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John 4:1 - 4:26



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delivers an analysis of John chapter 4, exploring the dialogue between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. Gregg provides historical and cultural context to enhance understanding while also delving into different interpretations of the conversation. He emphasizes that the theme of the conversation appears to be the internal worship of God rather than relying on external structures, and notes that while there are differing opinions among Christians about the woman's marital history, the important message is that God's love and forgiveness are available to all.

Transcript

John chapter 4 begins, 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. Now, Jesus decides at this point to depart from Judea where his ministry up to this point has been taking place.

He had been in Galilee before. Of course, he grew up there. In fact, his first miracle was wrought in Galilee in the turning of water into wine, but that was not a public spectacle.

Only the servants knew that he had done a miracle there, and the disciples. Even the master of ceremonies at the feast didn't know where the wine that had been once water came from. But it says, of course, the servants knew and the disciples knew and believed in him.

So this was kind of a more or less private miracle he had done. He has not yet in Galilee begun a public ministry and put his own powers and claims on display. This was to await the time when John the Baptist was taken out of circulation.

And we found in John chapter 3 and verse 24, it says, for John was not yet put in prison. That is at the point in time described in John chapter 3 verse 24, John was still not in prison. But in all the other Gospels, it says, when John was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee saying, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.

So we now read between John 3, 24 and this point, John is put into prison. And when he was put into prison, that's when the other Gospels say that that was the signal for Jesus to begin his Galilean ministry. And he began preaching the very same message John had preached.

Because John, before he was put in prison, was preaching, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And then John's put in prison. Now Jesus preaches that same message throughout Galilee.

In many ways, Jesus was picking up the torch from John the Baptist, but going to carry it much further. So it is with the imprisonment of John the Baptist, though John doesn't mention it here, that Jesus made this trek to Galilee. John gives us another motivation, not a contrary one, just an additional one, is that Jesus had been in Judea, and that's where the scribes and the Pharisees held a great sway.

Actually, they did throughout the country, but especially in Judea. That was a place where, you know, the chief priests and all the power brokers in the nation that were eventually not going to be very friendly toward Jesus, at this point they hadn't taken a very avid resistance to him, but these people were strong in Judea. Much stronger, much more influential there than in Galilee.

And here Jesus found out that news had reached the Pharisees, that he, Jesus, was now baptizing more people than John had. Now the Pharisees had not liked John, and they had resented his popularity. And now if they're hearing that Jesus is even more popular than John, or perhaps they've heard that John by now has been put in prison and they were relieved, but then they've heard that, uh-oh, the same thing's going on with this new guy.

In fact, more people are coming to him than were going to John. We thought we were done with John, but now we've got this same kind of movement continuing in what may have looked to them like a successor to John. Certainly Jesus was not a successor to John.

In the end of chapter three, John himself said that Jesus was more like the bridegroom to John's best man. The bridegroom's not the successor to the best man. The bridegroom is what the wedding is all about, him and the bride.

The bridegroom's friend, the best man, is just kind of an auxiliary figure, and that's what John said he was. And Jesus is the bridegroom, and the people are the bride. And Jesus has come to take his bride like the Messiah would do.

However, the news that Jesus' popularity, at least as a baptizer, was exceeding that of John could not bode well for Jesus in the eyes and the estimate of the Pharisees. They would see him as a threat. And at this point, Jesus was not quite ready to incur their

deadly hatred toward him.

And so he apparently intended to put some distance between him and them by going to Galilee. And that's what it says here. Now, in the midst of telling us that, it says Jesus himself really didn't baptize people but his disciples.

That seems almost like it could say he didn't baptize anyone except his disciples, that he baptized them and maybe they baptized the rest. Maybe. Or it's more likely it means that Jesus did not personally baptize people with his own hands, but he did it through his disciples.

His disciples did it. In his name. And this, of course, was what they did even after Pentecost.

They baptized in his name. That is, as his agents. That's what it means to do something in someone's name.

If the disciples were baptizing people in Jesus' name, it means they were standing as Christ's agents, baptizing people as he would. And they were doing that already at this point. Though it was probably more a baptism along the significance of John's rather than the significance of baptism after the resurrection.

We won't worry about that issue right now. The point is that Jesus wasn't really doing the baptizing personally. It was being done on his behalf by his disciples.

Nonetheless, what is said to be done by his disciples on his behalf is done by him in the manner that is so commonly used in Scripture. When somebody is said to do something, many times they didn't do it personally, they did it through an agent. It says he needs to go through Samaria.

Now, why did he need to go through Samaria? One might say, well, it was a geographical necessity. The land of Israel had three provinces vertically arranged, that is, from south to north. And the eastern boundary was the Jordan River.

On the other side of the Jordan on the east, there was what they called Transjordan or Peraea. That was not technically Israel, but a lot of the Jews lived over there and Jesus actually did a lot of ministry over there eventually. But Judea was the southernmost province on the west side of the Jordan in the main body of the land of Israel.

The northernmost was Galilee. And in between them, almost like a buffer state, was Samaria. Now, Judea was what had grown from the days of the return of the exiles from Babylon.

Back when the nation had split, back in the days of Rehoboam, Judah, the southern tribe of Judah, remained faithful to the house of David. The rest branched off the northern

kingdoms and they became something else. Well, they got captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC and disappeared.

They didn't disappear entirely, they kind of just faded because the Jewish people, the Israelites, in the northern part of the country, intermarried with the pagans in the area. That was actually the Assyrian policy. They deported a lot of the native peoples and brought in other peoples to intermingle them so that the racial integrity would break down and there wouldn't be, of course, much racial patriotism to rise up against Assyria, their conquerors.

So what happened is the northern tribes, once they were conquered by Assyria, pretty much intermarried. And they actually became mixed blood and mixed religious. It says in 2 Kings that they feared Yahweh and served other gods.

So it's clear that they kind of mixed their Yahwehism, their Judaism, with paganism. And so they had sort of a half-breed religion as well as a half-breed bloodline. These people were despised by the pure-blooded Jews who still stayed true to the temple in the southern kingdom.

And those people who had become so mixed in the north were the Samaritans in the time of Jesus. They were called the Samaritans. The northern kingdom that was conquered by Assyria had its capital city was Samaria.

And the region in the time of Jesus, during the Roman occupation, the whole region was called Samaria. And it was inhabited by the descendants 700 years removed, but the descendants of those northern tribes that had intermarried with Gentiles and therefore they were kind of half-breed Jews with sort of a half-breed religion. Very much despised by the pure-blooded Jews and the pure-religion Jews, especially people like the Pharisees in the south, in Judea.

Now, north of Samaria was Galilee. And Galilee was not inhabited by Samaritans but by a mixture of Jews who remained Jewish in their bloodline and Gentiles who were not Jewish because the Gentiles pretty much dominated Galilee. It was called Galilee of the Gentiles, in fact, in Scripture and elsewhere.

So Galilee was kind of a mixed area where there were Jews and Gentiles but not interbreeding with each other, as in Samaria. So you've got in the southern extremity of the country, Judea, which is the pure, blue-blood Jewish people, and they felt that way about themselves, that they were elite. Then at the north there was Jewish people who lived in the midst of Gentiles in Galilee.

And then in between there was this buffer zone of Samaria. That was kind of where the Jews and Gentiles had mixed centuries ago. And so they weren't really Jewish or Gentile, they were just something in between.

Now, the people of Judea did not highly respect Galileans, but they absolutely despised Samaritans. And there was great hostility between the Samaritans and the Jews, which is what made Jesus' parable of the good Samaritans so striking because the man in question who fell among thieves was a Jew in the parable. And his Jewish brothers, even a priest and a Levite, did not risk helping him in order to save their own skin and get away from the place where robbers lurk.

The priest and the Levite just went on by without helping him. But the man who did help him was a Samaritan, a man of a race that was hated by the Jews, by even the victim himself in all likelihood. And yet that's what made this parable so striking because Samaritans were hated by the Jews, and the Jews were pretty much hated by the Samaritans.

They had a rival religion. They even had a rival religious center. As the Jews had Jerusalem and the temple there, the Samaritans had a house.

They'd built a temple on Mount Gerizim. Mount Gerizim, you may remember, in the days of Joshua, was the place where God had commanded Joshua to set up two stones, whitewashed and engraved with the laws on them. And then some of the tribes, six of the tribes, were to stand on Mount Gerizim and six on Mount Ebal across the valley from there.

And they were pronounced blessings and cursings. Mount Gerizim was the mountain of blessing. It also looked down on Shechem.

Shechem was the first place in the Holy Land that had had an altar to Yahweh. Abraham had come and built an altar there. It was also the place where Joseph had first, I mean Jacob first bought some property in that area.

It was the first property owned in the Promised Land by anyone of Israel's family. And Shechem was therefore highly regarded. And Mount Gerizim that overlooked it was considered to be a sacred mountain to the Samaritans.

In fact, there's still a small remnant of Samaritan people today and Mount Gerizim is still the most sacred site in the world as far as they're concerned. In fact, in their estimation, it's the tallest mountain in the world. It isn't, but that's what they think of it as.

They think of Mount Gerizim as the tallest mountain in the world, just as, of course, the Jews think of Jerusalem that way. And so there was this rivalry with rival religions, rival shrines. And when it said Jesus must go through Samaria, it would be geographically convenient to go directly through Samaria because it stood right between where he was and where he was going.

But most Jews would not go into Samaria. And if they had to go between Judea and Galilee, they would leave the country. They would exit the country.

They'd cross east of the Jordan to get out of the country. And then if they're coming from Judea, they'd move north till they had passed the northern boundary of Samaria and then cross the Jordan back into the country in Galilee. They would avoid Samaria.

The Pharisees even believed that if the wind that blew across Samaria blew on you, you were unclean. That's how they felt about the Samaritans. And so when it says Jesus must go through Samaria, on one hand, it seems like it was convenient if you're going from Judea to Galilee, but Jews usually didn't do it the most direct route.

They'd take a circuitous route to avoid going through Samaria. So to say that Jesus needed to go through Samaria, it means there was a moral necessity of it rather than a geographical necessity. It could have been avoided.

But he needed to go there because that's what his father, of course, was directing him to do. There was an important divine encounter, a divine appointment that had to be made. Did Jesus know that there was going to be a divine appointment? He may have.

He may not have. Remember, in his earthly incarnation, he didn't know everything. He was just following his father's will.

But he knew that he had to go through Samaria for some reason. And this chapter will, of course, as it unfolds, make it clear why. So, verse 5, He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

It is mentioned in Genesis 48, 22, that Jacob bequeathed a piece of ground to Joseph's tribe, which had been purchased by him from the Canaanites. And it was this area here where this well was. So this was Jacob's well, it was called.

It is still there. It still produces water. In fact, it's an artesian well.

It's not just a hole that has water seeping out of the ground into it and collecting. It has a spring underneath. It's fed by a deep spring underneath it.

So it's got very fresh water still to this day. It's a good well. It's about 300 yards removed from Joseph's tomb, where Joshua and the others who brought Joseph's bones into the promised land, they buried Joseph.

It's quite close to this well. Anyway, this was a well that was meaningful to the Samaritans because they were descended somewhat from Joseph, from Ephraim and Manasseh. But they had intermarried a long time ago.

But insofar as Samaritans were aware of any Jewish heritage they had, it was from the ten tribes in the north. And this particular region belonged to Joseph's descendants at one time. And so that's the well we're talking about here, Jacob's well was there.

Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the

sixth hour. Now, Jesus was wearied from his journey.

But God doesn't get weary. It says that in a number of places in the Old Testament. Isaiah says he doesn't slumber, he doesn't grow weary.

But Jesus grew weary. And this underscores, of course, the fact that when Jesus was incarnate, when he took on human nature, he didn't just take on a shell that looked human, he became a real human. He took on real human weakness.

That's why he didn't know everything when he was on the earth and he said so. That's why he couldn't be everywhere at once. That's why he couldn't do everything he wanted to.

He could only do what the Father gave him to do. The works he did were the Father working through him. And likewise, he didn't have omnipotence.

He could run out of energy. He could get exhausted, and he did on occasion. And it says he was exhausted because it was about the sixth hour.

Now, the sixth hour, by Jewish reckoning, would be noon. And so many believe that he arrived at the well about noon. That would be, in the Middle East, as in many places in the world, the time for siesta.

You know, that's the place where the sun is at its full height. It's a very hot area, very hot climate. And most people would sit in the shade in the midday.

Jesus, if this was noon, had been traveling and reached a place where he could rest about in the hottest part of the day. Now, if it was noon, it's unusual that this woman would meet him, who met him there, because it'd be the most inconvenient time to go out and gather water or do any kind of labor. It would be a time when most people would be in the shade waiting for a better time of the day to gather their water.

But it is open to question whether John is using Jewish reckoning of the hours of the day. Because he was writing in Ephesus, which was a Roman colony. And many believe, and I incline to this myself, that he was using Roman reckoning, not Jewish reckoning.

To the Romans, the day began at midnight. And the hours ticked up twelve until noon, and then started again, just like in our clock. An hour after midnight is one o'clock, the first hour.

Likewise, an hour after noon is one o'clock. And if it's Roman time, then he was either arriving there at six in the morning or six at night, in other words. Now, if six at night, then he'd been traveling, of course, during the day, as anyone might be expected to do.

If it was six in the morning, then he'd been traveling apparently all night, in the dark. A very uncommon thing to do, a very unusual thing to do. And without flashlights and

such, to light their way, a rather risky thing to do, a hazardous thing to travel over rough terrain in the dark.

And so one might think it wasn't six in the morning, it was probably six in the evening. If it was six in the morning, and he did travel all night, then it would suggest that he felt it important to escape from Judea under cover of darkness, and to do something that would be highly unlikely in most circumstances, that's to travel in the dark. If he did that, then he must have been in a great hurry when he heard that the Pharisees knew that he was baptizing more than John was.

He may have felt there was a pressing danger, and that it would be good for him to slip out of the area under cover of darkness, notwithstanding the treacherous conditions that he'd have to travel through without light. Maybe that doesn't seem very likely. However, that would be a rather normal time, six in the morning, to gather water.

It's the beginning of the day for most people in that area, six in the morning, and so the woman might well come out to gather her water at that particular time. On the other hand, it could be six in the evening. If so, it would be unusual to gather water at that time, because most people started going to bed around six when the sun was going down, and would have probably already eaten, unless she was gathering water for the next morning.

Hard to say. It seems like the day was ahead of them when this happened, because he had this conversation with her at the well. Then she ran and got people who were apparently out in the streets and so forth, as they would not be at bedtime.

And then they came, and Jesus spent some time preaching to them and so forth. It sounds like there was some hours of daylight left. It was either noon or possibly six in the morning.

As I said, notwithstanding the difficulties that would incur, traveling at night and arriving there at six in the morning. But again, it seems to me that six in the morning would also be the most likely time to find a woman coming to gather water for the day's uses, for cooking and washing and so forth. Of course, the fact that that was the most common time to gather water might be an argument against it, because many people argue that the woman was deliberately getting her water at a time that other people would not.

And that if that was the time most people would, then that's the time she would not. That she would, in fact, come out when she was pretty sure she would run into nobody there. And that could be noon or at night.

So, you know, these are the issues to try to decide whether it was morning, noon, or night. On balance, though, I don't think the Bible gives any evidence that the woman was avoiding society, notwithstanding preachers who say it all the time. Preachers

continually say this woman had a bad reputation because of her sexual past and that people avoided her and so forth.

That's not what I find to be so in the story. People didn't seem to avoid her when she went and gathered them. They took her seriously.

They came out to hear her. They talked to her like any other person. There's no evidence in the whole story that she was an outcast of any kind.

As far as we can tell, she was in normal society in Samaria. And that probably seems strange because preachers always emphasize how much it was so that she was a scandalized woman. But they say that because of her marital history.

We know she had had five husbands and was now living with another man. Well, the living with another man is not very good, though that might not have been as uncommon in those days as it would be in a Christian society. And five husbands might not have been her fault.

It depends on the circumstances. Did they divorce her because she was a bad woman? Then that's bad. Did they divorce her because they were bad men? Well, then she might be innocent.

She might not be marred by the fact that she made some bad decisions and married five men who ended up being jerks. So there's nothing in this story that kind of seals her reputation in our eyes as a woman of ill repute. Sure, she wasn't living a morally perfect life, but it's not so clear that the other people in town were all that prudish about such things themselves.

That might not have been uncommon among them. We just don't know. There's a lot of compromise in Samaria.

So, since we have no evidence that she was avoiding society or that she would have any reason to avoid society, there's no reason to believe she would be gathering water when no one else would. And therefore, all other things being equal, it seems that six in the morning would be the reasonable time for it to be, but we can leave that undecided. I'm just giving you the options.

But it does not seem to be six at night, because that's when the sun would go down, and there's a lot of activity that takes place in this story after this point. In fact, the disciples had gone into town to buy food, more likely to be done in the morning than at the heat of the day when the shops would be shut, or at the end of the day when they're shutting too. It seems much more likely they'd be buying food in the morning as that would be when the shops are open, rather than at high noon or at sundown.

So those are my thoughts on that. Obviously, you're entitled to take a different

conclusion. Now, 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 to him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Now, she knew he was a Jew immediately.

He may have looked very kosher, you know, not like the actors who play him in movies, but he might have actually looked Jewish. If there was, in fact, a look that could be called Jewish back then, when we think of a Jewish stereotype, we're thinking of certain features, obviously, that we might think of a Barbra Streisand or Woody Allen or Henry Kissinger or someone like that, very striking features that we are stereotypically, we think of as Jewish. But those features might not be Jewish features.

It's possible that those are actually Khazar features because most of the Jews have those looks, have come from Eastern Europe. They're Ashkenazi Jews, and the Ashkenazi Jews centuries ago intermarried a great deal with a Gentile race that they're called Khazars. This is just part of Jewish history.

It's hard to know whether those features that we think of as typical Jewish features are really typical Khazar features, and Jews didn't always have them. After all, you'll find Jews in North Africa who are black, and you'll find Jews in Asia that actually have almond-shaped eyes and other Asian features. The Jews intermarry wherever they go, and the European Jews, to a very large extent, intermarried with the Khazars, and that's where those features that we're talking about sometimes are found.

To say Jesus looked Jewish, we might immediately think of a Jewish stereotype by our today's reckoning of what a Jew looks like. The Jews might have looked very different back then, might not have been that distinctive by looks, but they did have one thing distinctive. According to the law, the Jew had to have a blue boundary on his cloak, or he'd have sort of a shawl that he'd wear, and it had a blue border on it.

The law actually required that. It was to remind them of their heavenly connection with God. And Jesus was Jewish, and he probably had that blue border on his garment, and therefore she would instantly, by looking, know he was Jewish.

He might also have had an accent, but it would be Galilean, not Judean. So it's probably by the way he was dressed, in a Jewish way, that she didn't have to ask where he was from. She said, you're a Jew, why are you talking to me? Why are you asking me for water? Jews would never drink from the same vessel with the Samaritans.

They have no dealings with Samaritans, typically. Jesus was not typical, obviously. But she didn't know that yet, but she was finding out.

I guess in a way she did recognize immediately he was not typical, because he asked her

to give him a drink, and he knew she was a Samaritan. So he was not like most Jews, prejudiced against her race, to the point of not being willing to have any contact. By the way, another thing that was a bit of a surprise to her, though it doesn't mention it, is that he spoke to her as a woman.

She was perhaps more mindful of the strangeness of a Jew speaking to a Samaritan than of the other strange thing, as of a man speaking to a woman in public. In the Middle East, they don't do that. And you'll find that when the disciples come back with the food, it actually says the disciples were surprised to find that he was speaking to a woman, because that too was a breach of social custom.

Jesus was neither a racist or a sexist. He did not share in the prejudices of the Jews, though he was a Jew. He would talk to a woman as freely as to a man.

Other Jews wouldn't. He would talk to a Samaritan as freely as to a Jew. Other Jews wouldn't.

He was not a typical Jew, and she was both Samaritan and woman. And here he is striking up a conversation with her and asking her to share her water. And she said, why are you asking me, a Samaritan woman, when you're a Jew? And he 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.

Now, if you knew the gift of God, what is the gift of God? He could be referring to himself because God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Jesus is himself the gift of God, but I'm not sure if he's thinking that way in this statement. He might be thinking of salvation as the gift of God because Paul says that it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast salvation is the gift of God.

Or for that matter, the living water he's offering may be seen as the gift of God. The living water he offers is in fact the Holy Spirit, though that is not clear to her initially. She misunderstands him at first, but the living water is the Holy Spirit.

John doesn't tell us so here, but he does tell us a few chapters hence in chapter 7 because Jesus again in chapter 7 of John makes reference to the living water, and there John himself tells us what the living water is. You can look there at John 7, verses 37 through 39. In John 7, 37 and 38 are the words of Jesus, and verse 39 is John's commentary on what Jesus said.

But what Jesus said was in the middle of verse 37, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink, and he who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And then the author tells us, but he spoke concerning the Spirit. When he talked about the living water, he was talking about the Holy Spirit, whom those believing in him would receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was

not yet glorified.

So, the time would come when the Holy Spirit would be given. That's the gift of God too, isn't it? So, when he says, if you knew the gift of God, in this context, he could have any number of possible meanings. His exact intended meaning is perhaps elusive.

Himself, salvation, the Holy Spirit, that is the living water, any of those things could be the gift of God. But he says, if you knew the gift of God, and if you knew who it was who's asking you for this, instead of being surprised that he asked you, you'd be eagerly asking him to give you water, and he'd give you living water. Now, the term living water is ambiguous in those days, because a well that had an artesian spring at the bottom, often was said to have living water.

That's running water, water that's in motion rather than stagnant. Many wells just had water sitting in them, but wells like this one, if you could go deep enough, down to where the springs are, you could get the pure water that's moving, the living water, the running water that was deep within the well. And apparently, she initially thought that's what he was talking about, because she said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw, and the well is deep.

Where are you going to get that living water? She seems to be saying, I know there's living water down there if you go deep enough, but you don't even have a bucket and no rope, and that's a long way down. How are you going to retrieve that water that you're promising me? And he answered, or she didn't let him answer yet. She asked a question, but she continued.

She said, are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock? So she's asking him whether he claims to be greater than Jacob. This well has Jacob's name and reputation attached to it. He is the patriarch of all Jews and Samaritans.

All 12 tribes of Israel were from his 12 sons, and therefore, he is one of the greatest men in the memories of the Jews and of the Gentiles, if the Gentiles were Samaritan Gentiles. And so she says, you're kind of diminishing the value of this water here. You want me to give water that I have, but I don't claim my water is living water.

It's just from this Jacob's well is all. But you think Jacob's well isn't good enough? It was good enough for Jacob. He drank from it.

His family drank from it. You think you're better than that? You have better water? You have a better well than Jacob's? She's kind of offended by the suggestion that he can get water that she can't get from Jacob's well, as if maybe the water is in a different well, because this one's too deep for him without a bucket and a rope to get the living water out of it. And 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.

Now, it seems clear that Jesus is here talking about something supernatural, though it seems that she doesn't quite get that it's not water. It sounds like he's talking about magic water, water that isn't like ordinary water, because this water, although it's from Jacob, and even though that's prestigious and all, it still never will satisfy or quench your thirst eternally. No matter how often you drink from it, there'll always be a time you get thirsty again and have to come back for more.

But he says, I'm talking about something you won't have to repeat. You don't have to be drinking of it constantly, but you can do that. You can't drink from this water constantly because your belly will get full and you can't just drink water all the time.

You have to drink regular water occasionally. But whoever is drinking, and I believe it is implied continually of this water that I will give, and you can do that. You'll never get your belly full and not be able to drink of it anymore, but you can drink it all the time.

You can tap into that spring, that fountain of water. It'll be like a fountain and you spring it up continually so that you don't ever get thirsty again. Now, she, still understanding this more or less in the natural of regular water, said to him in verse 15, Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw.

Now, at this point, Jesus apparently decides that the analogy of water has got to be explained or abandoned. It was a good conversation starter when you're at a well and the person's there to gather water. Obviously, they're there because they're thirsty or they anticipate being thirsty and they're getting water for the day.

And so, you can offer living water. That's kind of a bridge of evangelism from where the person's at to where you want them to be thinking. And so, he's brought up this subject.

I've got something I can give you. It'll bring eternal life and continual satisfaction of your thirst. But she still, at this point, is thinking in terms of natural water and natural thirst.

And says, well, you know, you got some kind of magical water that'll do it. I don't know where you're going to get that, but I'll be glad to have it. You've got it? Give it to me.

You offered it to me? I'm asking for it. But now, he's got to change the subject so that she's not still thinking about water and natural thirst. So, he's got to change the direction to spiritual things because he's talking about spiritual things.

He wants to get her transitioning from the thought of water to something more like what he's really talking about. To do that, and knowing her marital background, prophetically, he decides to bring that subject up because that subject becomes a matter that sparks

her spiritual thirst. In fact, it is my opinion that this woman was very much aware of a spiritual thirst in her.

I'll tell you why as we read these verses. Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come here. Now, he knew she didn't have one.

He knew what her answer would have to be. And he knew that that was a matter that would get the subject going where he wants it to go. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.

Technically true, of course. Now, he was a stranger in town, so for all she knew, he didn't know anything about her background and no reason to volunteer all that. She'd give a simple and true answer, even a little evasive.

I don't have a husband to bring. So, by implication, go ahead and tell me whatever you're going to tell me or give me what you're going to give me because I can't go get my husband and bring him. This is as good as you're going to get it.

It's me here, so I'm listening. And Jesus said to her, you have well said, 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. And the woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Now, notice where she goes with this.

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, Mount Gerizim, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Now, how is this conversation transitioning? Where's it going? Well, I'm going to suggest something different than what I normally hear people suggest. A lot of people feel that this woman is cynical.

This woman is kind of a woman of ill repute. That some of her remarks to Jesus are intended in sarcasm and so forth. And this is because most evangelicals who read this find a woman who's been married five times and living with a guy, you know, well, she must be a hussy.

She must be a bad, bad woman. But that's our evangelical orientation and culture talking. In those days, she might not have been that unusual.

A man could divorce his wife just by saying, I divorce you. There's very little to it. And then she'd go and be another man's wife.

If she had lived enough years and had enough fickle husbands who wanted to switch lives, she might have been taken and dumped and taken and dumped any number of times through no fault of her own. But she's living with a guy now. Well, maybe she learned her lesson about marriage.

You know? There's a lot of people in our culture who have given up on marriage too. They've been married multiple times and they say, well, through no fault of their own, they were dumped by their spouse and they say, I'm done with marriage. Maybe I'm not done with companionship.

Maybe I'm not done with sex, but I'm done with marriage. I mean, a lot of people are thinking that way who aren't Christians. And a lot of Christians sometimes think it'd be nice if we could do that because marriage is so risky these days.

Marriage is, you can just be abandoned. Whereas if you're not married, you just, you don't get all your hopes up. It's very possible that that was where she was at.

Anyone who's been through five failed marriages. Now, whether she had become a widow a couple of times or so, probably not all five times. Almost certainly there's some divorces there.

But she had tried marriage five times. What's amazing is she didn't give up on it earlier. A lot of people give up on it after one bad marriage or two, certainly three, but she had never given up on marriage until she'd had five failures.

And she still hadn't given up on relationships. She just given up on marriage. It obviously wasn't anything that was working for her.

So it doesn't mean that she was particularly immoral. She may have actually been unusually committed to marriage, to have married five times in spite of four earlier failures. At the fifth failure, she apparently thought, well, that's enough.

You know, that's enough marriage. And yet she needed someone to support her. I mean, women couldn't support themselves in that society.

So she had to have a man. She just had probably given up on marriage. There's no other reason we know of why she would have had five marriages and then not marry this guy.

She's apparently become cynical about marriage, but probably not feeling very good about her present situation, probably feeling convicted. Now, I'm going to come back and talk about that a little bit, but you see, the next thing she brings up is this theological controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews. And some people think what she's doing is now that he's put his finger on her sin, she's wriggling uncomfortably under the conviction and wants to dodge it and change the subject into something totally irrelevant.

That's what many people say. You know, suddenly she's convicted by what he said. She doesn't want to come to the light.

She wants to hide in the darkness. She wants to change the subject, get off that subject

that's bringing her conviction and go somewhere totally anywhere else. Let's talk about our controversies theologically here.

As if she wasn't really interested in the theological controversy, she just wanted to get onto any other subject to take the spotlight off of her. Now, that's how I always hear this preached. That's not what I think is happening, Bill.

I don't see any reason to give her such ill motives and impute that to her. She is living in a sinful situation and she knows it. In that time, what would a person do to remedy that? Take a sacrifice and offer it to God, a sin offering, a trespass offering or something like that.

But she's got a bit of a problem. She's not sure which place is the place that God honors. She's heard that Jews think one thing and heard people think another thing.

What if she took the sacrifice to the wrong place? It might not only fail to atone for her sin, it might even offend God that she's not at the right place. And she has been paralyzed, possibly, and this is my way of looking at it, she's been paralyzed by the ignorance of this topic. That this was not some arcane theological dispute that she was just trying to find any theological question to raise since she found he was a prophet that would get him onto another subject, get him onto one of his favorite subjects, off of her unfavorite subject.

Some people kind of cast the conversation that way. I don't think so. I think where she's at is she really does have a thirst and that's why Jesus is talking to her.

Do you realize this woman is the only person on record to whom Jesus said, I am the Messiah? Many other people asked him directly, are you the Messiah? He'd say things like, I've already told you and you won't listen, or something like that. He'll change the subject. With her, he actually said, I am the Messiah.

He didn't even say that clearly to his disciples. He made them say it. Then he said, bless her, you, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father has.

He confirmed it to them, but to just reveal it, this woman. Now, Jesus doesn't cast his pearls before swine. This woman, I believe, was a person who had an unusually spiritually hungry heart.

And we can see her reaction when she gets converted. She goes out and evangelizes everyone she sees. Not everyone does that.

This woman was a spiritual woman who had miserable marriage failures again and again and again, but had for the longest time not even given up on marriage. She had to have a man so she'd marry him. Eventually, she did finally lose all hope in marriage, apparently, and decided not to marry the guy.

This is, of course, my reconstruction of the situation, but it fits all the facts. To my mind, it's a more charitable way of looking at it because if she really was just a cynical person kind of trying to dodge the issue, not wanting to feel the conviction, why would Jesus reveal to her things he didn't reveal to anybody else? If she's not really an honest person, someone who's trying to hide in the darkness. I believe she was a very honest person.

And once she found out that he knew things about her that a man could not know, I think she thought, wow, there's a prophet here. We haven't seen one of those for a long time. Now I can get my question answered because my sins require that I make an atonement.

And I really need to know where that is the right place to do that. Is it Gersham or is it in Jerusalem? And Jesus gave her an honest answer. He didn't say, hey, stop dodging the question.

Let's get back to the subject of your shacking up here. No, she went in the direction of Mount Gersham and worshipping God, and he took that interest seriously and he taught her on that subject. Because unlike in many other cases, people ask him one question, he goes off and talks about something different because he doesn't consider their question to be germane to where they're really at or honest or whatever.

In her case, she asks a question that many people are going to try to say, she wasn't really that interested, she just wanted to get off the topic. But actually, Jesus treated it as if it was an honest and genuine question, and he answered it very deeply and told her things that we have no record of him ever telling anybody else. So, I also want to point this out.

She had had five husbands. That means Jesus recognized five legitimate marriages. He did not recognize the legitimacy of her present arrangement.

So Jesus did know how to make a distinction between a legitimate marriage and an illegitimate shacking up. Yet, he did seem to take at face value the legitimacy of her first five marriages. Now, we don't know much of the history.

We don't know if she had been widowed any of those times, but it seems very unlikely she would have lost five husbands to death. Maybe one or two, maybe. But, I mean, certainly with five marriages behind her, some of those must have been divorces.

And that means that she had no doubt been divorced and remarried. And divorced and remarried, and divorced and remarried. And yet, Jesus considered all of those marriages legitimate.

He didn't consider her present arrangement legitimate. That was a situation that would be called fornication. But her marriages and remarriages were taken at face value as the real thing.

And I say that only because while it is true that some remarriages are not legitimate, and Jesus made it very clear that under certain circumstances, divorce and remarriage is adultery, he did not count it to be so in her case. He referred to her marriages not as adultery, but as marriages. And there's a world of difference between adultery and marriage.

Marriage is sacred. Adultery is sin. So, we might find people who have been married two or three or four times, and every one of their marriages are adultery because they never once had grounds for divorce.

They just jumped from bed to bed and get a legal paperwork for it. The state cannot legitimize adultery. If it gives a marriage license to an adulterous relationship, that doesn't make it not adultery.

That doesn't make it marriage. Marriage is sacred. Marriage is honorable.

The bed is undefiled. Adultery is the opposite. And Jesus said a lot of remarriages are really adultery, not remarriage.

But in this woman's case, he recognized marriage five times in a row. Legitimate. So, it may well be that in her case, her husband were adulterous, or in some other way, had legitimized her freedom to remarry.

Under the law of Moses, of course, a woman in Deuteronomy 24, it said a woman could remarry if her husband simply gave her a writing of divorcement. Doesn't even say what grounds he would need to have. And so she'd go off and marry again.

That was allowed under the law. And Jesus does not necessarily challenge that here. Which tells me that in some cases, Jesus does not recognize remarriage because it is adultery.

But in some cases, he does. And that's worth saying because there are so many different opinions among Christians on this subject. And I do, from time to time, get phone calls on the air and meet people who tell me no remarriage is ever legitimate.

Ever. No matter what the grounds for the divorce is. In fact, there was a gentleman who was coming to our meetings here last year.

And that was his position. He always wanted to engage me in that conversation. And frankly, I've looked into it.

I disagreed with him. I didn't want to argue that with him. But the point is, there are people who will condemn all cases of divorce and remarriage.

And Jesus apparently doesn't do that. He didn't condemn her five marriages. Which must have been one after another.

And some of them must have ended in divorce. Anyway, that's just a sidebar on that particular point. Now, I want to say two.

In verse 14, when he says, Not that part. The first part. I want to mention that because there's a number of places in John's gospel where Jesus is quoted as saying, For example, in John chapter 6, he says, My body will never hunger.

Okay? And in other places, it says that, And I'm trying to think of some of the other cases. In the book of John, there's about four or five of those kinds of statements. That he that X's shall never Y. That's the structure of the sentence.

And many people feel that means that if you do X one time, that you'll never Y. And they say, well look here, Jesus said, Whoever drinks of this water will never thirst. So if you have ever drunk of that water, then you'll never be lacking it anymore. In other words, you can't lose what you gain.

Whoever eats of his flesh and drinks of his blood will never hunger. Well, that means you only have to do it once, they think. And then you've got it for life.

And this is, of course, those who believe in unconditional eternal security. They just believe that you have to say the sinner's prayer once. You have to eat that one time.

You need to drink that one time. Take one drink and you'll never thirst again. And no matter what happens, you'll never thirst.

But that's not really how this kind of sentence is understood. The first verb is in a present tense, which can be taken as continuous. Whoever is drinking of the water.

That is a legitimate translation. Whoever is drinking of the water that I give will never thirst. Whoever is eating my flesh and drinking of my blood shall never hunger.

Whoever is my sheep hearing my voice and following me shall never perish. Whoever is doing these things, no matter how long they do them, they'll never perish or grow hungry again. But they have to keep doing them.

This is an ongoing behavior. And basically, to prove that that's what it meant, you can contrast it with the last verse of John chapter 3. The last verse of John chapter 3 says, He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. He who does not believe, present tense, the Son shall not see life.

Future tense. Essentially, if this means whoever doesn't believe one time shall never be saved, that would be disastrous. Because all of us at one time did not believe.

And he says, whoever does not believe shall not see life. It almost sounds like he's saying, well, anyone you've met who's not a believer, they're never going to be saved. They're never going to see life.

It's predicted. They shall not see life. But obviously, he means whoever is not believing.

While they are not believing, they shall not see life. Obviously, that person who doesn't believe might change and believe, and then he will see life. It is, in the case of the first verb, as long as the first verb is continuing, the second statement, the second prediction is true.

As long as he is unbelieving, he will not see life. As long as one is drinking, they will not thirst. As long as one is eating, he will not hunger.

As long as one is following, he shall not perish. These are the meanings of these multiple statements in John that talk this way. And so, Jesus is not saying, take one drink, and you're in for life.

He's saying, I can give you something that can continuously spring up in you like a fountain. You're continually being refreshed. You're continually being quenched of your thirst.

And this doesn't mean that a Christian, the normal Christian life is to not have any thirst for God. Obviously, a Christian does have thirst for God. Even though we drink of the living water, we still thirst for God.

But what this means is the kind of thirst for what this woman was lacking, and what she needed was, she needed to connect with God, and she was lacking that. That lack will be permanently resolved if you drink and continue to drink from the water that I will give. And so, when he told her about her marital past, she said, oh, sir, I perceive you're a prophet.

And therefore, she thought, now there's someone who can answer this question. I've heard the rabbis debating this all my life. Our Samaritan rabbis insist and have proof that Mount Gerizim's the holy place.

The Jewish rabbis, they insist that Jerusalem is. I have no confidence that any sacrifice I offer in either place would be acceptable, because I don't know if it would be the right place. But now, there's someone here for the first time who can quench this thirst for understanding of how I can atone for my sins, how I can get right with God again.

My life has become a disaster. It's become a mess. It's just, behind me, there's a trail of broken relationships.

I just feel like I need somehow to get connected with God again, but I don't know where to find him, because there's different denominations saying different things. And so, Jesus answers her when she asks about where the right place to worship is. And worship means offer sacrifices, so that's what she wanted to do.

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, meaning you Samaritans worship, what you do not know. We, the Jews, know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the 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 in spirit and truth. And the woman said to Him, I know that Messiah is coming, who is called the Christ.

When He comes, He'll tell us all things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am He. Now, Jesus is saying, you know, you're worried about something that's not even, you don't have to worry about.

Does it matter where you offer a sacrifice? Is it Gerizim? Is it Jerusalem? God is no longer concerned about Gerizim or Jerusalem. The hour is coming soon, when no one's going to be worshipping in Jerusalem or in Gerizim, you know why? Because Jesus foresaw within the lifetime of many of those people, the Romans are going to come, they're going to destroy both those shrines. And both those shrines are going to be missing for thousands of years.

The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, so was the shrine in Gerizim. The Romans wiped it out. That was 40 years after this conversation.

And people from that time on did not worship in Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem. And so He's saying, first of all, you're worried about something that's an obsolete concern. The hour is coming when you'll neither worship in Jerusalem or in this mountain.

No one's going to be worshipping here anymore. These shrines will be gone. But God has something else to replace it.

Something He cares more about. He's looking for people who worship in spirit. Not in this location or in that location, but in spirit and in truth.

Now, in truth means honestly. The expression in truth in Scripture means genuinely, as opposed to hypocritically. One of the most common things in religion in any time, and certainly in those days, was the Pharisaic hypocrisy that pretended to be more righteous than one was.

The idea of trying to get a reputation for oneself of being holy, holier than other people, when you're really not. And worshipping like the Pharisees who'd blow a trumpet before them before they gave a coin to a beggar. Or making long prayers on a street corner so everyone could see how spiritual they were.

Jesus said, when you do those things, when you worship like that, don't be like the

hypocrites. Don't be like that. When you pray, when you give, when you do any act of piety, make sure that sacrifice you're making is a sacrifice of worship in truth.

That is a genuine act, not a hypocritical one. God is looking for, and having a hard time finding, those who worship Him genuinely. And the other part is in spirit.

In spirit and in truth. In spirit means internally as opposed to externally. The religion of the time was primarily understood to be that of keeping outward rituals.

Don't touch this, don't eat that. Offer this sacrifice. Make this journey at this time of the year.

Those are all external things. That's not the worship God's looking for. God's looking for worship that's inside the heart, in the spirit of a man.

Now, He might mean in the Holy Spirit, and that would be fine too. But the point is, it's internal. Whether He's talking about the Holy Spirit or the human spirit, the idea is that it's not external and ritualistic behavior.

He's looking for something that's inside the heart. We know that Jesus said that. Jesus said, This is how people know you're my disciples, if you have love for one another.

And what is love but the fruit of the spirit? It's an internally generated phenomenon when you have the spirit of God and when you are worshiping God spiritually as opposed to in an externalistic, ritualistic way. So, Jesus is saying, You know, there's a lot of people worshiping the Father and Gerizim in Jerusalem right now. Most of it is not in spirit and most of it's not in truth.

And God's looking for people who do that. And when God has to go looking for something, it must be mighty rare. Because God sees everything.

He knows the number of hairs on your head. If He's having a hard time finding someone who worships in spirit and truth, it must be that almost everyone else is worshiping some other way than that. The fact that God is seeking such to worship Him should be taken to the Christian as a, you know, a summons, you know.

God is looking for something. Let it be me. Lord, hear my, send me.

When He said to Isaiah, Who will go for us? Isaiah said, Hear my, send me. When He says, I'm looking for worshipers in spirit and truth, Hear my, send me. Please, let me be a worshiper in spirit and truth that that's what you're looking for.

Especially if they're rare enough that you're having a hard time finding them. Let me make them one person less rare than they were before and become one. Let me become a true worshiper, a spiritual worshiper.

Not a person who just tacks on religious rituals to a carnal life and a selfish life, but periodically goes to church and does the spiritual ritual of singing the songs, lifting the hands, giving the tithe, sitting for the sermon. This is all ritualistic. I mean, it can be genuine.

You can do all those things in a heartfelt way, but all those things be done without any heart at all, without any sincerity, without any internal agreement with it at all. What God is looking at is what's on the heart. And that's what Jesus says.

You're so concerned about whether you're in the right spot offering your sacrifice. Well, the sacrifice you're going to offer is going to be a spiritual sacrifice because you're going to worship in spirit. And in truth, you're not going to be needing to continue this ritualistic worship of Gerizim or Jerusalem in the future.

It's over. And she says, well, okay, that sounds pretty radical, but I know if the Messiah comes and confirms that, I'll know it's true because he's going to come and tell us everything. He said, well, I am him, so he might as well listen to me now.

And she took it seriously. She actually figured he just might be. And she went to tell her friends, but we're going to have to stop there tonight and we'll see about what happened when she evangelized her town next time.