

The Savior of the World

John 4:1-45

The very last verse of John, chapter three, speaks of two categories of people. There are those who believe and have eternal life, and there are those who do not “obey” the Son, do not have eternal life, and do have the wrath of God remaining on them.

In chapter four, we have a record of the Lord’s encounter with a woman of Samaria. There is much to learn about the gospel here. First, the gospel of Christ is not to be a tool for competition among God’s people. When the Lord learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was attracting more disciples than John the Baptist, the Lord left the area (Judea) and started out for Galilee.

The gospel also crosses boundaries and breaks down walls that separate people. There were two ways of going to the northern province of Galilee. One could have crossed the Jordan and avoided Samaria altogether (which involved a much longer trip), or one could simply enter Samaria and pass through it. The Lord chose to go through Samaria. While resting beside the ancient well of Jacob, the Lord encountered a woman coming to draw water. He asked her for a drink of water. She was astonished. Jews normally had little to do with the despised, half-breed Samaritans, and Jewish men would regard a Samaritan woman with particular scorn. She asked for an explanation.

The Lord responded by using the water of the well as a figure of speech for the spiritual water that saves and sustains. He began to call this woman out of spiritual darkness into the light of life. In order to do that he said, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” She needed to know the identity of the person who was speaking to her and she needed to know his power to give spiritual life to sinners.

The gospel also satisfies every need of a sinner and does so for all eternity. The Lord contrasted the temporal sustenance of well water with the eternal sustenance of the water of life. Those who drink by faith of the water of life given to us in Christ will never be thirsty again!

The Lord Jesus Christ was of course “preaching the gospel” to someone who had no understanding of her real need. She saw an opportunity to improve her lot here on earth and asked for the water he spoke about. But she merely thought that the result would be less work. She believed that she might never have to do the work of drawing water again. Her goal was earthly and temporal like the people today who think that the gospel is a means to earthly wealth.

The Lord, knowing her ignorance, reminded her of the law of God. “Go call your husband,” he said. She insisted that she had no husband though she had been the wife of five husbands in the past, and was now living with a man without the benefit of marriage. The Lord was using the law to show her that she was a transgressor, a sinner. She tried to change the subject by raising the question of where true worship could take place. The Jews said Jerusalem; the Samaritans, Samaria. But the Lord would have none of it. True worshipers, he taught her, must worship in Spirit and truth. Locality was not the essence of the thing. Truth and the work of God’s Holy Spirit were needed above all else.

Finally, the gospel reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as the only announced savior of sinners; the only savior of the world. The woman came to believe in him, and her

testimony called other Samaritans to believe. Not only did the Lord visit with the despised Samaritans, he stayed there for two days and taught them himself. Many more came to depend on him for salvation. At a time when his own people, the Jews, were conflicted about his true identity, these Samaritans were confessing him to be the Savior of the world.

All of this was a blessing to the Lord himself. He told his surprised disciples that this encounter with such people was like the satisfaction of good food. Doing the will of God brings true contentment.

by Joe Nesom