

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 42

John 1:4 *“And He must needs go through Samaria. ⁵ Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.”* John 4:4-6)

JESUS MUST NEEDS GO THROUGH SAMARIA

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was a prodigious Worker. This is the manner of the Lord. When we are introduced to the God of heaven, it is within the context of Him **doing** something – creating the heaven and the earth (Gen 1-2). We are then exposed to His response to sin, both that of Adam and Eve, and Cain, their firstborn son (Gen 3-4). Then we read of His response to sin dominating the entirety of the race, and provoking Him to send an unparalleled flood that destroyed all flesh, saving those in an ark that He commanded and instructed to build (Gen 6-10). We are then exposed to God's response to a united human endeavor that was launched without any regard for Him (Gen 11). Commencing with chapter twelve of Genesis, the focus is on the calling of Abraham, the promises made to him, and the promises and dealings of God with his progeny (Gen 12:a-Mal 4:6). *“God”* is a Person, not just an idea, or a philosophy; and when He is treated as though that was the case, it will not go unnoticed by heaven. Because the Word of God is a literary introduction to God, His Person, His ways, and His purpose, it is like a Divine primer to give us a proper education concerning our Maker. Further, God confirms who He is by divulging His will, His loves, and His hates. That is how we come to know Him. The ultimate revelation of God is the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom *“the fulness of the Godhead” dwells bodily* (Col 2:9). The record of what angered Him, as well as what touched His heart, is our exposure to God Himself. His works are demonstrative of the kind of things God can and does do. The teaching of Jesus is what God wants men to know. The warnings of Jesus are God's alerting trumpet to us. Move the Bible away from the category of mere literature, or interesting writings. The Scriptures are a literary record of what God requires us to know about Himself, His nature, His will, and His purpose. We must not miss this as we walk through these various texts. The supernal light that exudes from Scripture will clarify God and His will to those who believe. But it will blind those who do not believe, for God has not willed to save such.

HE MUST NEEDS PASS THROUGH SAMARIA

John 4:1 *“And He must needs go through Samaria.”*

After ministering in Judaea, and confronting the scribes and Pharisees, who were more prominent in that part of Canaan, Jesus headed for Galilee. Jesus had come from

Galilee to be baptized of John in Judaea (Mk 1:9). Galilee is where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary (Lk 1:26), and it is where Joseph and Mary lived when they went to Bethlehem to be taxed, at which time Jesus was born (Lk 2:4-5). Galilee is where Jesus was raised (Lk 2:39-40). After Jesus was baptized in Judaea, He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14). Galilee is where Jesus worked His first miracle (John 2:1).

MORE ABOUT SAMARIA. Although Samaria was in the promised land, it was different from the rest of the populous.

This was the area over which king Jeroboam ruled. He instituted idolatry in that section of the country, having golden calves fashioned as the center of worship, and positioning them in Bethel and Dan, in the northern and southern extremities of the country (2 Kgs 10:29). Christendom is more like Samaria than Galilee or Judaea.

Because of Samaria's sins, the king of Assyria besieged Samaria three years (2 Kgs 17:5-7), and finally carried away Israel (whose capital was in Samaria) into Assyria (2 Kgs 18:11). The king of Syria then imported men into Samaria: *"And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof"* (2 Kgs 17:24). However, things did not go well for them – heathens in the land given to Abraham's seed. It is written, *"And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them"* (2 Kgs 17:25). The king of Assyria received the following message: *"The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore He hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land"* (2 Kgs 17:26). The king then commanded, *"Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land"* (2 Kgs 17:27). *"Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD"* (2 Kgs 17:28).

Eventually, the outcome of this judgment was that a race of people sprang up that were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. That some Israelites remained in the country is evident by the fact that some years later Hezekiah invited those Jews left in Samaria to come to a Passover in Jerusalem. He referred to these Israelites as *"Ye children of Israel. . . that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria"* (2 Chron 30:6). From this admixture of people, came those now called *"the Samaritans,"* a name originally belonging to the Jews living in Samaria prior to God's judgment against them (2 Kgs 17:29).

These were not viewed as the people of God. When Jesus first sent out His disciples, He said to them, *"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not"* (Matt 10:5). When Jesus was journeying, it was *"a village of the Samaritans"* that refused to receive Him (Lk 9:52). It is noted that the one leper who was healed with nine others simultaneously, yet return to Jesus to give thanks, was *"a Samaritan"* (Lk 17:L). When seeking to reproach Jesus, some opposing Jews said, *"Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil [demon]"* (John 8:48). As proved true in other cases, when there was a mixture of the Jews with others, the **others** prevailed. This is seen in the *"mixed multitude"* that left Egypt with Israel (Ex 12:38; Num 11:4; 13:3). The same was true of those in the days of Nehemiah. Nehemiah testified, *"In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the*

language of each people" (Neh 13:23-25). Paul also admonished those in Christ, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* (2 Cor 6:14).

Thus, Jesus begins to pass through this area – a territory of mixture and religious confusion. This is the first occasion in the New Covenant writings that mentions *"Samaria."* The next occasion was toward the close of His ministry when Jesus is said to have *"passed through the midst of Samaria"* (Lk 17:11).

AN OBSERVATION CONCERNING THE MODERN CHURCH. The modern, or nominal, church is much like the Samaritans – a kind of spiritual half-breed. It has mingled with the world, ingested its wisdom, and courted its approval. As a result, it has become more like the world, and less like its Head, Jesus Christ. This is always what happens when the holy attempts to join with the profane. It was Solomon's wives that led him astray, not the kings of other countries (2 Kgs 11:3-4). It is no wonder that Paul warned, *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners"* (1 Cor 15:33). The NIV reads, *"Bad company corrupts good character."* The Amplified reads, *"corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character."*

HE CAME TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA

"⁵ Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph."

HE COMES TO. The distance from Jerusalem to Sychar was fifty-five miles, probably walked in two days. You will note that the Spirit makes no comment about what occurred along that way, during a period of at least two days. There were doubtless conversations between the disciples and Jesus, but they are not mentioned. This confirms that the Scriptures are not like a dairy, recording things unrelated to Divine objectives. **There is a certain distraction in meaningless minutia**—i.e. details that of themselves have little lasting meaning, and are unrelated to Divinely established purposes. Many people get lost in such details, which leads to erroneous thinking, and possibly flawed living. At this point, suffice it to say, it was where Jesus was **going** that was the primary consideration. If true, this contradicts the new theological imagination that it is *"the journey"* that is to capture our attention. If we are really *"saved by hope"* (Rom 8:24), this is absurd observation.

A CITY OF SAMARIA CALLED SYCHAR. This is the only place in the Bible where this city is mentioned. Some take the position that this was a name given to the city of Shechem. There is no satisfactory way of establishing the identity of this city, and I consider the attempt to do so a distraction. The Spirit will identify the location by another means.

NEAR THE PARCEL OF GROUND THAT JACOB GAVE TO HIS SON JOSEPH. Other versions read, *"a plot of ground,"*^{NKJV} *"the field,"*^{RSV} *"the bit of land,"*^{BBE} *"the property,"*^{CSB} *"the possession,"*^{GENEVA} *"the place,"*^{YLT} and *"the tract of land."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Moses provides the record of this transaction, recording it centuries after it occurred. Jacob had left Laban, peacefully met his brother Esau, and continued his journey from Padanaram to Canaan. It is written, *"And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth"* [meaning "booths"] (Gen 33:17). He then *"came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan."* It is there that *"he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an*

hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel" (Gen 33:19-20). This is the "parcel of ground" to which our text refers. At that time, the land was not given to Joseph, who was then rather young.

The giving of the land to Joseph took place while Jacob was dying, when he blessed all of his sons. He said to Joseph, *"Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (Gen 48:22). This is the only record of a militant exploit of Jacob. While it requires some speculation, it appears that Jacob had subdued that territory, and the events that followed grew out of that situation.*

This bequeathing of this property to Joseph is described more fully in the record of Joseph's death. *"And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph" (Josh 24:32). Now, over 1,700 years later, that act of Jacob still held true. The land was not identified by who was living there at the time, but by the purchase of one of the "fathers" of Israel, which was given to his son Joseph. That this purchase was according to the will of God is obvious from the fact that the Spirit had the transaction recorded, and that the Gospel writer makes mention of it to identify the place where Jesus is now found.*

Notice the heritage of the people of God. Places of significance are not ones noted for their natural beauty. They are not places where worldly military exploits were accomplished, or worldly councils were held. In the nation of Israel God established marvelous reference points that serve to set the teachings of the Lord within the context of the working of the Lord.

Of themselves, places are insignificant. However, when the Lord works in an area, and that working is recorded in Scripture, it becomes a valid reference point by which facets of Divine working can be better known—i.e., Canaan, Jerusalem, the pool of Bethesda, Cana, Samaria, Ephesus, Corinth, etc. Every person and every place with which God or Christ have identified themselves have profitable associations. This seems to have been general knowledge during the time when Jesus went about doing good, and healing all who were possessed of the devil (Acts 10:38).

It appears to me that the work of God must be accomplished in the right environment. When it came to public structures, Jesus was found in the synagogues (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Mk 1:39; Lk 4:15), and the Temple (Matt 11:27; Mk 12:35; 14:29). His entire ministry was in the land of Canaan – Galilee and Judaea being the primary areas. I realize this can be taken too far, but it is something we must consider. If you want to find Jesus, so to speak, He will be where His people are gathered (Matt 18:20), the ones among whom He works. When the saints come together, they are, so to speak, seated on the well – one of the primary places where refreshing waters flow. There are, after all, *"the wells of salvation" (Isa 12:3).*

JACOB'S WELL WAS THERE

"⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour."

JACOB'S WELL WAS THERE. This is the only place in Scripture where this well is mentioned. This well exists to this very day (2015), and is reported to be "ABOUT 9 FEET IN DIAMETER AND ABOUT 75 FEET IN DEPTH." EASTON'S BIBLE DICTIONARY It is no longer noted for its water, as

the area has been turned into a tourist site, and even a religious site. Easton's Bible Dictionary notes, "UNFORTUNATELY, THE WELL OF JACOB HAS NOT ESCAPED THAT MISPLACED RELIGIOUS VENERATION WHICH CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITH LEAVING THE OBJECT OF IT AS IT IS, BUT MUST BUILD OVER IT A SHRINE TO PROTECT AND MAKE IT SACRED. A SERIES OF BUILDINGS OF VARIOUS STYLES, AND OF DIFFERENT AGES, HAVE CUMBERED THE GROUND, CHOKED UP THE WELL, AND DISFIGURED THE NATURAL BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY OF THE SPOT." Compare this with the narrative of John, which covers a time that was over 1,700 years after that well was dug. The place was not noted for the city that was there, the people who lived there, or any kind of commerce that existed there. The significance of that well was found in a financial transaction Jacob made 1,700 years earlier.

As Jesus sat on that well, I do not doubt that His great mind perused the things associated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the holy triad with whom God had associated Himself (Gen 26:24; 28:13; Ex 3:6; Matt 22:32; Acts 7:32). Jesus Himself was the Descendant promised to those three Patriarchs (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Now Jesus is there, commencing a ministry that will consummate in the blessing promised to those patriarchs.

WEARIED WITH HIS JOURNEY. This was the Son of God – God "*manifest in the flesh*" (1 Tim 3:16). The "*fulness of the Godhead*" dwelt in Him "*bodily*" (Col 2:9). This was a special "*body*" that had been prepared for Him by God Himself. As it is written, "*Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me*" (Heb 10:5). Those ancient sacrifices with which God was not satisfied, all had bodies – bodies of flesh and blood. But they were insufficient to take away sin (Heb 10:11), and the offering of them could therefore not cleanse the conscience of the sinner (Heb 10:2).

The Lord being sent in "*the form of sinful flesh*" (Rom 8:3) – a body – was more than a mere technicality. It was necessary, but there were some unpleasanties associated with it – things which Jesus as "*the Word*" (John 1:1) never before had experienced. He experienced the helplessness of in fancy, and had to be protected (Matt 2:13-15). He advanced in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man (Lk 2:52). He was, for example, "*tempted*" (Matt 4:1; Heb 2:18; 4:15). He experienced hunger (Matt 4:2; 21:18; Mk 11:12). Angels had to minister to Him and strengthen Him (Lk 22:43). He was "*straitened*," hindered and distressed, until He accomplished His death (Luke 12:50).

We must give diligent heed to avoid developing a casual attitude concerning the Word become flesh. The Manhood of Jesus was necessary to our salvation, but it involved unimaginable condescension, stooping, deigning, and humility. This text exposes us to another one of those condescending experiences: "*wearied with His journey!*" Other versions read "*tired*,"^{NIV} "*tired out*,"^{NRSV} "*exhausted*,"^{CJB} and "*worn out*."^{CSB} Another time, He slept in a ship (Matt 8:24). Such experiences are common to us. However, they were humbling experiences for the Savior of the world. It is said of the Lord, "*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding*" (Isa 40:28). In order to save men, the Word forfeited all of that. His incarnation meant that every one of those traits had to be temporarily laid aside. He had to grow in stature (Lk 2:52), advance in wisdom (Lk 2:52), be taught (John 8:28), and be strengthened (Lk 22:43).

I find myself having to revisit this contemplation again and again. This is particularly true in our day, when professing "Christians" have humanized Jesus too much. Until men have some measure of comprehension concerning the extent to which Jesus humbled Himself, they will not be able to humble themselves before God – and failure to do that has

eternal consequences.

IT WAS ABOUT THE SIXTH HOUR. The first hour of day was 6:00 A.M. That would make the sixth hour, what we refer to as, noon: 12:00 P.M. If they commenced walking at 6:00 A.M., which is quite possible, they had been walking for six hours. Our Lord was weary, but He did not lie down, He sat down. This permitted Him to stay alert, for He must have known the Father had a work for Him to do in that area. **From the standpoint of His experience, He was resting. From the view of His purpose, He was waiting.**

To a degree, I believe we can have this same experience – **resting from activity, but waiting for direction.** O, the inexplicable joy that can be experienced in such a posture. Sometimes we must sit down, so to speak, because we are weary. However, during that time we can also remain alert, knowing the Lord may very well have a special work for us to do then.