

In the Name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit

One God Amen



The Gospel According to Saint John the Evangelist Chapter 4

1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John **2** (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), **3** He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

4 But He needed to go through Samaria. **5** So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. **6** Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. **7** A woman of Samaria came 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** Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. **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." **11** The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? **12** Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" **13** Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." **15** The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." **16** Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." **17** The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' **18** for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." **19** The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. **20** Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." **21** Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. **22** You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. **23** But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. **24** God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **25** The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." **26** Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" **28** The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, **29** "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" **30** Then they went out of the city and came to Him. **31** In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." **32** But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." **33** Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" **34** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. **35** Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! **36** And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. **37** For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' **38** I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." **39** And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." **40** So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. **41** And many more believed because of His own word. **42** Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

43 Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. **44** For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. **45** So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast. **46** So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. **47** When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. **48** Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." **49** The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!" **50** Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. **51** And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!" **52** Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." **53** So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household. **54** This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

General Interpretation:

Jesus in Samaria

In this chapter, St John the Evangelist continues what he ended in the last chapter with respect to Jesus' baptizing in Judea. Here, he specifically stated that Jesus did not baptize and did leave Judea, for lack of faith and jealousy of the Pharisees, and headed to Galilee, a gentile region.

Taking this trip, Jesus had to pass by Samaria which is situated in the middle between Judea in the South and Galilee in the North (refer to the attached map). When Jesus reached Samaria, he was tired and reached for Jacob's well to rest. While His disciples were away to get some food, a Samaritan woman approached the well to draw water. Jesus struck a dialogue with the woman:

Jesus	The Samaritan Woman
<i>"Give me a drink"</i>	<i>"Jews do not talk to Samaritans"</i>
<i>"I give living water"</i>	<i>"You have no water pot. Are you greater than Jacob the patriarch?"</i>
<i>"The world's water perishes, mine bestows everlasting life"</i>	<i>"I am very interested in this water that spares me the trip to the well"</i>
<i>"Call your husband"</i>	<i>"No husband at this time"</i>
<i>"I know your history and your secrets. You are telling the truth"</i>	<i>"I see You are a prophet. Please, tell me about the true worship"</i>
<i>"Salvation is through the Jews. God requires worship in spirit and truth"</i>	<i>"When the Messiah comes, He will tell us everything"</i>
<i>"I am the Messiah"</i>	<i>Became an evangelist and a missionary.</i>

By the time Jesus finished talking with the woman, His disciples came and were astonished to find Him talking with a Samaritan. They asked Him to eat but He refused for in His mind, He had another idea of food and that is to do the will of the Father, which is to draw all to Him.

In the meantime, the woman went into the city and called its people to come and see the One who told her everything she ever did. So, they went out to see Jesus and hear Him, and they believed in Him. Jesus remained in Samaria for two days, upon the Samaritans' request, and then left for Galilee.

Jesus' Departure to Galilee

Jesus was angry at the Jews for their unbelief and instead of ministering them in Judea, He went to Galilee of the gentiles. There, they received Him gladly and believed in Him for they saw the signs He did at the Temple not long ago and knew of the sign He did in their own region at the wedding of Cana of Galilee.

When Jesus reached Galilee, a certain noble man met Him and asked Him to go with him to Capernaum to heal his son who was very sick. This man was most likely a gentile and not a Jew and was serving at Herod Antipas' palace. He came from Capernaum,

about 16 miles from Cana upon hearing that Jesus was there. Jesus answered his request and healed his son by uttering the words “Go your way; your son lives.” This was the second sign Jesus did in Galilee.

Spiritual Interpretation:

Jesus in Samaria

Since Adam and Eve left the garden, God’s heart was longing to dwell with man again. For this reason He gave him the Tabernacle, then the Temple to meet with him and speak to him. Then He finally took flesh and descended to live on earth, so that He can lift him up again to paradise restoring his royal status. Unfortunately, the Jews did not comprehend God’s plan and flatly rejected it “He came to His own and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

This rejection is evident in the first three verses. The Pharisees could not bear seeing Jesus gain popularity. They opposed Him as they opposed John the Baptist and were afraid of losing their authority and their esteem among the people. So, Jesus went to the Samaritans leaving the Jews behind “For Jerusalem stumbled, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord” (Isaiah 3:8)

Upon reaching Samaria, Jesus rested at a well by the name of Sychar where Joseph was buried (Joshua 24:32). In many ways Joseph is a symbol for Christ and following, is a comparison between Lord Jesus and Joseph in light of this chapter:

<u>Jesus¹</u>	<u>Joseph</u>
<i>Rejected by the Pharisees</i>	<i>Rejected by his brothers</i>
<i>Was accepted by the Samaritans (non Jews) and they believed in Him</i>	<i>Was accepted by the Egyptians and they let him rule over them.</i>
<i>Belief in Him spares eternal death</i>	<i>Belief in him spared bodily death</i>
<i>His Heavenly Father blessed the Samaritans with a fountain of water springing up into an eternal life.</i>	<i>His earthly father blessed the Samaritans with a well for their earthly life.</i>
<i>Died outside Jerusalem</i>	<i>His bones ended up among the Samaritans (non Jews)</i>

At the well, Jesus met a Samaritan woman who came to the well in the middle of the day to draw water. Let us reflect on this beautiful setting, for nothing is mentioned in the gospel without a reason. Let us pay close attention at the details so that we may benefit from the evangelist’s words:

“Wearied from His journey”, as a man, to save humanity. It was not a coincidence that Jesus took the trip to Galilee, passing through Samaria, just to meet this Samaritan woman. He could have chosen a different time to avoid the scorching heat, or He could

¹ Both Lord Jesus and Joseph were delivered to the Gentiles, stripped off their clothes and began their ministry at the age of 30 years.

have made the woman come at a different time. But, He bore the agony of the journey to meet the woman at the exact time she would come out to the well. Someone, may say, but He is God, He could have made her come out at a different time. Nonsense, for the Lord does not force Himself on any one “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20)

“It was about the sixth hour” when Jesus reached the peak of exhaustion, for He rested and His disciples continued on to the city to buy food. Jesus knew that that it was at this time the Samaritan woman would come to the well and He sought to meet her at this hour, just like God sought Adam and Eve in the middle of the day in the garden of Eden. Consequently, God chose the sixth hour as the hour of redemption, because it was during this same hour that man knew he was naked. What’ more, He covered Adam and his descendants during this same hour by being naked on the cross.

“Give Me a drink” He said to the woman. Was He really thirsty? He Who has the universe under His authority cannot take care of Himself? Certainly not, for He said so similarly on the cross “I thirst”. He thirsts for the salvation of everyone, and appropriately He sought the woman’s salvation by freeing her from her bonds.

Do you see that this setting is similar to the one at the Cross:

<u>Crucifixion</u>	<u>Meeting the Samaritan woman</u>
Weary journey from Jerusalem to Golgotha	Weary journey from Judea to Samaria
The disciples left Him for fear of their lives	The disciples left him for search of food
Was thirsty for the repentance of the everyone including the Pharisees and the bystanders.	Was thirsty for the woman’s repentance and everyone in the city.

Time will not permit us to reflect on every detail of the meeting between our Lord and the Samaritan woman. However, before we move on it is important to note the following:

- It was the Lord Who started the dialogue
- The Samaritan was humble to confess that the Jews hate the Samaritans and did not take advantage of the situation that Jesus “needed” her to give Him a drink.
- Very respectfully she addressed Jesus with “Sir” and did not mock Him for not having a pot, and yet He would give living water.
- Jesus did not put Jacob down and did not haughtily tell the woman “Who is this Jacob, you are comparing Me with”
- Unlike Nicodemus who doubted the Lord’s words regarding the new birth, the woman believed and asked for the living water Jesus gives.
- When confronted with her past, she admitted her flaws and therefore became worthy to become an evangelist to her community.
- She was not ashamed to go to her neighbors who knew her and knew the life she lead to tell them about Christ.

- *The Jews rejected Jesus and the Samaritans received Him and believed that He is “Christ the savior of the world”*

Jesus’ Departure to Galilee

The evangelist tells us that Jesus went to Cana instead of going to Capernaum His own country. Jesus knew that there, He would be rejected and humiliated “ for a prophet has without honor in His own country”, so He chose instead to go to the place He had already blessed and to where He offered the symbol of love between man and God.

At Cana, Jesus performed another sign by healing the son of a nobleman who was at the point of death. Accordingly, He started His mission by uniting man and woman, then bestowing life to our fallen nature, that which death had conquered. His words were only enough to cure the noble man’s son who was about to die. He only uttered the words “Your son lives”, and the boy was healed and lived.

Unfortunately, the boy’s father had little faith and wanted Jesus to come down with him to where the boy was. He did not believe that the One Who can create and can change matter from one form to the other could also heal his boy with only words. This was so, to the extent that he asked his servants about the time his boy was healed naturally or was he healed through Jesus’ words. That is why Jesus admonished him saying: “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” This also explains why later Jesus condemned Capernaum saying: “And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.” (Matthew 11:23)

Word Meaning:

- *Sychar:*

It is the plot of land that Jacob bought from Hamor (Gen 34:2) and became the land of Joseph and his children (Joshua 24:32).

- *Samaritans:*

There are many accounts as to the origins of the Samaritans. However, the Orthodox Church believes that the Samaritans were foreigners whom Shalmanasser, the Assyrian King placed in the region in place of the Israelites he exiled to Babylon.

Spiritual Life Application:

Jesus in Samaria:

Since the foundation of the world, the Lord is seeking to be with man, not only to dwell with him but in him as well. However, it is up to man to accept this relationship with the Lord and to invite Him in his heart². What this means in our daily lives is for us to have some time to hear the Lord's voice. He is always calling on to us to accept Him and accept His gifts. So, how can we hear Him? The answer is simply to open our bible and read His word then to act on what we read and apply it in our lives. For example, if we during the course of our reading come across this chapter, we can try to apply the following:

- Realize that the Lord knows our secrets and even the ones we may have forgot. Then, we should Act on this realization by having a daily quiet time with Him and apologize for anything we may have done to upset His heart. Also, it is a good habit to have a running list of the things for which we express regret. When it is time to sit with our father of confession, we may use this list so that we may be worthy hearing our Lord telling us: "in that you spoke truly" (verse 18).
- We should not feel depressed as a result of our sins we have confessed about, for they are no more. Or feel ashamed of mistakes other people may know about us, for if we have sincerely confessed them and have changed our paths, the Lord has forgiven them and remembers them no more. That is why we pray in the liturgy: "Cleanse us from the remembrance of evil entailing death"
- Let us not judge others and leave judgment to the One Who has the right to judge. The Samaritans listened to the woman and believed her word. They could have told her that she was a sinner and ignored her. Instead they believed her words and in turn met the savior of the world.

Jesus' Departure to Galilee

The Lord reproached the nobleman for his little faith. As children do not question and believe in simplicity, so should we. In many verses, the Lord calls us children, little flock, sons to remind us that we should trust Him. Moreover, we pray everyday: "Our Father", is there any child who does not believe his father's promises even if he does not understand how his father will fulfill those promises? So, let us humble ourselves, mimic the little children and put the Lord's words above our minds and have faith in them.

Theological Aspects

As in all the chapters of St John's Gospel, the divinity of our Lord is evident through the mentioned events and this chapter is not different. Here, Christ is portrayed as:

1. Life giver
2. Prophet
3. Heart discerner
4. Christ the savior
5. Healer

² We may have received the Holy Spirit inside us during baptism, but do we have the fruits of the Spirit?

This list is by no means an exclusive one but merely a guide to the reader. Following is an emphasis on two fundamental points:

- 1. Christ's human nature*
- 2. Redemption and its necessity for mankind*

Christ's human nature:

Upon reaching Samaria, St John tells us that Jesus was "wearied from His journey". Two questions come to mind: Was it the divinity or the humanity that was wearied, or both? And was the divinity in Samaria before, after or during Christ's presence there?

- Was it the divinity or the humanity that was wearied, or both?*

The words used by all the gospels about Jesus to describe a human function like "weary", "hungry", "sleeping", "weeping", ..etc are all said about Christ's human nature for the divinity does not get tired, hungry and does not sleep or weep. When the divine nature united with the human nature, each kept its own characteristics "without mingling, without confusion and without alteration"³.

St Luke tells us about Jesus the child who "grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." (Luke 2:40). Of course, the divinity cannot grow for "it" is infinite and did not prevent or interfered in the need for Christ's human nature to grow.

- Was the divinity in Samaria before, after or during Christ's presence there?*

Obviously, the divinity is everywhere and the whole universe does not and cannot limit 'its' presence for "all things were made through Him" (John 1:2). So, when the evangelist say "He came to a city of Samaria", he is referring to the human nature.

Redemption and its necessity for mankind:

Jesus' words to the noble man: "'Go your way; your son lives." concerned only the boy's earthly life. Could the Lord have done the same thing for our spiritual death? Instead of Him being hanged on the tree and suffering one of the worst methods of death, could He have uttered the same words to spare us the eternal death. Certainly not, for only through His death and His resurrection, we can receive eternal life. The original sin was committed against God the infinite and the punishment was the eternal death of man. The debt tot be paid was infinite for the transgression was against the Infinite. If God could have just said to Adam "Go and live, I have forgiven your sins", then God's justice would not have been fulfilled, for the debt was not paid and it would have been only God's mercy that was being fulfilled (by having Adam live).

³ St Basil's Liturgy

Far from it that God's attributes would fall short of perfection for they are all equal and perfect. Thus, it was necessary for an infinite being to satisfy God's infinite justice by paying the infinite debt. Who else is infinite beside God? So, to satisfy both God's mercy and justice, God took our nature and united it to His infinite divinity.

He bore death instead of Adam and his descendants on the cross and through His death and His resurrection both mercy and justice were fulfilled. We received eternal life; that is mercy, and God's debt was paid that is justice. Through the person of Jesus Christ "Mercy and truth have met together: righteousness and peace have greeted each other. Truth has sprung out of the earth, And righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:10-12)

With all of this being said, one question still remain: How was the debt of eternal death satisfied since Christ rose from the dead instead of suffering eternal death, which mankind was ought to suffer? The answer is simple; Christ is not a mere human but God the incarnate Whose human nature did not inherit Adam's sin. He was conceived in the virgin's womb through the Holy Spirit and therefore bypassed the natural conception that would have resulted in inheriting the original sin. That being said, it is important to note that His human nature is complete like the rest of us, but without the original sin.

Church life Application

- *The Coptic Orthodox Church reads this chapter (verses 1-42) three times a year with each time focusing on a different theme contained in the verses:*
 1. *On the 4th Sunday of Lent: The focus is on the repentance of the Samaritan woman*
 2. *On the 3rd Sunday of the fifty holy days: The focus on the living water and how the woman after her encounter with Jesus turned into an evangelist.*
 3. *On the Pentecost (during the Prayer of worship): The focus is on the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Early Christian Writers:

There was a period (up until the year 451 AD) where there is one faith among all the Christians in the whole world known at that time. There were five sees or patriarchates for administering and organizing the ministry and they all shared one faith. These centers, according to seniority, were:

1. *Jerusalem*
2. *Antioch (currently in Syria)*
3. *Alexandria (the Church of Alexandria or the Coptic Church)*
4. *Rome (currently the Roman Catholic Church)*

5. Constantinople

Returning to the writers of this era is crucial for studying the common faith that was shared among all the Christians of this period for they lived as one body in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is just a sample of what John Chrysostom (Pope or Patriarch of Constantinople) wrote regarding the twentieth verse. It is a very beautiful writing concerning learning the Bible:

John 4:20 - "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," (meaning Abraham and his family, for thither they say that he led up his son,) "and how say ye that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship?"

"See how much more elevated in mind she has become? She who was anxious that she might not be troubled for thirst, now questions concerning doctrines. What then does Christ? He does not resolve the question, (for to answer simply to men's words was not His care, for it was needless) but leads the woman on to the greater height, and does not converse with her on these matters, until she has confessed that He was a Prophet, so that afterwards she might hear His Word with abundant belief; for having been persuaded of this, she could no longer doubt concerning what should be said to her.

Let us now after this be ashamed, and blush. A woman who had had five husbands, and who was of Samaria, was so eager concerning doctrines, that neither the time of day, nor her having come for another purpose, nor anything else, led her away from enquiring on such matters; but we not only do not enquire concerning doctrines, but towards them all our dispositions are careless and indifferent. Therefore everything is neglected. For which of you when in his house takes some Christian book in hand and goes over its contents, and searches the Scriptures? None can say that he does so, but with most we shall find draughts and dice, but books nowhere, except among a few. And even these few have the same dispositions as the many; for they tie up their books, and keep them always put away in cases, and all their care is for the fineness of the parchments, and the beauty of the letters, not for reading them. For they have not bought them to obtain advantage and benefit from them, but take pains about such matters to show their wealth and pride. Such is the excess of vainglory. I do not hear any one glory that he knows the contents, but that he hath a book written in letters of gold. And what gain, tell me, is this? The Scriptures were not given us for this only, that we might have them in books, but that we might engrave them on our hearts. For this kind of possession, the keeping the commandments merely in letter, belongs to Jewish ambition; but to us the Law was not so given at all, but in the fleshy tables of our hearts. And this I say, not to prevent you from procuring Bibles, on the contrary, I exhort and earnestly pray that you do this, but I desire that from those books you convey the letters and sense into your understanding, that so it may be purified when it receives the meaning of the writing. For if the devil will not dare to approach a house where a Gospel is lying, much less will any evil spirit, or any sinful nature, ever touch or enter a soul which bears about with it such sentiments as

it contains. Sanctify then your soul, sanctify your body, by having these ever in your heart, and on your tongue. For if foul speech defiles and invites devils, it is clear that spiritual reading sanctifies and draws down the grace of the Spirit. The Scriptures are divine charms, let us then apply to ourselves and to the passions of our souls the remedies to be derived from them. For if we understand what it is that is read, we shall hear it with much readiness. I am always saying this, and will not cease to say it. Is it not strange that those who sit by the market can tell the names, and families, and cities of charioteers, and dancers, and the kinds of power possessed by each, and can give exact account of the good or bad qualities of the very horses, but that those who come to this place should know nothing of what is done here, but should be ignorant of the number even of the sacred Books? If you pursue those worldly things for pleasure, I will show you that here is greater pleasure. Which is sweeter, tell me, which more marvelous, to see a man wrestling with a man, or a man buffering with a devil, a body closing with an incorporeal power, and him who is of thy race victorious? These wrestling let us look on, these, which also it is seemly and profitable to imitate, and which imitating, we may be crowned; but not those in which emulation brings shame to him who imitates them. If you behold the one kind of contest, thou beholds it with devils; the other, with Angels and Archangels, and the Lord of Archangels. Say now, if you were allowed to sit with governors and kings, and to see and enjoy the spectacle, would thou not deem it to be a very great honor? And here when thou art a spectator in company with the King of Angels, when you see the devil grasped by the middle of the back, striving much to have the better, but powerless, do you not run and pursue after such a sight as this? "And how can this be?" says some one. If you keep the Bible in your hands; for in it you shall see the lists, and the long races, and his grasps, and the skill of the righteous one. For by beholding these things you shall learn also how to wrestle so yourself, and shall escape clear of devils; the performances of the heathen are assemblies of devils, not theaters of men. Wherefore I exhort you to abstain from these Satanic assemblies; for if it is not lawful to enter into an idol's house, much less to Satan's festival. I shall not cease to say these things and weary you, until I see some change; for to say these things, as says Paul, "to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." (Phil. 3:1) Be not then offended at my exhortation. If any one ought to be offended, it is I who often speak and am not heard, not you who are always hearing and always disobeying."



Israel
in
New Testament
Times
1st Century A.D.

Introduction

