

Chapter 14The Woman of SamariaJohn 4 vv 4 – 44.

Before I go on with the story, I must first inform you of something else. Here you see a little map of the land of Canaan as it was in the days of the Lord Jesus. Just study it.

The southern part was called Judea. There lived the greater portion of the Jewish nation.

In the middle lay the province of SAMARIA. There lived the Samaritans. In the north lay GALILEE. There again lived Jews, but they were for the most part not rich but poor. The Jews from Judea always talked about the "despised Galilee". In Galilee too was Nazareth, the dwelling place of the Lord Jesus.

On the other side of Jordan, where the tribe of Ruben, the tribe of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh once lived were two more provinces. The one to the south was called PEREA and that to the north, DECAPOLIS.

Remember these names, because in the New Testament stories we often meet them. That is also why this little map has been printed, so that you can see these places.

The Samaritans and the Jews were enemies. A Jewish boy and a Samaritan girl would never marry, nor

vice versa. Should this however take place, then they would be thrust out by the Jewish high priests. The Jews hated the Samaritans, and would have nothing to do with them.

On the other hand the Samaritans also hated the Jews. Sanballat and Tobia (you still remember, I expect, who they were?), did all they

*The land of Canaan at the time of the Lord Jesus*



*The black dashed line shows the detour taken by the Samaritans on their journey to Jerusalem via Jericho.*

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

could to hinder the Jews who returned from captivity didn't they? Just think back to the building of the temple.

For the Jewish people it was very annoying that the Samaritans lived in the middle of the land of Canaan. If they wanted to travel at the times of the great feasts from Galilee to Judea, to Jerusalem, then the shortest way was through the land of the Samaritans. They did not however take this route, for the Jews from Galilee did not want to travel through Samaria. So they crossed the Jordan just south of the lake of Gennesareth, walked southwards through Decapolis and Perea and then again crossed the Jordan and completed their journey to Jerusalem via Jericho. That was indeed a long detour, but they made it notwithstanding.

Moreover to travel through the land of the Samaritans was often dangerous. Dangerous? .. Why? .. Well, the Samaritans sometimes fell upon the Jewish travellers and robbed them of all they possessed; yes even worse, frequently they were killed or injured.

All these things increased the hatred and revenge between the Jews and the Samaritans more and more. You can quite understand it, can't you?

So boys and girls I have had to give you this information first, otherwise you would not be able properly to follow the story which I will now tell you. That is why you must try and remember this part.

The feast of the Passover of which I have told you in the last chapter, was now over. Those who celebrated it have now returned to their

homes. The Jews from Galilee have also left Jerusalem and have returned to Galilee through Perea and Decapolis.

But the Lord Jesus remained a little longer in Judea. How long we do not know. Daily the large multitude of people surround the Lord Jesus and listen intently to His preaching.

When the Pharisees hear this they become angry. They discuss it between themselves. A stop must be put to this.

But then the Son of God leaves Judea and sets out for Galilee. He does not pass however through Transjordan, but goes through the land of the Samaritans. The Jews hate the Samaritans, but the Lord Jesus does not hate them. On the contrary He goes to look for them. Oh, the Lord Jesus has come for the despised Samaritans also.

With His disciples then, He journeys through that hostile land. It is warm and the journey is tiring. Up hill and down dale.

Towards midday, at twelve o'clock when the sun is at its highest point, the little company of travellers approaches the Samaritan city of Sichar.

Close to this city is a well. This is known as Jacob's well, and was indeed dug by Jacob. What an old well it is then, isn't it?

The Lord Jesus sits down to rest close to this well.

The disciples go into the city to buy some food. Jesus stays behind alone. Look, there He sits. He is tired and thirsty. Beneath Him, deep down in the well echoes the lovely, cool spring water, yet the Lord Jesus cannot get to it. He has nothing with which to draw it. He sits there in silence. All around Him is peaceful and

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

## - NEW TESTAMENT -

still. He was weary and the rest was doing Him good.

This, too, goes to show us that Jesus was truly man.

Suddenly He hears soft footsteps approaching. Is it the disciples already? No! A Samaritan woman, with a water-pot on her shoulder is coming at noonday to draw water from the well.

Without saying a word to the stranger who sits there, she fills her water pot and is about to leave. She has seen at once that this traveller is a Jew. So she doesn't look at him, for he is an enemy of her people.

All of a sudden the Lord Jesus asks: "Give me to drink".

The Samaritan woman stops in her tracks, looks at Him in great surprise and asks astonished: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"



*The woman of Samaria*

She had not expected this. Such a thing had never happened to her before. A Jew should never ask anything of a Samaritan, for surely anything which a Samaritan gave would be unclean? ... That is why the woman is so amazed, yet she does not draw the water.

The Lord Jesus answers her: "If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living

water."

At this the Samaritan woman says: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?" And then she asks Jesus if He has water better than this. Jacob dug the well and he himself, his children and his cattle drank from it. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?" she concludes.

Jesus answers quietly: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

You can see I am sure that the Lord Jesus is not referring here to ordinary water, no, He means by "living water" the grace which makes us alive, where once we were dead.

When we enjoy ourselves in the world, we soon look forward when it is over to something else. We always want something new. But people who are taught of God have no more a longing after sin, they cannot and will not any longer join in with the sinful diversions of this world, no, they desire to live to the honour of God. That is what the Lord means by "living water".

The Samaritan woman however does not quite understand what the Lord Jesus means. She thinks He is talking about ordinary, common water.

"Sir" says she, "give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw".

She wants to have living water from the love of ease.

What answer will Jesus give to this? Will He get up and go away because she is so ignorant? No, He doesn't do that.

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

## - NEW TESTAMENT -

"Go, call thy husband, and come hither," says He to the woman. At once she looks away embarrassed, perhaps she even blushed for shame. Softly she answers, "I have no husband".

The Lord Jesus looks at her intently and says: "Woman, thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

Well now, how does the Lord Jesus know that? He has never seen this woman before, and yet He tells her what has happened in her past life, He tells her that she is a godless, bad woman, because she has left her husband five times, and each time she has married another man. That is not allowed. God has forbidden that in His laws. In this way the Lord Jesus shows the woman that He knows all things, that He is the Son of God.

The Samaritan woman stares at the stranger, dumbfounded.

"Sir," she cries, "I perceive that thou art a prophet." And she proceeds to ask Jesus to settle this question for her:

"The Jews say that the temple in Jerusalem is the true temple, that offerings must be brought there and that God must be worshipped there. But we, the Samaritans have built another temple on mount Gerizim, and we say that our temple is the real, true temple. We say that the offerings must be brought to our temple and that God must only be worshipped there. Who is right, your people, or mine?"

"Woman", answers Jesus, "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... The hour cometh, yea now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

Children, if you kneel down at your bedside, or in a dark corner of a barn, or anywhere else for that matter, then that is just as good as praying in church. God is everywhere present, and He hears and sees you wherever you are. No, we do not have to go to a definite place in order to make known to the Lord our needs and troubles, we can do that anywhere.

The woman answers: "I know that the Messias cometh which is called Christ: when He is come He will tell us all things."

Then the Lord Jesus says solemnly, "I that speak unto thee am he."

The sinful woman stands there motionless, She says not another word. Deep respect is in her heart for this Jew who has shown her her sinful life; who has told her all things that ever she did without knowing her; who now tells her that He is the Messiah, the long awaited King of Israel. She believes the words which the Saviour has spoken to her.

Suddenly they are disturbed.

The disciples who had gone into the city to buy food, now return. They have been successful. The Samaritans have not refused it them, but they have been able to buy some victuals and now they come back to their Master. They think that Jesus must have been looking forward longingly for their return . . . and . . . they find Him in conversation with a Samaritan woman. They cannot understand this... They would not have talked to this woman. Moreover it seems as though Jesus is no longer tired. There is a joyful look on their Master's face.

Yet they do not dare to ask who the woman is or what He has been discussing with her. They keep silent and wait.

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

## - NEW TESTAMENT -

The woman stands there speechless, with amazement. This friendly, wonderful stranger, the Messiah? How is this possible?

The Lord Jesus too remains silent. He has performed His work.

Suddenly the Samaritan woman hurries away. She leaves her water-pot standing by the well and makes her way to the city.

In the meantime the disciples say to Jesus "Rabbi, eat", by which they mean "Master eat some of the food which we have bought."

But the Lord Jesus refuses. He has no more appetite.

So the disciples think that someone must have brought the Lord Jesus some food, that perhaps the woman has given Him something.

Yet that is not true. He has not yet had anything, but He is now occupied with other things, which fill Him completely.

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Look! Numbers of Samaritans draw near to the well, where Jesus sits. Are they all coming to draw water?... No, they are coming to this Jewish traveller. Why? How do they know that Jesus is at the well?...

The Samaritan woman had hurried into the city. To all whom she met or saw she cried "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Oh, now that she has found the Messiah, she wants all her fellow citizens to find Him too. So she runs through the streets of her home town and says the same thing to everyone.

The Samaritans who hear it become inquisitive. Many believe the woman, and go to the well too. They want to see Him; they want to

hear Him speak.

Thus it is, that the road which leads to Jacob's well is crowded with people, men and women.

The Lord Jesus sees them coming. His soul is filled with heavenly joy.

He says to His disciples: "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

The Lord Jesus speaks here not of the harvest of wheat and barley, but of the harvest of souls. Many of those Samaritans, despised as they are by the Jews, shall be turned to God. That is why His face beams with joy, for that is surely the work of the Lord Jesus? He is the Saviour is He not?

There come the first of the Samaritans from the city to the well. Before long there is a large crowd of people "Will you tarry with us?" they ask the Lord.

Jesus gets up at once and goes with them into the city. He stays there two days, and then travels further to Galilee. But the Samaritans will never forget these two days, for through the preaching of Jesus, many are turned to God.

Many of them are rejoicing in everlasting glory. There they sing to the honour of Him, who once sat weary by Jacob's well. How wonderful are God's ways, are they not?

The work of the Lord Jesus was not in vain. Many Samaritans believed that the Messiah would pay for their sins too. The work of the King of kings is never in vain.

And the Saviour still works now. He sends us ministers who declare to us in His name that we too must be converted. He gives us the

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

Bible, the everlasting Word of God, that we may read therein. Shall that work then be in vain so far as we are concerned? No, that cannot be. If it does not work as a blessing, then it will be as a curse. In other words, it will make our judgement heavier. If we remain unconverted, then we shall be lost, forever lost. And that will be terrible. Do you ever think about it?

Shall those Samaritans then go before us?

May He give to you also a new heart. Ask if He will dwell and work in your heart too. Do you pray for this daily, or do you go on heedlessly? Does it not matter to you?