

## The Samaritan Woman

Part III

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The Saviour has spoken about living water which He would give the Samaritan woman if only she understood her need of this gift of God and realized who was speaking to her. The problem was, however, that she did not understand. She did realize that this living water of which He spoke had to be something special, so, she asked Him to give her some. Jesus then gave that strange command: "Go call your husband!" With these few words, the Saviour at once lays bare her real problem. She is a sinner in need of a Saviour. She had never realized this. Like all people she knew that she was not perfect. She was probably aware that her life-style was far from what it should be. But apparently her sins did not bother her very much. She did not see herself as a lost sinner before a holy and righteous God.

This changed suddenly when Jesus told her to get her husband. "I have no husband," she replied evasively. She is startled by this strange request. She is even more startled by Jesus' next remark: "You are right about that. You've had five husbands already, and the man you now have is not your husband."

By now the woman is becoming alarmed. This man knows all about me. He must be a prophet. She does not yet realize that He is the Messiah, but He certainly makes her think of the Messiah. "Sir," she says, "I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:19-20).

It seems she is trying to change the subject by asking questions about the proper mode of worship. I don't think that is necessarily the case here. We should try to understand her frame of mind at this point. This woman is awakened. She realizes, she is not right with God. This always leads to the question, "what must I do?"

The answer given by Scripture is, of course, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in His finished work." This is usually not the first answer that suggests itself to an awakened sinner. Often such a person thinks he has to do something about his religion. He should go to church more regularly. Or, if he feels he has been in the wrong church, he should find a better one. He is concerned about the proper way to approach God. He

must do the right things, perform the correct ceremonies, observe the prescribed rules. “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” (Micah 6:6) That is the question such troubled souls will ask themselves over and over again. The woman of Samaria was concerned about “where” she ought to worship. She had always believed it was in Samaria that God wanted to be served. Maybe the Jews were right after all by insisting on Jerusalem as the proper place.

I believe she was quite sincere in asking Jesus about this. At any rate, the Saviour did not rebuke her for this. Rather, He uses the opportunity to teach her what true worship consists of. It comes down to this: God accepts our worship only if it is worship in spirit and in truth. It must come from the heart, a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Not *where* but **how** we worship is important. Only if we as sinners trust in the provision God has made for our salvation, namely in His Son Jesus Christ — the only Saviour Who has sacrificed Himself for our sins — are we accepted by Him.

The woman of Samaria did not know all that, of course. She could not. But she needed to know that only through Christ she could be saved. This the Saviour was in the process of teaching her. Gradually He revealed Himself to her. In a most marvellous way He showed her who she was in her lost condition as a sinner, but at the same time He showed her who He was for sinners like her.

As Jesus was speaking the woman became intrigued. His teaching reminded her of what she had heard about the Messiah who was to come. She had been told of the living water which He alone could give her. She had been made aware of her sin problem, and the uselessness of formal religion. Could it be that this stranger...

Softly she says, “I know the Messiah is coming and when He is come He will tell us all things.” Now the big moment has arrived for Jesus to let out the secret. “I, that speak unto thee am He! I am the Messiah you have been waiting for.” Suddenly the scales fall from the woman’s eyes. She has met her Messiah and she believes in Him.

Here we see how ready and willing Christ is to reveal Himself as Saviour. As soon as the Samaritan woman expresses her interest in and desire for the Messiah, He tells her: “I am the One.”

Are you like this woman? Have you seen something of your sin and guilt before God? Do you wonder how you can get right with God? Maybe you have tried “religion”, praying, reading the Bible, going to church, doing good works, etc. But so far you have not found peace. All has been in vain. You have not been accepted by God and you feel restless, uneasy. The sense of guilt is still there. Sin lies as a heavy burden upon you.

You need Christ. Only in Him do you have access to God. He is the Way, the only Way to the Father.

Are you seeking Him? That is good. That is important. No one can be saved without seeking the Lord. But what is even more important is that Christ also seeks you. He

thirsted for the soul of that Samaritan woman. He is thirsting for your soul, too. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Yes, ask Him to teach you. That is the key here. That Samaritan woman showed a willingness to be taught by Jesus. That has ever been the mark of a true seeker. Calvin says about this passage:

When He acknowledges to the woman that He is the Messiah, He unquestionably presents Himself as her Teacher in correspondence with the hope she had conceived. And so I think it probable that He went on to give her fuller instruction to satisfy her thirst. He wanted such an example of His grace to be visible in the case of this poor woman that He might testify to all that He never fails in His duty when we want Him to be our Teacher. There is no danger of His disappointing one of these whom He finds ready to be His disciple.

How encouraging this is! The Saviour revealed Himself more clearly to this sinful woman who was willing to submit to His instruction, than to the learned Pharisees and Scribes who thought they knew it all.

How blessed it is then to sit at the feet of our great Teacher, Jesus Christ. As the Heidelberg Catechism says, Christ has been ordained of God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption.

Jesus, to what didst Thou submit,  
To save Thy dear-bought flock from hell  
Like a poor traveller, see Him sit,  
Athirst and weary, by the well.

The woman who for water came,  
(What great events on small depend!  
Then learnt the glory of His name,  
The well of life, the sinner's friend.

Taught from her birth to hate the Jews,  
And fill'd with party-pride, at first  
Her zeal induced her to refuse  
Water to quench the Saviour's thirst.

But soon she knew the gift of God;  
And Jesus, whom she scorn'd before,  
Unask'd, that drink on her bestowed,  
Which whoso tastes shall thirst no more.

His words her prejudice remov'd,  
Her sin she felt, relief she found;  
She saw and heard, believ'd and lov'd,  
And ran to tell her neighbours round.

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