechem for a while.

In fact, it was at Shechem that his two sons, Simeon and Levi slaughtered the entire population as Jacob and his family were encamped outside that city. It was at that place that Jacob acquired a piece of ground. It's actually probably the first piece of real estate and maybe the only piece of real estate that Jacob ever owned in the promised land.

And he bequeathed it to Joseph on his deathbed. I think it's in the 48th chapter of Genesis when he was giving special honor to Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, that he mentioned that he was giving to Joseph also this land that he'd acquired there at Shechem. This was the land that contained the well where Jesus met this woman.

Now you might say, how is it that this fell into Samaria? Well, Samaria and Galilee were the regions that had in earlier times been part of the northern kingdom. We have not yet studied the book of Kings yet and therefore we haven't covered this history and it may not be familiar to everybody. But in the days after Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam, succeeding him as king, made a foolish decision which caused the nation to divide.

Ten of the tribes rebelled against the house of David which was represented in the man

Rehoboam, Solomon's son. Only two tribes remained loyal. They were the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Benjamin was very small and insignificant therefore the confederacy of Judah and Benjamin simply was called Judah and it was a nation. In its own right, it became the southern kingdom and it was reigned over by descendants of David. The ten tribes to the north confederated into a separate entity with their own king.

So we had two nations now, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom were those tribes that were above Judah and the leading and most influential tribe of them was Ephraim which was of course the son of Joseph. Now, Ephraim was so much more significant than the other nine tribes in the northern kingdom that sometimes that northern kingdom was just referred to as Ephraim.

You'll find that in the prophets and even in the historic books. Sometimes in speaking of the northern kingdom it simply calls that kingdom Ephraim though it was more commonly called Israel. In the days of the divided kingdom the northern kingdom was usually called Israel and the southern kingdom called Judah.

But just as Judah was called that because it was the largest, the larger of two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, the whole kingdom was named after the biggest, Judah, so the northern kingdom of Israel having as its largest tribe Ephraim sometimes was simply called by that name Ephraim. Now, the portion of land that is here described fell into the territory of Ephraim. It was at a time much later that the land was divided up into different districts as it was in the days of Jesus.

By that time the northern kingdom had long ago fallen to the Assyrians. The southern kingdom had gone away into Babylon and come back. The area that had been of the tribe of Judah was now Judea.

And the area that had been the northern kingdom of Ephraim or Israel was now Samaria and Galilee. And this city in Samaria had previously been in the region of Ephraim. And it was there that, of course, Ephraim was Joseph's son.

And Jacob had given this plot of land to Joseph on his deathbed and the Ephraimites had it. I bring all this up because the woman brings it up in her conversation that Jacob gave this parcel of land as well to her descendants. She was descended from Ephraim.

But not purely so. Her descendants had intermarried with foreigners. So she could indeed speak of Jacob as her ancestor and Joseph as her ancestor.

But she wasn't purely of that tribe. She was a Samaritan woman. She was of mixed race.

Okay, so this is the region. Sychar, this village, is to be identified with Shechem where Jacob had acquired this property. And it specifically says at the end of verse 5 here near



the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

And his giving of that to his son Joseph is recorded in Genesis 48, 22. Okay, now verse 6. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, sat thus by the well.

It was about the sixth hour. Now, depending on whether we're following the Roman or the Jewish reckoning of the hours of the day, it makes a big difference. The Jews reckon the hours of the day from six in the morning.

And if John is using the Jewish reckoning, this would make it 12 noon. On the other hand, there are evidences that the Romans measured the hours of the day the same way we do, from midnight on. In which case, if John was using the Roman reckoning, this would be six in the morning.

It is impossible to be certain, but there is some evidence that John followed the Roman reckoning. I don't need to go into this in detail now, but the reason I say this is because Mark tells us that Jesus was crucified at the third hour. But John tells us that at the sixth hour, Jesus was still on trial before Pilate.

Now, if you're not following me, don't bother. We talked about this when we talked about alleged discrepancies in the Bible. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus was still standing before Pilate at a time that John calls the sixth hour.

However, Mark, chapter 15, verse 25, says that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, which is thought to be a contradiction. But the solution would appear to be Mark used the Jewish reckoning and John used the Roman reckoning. The Jewish reckoning, the third hour at which Jesus was crucified, would be nine o'clock in the morning, if Mark is using the Jewish reckoning, which is likely.

So to say Jesus was crucified at the third hour means at nine in the morning he was crucified, because the Jews would reckon from six in the morning, the third hour being nine o'clock. John, however, says that Jesus was still on trial before Pilate at the sixth hour. This would only work well and conform with what Mark said if John is, in fact, using the Roman reckoning, which would mean the sixth hour would be six a.m. and that would fit perfectly.

Jesus could be on trial first thing in the morning. The Bible says when the sun was barely up, the Jews took Jesus to Pilate's court and that would be around six in the morning. And then at nine in the morning later, Jesus was crucified.

Now, that all, of course, presupposes that John is using Roman reckoning. And if he is using it at that later point, he probably is here. And I think that's likely, so I'm going to go on that assumption.

That would suggest, then, that Jesus sat at this well, not at noon, but at six in the morning. Now, he sat at this well because he is weary from his journey. Think about it.

Six in the morning, he's weary from his journey. It suggests that he's been walking all night. His departure from Judea, he left at an inopportune time.

Most people would prefer to travel during the daytime. After all, they didn't have flashlights back then to help them over the rocky terrain, or they didn't have good roads, they didn't have street lamps. I mean, walking in the night was very inconvenient.

Anyone would prefer to travel in the daytime. But if Jesus arrived at Sychar weary at six in the morning, it would suggest that his departure from Judea was the night before and that he had traveled at night. So, he was weary by the time the sun came up.

This would suggest that the danger to him in Judea was sufficiently great that he wished to leave under cover of darkness so that he could not easily be followed. It's possible that the Pharisees were spying on him very closely, trying to watch his every move, but that the safest time for him to slip out undetected would be at night when they would assume him to be sleeping. And this may give us a hint at the degree to which there was a felt danger from his enemies that he felt he had to leave in the middle of the night and travel all night.

This would all be deduced from the assumption that it was six in the morning, the sixth hour, when he said he was well wearied from his journey. Verse 7. A woman of Samaria came to draw water, which is a natural thing to do early in the morning. If it were noon, and by the way, some teachers teach it as if the sixth hour was noon, that Jesus arrived here at the sixth hour and that was noon, they would say, well, this woman came at that time because it was siesta time, I mean, as it were, like in Mexico at noon, it's very hot and people basically go and rest in the shade until the hottest part of the day has passed and they go back and finish out their business day.

In hot climates, people generally try to go into the shade and not go out in the open sun in the middle of the day. Also in the Middle East, this is done. And it is thought if this woman came at noon, as some people suggest, that she deliberately was coming at a time when no one else would be there.

This is usually used by teachers as part of an elaborate attempt to make this woman appear to be a social outcast in her own village, that she wouldn't dare come draw water when other people are likely to be there. She had to come at noon when everyone else would be on siesta so that she wouldn't brush with these people. There is an attempt on the part of most teachers I have heard to make this woman out to be a social outcast, a scandalous party in her own village, one that could not endure social contact with others.

And this largely because of her series of marriages that she had. When she had five

husbands, now she is living with a sixth, who was not her husband. The very fact that she had such a series of husbands would be scandalous, they say enough.

And the fact that she was now shackled up with a guy who she wasn't married to would add to the scandal. Now I honestly don't know whether this woman, whether her, first of all, her serial marriages would not necessarily be counted against her. A woman in Middle Eastern society would not be able to divorce her husband in any case.

Although the law in Deuteronomy allowed a man to divorce his wife, there was no allowing of a woman to divorce her husband. So if she had five husbands in a row, it cannot be that she had divorced them. They divorced her.

Now they may have done so on valid grounds. She might have been a perennial adulteress. She might have been one who gave every one of her husbands grounds for divorce.

And if that is true, then of course she probably would be a woman of scandalous reputation in that town. I mean if every one of her marriages had ended because she committed adultery and her husband had to divorce her, one would expect her to be an object of gossip and slander and scandal and so forth. However, think about it.

If that was her reputation, how is it that five men had all agreed to marry her? If she was a known adulteress, I mean most men would, first of all, not wish to marry a woman that would bring scandal on them to marry her, a woman who was a known harlot in the town. I mean if for no other reason but to avoid bringing her reproach upon himself by marrying her. But there's also the fact that if a woman is known to have committed adultery while married to several previous husbands, why would anyone want to take the risk of marrying her? He could pretty much guarantee himself that he's marrying a woman who's going to commit adultery.

I mean after she's done it with two or three husbands, who's going to want to take a chance with her anymore? The fact that she found five men willing to marry her speaks something positive about her. The fact that they all divorced her, if that is the case, may be more of a reflection on them than on her. Divorce was easy in that society.

A man, if he just didn't like the way his wife cooked the food, could divorce her. He didn't have to go through the courts, he just had to say I divorce you three times and it was finished. And she was out.

And you can imagine that a great number of divorces occurred for frivolous reasons. A man just got tired of his wife, found someone younger and cuter or whatever, and decided to dump his former wife. It happened all the time.

And this woman was probably, I mean I'm not saying we know for sure she never committed adultery, but the fact that five men all would agree to marry her suggests

that she wasn't one that was well known to be, guaranteed to be an unfaithful wife, or else men wouldn't marry her. She very likely was divorced by her husband on something less than valid grounds, something less than adultery. Now again, I'm assuming all the while she's been divorced so many times.

The fact that she had five husbands is all we're told. We're not told she was divorced from any of them. She could have been widowed.

She could have been widowed all five times. Or widowed some of those times. She might have been divorced a few times and widowed a few times.

The fact that she had five husbands, what I'm saying to you is that she had five husbands is not telling us anything about her character. See, our modern Christian ideas of divorce from marriage or is wrong and so forth should not be imposed on her. She lived under a law different than that which Jesus taught us.

And even if she lived under the same law Jesus taught us, there are ways that a person could legitimately be married five times without ever having done anything wrong. They could lose five husbands in a row. The Pharisees told a story which was probably made up, but it was a hypothetical situation, all likely.

They said, there dwelt seven brothers among us. It wasn't the Pharisees, it was the Sadducees who told the story. Seven brothers were among us and the oldest married a wife and died childless and so the next brother married her according to the law and he died childless and all of them did that.

She had seven husbands in her lifetime. According to the law of Moses, that was something imposed on her by the law of Levirate marriage. Who knows, maybe this woman, all five of her husbands had been brothers.

We don't know. What I'm saying is there's a tremendous attempt on the part of teachers to try to paint this woman in very unflattering colors and largely based on the fact that she had had five husbands. Now, there is also the fact that she was now living with a man that was not her husband.

This obviously was an immoral thing judged by Christian standards and probably even judged by Jewish standards. I'm not sure to what degree Samaritans shared the same standards as the Jews did. Their mixture, as well as their blood, was a, I should say, their religion, as well as their bloodline, was a bit of a mixture between Judaism and paganism.

They did have some of the Jewish law that they acknowledged and followed and they had other stuff that was from other sources. I don't know to what degree they compromised their conscience to the degree of being shocked by a man and woman living together unmarried. We can say this, that whether her culture held that against her or not, we

know that Jesus would have not been in favor of it and he's the one who's addressing her at this point.

But let's cut her a little bit of slack if we might, at least as much as the information will allow. She cannot be, it cannot be justified that she was living with a man unmarried. But consider, she did marry five times.

She was not a floozy. She was honorably married five times. Now we don't know what caused each of these marriages to come to an end.

It could have been her own misconduct. She could have been, you know, a brawling woman or she could have been an adulterous woman. But as I said, if that was the case, why would five men in a row be willing to marry her? We don't know.

But it's possible that she was widowed a few times. But the likelihood is that she was divorced most of those times and her husband's divorced her and probably on something other than major grounds because divorce was so easy in those days and she was just passed from man to man. Though she married them and that couldn't be done without her consent.

It's not just a man who would pass a woman on to another man without her having any consent as to whether she married the next guy or not. I'm trying to put this together in a way that makes sense to me. I would suggest to her the fact that she lawfully and honorably married five times indicates that she wasn't some kind of a prostitute.

Now it's true she had resorted in this final case to living with a guy unmarried but one can somewhat sympathize with her if she had been mistreated in marriage five different times she might well have become a little embittered toward the institution. She might well have become a bit disillusioned and cynical about marriage. Not enough about men as to prevent her from living with a man after all she had to be supported somehow.

But after five husbands divorcing her and or dying on her she may have come to a place where marriage just wasn't something that struck her as a permanent arrangement anyway. And something that she had become somewhat cynical about. Now again, moving in with a guy isn't okay but one could possibly be a bit more sympathetic toward this woman in her wrong choice in this matter if we understand that her background could have easily made her a bit cynical about the whole institution of marriage and about men in general about their willingness to keep marriage vows.

Why bother entering into a marriage vow with this guy since five of them did it with me and they all broke their vows and threw me out of the house? Why bother? What I'm saying to you is that the Bible does not give us the kind of negative picture of this woman that sometimes preachers try to make of her. It's a desirable thing for preachers to make her out to be a real sinner because it makes a good evangelistic text to show

how to appeal to people who are in sin and who feel ashamed of their sin and so forth. This woman however seemed to be quite free in speaking to Jesus even about religious matters.

Some would suggest that when Jesus said call your husband and she said I have no husband and he said you're right, you had five husbands and you're living with a guy who's not your husband that her next statement reflects a certain discomfort she feels with Jesus pointing out her sin and that she kind of gets off onto a red herring to try to change the subject because it's at that point when he said to her you've had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband verse 18 the woman's next remark is oh sir, I perceive that you're a prophet our fathers worshipped on this mountain and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is a place where men ought to worship. Now some people would say well this woman is bringing up a subject entirely off the point. Suddenly Jesus has brought to her attention her sin she's feeling conviction she's feeling embarrassed and she's doing whatever she can to change the subject to get the heat off the heat of conviction.

The spotlight of truth is now on her sin and she wants to shift into the shadows somewhere and turn the attention somewhere else. Now people do this all the time. I mean you start talking about their need to become a Christian and they'll say things well what's God going to do about the aboriginals who never heard the gospel? Well I mean that's maybe an interesting question but totally irrelevant to the subject of your relationship with God you're not one of them.

You have heard the gospel we know what he'll do to you if you reject it we don't know what he'll do to them who haven't heard it but there's no question about what will happen to you. I mean the question of what he's going to do to the aboriginals is irrelevant but it's a dodge many people will try to get you off onto some you know where did Cain get his wife? Well who cares? We're talking about your sin and your need for God. But people have many non-Christians have this little arsenal of hard questions theological or biblical questions that they try to get the Christian off the track about when they're starting to feel the heat of conviction in a conversation where you're witnessing to them.

Some feel this is what this woman was doing I don't think so. You see some people think that her question well do you worship in Jerusalem or in this mountain? Like this is like way off the subject I mean it's just like a trivial religious point that she's trying to just dodge the whole issue of her own sin. I think not.

I have a number of reasons for thinking not. First of all her question is extremely relevant. Worship to the Jew and to the Samaritan meant offer sacrifices.

That's what worship was. We think of worship as raising your hands and singing songs in a church meeting which is how we worship because we offer spiritual sacrifices the fruit

of our lips. But worship has always been defined in terms of offering sacrifices to God or to gods in the case of the heathen.

But worship and sacrifice are inseparable concepts. And to the Jew there was nothing to worship but sacrifice. I mean worship was all there was in the act of worship.

Well, I shouldn't say all there was. There were some other things but it was the essence of Jewish worship and Samaritan worship as well. Now, it was also understood that you just don't offer sacrifices everywhere.

God had told Moses or Moses had told the people in Deuteronomy chapter 12 that sacrifices must be offered at the place that the Lord your God chooses to put his name there. The Jews understood this place to be Jerusalem and correctly so. The Samaritans had a different opinion.

They felt that the place that God had chosen to put his name was a mountain called Mount Gerizim. Now, in the book of Deuteronomy God had told the Jews when you come into the Promised Land I want you to have half your tribe stand on Mount Ebal and half of you stand on Mount Gerizim and there's a valley in between and I want to pronounce blessings on Mount Gerizim and curses on Mount Ebal. And they did this ritual in Joshua.

I think it was in chapter 8 of Joshua where they ended up doing this. Now, I don't know if it was because of this ritual or because of some other justification but the Samaritans believed that Mount Gerizim was a blessed place. It was a place where they built their temple and where they felt that their sacrifices should be offered.

And this remained a bone of contention between the Jews and the Samaritans right up until Jesus' day. Now, she asks him you know, she says my people have always said that we have to worship God that is offer sacrifices at Mount Gerizim. You people, you Jews say we have to do it in Jerusalem.

Which is right. Now, again, I mean if the woman had no sincere interest in worshipping God this would be a question of no relevance. But what I suspect is this.

That she was aware of her sin and she was aware that she was not right with God. Furthermore, she had no doubt contemplated getting right with God but that meant offering sacrifices. But where would God accept them? What is the point of offering them in a place that God won't accept them? Why waste your time and your money? Her people had always authorized Mount Gerizim.

The Jews authorized Jerusalem. She had never really known which was the right place and therefore she had done nothing. And she now had a prophet sitting before her.

He had demonstrated his prophetic powers by giving her a word of knowledge about her marital history. She thought, now, finally, here is a man who can answer this question for

me. One of the last things she said to him was when the Messiah comes, he'll tell us all this stuff.

She exhibits a hunger to know the things of God. And her question about which is the right place of worship would have extreme practical value to a woman in her condition. I am wrong with God.

I am living in sin. I do have a problem. But, you know, getting right with God means offering trespass offerings and sin offerings.

But where do I do it? I've heard two different things all my life and only one of them can be true. And now here is a man from God. He can tell me.

And she asked him. Now, the reason I believe her question is sincere is because Jesus told her the answer. Jesus was asked trick questions by scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, frequently.

And he usually did not cast his pearls before swine. He did not give the deep revelations of the kingdom of God to those people who were just trying to trap him or trying to trick him or trying to trick or who were simply not that interested. He told this woman some things that he is not recorded as having told anybody else ever, including that he was the Messiah.

This is the only woman, the only human, that we have record in the Gospels that Jesus specifically said, I am the Messiah to. Others asked him. In fact, the Pharisees and his opponents asked him in John chapter 10, they said, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you're the Messiah, tell us plainly.

He said, I already told you, I'm not going to tell you anymore. But he had never told them directly that he was the Messiah. He basically said, I've told you enough, you should be able to deduce that.

But this woman is the only person who was ever specifically told that he was the Messiah by him. Now, Jesus confirmed it when the disciples said the same thing at Caesarea Philippi. Peter said, you are the Christ, which is the same thing as Messiah, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus said, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father, which is in heaven. In other words, he confirmed that Peter was correct and had gotten it from God, that Jesus was the Messiah. But he directly told this woman, I am the Messiah.

I who speak unto you am he. That is certainly a pearl that he cast before her. It can hardly be that he regarded her to be a swine or one who was trying to dodge spiritual issues.



Jesus simply didn't give spiritual mysteries and truths to this woman to people who were not spiritually hungry and sincere. And the way that Jesus interacted with this woman, the way that he answered her questions, the way he gave spiritual things to her, which cannot be received by a natural man, but only by a spiritual, indicates to me she was a woman, she was a spiritual woman, not a spiritual woman. She was a woman