

WHEN THE SYSTEM IS STACKED AGAINST YOU

John 4:4-30; John 4:39-42

(4) And He must needs go through Samaria. (5) 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. (6) 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. (7) There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (8) (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) (9) 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. (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. (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? (12) Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? (13) Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: (14) 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 unto everlasting life. (15) The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. (16) Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. (17) The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: (18) For thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidist thou truly. (19) The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. (20) Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. (21) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. (22) Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. (23) 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. (24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (25) The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He come, He will tell us all things. (26) Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He. (27) 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? (28) The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, (29) Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? (30) Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

John 4:39-42

(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. (40) So when the Samaritans

were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. (41) And many more believed because of His own word; (42) And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Introduction

I beg your indulgence in this sermon. I will have to go around the mulberry tree and through the turnip patch to get to the smokehouse. The smokehouse is where I want to go because the meat is in the smokehouse, but right now, I can't go directly to the smoke house. Please stay with me for I am going to connect several dots as I walk to the smoke house. Here is the first dot. We are familiar with the intertestamental period of about four hundred years. A lot happened during this period. The interpretation of the Ten Commandments had become warped and perverted. The teaching of Moses had been taken out of context and used as a pretext for evil and exploitation. Much of what Jesus taught against was these perverted interpretations. For Bible readers, Jesus' teaching on the Sabbath readily comes to mind. In regards to this text, religious leaders had perverted Moses' teaching about divorce and used it to exploit women and pass them from man to man. This is why Jesus was asked if it was okay to divorce a woman for "any cause." The operative phrase was "any cause." Some men would marry a woman, treat her like a plaything, keep her for a while, and then pass her on to another fellow who would do the same thing. All these men had to do was to write her a bill of divorce and it was "legal." Remember in that culture a woman would either get married or be cared for by her father; when her father died or could no longer take care of her, one of her brothers took on that responsibility. Usually it was the oldest brother. Women with no brothers could easily get caught up in this evil system of exploitation. This was at least a step above prostitution. At least she was married with a roof over her head, even if no love was present. Most of these women gave it their best effort and hoped that by showing dedication, the present husband would keep her and not pass her on to the next guy. Most of the time this did not work because the present husband just wanted "free romance" and someone to do the "woman's work" in the house. After the first husband, she was considered "damaged goods" and was treated as a "thing" not a person. Here is my last dot. (I know you are glad!) What is obvious to one generation may be totally obscure to the next generation. One generation may see no need to emphasize something because it is so well known to them. This produces a "cultural void" because the succeeding generations are not aware of it. It is lost until, if ever, it is rediscovered.

Now I am about to open the door to the smoke house. The context of this text was so well known to the early church that they did not pass it down. Thus, over the centuries this lady got a bad rap, when it should have been the men who got the bad rap. (This is not male bashing!) The patristic writers got it right; they knew she was a victim of a cruel system, not a villain. This is reflected in their writings. Let me say it again: This woman at the well has been given a bad rap for centuries because of a cultural void and male-dominate hermeneutics. She was a victim of a cruel system. She was not a villain.

Even though people understood her plight, she was still considered a social outcast and was not allowed to mingle with “descent folk.” This narrative is a vivid case of how the system can be stacked against you. It also shows how Jesus is on the side of the down-trodden and how he will bring deliverance.

Exposition

1. Jesus Was On A Fast Track Mission-It Was No Accident
(I Must Go to Samaria-John 4:4)
2. Jesus Meets a Woman Who Was a Triple Minority
(Woman-Samaritan-Damaged Goods)
3. The Initial Contact Was Riddled with Skepticism and Contempt
(Why Are You Asking Me for Water?-John 4:9)
4. Jesus De-Escalated the Conversation and it Becomes Productive
(Jesus Met Her at Her Point Of Need)
5. During the Conversation Jesus Asked an Awkward Question
6. She Gave an Honest But Embarrassing Answer
7. She Realized Who He Really Was-The Messiah
8. They Talked About Worship
9. Jesus Gave Her Living Water and She Was Delivered
10. She Became a Great Missionary
(She Opened the Door For Phillip-Acts 8:5-25)

Closing Thoughts

This narrative is a “classical” comedy. A classical comedy was a story with a happy ending. This was a Divine Comedy! The entire town followed this woman’s witness to discover the Saviour for themselves.

What an unusual “evangelist?” She had no wholesome life experiences. She had no seminary training. She knew little theology. She could not explain why Jesus must be the Messiah and not just a prophet. She merely reported her personal encounter. While her testimony brought them to hear Jesus, it was their own encounter with the Word that caused them to trust Jesus as their Saviour. Your life can be a divine comedy too, if you accept the saving power of the blood of Jesus. Give God glory! Give God all the Glory!

End Notes:

1. In Matthew 19:1-9 there was an attempt to trap Jesus in the debate between the Jewish rabbis Shammai and Hillel. Shammai taught that it was immoral to pass women from man to man in the pretext of marriage. Hillel taught that it was perfectly fine. It goes without saying that Hillel had more followers than Shammai.

2. There are many errors, mistakes, or misinterpretations in all areas of life which have been perpetuated for centuries. They are so ingrained into culture that it is all but impossible to correct them. A case in point is the spelling of February. There are too many r's in February. A type setter's mistake for the dictionary was not discovered until after publication. The mistake became the standard. Later editions of the dictionary corrected the spelling but everybody thought the correction was a mistake and the rest is history.

3. A great book that explains the intertestamental period and its impact on the time of Jesus' sojourn on earth is *The Jews In The Time Of Jesus* by Stephen M. Wylen. It goes without saying that no book should supersede our study of the Bible, God's Holy Word.

**Copyright © 2020 by James C. Ward
All Rights Reserved**