

Jesus had been in Judea, but decided to leave for Galilee and go through Samaria. While His disciples went into town to purchase food, Jesus waited by Jacob's well where a woman came to draw water. In His conversation with her, Jesus reveals Himself to her as the promised Messiah. This precipitates a chain of events from which we can learn significant lessons.

I. *The events following Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman*

1. Events precipitated by the arrival of the disciples (4:27-30): The disciples, when returning from their food purchase, are amazed that Jesus would be talking with a woman. The woman leaves, though probably intending to return, and reports to the town folk about her encounter and invites them to come to see Jesus. She tactfully suggests by way of a question that Jesus might just be the Messiah.
2. Jesus's interaction with the disciples (4:31-38): Meanwhile at the well Jesus is telling His disciples that He already had food, by which He meant doing the will of God. He teaches them about a spiritual harvest of which they need to be aware, which in the context referred to the Samaritans.
3. The response in the Samaritan city of Sychar (4:39-42): The people of the town accept the testimony of the woman and come to Jesus, who stays with them two days and teaches them further (cf. vv 41-42). Many believe and then confess Him to be Savior of the world.

II. *Lessons from the events following Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman*

1. Lessons from the Samaritans

- a. *A clear testimony is an excellent bridge to the gospel, though it is not the gospel itself.* It is a significant part of the narrative (vv 29, 39, 42) that Jesus told the woman her background. Her experience with Jesus created interest, but was not sufficient for them to come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Savior of the world.
- b. *Our goal should be to bring people to Jesus.* Although the woman tactfully formulated her conclusions, the intent was clear, they should come and see this man.
- c. *God uses His word to change people (vv 41-42).* Cf. John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26; Romans 10:17 ("... faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" –NIV)

2. Lessons for the disciples

- a. *Disciples needed to get over their prejudice.* Prejudice seems to have blinded them to the spiritual harvest around them that was ripe, since they had to be told to open their eyes and look at the ripe fields.
- b. *Disciples, like the Samaritan woman, needed to expand their thinking to include the spiritual and not just the physical.* They understandably was thinking of physical food, but Jesus was aware of more than physical existence. He was aware of His purpose for being on earth. He found nourishment and strength in doing the will of God. He was ready to see the spiritual harvest.
- c. *Disciples needed to understand principles of spiritual sowing and reaping.* Some sowed and others reaped. But others had already sown and the disciples could now reap, without waiting for their own labors to ripen. The disciples might have been able to see the Samaritans coming from the village and they might have been the ripened harvest to which Jesus referred.

3. Lessons about Jesus

- a. *Jesus is revealed as possessing divine knowledge.* He knew the woman's background, impressing both the woman and the people of the town. She concluded that Jesus must be a prophet, just as Nicodemus had concluded that Jesus must be a teacher from God because of His miracles (3:2). The things which Jesus said and did should point people to the fact that Jesus was from God.
- b. *Jesus is revealed as the perfect man who does not live by bread alone.* Jesus is demonstrated to be human – tired, thirsty and hunger – but Jesus could find satisfaction and even nourishment from doing the will of God. He lived out the truth, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." As perfect sinless man, He did not live by bread alone.
- c. *Jesus is revealed as light to the Gentiles.* It was promised in the Old Testament, that the Messiah would be a light to the world. When Jesus "had to go through Samaria", he showed that the good news was not just to the Jews but for non-Jew as well. When Jesus told the woman "you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (John 4:21), he included the woman and all Samaritans who would become true worshipers. True worship was extended beyond the Jews to the Gentiles. Then as the very significant closing statement, the conviction of the Samaritans is cited, "we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." Jesus is the Savior not just of the Jews, but of the world, a light to Jew and to Gentile alike.

What will we do with Jesus? Most importantly each person needs to have accepted Him as the perfect God-man, God come in the flesh, the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Those who have thus become children of God should open their eyes to the spiritual dimension of life. Let us accept the task which Jesus gave His disciples, to sow and reap as God gives opportunity. Let us consider the will of God as more important than our daily bread. Let us learn to be good witnesses to Jesus, testifying to what He is doing and point others to Him. We need to call them, "come and see the One who has done such great things in my life."