

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN – KNOWING AND TELLING OF CHRIST

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Introduction

Have you ever met someone and just did not know what to think about that person? Either due to their personality, character or just the situation at hand, you just did not know what to think. Do I take them seriously or not? Are they invading my personal space and privacy or not? Am I invading their privacy or personal space?

I'm sure that this has happened to you at sometime and possibly even here. Often when we first meet someone it is often easy to misunderstand because we don't know them well, or to be misunderstood, and so we just don't know what to think. In our study from the book of John today we have just such an occasion.

We find that there are two people who meet one another, not having known one another before. These two individuals come from very different backgrounds, ways of life, religions, ethnic groups, cultures, and even from different moral fiber. It is easy to see the uneasiness that exists, especially on the part of the Samaritan woman as they begin to converse.

Although this Samaritan woman was also quite different from the Jewish religious leaders, it is evident that she has a far superior attitude. Behind the scene of this event are the Pharisees, whose attitude can be seen very clearly from what John has written. It is evident that they are people who want only to stand in unrighteous judgment of Jesus (*John 1:1-4*).

They were not interested in seeking, finding, nor obeying the truth, but only setting themselves up as judges of other based upon their own personal ideas, opinions and traditions (*John 1:24-27, Matthew 15:1-9*). It may be for this reason Jesus "*must needs go through Samaria*" (*John 1:4*), because there he would have an opportunity to preach the truth to the Samaritan woman at the well (*John 4:5-7*).

The Samaritan woman was knowing and telling of Christ. By the event of this day and by what this woman came to know we can come to have a greater knowledge and appreciation for Jesus, his work and will. What did she learn?

THE WOMAN CAME TO KNOW OF THE TRUE JESUS

That Jesus Was a Human Being

No doubt the woman's first observance of Jesus was that he was tired because as John says, "*Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well*" (*John 4: 6*). This woman could see very easily that Jesus was tired, worn out by the look in the eyes, the appearance of his face and the way that he was sitting.

She also knew very quickly that Jesus was thirsty because the first recorded words spoken by Jesus were "*give me to drink*" (*John 4: 7*), and we know that he was hungry because "*his disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat*" (*John 1:8*). The woman at the well first sees the humanity of Jesus.

This is important because the Son of God was also the Son of Man who came from heaven to earth was to put on humanity, to serve humanity (*Matthew 20:28*), and was to live as we do, experiencing all the pain and problems that we do, and ultimately die on the cross in human form, suffering for us (*Isaiah 53:1-12, Philippians 2:5-8, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Peter 2:21*). The woman learned that Jesus was human, the Son of Man.

That Jesus Was Not Bound by the Prejudices or Traditions of Others

The woman at the well also noticed very quickly that Jesus was a male Jew, and that he was speaking to her, and she responds, *"How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans"* (*John 4:9*). She was exactly right on both counts. A Jewish man would have been far too arrogant and tradition bound to even speak to a lowly woman, especially a Samaritan woman, and maybe especially to this woman.

However, this woman at the well learned that Jesus was not bound by the prejudices, hatred or traditions of others. Jesus did not come to this earth to uphold or be bound by the traditions of men that were in error, and no human being is to be bound by the erroneous traditions of men. Jesus would say, *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (*John 8:32*).

What she found in Jesus was something or someone very different who would only be bound by the word and will of God, and actually opposed the false doctrines and attitudes of the Jewish religious leaders (*Matthew 15:3-9, Matthew 23:23-26*). One lesson that we learn from Jesus on this occasion is that Jesus never possessed an attitude of arrogance toward another human being no matter what their status in life might be. Those who would criticize Jesus and Christianity need only to look at his example of how he treated women, with the utmost respect, and actually elevating their status in this world. Another great lesson that we learn from Jesus is that we are not bound by the traditions of those who often would appear to be "the most religious leaders of the brotherhood." The brotherhood of the Scribes and the Pharisees were trying to include and exclude by their traditions. Today we are not bound by brotherhood Scribes or Pharisees.

That Jesus Was the Messiah

The woman was surprised by the fact that Jesus had spoken to her, and at first was somewhat skeptical of Jesus and even questions him regarding what he was saying, and we can easily see why. Here is a woman from a very worldly situation and Jesus is speaking about spiritual things (*John 4:10-12*). However, as the conversation with Jesus progresses she came to understand that he was a prophet (*John 4:19*), and as Jesus teaches her more she learns that Jesus is not only a prophet, but is actually the Messiah (*John 4:25-26*).

Although her idea of the Messiah may have been somewhat different than the truth, due to having been taught the Samaritan traditions, but the fact remains that when this woman went to Jacob's well to get water on that day she came to know more about Jesus than many of the Jews knew or would come to know. She came to know the real Jesus: human, the Son of Man, the one not bound by the traditions of men, and the one who was the true Messiah, the Son of God. Even

though Jesus was very tired, hungry and thirsty on that day, it must have been very satisfying to know that this woman had a humble heart willing to be reached with the gospel.

THE WOMAN CAME TO KNOW OF THE TRUE PLAN FOR MARRIAGE

That One Cannot Escape God's Plan

In order to demonstrate to the woman that he was the true Messiah Jesus talked about himself in spiritual terms, and also began to talk about things in that woman's life that he could have never known unless by some supernatural means (*John 4:13-18*). At first she seems to kind of try to ignore what Jesus is saying or in other words say, "What are you talking about?" when she says to Jesus, "*I have no husband*" (*John 4: 17*). With the two-fold purpose of trying to teach her that he is the true Messiah and save her soul at the same time he responds (*John 4:17-18*).

One thing was obvious: although she may have tried to escape or hide from the discussion of the topic, no matter whom she was or what she said she could not escape God's true plan for marriage designed from the beginning. The truth was that she had been married to five different men and was now living with someone who was not her husband. This may very well explain why she came to the well at noon (*John 4:6*) when it was customary for the women to come to the well later in the cool of the day. Why did she come to the well when no one else would have normally been there? She probably came at that hour, most believe, because she was an outcast, an outcast who needed to know the truth.

That Jesus Clearly Taught God's Plan

While Jesus did not go into detail about God's plan, he was teaching it to her by what he was asking and saying. He was saying to her that the plan of God for marriage is for all humanity and not just the Jews or as some says now, Christians (*Matthew 19:4-9*). In the beginning God created Adam and Eve and that he set in order marriage, that they were to be one, and it was not God's will that man put them asunder, or in other words that they get a divorce. From the beginning this was the God instituted plan (*Matthew 19:4-6*) and divorce and remarriage were not part of the plan.

However, from the words of Jesus we understand that there is only one God authorized reason for an acceptable divorce and remarriage (*Matthew 19:9*). Jesus said, "*except it be for fornication*" (KJV), "*except for fornication*" (ASV), in the Greek, "*mé epi porneia*" (μή ἐπί πορνεία). Thayer says that the word "*porneia*" (πορνεία) is used for "illicit sexual intercourse in general" (Thayer 532), and Vines provides the same definition (Vines 125). Something illicit is that which is not allowed by law, which in this case would be the higher law of the will of God. The exception then is: if one's spouse is sexually active outside of the marriage bed, which is sanctioned by God and to be held in honor (*Hebrews 13:4*), only then would one have the right to remarry someone else who is eligible according to the words of Jesus, whether any involved are Christians or not.

THE WOMAN CAME TO KNOW OF THE TRUE PLAN FOR WORSHIP

True Worship to God Is Not Based Upon Tradition

As the woman comes to a greater understanding of Jesus she brings up the topic of worship (*John 4:19-20*). From her perspective a very good question and so Jesus teaches her the truth regarding this important subject (*John 4:21-22*). The Samaritans' worship had come to be merely be a mixture of human tradition with some of the word of God, which in effect had perverted their whole outlook and thinking toward God and worship. Essentially they were not doing anything right and that is exactly what mixing human traditions with the word of God do. It changes one's outlook and thinking to where one cannot even see that there is a true worship.

True Worship to God is based Upon God's Desire

Jesus teaches her and us that true worship must be based upon what God wants and not on what we want, that true worship is to be "*in spirit and in truth*" (*John 4:24-24*). Many of the Jews and the Samaritans worshiped, as do many people today, sometimes even members of the church, out of an inadequate ritualism and ceremony, and according to their own will which comes far short of God's plan. Jesus said that God is seeking one who will worship him from the heart and mind, intelligently, sincerely, genuinely, and according to his revealed will, that is "*in spirit and in truth*" (*John 4:23-24*).

This woman learned that there was more to worship than what she had seen, and possible had even had rejected. She came to know the true plan for worship was that we must give ourselves personally to worship by participating whole heartedly and only do those things as a part of worship that God desires.

THE WOMAN CAME TO KNOW OF THE TRUE PLAN OF SALVATION

The Plan is that Believers Must Teach or Tell the Plan

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every member of the church had the kind of zeal and courage that his woman had (*John 4:25-30*)? She could have easily walked away from the well on that day, thinking about Jesus, but not telling anyone about him, however, the woman leaves her water pot at the well and goes to tell others about Jesus, the Messiah. When we think of her probable lowly place in the community, and the Bible says that she went and told "*the men*" (*John 4:28*), that is impressive. She could have walked away from the well on that day with her water pot filled and told nobody about the conversation that she had had with Jesus. She could have returned and told only a few of her female friends, but no, she goes to who would have been the leaders of the community, maybe taking quite a chance to do so, and tells them "come see a man..." who is quite possibly "the Christ."

What is even more interesting is that "*they went out of the city, and came unto him*" (*John 4:30*). While the religious leaders of the Jews were rejecting Jesus, these outcasts up in Samaria were willing to listen and examine the evidence. What a lesson! Where does that leave us? The plan is that believers must tell others of Jesus (*Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19*). Where does that leave us? I believe that one of the reasons that so many congregations of the Lord's church today are smaller in number than they were in the past is not only because of the effects of liberalism,

because also because many sound members of the church have not taken seriously the command to tell it. This lowly Samaritan woman told it.

The Plan is that everyone must Hear, Believe, and Respond to the Savior

(John 4:39-42) – We see here the personal responsibility that everyone has toward Jesus Christ and his gospel. These people personally went to talk with and listen to Jesus. They and many others “*believed because of his own word*”, that is the word of Jesus. They make it very clear that they believe in Jesus, they are responding to Jesus not by hearsay, but because they personally heard the message of Jesus. While we cannot hear the literal voice of Jesus as they did, we can hear the message of Jesus through the New Testament, and we can believe that message and respond to it as did these Samaritans, all because a lowly Samaritan woman listened to Jesus and told others. We can obey the gospel of Jesus Christ as Samaritans would do some time later when Philip went there to preach (Acts 8:12).

Conclusion

The woman at the well came to know the true Jesus, the Jesus who was a man, who was not bound by the traditions of others and who was the Christ, the Son of God. She came to learn that God has a plan for marriage, for worship, and salvation. We should all imitate the attitude of this woman that we may be open to learning the same truths that she learned and put into her life.

Works Cited

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