

Inquirer's Studies
Lesson 2
John 4: Jesus Encounters a Samaritan Woman

Historical Background

Comment

After the captivity of the northern tribes of Israel (721-722 B.C.E.), the name *Samaritan* was applied to a particular people whose origin was muddled. The Samaritans were Assyrians and Hebrews who intermarried, who mixed the polytheistic religion of Assyria with the worship of Yahweh, the LORD of the Hebrews. The Samaritans didn't mix with the southern Hebrew tribes of Judea until after the southern tribes returned from captivity (circa 516 B.C.E.) when the Samaritans wanted to help them rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

The Judeans refused to allow them to rebuild and the two groups became openly hostile. In 409 B.C.E. the Samaritans built a temple in Shechem on Mount Gerizim and continued their version of worship. This temple was later destroyed by Maccabean king John Hyrcanus (130 B.C.E.). (Read 2 Kings 17 and 2 Chronicles 30 to learn about the beginnings of the Samaritans and Isaiah chapters 7 through 10 as well as Amos 3 and 4 to understand Jewish views of Samaritans.)

This was the context of the conflict that Jesus stepped into, as recorded in the Gospel of John 4:1-41.

Jesus' Conversation with the "Bad Samaritan"

Reading

The student should read the Gospel of John 4:1-41 and answer the following questions:

1. Considering the information in the comment above, why did the Jewish people refuse to deal with Samaritans?
2. What does Jesus offer the woman?
3. What did Jesus know about this woman?
4. What kind of worship does God seek?
5. Did the Samaritan woman believe in a coming messiah?
6. Who did Jesus claim to be?

Opinion Question:

Understanding that most women collected water in the cool morning or evening, what might have caused this woman to be there at noontime (the sixth hour)?

Comment

We again see a misunderstanding of the difference between the spiritual and the natural. The woman at the well thinks Jesus is talking about water, when he really is talking about a relationship with God and himself. She wants to avoid conflict and social ostracism. *Who is this stranger who doesn't have a bucket or an awareness of social propriety?* Jesus breaks down every barrier to speak to her heart. Will she listen?

7. What was the woman's reaction to the interruption by Jesus' disciples?
8. When the disciples offered Jesus food, what did he claim to have?
9. In town, what did the woman report that Jesus told her?
10. What was the immediate reaction of the men?
11. What was the ultimate reaction of the men upon hearing Jesus themselves?

Opinion Questions:

What did the Samaritan woman really want?

Do you thirst for spiritual things?

Key Verse: John 4:24

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Is there any good reason why you should not accept Y'shua now?