

# EXPLANATION OF 43<sup>RD</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## JOHN 4 (A.D. 70-95)

### INTRODUCTION

John 4:1-42 describes Jesus Christ revealing himself to the Samaritans.

John 4:43-54 describes Jesus Christ revealing himself to the Galileans.

There are some remarkable differences between John chapter 3 and John chapter 4. In John chapter 3, Jesus speaks to a man (Nicodemus), who was a Jew and who occupied a high moral position. But in John chapter 4, Jesus speaks to a woman, who was a Samaritan and who lived a low moral life.

### OUTLINE

#### (I) 4:1-6. Jesus journeys through Samaria.

- a. Jesus made disciples in Judea (4:1-2).
- b. Jesus leaves Judea and passes through Samaria (4:3-4).
- c. The well of Jacob (4:5-6).

#### (II) 4:7-26. How Jesus wins the soul of the Samaritan woman.

- a. Jesus first appealed to her *sympathy* (4:7-9).
- b. Jesus aroused her *curiosity* (4:10-12).
- c. Jesus stimulated her *longing* for satisfaction (4:13-15).
- d. Jesus awakened her *conscience* (4:16-19).
- e. Jesus revealed little by little *true knowledge* about who he was (4:20-26).

#### (III) 4:27-42. How Jesus wins the souls of many Samaritans.

- a. Jesus and women (4:27).
- b. The water jar of the woman (4:28).
- c. The Samaritan woman became a sower of the good news (4:29-30).
- d. The food of Jesus (4:31-34).
- e. The disciples become the reapers (4:35-38).
- f. The Samaritan harvest (4:39-42).

#### (IV) 4:43-54. Jesus in Galilee.

- a. Jesus is not honoured in Galilee (4:43-45).
- b. Jesus heals a dying son (4:46-54).

### EXPLANATION

#### (I) 4:1-6. Jesus journeys through Samaria.

##### a. Jesus made disciples in Judea (4:1-2).

**4:1.** Now when Jesus learned (knew by observation)(viaa) that the Pharisees had heard (viaa) that Jesus was making (vipa) and baptising (vipa) more disciples than John,

**4:2.** – although<sup>1</sup> Jesus himself was not baptising (viia), but his disciples -.

**The baptism of John, the baptism by the disciples and Christian baptism.** Jesus was greater than John the Baptist, because while John baptised people, Jesus let his disciples do the baptising. This baptising by the disciples was *a transition from the baptism of John to Christian baptism*. While the baptism of John was necessary for spiritual cleansing as a preparation to receive the Messiah (3:25)<sup>2</sup> Christian baptism with water is a sign and seal of the baptism with the Spirit, which really cleanses from all sin<sup>3</sup>. But because this could only effectively happen after the death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit, the baptism by the disciples was also a preparation for people to repent and turn to Jesus Christ (the Messiah).

##### b. Jesus leaves Judea and passes through Samaria (4:3-4).

**4:3.** he left (viaa) Judea and went off (viaa) again to Galilee.

**4:4.** It was necessary<sup>4</sup> (viia) that he went (vnnpn) through Samaria.

Jesus departed from Judea to avoid an early confrontation with the Jews. It was not yet his time to die. There were three ways from Judea to Galilee: a way via Transjordan, a way along the River Jordan and the shortest way straight through Samaria. It was a heavenly necessity for Jesus to pass through Samaria. This journey was a part of accomplishing God's will in his life (4:34)!

**The origin of the Samaritans.** After the death of king Solomon, the land of Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the southern kingdom of Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and half the tribe of Simeon, and the northern kingdom of Israel consisted of the other ten (nine-and-a-half). In 722 B.C. the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and carried most of its inhabitants into exile to Assyria.

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<sup>1</sup> G: kaitoige

<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:4

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:38; 22:16

<sup>4</sup> G: edei, imperfect tense of 'dei' and means that God's will or plan is involved

Then the Assyrians resettled the former kingdom of Israel with foreign exiles from other parts of the Assyrian kingdom<sup>5</sup>. These people mixed with the Jews that were left behind and they became the Samaritans. Samaria was the area between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south.

**The religion of the Samaritans.** The Samaritans formed their own religious community. They believed that the Israelites from the northern kingdom had been taken into exile because they had angered ‘the god of the land’. So they asked their king to import a priest from the southern kingdom of Judah to teach them the laws of this god of this land. So *a twisted form of Judaism was grafted upon a heathen religion*. The Samaritans only believed in the five books of the Law of Moses and they had different religious views than the Jews in Judea.

After the southern kingdom of Judah had returned from their exile to Babylon, the Jews refused to allow the Samaritans to help them rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. The Samaritans retaliated by hindering the work of the Jews<sup>6</sup>. The Samaritans then build their own temple on mount Gerizim. In 128 B.C. the Jewish freedom fighters (the Maccabees) under leadership of John Hyrcanus destroyed this temple. Therefore the Samaritans hated the Jews (8:48)<sup>7</sup>. And the Jews despised the Samaritans (8:48). But Jesus treated all people without partiality<sup>8</sup>.

### c. The well of Jacob (4:5-6).

**4:5.** So he came (vipn) to a town in Samaria called (vppp) Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had once given (viaa) to his son Joseph.

**4:6.** Jacob’s spring<sup>9</sup> was (viia) there, and Jesus, in the state of weariness (vpra) from the journey (literally: going on the way), was sitting (viin) in this manner<sup>10</sup> by the spring. It was (viia) about the sixth hour.

On his return from Paddan Aram to Palestine, Jacob bought a piece of land<sup>11</sup>. A well was dug, about 30 metres deep. The Amorites did not honour this transaction and later Jacob had to recapture the well<sup>12</sup>. The well still exists today!

After a day’s journey by foot, Jesus was tired. *The Gospel of John emphasises both the divine and the human natures of Jesus Christ*. As a human he became tired and thirsty.

It was about the sixth hour (cf. 1:39). While the Jews calculated the hours from daybreak<sup>13</sup>, the Romans calculated the hours from midnight and midday. John used the Roman system. Therefore the sixth hour was about 18 hours. The late afternoon was the time that women came to draw water<sup>14</sup>. The fact that the Samaritan woman came alone does not conflict with reality, because there were other wells and other woman could have drawn water earlier. People had already returned home from their work, because later many of them came to see Jesus (4:39). Moreover, the Samaritans asked Jesus to stay with them that night (4:40)<sup>15</sup>.

## (II) 4:7-26. How Jesus wins the soul of the Samaritan woman.

In Proverbs 11:30 is written, “He who wins souls is wise”. Jesus gives us an example of how he won the soul of the Samaritan woman. On his way from Judea to Galilee, Jesus had to pass through Samaria. There, one afternoon he sat, tired and thirsty at a well, while his disciples had gone to buy food in a nearby town. Here he talked to an immoral Samaritan woman in order to win her soul into his Kingdom. He employed sympathy, curiosity, longing, conscience and true knowledge.

### a. Jesus first appealed to her sympathy (4:7-9).

**4:7.** A woman from Samaria came (vipn) with the purpose (infinitive) to draw (vnaa) water. Jesus said (vipa) to her. “Give (vmaa)(imperative) me to drink (vnaa)(i.e. a drink).”

**4:8.** His disciples had gone (vila) into the town in order to buy (vsaa) food.

**4:9.** The Samaritan woman said (vipa) to him, “How can you, being (vppa) a Jew, ask (vipa) to drink (vnaa)(i.e. a drink) of me, being (vppa) a Samaritan woman? For Jews do not use<sup>16</sup> (vipn)(vessels)(i.e. associate) together with Samaritans.

*Jesus first appealed to her sympathy by asking her for a drink of water from her jar*. The woman was surprised that Jesus asked her for a drink from her water jar. The sentence: “For Jews do not associate with Samaritans” (4:9) literally

<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings 17:21-41

<sup>6</sup> Ezra 3-4

<sup>7</sup> Luke 9:51-53

<sup>8</sup> Luke 9:54-55; 10:25-37; 17:11-19; cf. Deuteronomy 10:17

<sup>9</sup> G: pégé

<sup>10</sup> G: houtós

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 33:18-20

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 48:22

<sup>13</sup> Mark 15:33

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 24:11

<sup>15</sup> Luke 24:29

<sup>16</sup> G: sugchraomai

says: “Jews do not share (vessels) together with Samaritans.” The meaning is that the Jews do not share dishes and pitchers non-Jews have used, because they feared that these would make them ceremonially unclean<sup>17</sup>.

A very effective way of gaining entrance into the heart of another person is by giving that person an opportunity to do you a favour or by doing a favour to him. Jesus combined both ways. He asked her for ordinary water and offered to give her living water.

#### **b. Jesus aroused her curiosity (4:10-12).**

**4:10.** Jesus answered (viao) and said (viaa) to her, “If you knew (by relation and intuition) (vila) the gift of God and who it is (vipa) that says (vppa) to you ‘Give (vmaa) me (vnaa)(i.e. a drink)’, you would have begged (viaa) him and he would have given (viaa) you living (vppa) water.”

**4:11.** The woman said (vipa), “Sir (Lord), you have (vipa) no bucket (with a long rope attached) and the well<sup>18</sup> is (vipa) deep. From where (how) then do you get (have)(vipa) the living (vppa) water?”

**4:12.** You are (vipa) not greater, are you (‘mé’ + a question expects the answer ‘no’), than our father Jacob, who once gave (viaa) us the well and he himself drank (viaa) from it, also his sons and his cattle?”

*Jesus aroused her curiosity by offering her a drink of living water.* When Jesus spoke of the living water, the Samaritan woman thought that Jesus was speaking of ordinary water, which she could draw out of the well. She thought that Jesus was referring to the spring-water that bubbles up at the very bottom of the well, below the standing water in the well. Therefore she said that Jesus had no bucket with a rope to bring up this water. Apparently the patriarch Jacob dug this well and the woman questioned whether Jesus was greater than Jacob was.

The woman assumed that Jesus was a Jew in need of help and that she as a Samaritan woman was self-sufficient and able to help him. However, Jesus turned the tables and said that she was really the needy person, who needed the living water and that he was the Fountain that could supply it.

The way to arouse people’s curiosity is to tell them who the God of the Bible is and what he wants to give.

#### **c. Jesus stimulated her longing for satisfaction (4:13-15).**

**4:13.** Jesus answered (viao) and said (viaa) to her, “Everyone who drinks (vppa) from this water will certainly get thirsty (vifa) again.

**4:14.** But whoever *once for all* drinks (vsaa) the water which I will give him (vifa), will never (double negative) be thirsty (vifa) again forever! The water I will give (vifa) him will *certainly* become (vifd) in him a spring of water which *continually* springs up (i.e. keeps bubbling up)(vppn) to eternal life.”

**4:15.** The woman said (vipa) to him, “Sir, give (vmaa)(imperative) me this water so that I will not get thirsty (vspa) and have to keep coming (vspn) to this place (here)<sup>19</sup> to draw (vnpa).”

*Jesus stimulated her longing for satisfaction by telling her that she could become a spring of living water that brings lasting satisfaction.* Jesus contrasted the ordinary water with the living water. Jesus was speaking of the living water, namely salvation, which the Holy Spirit would work in her. He contrasted the ordinary physical water that Jacob’s well provided with the living spiritual water that he provided. When you drink of ordinary water, you will always become thirsty again, but when you drink the living water (salvation) that Jesus gives, you will have lasting satisfaction. The ordinary water remains outside your soul and can therefore never fulfil the needs of your soul. But the living water (salvation and all its blessings) will enter your soul and fulfil its deepest needs. The ordinary water will always disappear after you drink it. But like a never-ending fountain or spring, the living water of Jesus will never fail to refresh and satisfy you. It will be like a never-ending spring, which fulfils your deepest needs.

A way to stimulate a person’s desire for eternal life is to contrast it with ordinary life.

#### **d. Jesus awakened her conscience (4:16-19).**

**4:16.** He said (vipa) to her, “Go (vmpa), call (vmaa) your husband and come (vmaa)(imperatives) here.”

**4:17.** The woman replied (viao) and said (viaa) to him, “I have (vipa) no husband.” Jesus said (vipa) to her, “You (were) right when you said (viaa) ‘I have (vipa) no husband’.

**4:18.** You had (viaa) five husbands, and him you now have (vipa) is (vipa) not your husband. This you said (vira) truly (correctly).”

**4:19.** The woman said (vipa) to him, “Sir (Lord), I perceive (vipa) that you are (vipa) a prophet.

*Jesus awakened her conscience by asking questions that revealed some of her sins.* He asked her to bring her husband. Jesus knew that a thirst for the living water would not be truly awakened in her unless she had a personal awareness of sin. When Jesus mentioned her husband, she felt guilty, because she did not have a husband. She was living an immoral life.

The way to awaken a true desire for salvation is to help people realise their sins.

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<sup>17</sup> cf. Mark 7:3.

<sup>18</sup> G: phrear

<sup>19</sup> G: enthade

#### e. Jesus revealed little by little true knowledge about who he was (4:20-26).

**4:20.** Our fathers (Jacob and all his sons!) once worshipped (viaa) on this mountain, but you (Jews) (who are descendants of only one of his sons: the tribe of Judah!) claim (vipa) that in Jerusalem is (vipa) the place where we must worship (vnpa)."

**4:21.** Jesus said (vipa) to her, "Believe (vmpa)(imperative) me, woman, the hour is coming (vipn) when neither on this mountain (Gerezim near Samaria) or in Jerusalem you will worship (vifa) the Father.

**4:22.** You (Samaritans) are nowadays worshipping (vipa) what you do not know effectively (by relation or intuition) (vira); we (Jews) are worshipping (vipa) what we do know effectively (by relation and intuition)(vira), for the salvation (of mankind) is (vipa)(to come) from the Jews.

**4:23.** The hour is coming (vipn) and is (vipa) now, when the true worshippers will worship (vifa) the Father in spirit (the attitude of our spirits) and truth (the attitude of our minds), for such are the people the Father always seeks (vipa) as his worshippers.

**4:24.** God (is) Spirit and those who worship him must (vipa) (i.e. can only) worship (vnpa) in spirit and truth.

**4:25.** The woman said (vipa) to him, "I know (by intuition)(vira) that the Messiah called (vppp) Christ is coming (vipn). When he has come (vsaa), he will certainly announce (vifa) (the divine truth about) everything to us."

**4:26.** Jesus said (vipa) to her, "I, the One speaking (vppa) to you, am he<sup>20</sup> (vipa) (i.e. I AM the Messiah)."

When the woman realised her sin, she changed the subject. She asked a question about the right place to worship God. This was a controversial point between Samaritans and Jews. Samaritans believed one should worship near Samaria and the Jews believed one should worship at Jerusalem. Jesus made her understand that true worship has nothing to do with a religious building, but with the heart of man! God seeks people who would worship him in spirit and in truth!

The woman began to long for the coming of the Messiah and his revelation of everything necessary for people to know, believe, be and do. He would reveal how people could and should be saved from their sins and how that could and should live as renewed people.

*Just as Jesus' self-disclosure advances gradually, so the woman's confession advances gradually.* She first sees Jesus as a Jew, then as a prophet and finally as the Messiah! Jesus revealed himself to her, "I, the One speaking to you, AM he (the Messiah you are longing for)." Jesus Christ had hidden this truth from those who think they are wise and learned, and had revealed it to those who receive the truth like children. Because Jesus remained in Samaria only for two days and performed no miracles, his stay in Samaria did not lead to a conflict with the religious leaders.

#### f. True worship (4:23-24)

**The importance of attitude (spirit) and truth in true worship (4:20-21).** The Samaritans and the Jews thought that it was very important *where* you worshipped God. They believed that they needed a building and it had to stand in their own country and belong to their club/organisation. However, Jesus teaches that it is not the *place or organisation*, where we worship, but the *attitude (spirit)*, with which we worship and the *truth*, according to which we worship, that is important! Therefore, true worship is not hampered by physical or traditional considerations. Christians may worship God the Father everywhere, in their houses, in church buildings, in prisons, and in the open air.

**The importance of knowing the God one worships (4:22-23).** Jesus said that the Samaritans worshipped what they did not know. By acknowledging only the five books of the law, they had rejected the historical-, poetical- and prophetic books of the Old Testament! Therefore they had no true knowledge of who the God of the Bible was! Instead their 'god' had become an invention of their own imagination. *Every religion that rejects the books of the Bible has no knowledge of who the God of the Bible is. The 'god' they worship becomes an invention of their own minds.*

Jesus then said that the Jews worshipped what they did know. Because the Jews had maintained all the books of the Old Testament they had a fairly complete revelation of who God was and they possessed all the (more than 80 clear) prophecies about the coming Messiah!

During the Old Testament period *God had continued his salvation history with Israel* and not with any other nation. Thus, salvation of all mankind was going to come from the Jews. The promised Messiah, Saviour and Lord would come from the tribe of Judah<sup>21</sup>, from the house of David<sup>22</sup> and would be born in Bethlehem<sup>23</sup>.

People cannot just worship anyone as 'god'. The only true God, the God of the Bible, revealed himself through all the prophets in the Old Testament and finally in and through Jesus Christ<sup>24</sup>. No other God and no other Saviour exists<sup>25</sup>!

**The truth according to which Christians must worship (4:24).** The attitude with which our mind worships is determined by the truth concerning the object (the God) of our worship. We worship God.

*But what is the truth about God? The truth about God is not anything that religious people say or believe about God, but it is everything that God reveals about himself in the Bible! God has revealed to us who he is and what he is like.*

<sup>20</sup> G: egó eimi

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 49:10

<sup>22</sup> 1 Chronicles 17:11-14

<sup>23</sup> Micah 5:2

<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 43:10-11; 45:22-23

God has revealed to us his divine attributes, his words and his deeds<sup>26</sup>. True Christian worship is based on Christian truth and on true Christian teaching!

One of the truths that God has revealed to us is that 'God is Spirit'. God is in his essence completely spiritual. He is not a stone-deity, or a tree-deity, or a mountain-deity, or a temple deity, so that he needs to be worshipped in idols cut out of stone, or under a certain tree, or on a certain mountain, or at a certain religious building. He is not a deity to be understood in terms of the mathematical and physical laws of matter, energy, space and time of this universe, because he is transcendental (he is above time and space, etc. of this universe). He is not a religious deity according to the view of a single prophet or religious founder at a particular point in history. He revealed himself by means of more than 40 prophets and apostles over a period of far more than 1500 years, living more than 3000 kilometres apart and in three languages. He revealed himself through the Old Testament prophets and finally in taking on the human nature and revealing himself in Jesus Christ.

*God needs to be worshipped according to how he has revealed himself in the Bible.* God is completely spiritual in his nature. This means, that he has no body and cannot be seen by people. He is independent and does not have to be served by people<sup>27</sup>. He is a personal Being who plans, decides, speaks, feels and acts. People need to relate to God in a personal way, not in a religious ceremonial way. People need to relate to God as a creature to the Creator, as a child to a Father and therefore they cannot dissolve in or become one with God in a pantheistic way. In John 4:24 Jesus says, "God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth". Therefore, true worship is directed to the true God as he has revealed himself in revelation (the Bible), in creation and in salvation history.

**The spirit with which Christians must worship (4:24).** *The attitude with which our spirits worship* is determined by our obedience to God's truth regarding the method of worship. Many religious people believe that the method of worship consists of prescribed prayer positions, fixed prayers or repetition of mantras, prescribed places of worship, special religious festivals, and religious laws about clothing, eating, drinking and fasting, pilgrimages to holy places and giving money. For example, the Jews prayed standing<sup>28</sup> with uplifted hands<sup>29</sup> or kneeled while facing Jerusalem<sup>30</sup>; they fasted during four months of a year<sup>31</sup> and twice every week<sup>32</sup>; they had to give three different kinds of tithes of their income<sup>33</sup>; they made three pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year<sup>34</sup>; they ate no unclean food like pork and blood<sup>35</sup>; their religious leaders wore special religious garments and they were not allowed to shave their heads or trim their beards<sup>36</sup>! The religious laws that were made by the Pharisees and other religions are not pleasing to the God of the Bible.

Not any kind of worship is pleasing to God! Not any and every method of worship may be employed in the Church. For example, in Isaiah 1:13-15, God says, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me,... I cannot bear your evil assemblies, ... your festivals my soul hates, ... even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen." Therefore, *Christians should not make an outward display of their worship, but their worship should be inward.* Christians should worship God with a forgiving spirit, by confessing their sins, by surrendering their lives, by dedicating themselves to God and his work, by interceding for the needy, and by praising and thanking God for who he is and what he has done. Therefore, true worship involves the whole inward man as well as his daily life-style.

**The humility with which Christians must worship (4:23).** John 4:23 says that the worshippers in spirit and truth are the kind of worshippers God the Father *seeks*. It does not mean that the Father searches for individuals who make themselves such worshippers. Rather, it means that the Father yearns to make the people whom he saved into such worshippers! God the Father has taken the initiative in seeking and saving people<sup>37</sup>. He is also taking the initiative to complete that salvation<sup>38</sup> by making the saved people into people that worship in truth and in spirit.

### (III) 4:27-42. How Jesus wins the souls of many Samaritans.

#### a. Jesus and women (4:27).

**4:27.** In the meanwhile<sup>39</sup> his disciples came (viaa) and were surprised (viia) that he was talking (viia) with a woman. But no one asked (viaa), "What do you desire (vipa) (of her)?" or "Why are you talking (vipa) with her?"

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<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>27</sup> Acts 17:24-25

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 6:5

<sup>29</sup> 1 Kings 8:38,48

<sup>30</sup> Daniel 6:10

<sup>31</sup> Zechariah 7:5; 8:19

<sup>32</sup> Luke 18:12

<sup>33</sup> Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 14:22-29

<sup>34</sup> Deuteronomy 16:16

<sup>35</sup> Deuteronomy 14:1-21

<sup>36</sup> Leviticus 21:5,10

<sup>37</sup> Luke 19:10

<sup>38</sup> Philippians 1:6

<sup>39</sup> G: epi toutó

**Why were the disciples surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman?** Jewish culture frowns on speaking with women. The Jewish religious leaders and teachers taught, “Let no one talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife”.

Many religious teachers today lay very heavy burdens on their women. They teach that women exist only to please men; that women must dress in a particular prescribed way; that women should always stay at home; that men may not talk to other women; that a man may marry several women; that a man may divorce his wife for any reason; that a man may beat his wife and even kill his wife!

**Jesus changed the Jewish culture with respect to women.** Jesus changed the Jewish culture with respect to women. He illustrated to his disciples what true emancipation of women meant. True emancipation of women does not mean that Christians ignore the differences which God had created between men and women. It also does not mean that Christians disobey the different responsibilities God had given to men and women in marriage and in the Church. In the eyes of God, the soul of a woman is equally as precious as the soul of a man<sup>40</sup>. And her contributions in the home and in the Church are equally as valuable. And her dignity in society is equally as important.

The motives of Jesus with respect to women were always pure and noble. Although the disciples were surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman, nobody asked, “What do you desire of her?” The answer would have been, “To *receive* from her a drink of ordinary water”. And nobody asked, “Why are you talking with her?” The answer would have been, “To *give* to her the living water!” Jesus always treated women with respect and kindness.

#### **b. The water jar of the woman (4:28).**

**4:28.** The woman left (viaa) her water jar and went back (viaa) to the town and kept saying (vipa) to the people,

The Samaritan woman left her water jar and went back to town. She had not forgotten her jar, but deliberately left it standing there (cf. 4:3). After she understood that Jesus Christ was not only a prophet, but the expected Messiah, she was no longer opposed to a Jew using her Samaritan water jar. She deliberately left it behind so that Jesus could drink and quench his thirst and thus let him know that she had taken his words into her heart.

#### **c. The Samaritan woman became a sower of the good news (4:29-30).**

**4:29.** “Come<sup>41</sup>, see (vmaa)(imperative) a man who told (viaa) me everything I ever did (viaa). Is (vipa) he not, perhaps, the Messiah (the Christ)?”

**4:30.** They came out (viaa) of the town and were coming (viin) toward him.

When the Samaritan woman arrived in the town, about ten minutes walking from the well, she did not say that Jesus is the Messiah, but challenged the people to investigate for themselves. She said, “Come and see ...” just as Jesus did to his first two disciples (1:39,46). She said, “This man told me everything I ever did (he is a prophet). Could this be the Messiah?” Just like the Jews, the Samaritans expected the Messiah to be the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18-19. And so many people of the town rushed out immediately and made their way in long rows through the fields to Jesus at the well (4:30).

#### **d. The food of Jesus (4:31-34).**

**4:31.** Meanwhile<sup>42</sup> (i.e. before the Samaritan villagers arrived) the disciples asked (viia) him saying (vppa). “Rabbi, eat (vmaa)(imperative).”

**4:32.** He said (viaa) to them, “I have (vipa) food to eat that you know (by relation and intuition)(vira) nothing about.”

**4:33.** The disciples were saying (viia) to each other, “Had someone brought (viaa) him (something) to eat (viaa)?”

**4:34.** Jesus said (vipa) to them, “My food is (vipa) to do (vsaa) the will of him who sent (vpaa) me and to once for all finish (vsaa) his work.

*The ‘food’ is a symbol for the calling and life task of Jesus Christ, in which he finds joy and satisfaction. It is a symbol for doing God’s will and finishing his God given task in life. Jesus came to reveal God and God’s will to people, to save people through his death and resurrection and to establish God’s Kingdom on earth.*

*Jesus was not only a beginner, he was also a finisher! At the beginning of his life and ministry he committed himself to finish his God given life task (4:34). And at the end of his life and ministry he had completely finished his calling (17:4; 19:30)! He had revealed God the Father to the people God had given to him. He had protected them against the devil and not one of them was lost (17:6-18).*

#### **e. The disciples become the reapers (4:35-38).**

**4:35.** Do you not say (vipa), ‘It is (vipa) still four months more and then comes (vipn) the harvest?’ ‘Look’ I tell (vipa) you, ‘lift up (vmaa)(imperative) your eyes and scan (vmad) the fields! They are (vipa) (gleaming) white (thus ripe and ready) for the harvest.

**4:36.** The reaper (vppa) is receiving (vipa) wages and is gathering (vipa) a harvests for eternal life, so that both the sower (vppa) and the reaper (vppa) may together<sup>43</sup> be glad (vspa).

<sup>40</sup> Galatians 3:28

<sup>41</sup> G: deute (adverb)

<sup>42</sup> G: en tó metaxu

<sup>43</sup> G: homou

**4:37.** For in this (matter) the (old) saying is coming (vipa) true: ‘One is (vipa) the sower (vppa) and another the reaper’ (vppa).

**4:38.** I sent (viaa) you to reap that for which you did not labour (vira). Others have laboured (vira) and you have entered (in the sense of: shared) (vira) into their labour (that is: you have a share in the results of their labour).”

**What does Jesus teach about the relationship between sowers and reapers (4:29-30)?** The sowers in this case are Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus had won the soul of the Samaritan woman. She in turn went to win the souls of the people living in her town. She challenged the people to come and investigate for themselves: “Come and see ...”, just as Jesus did to his first two disciples. Just like the Jews, the Samaritans expected the Messiah to be the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18-19. And so many people of the town rushed out immediately and made their way to Jesus.

**The spiritual harvest does not have a specific season.** In the meantime, Jesus spoke to his disciples and said, “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest?’ ” The ordinary agricultural harvest in this region took place in April. Therefore, the time Jesus met the Samaritan woman was December. This must have been December A.D. 27. In December the harvest of grain was not yet ripe for harvest.

But Jesus was not speaking of the agricultural harvest. He was speaking of harvesting the crop of people for eternal life (4:36). *The spiritual harvest of people does not have a specific season! It is always ripe<sup>44</sup>! It is always ready to be harvested!* In this case, there was hardly any time between the sowing of the seed of the gospel and the reaping of the crop for eternal life! Jesus saw the procession of Samaritans coming from the town and across the fields towards the well and said, “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” Jesus clearly implied that he was sending his disciples to harvest these people into his Kingdom. *Right here the prophecy in Amos 9:13 was being fulfilled.* “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes!”

**In the spiritual realm the usual pattern is that one person reaps where another person has sown.** In John 4:37, Jesus says, “The saying, ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true”. Each worker in the Kingdom of God is at the same time a reaper and a sower. He reaps that which has been sown by others. And he sows the seed, which brings forth a harvest that will be gathered by others. Therefore, in God’s sovereign plan, *there will always be a harvest to reap!* Either you yourself may have the joy of reaping a harvest, or you may have the joy of knowing that another worker will harvest where you have sown! In this way, the sower and the reaper will be glad together.

**The reapers in this case are the disciples.** In John 4:38, Jesus says, “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour”. Both Jesus and the Samaritan woman had been working among the Samaritans - Jesus indirectly, via the Samaritan woman, and she, in turn, directly, among her townspeople. Now the Lord Jesus Christ sent his disciples to reap the crop of people for eternal life.

**Christian workers may always rejoice in their work of sowing or reaping.** The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that *your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*” And the prophet Isaiah said, “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth; *it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it*<sup>45</sup>.”

#### **f. The Samaritan harvest (4:39-42).**

**4:39.** Many Samaritans out of that town believed (viaa) in him, through the word of the woman when she testified (vppa): “He told (viaa) me everything I did (viaa)”.

**4:40.** So the Samaritans came (viaa) to him, asking (viia) him to stay (vnaa) with them, and he stayed (viaa) two days.

**4:41.** And many more believed (viaa) in him through his word (i.e. his teaching).

**4:42.** They were saying (viia) to the woman, “It is no longer because of your talk that we believe (vipa), for we ourselves have heard (vira) (and his words keep ringing in our ears), and we know (by relation and reflection)(vira) that he is (vipa) really the Saviour of the world.”

**How did the faith of the Samaritans grow?** Many Samaritans came to believe in Jesus Christ. An important thing to remember is that personal contact with Jesus is necessary for faith to mature. Beginning believers must learn to hear Jesus speaking to them personally.

Another important thing to remember is that faith can grow. The Samaritans first viewed Jesus as a Jew; then as a prophet; then as the Messiah; and finally as the Saviour of the world! Jesus came first to be the Saviour of his people<sup>46</sup> and then to be the Saviour of the world<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Matthew 9:37

<sup>45</sup> Isaiah 55:10-11

<sup>46</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>47</sup> John 4:42; Romans 1:16

The 'world' is here *not* every individual that ever lived (it is not universal salvation). It is also *not* the world as the dominion of evil, the world that is openly hostile against Christ and Christians (15:18)<sup>48</sup>. It is the world of lost people without distinction of race, nationality, language or culture (3:16,19).

Jesus Christ saves them from their sin<sup>49</sup>, from their wickedness<sup>50</sup>, from the corruption of this world<sup>51</sup>, from the dominion of Satan<sup>52</sup> and finally from physical death<sup>53</sup>. He saves them through the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit<sup>54</sup>.

#### **(IV) 4:43-54. Jesus in Galilee.**

##### **a. Jesus is not honoured in Galilee (4:43-45).**

**4:43.** Now after the two days he departed (viaa) from there to Galilee.

**4:44.** Jesus himself testified (viaa) that a prophet has (enjoys) (vipa) no honour in his own fatherland.

**4:45.** So when he arrived (viaa) in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed (viad) him, having seen (vpri) all he had done (viaa) in Jerusalem at the feast, since they themselves had come (viaa) to the feast.

**Why does Jesus go to Galilee, his home country, when he knows that a prophet has no honour in his home country?** When Jesus was in Jerusalem, many people believed in him, because of the miracles they saw. After he had cleansed the temple, he had his first clash with the Pharisees. Jesus went to Galilee on purpose, because in Galilee he need not fear that people would honour him in a way that would bring him into immediate collision with the Pharisees and thus create a premature crisis.

Jesus came to his hometown, Nazareth in Galilee. Galilee was his fatherland. The Galileans *welcomed* him, because he was a miracle worker (4:45). But their welcome did not honour him, because Jesus knew their hearts: unless they saw miracles, they would *never believe* (4:48). Although he spoke with wisdom and did a few miracles, the people took offense at him, because they did not regard him as the Messiah, but as the carpenter's son, whose mother was Mary and whose brothers were James, Joseph, Simon and Judas<sup>55</sup>. Finally, the people rejected him. So Jesus said, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honour".

When Jesus later said to them that unless they receive him into their hearts and lives by abiding faith, they would not receive eternal life, many of the Galileans *left* him (6:66).

Why did Jesus nevertheless go to Galilee? Because his mission was to preach the message of the Kingdom of God everywhere. Everyone must hear<sup>56</sup>. The Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus lasted from December A.D. 27 to April A.D. 29.

##### **b. Jesus heals a dying son (4:46-54).**

**4:46.** He came (viaa) again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made (turned) (viaa) the water into wine. And there was (viia) a certain royal official whose son was (lay) sick (viia) at Capernaum.

**4:47.** When this man heard (vpri) that Jesus arrived<sup>57</sup> (vipa) from Judea to Galilee, he went (viaa) to him and kept asking (viia) him to come down (toward the Sea of Galilee)(vsaa) and heal (vsad) his son, who was at the point of (viia+) dying (+vnpi).

**4:48.** Jesus said (viaa) to him, "If you (plural: the individual was representative of a whole class) would not see (vsaa) signs and wonders, you would never (double negative) believe (vsaa)."

**4:49.** The royal official said (vipa) to him, "Sir (Lord), come down (vma)(imperative) before<sup>58</sup> my child dies (vnaa)."

**4:50.** Jesus said (vipa) to him, "Go (vmpn)(imperative), your son is living (vipa)." The man believed (viaa) the word which Jesus spoke (viaa) to him and went on his journey (viin).

**4:51.** While he was still going down (vppi) (towards the Sea of Galilee), his servants met (viaa) him saying (vppi) that his son was living (vipa).

**4:52.** He then inquired<sup>59</sup> (viad) about the hour with them in which he had begun to (viaa) improve ('better' of sickness). They said (viaa) to him, "Yesterday<sup>60</sup> at the seventh hour (19.00 hours) the fever left him (viaa)."

**4:53.** Then the father realised (know by observation and experience)<sup>61</sup> (viaa) that this (was) the hour in which Jesus had said (viaa) to him, "Your son lives (vipa)." So he himself believed (viaa) and also his whole household.

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<sup>48</sup> 1 John 5:19

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>50</sup> Titus 2:13

<sup>51</sup> 2 Peter 2:20

<sup>52</sup> Colossians 1:13

<sup>53</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:26; 2 Timothy 1:10

<sup>54</sup> Titus 3:4-8

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 13:53-58

<sup>56</sup> Matthew 24:14; Mark 1:38-39

<sup>57</sup> G: hékó

<sup>58</sup> G: prin

<sup>59</sup> G: punthanomai

<sup>60</sup> G: echthes

<sup>61</sup> G: ginóskó

4:54. Now this (was) the second miraculous sign which Jesus performed (viaa) having (i.e. after he had) come (vpaa) from Judea to Galilee.

**What brought the royal official and his whole household to faith?** Jesus went from Nazareth to Cana where he had performed his first sign. A royal official, probably from king Herod Antipas, lived in Capernaum. His son was sick and close to death.

When the official heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee he went to him in Cana and begged him to come to Capernaum to heal his son. He was a Jew, because Jesus lumped him together with the other Jews of whom he said, “Unless you people (the Jews) see (literally) signs and miracles you will never believe” (4:48). The royal official probably thought that Jesus was a performer of sensational miracles that drew crowds. He believed that Jesus had to physically come to Capernaum, a journey of twenty-five kilometres over mountains, a journey that took at least seven hours, stand at his son’s bed and perform some kind of sensational miracle. He believed that Jesus had to come immediately, otherwise his son would die. He thus did not believe that Jesus had power from a distance or beyond death!

But instead Jesus said, “You may go, your son (literally) lives (present tense).” He did not say, “Go, your son will live (future tense).” Because the journey was long and difficult, the man left the next day for Capernaum. His servants met him on the way and told him that his son was healed. His son was healed the previous day at nineteen hours (Roman time) in the evening. This was the exact time Jesus had said to him, “Your son lives.” So he and his whole household (family, dependants and servants) believed. This is an example how Jesus practically fulfilled his covenant promise to Abraham and his descendants<sup>62</sup>. Because the word ‘believe’ is in the aorist tense, we cannot make any statement whether he and his household persevered in their faith or not.

This was the second sign that Jesus performed. The purpose of sensational miracles is to impress and focus the attention on the miracle itself. But the purpose of the signs of Jesus in the Gospel of John is to focus the attention on who Jesus really is (see 2:11) and thus strengthen faith in Jesus Christ. Signs and miracles do not necessarily bring people to faith in Jesus Christ (12:37-38)! People come to faith by hearing the gospel (5:39-40)<sup>63</sup>! *The purpose of a sign is rather to strengthen people’s faith (20:30-31)*! The official had come to Jesus to see a sensational miracle, but Jesus only spoke his word to him. He did not see any miracle, but now he believed in Jesus Christ, not because of the miraculous sign, but because of the word Jesus spoke! He believed even though he saw no miracle! The second sign of Jesus pointed to the power and authority of Jesus: over the physical realm (the body of the boy), over distance (25 kilometres) and over time (on the exact moment he spoke)! Physical science, distance and time form no obstacle to Jesus to reveal his power and his love!

## APPLICATIONS

- 4:1. Go and make disciples, like Jesus himself did<sup>64</sup>.
- 4:7. Take the initiative to make contact with people by asking them a favour or by doing them a favour.
- 4:10. Arouse the curiosity of people by telling them about God and what God can give.
- 4:13-14. Stimulate the desire of people for spiritual realities by contrasting it with the physical realities.
- 4:16-18. Awaken a true desire for salvation by helping people to realise their sins.
- 4:19. Reveal little by little to people who Jesus Christ is, so that you do not overwhelm them with too much truth.
- 4:21-24. Worship God with the right attitude of mind. Worship the God, who has revealed himself in the Bible.
- 4:21-24. Worship God with the right attitude of spirit. Worship God, not in outward ceremonies, but in sincerity.
- 4:27. Treat women as you treat men, with respect and without oppressive discrimination.
- 4:32,34. Eat ordinary food, but never neglect to eat spiritual food: to do God’s will and to finish the work, which God has assigned.
- 4:37-38. Sow the gospel wherever you can and reap people into God’s kingdom whenever you can.
- 4:42. Make sure that your faith in Jesus Christ is not only built on what other people say, but on your personal faith and experience with Jesus Christ.
- 4:44. When you are not honoured as a preacher in your own town, go to another town<sup>65</sup>.
- 4:48-53. Accept that you are more blessed when you have not seen Jesus or his miracles and nevertheless believe<sup>66</sup>.

## QUESTIONS

- 4:4-9. Who were the Samaritans?
- 4:10 ff. How does Jesus win the woman’s soul?
- 4:23-24. What is true worship?
- 4:27. Why were the disciples surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman?
- 4:34. What does the ‘food’ of Jesus Christ symbolise?
- 4:35-38. What does Jesus teach about the relationship between sowers and reapers?

<sup>62</sup> Genesis 17:7; Psalm 105:8-10; Acts 2:39

<sup>63</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>65</sup> Matthew 10:11-15

<sup>66</sup> John 20:29

4:39-42. How did the faith of the Samaritans grow?

4:3-45. Why did Jesus go to his home country when he knew that he would not be honoured there?

4:46-54. What brought the royal official and his whole household to faith?