

I. Introductory comments

A. Today, our study brings us to the first story in John 4, which – in its entirety – goes from vs 1-35. However, for our study, we will break this story into two parts, with the first part going from vs 1-26, and the second part being vs 27-35.

1. But before looking at this story about Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, I want to remind you that unlike the other three gospels which arrange their stories about Jesus in chronological order, John arranges his stories in a way that tells us not only that Jesus is God in human flesh, but also what He did, His thinking, His purposes, and His ways. Therefore, in John's gospel, it is important to consider how John arranges his stories, for in doing this you will gain more, if not all the lessons John is teaching.
2. For example, beginning in chapter 2, John tells the story of Jesus changing water to wine. And in the process of working this miracle, Jesus made wine for the wedding guests in what the Jews considered sacred water pots set aside for the practice of religious purification during meal times.
 - a. Now the reality is, these particular purification practices were not prescribed by the Mosaic Law or anywhere else in the OT.
 - b. Therefore, in doing this we get a glimpse of what Jesus thought about the Jews "making something sacred that God had not made sacred," by using it for something secular.
 - c. In contrast to that story, John goes on to tell the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple. In this story, John shows what Jesus thought about turning God's house into a place of business, or in other words, what Jesus thought about turning something that God made sacred, into something secular.
3. In chapter 3, John tells the story about Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus – who as a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin should have understood the spiritual truths Jesus was talking about. But not only did Nicodemus NOT understand Jesus, he showed no immediate evidence of an obedient, life-changing response to the truth he was hearing.
 - a. The next story John tells is the story of John the Baptist's final testimony about Jesus being God in human flesh. And this story

concludes with these words: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

- b. This final statement in the John the Baptist story ties the Nicodemus story to the woman at the well story by making it clear that what Nicodemus failed to do, the Samaritan woman did.
 - c. In other words, in contrast to Nicodemus – who was well equipped to properly respond to Jesus, a sinful woman who was far less equipped to understand, believe in, and obey Jesus, did understand, trust in, and respond to Jesus accordingly.
 - d. In fact, from John 4:1 though at least John 5:17, John contrasts Nicodemus’ response to Jesus to a number of others who encountered Jesus, believed in Jesus, and responded with faith and obedience to Jesus.
4. Now my purpose in pointing this out is to remind you that even though John does not tell the Jesus story in chronological order, he does arrange his stories in a way that conveys important truths and teaches us important lessons beyond confirming that Jesus is God in human flesh. It is true, you have to look a bit harder for these lessons, but they are there, and by the help of the Holy Spirit, you can find them and learn from them.

B. Pray

II. Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman

- A. John 4:1-3 . . . Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John [2] (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), [3] He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.
 1. The most probable explanation for Jesus leaving Judea and heading back to Galilee is because of the Pharisees. Why? Because they were the ones who felt most threatened by Jesus and therefore wanted to do away with Him, as soon as possible.
 - a. For example, Matthew clearly states the Pharisees’ intentions when relating the story about Jesus healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Matthew tells us that following this healing, the Pharisees went out and conspired against Jesus, as to how they might destroy Him. But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there (Matthew 12:14-15).
 - b. And though you may think it would have been more spiritually mature or a strong expression of faith for Jesus to stay and faith

those who would kill Him, let me remind you of two things. First, Jesus did face them according to His Father's timing to face them. And second, Jesus was following His own advice to His disciples, for He said, "whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly...you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23).

- c. I think it is important to note that both the choice to flee persecution when we can, and the choice to bear up under persecution when we can't – or when we believe staying is what is best for those around us, are both right choices. What is important – at least from my perspective – is making either choice for the glory of God (Matthew 5:16) and the advancement of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).
2. In vs 2, John makes an interesting statement, for he tells us that it was not Jesus himself who was baptizing, but it was His disciples who were doing the baptizing.
 - a. However, in John 3:22, John says, "After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them (the disciples) and baptizing." In pointing this out, I simply want to acknowledge that John 3:22, can be read to mean Jesus was baptizing at least some of those who responded to His teaching.
 - b. So which is it? Did Jesus baptize some or didn't He? We don't know for sure.
 - (1) However, from Paul's experience with the Corinthian believers, we can understand why it could have been important for Jesus NOT to have baptized anyone.
 - (2) We read about Paul's experience in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. [11] For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. [12] Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas (Peter)," and "I of Christ." [13] Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"
 - (3) My point is, if Jesus had baptized some of those who responded with repentance and faith, it is probable that at

least some of them would claim to be spiritually superior or more worthy of leadership roles than those who had not been baptized by Jesus – which would have fed division within the Body of Christ.

3. My reason for bringing this up is because we humans are prone to what is commonly called “name dropping,” that is, claiming to know or be a friend of or to have had some contact with someone important – as if that raises our status or importance or worth above others. But this is pride at work, not maturity or greater spirituality.
 4. Therefore, let me remind you that some of the authentic expressions of love and spiritual maturity are –
 - a. Becoming the servant of all (Mark 10:43-44),
 - b. Humbly regarding others as more important than yourself (Philippians 2:3),
 - c. And preferring that others be honored instead of yourself (Romans 12:10).
 - d. In other words, one of the authentic expressions of love and Christian maturity is to humble yourself and let God exalt you, when and how He deems best (1 Peter 5:6).
 - e. Therefore, instead of dropping a name to raise our level of importance above those around you, humble yourself and serve, for this is the path to being great in the sight of God.
- B. John 4:4-6 . . . And [Jesus] had to pass through Samaria. [5] So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph (Genesis 48:21-22); [6] and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour (either 12:00pm or lunch time according to Jewish time, or 6:00pm and dinner time according to Roman time).
- C. John 4:7-9 . . . There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." [8] For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. [9] Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)
1. History of Samaria: The Samaritans lived in the area of Israel that once belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
 - a. As you may recall, when Solomon's son, Rehoboam became king, the northern ten tribes of Israel, led by Jeroboam, broke away from the two tribes that remained faithful to Rehoboam. To protect

his power as king over the ten tribes, Jeroboam led his people into idol worship, so they would no longer go to Jerusalem to worship and be reminded of their heritage as a unified nation under God.

- b. When the ten tribes were carried into captivity by Assyria, the king of Assyria sent some of his own people to live in Samaria, and in time, they intermarried with the Jews, which in turn further influenced the religious practices in that area toward idol worship. To make matters worse, the Samaritans mixed together Judaism and idol worship, and as a result, they built a temple for themselves in Gerizim.
 - c. Therefore, due to the intermarriage, pure bred Jews considered the Samaritans half-breeds, and due to their idol worship, practicing Jews considered the Samaritans unworthy of equal standing before God. In fact, according to historical accounts, the Jews despised the Samaritans.
 - d. This is the setting into which Jesus came when he stopped at the Jacob's well.
2. The first thing to notice is that Jesus showed no signs of social or ethnic prejudice. And the second thing to notice is that the Samaritan woman, whose people had experienced years of being treated as second-class citizens by the Jews, was sensitive enough to being discriminated against that she commented on Jesus lack of prejudice.
 3. This raises the question, "Should Jesus be our example when it comes to prejudice and discrimination?" It is probable that your first answer is an emphatic "YES." But does our practice and the practices of the church universal support our emphatic yes?
 - a. Consider just our own country. How is it that a significant portion of the church in American supported slavery?
 - b. How is it that Christians attended and financially supported Christian colleges and Church schools that would not allow Blacks to attend?
 - c. How is it that Christians today are not condemned for hating whites who discriminate against African Americans, just like we are condemned for hating homosexuals?
 4. Sadly, Christians are not famous for being like Jesus when it comes to prejudice and discrimination. And yet, Jesus is to be our example, and the Bible does provide the standard for Christian treatment of those within the Body of Christ and those outside the church who are different from us in some way.

- a. And though I am sure you know this, let me remind you once again that the overriding principle and standard is clearly stated in Mark 12:31, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - b. Jesus explained who our neighbors are and how we are to love them in His parable of the Samaritan who helped a man (most probably a Jew) who, on his trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, was attacked by robbers, stripped, beaten, and left for dead (Luke 10:30-35).
 - c. God, speaking through Zechariah spoke against prejudice and discrimination toward the poor and powerless, when He said, “Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; [10] and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another” (Zechariah 7:9-10).
 - d. Paul proclaimed the unifying oneness that makes everyone within the Body of Christ equal to everyone else when he said, “...there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, for Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11).
 - e. And if that is insufficient to compel us to love one another as equals within the church, we have Paul’s words in Ephesians 4:1-6, “Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, [3] being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] [For] there is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”
5. Therefore, when Jesus is our example and the word of God is our standard, we will take no part in any kind of prejudice and discrimination toward anyone.
 - a. Does this mean we cannot speak against sin or tell someone they are sinning? Of course not, for here again Jesus is our example, for in a clear and straight-forward way He told the Samaritan woman about her sinfulness.
 - b. However, what we do say, is to be said with love and grace, respect and kindness, so that we represent God well, and give the one we are speaking to the best opportunity to hear what we are saying (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 4:6).

- D. John 4:10 . . . Jesus 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."
1. If you knew – At the very least, these three words are profound, for they point to those who know and those who don't know.
 2. If the Samaritan woman KNEW both the gift and the One who is the gift, she would have been the one asking rather than Jesus.
 - a. But as we see, she did not know. In fact, she was so stuck at the earthly level of knowing and understanding that she could not imagine how Jesus could give her water of any kind without a bucket (see vs 11).
 - b. However, and this is jumping ahead, she finally figured it out and responded accordingly (see vs 28).
 3. The reality is, there are those who know and those who don't know.
 - a. Those who know Jesus and that Jesus is the gift of God, never want to go back because they have found that single treasure which is so valuable that they have gladly sold all to obtain it.
 - b. Those who don't know, cannot even imagine that what God gives in His son, Jesus Christ, is real, or that it is more valuable or more satisfying than what they have here on the earth. In other words, those who don't know are convinced that what is earthly and self-serving is far more satisfying, brings far more pleasure and happiness, is far more enriching and fulfilling than what is spiritual and godly.

III. Conclusion

- A. As I have already said, Jesus is the gift of God. I know we most often think of eternal life as the gift of God. But when we look at God's gift that way, we are concluding that what we get from God matters more to us than God himself.
- B. Admittedly, we all start as children, even in the Christian faith. And to children, what they get from their parents is what matters most. But once they become adults, the gifts become secondary at best, while a loving and caring relationship with their parents becomes what matters most.
- C. Therefore, I am urging you not to remain a child. Get to know God, himself – personally and intimately – and if you do, you will agree that knowing Him and His son, Jesus Christ is the greatest gift you could ever be given.
- D. As Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).