

# Impossible Converts

## II – The Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-42

- Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

- The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”

- Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.  
<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.” Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” They went out of the town and were coming to him.

- Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”



# Jesus' Three Years Ministry

- Primarily among the Jews
- 'I am sent to the lost sheep of Israel'
- This story 'The Woman at the Well' and many others
- Reveals his long-term goal for the Gospel
- To go far beyond the Jewish people
- First to Samaria
- Then ultimately, to the ends of the earth
- He is 'the Savior of the World'

# A Brief Meeting

- Our text describes a brief meeting
  - Jesus and a Samaritan woman
  - Seemingly chance encounter and conversation
  - Leads to a two day stay in the village of Sychar
  - As a consequence many villagers come to believe in Jesus
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- Painting from the catacombs in Rome

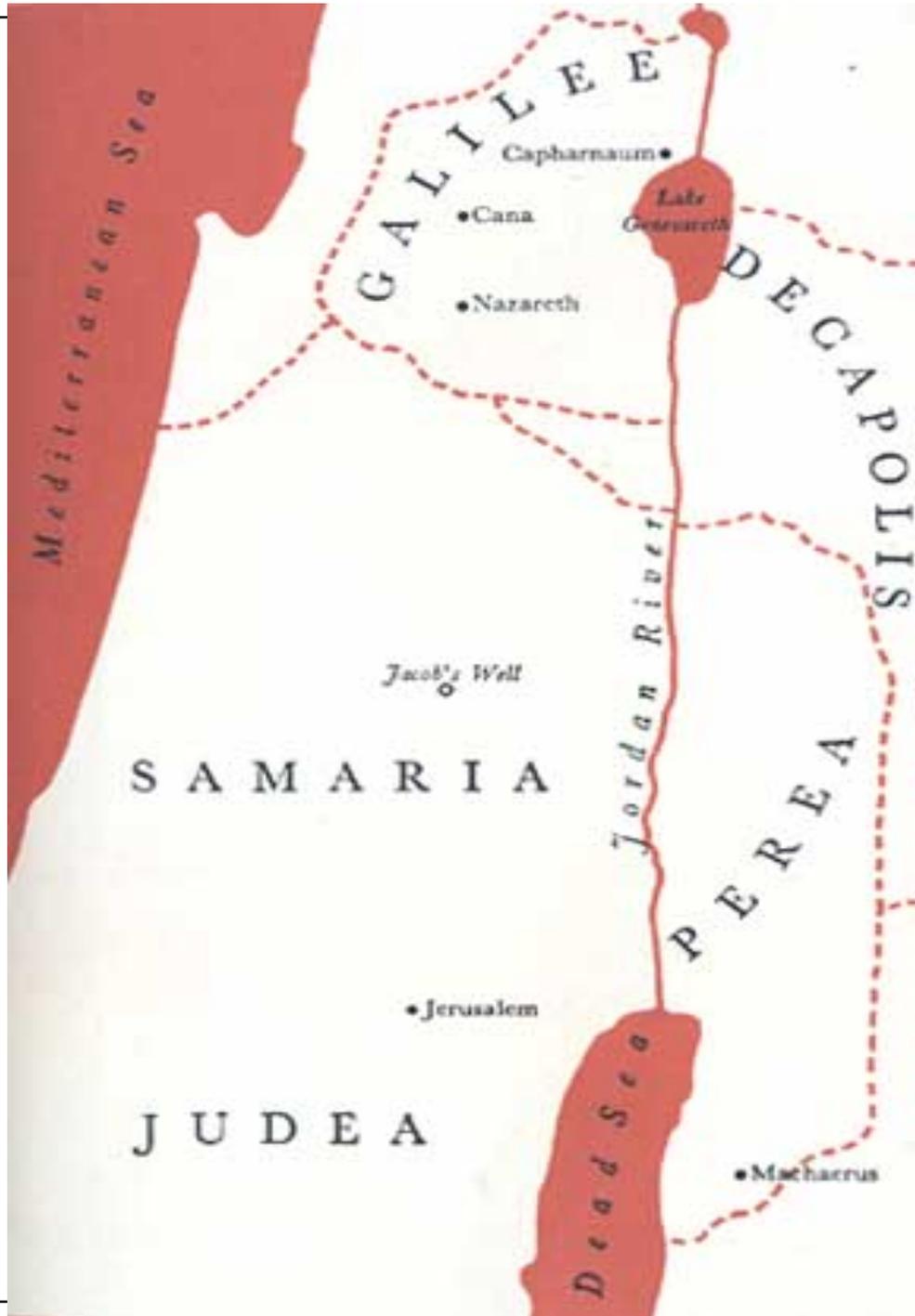


# A Chance Encounter?

- Jesus stops to rest from his journey
- Does the woman just happen to be there at the well?
- From childhood Jesus committed to ‘doing his Father’s work’
- Jesus’ teaching, indeed, everything he says
- Jesus’ life, indeed, everything he does
- All in obedience to His Father’s will (John 14:31; 12:49)

# Jesus Our Pattern

- Jesus is the Father's pattern for our lives
  - Our pattern for mission and evangelism
  - Jesus does not go anywhere by chance
  - His whole life a series of divine appointments
  - His food to do what pleases his Father v.34
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- Map showing Jacob's Well in Samaria



# ‘Now he had to go through Samaria’

- Why does Jesus ‘have to go through Samaria’?
- Jews only through Samaria to Galilee, if urgency
- Jesus not in a hurry
- Stays two days in Sychar, v. 42
- Three routes for a Jew to travel north from Judea to Galilee:
  - Inland along the Jordan River
  - The coast road along the Mediterranean
  - Through Samaria: direct
- Detailed map of Samaria showing Sychar and the well



Detail Map of Jerusalem Region, circa 30 CE

# The Third Route

- Most direct route through Samaria
- Jews: no shortcut through Samaria without constraint
- Avoid all contact with Samaritans
- Meet a Samaritan on the road, walk into the ditch
- Not even shadows to touch
- Jesus' compelling reasons to go to Samaria
- Eager to meet the woman at the well!
- Jesus walks through the heart of Samaria
  
- Painting by Duccio 1311



Who was this person Jesus  
feels constrained to meet?

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*An Outcast*

# 1. The Problem of Her Race

- As a Samaritan she is a member of the wrong race
- (From the perspective of the Jews)
- The Samaritans were a people of mixed race: ‘half-breeds!’
- Partially descended from remnants of ten northern tribes
- People from the northern kingdom of Samaria (Israel)
- Taken captive & resettled in far eastern parts of Assyrian Empire

# Intermarriage

- Many intermarried in exile
- Like Esther, when she became queen in Persian court
- Many returned to Samaria after exile
- Others remained in Samaria after Israel's defeat
- Intermarried with other peoples settled by Assyrians
- Policy of conquer and resettle (2 Kings 17: 21-24)
- Jews: 'they polluted the pure blood of the patriarchs'
- No pure blood: think of Ruth!

## 2. The Problem of Her Religion

- Another offense to the Jews
- Samaritan religion is also mixed
- Samaritan religion: a blend
- The worship of the true God
- Plus pagan idolatry of the peoples from around Babylon
- Settled in Samaria
- By the conquering Assyrians (2 Kings 17:21-41)
- Samaritans accepted only the books of Moses as Scripture

# Place of Worship

- Built temple on Mt. Gerizim
- Mt. Gerizim: the proper place to worship the Lord
- Jews fought war against the Samaritans
- Burned temple, a place of abominable sacrilege (128 BC)
- Jews despised Samaritans as heretics
- Confused theology
- Improper worship
- Worse than paganism to the Jews

### 3. The Problem of Her Gender

- Why should this be considered a problem?
- Jewish Rabbis/teachers: no women disciples
- Women not allowed to be witnesses in court
- Rabbis: women irrational and untrustworthy
- Prayer of the Pharisees
- ‘Thank you God that I am not a Gentile, but a Jew; that I am not a slave, but am free; not a woman, but a man’
- Paul, a converted Pharisee, overturns this prayer  
Galatians 3

# Not a Problem for Jesus

- Jesus, God's Son, the second person of the Trinity
- Eternal Word, Creator of man & woman in his likeness
- Who better than Jesus to show by his example?
- Women are designed and created by him
- The full equals of men
- Every woman in this world
- Fully the representative and bearer of God's image
- You are the crown of creation
- Crowned with glory and honor
- Everything under your feet

# Jesus Honors Women

- Jesus loves to honor women
- Asks them to bear witness to him
- Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph
- The first witnesses of his resurrection: 'told the others'
- Jesus trusts the witness of women
- Eager to meet this woman
- Gladly calls women to faith & discipleship

## 4. The Problem of Her Sin

- Her sin is not secret or 'respectable'
- Known by all to be a sinner
- Married five times
- Now living with a man outside of any marriage contract
- Divorce easy for men
- If a man found another woman more to his liking
- If he found fault with a woman for any reason
- He could divorce her (Matthew 19:3)

# Moral Outcast

- Woman always viewed as the one 'at fault'
- A woman divorced five times: a person despised by all
- No need to marry her to have her
- Now a woman passed from man to man
- Scorned and hated by other women
- Failure in her marriages
- Danger to their marriages
- Almost certainly why she is at the well alone
  
- Painting by Paolo Veronese 1550



# Jesus, Friend of the Outcast

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The Gift of God

The One Who Gives Living Water

A Prophet

One Greater than the Patriarch Jacob

The Messiah

The One Who Will Explain Everything to Us

'I Am He'

The One Who Can Tell Us Everything We ever Did

The Savior of the World

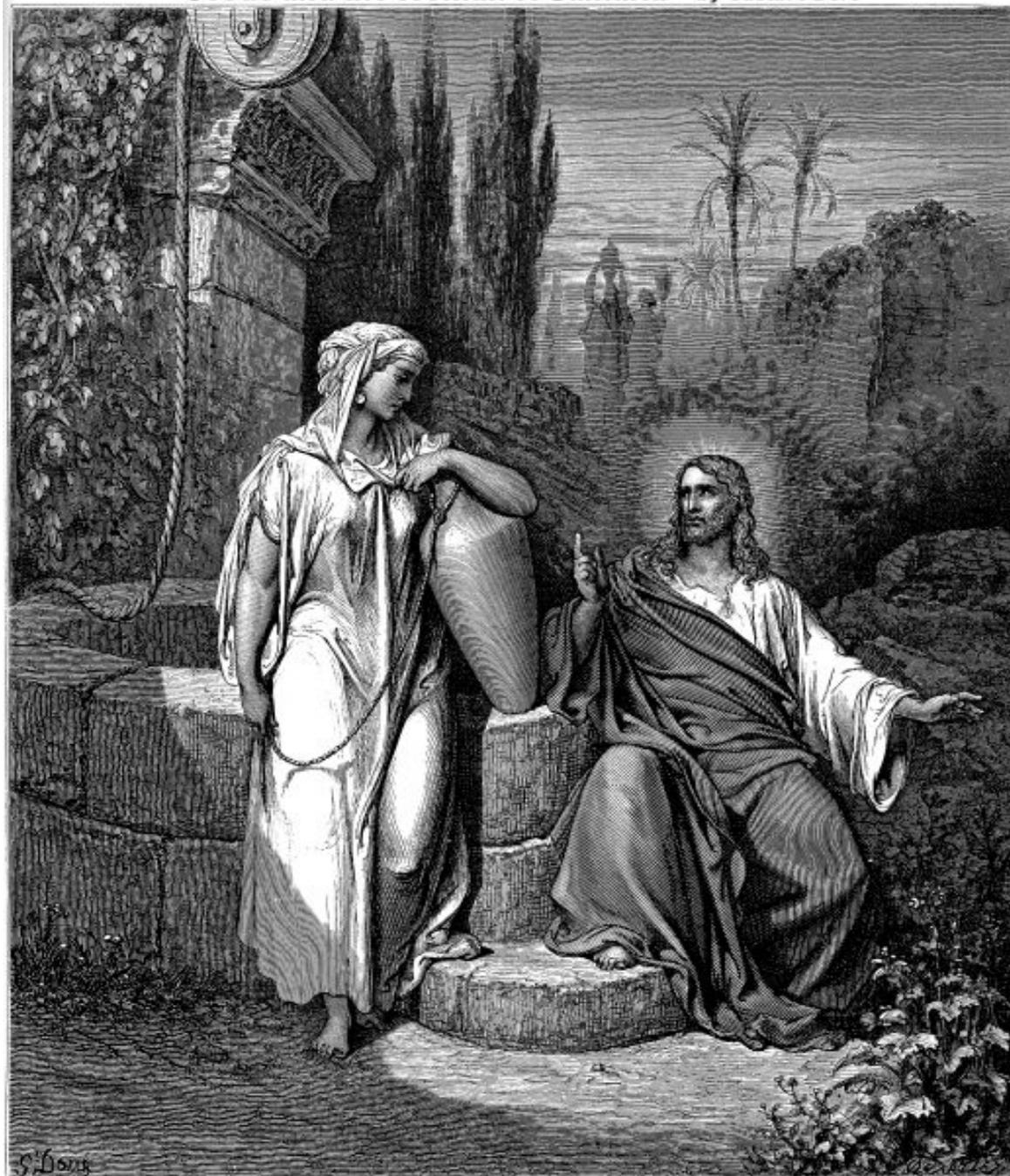
# How does the Son of God, meet the woman at the well?

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How does the God/man,  
in his Godhead and manhood holy,  
separated from sinners.

how does he relate to this person  
with many barriers between himself and her?

**"Jesus and the Woman of Samaria"** by *Gustave Doré*



# 1. Setting aside Custom and Law

- Asks the woman at the well for a drink of water
- Jews did not drink or eat from vessels used by Samaritans
- Rabbi Eliezer taught:
- ‘He who eats the bread of the Samaritans is like one who eats the flesh of swine’
- Jesus breaks social customs
- Breaks Jewish law
- ‘Use your water jug to draw from the well’
- ‘Give me a drink from your jug’

- No Jew ever requested food or drink from her
- Jesus will drink from an unclean container she has handled
- She is amazed
- Aware of extraordinary nature of his request
- ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’
- No man ever addressed her as a social equal
- His disciples surprised to find him talking with a woman when they return (v.27)
  
- Strozii 1640
- Henryk Siemiradzki 1886





## 2. Revealing His Needs

- Jesus shows his vulnerability and need to her
- He is tired and thirsty
- The Creator of the world
- The source of every river, spring, ocean, drop of rainfall
- The fountain of living water
- The One who needs nothing from anyone
- This One asks the Samaritan woman for a drink
- He dignifies her by acknowledging his need of something she can do for him
- An ordinary request
- Jesus could not have done anything more honoring

### 3. Respectful Discussion

- Jesus treats the Samaritan woman as rational and thoughtful
- As the Creator of women he knows her fully
- Her intellectual abilities
- Her capacity to learn and reason
- No teacher (and no man) has ever spoken to her in this way before
- Jesus enters into a lengthy theological discussion with her

# What Did They Discuss?

- John's account is a summary of central points: full account one day
- The living water: spiritual life; only Jesus can give this
- Fills the soul to overflowing for ever
- The patriarch Jacob
- Giver of the well to his descendants
- Honored by the Samaritans
- The proper site for worship: Jerusalem for the Jews
- Or Mt. Gerizim for the Samaritans
- The nature of true worship
  
- Mt. Gerizim: photo taken from Mt. Ebal



# The Messiah

- The coming of the Messiah
- Samaritans called him 'Taheb' 'The Restorer'
- The promise of a great prophet like Moses
- Would teach all the truth (Deuteronomy 18:17-19)
- Samaritans had first five books of Bible
- Salvation will be from the Jews
- Messiah would come as the lion from the tribe of Judah
- Would rule all the nations (Genesis 49:10)

# God's Testimonies of Truth

- Jesus aware of the Father's testimony in her life
  - Her knowledge of Books of Moses
  - Her interest in worship
  - Her spiritual need
  - Her hope for Messiah
  - Her sense of shame
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- God always has his testimonies in every person we meet
  - Whatever is true, good, lovely, admirable, worthy of praise

## 4. Gentleness and Grace

- Jesus speaks to her gently
- Even about her sin
- Weighs heavily upon her
- ‘Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?’
- The villagers refer back to this
- ‘Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony’
- ‘He told me all that I ever did’

# Defined by Sin

- Failures in the area of marriage and sexuality
- A definition of her whole life
- Everyone characterized her by her broken marriages
- She also
- Jesus' knowledge of her leads her to the conclusion
- 'You are a prophet: the Messiah'
- Jesus' plain declaration that he is indeed the Messiah
- She puts her faith in him

## 5. Commissioned for Service

- Jesus trusts those who come to him
- Gives responsible tasks in his service
- He commissions this Samaritan woman
- Bear the good news to your husband, bring him back
- She bears the good news to her neighbors
- Brings them to meet him
- The first witness to Jesus in her community
- Jesus gladly commissions women
- Ambassadors of his reconciliation
- Witnesses to his divine nature, to his being the Christ, to his amazing love

# A Successful Evangelist

- Her words to her neighbors bear fruit
- They come immediately to meet Jesus
- Jesus sees them in white garments
- Coming across the fields
- ‘Do not they say, “Three months more until the harvest”
- But I say to you, look up and see the fields are already white for harvest’
- I have done the hard work, broken the barriers
- Now you can labor among these people

# A Stay in 'Unclean' Territory

- Jesus stays two more days in the village
- Apparently 'chance encounter' with the woman
- Many in community meet Jesus
- Become believers
- Come to know: this man is the 'Savior of the world'
- 'Side-trip' to Sychar
- One of the most successful times of mission recorded for us in the Gospels

# Jesus Eating Unclean Food

- Peter's protest: "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common of unclean" (Acts 10:14)
- Peter forgot whose house he was staying in, a tanner's
- He also forgot the lack of a Kosher restaurant in Sychar

# Lessons from Jesus

- Intentional lives
- Overcoming barriers
- Setting aside custom and Christian rules
- Being vulnerable
- Asking what testimony the Father has (Philippians 4:8)
- Receiving the good gifts of unbelievers
- Respectful discussion: traces of truth
- Gentleness and grace about moral failures
- See our own sins
- Commissioned for service