

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of**  
**August 2017**

(added progressively after each Sunday)

---

(see following pages)

**A Question; Answer & Explanation** (part a)

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Perhaps children, and others who can remember being children, have had the following experience: You might have been to the theatre and watched a play. Perhaps it was very interesting and it was just getting to an important part when ... there's an interval! Why now? What's going to happen? Perhaps you feel a bit impatient or even let down. However Mum (it's usually Mum) who's been through all this before, points out to you some of the things that so far you've missed and even hints at how these will be important when the play resumes in a few minutes.

An interval can be valuable.

In our reading of the Gospel of John, we come to an interval or an interlude.

So far we have seen a great deal of action. Now there's an interval when some things are explained to us, before the action continues. Rather than having any sense of impatience, we learn things from it, which are extremely valuable to us: we are reminded about some of the things that have already happened and we get a clearer focus of what's already happened and we will also be prepared for some of the things that will be mentioned later on in this Gospel.

The interlude: Chapter 3 from verse 22.

By now we have heard of the second sign of Jesus: how He turned people out of the Temple – that great display of authority! We've listened to His teaching as given to Nicodemus. So we are now wondering what the third main sign will be? What will Jesus do next? And what will His next piece of teaching be? But first the interval.

Here we have a Question; an Answer and an Explanation.

The Question; Verses 22-26

Jesus and His disciples have now left the city of Jerusalem. Where the Temple had been cleansed and Nicodemus had been spoken to. Yet they remain in the countryside of Judea, which is nearby. Jesus continues with His disciples, teaching and baptising, perhaps for a considerable time. In verse 23, John, the writer, is very careful to point out that while Jesus was doing that, John, the Baptist, was doing much the same thing, in another locality, not very far away. And it is made plain in verse 24 that this continues until he was cast into prison. We know from Matthew and Mark that our Lord's ministry didn't really become public until after John was arrested.

So here is the situation: Jesus in the desert, teaching and baptising. John (the Baptist)

in the desert teaching and baptising. And both not very far from each other. Both in out of the way places and at the same time. Outwardly both of them doing the same thing.

John had been saying that he was a voice crying in the wilderness. He'd pointed to Christ and said follow Him. He's the Messiah. In fact two of John's disciples had left John – with his encouragement – and gone to follow Christ. (John & Andrew) They had left John for Jesus. One might think that once John pointed to Christ his ministry would finish. After all, he was saying all the time, that he was coming to prepare the way for Christ. Christ has now come .... So was it the time for John to 'stand down'?

Instead we have these two ministries, going on at the same time and to all outward appearances, they are doing the same thing.

This would create problems in people's minds. Particularly in the minds of the disciples of John the Baptist. John had been asked: “Are you the Messiah?” “No” – Christ, Jesus is. “Are you the great Prophet who has been promised?” “No”. – Christ is. “Who are you then?”

“A voice crying in the wilderness.” “That One: He is the Christ, He is the promise Messiah. He's the One you are expecting. He's the Lamb of God. He's the Son on God.” Yet John was still doing his thing as he had for so long now!

So we read in verse 25: *<sup>25</sup> Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.* Because both ministries were being carried out at the same time this raised questions in people's minds, especially with the disciples of John. They got into an argument with a Jew about purifying. John wasn't preaching about politics. Nor was Jesus preaching politics. John wasn't preaching economics. Nor was Jesus.

They were both preaching cleansing. This resulted in symbolic purification by water. Baptism as a sign of turning away from sin – repentance. They preached cleansing. How can you be clean from your sin? How can you have your inner 'heart' washed? How can you be right in the sight of God? How is the pollution of the human heart dealt with? These were the questions that both John and Jesus in their respective ministries were answering.

The question then was about purifying. From verse 25 we have no idea how the argument between John's disciples and the Jew went. But what we do know is that at the end of the argument they returned to John the baptist and we know what they said to him. Verse 26: ... *“Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.”*

So there had been some argument concerning purification – which was the subject of both ministries. And when John's disciples return to Him we note a sense of resentment showing itself. “... all are going to Him.” A note of jealousy showing itself!

They were finding that this new teacher was more successful than their teacher.

So we see what the implied question was. Here are two parallel ministries; two teachers who to all intents, appear to be doing the same thing. What is the relationship between the two? Are they the same? If so why do both of them need to minister? Are they different? If so, how? Is Jesus really a greater success than John? If so, what does John think of Him? As a rival? An enemy even? Or a colleague and a friend? What really is the relationship between John the Baptist, who had all the attention until now and Jesus who is fast catching all the attention. That was the question!

So, the answer: Verse 27-30 John Begins his answer. What John did was to underline a great principle. Here were his disciples who were beginning to 'burn with jealousy'. Because Jesus appeared to be doing the same as heir master but apparently with more success. John the Baptist knows he must nip this idea in the bud. <sup>27</sup> *John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.* This means: No man can exercise a ministry with spiritual effect without the authority of heaven.

It was clear that both he and Jesus were authorised to their tasks in this way. Their tasks were different, but they were both *given from heaven*. So there is no way to describe John and Jesus as rivals.

Verse 28: John again states what his own ministry was: <sup>28</sup> *You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'* He's not the Christ, but nevertheless he has **been sent**. He's not 'pouring scorn' on his own ministry – which is given from heaven!

He goes on with a vivid picture, verse 29: to show the relationship between himself and Christ. Jesus is the bridegroom. [This wasn't a new picture: Hosea had already used it of the Messiah to come, as had Ezekiel, Malachi, Isaiah and Solomon (Song of Songs).]

But he (John the Baptist) speaks of Jesus as the bridegroom and he speaks of himself as the friend of the bridegroom. Or as we would say: the Best man. Is there any competition between the duties of the Bridegroom and the Best-man in a wedding? They're not rivals. They're the best of friends. They're complimentary to each other. Different roles, function and importance, the Best-man and Bridegroom are not considered rivals.

Remember that when we read the Bible, it is necessary to be aware of the local historical context of the time when events mentioned were written.

When John made the comparison of Jesus and himself with Bridegroom and 'best-

man' his hearers would not have had our modern marriage systems in mind. In an Eastern wedding of that time: the Groom says nothing until a certain time in the service; in would come the Bride, escorted to the side of her husband to be not by her father, but by the best man; the best man would introduce the bride to the bridegroom; as a sign that he accepted the bride, for the first time in the service the bridegroom would speak. He doesn't speak until that formal moment when he accepts the bride.

This is what John is saying in verse 29: <sup>29</sup> *The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.*

The bride brought in by the best man – all eyes on the Bride as usual and the best man. Then briefly the eyes are on the Bride the best man and the Bridegroom as the offer and acceptance is made. Then it is the Bride and Groom only. So the best man fades out of the picture discretely.

What John is saying: all eyes have been on him with the bride; for a little while, eyes will be on him and the Bridegroom together, but once he hands over the bride it won't be long before all eyes are on the bridegroom; the best man fades out of the picture. (verse 30) <sup>30</sup> *He must increase, but I must decrease.*”

John the Baptist had been preaching that Jesus was the Messiah. He had already encouraged two of his disciples to go after Christ. Christ had accepted them and so they and a few others had already become Christian believers. For a while these two men had their ministries side by side. But the future was to be a stepping down of John with our Lord Jesus Christ having more and more attention. John had led the bride to Christ; Christ had spoken and accepted the bride (the bride being those who believe in Him) and before long all eyes would be on Christ alone. None left on John the Baptist.

We must admire and emulate John the Baptist. He was content to be nothing. Content to be unnoticed, provided his Saviour received the attention. Are you?

John the Baptist was content to point to the Saviour and not himself. Are you?

Jesus called that attitude spiritual greatness. When He spoke later of the qualities of John the Baptist. (Matthew 11:11) The contentment to be unnoticed as long as Christ is noticed.

Go then and do likewise.

[1853]

**Pray this is so for all the saints gathered here today.**

Next week: an explanation (verses 31-36)

**A Question; Answer & Explanation** (part b)

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

We have learnt that John the Baptist was content to point to the Saviour. To be forgotten himself. An attitude referred to as 'spiritual' greatness. Being content to be unnoticed as long as Christ is noticed.

So, a question (what is the relation between the two ministries – John and Jesus) and its answer (the relationship is that of a best man to a bridegroom).

Now, Verses 31-36 an explanation:

Here John – the writer – adds his own personal comment. The Apostle John adding his comments on the things that he has just recorded. John the Baptist has been showing the difference between himself and Christ. Now John the Apostle, the writer of this Gospel, is about to stress the infinite distance between that 'best-man' and the Bridegroom. The great difference between John the Baptist and the Son of God.

Verse 31: <sup>31</sup> *He who comes from above is above all. That's Christ! He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. That's John the Baptist.*

*He who comes from heaven is above all. Again that's Christ.*

The 'tenses' used have special meaning:

John did not say: "He who came from above is above all." John said: "He who comes (or cometh) from above. That is: **He who comes and is still coming!** Here we have just a hint into the great truth of the eternal generation of the Son. Jesus Christ is the eternal God. He is God in the same sense (essence) as the Father is; and he is God in the same sense as the Holy Spirit. And yet the mystery is that everything that Jesus Christ is He owes to the Father. The mystery of the eternal generation of the Son! He was never born and yet His life flows from the Father. John has already said in 1:14.

<sup>14</sup> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* And in the Westminster Confession: (2:3) The Father exists from no one, being neither generated nor proceeding. The Son is eternally generated by the Father. The Holy Spirit is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. [The older version uses the word 'begotten' rather than 'generated'] And also when referring to Christ the Mediator: (8:2) The Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, being truly and eternally God, of one being and equal with the Father, ...

We don't have sufficient intelligence or language to understand or explain all this.

Conversely the Apostle John describes John the Baptist in the same verse (31) as: *He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way.* There's no

disrespect there for John the Baptist, just the limitations of His ministry are being recognised.

But what startling difference. Two men in the wilderness: baptising; people coming to them. One a bridegroom and one a best-man. But the difference is greater than merely that.

- John the baptist --- born (created) of the earth; speaking of the earth. In other words a mere man.
- Jesus --- begotten (generated); as far as His human nature is concerned, he was born. But as far as His actual Person is concerned, He never had a beginning (eternally generated from the Father, begotten); not from the earth – from heaven and able to speak of heaven. And for emphasis, twice in verse 31, John says; “Above all!”

He's the God/man. That's the difference between the two ministries in the desert. One was a man speaking the words God gave to him. One was God, speaking the things He had seen in eternity and heard from the Father Himself. This One was God amongst us as a man. That's the difference between them as persons.

What about the difference between them in ministry: verse 32. <sup>32</sup> *He bears witness to what he has seen and heard*, The great facts of eternity, Jesus saw! We read of the archangel – Jesus saw him. The Word testifies to the Father; we read about Him – Jesus saw Him. We know about the Holy Spirit – Jesus saw Him. We hear about the facts of the Trinity and the heavenly world – Jesus saw it all. Therefore He speaks about it uniquely as we note in Chapter 3:13 <sup>13</sup> *No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man*. These things he has experienced He can speak – like no one else ever can!

We read in the Old Testament that God the Father Commissioned the Son to come into the world<sup>1</sup>. We may read it, but Jesus was there and heard it! He heard from the Father the Commission to come into the world to save His church. He heard and saw and it is these things that He speaks with unique authority. It is how Jesus' ministry differs from that of John the Baptist. No one but the Son of God can do this.

But look at the surprising thing that is said at the end of verse 32: ... *yet no one receives his testimony.*

When Jesus speaks of heaven He speaks with authority. With personal knowledge uniquely, yet by and large – true today also – men and women just do not heed, what the Son of God says! But thank God some do.

Verse 33: <sup>33</sup> *Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.* In other words, when people hear the teaching of Christ, the majority of them treat it as if some one is trying 'to pull the wool over their eyes'. They don't accept it as the truth of God. But there are those who when they hear the teaching of Christ accept it as the truth from God. They *set their seal* to this fact: that God in Christ is telling them the truth.

Because (verse 34) it was God who sent Christ. <sup>34</sup> *For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, ... .* And therefore the words which Christ speaks are God's words. For that is true, as emphasised by the second part of verse 34: *for he (God) gives the Spirit without measure.*

Well says somebody, "It's getting difficult to absorb." Think of it like this: Imagine the most godly person you have ever met. You found out however that after you knew them for a few weeks or perhaps months that they had a few 'blind spots', a few warts<sup>2</sup> and that they were not so godly as you first thought. You've met people whom you thought were absolutely perfect. People who made such an impression that as they pass you the hair on your backbone stand up. You might exclaim, "O to be as godly as that!" Yet when you get to know them a little you find that they're men or women after all. They are filled with the Spirit, is the only expression you could use. Their personality is dominated by the Holy Spirit. Yet. Not completely. There are still some faults, which even you and I can see. Filled with the Spirit? Yes. But not absolutely dominated by the Spirit.

Most of the time then, they will speak that which is true and righteous, yet now and they they fall from the truth.

---

1 The Great Commission has several Old Testament promises that are alluded to in the New Testament as referring to the person, and the gospel, of Jesus Christ. Moreover there are also many other Old Testament scriptures that also look forward to the world wide spread of the knowledge and rule of God (ultimately through the gospel of Christ)

The authenticity of the Old Testament references which are taken to refer to the coming of Christ to earth such as (Genesis 12:3; Psalm 2:8; Psalm 22:27; Isaiah 49:6, 52:15 and many others) is confirmed by the inspired New Testament writers who specifically reference these Old Testament references as meaning the incarnation of Christ: Acts 4:25-27, 13:33; Hebrews 1:5, 5:5; Revelation 2:26, 12:5, 19:15; Matthew 27:46; John 19:24; Hebrews 2:12 and others.

2 A figure of speech derived from Oliver Cromwell's facial appearance. As the Puritan Lord Protector of England, he was to have his portrait painted by a prominent artist who usually painted the 'well to do' in a flattering if not accurate way. Consistent with his puritan ethics it is claimed that Cromwell required the painting to be accurate even to the extent of 'warts and all'.

It was never like that with Christ. God gives Him the *Spirit without measure*. God in Christ the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. (Colossians 2:9) The whole of the Holy Spirit dwells in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He enjoys that intimate union with them as members together of that glorious Trinity. There is no limit to His spirituality. There is no part of Christ which is tainted or touched with sin or imperfection or 'falling short'.

Therefore you can be certain that everything that Jesus says is absolutely so. Because God gives the Spirit without measure to Him. That's the ultimate difference between the Lord Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. And even the most godly man or woman. John was sent by God – Christ is God! John *was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb*. (Luke 1:15). In Christ the Spirit **dwells** bodily in Him – eternally.

This difference is further supported by verse 35. Christ's relationship to the Father in the Godhead is unique. <sup>35</sup> *The Father loves the Son ...* The relationship which these glorious Persons have to each other can be described in such homely language as: Father and Son. They are bound together as members of the Godhead by the bond of perfect divine love. The very essence of God's revealed character. The Trinity is the personality of love.

*... and has given all things into his hand*. Which means that everything that God does He does through Christ. Everything! How did God make the world? Through Christ. How does God uphold the world? Through Christ. How does God save sinners? Through Christ. How does God judge the world – all men women and angels? Through Christ. How does God end the world? Through Christ. How does God create heaven for His people? Through Christ.

Everything God has done, is doing and will do is ... through Christ.<sup>3</sup>

That's why the chapter concludes as it does: There is no hope of anybody having the life of God in their soul (that's eternal life) who does not come to Christ. Because everything that God does – even the giving of eternal life – which is the placing of His own life in the human soul, he does through Christ. He doesn't do it through Christianity! He doesn't do it through Church! He doesn't do it through Bible reading **although these things are vitally important**. He does it through Christ. Not through your: best thoughts; good works; best intentions; tears; or heartbreaks.

He gives eternal life only through Christ, therefore there is not hope of anybody having eternal life who is cut off from Christ, which is why the chapter finishes with:

<sup>36</sup> *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

There is no greater sin than the neglect of Christ. God loves His Son! If you don't love Him then God's anger remains with you. [God's anger, justly, is on all members of

---

<sup>3</sup> When all is completed then: <sup>28</sup>When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that **God may be all in all**. (1 Corinthians 15:28)

'fallen' mankind. Only through Christ can this anger be appeased. Without this that anger, wrath, REMAINS.] God does everything through His Son, therefore if you don't come to His Son you cut yourself off from the only fount of life and you spit on the One whom God put all His favour upon and God's *wrath remains on you*.

This fortnight's passage from John's Gospel has been an interlude or interval, a reflection, in the overall narrative. From it we should 'take away':

That however great a human, like John the Baptist is, such can never be as great as Christ. Since every man comes from the earth. But Christ comes from heaven. Therefore they should be no one greater in your estimation than Christ.

Even the greatest servant of God is only a pointer to Christ. Such a servant has no power to help you or to save you.

It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfectly revealed God, invested with all God's power. To be saved then, from God's wrath it must be by God's Son.

The only alternative in the world is faith in Christ or eternal damnation. Today you have had Christ's unique place explained to you, you are totally inexcusable if you go to anybody else for your eternal salvation. The only hope for you lies at His feet -- not any preachers -- and to say to Him. Personally: "God," -- for that's who He is -- "be merciful to me, a sinner."

[2007]

**Pray this is so for all the saints gathered here today.**

**The Journey; Conversation & Outcome** (part a)

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Verses 1-6: The Journey, which our Lord made.

Previously in the Apostle John's eye-witness narrative of the 3 ½ year Ministry of Jesus, we found Jesus in the wilderness of Judea, the southern region of Palestine. Under His authority baptisms were taking place. The disciples of John the Baptist were jealous of the growing prominence of Jesus with His disciples. But John the Baptist, corrects their misunderstanding of the roles of a proclaimer (John) and the Messiah (Jesus).

Jesus now decides to leave Judea (where He is coming under threat by the nearby 'authorities' in Jerusalem. He travels North to go to Galilee and in today's events He is passing through Samaria.

(verse 3) Why did He leave Judea? The answer is in verse 1: *<sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup>(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ...*

The Lord knew what the Pharisees were about. This is why, at this early stage in His Ministry, He left. Only later to 'engage' with them.

So Christ, for the time being, left Judea. In the Greek the word translated 'left', means 'a definite and intentional break'.

In Greek, a man might use one word to describe His leaving the house in the morning to go to work, leaving His wife at home. A different word is used if he was leaving his wife, never to return. It was this decisive word that is used in our case. At this stage then, our Lord abandoned Judea. He very seldom when back there during His ministry.

Verse 4: Leaving Judea and heading to Galilee <sup>4</sup>... *he had to pass through Samaria.* Now much has been said about the word translated here as 'had'. Looking at a map you would see Judea in the south, Galilee in the north and Samaria in the middle. If you travelled 'as the crow flies' you would pass through Samaria. But Jews didn't: (verse 9) ... *(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)* They were opposed to each other. To make such a journey a Jew would go round Samaria – crossing backwards and forwards the River Jordan. A much longer route. Anything to avoid going through Samaria. But our Lord 'had' to go through Samaria! He deliberately chose to do so. He broke with the normal tradition. He didn't behave the same way as everybody else.

Because there is a universality about the Gospel. Which means that although the Gospel comes to the world by a Jew, it isn't only for Jews. The Gospel invitation

includes Jews, but is not exclusive to them. The Gospel is inclusive as this unfolding event demonstrates.

He goes through Samaria for this reason and He seeks one particular individual. She doesn't know that Jesus has arranged to see her. But He has. He's going to talk to her; she will come to faith; and enter the experience of eternal life. He will do the seeking and He will do the saving!

As she prepares to go out with her water pot to carry out the regular chore of fetching water for the family, she doesn't yet know that this is the greatest day in her life so far. Different from every other day that she has lived. Jesus is coming for her.

In verse 5 and 6 we see that he arrives at that well outside Sychar. <sup>5</sup> *So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.* <sup>6</sup> *Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

Years before Joseph had been given a parcel of land by Jacob. Joseph was actually buried there and Jacob's well was there. Our Lord makes the long journey up from the wilderness in Judea. It's now 6 O'clock in the evening. (The 'sixth hour' in John's Gospel is possibly, the Roman reckoning of time.<sup>4</sup>)

Towards the end of the day, the Lord Jesus Christ arrived at this well; sits down; tired; and as we shall see – thirsty; and later on we read – hungry.

Think of our reading in Chapter 1 that the Lord Jesus Christ was the everlasting God, who became flesh, and dwelt among us! Now here is the everlasting God, clothed in our man-hood. So perfectly clothed, that He is tired, thirsty and hungry as he sits down by a well outside a little town in Samaria, experiencing the limitations of human life.

This is the Journey as told in the first six verses.

The Conversation:

It's quite a long one starting at verse 7 to verse 26. The disciples have gone off alone into the town to buy food. (verse 8) On the way there they probably pass, coming from the town to the well with her water pot, a solitary woman.<sup>5</sup> They probably hardly noticed her, not giving her a 'second glance'.

For her the day had begun like any other and now the drudgery of dragging herself outside the town with that heavy pot to bring back the daily necessity of water for her household. But this was to be a momentous day that had been planned by Christ from before the beginning of the world, for her, for many in her village and down through the

---

4 Matthew however appears to have written for a Jewish audience and his time references for daylight start with dawn, while the Roman system started at noon.

5 Some suggest that her life choices had made her an outcast in that town and she had to go to the well at the least favourable time when no one else was there.

ages for us.

Jesus had come, where no Jew normally came, specially for her. He knew her through and through. Knew all about her. Her secret thoughts, her manner of life and her past history. And He knew what He would do.

Perhaps you can picture in your mind, the Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the edge of the well, and how He might have smiled to himself to see this unnamed lady coming. He knew everything about her. He had come to call her to salvation.

He brought her to faith by conversation. If a conversation is going to do this, how would you expect such a conversation to open?

It was a dialogue. It's easy to see who said what.

Jesus opens it, (verse 7) on a human level by asking a favour: *Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."* Eventually (verse 26) He closes the conversation with a great declaration:<sup>26</sup> *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

How does the conversation get from asking for a drink to this declaration, that He is God's appointed Christ?

Let's trace it. (For we shall find much to help us in our own efforts to win others for Christ).

- He opened the conversation (here already is a lesson. Too many times we sit around waiting for someone else to open the conversation.) He opened with a simple request. He knew her through and through, but simply asks for a drink from the well.
- Her reply (verse 9) is one of utter astonishment. With not a hint of courtesy! <sup>9</sup> *The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)*  
She's astonished! Jews and Samaritans didn't exchange any words – except insults. Not only that but an unattended woman!  
Not a particularly promising start you might say.
- But His remarkable reply verse 10: <sup>10</sup> *Jesus answered her, "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."* <sup>6</sup>  
What He had done for her was to go straight to her spiritual need. He made an offer to her of living water.
- There must have been something in the way Jesus spoke because in verse 11 she's no longer impolite. She's now courteous.  
<sup>11</sup> *The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"* <sup>12</sup> *Are you greater than our father*

<sup>6</sup> It doesn't appear that Jesus even got His drink, by the way. We read later that she leaves behind her water pot and there is no record that she gave Him a drink.

*Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”*

He has offered her 'living' water. He's said that if she knew what God could give and who was speaking she would ask Him for that living water. So though she's polite – , impressed even – she's confused. The reference to 'living' water has attracted her attention – focussed her attention. She is asking a very important question: “Are you greater ...?” So she is starting to wonder about this stranger's identity!

Lots of people who came to faith did so that way: Wrestle in their mind for months – perhaps years – with the question of Christ's identity, before coming to Him in faith. This is a common road to faith.

- Jesus makes it clear, that He is speaking about spiritual water and everlasting life. The conversation had begun with that water that is necessary to sustain physical life. So now He's making it 'clear as crystal' that He's now talking about spiritual water, and the talk about physical water is only a 'picture' to illustrate the Gospel offer of pardon and the eternal life.

So verse 13/14: <sup>13</sup> *Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

He is offering some spiritual change within, (*become in him*) that will result in everlasting life. It's quite clear what our Lord is talking about, which makes her reply rather strange. (Or is it?)

- Verse 15: <sup>15</sup> *The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”*

She seems to have got the idea, but then lets herself down by again referring to the physical water – *come here to draw*.

Is she still confused? Let's be fair. Perhaps her thoughts were like this:

'Never thirst? But I am thirsty. Spiritually thirsty. Dissatisfied, troubled ... Give me this spiritual water you're talking about! Give me what will quench my restlessness. Give me what will take the 'meaningless of life.' ---- But then she thinks, 'Perhaps He doesn't mean anything of the sort. At least give me something that will release me from the toil of fetching water every day!' She's realised the need. On the verge of understanding, but not quite ready to receive the remedy. How does the Lord bring her to the point of faith? How is this Master-solver going to bring this solitary woman to the point where she actually believes on Him – savingly.

- The answer is that our Lord does what He always does when He is dealing with individuals. When God is at work in a person's life, God exposes the inner recesses of that person's heart – their sin. Coming to faith in Christ is not just a matter of: feeling restless; disillusioned; and purposeless. There has to come the point when sin is talked about and dealt with. The person concerned becoming open with Christ about his or her sin. It's on this point the Jesus now tackles the woman, with verse 16. <sup>16</sup> *Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”*

Return to the town, get your husband and come back!

- She's touched right on the raw. It's something she wouldn't mention but He's gone straight to it. Right to the sorest point of all! (Just as, in a different context, when Jesus showed Nathanael that He *knew* him.) She tries to hide the truth that she fears, even from herself, and says immediately: first part of verse 17. <sup>17</sup> *The woman answered him, "I have no husband."*  
Incredibly evasive! Sinners are. When people sit under Gospel preaching, when something in their life is touched on, they become terribly evasive. In Christian conversation when you're talking to someone, to help them to faith and you touch on something in their life they become distant and evasive. Then side-step or change the subject. Anything rather than face the subject of that sin! Their offence to God. They can dismiss you, but they can't hide from the searching eye of God. Nor could the woman at the well!
- "I haven't got a husband." and Jesus comes straight back (rest of verse 17 then verse 18)  
*Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.*  
Now! It's out in the open. That which both of them knew. Gently, but firmly, Jesus tears the mask off her heart. Her heart is exposed to Him. Conviction of sin! Confession of sin!
- She realises that he knows: (verse 19) <sup>19</sup> *The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.*  
But it's not quite over. Just one final wriggle. One final red herring.
- The dialogue continues (verses 20 -25) with a theological discussion. At the end of which she concedes that the mutual recognition, that Jews and Samaritans have, is of a coming Messiah who will have all the answers.  
Jesus then makes the decisive declaration (which He makes to bring every sinner to repentance and faith) verse 26: <sup>26</sup> *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

Has He already said this to you? Is He saying that to you today?

[2303]

**Pray this is so for all the saints gathered here today.**

(Next week we learn about the theological discussion and go on to the wider Outcome of the conversion of the unnamed woman at the well.)

**The Journey; Conversation & Outcome** (part b)

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

So we pick up the narrative of the conversion of the 'Woman at the Well' from verse 19. The woman having had her supposed living arrangements – her sin – exposed, comes to the conclusion that, He that she is speaking to 'knows' all about her already and she acknowledges: <sup>19</sup>..., “*Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.* She is starting to get it! But not quite yet. One final wriggle on the hook. Her final 'red herring'.

Sinners are very clever. (But of course they are not a separate race. We have been, and still in part, are they.) Those of us, who by God's kindness – grace – have been brought to faith, we didn't want our sins tackled. We wanted our sins forgiven, but not exposed. When the Gospel kept probing into our hearts we got decidedly uncomfortable and extremely wounded. But when it was all up for our sins we may have tried another tack. The human heart is very devious! Many when pressed into a corner in that spiritual condition, the way they try to get out of the corner, they raise a fine point of theology. If you are speaking seriously to someone, especially if they have had an upbringing in a Bible-believing church, if you try to help them to 'come to Christ' they will raise all sorts of red herrings: everything from the supposed future millennium – the thousand year reign of Christ on earth; the anti-Christian authority of the Pope; differences between the Denominations; the latest statement of a spokesman for a certain church.

Anything! To stop you talking about their heart and their sin.

We learnt all that from Adam in the first place, but now this woman also. Verse 20: Her theological red herring is this: She being a Samaritan has been brought up to believe that they should only worship God on their mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is where to worship. Who's right she asks. Is it Mt Gerizim or the Jerusalem Temple?

In His perfect grace, Jesus consents to enter the discussion: But in His divine wisdom He brings the discussion right back to the point where it is her own heart which is the focus of attention. [Don't be afraid to enter into a theological discussion with a sinner who is trying to dodge the issue. But bring it right back to their own standing with God and the state of their own heart.]

That's what happened here. Jesus says (verse 22): <sup>22</sup> *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* It's the Jews who know about worship, because salvation comes through the Jews. [God chose Abraham and a line of his descendants – notably Jacob (Israel) to reveal His nature and purpose, culminating in the ultimate revelation of Himself in Jesus, born a Jew!]

But Jesus goes on: (verses 21, 23 & 24) There's no value in Jerusalem and there's no value in Gerizim. If the heart is not right with God. It's the heart God is interested in.

He's not interested if you pray on Mt Gerizim or the Temple in Jerusalem. He's interested in the heart. Is there truth in the heart. Is there honesty in the heart. Is there reality in the heart. Is there sincerity in the heart. Everything in the heart. God is a Spirit! He's not restricted to Gerizim. He's a Spirit, not restricted to the temple at Jerusalem.

Because God is a Spirit, what He must have is spirituality. He must have people who seek Him in accordance with the truth. He must have people who pray to Him with their hearts in it! So the externals don't matter.

It's the spirit and the truth which are everything.

So she tries to evade the trust of the conversation, but she's right back, she hasn't managed it. It's her heart that is being spoken about. Do you follow the truth? Is your heart in it when you Worship God?

Well she shows that she has had some Biblical upbringing because look at verse 25: She seems to have understood that it is only through the Messiah, that hearts can be put right with God. As she says, "When the Messiah comes He will tell us about all these things."

The conversation is now at the point our Lord has been steering towards! So He says in the great climax at verse 26: "*I who speak to you **am** he.*" **I AM!**

A marvellous conversation. We see how everything fitted together for her.

The stranger has offered everlasting life – link an inner spring (of living water); the stranger has read her heart and exposed it; the stranger has shown that whenever a person's heart is right with God, God accepts that person. This 'Stranger' has: Read a heart; shown the need of that heart; promised everlasting life to her. She has never had her heart dealt with like that before. And it's now clear to her how the stranger can do that: He is God's promised Messiah!

That's how the conversation went, for which Christ made this journey.

So the Journey and the Conversation. Now the Outcome. (verses 27 - 42)

At that precise moment, in that conversation, the Disciples return from their shopping expedition. Can't you but pause and admire the 'sovereignty of God'? If the Disciples had come a minute earlier, that conversation would have been interrupted and would never have reached its climax. But by coming, just then, the climax had been reached and the woman couldn't talk freely to Christ so she had to act on the things she had just heard.

The sovereign Lord controlled not only the timing of the woman coming out to speak with Him, but the actual timing of the Disciples' return. Because as Christ has already said in Chapter 3: That although He is on the earth, He is still the Son of Man who was and is in heaven. Although on the side of that well He sat, as God Incarnate (in our flesh), He is still the One who rules the Universe and directs its affairs. He didn't cease to be the sovereign Lord because He was clothed in human flesh. He never ceased to be what He had always been, although He has become what He was not before.

(Addition not replacement: One Person with two distinct natures,)

Next we look at the effects on the Disciples now they have come back:

It's overwhelming. The Jewish developed law was very strict: no religious teacher must ever hold a conversation with a woman alone. But as they come back there is their Rabbi, talking, alone not only to a woman, but a Samaritan woman. Inside they were tempted to say to her: (verse 27) "What do you want?" And inside they were tempted to say to our Lord (still verse 27) "Why, on earth, are You talking to her" But remember from Proverbs: If a fool were to keep his mouth shut, he will appear to be wise.<sup>7</sup> The Disciples then were given the great gift of silence.

The woman goes off to the nearby town. Then the Disciples do approach Jesus (verse 31:) They know that He is thirsty, tired and hungry, so they beg Him to have something to eat. He'd been travelling all day, now it's time to eat. But His astonishing reply is in verse 32: "I have a supply of nourishment of which you know nothing." So between themselves they wonder: "Has someone come from the town and given Him something to eat?" They, like us, are a bit of an embarrassment, He talks about spiritual food; they can't get physical food out of their minds. Then He explains: Verse 34. *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."* "I've been doing the will of God. I've been leading one woman to faith, and that is so satisfying, I've lost all desire for food. In leading one person to faith I've received sustenance from somewhere else. Compared with the spiritual value of doing God's will eating is as nothing."

Our Lord here reveals Himself to be more humble than His followers. There are those who don't mind doing the will of God as long as the will of God is something dramatic. But the will of God here, for the Saviour, was that He should sit alone talking to the one individual in the cool of the evening. And in doing the will of God He is found to be infinity satisfied. So satisfied that His otherwise real physical needs were of no importance to Him.

Then He spoke to them – us – on the subject of Gospel work:  
Verse 35 – 38 are extremely important to our Gospel work.

Gospel work is like a harvest. It consists in sowing and reaping. But the harvest is an eternal harvest. The issues are eternal issues. To understand the principle Jesus is revealing, imagine the following:

Some modern body, setting up an evangelism commission. Governments are very keen on a subject being inquired into by a Royal Commission, for example. But in this case suppose, a group of prominent clergy gather to examine The Viability of Mission in Samaria.

If they did however there is no doubt that they would have come to the conclusion that, Samaria may need the Gospel, but it is not ready for it yet!

But Jesus says: "The trouble is not that the fields are not ready but that the workers

---

<sup>7</sup> Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. Proverbs. 17:28 (ESV)

are few.”

“Even this most difficult evangelism field is 'white with the harvest'! So put in the sickle and reap. And you will be amazed to discover that there can be a harvest even where there wasn't any sowing.” By you at least.

That was the Outcome for the Disciples. And it's a tremendous lesson for us to learn. The trouble isn't that the fields aren't ready, but that the workers are few. That's been the trouble since John 4 right to August 2017. There would be more reaping if there were more reapers. Jesus said so!

Verse 35: And might they have thought that the harvest was yet some four months away, in the normal course of the seasons, but what did they see in the distance, coming from the town a stream of people in the white clothing, looking just like the fields of corn – white for harvest. Coming to Jesus on the strength of one woman's witness.

What about the outcome for the woman?

She had run into the town, forgetting her water pot. (verse 28) She had forgot all about physical water. She entered the town full of the conviction that she had met the Christ. The thing that persuaded her that she had met Christ, that He had told her all that she had ever done.

That's how most come to faith. The reason you believe the Scriptures is not because someone came to you with a great book, which of itself proved to you that the Scriptures are true. But because when you searched the Scriptures you found that they were searching you and your heart was exposed supernaturally and you suddenly realised that you were exposed to the very Word of God. That's the way it happened here in Samaria.

<sup>39</sup> *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."*

Now we can picture around this Jew, who is God incarnate, is this crowd of Samaritans. They say “ Please stay with us.” And the little town had a privilege of privileges! The Lord of Glory – God in our manhood – stayed two whole days with those villagers. For two days they had the Lord Jesus Christ to themselves. No Pharisees to look down there noses and 'breathe down His neck', because: 'Jews have no dealings with Samaritans'. No opponents with their carping criticism. But people hanging on every word of the Saviour. More believing His claims and then saying to the woman: *“It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”* (verse 42)

They knew their Bible.<sup>8</sup> They had come not just to 'know about' the Messiah but to

---

<sup>8</sup> Alternative ending: They knew that He was the Christ. They knew that in the Old testament the Messiah was promised, and they knew that this visitor that have become known by them in the two days was that Messiah. But they added a further title: the **Saviour of the World**. He was called this because He spoke to them about their sin – just like He spoke to the Samaritan woman – then showing that He brought free deliverance and pardon and forgiveness. But why did they call Him 'the Saviour of the World'? Not because He saved everybody. (If He saved everybody, there would be no hell; no need for a Gospel invitation and

meet and 'know' Him. And not only would they call Him Christ but as the final words of verse 42 reveal, echoing that fact that they were well used to having been treated as outsiders, they say: "... this is indeed the Saviour of the World." To which can we any less! Amen and amen.

[2142]

**Pray this is so for all the saints gathered here today.**

---

no need to warn you to repent and believe.) They called Him Saviour of the World, because He made it plain that not only Jews are to be saved. There is no exclusivism about the Gospel. There is no nation or sect or club who are excluded from the Gospel invitation. There is nobody who can say: that the Saviour has come into the world for others but not interested in my sort. He demonstrated that in Samaria where He invited those who were spat upon and despised and brought them into the experience of Salvation. It's plain from John 4 that there is a person who saves all who come to God by Him. That is what the Gospel message is.