

The
Woman

at the
Well



The Woman at the Well

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The Road to Samaria

As hatred for Jesus grew among the Pharisees, Jesus turned away to the region of Galilee. Traveling down the dusty roads with His disciples, they had to pass through the little town of Samaria. The Samaritans were bitter rivals with the Jews. The history of their rivalry went back to the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in the days of Ezra. Due to their idolatry, the Jews would not permit the Samaritans to aid in restoring the temple, so the Samaritans retaliated by building a rival temple. Still, they did not depart entirely from their idolatrous practices. As a result, the curse of God seemed to remain upon the Samaritans.

Years had passed, and this bitter animosity between the two classes continued to grow. While the Jews had been appointed as keepers of truth, there were many in Samaria who were searching for truth. Many who were lost and without God were seeking to find the way of salvation, but the prejudice of the Jews prevented them from working among the Samaritan people. It was partly for this reason that Jesus later used the story of the Good Samaritan to try to break down the prejudice that existed between the two classes.

Now, as they traveled, Jesus and His disciples “came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph” (John 4:5). Here a well had been put up. This well, which Jesus and His disciples now approached, was a national landmark in Jewish history, stirring

within the heart a deep sense of national pride. It was here on these very grounds that the ancient patriarch and his son had herded their sheep, and while the Samaritans had fallen into idolatry and departed from the true faith, the Jews and Samaritans were both mindful of the strong heritage of this place, recalling how God had led His people in the past.

Upon arriving at the well, Jesus sat down for a short season of rest while the disciples turned aside to the city to buy some food, an act pregnant with symbolic significance. Symbolically, the disciples of Jesus were representatives of the true followers of Christ. The disciples had walked with the Savior, and yet they now consented to leave Him behind to go and buy food. Also symbolically, food in the Bible represents the truths of God's word. We are told, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The food of the world, on the other hand, is symbolic of the teachings that are customary in the world.

In the same way that the disciples turned away from Christ to go and buy some food, there are many today who turn away from the truths of God's word, the Bible, to chase after the food of the world, following false teachings of science or the philosophies of men. Satan is constantly seeking to divert people with worldly food. As a result of his efforts, many turn away from the riches of God's word to the food of the world, rejecting the authority of the Bible or simply becoming too distracted to read it. Too consumed by the food of this world,

whether books, movies, or social media, they leave the spiritual feast that Christ is offering and go and buy food from the world, mingled with its lies.

The fact that the disciples had to go and buy food is also symbolic of their works. When we receive the food of God's word, we eat for free. Salvation is a "free gift," offered "without money and without price" (Rom. 5:15; Isa. 55:1), while the food of the world has a high price. We are told that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Those who are seeking to live by the teachings of this world are denying the teachings of Christ. Instead of seeking salvation by faith in His word, they seek to work their way to heaven by living according to their own standard. Instead of heeding the word of God and making it the statute of their life, they buy food from the world, received at a high price.

As the disciples went apart from Christ to buy their food, the Savior remained behind. In the same way, in order to go and buy the food of the world, we must leave the Savior behind. We cannot expect Christ to follow us as we go after the sinful delicacies of this world. The Bible tells us, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). You cannot eat from the table of Christ and yet go and buy food from the world. In order to partake of Christ's table, we must first leave the delicacies of the world behind, and in order to chase after the food of the world, we must turn away from Christ. While Christ appeals to us to stay close, it is our choice to stay with Him or leave Him behind.

As the disciples were making their way to obtain the food, the Savior, “being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well” for a season of rest (John 4:6). Like the disciples, so many continue to run after the food of this world instead of resting with Jesus. Still today, Christ calls us to enter His rest. At the foundation of the world, God “rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” (Gen. 2:2, 3). God then placed the command to rest on the Sabbath in the heart of the law, tagged with the word, “Remember.” He appeals, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work” (Ex. 20:8-10). In spite of this, many ignore the call to rest and continue to run after the food of this world.

While God blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the week, long before the Jewish nation existed, many today ignore this and claim that this blessing was only for the Jews. Some try to spiritualize the Sabbath away. Some claim the Sabbath was done away with at the cross or suggest that the day was transferred to Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Some twist the words of Paul and claim that we can worship on any day. But while the excuses to break the Sabbath are abundant, God still affirms, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9), while many continue to run off with the disciples searching for worldly food, rather than resting with Christ.

Today, God is looking for faithful Christians who will obey His Sabbath and enter that rest, but many, like the disciples, continue to seek man-made food in place of the true rest that God designated from the foundation of the world. Still, God promises that if we will enter the Sabbath rest and “call the Sabbath a delight,” He will cause us “to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father” (Isa. 58:13, 14). Instead of running off for the food of this world, we can find true rest with Christ at the well of Jacob. Christ is offering true peace, and all those who would have rest must come to Him at the well of living water.

As Christ sat by Jacob’s well, a “woman of Samaria came to draw water” (John 4:7). In the Bible, a woman is often used to symbolize a church. The apostle Paul affirms this in 2 Corinthians 11:2, where, speaking to the church in Corinth, he writes, “I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” While the woman here is in some ways symbolic of the believer coming to find rest at the feet of Jesus, in other ways, she is symbolic of a seeker who is wandering about in the world, searching for truth, as we will see.

At once, we see this woman coming to the well seeking to quench her thirst. As the food that the disciples went after was symbolic of worldly food, the water that this woman seeks to draw is also symbolic of the wells of the world. Just as many wander after worldly food, many seek to draw from the wells of this world, thinking to find in them something that will quench the longings of the soul.

This longing for something more meaningful has been placed in our hearts by God. The Bible says, “He has put eternity in their hearts” (Eccl. 3:11). It has been said that there is a God-shaped hole in each of our hearts that only the love of God can fill. While so many seek to gain some kind of comfort from the devil’s wells, instead of turning to Christ, the wells of the world will eventually dry up, leaving the soul thirsty again.

There are many different ways in which we chase after the wells of this world, and there are a thousand different wells spread about this sinful world to trap its weary thirsting victims. The devil will sink a person into drug or alcohol addiction, lure them with sexual images, catch them with an improper relationship, distract them with a lust for violence through video games and movies, or lead them away by their ungodly friends, giving them a thirst for the sensual and an appetite for sin. Or perhaps he will simply whisper into their ear, “You are not so bad that you have to go to prayer meeting and read your Bible.” Whatever well the devil uses to distract us from true and full-hearted devotion, it will soon dry up.

Just as this woman went to the well of Jacob, there are many going to the wells of the world, while the One offering the living water is sitting right beside us. So often, we seek to satisfy the thirst of the soul when the One who can offer us the living water is just within reach. All men and women have to do is “seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each

one of us” (Acts 17:27). Indeed, “‘The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach)” (Rom. 10:8).

Christ is so close, and yet we continue to drink from the wells of this world. While Christ is just beside us, so many continue to vainly seek worldly means and methods of obtaining peace. As we drown our sorrows in the bottle, as we fly off to a shopping spree, as we live vicariously through our favorite movie stars, there is a Bible study just down the street, there is a church service going on around the corner, there are prayer meetings over the hill. While we chase after the temporary fixes of this world, the Bible sits on the shelf unread, and the prayer closet remains empty. The Savior is very near, and yet we continue to flee to the wells of the world.

What is more tragic about this incident is that Jesus was so close, and yet this woman didn’t even recognize who He was. The long-awaited Messiah, upon whom all the hopes of Israel rested, was sitting in her presence, and she didn’t even recognize Him. While many are quick to berate this woman’s negligence, how often do we do the same thing? Many people go about their daily lives, and as God attempts to draw near, they don’t even recognize His presence. Their hearts have become so hardened to the tone of spiritual things, their eyes so distracted by the flashing lights of the world, their minds so filled with the petty cares and attractions of this life that they do not even recognize when God draws near to them.

God often speaks to our conscience. Not one living soul has been able to escape the sting of a guilty conscience, as God appeals to the mind, and yet many do not recognize this as the voice of God. So many have heard God's "still small voice" urging them to do the right thing (1 Kings 19:12). They have heard that soft whisper in the back of their mind saying, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isa. 30:21), but like the woman at the well, they do not recognize the One speaking. So often, God speaks to us through preachers, through books, through nature, through our own inner voice, and through a variety of other means, yet we remain deaf, unable to recognize the voice of God in these whispers. As a result, we refer to providential leading as 'accidents' and miracles as 'luck' while God is standing so close.

It's so ironic that many atheists claim that if God would just come down and show Himself, then they would believe, and yet they refuse to look at the evidence of God in their midst. Like the woman at the well, they see the form but do not recognize the Person. Atheists and Christians alike are guilty of this. Jesus is so close to us in our everyday life, offering us the living water, and yet most don't even recognize Him as they go throughout their day. The lesson of the woman at the well is to look for Jesus in the everyday things of life. Even when our hearts and minds are far away, Jesus is so near.

Another irony is how close Jesus sat to the water while still unable to reach it. He, who had created the world, placed himself under the subjection of the elements of this world, making

Himself vulnerable and dependent upon humanity. He who created water now appealed to the woman for a drink. Looking at the woman, Jesus requested, "Give me a drink" (John 4:7). The petition of Jesus to the woman represents the commission that Christ has given to the church. As God's followers, we are called to a life of service. Christ is calling His followers to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, give water to the thirsty and comfort the weary souls in our midst.

Just as Christ appealed to the woman to give Him a drink, Christians are called to meet the physical needs of Jesus. While the Savior no longer physically dwells in our midst for us to minister to, we are still called to minister to Him through those suffering in this world, just as Jesus told us. Christ said, "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). When we neglect to meet the needs of those in our midst, we are neglecting our God-given duty. The Savior has called His followers to a life of service.

While it is very important to meet the physical needs of those around us, this work will be in vain if we do not move beyond this to the spiritual needs. As we are able, we are called to meet the spiritual needs of those in our midst. We are called to share the water of life with those who are seeking it. While it will do us no good to force the water upon the people who do not have a thirst for it, we should always be watching for those in our midst who are crying out, "Give me a drink." There are so many hungering and

thirsting souls in our midst, longing for the spiritual water of life that we have to offer.

In petitioning the woman for a drink, Jesus was not simply seeking to gain a drink of water, but rather to break through the prejudice that stood between the Jews and the Samaritans. As a result, the woman was startled by the request, asking, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (John 4:9). She had been acquainted with the strife that had long separated the Jews and the Samaritans and was amazed that a Jew would make such a request from someone like her. To the Jews, the Samaritans were considered dogs.

The inquiry of the woman represents the attitude of the earnest seeker when confronted by the Savior. While her actual feelings must be left to speculation, the question seems to convey an attitude of unworthiness. This should be the attitude of all who approach the Savior. Each of us should inquire, “Who am I, that You should even speak to me?”

As David once asked, we also should inquire, “What is man that You are mindful of him” (Ps. 8:4)? There are so many today trying to get what they think they deserve, when the truth is, we deserve death. The Bible says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). In light of this, we must not be like the Pharisee, who said boldly, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector,” but instead, like the Publican, who beat his chest and cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13)!

The Living Water

As the woman asked why Jesus was speaking to her, a Samaritan, the Savior rediverted her attention back to the topic, stating, "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" (John 4:10). Upon hearing these words, the curiosity of the woman was stirred. While the conversation had begun on a shallow level, it now turned in a different direction. And while the woman did not fully understand the words of the Questioner, she sensed somehow that His words were of great importance.

In His words, Christ was trying to awaken the spiritual senses of this woman, revealing to her that the gift of eternal life was not only offered to the Jews but to all. While the Jews felt that they alone were the sole beneficiaries of the gift, the message of salvation was available to all, and the Savior was preparing to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles. Even now, as He spoke, the door of salvation was already starting to open, and the woman could see a glimpse of light beginning to shine through. The Savior had stirred an interest within her, and the window of opportunity stood open before her. Jesus had given her the very words and simply left it for her to ask.

As Jesus had given the woman the words to say, the Spirit still gives us the words to say when we make our petitions to Christ. The Bible tells us that "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us" (Rom.

8:26). The entire work of our salvation is a gift of God. We cannot repent by ourselves. We cannot confess by ourselves. We cannot ask for salvation by ourselves. It is the work of the Spirit to stir thoughts within us and inspire us with the very words to say, yet as with the woman, the decision to actually do the asking remains with us. The Spirit does all the work of saving, yet we must make the choice to serve God.

The Savior not only told the woman just what to ask, but He even told her that “He would have given you living water” (John 4:10). Here the assurance was given that if she would just ask, He would give. The Savior later affirms this concept with the words, “Ask, and you will receive” (John 16:24). So often, we do not receive from God simply because we fail to ask. If we would only ask Him, the Savior would pour out upon us the blessings of heaven. This does not mean we are to ask for the earthly blessings of money and worldly comfort, but spiritual blessings. God is ready and willing to bless those who seek to put Him first, with the presence of His Holy Spirit. How little we receive because we simply do not ask.

Not fully realizing the concept of what was being spoken, yet understanding that it must be something of great importance, the woman inquired, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?” (John 4:11). The woman’s question revealed a lack of true discernment. When Nicodemus was told that he must be born again, he similarly inquired, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second

time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4). Both had understood that the words of Christ were not literal, yet neither could grasp the depths of what the Savior was trying to say.

Like the woman, there are many today who lack spiritual discernment. When Biblical concepts are spoken to them, they do not understand because they have not fully surrendered their lives to Christ. Many have had an experience with Christ enough to inspire them to go to church and perhaps read the Bible, but not enough to inspire them to make a full surrender. As a result, they do not take God's word as the sole authority of their lives and are unwilling to follow the teachings of God's word in their fullness. As a result, they remain spiritually blind, for Christ said, "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God" (John 7:17). The condition of knowing is a willingness to follow and obey without reserve. So many people within the church cannot discern right and wrong because they are unwilling to follow God in all things. They are unwilling to make a full surrender to Him. As a result, they fashion the Scriptures after the principles of the world, unable to really discern the principles of God's word.

Tragically, this woman is an accurate symbol of the modern Christian Church. So many professed believers cannot discern between right and wrong anymore. Sins enter the church, which professed Christians are inclined to defend. So many Christians today inquire, "What's so bad about telling little lies? What's wrong with dancing in the clubs? Is having

sex outside of marriage really a sin? What's the big deal about gambling? Getting divorced? Using cuss words? What's so bad about pornography? Is there really anything wrong with getting drunk once in a while? Isn't abortion a woman's right?" To the natural mind, these Christian standards make no sense, because "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

When Jesus began to speak in spiritual tones, the woman did not understand, but she felt the importance of His words to a certain degree. The ways of sin had left her dry and unsatisfied, and she was longing for the living water. In the same way, there are many who have tasted the delicacies of sin. They have eaten of the forbidden fruit, and it has left them bitter and sorrowful. They have found that the wells of the world fast dry up, and like the Samaritan woman, they long for something more, but they do not know where to go and get it. So often, we seek to fulfill our longings at the wells of this world, while we should instead be falling on our knees and asking, as the woman at the well asked, "Where then do you get that living water?"

As the woman now inquired about the living water, she continued, "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" (John 4:12)? Leaning upon the strong heritage of her religion, the woman might have been led to doubt the words of the Savior. Still today, there are many who

fall into the same ditch. They say, “That can’t be true because my pastor didn’t say it. Are you greater than my pastor?” Others say, “That’s not right because it does not agree with the teachings of my church. Are your opinions right and those of my entire church wrong? Could it be that you are right, and they are all wrong?”

Many continue to lean on the frail arm of man. Instead of searching out the truth for themselves, they lean upon the opinions of their pastors and church leaders. It was this great danger that led nearly the entire Jewish nation to reject the Messiah. Like the woman, many cling to their church history or the opinions of pastors, while God warns, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength” (Jer. 17:5). Instead, we must be like those noble Bereans who “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Still, there is another lesson to be learned in the response of the woman when she asked, “Are You greater than our father Jacob?” While the Hope of the World was sitting before her, this woman was still living in the past. Her eyes were so focused on the glories of the past that she could not recognize the amazing opportunity of joy and peace right before her eyes. Her past glories blinded her present reality. So many people today still suffer from this tragic condition. They are stuck in the past. They linger in the glorious days of their youth. While the Hope of the World sits before them, they live their lives wrapped up in the past, and they continually speak of “the good old days.”

Many live their present lives buried in the graves of their past. They relish in the glories of their high school days or college years, their moments of fame, the times when they were young and beautiful—before the wells broke. Before the breakup. Before the divorce. Before the lost job. Before the failed test. Before the accident. Before the sickness. Before the death. Growth stopped after the tragedy. They gave up. Many who have life left in them are paralyzed by their past, thinking that their best years are behind them, while God still has work for them to do.

There are others who linger at their own Jacob's well, looking to their cultural heritage to give their lives meaning. Like the woman, many lament their present condition, looking to the past history of their culture to find purpose and meaning in life instead of embracing present advantages. They look at the thorns of life while ignoring the roses. They linger in a discontented past, while One greater than their past is sitting before them. What a tragedy that so many, like the woman at the well, live in the past, when Jesus is offering them so much more. Christ offers peace, power, and fulfillment today.

Still, while this woman leaned upon the strong heritage of her forefathers, there was something in her that was longing for a draft of the living water, and Jesus answered, "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" (John 4:13, 14). The Savior now seemed to read the very longing of

her soul. Her life had been dried up. The wells of the world which brought seasons of pleasure had proven unsatisfying, and she longed for more.

The water that Christ offers us is a fountain of love, joy, and peace that brings real fulfillment in life. We are told that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace” and more (Gal. 5:22). When we finally turn from our dried-up wells and accept Christ into our hearts, He supplies the longing of the soul. He declares, “give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isa. 61:3). These are not fleeting gifts that pass away as soon as they come, but like an endless fountain, they continue to flow into the life, filling the soul with a lasting experience.

Once we taste of the Spirit of God, we will continually long for more, and that longing will always be filled, for if an earthly father is ready to give good gifts to their children, “how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13)? The gifts of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace, which burst up in the soul like a fountain, leading us to kindness, gentleness, patience, and forbearance towards others. The internal peace that works inside of the Christian works its way out of the Christian life, affecting all those around us.

Now the Savior had whetted this woman’s appetite for the living water. She saw that her past was a history full of unfulfilled hopes and shattered dreams. All that she had once longed for in life was swallowed up into a past of bitter experience. True

and lasting happiness was lost somewhere in the distance, and peace eluded her, yet the words of the Savior now sprung up within her a well of hope, and she appealed, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw” (John 4:15). She was ready to draw from a different source than the wells she had been drawing from.

There is no question that the wells of this world, which Satan holds before us, offer temporary pleasures and seasons of happiness. The Bible talks about “the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:25). These wells are decorated in pretty packages, with beautiful bows, and painted in the most attractive light, yet they run dry as fast as they fill up and always leave you wanting more. On the other hand, the water that the Savior offers is from an endless well of lasting peace and joy. While the Christian life is not without its trials, it offers a deeper experience than that offered by the devil. So many today look for peace and contentment while drawing from the devil’s well. They long for true peace and seek to find their fulfillment in the fading pleasures of sin, while Christ is offering the living water.

Tragically, some refuse to turn to the living water because they fear it will not be good enough. They claim that the Christian life is no fun because the Bible has certain restrictions, but God never asks us to refrain from anything that is not in our best interest. There are lots of things Christians do for fun that are not considered sinful. Christians merely choose to have fun God’s way. These forms of fun give us pleasure without the guilt and pain that sin

brings. The fun the Christian participates in does not lead to guilt, shame, depression, despair, and hopelessness. Instead, it invigorates the life and gives it purpose. While the devil likes to paint the Christian life in an unattractive light, it's all a lie. The wells of sin only end up leaving us dry and bitter. Marijuana, alcohol, pornography, premarital sex, gambling, and other vices may have a form of excitement, but they will never satisfy the soul. Still, God permits us to drink from these wells in hopes that our eyes will finally be opened, we will see that they are empty, and we will turn to Christ for the living water, like the woman at the well.

As the woman made her appeal for the living water, Jesus replied, "Go, call your husband, and come here" (John 4:16). The woman, again being symbolic of the church, is here called to go and retrieve her husband, "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). As the Savior gives the command, the woman confesses, "I have no husband" (John 4:17). The shameful condition of this woman was not that she did not have a husband but that she had *left* her husband. This is symbolic of the church which has left Christ. To the church of Ephesus, the Savior declared, "you have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). As a result, the wells of many churches have spiritually dried up.

In their persistent efforts to entertain the world or to be more politically correct, many churches have lost sight of Christ. While claiming to preach Christ, they have actually departed from the will of God.

They seek to maintain their membership through concerts, games, or joining worldly causes, while true spirituality is lacking. Instead of calling believers to return to God's holy law and repent of the popular sins of our day, pastors water down messages and preach "smooth things" to those with "itching ears" while true spirituality dies (Isa. 30:10; 2 Tim. 4:3). They have lost sight of their vision of holy living and their commission to seek and save the lost. As a result, they are becoming dry and destitute.

There are many churches today that have left their Husband. They have departed from His statutes and turned away from His law. 1 John 2:3 says, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." In spite of this, many ignore the plain commands of God. As a result, they are mere skeletons. They exist in form only. The structure remains, but there is no true life in them. Their spirituality has dried up; therefore, they are counseled with the church of Ephesus, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent" (Rev. 2:5).

This woman simply declared that she had no husband, but Christ knew the secrets of her heart and drew them out, declaring, "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" (John 4:17, 18). It is in love and pity that the Savior now draws out the secrets from the dark closets of her life. Things that

the woman would have liked to conceal, the Savior must draw out for, in order to lead this woman to the living water of salvation, she must first confess her sins.

Christ knew the sinful condition of this woman was a history of divorce and sexual promiscuity. He could have tried to speak soft words and ease her sense of guilt, but this would have been detrimental to her repentance. It was in order to bring her to a sense of her own guilt that the Savior turned the question upon the topic of her husbands. The sin must be revealed in order to be confessed. It must be brought out of the closet, not to embrace and justify it, but in order to see it as sin and forsake it. Opening before the woman her sins, the Savior sought to bring conviction to her soul in order to lead her to repentance. Her eye was drawn back upon the sins of her past, and she was now made to see the horrible trail of choices that she had made. She was forced to look at the horrible path of ruin that flowed behind her like a trail of blood, haunting her.

As we look upon our past, we too can see the horrible mistakes that we have made. We see where the rivers of sin have led us to. We see the pain and devastation that has resulted from our spiritual failings, and the bitter fruits of our past sins hang over our heads like a great mountain, ready to crush us. As the Bible says, “the way of the unfaithful is hard” (Prov. 13:15). The life of sin brings pleasures for a season, but in the end, the fruits of sin are painful. Looking back, the trail of blood behind us brings bitterness and pain.

While many try to justify their sins in order to gain some kind of peace of mind, the Savior knew that true healing could only come in bringing sin to the surface, confessing it, and repenting of it. This woman had to see that she was the guilty one. In the same way, if we want to find the living water, we too must first admit our sins. True peace does not come through justifying sin but through confession of wrongs. We must avoid the fearful temptation to justify our sins. The woman could have tried to point the blame on the conduct of her former husbands, somehow shifting the responsibility from her own guilt, but the Bible counts divorce as sin, except on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness, and this woman had to confess her sin (See Matt. 5:32). In order to gain peace, her sins had to be brought to the surface, confessed, and repented of.

While the cutting knife of the gospel is at times painful, it is as necessary as the doctor's scalpel to remove cancer from the patient. Humility, emptiness, brokenness, and repentance are all necessary attitudes for healing. This truth was clearly expressed by Christ in His sermon on the mount, when He declared, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:3-6). It is only when we are broken, empty, helpless, and hopeless that we are ready to be filled, so Christ must wait until we see our brokenness to heal us.

The Hope of Israel

In discomfort, the woman now tries to turn the topic of conversation away from her past by declaring, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet” (John 4:19), but the work was done. By bringing her past to the surface, the Savior was able to break through the hard crust and plant the seed of life into the soft soil of her heart, preparing its way for future growth. This work of breaking the outer crust of the heart, hardened by the pains of a sinful past, is necessary in order to get the seed of the gospel inside so it can grow.

In declaring, “I perceive that You are a prophet,” the woman reveals that her spiritual eyes are beginning to open. She begins to see the great importance of the spiritual world around her. She can see in the Savior’s words that there is something far more important in life. She begins to see the depths of her soul and the solemnity of her eternal choices. Her spiritual senses have been jarred, and rising in her soul is an ever-growing thirst for the living water that the Savior spoke of, but she still does not fully perceive spiritual things because she does not yet realize that Jesus is the Savior. Her eyes are not yet fully open.

Again, trying to divert the topic away from herself, she turns to a more controversial topic of national importance, stating, “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship” (John 4:20). To this, Jesus simply replied, “Woman, believe Me,”

for we are brought into a saving relationship through belief in Christ, “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” (John 4:21, 22). This woman, representing the church, declares that she holds her position on this one mountain, while the Jews worship on another mountain, yet the Jewish nation was at that time the true faith. The Bible says, “to them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2).

In declaring that “salvation is of the Jews,” Jesus was not justifying the fact that the Jews had overstepped their boundaries, but the essential way of salvation was still to be found in the Jewish system. The sanctuary service was still what revealed the proper picture of God and pointed to the mission of Christ as the Lamb of God. The Jews were simply the carriers of the message of salvation, yet their time was almost up. The Divine divorce was fast approaching when Christ would cry, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Luke 13:34, 35). The Jews had long rebelled and rejected God, and the probation of Israel was quickly closing. The birth of a new covenant was at hand.

Just as salvation was of the Jews, it was now preparing to go to the Gentiles. Jesus said, “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” (John 4:23). The words of Christ were an invitation to the woman. While the fundamental teachings of salvation were to be found in the Jewish system, this system was fast fading away. As the Jews had diverted from the truth of the gospel, which was to be spread abroad, Christ had to tear away the whole system and replace it with the Christian church.

The message of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ was to be spread to the world through the Christian church, reaching into the darkest corners of the earth. All across the globe, masses of people are thirsting for living water. Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and other false religions offer only dry forms, which leave the soul empty, while Christ is offering the living water. So many people, trapped in the rituals of formalism, and bound by the chains of sin, bear the scars of their past on their hearts every day. They drink from the wells of this world, hoping to find some greater satisfaction. It’s the duty of the Christian to offer these thirsty souls a draft of the living water. This precious message of salvation through Jesus Christ must be spread across the globe.

Concluding the conversation, Jesus told the woman, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). There is a great difference between the flesh and the Spirit, and all who worship God must worship in the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the living fountain that springs up into everlasting life. To the natural mind, the things of the Spirit make no sense. Looking upon the

pretty packages of sin, the carnal mind cannot reason how one could turn down such carnal pleasures for the things of God. This is because the sinner continues to look at the temporary moments of pleasure that sin brings, while the Christian looks beyond the veil at the eternal value of things.

The carnal mind cannot make sense of how God's way would be better because "God is Spirit." It is for this reason that Christ said to Nicodemus, "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). While the mind may reason to a certain degree, the natural eye cannot fully understand the things of the Spirit, so the only hope for the sinner is to be born again of the Spirit. Once the spiritual eyes begin to open, the base character of sin is exposed. The terrible stench from within the box of sin is suddenly smelled, and the pretty package of sin is no longer attractive to the eye. The born again Christian, while recognizing the outward appeal, is repulsed by the stench of sin and is given the power to resist.

Through the new birth, we enter into a spiritual life with God. The Spirit becomes one with us, and we become one with God. Christ begins to work within us, and we say with the apostle, "Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). When we are born again, the "Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God," and we begin to worship God "in spirit and truth" (Rom. 8:16; John 4:24).

As the Savior expounded upon these things, the eyes of the woman were drawn to the coming Promise. The common belief that a Messiah was to come was adopted even among the Samaritans, and the Hope of Israel was presented before her mind, as she stated, “‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things’” (John 4:25). This had been a distant hope of hers. Somewhere beyond the realm of time and space, a distant hope remained of finding her peace, but as the years had passed, this hope grew dim, and she was ready to cry out with the prophet, “The days are prolonged, and every vision fails” (Ezek. 12:22).

Her life had started out so glorious, but along the road, the winding and twisting paths of sin had left ugly scars on her life. The relationships that she thought would bring her happiness and fulfillment left her empty. The children had now grown up and gone away. The hopes and dreams of her past seemed to fade away into the pain of life’s present realities. The fantasy of white picket fences in her life had begun to rot. The hands of time had corrupted and disparaged her dreams, and all she had left were the ugly scars of sin to show for it. The rivers of this life run dry so quickly.

How many, like this woman, have drunk of the pleasures of sin, only to find the fulfillment quickly fade away, leaving the soul dry and empty. In a desperate attempt to ease the burdens of life that are bearing upon you, you distract yourself with a shopping spree, you binge your troubles in food, or you bury reality in movies and novels. You try to

silence your conscience by the incessant beat of the world, yet true peace eludes you. Like the woman at the well, so many of us try to ease the pain of life by drowning our troubles in the bottle or trying to subdue the pain with medication when the living water “is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

In this woman’s declaration that “the Messiah is coming,” she expressed the glimmer of hope that remained deep within her. Somewhere within her heart was an ember of hope that some knight in shining armor—some savior—would come and rescue her from the madness of her life that her past relationships had failed to satisfy. Somewhere within the dark corridors of her mind, she longed for this peace, yet her hope was far off in the distance. She looked somewhere in the future while the living water was right within her reach. This is the condition of so many people today. While many cling to their past, others rest their hopes somewhere in the distant future.

So many, like the woman, put their hopes on future glories, thinking that once they graduate, or get the house, or find the spouse, or have the baby, or get that new job, or get that new thing they’ve been wanting, everything will be better. Then, once they have these treasures, they find that these things only temporarily satisfy while not offering the true peace and fulfillment they desired or thought they would bring. These future ambitions do much to distract our lives, but they do not offer the true and lasting peace that we had hoped for. When we reach our goals, they may satisfy for a little while, but they will end

up dry, like all the other wells. The things of this life will never really satisfy the longing of the soul. God has been trying to tell us this, but we keep closing our ears, hoping that somehow our temporary pleasures will bring us peace in the end. We vainly place our future hopes on the things of this life and end up unfulfilled, when all along, the Hope of the Ages is resting before us, offering the living water.

Others, like this woman, put their hopes on Christ but forever keep these hopes in the distant future. Like the woman, many hope to find Jesus, but not quite yet. They say, "I'll get my life right with God later, but I'm having too much fun drinking from the wells of sin right now." Like Felix before Paul, they say, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:25). As a result, they put their hope of eternal life in a distant future that never comes. It is such a tragedy that many will be lost who desired to be saved simply because they put their hopes of accepting Christ in the future instead of accepting Him today.

Just as the woman looked to her past heritage and to the future coming Messiah, many continue to place their hopes in the distant past, or the distant future, while Christ is offering them hope today. Stop looking backward and forward. Jesus wants you to have peace today. Jesus wants to offer you joy and hope right now. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Still, Jesus didn't condemn this woman for her lack of faith. Instead, in sympathy and pity, the Savior looked at this weary soul and said, "I who

“I am He” (John 4:26). I am your hope. I am your Deliverer. I am the One you have been waiting for. You don’t have to keep looking into your past. You don’t have to keep looking into the future. You don’t have to keep hoping that deliverance will come at some distant time, from some distant place. Today is the day of salvation. I am offering you the living water today. Right now.

Still today, the words of Christ echo down the corridors of time with the resounding message: “I am He.” I am your protector. I am your defender. I am your faith. I am your courage. I am your pleasure. I am your peace. “I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (Gen. 15:1). I am your Savior.

Perhaps you have been drinking from the wells of this world, looking to drugs, sex, alcohol, money, or maybe some seemingly innocent thing to stimulate a need inside you while you are still void of peace and fulfillment. Aren’t you tired of running to the wells of this world that bring temporary pleasures but leave you empty and dried up as soon as they pass? Don’t you want something more fulfilling? More lasting? If the wells of sin have left you dry, why don’t you give Jesus a try? Jesus is not a far-off hope. He is not a distant dream conjured up in the minds of men. He is not a past glory or a future hope. He is a present reality, and He is reaching out to you right now, longing to give you peace today, if you will just reach out to Him and invite Him into your heart by faith. The wells of sin fast dry up, but the living water is just before you. Won’t you get on your knees and invite Him into your heart right now?

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