

JOH 4:1-7 "The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. 4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

This portion of Scripture comes on the heels of the situation we found in chapter three where Jesus was gaining popularity among the people as more and more Jews were going out to Jesus and His disciples to be baptized, according to Jewish ceremonial rites as it related to their repentance.

By the way, this repentance is the same message that was always given to Israel in their rebellious state. Now that the Messiah has come this is another call for repentance to the Jews of that day before the Lord made the determination that the nation of Israel would be desolate and He would take the message of hope to the rest of the world.

Matthew 23:37-39 ³⁷ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! ³⁹ "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

And the nation of Israel, represented by the leaders of that nation, will not be exempt from the wrath of God for their rebellion.

Matthew 3:7-12 ⁷ But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; ⁹ and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ "The axe is already laid at the

root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The children of Abraham are not exclusively an ethnic nation but all people associated with the faith of Abraham, both Jew and Gentile.

Galatians 3:6-9 ⁶ Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. ⁷

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

And the message of John the Baptist in our text is that the baptism he preaches is one that will lead to a turning from the law for salvation to a turning to the Lamb of God, depicted in the law, who can truly save.

In fact, the beginning of chapter four is directly related to that portion we saw in chapter three which addressed a concern among some of John's disciples regarding this baptism.

JOH 3:25-26 "An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. ²⁶ They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan - the one you testified about -well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

It would appear that the Pharisees caught wind of this seeming division among the ranks of John's camp and may have seen a way to drive a wedge further into this new movement so as to cause it to crumble.

JOH 4:1 "The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John,..."

This short phrase would make no sense unless the Pharisees saw a way of gaining an advantage with this information. They

undoubtedly understood the dynamics of divide and conquer, especially as it relates to their own standing among the people.

Keep in mind that the Pharisees were zealots for Judaism. But along with that they were zealots for their own status in Israel. And to have a common carpenter come on to the scene and have myriad's of people flock to Him was probably more than they could handle.

And so, they see the door opened for an opportunity to pit John against Jesus so as to crush this movement. And this is not unlike how the enemy, Satan, has always worked. From the very beginning Satan has used this tactic, going back as far as the Garden of Eden. You might remember how Satan came and deceived Eve, who in turn encouraged her husband to eat of the forbidden fruit.

But the real divisive aspect of this incident didn't happen between Adam and Eve but between Eve and God. Satan confronted Eve with her own pride and called into question God's goodness.

GEN 3:1-6 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,< 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

Satan pitted God against man and man chose not to trust the very God who gave them life and paradise, thinking that they could create a better paradise through their rebellion. Divide and conquer was Satan's plan, and it worked. And you and I are the recipients of that divisive act.

But the way Satan divides today has more to do with pitting Christian against Christian since he can't stand it when believers are united and able to go forth against his kingdom of darkness with the gospel of Jesus Christ; the gospel of light.

And this is why we must always be discerning as it relates to the truth of God's word and will. It's when we are uninformed regarding God's word that allows Satan to create doubts and confusion which leads to Christians making decisions based more on their emotions and feelings rather than on the authoritative word of God.

This is exactly how Satan works. He takes our weaknesses and capitalizes on them, just as he did with Jesus when our Lord fasted for those forty days in the wilderness and became quite hungry.

MAT 4:3-4 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus was not going to be tempted by His own immediate desire, but rather would act according to the will of God which is the written word of God. And this is how we need to conduct our lives as well. But back to our text.

JOH 4:1-2 "The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples."

We touched on this a couple of weeks ago in response to the concern of some of John's disciples that Jesus was baptizing more people than John. In that passage it looks as though Jesus Himself was doing the baptizing, but our text clears this issue up as it qualifies our Lord's personal involvement in baptizing.

Although He was not personally baptizing He was certainly authorizing the ministry of John as He placed His full approval on this practice, and in that way He was seen as One baptizing as our Lord's disciples were doing the actual water baptizing.

And again, the reason for this is that since the ministry of Jesus Christ was one of becoming a sacrifice for us, and not simply announcing His own coming, this ministry of baptism of repentance was reserved for John the Baptist who was the voice in the wilderness declaring the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world.

But it's because of this possible division among the Jews, as it related to John and Jesus, that our Lord chooses to take action to avoid not just division but also confrontation with the Pharisees.

This was not the time for a showdown with the powers of Israel and our Lord.

JOH 4:3 "When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee."

Remember that it was Galilee where Jesus first started His public ministry as He turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, which is in the region of Galilee. And it is apparent that His work is over in Judea for the time being as He now goes back to Galilee.

But as we come back to our text we come to the sum and substance of our passage because it is here where we see the reason for all of these events leading to our Lord's return back to Galilee. There is no coincidence here for Jesus deciding to leave Judea.

JOH 4:4 "Now he had to go through Samaria."

This short little verse sets up the eternal plan of God for an individual who was chosen before the foundations of the world. And it is this individual whom the Holy Spirit wants all mankind to see as the recipient of God's grace.

Now, when it says that Jesus had to go through Samaria it is stating something which is vital or necessary. And yet, it was not necessary to go through Samaria to get to Galilee. In fact, as Arthur W. Pink points out in his commentary it was possible to go from Judea into Galilee by crossing the Jordan [River], and passing through Perea; but this was a very [roundabout] route, though some of the stricter Jews seemed to have been in the habit of taking it, to avoid [contact] with the Samaritans.

When I travel to Fort Lauderdale to visit my mom and dad I take I-75 down to Alligator Alley and cross over to the east coast via that route. It's more convenient for me and it's one I prefer. But that is different from saying that I have to take that route because there are no other ways to get to the east coast.

And so, Jesus did not have to go through Samaria to travel from one geographical point to another. But, Jesus did have to go through Samaria to fulfill the will of His Father. And that is what is being pointed out here. The divine plan and will of God cannot be thwarted. And so, to fulfill this plan, Jesus did have to go through Samaria.

JOH 4:5-6 "So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's

well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour."

What the apostle John is doing for his readers here is setting the stage for this encounter with the person Jesus has been eternally foreordained to meet with. The city of Sychar was an area every Jew would have been familiar with since it was identified with Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, thus the name of the nation. But it's also identified with a savior of Israel, Joseph.

Joseph, you'll remember, was sold by his brothers into slavery. He ends up in Egypt, and to make a long story short he ascends, after much tribulation, to second in command over all Egypt and creates a system of growing and storing grain which would last through one of the worst droughts Egypt and the surrounding areas ever suffered.

Joseph's father, Jacob, together with the rest of his family, eventually end up in Egypt as they are saved from the drought by Joseph and eventually grow into the nation of Israel which, at the end of some 400 years, finds deliverance from the heavy hand of different Pharaoh's who had placed Israel in slavery.

But, long before Jacob ended up in Egypt with his family he had bought a plot of land from the inhabitants of this area John now identifies as Sychar. In the days of Jacob the area was known as Shechem, after the man who was chief of the people who lived there.

GEN 33:18-20 "After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. 19 For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. 20 There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel."

It is this piece of land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph as Jacob approached the end of his life. And it is this area that was given to the sons of Joseph as an inheritance.

JOS 24:32 "And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants."

And so, what we see is that it was the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh who would inherit this area. And it was the descendants of these two who were the original Jewish inhabitants of Samaria.

By the way, it is interesting that Joseph had given instructions to his brothers to take his bones and re-bury them in the land of promise. This suggests that Jacob understood the promise of God to bring Israel into the Promised Land and that by faith he accepted this promise.

And sure enough, when Israel came out of Egypt and when they finally entered the Promised Land, Joseph's bones were buried there in that tract of land his father Jacob had given him.

But what was also there in that tract of land, which Jacob had bought many years before, was a well which he either dug himself or simply was already there. It was and is identified as Jacob's well.

In fact, both the tomb of Joseph and Jacob's well are still there to this day. F.F. Bruce makes the comment that "Joseph's tomb is still pointed out in the neighborhood; it is covered with a dome like many other (monuments of holy men) in the Islamic world."

And 325 yards S.E. of Joseph's tomb is Jacob's well. And this is the place where Jesus is to meet the Samaritan woman, the encounter which was planned by God from before the foundations of the world.

And what was so interesting about this encounter is that at this time in Jewish history the people who resided in Samaria were no longer the direct descendants of Joseph, but a new group of people with a different genealogy, a different culture and different gods.

Whenever the name Samaritan comes up in the New Testament it is always associated by the Jews as a by-word for dogs; people who were seen as beneath the Jews. I don't know if you know the history of these people and why the Jews had such animosity for them, but I thought it would be instructive for us to get a glimpse into who these Samaritan people were so as to better appreciate this encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

It was in this particular area where the nation of Israel found itself being divided in 931 B.C. It became known as the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

But what precipitated this division was nothing short of greed. And what is even more disturbing is that it took place only three kings into the history of Israel; the first king being Saul, the second being David, and the third was Solomon, David's son.

But it was the son of Solomon, Rehoboam, who was the catalyst for this division. Solomon had enforced upon the people of Israel many oppressive policies, including excessive taxes and forced labor.

But it was his son who took these policies to the next level. The tribes in the north wanted the taxes and forced labor to be eased so as not to be a burden but Rehoboam declined. And so, like our southern states just before the Civil War, who seceded from the union, the northern kingdom of Israel seceded from the south, and chose for their king, Jeroboam.

And so, now you've got a divided kingdom where the southern portion has as its capital, Jerusalem with the temple and the Ark of the Covenant. Since the northern kingdom didn't want to make that pilgrimage to enemy territory, if you will, to worship in Jerusalem, they later made up their own shrines and temples.

In fact, it was in this very area in our text where King Jeroboam of the North made his political capital, which was Shechem. It was Jeroboam who was told by the prophet Abijah that the reason for this division of Israel was actually because of the idolatry of Solomon.

1KI 11:31-33 "Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. 32 But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. 33 ***I will do this because they have forsaken me*** and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did."

And yet, Jeroboam did no better as he introduced idols in the northern kingdom.

1KI 12:26-29 "Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. 27 If these people go up

to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam." 28 After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." 29 One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan."

Things were a mess and they would only get worse. A couple of hundred years would go by before the long-suffering of God would come to an end and He would judge the nation of Israel starting with Samaria.

2KI 17:6-8 "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes. 7 All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods 8 and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced."

It was in the middle of the 8th century B.C. that the Lord sent the Assyrians to invade the northern kingdom of Israel, specifically Samaria. But it wasn't until some 10 years later that Israel finally fell to Assyria. And this is where the area of Samaria comes to be known as a pariah.

What happened was that when Israel was taken into captivity the Assyrians took most of the Jews back to Assyria for forced labor. But the Assyrians realized that someone needed to tend the land that was vacated. The land was an asset to the Assyrians for agriculture and this was seen as part of the spoils of war.

But with the Jews being taken to Assyria someone had to be brought in. And so, the Assyrians brought in settlers from Babylonia and Syria who brought with them their idols and gods.

Over time the few Jews who were allowed to stay in Samaria were assimilated in with the foreign settlers. And so, now you've got a mixture of peoples and cultures along with a mixture of Judaism and paganism.

But the Jews who were not mixed in with other portions of Israel came to hate these people in Samaria. They hated the idea that

foreigners would settle in the land that was promised to the Jews. They hated the idea that they brought their gods. They hated the idea that other Jews living in Samaria would intermarry with these pagans and create a hybrid religion of Judaism and paganism.

This animosity grew and yet some of those Jews who did intermarry still felt some sort of connection with their Jewish roots. Even their descendants felt this way to some extent.

In fact, years later, after the Babylonian captivity of Judah, there was a remnant of Jews who were allowed to go back to their land and the people of Samaria wanted to enter into an alliance with the Jews. We read about this in Ezra.

EZR 4:1-3 "When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, 2 they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, "Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here." 3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, "You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us."

The Samaritans always seemed to have an identity crisis. On the one hand they adopted much of the Jewish practices as taught them by Jewish priests sent back to Samaria at the command of the Assyrians.

And yet, they continued to practice much of the pagan religions that were brought to Samaria from foreign peoples introduced into the region of Samaria.

By the time Jesus comes on to the scene this deep hatred has kept the Jews and the Samaritans light years apart to the point to where the Jews would not even take the chance of being defiled by a Samaritan's presence, which is why it was somewhat unusual for Jesus and His disciples to go through Samaria to reach Galilee.

But what is even more unusual is for Jesus, a Jew, to invite a Samaritan; and not just any Samaritan, but a Samaritan woman, to give Him a drink of water, which was anathema among Jews of the time.

JOH 4:6-7 "... Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 When a Samaritan

woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

One of the things we notice about this passage is that Jesus was flat out tired. The sixth hour in Jewish time is 12 o'clock noon. The sun was high and hot and they had been traveling for some time.

And one of the things this points out is that despite the fact that our Lord Jesus was fully God, He was most certainly fully man. He was subject to many of the things human beings have to contend with. He got hungry and thirsty and He grew tired. He had to sleep and be nourished.

And He reaches this well and is exhausted. In fact, this is how the Greek word for tired in the NIV can be translated. He was hot and exhausted and needed some refreshment. And keep in mind what well He is sitting at. This is Jacob's well; the same Jacob Jesus wrestled with many years before.

Remember, it was Jacob who realized it was the Lord he had been wrestling with all night. It was at this spot where this wrestling took place that Jacob named in honor of the One he wrestled with.

GEN 32:30 "So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

What Jacob saw and experienced was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. He wrestled with the Son of God who we know today as the incarnate Son of God, or Jesus Christ.

The significance of Jesus at Jacob's well is that it was that wrestling encounter with Jacob where our Lord impressed upon Jacob to seek Him and follow Him alone; no longer to be a wanderer and a deceiver.

It was also in that encounter where God changed Jacob's name.

GEN 32:28 "Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

The name Israel means governed by God. And Jacob was now a man who was humbled by the Lord to follow God all the days of his life. Jacob had been given not just a new name, but a new life and this well symbolizes the new life all men can have in Christ who is the living water.

And this is what this Samaritan woman is about to realize. When we come back together next week we'll look at this encounter between a Jew and a Samaritan; sworn enemies. And yet, as we'll see Jesus is no ordinary Jew who holds a grudge, but a Savior who has come not to judge the world but to save it, including the Samaritans.

He is a God of grace who doesn't simply provide salvation but who actually seeks us out, as He did with this Samaritan woman, so that we can taste and see that the Lord is good.

And the well at which Jesus sits will be the backdrop for the well of salvation from which we can drink freely. May we join with the prophet Isaiah.

ISA 12:2-4 "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.