

THE SATISFYING WATER OF LIFE.

John 4:5-14 – Feb. 5.

Golden Text: – "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." – Rev. 22:17.

THE SAMARITANS were descendants of those heathen peoples planted in Palestine by the Babylonian government when the Israelites were deported to the countries of Babylon. Gradually these mixed people, "Samaritans," acquired a love for the land in which they were dwelling, and its ancient history became theirs. They realized that the Jews had been God's favored people, but thought of them as rejected from divine favor and of themselves as having become their successors, not only in the possession of that portion of the Israelites' territory called Samaria, but also to some degree their successors in the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Moses. They accepted the five books of Moses, the pentateuch, but rejected the remainder of the Old Testament Scriptures, which the Jews recognized.

There was even a greater religious antipathy existing between Samaria and the Jews than between Jews and other heathen peoples, because the Samaritan faith came closer to the Jewish faith and was, therefore, in some respects more actively antagonistic to it than were some of the heathen faiths which permitted of no competition. For these reasons there were no dealings between Jews and Samaritans – that is, they might trade one with the other but had no social fellowship. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as impostors, not the children of Jacob at all. True, a few "scalawag" Jews had mingled with the Samaritans, but in so doing they had alienated themselves from their brethren and the religious faith of the nation. The Samaritans, coveting the promises and blessings made to the seed of Abraham, strove to convince themselves that they were now the heirs of those promises, and called Jacob their father, thus making themselves the children of Abraham and heirs of the Oath-Bound Covenant.

JESUS' HUMILITY AND TACT.

Our Lord and his apostles, journeying from Judea to Galilee, passed through the territory inhabited by the Samaritans. They had probably been on their journey since early morning, and at noon time Jesus rested at Jacob's well while the disciples went to a near-by village to purchase food. Water wells in Palestine, as in many parts of the world, are comparatively scarce. Jacob's well, dug fourteen centuries before our Lord's time, was a remarkably good one, deep, abundantly supplied with water and well curbed at the top, with a small mouth about fourteen inches in diameter. It seems to have been considered almost a miracle in its day, and even at the present time it is definitely located, although much filled up and to some degree dilapidated.

A Samaritan woman came to the well for water while Jesus was resting there, and the account of our Lord's interview with her constitutes one of the most striking presentations of divine truth found in the Gospels. It is remarkable that on so many occasions our Lord said remarkable things to not very remarkable people under not very remarkable circumstances. There **[R3496 : page 30]** is encouragement in this for all of his followers: indeed we find that the Lord's principal communications all through this Gospel age have been with the humble – "not many wise, not many great, not many learned hath God chosen, but the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the Kingdom." As then, by the grace of God, we have heard the voice divine speaking peace through Jesus Christ, let us rejoice, yet let us feel humble too, remembering that he is taking of the ignoble things of the world with a view to making of these things the noble, that will reflect his glory and show forth his praise through all eternity as marks of his grace.

Our Lord's request of the woman, that she would allow him to have a drink of the water she had drawn, was a most tactful method of approach to her heart. In so doing he put himself in a measure under

obligation to her. Thus in one sentence he broke the icy barrier which had always existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews claimed superiority, and while the Samaritans did not acknowledge this, they nevertheless felt it to some degree, just as colored people are apt to feel toward the whites. The woman was now ready to talk, but, standing on her dignity, she hasted not to give the drink, but parleyed to ask why a Jew of seemingly high character should act so differently from the custom – should ask water of a Samaritan woman, be willing thus to place himself under obligation to one of those usually treated as inferiors.

Jesus, while probably thirsty, was more anxious to give the word of Truth than to receive the natural water, and instead of allowing himself to be drawn off by the woman's question into a discussion of the rights and wrongs of the Samaritans, he turned the conversation by saying, "If thou hadst known the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked of him and he would give thee living water." The force of this expression is only partially seen until we learn that the words our Lord used, "The gift of God," were the very words customarily used by the water-carriers, who, with water-skins filled with water from such wells, went about the cities crying out in their own language, "The gift of God!" "The gift of God!" Water was thus termed the gift of God, and the woman presumed our Lord's meaning to be, If you had known about *the* water, the gift of God, etc.

Of course the woman did not discern any deeper meaning – how could she? She at once retorted that he had no leather bucket, with camel's-hair rope, to let down for water, and therefore he could not give her to drink – "Whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself and his children and **[R3496 : page 31]** his cattle?" Is there any other water as good as this? Have the Jews got as good a well in all their country?

The value of water is much more appreciated in oriental countries than with us. It means the cooling and refreshment of the blood, the cleansing of the skin, the comfort of life in every way. The poet has expressed its value in the words: –

"Traverse the desert, and then you can tell
What treasures exist in the cold, deep well.
And then you may learn what water is worth.
The gnawing of hunger's worm is past,
While fiery thirst lives on to the last.
The hot blood stands in each gloomy eye.
And 'Water, O God', is the only cry."

"Let heaven this one rich gift withhold,
How soon we find it better than gold."

Our Lord's answer to the woman was, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever shall drink of the water I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." How wonderful this statement must have appeared to the woman! How wonderful it appears to us even after we have learned its real depth and meaning. How we are continually learning more and more about this water of life – appreciating it more and more each day we live, and finding still greater refreshment in it as we continue to partake of it.

As our physical systems call for water continually and cannot do without it, so we have longings and ambitions and thirsts of a higher intellectual order. These the whole world is endeavoring to satisfy, but the thirst for wealth, for influence, for power, is insatiable. What a little farmer or merchant finds of restlessness and lack of satisfaction, the greater farmer and merchant and manufacturer and millionaire and prince and king and emperor find in their larger spheres. We remember the story of how Alexander the Great wept because there were no more

worlds that he might conquer. We remember that Solomon the wise, after having tasted of all the streams of pleasure and novelty which the world could supply to the richest and wisest and most influential man of the time, cried out, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" What the whole world is seeking for and failing to get, our Lord Jesus gives to his people – water of life, satisfaction. Those who receive his blessing have in them wells of water springing up in their hearts "A fountain ever springing." Their longing thirsts are satisfied as nothing else can satisfy them; they have more than ambition could ask. The divine bounties granted to them are exceedingly and abundantly more than they could have asked or thought.

"JESUS HATH SATISFIED! JESUS IS MINE!"

The whole world is seeking for happiness. The few who have truly found Jesus, and who have made a full consecration of their hearts to him, and to whom he has given the water of life – these few have found the happiness which the world is seeking in other directions in vain. They have found a heart satisfaction which is able even to offset trials, sorrows, difficulties and disappointments from other sources, and to glory in this realization, that their experiences are working to their advantage, proving them, preparing them for still greater riches of glory by and by. As the Apostle declares, this new life, this new relationship with Christ under which he furnishes the water of life, has the promise not only of the life which now is, but also of that which is to come.

Quite a good many who bear the name of Christ have a hope toward God as respects the future, but very little of the joys of his salvation in the present time. Such are not living up to their privileges – they have not properly grown up into Christ, their living Head. They need to increase their faith by adding to it fortitude, knowledge, patience, godliness, love of the brethren and love in general. As they thus comply with the terms of the school of Christ they will more and more be able to say not only that the Lord has lifted their feet from the

horrible pit of sin and death and placed them upon the rock Christ Jesus, but also to add, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even the loving kindness of our God."

THE GOLDEN TEXT.

Those who prepared the lesson evidently supposed that they were providing a Golden Text which would be a very key to the lesson, but in this they erred after a very common manner. The Golden Text is part of a picture in Revelation which represents not the conditions of the present time but those of the future – those of the Millennial age. It pictures the Church, the Bride of Christ, complete and glorified, as the New Jerusalem filled with the glory of God; it pictures the water of life proceeding from this glorified New Jerusalem, the Church in Kingdom glory – flowing as a river with the trees of life on either side of it bearing fruits, whose leaves are for the healing of the heathen. It pictures the Spirit and the Bride in the future, saying, "Come" – inviting whosoever will to come and take of the water of life freely.

That picture is future, as is evident not only from the connections of the narrative but because there is at present no Bride, but merely an espoused virgin. (2 Cor. 11:2.) The "very elect" of this Gospel age, who have striven to "make their calling and election sure," await the marriage feast at the close of this age, that they may enter then into the joys of their Lord as his Bride. This scene, then, in which the Bride in conjunction with the holy Spirit will invite to the water of life, is one which pictures the effulgent blessings of the Millennial Kingdom and its blessed opportunities, which shall be extended without restriction to every creature.

There is no such river of the water of life at the present time, and no one is commissioned to use the words of the Golden Text now. Now, as the Lord himself declared, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." The present, therefore, is the time for the special drawing of a special class to the Savior. It includes only those who have the ear to hear and the eye of faith to appreciate the

grace and blessings which are now being offered. Blessed are our eyes for they see and our ears for they hear! We rejoice, however, that by and by all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped, and all shall then have the opportunity for drinking of the water of life to their satisfaction continually.

We who are now favored need not continually to drink at any well or river; but, on the contrary, as explained by our Lord in this lesson, they each have in them a well of water springing up unto eternal life – a "fountain ever springing." O, how rich is our condition! How wonderful are the Lord's bounties granted to those who are of humble and contrite heart and who possess the hearing of faith! Let us indeed abide in him, in his love, and in possession of the bounties he has provided for our refreshment.

