

## **NOTHING TO DRAW WITH AND THE WELL IS DEEP.**

– FEB. 18. – JOHN 4:5-26. –

*"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

SAMARIA was the name of a stretch of country lying between Judea and Galilee; we might call it a county, and say that its chief city, of the same name, was its county-seat. Its inhabitants were known as Samaritans, and the Jews, while dealing with them commercially, would have no intercourse with them socially and religiously, but treated them in every respect as they treated Gentiles in general, as being outside of divine favor, "aliens and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, without God, and having no hope in the world." (Eph. 2:12) The ancestors of these Samaritans were Gentiles, and were transported to Samaria centuries before, as the Israelites were transported to Babylon, by Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings 17:24-41.) These Gentiles, through contact with the Jews, and through intermarriage with certain renegade Jews, obtained a smattering of knowledge of the Jewish hopes and worship, combining these to some extent with false ideas of their own. As a people they are described by the Apostle's words as feeling after God, if haply they might find him. (Acts 17:27.) But the time had not yet come for God to reveal himself to the world, or in any sense of the word to accept Gentiles: thus far all divine favor had been concentrated upon Israel, the seed of Abraham, and upon only such of those as maintained their covenant relationship by circumcision; hence the Jews were right in not acknowledging the Samaritans, and in having no dealings with them religiously, nor intermarrying with them socially. This was not a matter of bigotry, but of divine regulation and prohibition. – Deut. 7:1-6.

It will be remembered that our Lord distinctly set the seal of his approval to this course, when sending forth his disciples to declare the

Kingdom of God at hand. He said to them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and *into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not*; for I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*." We remember, too, the city of the Samaritans concerning which the Apostles James and John said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire from heaven, to consume them?" To whom Jesus answered, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of. The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Nevertheless, we remember that Jesus would not perform his miracles in healing the Samaritan sick, and that it was for this reason that the Samaritans resented and would not receive him, or permit him to pass through their city on his journey. – Luke 9:51-56.

It was during one of these numerous journeys from Judah through Samaria, en route to Galilee, that our Lord, wearied from the exhaustion of preaching and from the further exhaustion of his vitality in healing the sick, and from journeying, rested at Jacob's well, while his disciples turned aside to a village to purchase provisions.

Jacob's well had a great reputation throughout that region, because of the purity of its waters; that being a limestone country most of the water found was brackish, but Jacob's well, sunk to a depth of over a hundred feet, and about eight feet in diameter, struck a crevice in the rock, which yielded a large supply of [R2574 : page 45] desirable water. We are to remember, too, the scarcity of water in that part of the country, especially at some seasons of the year, which accounts for the fact that the Samaritan woman of our lesson had quite a distance to come to obtain her supply at this good and never failing well-spring. When she arrived, Jesus, who was sitting on the curb of the well, resting, was at once recognized by her as a Jew, and she was at once recognized by him as a Samaritan, not merely by facial lineaments, but also by distinctive features of dress – the Jews having a white fringe on their garments, while the Samaritans used blue.

For a Jew to make a request, to ask a courtesy, of a Samaritan, was unusual; and consequently when Jesus asked for a drink of the

water the woman was drawing she was astonished enough to inquire how it came that he, a Jew, would make such a request of her, a Samaritan, and her question has in it the element of boldness, which is explained later on by her acknowledgment that she was not a virtuous woman. All this, however, makes it the more remarkable that our Lord would condescend to have any intercourse with her. There is a lesson in this, however, along the line of the Apostle's words, "Condescend to men of low estate." We cannot avoid supposing that the reason why many Christian people would utterly disdain to speak to such a woman is that they have almost unconsciously to themselves imbibed the spirit of their religious teachings, which would declare that God would so abominate such a person that he would deliver her over to the devil, to be eternally tormented, as soon as she came into his hands at death. They reason, almost unconsciously, that one so despised of the Lord should be shunned and spurned by humanity. They need a clearer knowledge of the divine Word respecting God's attitude toward sinners, his unwillingness that any should perish, and his provision that the wilfully wicked, who reject all his mercies, shall not be tormented, but be blotted out of existence. (2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 3:23.) True views of the divine character and plan are very helpful to God's people in shaping their course properly.

Had there been a company of Jews to whom the Lord could have talked at this time, we are bound to suppose that his energies would have been expended on their behalf, to the neglect of the disreputable Samaritan; but there being none of the "children" to be "fed" at the time, he let some of the crumbs of knowledge and blessing fall to the Samaritans, who, like the Gentiles, were not "children," but in comparison were "dogs." (See Matt. 15:27.) Our Lord's course here is an instruction for his followers, an illustration of the Apostle's words that we should "do good *unto all men as we have opportunity*, especially to the household of faith." Further, it illustrates our Lord's own declaration, that it was his meat and drink to do the Father's will, to be engaged in the Father's business. Altho he was weary, and knew that further talking would interfere with his rest and refreshment, he

was ready to sacrifice his own convenience that he might be helpful to another, even to a social outcast. So the Apostle exhorts all of the Lord's people to be "instant in season and out of season," in preaching to willing ears.

There was wisdom in our Lord's method of introducing himself to the woman. He made a request that would not be difficult for her to comply with, and at the same time he laid himself under obligation to her; and experience shows that this is one of the best methods of approaching all – condescension and an expression of confidence in their generosity, with the implication which it gives of willingness to return the favor in some manner.

Not heeding the rudeness of the woman's reply to his request, our Lord proceeded to teach a lesson respecting the grace of God, using the good water of Jacob's deep well as an illustration, telling the woman that if she understood the privilege she enjoyed she in turn would be asking him for "living water" – flowing water, not stagnant, always fresh. She perceived that there was some deep meaning to our Lord's words. He could not refer to Jacob's well, for he had no leather bucket and cord with which to draw from it; hence her inquiry, Whence hast thou living water? Father Jacob provided this well, and knew of no better water for himself and family. Are you able to provide better water than this? Are you greater than he? Our Lord then led another step in the exposition of spiritual things, assuring her that the water which he had to give was of a different kind; that it would not only satisfy thirst for the time being, but would be a continual well-spring within, ever giving satisfaction.

Water, living water, pure water, is a wonderful symbol, very expressive to everyone: and thirst is another. Thirst is desire, craving, longing. Physical thirst is said to be much more painful than physical hunger. The latter loses its powers gradually in weakness, but thirst continues and intensifies hourly until the very last breath. Water is that

which quenches, which satisfies this demand of nature: and so there is also a soul-thirst, and a water of life which alone can satisfy it.

Every ambition and desire is a thirst. A man's greatness, his individuality, is measured **(1)** by the number of his thirsts or desires; **(2)** by the character or quality of those thirsts or desires; **(3)** by the capacity and intensity of those thirsts or desires. And true education is the instructor of men as respects proper **[R2575 : page 46]** and improper desires, or thirsts: and respecting which should be gratified, and how to do so most wisely. He who has no desires has nothing to satisfy, and is practically a nonentity. The lesson of life is not that we should be without desires and plenty of them, but that these desires should be transformed from sinful desires to righteous desires, from sinful cravings to holy cravings. Thus the followers of the Lord are to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and are to be filled – satisfied – not by losing their desires, but by realizing them – by appropriating the Lord's provision, which is abundant and continuous, satisfying all proper longings. Improper longings are to be resisted, controlled, rooted out, while proper longings are to be built up, cultivated, to be supplied and to be enjoyed forever.

This satisfying water of life can be obtained from no other source than our Redeemer, and all who have received it well know it and can never be sufficiently thankful for it; for in it they have the peace of God which passeth all understanding ruling in their hearts. Instead of thirst for honor amongst men, they have the thirst for fellowship and honor with the Heavenly Father and the Redeemer. Instead of a thirst for earthly wealth, their transformed desires now thirst for heavenly treasures. Instead of thirst for sensual pleasures, their desires are transformed so that their chiefest joys and desires are for spiritual pleasures. And all these thirsts are abundantly and continually satisfied through the refreshment of the Word of Truth, and the holy spirit of the Truth – the water of life which is communicated to us by our Redeemer, and is in each one a perennial living fountain.

Of course the Samaritan woman did not grasp the meaning of our Lord's words, nor could we, under the same circumstances, for we are to remember that the well from which our Lord gives us to drink is deep, and that neither the Samaritan woman nor we have anything to draw with. We however, living under the new dispensation of the holy spirit, have been abundantly supplied, for, as the Apostle declares, "The spirit searcheth all things, yea, the *deep things* of God....That we might know [appreciate, be satisfied with] the things that are freely given unto us of God." – 1 Cor. 2:10,12.

Our Lord did not answer the woman's request for the true water of life, **(1)** because the time for bestowing the holy spirit of the Truth had not yet come, and did not come until after the great sacrifice at Calvary – until Pentecost. **(2)** Because she was a Samaritan, and as such could not receive divine favor and the holy spirit until the appointed time which was not until the door of favor would be open to all Gentiles, – not until three and a half years after Pentecost: nevertheless the woman's interest and faith and the faith of her townsmen seem to indicate an honesty of heart pleasing to the Lord, on account of which he let fall to them some "crumbs" of comforting truth which may have prepared them for the Gospel when later it was fully opened to them and to all Gentiles. **(3)** Because the woman was not yet in the condition of heart to receive the water of life. It was unnecessary to explain to the woman the first two reasons, since the last was a barrier which she could more readily understand, and hence our Lord called her attention to the fact that she was living in sin. She perceived that he was gifted with a prophetic insight which permitted him a stranger to know of her sinful course of life, without asking.

It may be queried, why our Lord would thus confer with a woman unprepared to receive the blessings he had to give, and one to whom he could not have given the blessing then, even if she had been prepared. The answer is **(1)** that he was making use of an opportunity to its fullest possible advantage; **(2)** that despite her sinful course of life the Lord saw traits of honesty in the woman's character, evidenced

from the narrative; (3) he might reasonably hope that the influence of this discourse might tend toward righteousness and toward a true thirst for the water of life, which six years later, under the general preaching of the Gospel (without restriction to the Jews) might bring some of these Samaritans to a realization of the fact that the well of the water of life is deep, that they had nothing wherewith to draw, and that if they would have this satisfying portion they must receive it as a gift from him who laid down his life that he might have the privilege of supplying the water of life to whosoever wills. And should the poor Samaritan woman never have come under the influence of the Gospel, with an opportunity to drink of the water of life, we have the assurance of the divine Word that such an opportunity will be granted to her in the future, together with all who do not now have an opportunity.

We praise the Lord for the information afforded us in his Word, that altho the water of life is now given individually, and enjoyed only by the "elect," "even as many as the Lord our God shall call," yet the time is coming that it shall no longer be thus a well of water *springing up within* the Lord's people, but during the Millennial age will be a river of water of life, broad and full and clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and of the Bride the Lamb's Wife and joint-heir, to all the families of the earth: and that then there will not only be trees of life, whose leaves will be for the healing, restitution, of the nations, but that the Spirit and the Bride (then glorified) shall say, Come, and he that heareth may say, Come, and whosoever will may come and have the water of life freely. – Rev. 22:17.

The Samaritan woman seemed anxious to avoid any discussion of her own character and life, and skillfully turned the question to a theological one – whether the Jews or the Samaritans were right in their different views respecting divine worship and its proper place. And in this we see that human nature is much the same today. Men and women of today would rather discuss theological problems and denominational [R2575 : page 47] controversies, than turn their

glance inward, and note the inconsistencies of their own lives, with a desire to reform them. Nor did our Lord too closely press the moral question he had so promptly touched and to some extent made sensitive, and his course in this should be a lesson to his followers. It is sufficient that attention be called to a wrong, and often this is more efficacious than if they be teased and angered, and put on the defensive, by disrespectful "nagging."

Our Lord summed up in few words a great lesson respecting the proper worship of God. He told the woman most pointedly that the Samaritans had neither part nor lot in the matter, and worshiped they knew not what, while the Jews, on the contrary, were following the divine instruction. Nevertheless, he pointed to the fact that a great dispensational change was imminent, in which all distinctions and barriers of place and manner would pass away, and that under the new dispensation of this Gospel age, any and all having ears to hear and eyes to see God's grace would be permitted to worship God anywhere, but only in spirit (with the heart, sincerely), and in truth, in harmony with the divine arrangement, in the true way – through Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and by whom alone there is access to the Father – the Messiah, the procurer and dispenser of the water of life.

An Oriental fable tells of a fountain whose waters were infused with a peculiar power, so that wherever a drop of this water fell on a barren plain it caused a new fountain to gush forth, so that provided with this water the traveller might pass through any desert, however wide or dry, and be always refreshed.

"Wild and fanciful the legend; yet may not meanings high,  
Visions of better things to come, within its shadow lie?  
Type of a better fountain, to mortals now unsealed,  
The full, free salvation of Christ our Lord revealed!

"Beneath the cross those waters lie, and he who finds them there,



All through the wilderness of life the living stream may bear;  
And blessings follow in his steps, until where'er he goes  
The moral wastes begin to bud, and blossom as the rose!"

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