

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bible-student\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php)

the Father's mind and will; self-interest or other influence could never mar it.

(c) The prevailing *motive* of His saving work; for in 'receiving' all whom the Father had given Him was because the Father had willed it. None would be lost (Jn. 6:37-40; the whole context must be read to get the fulness of thought it contains).

(d) He *endured the cross* and the full measure of its suffering because it was the Father's will. Note very precisely that, at no point in all His sufferings did He deflect for an instant from the complete and willing obedience to the Father (Mk. 14:36; Matt. 26:42; etc.). Here the self-abnegation of Jesus reaches the deepest depths—and can we not also add—the *highest heights*? 'Wherefore God . . . gave Him *the NAME* which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . .' (Phil. 2:5-11; the whole passage should be read).

*(To be concluded in next issue)*

## AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

PROF. F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

### II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (John 1:19-12:50)

#### (b) MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE, JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA

(John 2: 1-4: 42)

### V. *Jesus and the Samaritans* (4:1-42)

*(Continued)*

Ch. 4, v. 13—*Jesus answered and said unto her, every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again*—The woman's last question had been incredulous; how could a chance passing Jew be greater than the patriarch Jacob? But Jesus takes up her question seriously. The water in Jacob's well was good water, undoubtedly, but it did not satisfy thirst indefinitely; those who drew water from that well and enjoyed its refreshing properties grew thirsty

again and had to come back for another draught. The frequent comparison of the Law to refreshing water in the rabbinical traditions suggests that Jesus is here offering something superior not only to the water in Jacob's well but to the legal religion of Jews and Samaritans alike.

v. 14—*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto Eternal Life*—As the Evangelist says of a later reference to water in the teaching of Jesus (John 7:37-39), he might equally well have said here: 'this spake he of the Spirit.' For the Spirit of God, imparted by Christ to His people, dwells within them as a perennial wellspring of refreshment and life. The soul's deepest thirst is for God Himself, who has made us so that we can never be satisfied without Him. 'Christ satisfies a man not by banishing his thirst, which would be to stunt his soul's growth, but by bestowing upon him by the gift of his Spirit an inward source of satisfaction which perennially and spontaneously supplies each recurrent need of refreshment' (G. H. C. Macgregor).

'I thirst for springs of heavenly life,  
And here all day they rise.'

The fountain of living waters may thus be found resident within a man's own life; with joy he may draw water from the wells of salvation (Isa. 12:3) and know that, as he partakes of that saving draught, he is tasting the true heavenly gift, the life of the age to come. The 'well' of which Jesus speaks here is, as we might expect, a spring or fountain (Gk. *pege*); the participle 'springing up' agrees with 'water' and not with 'well'.

v. 15—*The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw*—If the stranger can really do what He says, then certainly he is greater than Jacob. But the woman's thoughts are still moving on the mundane plane; she imagines that Jesus is talking about material water and bodily thirst. How grand it would be if she had a supply of this water and had no more need of making the tiresome journey to Jacob's well!

v. 16—*Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither*—Her misunderstanding cannot be corrected so long as the conversation is carried on in terms of thirst and water. Hence what appears to be an abrupt change of subject, which is calculated to lead up to a fresh unfolding of the spiritual truth already hinted at, without the use of the water metaphor this time.

v. 17—*The woman answered and said unto Him, I have no husband*—She was taken aback by the abrupt change of subject, the more so as the stranger touched upon a phase of her life about which she was naturally sensitive. Still, he was only a stranger and would not know her history, so she could put him off by a bare statement of the present position: 'I have no husband.'

*Jesus saith unto her, thou saidst well, I have no husband*—But the stranger obviously knew much more about her than she suspected; He knew that her statement was the truth so far as it went, but that it was by no means the whole truth, so He proceeded to let her understand just how much He did know about her.

v. 18—*For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly*—This may be taken as a literal summary of the woman's chequered married life. We are not told why she had had so many husbands; perhaps one after the other had 'found some unseemly thing in her' (Deut. 24:1) and divorced her; or she may have lost some of them by death. And now she was living in conjugal relationship with a man to whom she was not properly married (possibly by reason of some legal impediment). Hence her answer, 'I have no husband', was formally true but actually misleading. But have these words of Jesus a meaning beyond this literal one which lies on the surface?

A time-honoured interpretation sees in these words of Jesus a reference to the religious syncretism which characterised the mixed Samaritan population in the days following the planting of non-Israelite settlers in Samaria by the Assyrian kings. On this showing the woman herself represents the Samaritan community, despised by the Jews as being hybrid in race and religion. Her five husbands are the pagan deities whose worship was brought

into Samaria by the settlers mentioned in 2 Kings 17:24; the sixth, to whom she was not legally married, is the true God of Israel. It is remarkable that the prophetic imagery should be so reversed that idolatry could be represented by legal marriage and the worship of the true God by an illicit union; interpreters who can swallow this will not be unduly disturbed by the fact that the pagan deities worshipped by the settlers were seven in number, not five (2 Kings 17:30 f.), and that they were worshipped simultaneously, not one after the other. Other expositors, however, realizing that the details do not correspond, are content with a vaguer allegorization, suggesting that the Evangelist is concerned to condemn religious syncretism in general rather than the Samaritan variety in particular. The kindest treatment that such interpretations deserve is a Scottish verdict of 'Not proven.' And until something more like proof is forthcoming, we may rest content with the view that the woman's own experiences are being brought home to her, to convince her of her need of 'living water'.

v. 19—*The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a Prophet*—A stranger who could read her life-story to her like an open book was no ordinary man; such insight betokened the gift of prophecy. Now the Samaritans did not recognise the canon of post-Mosaic prophecy which forms the second division of the Jewish Bible. In their eyes Moses was the one and only prophet of the past; no other prophet could arise until the one of whom Moses himself spoke in Deut. 18:15 ff., and with this future prophet their messianic hopes were bound up. Therefore, if the woman meant the term 'prophet' seriously, she was well on the way to the conclusion which finds expression in her words of v. 29: a man who could tell her all things that ever she did must surely be the Messiah. But she has not come to this point yet.

v. 20—*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*—If she is talking to a 'prophet', the conversation must take a religious turn; and if a Jew and Samaritan converse about religion, one of the chief points at issue between the two communities must be aired. Where was the place which the Lord chose out of all the

tribes of Israel to cause His 'name' to dwell there? Jews and Samaritans had for long disagreed about the interpretation of Deut. 12:5; perhaps one who was so clearly a prophet would be able to settle the dispute. The Samaritans read in Deut. 12:5 'the place which the Lord your God *hath chosen*' and took the place to be the sacred hill of Gerizim; the Jews read 'the place which the Lord your God *shall choose*' and understood the reference to be to Jerusalem. Which was the true interpretation? 'This mountain' was Gerizim, which rose above them on the south-west—Gerizim, where the blessings were pronounced upon Israel after the settlement in the land in the days of Joshua 8:33; cf. Deut. 27:12, and on which in later days the Samaritan temple stood. The choice of this holy place by God as His people's central sanctuary was actually recorded in writing at the end of the Samaritan version of the Ten Commandments, both at Exodus 20:17 and Deut. 5:21; 'And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God bringeth thee into the land of the Canaanite whither thou goest in to possess it, that thou shalt set up for thyself great stones and shalt plaster them with plaster. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law. And it shall come to pass, when ye cross over Jordan, that ye shall raise up these stones, concerning which I command you this day, upon Mount Gerizim. And thou shalt build there an altar to the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt lift up no iron upon them: With whole stones shalt thou build the altar of the Lord thy God and thou shalt offer upon it burnt-offerings unto the Lord thy God. And thou shalt sacrifice peace-offerings and shalt eat there and rejoice before the Lord thy God. That mountain is beyond Jordan westward, in the land of the Canaanite that dwelleth in the Arabah over against Gilgal, beside the terebinth of Moreh, over against Shechem.' Could anything be clearer? And was there one place in all five books to Moses to which Jews could point in support of their claim that 'in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship'? What would this Jewish prophet say to that?

v. 21—*Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father*—The answer she received was quite different

from anything that she could have expected. The time when there was any point in the argument about the claims of Gerizim *versus* those of Zion had come to an end. A new order was now to be introduced which rendered such questions for ever meaningless and out-of-date. The important question is not *where* men worship God, but *how* they worship Him. This revelation, as Jesus unfolds it, appears so simple; yet some Christian men and women continue to this day to make the same mistake as the Samaritan woman and imagine that a man cannot worship God aright unless he worships *with them*. How differently the New Testament speaks! And how well William Cowper had caught its message!

Jesus where'er Thy people meet,  
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;  
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,  
And every place is hallowed ground.

v. 22—*Ye worship that which ye know not—We worship that which we know: for salvation is from the Jews*—Even with regard to the time now past, Jesus makes no pronouncement on the claims of the rival sanctuaries. But with regard to the general dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans, He declares the Jewish worship to be more intelligent than the Samaritan, because Israel's hope of salvation was centred in the promised Prince of the house of David, who must therefore belong to the tribe of Judah.

v. 23—*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and Truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers*—The prophets had spoken of a coming day, when not one central sanctuary alone, but the whole earth, would be the habitation of the name and glory of God. While the manifest consummation of this hope, associated as it is with the universal knowledge of God, still lies in the future, yet to faith the conditions of that age to come are present already. Hence 'the hour cometh' in v. 21 is followed in v. 23 by 'the hour cometh, and now is' (compare the reverse order in ch. 5:25, 28). Here is an instance of John's 'realized eschatology'; just as in ch. 3 the life of the age to come may be possessed and

enjoyed here and now, so in ch. 4 the worship of the age to come may be rendered to God here and now, by those true worshippers, so desired by the Father, who worship Him 'in spirit and truth'. Spiritual worship, genuine worship, cannot be tied to set places and seasons. And such worship is seen to be the more appropriate when we consider the nature of the One to whom it is offered.

v. 24—*God is a Spirit: And they that worship Him must worship in Spirit and Truth*—It is not merely that God is 'a Spirit' among other spirits; it is rather that God Himself is pure Spirit, and the worship in which He takes delight is accordingly the sacrifice of a humble, contrite, grateful and adoring spirit. But this affirmation of our Lord's was not entirely new; it but crowns the witness of psalmists and prophets in earlier ages, who saw that material things could be at best the vehicle of true worship but could never belong to its essence. Sincere heart-devotion, whenever and wherever found, is indispensable if men would present to God worship which He can accept.

v. 25—*The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when He is come, He will declare unto us all things*—The woman now leaves one important question of her religion, and takes up another—the messianic expectation. To the Samaritans the Messiah was first and foremost the 'prophet like unto Moses' of Deut. 18:15 ff. (See the notes on ch. 1:21.) Since he was to be a great prophet, he would naturally be in a position to 'declare all things' and solve all problems; in this regard he corresponds rather to Elijah in Jewish expectation; and it is further noteworthy that in Samaritan tradition the Messiah is called the *Ta'eb* or 'restorer', for this also reminds us of Jewish beliefs about Elijah (cf. Mal. 4:4-6; Mark 9:11-13). This remarkable stranger, whom she suspected to be a 'prophet', had given a ruling on the true worship of God; but the absolutely authoritative ruling would be given by the great Prophet of whom Moses spoke, when once he appeared. (Another, more incidental, declaration which the *Ta'eb* would make would relate to the place where the sacred vessels of Moses' tabernacle had been laid up in hiding.) Was she testing Jesus, to see what He would say?



v. 26—*Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee Am He.*— If she had begun to have an inkling about the identity of the One who spoke so wonderfully to her, it was now confirmed. He whom the Jews expected as the promised Prince of the house of David was at the same time the One whom the Samaritans (and others) expected as the Prophet like unto Moses. She had not known at first who it was that said to her 'Give me to drink'; but now she understood how He could make a claim that marked Him out as greater than their father Jacob: it was the Coming One Himself who sat there by the well and spoke to her.

(*To be Continued*)

## THE PENTATEUCH OF SUFFERING

H. C. HEWLETT

### 4. The Meekness of the Lamb (Isaiah 53:7-9)

Thus far we have traced the parallel between the first three books of Moses and the first three sections of the Song of the Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Corresponding to the book of Numbers which narrates the journeys of Israel through the wilderness is the fourth section, Isaiah 53:7-9, wherein we see the sufferings of Christ, not so much as the substitute who bears the infliction of Divine judgment for His people's sins, but as the lonely One who pursues His journey through a hostile scene. The book of Numbers in the Hebrew Bible bears the title 'bmidhbar' (i.e., in the wilderness), taken from the word in the opening verse, and this world was morally a wilderness to Christ as He walked through it. Can it be mere coincidence or is it a mark of the Divine authorship that when Philip met the eunuch in 'the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert', the eunuch was reading from this desert part of the Song? Clearly, to Philip the prophecy spoke of Jesus (See Acts 8:26-35).

The Servant's life was consummated in His death. The more the malice of men was shown toward Him, the more brightly