



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 080: The Woman at the Well

Study Author: Michael Button

Read John 4:1-42.

Introduction: Samaria lay between Judea in the South and Galilee in the North, so (unlike many Jews who avoided Samaria by taking a lengthy diversion) Jesus travelled through it on His journey between the two. He comes to a well at Sychar where He meets a woman drawing water. He asks her a drink, and a conversation ensues.

1. How Jesus used the conversation. On the surface it looks as if Jesus avoided giving direct answers to the woman's questions. Probably He was responding to what He saw in her heart, and to her deeper needs, rather than to what He heard her speak.

<i>What SHE wanted to know</i>	<i>What JESUS wanted her to know</i>
Why He should ask of her (v9)	Why SHE should ask of HIM (v10)
How could He give living water (v11)	How the living water would satisfy her (v14)
The living water (v15)	His omniscience* (vs 16-18)
Where she should worship (v19)	HOW she should worship (v23)
What the Messiah will teach (v24)	He IS the Messiah (v26)

* Divine knowledge

2. What does the conversation reveal about Jesus?

- (i) *His humanity* (verse 7). See also Mark 4:38 and John 11:35. How do these verses show the human side of Jesus?
- (ii) *His absence of prejudice* (verse 9). Can you think why the woman was puzzled? If you are unsure, see what the commentators say.
- (iii) *What He can offer* (verses 10 and 14). To what is Jesus referring? See also Isaiah 12:3, Isaiah 55:1, Rev 21:6 and John 7:37-39.
- (iv) *His superiority* (verses 11-12). It was believed that this well was dug by the Patriarch Jacob since it was located on a parcel of land that he had owned (Gen 33:19).
- (v) *His divine knowledge* (verses 16-18). What did He know about this woman whom He had never met? How do you think He knew?
- (vi) *His knowledge of the future* (verses 20-24). The Samaritans had built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, where worshippers of Yahweh (The Lord God) could worship without having to go to Jerusalem. Neither temple now exists, so where should worship take place now? Jesus said how worship is to be conducted (v23). What did He mean?
- (vii) *His Person* (verses 25-26). Jesus generally avoided stating directly that He was the Messiah, probably because the Jews had a false notion of the Messiah's mission and person. They saw him as a conquering hero to rescue the Jews from Roman rule. Can you think why Jesus felt able to reveal His identity to this woman? What *did* He, as the Messiah, rescue people from?
- (viii) *His mission* (verses 31-34). The disciples did not understand what he meant by "I have food to eat of which you do not know." How would you explain it to them?

To think about: Am I asking what Jesus wants me to know, and am I listening?

To dig deeper: Read what you can find about *Living Water*.