

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 14 Fields are Ripe unto Harvest

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: **'behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest'**

These are brief studies, not
“teachings” or “doctrines”.

Volume 1, Study 14

The woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well

‘Jesus answered and said...If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, ...he would have given thee living water.’

John 4:4-42 will be the text from which we will work. Our focus will be two fold: 1) who were the Samaritans and 2) what was Jesus doing as he passed through Samaria?

John 4:4-9) And he [Jesus] must needs go through Samaria. 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. 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. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

The region called Samaria in Jesus’ time was west of the Jordan River between Judaea to its south and Galilee to its north. Judaea and Galilee were considered by Jews as *approved Jewish land* while Samaria (though a part of the land of Israel) was *not approved* as *purely Jewish*. Long ago the first displacement of Israelites was by Assyria, which occurred several times in groups being taken from the land into exile. This happened to the northern tribes of Israel which called themselves Israelites (as compared to the southern tribes which called them selves Judahites...which became shortened to ‘Jews’). I will not spend any further time on this. If you have not read studies 2 and 4 then to properly comprehend this study go back and read them and then come back here.

In taking Israelites off of their soil, the Assyrians replaced them with other peoples whom they had conquered and the region called Samaria was particularly populated with people foreign to God’s people Israel. This was true in the glory days of the northern kingdom because the city and district of Samaria was the center of the king’s power.

However, over the centuries from the fall of the Assyrian Empire, many peoples had returned to their native lands, some returning in groups, but most of them returning individually or in families. Therefore, many descendents of the Israelites displaced both by Assyria and Babylon had long since returned to the Promised Land. Over time they had rebuilt and improved their lot.

Yet, in Jesus’ day, Jews (in their self-righteousness) rejected all Samaritans as low class, even mixed-blood (i.e. defiled) Israelites, though many folks living in Samaria were returned Israelites and not intermarried or of mixed blood. This rejection by their brothers resulted in the Samaritans being rejected from the temple in Jerusalem and rejected from joining with anything of the Mosaic Law, which resulted in their continued low and even desperate condition.

The southern kingdom had itself been exiled off of their soil to Babylon, but the Babylonians had not brought in other peoples into the land of the southern kingdom as the Assyrians had done to Israel’s northern kingdom. All of this of course was according to God’s Plan of the Ages as pertaining to His people Israel.

Many of the exiled Judahites stayed in Babylon (as had many of the earlier exiled Israelites stayed in the ex-Assyrian Empire), yet many had returned to the land of the southern kingdom. Over the course of time, then, with Judaea continuing as a minor kingdom under the empires of Greece and then Rome, circumstances for God's people Israel in the Promised Land continued only some better such that the people had to disperse wherever they could make a living.

An example of this were Jesus' parents (both of differing lineages of King David who was of the city of Bethlehem) living in the district of Nazareth in Galilee. In Jesus' day, things were difficult all over Palestine, but the 'Jews' in their self-righteousness continued their rejection of the Israelites who happened to live in Samaria.

Why, then, was it specifically recorded that Jesus '**must needs go through Samaria**'? Jesus grew up in Galilee and he and his family, along with many other families, took short pilgrimages several times a year to Jerusalem in obedience to the Mosaic Law. For each trip they either traveled around Samaria or by a major caravan route passed through Samaria. Therefore, being faithful to the law as they had been taught (which teaching in the synagogues had become greatly influenced by the Jewish self-righteousness, including rejection of Samaritans), Jesus' family along with many others for financial reasons traveled the major caravan route. It had developed with what we would call "motels and diners" for the traffic on this road. They did not stray from that highway.

Our passage of study occurred very early in Jesus' ministry, and Jesus decided that he '**must needs go through Samaria**'. In verse 9 we see the woman from the town of Sychar approaching the well of Jacob that was located on a '**parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph**'. In Genesis 48:5,6 we see Jacob (led of God) bringing in Joseph's two sons into the direct lineage of Jacob himself, even as if they were his own sons. Indeed, in God's future for Israel these two sons stood among the tribal patriarchs in Joseph's stead. Likely Jacob had no idea why God had led him to do this. In the rest of the chapter, then, we see Jacob (led of God) bless the younger son over the elder son. The elder son is Manasseh.

This made for thirteen patriarchs. However, in God's Plan of the Ages by means of His people Israel, the tribe of Levi would be set aside for the special purpose of the Mosaic Law...which resulted in the Mosaic Law with priests and levites and twelve tribes.

The reference in our text of a '**parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph**' is regarding verse 22. This large region, this well in its midst, had a rich environment for shepherding. For most of the years of the nation the Israelites were in that business. Many other wells existed, but this region was well known for this particular well. In Jesus' time, shepherding was still a major business for most of the common people.

Then in Genesis 49, God through Jacob before he died passed the Abrahamic Blessing on to his sons; and in verses 22-26 we see the blessing upon Joseph, which would become true for Joseph's sons and their lineages as described above. Verse 22 mentions the well (i.e. where Jesus sat talking to the woman). Many years earlier, the Abrahamic Blessing had been bestowed by God upon Abraham and then it had been passed on to Isaac, then on to Jacob, and here Jacob has passed it on to his sons.

If you should read that account you might say, "I do not see Joseph receiving a specific piece of property in Canaan." Well, things from God were given and/or passed on by patriarchs without specific foreknowledge; indeed, they knew that God knew what He would be doing, and the patriarchs tried to simply walk their lives in obedient faith.

When Israel crossed over the Jordan River into Canaan for war, the people knew that they would be victorious; they knew that after the battles they would be granted inheritances of land by lot, and they knew that by the lot God would accomplish everything He had promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's patriarchal sons.

There was never any question of it in the hearts and minds of any Israelite that walked

and/or fought by faith before Yahweh. It turned out that the tribes of Joseph's two sons received inherited portions of land in the middle of the Promised Land, with the tribe of Manasseh on both sides of the Jordan River. In the nation of Israel, before the tribes split into two kingdoms, the tribe of Ephraim became a leading tribe, very strong and particularly blessed. However, after the split, the city of Samaria became the capital of the northern kingdom and the kings went after foreign Gods.

In the time of Jesus: The ancient tribal land of Manasseh west of the river was known as 'Samaria', the town of Sychar was within walking distance to a significant junction of the major caravan route running from Galilee to Jerusalem, and the road was right next to Jacob's well. Therefore, the town was some distance from the well. In other words, under Jewish influence the road ran next to the well but avoided the town of Sychar such that the people of Sychar were forced to walk some distance to get their water.

In going to Galilee from Judaea, most non-Jewish travelers would go through Samaria, and only the strictest self-righteous Jew would take a lengthy road around Samaria. So why did the Apostle John emphasize Jesus' statement that he '**must needs go through Samaria**'? It was a significant statement to his disciples, which led to a significant episode by the well of Jacob. Indeed, Jesus had significantly sent the disciples away from the well for provisions. Where did they go for provisions? The only stores in that local were Samaritan stores. Thus, Jesus was immersing the disciples into Samaritan life even as he would be ministering to the Samaritan woman. The Messiah and his disciples would stay in Samaritan homes for that night and for two more days to minister to them the good news of 'the kingdom of God'. No doubt, there was a large baptismal service that ensued, for many citizens of Israel were believing in Jesus and the disciples were baptizing them. (For the people of Sychar, what water was used? At the time, John the Baptist was east of the Jordan River baptizing there.)



Let us now consider some of the interchange between Jesus and the woman -

4:10) Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest 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.

What is the '**gift of God**' that Jesus refers to? In the course of all that God was doing through the ages to this point in time, the '**gift**' was Jesus the Messiah; but in the particular sense of Jesus' words to the woman, who knew about such religious things, the '**gift**' was the 'Promise given to Abraham'. Jesus was speaking historically to this woman's knowledge of the 'promise'.

4:11) The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

Focus upon these two verses. Why didn't the well have its own method of supplying water to thirsty travelers? If such a method was supplied then someone would always steal it (even as today). Very long ago, then, the local citizens stopped such courtesy to the many strangers that despised them.

What is '**living water**' in the woman's understanding? According to her, such water was deep in the well. A well with standing water is worthless because it is stagnant. The reason Jacob's well was still functional (a great blessing to the local people) was that it had living or moving or flowing underground water. In an arid land such a well to non-believers would be worth more than the coming of the Messiah. As much as we are thankful to God's blessings to us, even more were the Samaritans thankful to Yahweh... God of the Israelites...of whom was this woman.

So, what could be better than this blessed well still giving fresh water from the God of Blessing? Do you see Jesus' introduction to introducing himself? He has gotten this

woman's mind into the tract of proper thinking for what would be coming next. Jesus had invited the woman to ask a question of him, but she does not yet suspect...what?

4:12) Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

The Samaritans were rejected from the Mosaic Law and its temple, priesthood, and sacrifices. Therefore, they went farther back into the Promises to Abraham; that is, to the founding father of the twelve tribes of Israel, for Jacob was 'Israel'. So the woman questioned Jesus (whom she suspected of offering her some magical way of getting water from Jacob's well), '**Art thou greater than our father Jacob**'? Do you see that the conversation was immediately turning to spiritual or religious things, which is exactly what Jesus intended?

4:13-14) Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

A person needs water. Thus, being thirsty is a natural thing. It seemed to the woman that the water Jesus offered would take care of such needs as being thirsty; that is, the citizens of Sychar had to walk inconveniently every day quite a distance to carry water home for their needs. Suddenly the woman is interested, for she senses in this man that just perhaps he might be able to do this thing. Her first need, as she sees it, is convenient water for a change; and she has not digested Jesus' words '**a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**'

4:15-21) The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye [a Jewish prophet] say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

The hour is not yet, but God the Father will be worshipped anywhere in Spirit and Truth. We see here the Jews worshipping in Jerusalem and the Israelite Samaritans worshipping as best they can, being denied access to the Mosaic Law. Until now, the Good News of the Kingdom of God had not been preached by Jews or anyone in Samaria, but enough of it has been correctly preached and taught continually in Samaria for this woman to know and understand many things; and when she finally sees that she is standing before her Messiah...well! What do you, dear reader, suppose is going on inside this woman who is so despised by her own people in Sychar that she must go to fetch water in the heat of every day?

4:22) Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

Please remember that '**salvation**' is of God's Plan of the Ages and to this point in time '**salvation**' had everything to do with (as far as God's People Israel were concerned) the Mosaic Law, the temple in Jerusalem, the priesthood, the sacrifices, etc. Ah, but Jesus had just told the woman (and us) something wonderful: When God's people are denied (for whatever reason) access to what God has provided for salvation, there is still salvation in God by other means; and He works it out. This woman in her miserable state yet believed in God's *Promise to Abraham*, and all like her were *waiting for their Messiah*.

'...**salvation is of the Jews**' means that for Israelites it is of the Mosaic Law, to which the Jews were desperately (and self-righteously) clinging as they lived under the heavy yoke of the Roman Empire. Indeed, as Jesus had just informed this woman, in some sixty

or so years the Romans would destroy Jerusalem and ravage the land and the great majority of Israelites of any tribe would be scattered far and wide into the nations.

The Jews knew all about this ‘**salvation**’ to Israelites. The Samaritans did not *experientially* know it. Yet, all along as Israelites they were under God’s protective hand and He maintained preachers and teachers in Samaria, such that the people were *waiting for their Messiah*. And in many parts of the world at that time there were Jews and Gentiles in Jewish synagogues maintaining as best they could the teachings of the Mosaic Law.

4:23-30) But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

4:31-34) In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

‘My meat is [1] to do the will of him that sent me, and [2] to finish his work.’ The word ‘**finish**’ here is better translated ‘**accomplish**’. Jesus is speaking of two jointed but separate things. He has always maintained that he came for the purpose of the initial coming of the Messiah, which included dying on the cross and arising on the third day.

However, this particular episode has to do with ‘**to accomplish his** [i.e. God the Father’s] **work**’, which in this passage was to bring (for the first time, finally) the Good News of the Kingdom of God to God’s people Israel...which Jesus continually preached and presently would be doing so to the people of Sychar.

Of course this is entirely wrapped up in the Messiah’s coming, but this episode is distinctly about *the beginning of inclusion of the northern tribes of Israel*, which for the most part had been excluded by the Jews for a very long time.

4:35) Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

To my knowledge, the evangelical part of the modern Church has always taken this passage to mean “the harvest is to the lost people of the world”, so let me explain what I think Jesus was saying. The harvest that he saw were not “lost people” in the sense of how the modern evangelical church thinks of it. They were Israelites returned from the nations and surviving as best they could with God’s compassionate help in impoverished Samaria...which lowly region was in the very center of the Promised Land...which Promised Land was considered by the Jews as entirely their own...and thereby the Jews were rejecting their lowly brethren who also were the People of Promise.

The Messiah himself took pause to initiate *the inclusion of the Samaritans*. Not many years later in the Book of Acts we see Philip not only preaching and teaching there of the Crucified and Risen Christ Jesus, but he was led by God to live and raise his family in Caesarea on the seacoast of Samaria.

4:36-38) And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

All of the workers laboring for a crop, at the time of harvest, shall share in food on the

table for their families; that is, each receives an equal share for his labor in a single enterprise. In regards to these Samaritans, who were the sowers and laborers not present in this time of harvest as Jesus was initiating the harvest in Samaria? They were the few *mentioned in scripture* and all of the *great many not mentioned in scripture* that labored in God's Plan of the Ages regarding God's people Israel. (Their share of the reward awaits them in heaven.)

Not until the Time of the End will all Israelites be brought in from the nations to become united in an Inclusive Israel wherein all the tribes will live on inherited portions in their Promised Land. Nonetheless, regarding the coming of their Messiah, Jesus had just begun the process of reaching out to all of the tribes in regards to 'the kingdom of God'.

How many evangelical and liturgical environs throughout the world have in them two types of children: *children of the church* and *children of God*? God has the answer. It is His business. And only He knows.

And, how many *children of God* are there who 'believe' in the true Biblical sense of believing, but do not have the *experience* with God of which the apostles in their epistles obviously proclaim? The people of Sychar received such an experience for two and a half days, their lives being forever changed. How many Samaritans, even before Jesus rose from the grave, were being joined into the Inclusion of God's people Israel as they *believed upon their Messiah*?

Compared to the percentage of believers among the Jews, what percentage of Samaritans were becoming 'believers' in the years following? Consider the passage 'she that had been barren has become the blessed mother of many more of the sons of Israel'; and think in terms of Samaria as many years 'barren'. Less than two generations after the Resurrection, the Romans will destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and the last of God's gathered people will be dispersed into the nations. What did God have planned for the Samaritan Christians in the dispersion and afterwards as they lived among the nations? God has not given us these kinds of answers, dear reader, but go ahead and think about it. Is God not more Gracious than we can know?

Some years later when Philip began to teach and preach in Samaria, how often did he run into believers excluded from the Mosaic Law yet they were longingly awaiting other messengers from their compassionate God to teach them, to lead them, to build them up?

And how about the many...long-time in their midst...that had already been teaching them the scriptures and of their coming Messiah, had been teaching this Samaritan woman? These also 'received rewards' for laboring. How much will they be included in the harvest in Samaria. How long had they been praying and waiting of such a harvest? Who were they? We shall not know until joining them.

4:39) And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

These truly '**believed on him**'. What can be better than experiencing the newly received Spirit of God and entering (not just the family of Israel) the family of God?

4:40) So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not [just] because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

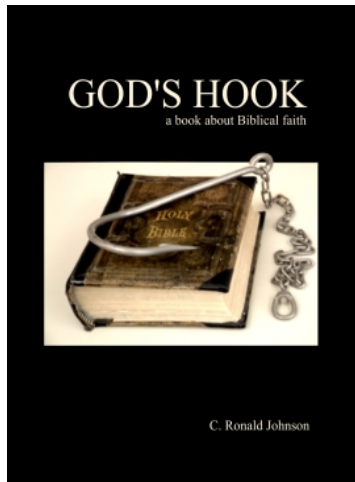
Is there something better than joining the family of God? The entire Bible says "Yes" and especially the New Testament says "Yes". It is not so much 'drawing nigh unto God' as it is 'God drawing nigh unto you'. But whichever way you might view it, it is a function of Biblical faith (Hebrews 6:11).

Now you may think that I have drawn this out; that I have been somewhat carried away. Maybe, but I will go through it a time or two to clean it up, and perhaps it will be shortened, a little. Yet, dear reader, this passage is so full of God's Ages-Old-Promise-in-

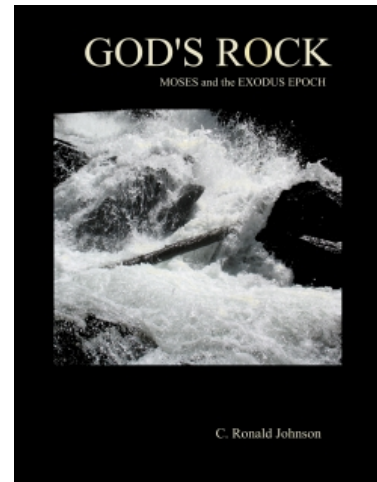
Abraham toward His people Israel, and for us, and for the world that I have a hard time not sharing it. In every way that the Bible offers and/or explains 'Promise', the Promise in this passage represents and infers all of it. And I pray, dear reader, that you appreciate the little bit of history included here.

In the ensuing years of our time on Planet Earth, livelihood may become more difficult for many of us in America. If so, then we join the many around the world who have been experiencing long times of it. God's people often become more interested in the topic of Biblical faith in such times. This is good, for in exploring heaven's faith within one's innerman the child of God will always find the 'walk of faith' to be far better than the things and the way of life he may have lost. Lord, may it be so!

These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



a book
about
Biblical
Faith



the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus