

## THE WATER OF LIFE.

– JAN. 29. – JOHN 4:5-15. –

*"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." – John 4:14.*

EARLY in his ministry, in sending forth the Apostles to preach the Kingdom of God at hand, our Lord had instructed them that they were not to go amongst Gentiles nor to Samaritan cities to deliver their message. It was easy to avoid the Gentiles, because comparatively few of them resided in Palestine: the governors of the land, Herod and Pilate, the centurions, and the soldiers, were probably the only Gentiles they were likely to meet, and these they were to seek to avoid, as the message of the Kingdom was not for them. But it was a difficult matter to avoid the Samaritans, for the district called Samaria lay between Judea proper and Galilee, and was necessarily passed through repeatedly by our Lord and his chosen twelve.

The Samaritans, it will be remembered, were not Jews, altho they were worshipers of God, and had come largely under the influence of the teachings of the Law. They were descendants of those mixed peoples which were placed in possession of the land of Israel, as colonists, when the ten tribes were taken captive and colonized amongst the Gentiles. As the Israelites in a foreign land took up with the religious customs of those lands to a large extent, so these Gentiles, transported to Palestine, took up with many of the religious customs, etc., related thereto. But their belief in God, and the fact that they worshiped the true God, did not constitute them proper subjects for the Gospel call, which was confined exclusively to the natural seed of Abraham up to the time of our Lord's rejection; – then their house was left desolate, and the middle wall of partition between them and other nations was broken down, and the Gospel of the Kingdom was sent forth, without restraint, to whosoever would have the ears to hear it.

It was while our Lord and his disciples were passing through this Samaritan territory, between Galilee and Judea, that, coming to one of the cities of Samaria, he was refused entertainment, and James and John inquired, Wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to destroy them? and Jesus refused, saying that his mission was one of salvation and not of destruction. The Samaritans did not refuse entertainment because they were opposed to the Lord and his teachings, for, quite to the contrary, they apparently would have been very willing to receive him, recognizing him as a teacher sent from God, who performed many wonderful works. Their refusal to entertain him was because he did not purpose to stop with them to teach them, perform miracles in their midst, heal their sick, etc., but was merely passing through in his journey to perform his miracles upon and teach the Israelites.

It was while our Lord and the Apostles were similarly passing through Samaria again, that, weary with his journey, and probably not wishing to appear unkind, nor to be similarly repulsed again, Jesus waited beside Jacob's well, and rested, while the Apostles went to the city of Sychar to replenish their stock of provisions. And in the interim a woman of Samaria met Jesus at the well, when she came to draw water. It was evidently with less of a desire for the water for his own comfort, than from a desire to teach the woman, that **[R2423 : page 26]** our Lord asked her for a drink. While he could not invite her, or any other Samaritan, to a place in the Kingdom, which was the central thought of his Gospel, he could nevertheless appropriately give her some food for thought, which later on might do her good, and prepare her to have a hearing ear against the time when the Gospel call would be unrestricted – for whosoever hath an ear to hear.

The completeness of separation between the Jews and Samaritans, as of different classes or castes, is clearly shown in the woman's surprised reply to our Lord's request. Not that the Samaritans were averse to having fellowship with the Jews, but that the Jews, imbued with the thought that the promises of God were to the seed of Abraham exclusively, would "have no dealings with the Samaritans,"

would ask no favors of them, and apparently would grant few favors to them. While our Lord was bound to act in line with that truth, that the seed of Abraham, and the promises made to it, were distinct and separate from all others, yet he was not influenced by feelings of pride, caste, etc., and in this instance he pursued a policy in harmony with the Apostle's admonition – that good be done to all men as we have opportunity, – preferably to the household of faith. (Gal. 6:10.) For the time our Lord was not in a position to speak to Israelites, to do them good, and he was prompt to embrace the opportunity to do what good he could to even a Samaritan woman. And therein is a lesson for all of his followers to-day: we should serve the household of faith wherever possible, but when this is impossible, and an opportunity offers, we should seek to do some good to others – to speak words which may help them by and by, if not in the present time or age.

Not entering into a dispute with the woman, nor into explanations of the distinction between the seed of Abraham and others, our Lord proceeds to talk of something much more important to her, and in this also sets a good example to all those who would speak his truth in his name, in his way, wisely. He told the woman of a more important matter, – that he alone could give the water of life. While physically he was weary, and needed the natural water, yet in a higher sense the woman was the weary one, heavy-laden with sin, who needed the invigorating water of life of which the Lord himself is the fountain.

The thought in the expression, "living waters," is that of a fresh spring in contrast with stagnant waters, which become contaminated and foul. The water which our Lord proposed to give the woman was certainly not the holy spirit, for this is distinctly termed the gift of the Father, and is symbolized by the anointing oil. The water of life is the *truth*, which both cleanses and refreshes. A portion of this our Lord could properly give to the Samaritan woman, if she were hungering and thirsting after it, and he did give her a drink of it.

The woman classed herself as a daughter of Jacob, and thus implied a hope on the part of Samaritans that notwithstanding their rejection by the Jews from heritage in the Abrahamic covenant, they nevertheless trusted in some blessing. And indeed there was a mixture of Israelitish stock amongst the Samaritans, for certain poor Israelites had not been deported to foreign countries, and these, ignoring the strictness of the Abrahamic covenant, had intermarried with the Gentiles and in general had abandoned circumcision and the other conditions of Judaism, and hence could be no longer recognized by the Lord as in any respect different from the other nations, – Gentiles. So, too, it was with many of the Israelites who were deported: they mixed and mingled with the Gentiles, abandoned the sign of circumcision in the flesh, and in general all the provisions of the Lord's covenant: these, in every sense of the word, ceased to be Israelites, and had no further hopes under that covenant, – being as much strangers and foreigners to the promises of the Covenant as any Gentiles. [R2424 : page 26]

Thus, from our Lord's treatment of the Samaritans we can readily see the baselessness of the expectation of some, who style themselves "Anglo-Israelites," and claim to be the descendants of these deported Israelites who abandoned circumcision and all the features of the Law Covenant, given to Israel. Those who lean on such a prop lean upon a broken reed. The only Israelites who can hope for any mercy and blessing at the Lord's hands, under the Law Covenant, and as the natural seed of Abraham, are those who have a sufficiency of Abrahamic faith to at least maintain the outward signs in the flesh, and an outward attempt at obedience to their Law Covenant. As for the others, who become part and parcel of the Gentiles, they have neither part nor lot any longer with Israel: they may, however, through Christ, come under the still more beneficent terms of the New Covenant, sealed with his precious blood. But the blessings of the two covenants cannot be mixed, and, as the Apostle Paul distinctly declares, whoever hopes for justification under the Law Covenant and under the New Covenant is making a great mistake, and is falling between them both.

Whosoever he be, Christ profiteth him nothing; he is yet in his sins, and not an heir, neither as a member of the natural seed, nor yet as a member of the spiritual seed. – Gal. 5:2.

The woman's slowness of comprehension is striking, and yet so it is with all of us when first we came in contact with spiritual truths. Our Lord's patience as a teacher, with a congregation of only one, and that one a woman of a low caste, should be a lesson to all of his followers who seek to distribute to others a taste of the water of life.

Our Lord's explanation of the peculiarities of the [R2424 : page 27] water of life of which he is the fountain for mankind is very beautiful, but its force can be appreciated only by those who have received this blessing at his hands – only by those to whom he has communicated his truth and who have been sanctified by that truth, set apart as his disciples – as fountains of truth for others.

Errors, falsities, may satisfy temporarily the cravings of those who have never yet tasted of the *truth*, the water of life; but nothing can give permanent, lasting satisfaction except the truth: and our Lord himself, the Word, the Logos, the message of the Father, full of grace and truth, is the embodiment and representative of this satisfying water of life. Whoever receives the Lord as his Redeemer and Leader and Teacher, through whom all the gracious promises of God are to be fulfilled; – whoever receives this water of life, receives a satisfying portion, and will never be found looking for truth in other directions. It will satisfy his longings as nothing else could do, and so abundantly as to leave no appetite for strange waters.

The saints, the Body of Christ, the prospective Bride, are the only ones who receive this water of life in its fullest and completest sense during this Gospel age; and of them it is true that this water is always fresh, springing up within them everlastingly. And when these many well-springs shall in God's due time be brought together in the Kingdom, then will be fulfilled through them unitedly, as the Body of

Christ, the prediction, "Out of thy belly shall flow rivers of living water." – John 7:38.

This river of water of life does not flow at the present time: it cannot flow out to the "nations" until all the "little flock" as well-springs shall be brought together in the Kingdom. And thus it is pictured in Revelation, that after the throne, the Kingdom, is established, from under it shall flow the river of water of life, clear as crystal. **Truth** will then flow as a mighty river, refreshing and blessing the whole earth, and causing the trees of promise to bring forth "leaves for the healing of the nations [the heathen]." And then shall be fulfilled a promise of the Scriptures which is misapplied by many to the present time: "The spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) The Bride cannot say, Come, in this sense of the word, until she becomes the Bride, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the new age has fully opened. Neither can she invite the whole world to come to the river of truth until she herself has been glorified, and until that river of life flows. While looking forward to that glorious day, when grace shall be free to every creature, we nevertheless rejoice in the election of the present time, in which the Gospel call is intended not for everyone, but for only those who have ears to hear, "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." – Acts 2:39.

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