

John 4:1-26

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

E. The First Discourse – The New Birth (3:1-21)

F. John the Baptizer's Farewell (3:22-36)

G. The Second Discourse – The Water of Life, Part One (4:1-26)

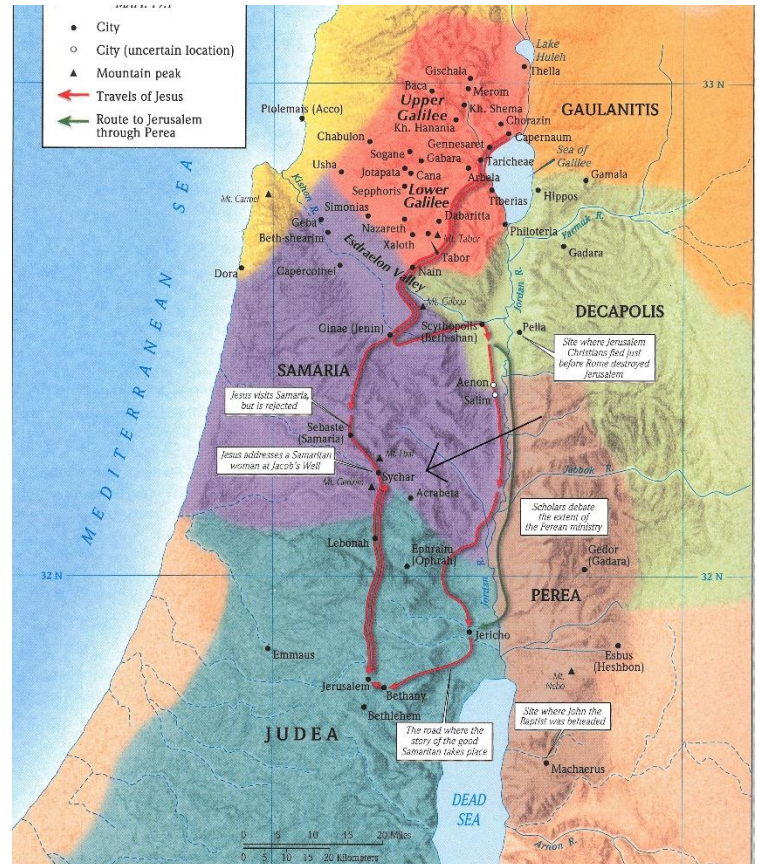
Jesus, on the move once again, starts a journey from Judea to Galilee. As the map on the right shows, this could have meant a walk up the Jordan River, and not necessarily requiring a trek through Samaria. Nevertheless, Jesus *needed to go through Samaria* (v. 4).¹

The Samaritans by this point were an ethnic mixture of the native Samaritans stemming from the Assyrian conquest centuries before and the Israelites who managed to remain in the land during the captivity.² As such, the Israelites would have had nothing but contempt for the descendants of these half-Jews.

When Jesus was passing through Sychar (see black arrow to the right), John says that He stopped at *Jacob's well* (v. 6; cf. Gen 29:1-12?; Josh 24:32) around 6:00pm. Even though John adds that Jesus was *wearied from His journey* – imagine that, Jesus is acquainted with our physical limitations! – we can't help but think that He had something or someone else on His mind.

Shortly after Jesus arrived, *a woman of Samaria came to draw water* (v. 7). The disciples having *gone away into the city to buy food* (v. 8), Jesus asks the woman for a drink. Imagine the shock this woman would've felt. Not only was a man speaking to a woman in public, but Jesus was a Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman; their societal classes were quite different (cf. v. 9)! Yet, Jesus had no qualms about the interaction.

Jesus, as He tends to do, turns the conversation on its head. His initial question is simply to start the conversation in order for Him to bring about what He's really interested in. While He may indeed be thirsty, He's more interested in the *living water* He can offer her (v. 10). This confuses her; after all,



¹As Wilbur Pickering notes: "He could have gone up the coast and avoided most of the mountains, but He 'needed' to go through Samaria. Probably because the Father told Him to – it was harvest time in Sychar."

²"The newcomers from the north may be presumed to have intermarried with the Israelite remnant, and ultimately the population took the general name of Samaritans." *New International Bible Dictionary*, "Samaritans." So also Merrill Unger: "The Samaritans were a mixed race with a heathen core (Ezra 4:2). Their blood would become more and more Hebraized by the addition of renegade Jews and by the intermarriage with surrounding Israelites, who would find among them the familiar worship of former times." *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, "Samaritans."

Jesus has *nothing to draw with, and the well is deep* (v. 11). She then asks Him in v. 12 if He is *greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself*.³ Ah! Now they're getting somewhere! Yet, Jesus is only starting!

Jesus starts talking more about this *living water*, almost assuredly a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3). This water He offers will quench the person's thirst forever.⁴ Of course, we have the advantage of knowing that Jesus is offering spiritual water, not physical water. This is in accordance with Revelation 22:17, where John writes:

And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

The Samaritan woman is quite intrigued about this living water! In v. 15, she asks Him to give her *this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw*. As interested as she is, she still doesn't quite grasp the significance of Jesus' offer. She may drink of the water of life that Jesus offers, but she'd still need to drink the water from the well to sustain her physical life. Even when we believe in Jesus, we still live in our bodies and need the sustenance that food and water provide.

In response to her request, Jesus asks her to *go, call your husband, and come here* (v. 16). What an odd thing to ask at this point! Nevertheless, Jesus proceeds to tell her how she's *had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband* (v. 18)! This causes the Samaritan woman in vv. 19-20 to pivot and change the subject:

Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.

From Sychar, both Mount Gerazim and Mount Ebal would have been readily visible, the former of which was the site of Samaritan worship.⁵ Jesus seems unfazed by the Samaritan woman's question; in fact, He uses it as an opportunity to talk about what true worship looks like in vv. 21-24. Jesus looks forward to the time when it's not about where someone worships, but how. *True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth* (v. 23).

We now can worship wherever we'd like – even here in Winchester, Virginia. We don't need to go to a particular temple or mountain like the Jews needed to do multiple times a year under the Law. What the Lord requires of us is that we do so heartily (i.e., in our spirit) and with a true understanding of who He is and what He's done for us (i.e., in the truth).

The Samaritan responds by saying that she knows *that the Messiah is coming* (v. 25). She also knows that He'll clear all this up when He arrives. Jesus reveals Himself to her as the Messiah. This is the first time in the Gospels we see Jesus publicly identifying Himself as the Messiah, and it's to a Samaritan woman! As we will see next week, she goes to tell the men of the city, asking them, *Could this be the Christ* (v. 29)?

³Note how she says *our father Jacob*. The Samaritans of Jesus' day still drew upon the Pentateuch (i.e., the first five books of the Bible).

⁴The Greek is emphatic: by no means, ever, will the person be thirsty again

⁵The two were also significant in the Palestinian Covenant in Deut 27:1-13.