

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON 44

John 4:11 *“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 into everlasting life.”*John 4:11-14)

CLEARING THE AIR

INTRODUCTION

We learn that when Jesus engages the intellect of a person, He is challenging. He stretches the mind of an individual, so that they think deeper and farther than they did before. Take, for example, how He challenged this woman: *“If thou knewest **the gift of God!**”* How could a thought be further away from everyday life than that! Then He continues, *“If you knew **who it is** that saith to thee, Give me to drink!”* To her, this seemed like an ordinary Jewish man – *“Thou, being a Jew.”* I suppose that apart from Moses, who the Samaritans recognized as being from God, she had no idea there was a distinctive Jew that stood out from all of the rest of those people. With a few words, Jesus has stretched her mind to consider things that were not within the framework of her religious thought. It is obvious that she had not thought of God as giving gifts, and she certainly had never thought she would personally meet some dignitary. In my own view, I think that many people make the mistake of introducing Jesus within the context of normal things, and ordinary life. See if you can find some record in Scripture that has men introducing Christ or what He brings in such a manner. Was it not the announcement of something impossible that got the the attention of Mary, the mother of our Lord (Lk 1:34). Was it not something that was difficult to understand that drew the attention of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:34)? I am not speaking of mere intellectual inquiry, but of introducing the transcendent working of God. When you liken such workings to earthly experiences, they become hidden to men, because that is not way God makes them known (Lk 8:10). All of this should become very apparent to honest seekers. What God has to give cannot be obtained from any other source, and it ultimately deals with things that will go on after the present heavens and earth pass away. *“Better things”* (Heb 12:24) and *“better promises”* (Heb 8:6) are transcendent to *“this present evil world”* (Gal 1:4).

“OUR FATHER JACOB”

John 4:11 *“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?”*

This woman simply cannot process what Jesus has said. It is beyond the border of

her perception.

THOU HAST NOTHING TO DRAW WITH. This woman has come to the well to draw some water. It is obvious that she brought a vessel with her in which to carry the water back to her residence. She observes that Jesus had no vessel, and there apparently was not one there for general use. Even if she gave her vessel to Jesus, she had already deduced that the water Jesus had to give was not accessible in Jacob's well – at least not with her vessel.

Spiritually speaking, this is like presenting Jesus to a person with a naturally superior and cultured mind. Yet, when the things of God are delineated, the listener finds that the truth of God is beyond the *"carnal mind"* (Rom 8:7), or *"the natural man"* (1 Cor 2:14). **One simply cannot reach down low enough into the human nature to satisfactorily clarify the things of God.** Words taught by the Holy Spirit must be employed, comparing spiritual things with spiritual words – *"which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words"* ^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13). It is rather arresting to consider how many words *"taught by human wisdom"* are being employed these days to communicate the things of God. Such words are to *"sound doctrine,"* what a vessel with holes is to the containing and transporting of wage-coinage in a *"bag with holes"* (Hag 1:6). Each humanly devised word is like a hole through which the truth escapes, rendering it useless to the individual.

THE WELL IS DEEP. Perhaps the water of which Jesus spoke was actually in this well – but it would have to be much deeper than the area from which the people were drawing their water. She admits that the well was *"deep."* No vessel they had used had ever reached the bottom of it.

FROM WHENCE THEN HAST THOU THAT LIVING WATER? Other versions read, *"Where, then, do you get that living water?"* ^{NASB} *"Where can you get,"* ^{NIV} and *"So where do you get this 'living water.'"* ^{CSB} **Her appetite has been whetted!** She wants what Jesus says He can give her, even though she does not have one valid thought concerning it. But, how can it be obtained? Perhaps Jesus knew of a vessel and its rope that could be lowered to that hitherto unknown depth. Jesus said if she knew what He was offering, He would have given her *"living Water"* – **but how would He get it for her.**

One of the embarrassing weaknesses of the Christianity of our day is that it is too simplistic. It does not offer something that people want, but do not know how to obtain. It deals too much with fleshly improvement, instead of justification and re-creation. New creaturehood, new identity, new access, new ability – this is what Jesus came to give.

ART THOU GREATER THAN OUR FATHER JACOB? This woman had obviously been taught that the Samaritans were in the lineage of Jacob – but they were not. They did not know the *"God of Jacob"* (Gen 49:24). They did not descend from any of his twelve sons. Jacob knew who he worshiped, the Samaritans did not know who they worshiped (John 4:22). **They were living in the land promised to Abraham, but they were not of Abraham's seed!** History tells us they claimed to have come from Joseph – but they did not. They were the descendants of a mixed race, that was wholly unrelated to Jacob (2 Kgs 17:24).

Here, in a sense, the woman challenges the Lord Jesus: *"Art Thou greater?"* – as though that was highly unlikely, perhaps even impossible. **This was not a spiritually dignified inquiry, and Jesus will not recognize it as such.** It was a request driven by ignorance – and ignorance of the worst sort: religious ignorance.

It ought to be noted here that at the point something from God (be it Abraham, Jesus Himself, or the Scriptures) is mixed with something of the world, it loses any connection with

God. This is true of tradition (Mk 7:13), and of people as well. When Jesus is mingled or associated with something men have made, the object becomes *"another Jesus"* (2 Cor 11:4), not the real Jesus.

To this day there are people who assume their association with Jesus because of their identity with an organization, a movement, or a position. In fact, this is a common way of thinking in church circles. Numberless people who claim identity with a certain sect, or strain of theological thought, are assumed to be associated with Jesus by virtue of that identity. No further proof is provided, other than the formal identity with something that is man-made. However, just as surely as the Samaritans were not the offspring of Jacob, so such people are not, because of the institutional identity, *"brethren"* to Jesus (Rom 8:29; Heb 2:17). A legitimate identity with the Lord Jesus Christ is confirmed when His attributes are found in people—i.e. they have been made *"partakers of Christ."* Jesus is *"the Firstborn among many brethren"*—and those *"brethren"* are all like Him. As it is written, *"as He is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). Those are the **only** people **really** associated with Jesus!

THE PHENOMENON OF THIRSTING AGAIN

"¹³ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

JESUS ANSWERED. The expression *"Jesus answered"* occurs sixty-four times in the Gospels. People who are prone to ask questions must remember this. Such knowledge will temper what they ask and how they ask it. We learn from this expression that Jesus does not, so to speak, stand at a distance from the people. He does not ignore honest inquiries, and answers dishonest ones appropriately. If the Holy Spirit admonishes the saved, *"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"* (1 Pet 3:15), you may be sure Jesus will give answer to honest inquirers. The woman has asked a dual-sectioned question: "whence hast Thou that living water? and "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob?" His answer may appear to be avoiding her question, but it is not. It is a pointed answer.

WHOSOEVER DRINKETH OF THIS WATER. *"This water"* is the water in Jacob's well. It is the water the woman came to obtain. It is the only kind of drinking water with which she is familiar. **However, in reality, here was another kind of water,** and it really was a *"water"* dissimilar to the water in Jacob's well, or any other water that was naturally available to man. In this case, the water in Jacob's well was **not** going to be **replaced** by the water of which Jesus spoke. If the woman drank of the water Jesus gave, she would still have to come to Jacob's well to obtain the water housed there.

Actually, this woman was being faced with a hurdle which countless people have not been able to get past. **There is more to life than life in the body.** Mankind is more than flesh and blood. Until Jesus came, very few people had any kind of satisfying knowledge in this area. God had revealed there was such a thing as a soul (Gen 2:7; Kgs 17:21; Psa 42:2,11), or a spirit (Job 2:8; Psa 34:18), but there was little knowledge concerning their sustenance. The same was true of the mind (Deut 18:6; 1 Chron 28:9; Isa 26:3). Jesus said the Gentiles lived for the body, and made clear that was not the way to live: *"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Mat

6:31-33).

To this very day, very few people have a valid understanding of the kind of life Jesus came to give (John 10:10). Countless numbers of people think that *"abundant life"* is enhanced life in the body – health, wealth, pleasant circumstances, and worldly success. This is, in a sense, a *"Jacob's well theology."* Any person who insists on making worldly life their emphasis will not, in that stance, ever drink the water that Jesus has to give. This circumstance answers a lot of troubling questions.

The professing church is unspeakably weak in this area, and it is a reproach of staggering proportions. For the average professing Christian, the time spent nurturing and culturing the *"inner man"* (Eph 3:16) is wholly disproportionate to what it should be. Spiritual anemia pervades the professing church at staggering levels. In fact, if a person were to confine his analysis to Christendom as it stands, a satisfactory case could not be established for the existence of an all-powerful Savior, the Captain of our salvation. This is not a matter of merely finding fault. Before God's appointed remedy for humanity can ever be realized, the condition of humanity must be seen – and it cannot be seen, so to speak, from Jacob's well! It must be seen within the context of Christ Jesus the Lord Himself.

SHALL THIRST AGAIN. Other versions read, *"will be in need of it again,"* ^{BBE} *"will become thirsty again,"* ^{IE} and *"will get thirsty again and again."* ^{MESSAGE} These words do not mean the person will have to take another drink, or that another time will come when it will be necessary to drink water. Jesus is speaking of a time when the person will run out of the available source of the water. In the case of this woman, the time would come when she would have to get a vessel, go to the well of Jacob, and once again draw a temporary supply of water. *"Thirst,"* then, was not speaking of a sensual condition, but of a personal supply. The woman might obtain a larger vessel, and be able to draw a larger supply. However, the supply would eventually run out, and even that larger vessel would have to be filled once again . . . and again, and again.

Now, Jesus has introduced a condition of sufficiency that is foreign to everything natural. He is speaking of *"eternal life,"* as compared to life in the world. He will confirm that eternal life cannot be nurtured by anything in this world – even Jacob's well. There is nothing in this world that can nurture or feed eternal life – not the wisdom of the world, the benefits of the world, or anything that can become depleted, or that can run out. Mark it well, anything that comes short of *"eternal"* cannot add anything truly profitable to the believer. I know there are temporal advantages that give some measured benefit – things referred to as *"necessary uses"* (Tit 3:14). However, you dare not fill your life with such things. That would be like storing a lot of vessels filled with water from Jacob's well. Also, the driving compulsion for *"quick-fixes"* must not be allowed to dominate our thinking and our lives. It is imperative that we seek long-term benefits that do not fade, wane, and diminish.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WATER IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF PLACE

"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 into everlasting life."

This is a spiritually pregnant sentence. It holds the secret to spiritual life, lifting it from the caldron of carnality, and the dry pit of human wisdom. This fits well into the expression, *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh"* (Rom 8:3).

WHOSOEVER DRINKETH. Other versions reads, *"whoever takes the water,"* ^{BBE} *"whoever drinks from the water,"* ^{CEB} *"if anyone drinks the water,"* ^{IE} and *"whoever once drinks of the water."* ^{MONTGOMERY}

What the Lord gives must be appropriated. It must be taken within, imbibed, or ingested. It must become part of the individual. If it is faith that is being given (Phil 1:29; 2 Pet 1:1), then the person must commence to believe (1 Cor 1:21). If it is peace that is given (John 14:27), then the peace of God is to rule the heart and mind of those possessing it (Col 3:15). If repentance is given (Acts 5:31; 11:18), then the one receiving it is to *"repent"* (2 Cor 7:10). If grace is given, then what grace does is to be found in the individual (Tit 2:11-12). If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, then we are to be found loving God (1 John 5:2), Christ (2 Cor 5:14), and the people of God (1 John 3:14).

The world has seen enough of people who say they are "saved," or are "Christians," but bear no evidence of it. A person simply cannot drink of the water that Jesus gives without it impacting how they think and live. Further, we will see from this text that the drinking of reference is the **initial** drinking, not a repeated drinking.

THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM. This is *"water"* that is given. **Jesus does not sell it.** There are things Jesus does sell to those who have backslidden. As He said to a backslidden church, *"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see"* ^{NKJV} (Rev 3:18). Observe, that *"water"* Christ gives is not in that list! This water has to do with eternal life, which cannot be purchased by those without it. There must be a personal death, not a purchase!

SHALL NEVER THIRST. Other versions read, *"Will never be thirsty,"* ^{NRSV} *"never be in need of drink again"* ^{BBE} *"will never get thirsty again-- ever!"* ^{CSB} *"shall not thirst for ever,"* ^{DOUAY} and *"shall never, no never, be thirsty any more."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

I do not believe some of the versions did a good job of translating this verse. **Jesus is not speaking of the sensation of thirst, but of the ability to satisfy that thirst.** In Scripture, thirsting speaks of the personal **inability** to satisfy that thirst (Ex 17:3; Deut 28:48; Judges 15:18; Isa 5:13; 50:2).

A WELL WITHIN. Later Jesus will refer to this experience in these words: *"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:36-37). Through the Holy Spirit, John interprets what this is: *"But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified"* (John 7:39). This, then, is a view of the *"gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38; 10:45). Paul refers to this when he wrote to the Thessalonians, *"God, who hath also given unto us His holy Spirit"* (1 Thess 4:8). John also referred to God giving us the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24; 4:13). Paul also wrote of receiving the Holy Spirit as Him being *"shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior"* (Titus 3:6).

This is all speaking about the Lord putting the well within. The giving of the Holy Spirit is the placement of the well within, where it *"springs up"* in such epochal proportions that is it like a mighty river that flows forth from, his belly.

SPRINGING UP INTO ETERNAL LIFE. Other versions read, *"a spring of water welling up to eternal life,"* ^{NIV} and *"shall become a spring of water welling up (flowing, bubbling) [continually] within him unto (into, for) eternal life."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This refers to nothing less than the renewing ministry of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5), and

the *"change"* that He works within the believer, from one increasing stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). This is the ministry that brings the knowledge of God (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20), and *"the fruit of the Spirit"* (Gal 5:22-25). The **only** way this will not happen is for the Spirit to be grieved (Eph 4:30) or quenched (1 Thess 5:19). Solomon alluded to this when he wrote, *"a good man shall be satisfied from himself"* (Prov 14:14). This will yield experiences like, *"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience"* (2 Cor 1:12), and *"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another"* (Gal 6:4).

Every person in Christ has this internal well – a well that is springing up into a river that flows out of them! However, many believers do not know this. They live in cycles of moroseness, as though they must have the well put in them again. Your faith can find this well! The experience of discouragement is the result of not drinking from the well. I understand that God sometimes leads us through dark places, but He never stops up the well. It never ceases to flow. The believer will *"never thirst."* **Find the well!**