

SUNDAY 03.03.2024

RELIGION TO RELATIONSHIP

PART 3

JOHN 4: NIV

**Theme: BREAKING THE
BARRIERS**

BACKGROUND OF SAMARIA

Chapter 4

The city of Samaria was founded by Omri king of Israel (1 Kings 16:21-28) and later it became the capital of the northern kingdom, until when the Assyrians invaded and destroyed it at about 722 B.C.

Then they deported most of the Jews who lived there and brought in pagans (*Cuthah, Awa, Hamath and Sepharvaim*) from “Babylon and settled them in the towns of Samaria” (*2Kings 17:24*).

The Old Testament points out that these new settlers intermarried with the few original Jewish settlers who were not taken into exile, and the result was mixed blood descendants, “while these people were worshiping the Lord, they were also serving their idols.” (*2 Kings 17:41*)

Those who were living in exile felt betrayed, and when they came back to rebuild the Temple for the Lord, they refused to allow the Samaritans to partake in the rebuilding. (*Ezra 4:1-6*).

Because of this, the Samaritans through Sanballat and Tobiah tried to prevent the rebuilding of the city wall (*Nehemiah 4*). The hatred between Jews and Samaritans became too great to be healed, and slowly the two groups separated completely.

We can see from here that Jesus was going to a danger zone, but the interaction he had with that Samaritan woman broke barriers and set a new agenda for a fresh relationship between God, Jews and the Samaritans.

Jesus had been in Judea for some time, while in Jerusalem he attended the Passover (2:13), cleansed the Temple (2:14-22), at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name (2:23), and later held talks with Nicodemus (3:1-21). In the Judean countryside, he and his disciples baptized many people. (3:22).

In chapter 4, “Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John ... Jesus, knowing that His success in winning disciples was a subject of concern to the Pharisees, left Judea and returned to Galilee (4:1-3).

Although the shortest route from Judea to Galilee crossed Samaria, it was not the usual one for the Jews to take, because of general hostilities between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews often preferred the longer route, which crossed over Jordan and went through Perea when travelling between Judea and Galilee.

Verse 4 indicates that Jesus had to break that barrier by going through Samaria. (*an area shunned by many Jews*), by going through Samaria, Jesus demonstrated that, no barrier can stand between him and his people.

1) Yet at the well, we see Jesus breaking another barrier, He shared water with a Samaritan woman, Jews were not permitted to share meals with Samaritans ... *“You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”* (4:9

a) There are other instances in the Bible where Paul rebuked Peter by saying, “while Peter was in Antioch he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. (Gal. 2:11-13).

2) SIN is another barrier that was broken, The Samaritans had been labeled as sinners and impure people, Yet Jesus chose to spent time with this woman at the well and later agreed to stay with the Samaritans people for two days (4:40).

a) Jesus became a friend of tax collectors and generally the sinful people who were not only despised by the supposedly “righteous” but were thought to be unworthy of attention. (Matt. 9:10-17). He gave time and energy to relationships.

3) The last barrier was the place of worship between Samaritans and Jews. The Samaritan woman seemed to understand the debate between the Jews and Samaritans over a place of worship. “*Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.*” (4:20).

a) Jews had their Holy site and Samaritans too, (Mt. Gerizim). Both Jews and Samaritans ridiculed each other in respect of the others holy site.”

Jesus' response was to point out the temporary nature of locations for worship and to teach the correct way to worship God. True worship is in spirit and in Truth (4:23-24). It's in one's own soul where true worship takes place.

CONCLUSION

What can we learn from this story? We can see that this woman was not in a hurry to take the water home, and as she continued to spend time with Jesus, her growing awareness of who Jesus was, became clearer and clearer.

At first Jesus was just a Jew, then she thought that this man must be someone greater than Jacob, wait a minute! “You must be a prophet,” but finally she discovered that this man is the Messiah. Sometimes the barriers stand in the way of truth.

Verses 39-42 are an account of the result of the woman's testimony to her fellow townspeople at Sychar. Her witness combined with the testimony of the Lord Himself caused many Samaritans to confess that Jesus was the Saviour of the world (42), what about us?