



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

John 4:10-19 Commentary **New American Standard Bible**

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 4:10) Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

In John 3, Jesus spoke with THE teacher of Israel who came to talk to him at night. In John 4, John reported Jesus' second lengthy teaching opportunity when He spoke with a Samaritan woman under the bright noonday sun, a woman He spoke to after she came to Jacob's well to draw water. She never expected to meet the Messiah, and perhaps went to the well at noon to avoid talking with anyone because of her reputation. As Jesus taught Nicodemus, so Jesus took the opportunity to teach a person who would have been despised by most rabbis, Pharisees, and Jews for racial, moral, and spiritual reasons. But Jesus came to take away the sins of the world and the true moral guilt of anyone who would believe in him; still, we find it remarkable that Jesus, the Son of God, would take the time to teach this Samaritan woman about the way of salvation.

Jesus is “the Gift of God.” Remember, “God gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). The gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ is the gift of God. Restoring a right relationship with God by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a gift of God. The merciful forgiveness of sins is a gift of God. Becoming a child of God is a gift of God. God gives all these gifts through Jesus Christ, THE Gift of God. Jesus came to give other gifts not listed above to those who would receive him and become the children of God; but primarily in this verse, the emphasized gift of Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit. In the previous chapter, Jesus also spoke to Nicodemus about the gift of the Holy Spirit and how to receive this gift. To teach his readers more about the Holy Spirit John carried Jesus’ teaching into chapter 4.

“Living water” is the flowing or running water of a stream or river; it appears to be alive because it is moving. “Living water” is contrasted with well water that is not spring fed, or water in a cistern or a pond that can become stagnate. The traditions of the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Samaritans could be compared to the water in a cistern. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we open our minds and hearts to receive living water. Jesus offered to give the woman water that was far superior to well water, even water from Jacob’s well. The woman took Jesus’ words literally, probably as He intended; then, He could move their conversation in the spiritual direction that He wanted to lead her to faith in him. Jesus was truly talking about giving her the gift of eternal life through the Holy Spirit, who would live within her and give her never-ending spiritual life. We understand Jesus’ meaning more fully when we look ahead to another of Jesus’ conversations. In John 7:37-39, Jesus cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ (Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified).”

In human flesh, Jesus, the Son of God, embodied the expression of the merciful, forgiving love of God for all people. In Jesus Christ, God showed His love for Samaritans and people of questionable moral character. Jesus the Messiah asked her for a drink. If she had known the full truth about

Jesus, she would have asked Jesus to meet her moral and spiritual needs, which were truly more important to her than her physical needs.

(John 4:11) She *said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?”

Jesus’ way of life and speaking expressed His concern and openness toward the Samaritan woman, so she spoke freely and openly with Jesus. She said she did not know what Jesus meant by “living water.” She only knew of one nearby water source—the water in Jacob’s well, and she saw that Jesus did not even have a way to draw out that water. She may have suspected that Jesus wanted to talk to her about water other than well water. So, she may have decided she would divert Jesus from speaking of moral or spiritual matters that giving her “living water” or “spiritual water” might involve.

(John 4:12) “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?”

The woman asked Jesus who He was; she was already amazed that He would speak to her, a Samaritan woman, because Jesus was a Jew. The Samaritans honored Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the same as the Jews). God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. The descendants of 10 of Israel’s 12 sons (10 of the 12 tribes of Israel) had composed the Kingdom of Israel, from which the Samaritans descended after the kingdom had been destroyed as part of God’s punishment for their idolatry and immoral practices. The woman did know about and believe in the promise of a Messiah that God was going to send, because His coming is foretold in the Bible books accepted by the Samaritans (the Five Books of Moses). As interpreted by both the Jews and Samaritans, in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18:18, the LORD promised that He would send a Prophet and Messiah, Moses wrote, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet” and “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.” There was much Messianic expectation

throughout Galilee, Samaria, and Judea at that time. She wanted to know if Jesus thought He was greater than their greatest ancestor, Jacob, who became the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. She could think of no one greater than Jacob other than the Messiah who was to come. She might have asked herself, “Could Jesus have thought that He was the Messiah?”

(John 4:13) Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;

First, Jesus spoke the truth to her about the physical water that meets physical needs. We know that after we drink physical water, we will need more physical water later and usually our body will tell us when we need to drink more water. On a deeper level, the teachings of Moses and the laws of Moses and the religious traditions that the Jews and Samaritans accepted would not completely and forever satisfy their spiritual thirst.

(John 4:14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Jesus came to give spiritual water, spiritual truths, and a spiritual presence with God that will totally and forever satisfy our moral and spiritual needs. When we take Jesus and His teachings into our heart, mind, and soul, then the truth and presence of Jesus will satisfy us more and more and give us the blessings of eternal life now and forever. We have already seen that Jesus primarily meant the Holy Spirit when He spoke of “Living Water.” As John the Baptist proclaimed, Jesus would baptize those who believed in him with the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to live within us, we will never be thirsty for any other spirit. The Holy Spirit will totally satisfy spiritually everyone who believes in and follows Jesus. For a conscientious student of the Bible and prayerful believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will spiritually satisfy abundantly and reveal deeper truths about God and eternal life that can be described as “gushing” it is so life transforming.

(John 4:15) The woman *said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.”

After hearing Jesus, the woman kept her attention on physical water. Many people today take running water in their homes for granted, and this woman naturally wanted to avoid the labor of drawing water from a well and carrying it back to her home one bucket at a time. To move her to think about her real and more pressing problems, Jesus directed her to consider her moral and spiritual problems without condemning her. Gradually, Jesus led her to face her real needs and find him as the only solution.

(John 4:16) He *said to her, “Go, call your husband and come here.”

If the woman was to receive the living water Jesus said He could give her, she would need to discover what was blocking her from receiving the Holy Spirit, the gift of Jesus. To begin the process of revealing to her the nature of her deepest needs and the solution, Jesus asked her to go and bring her husband back to talk to him. Under the circumstances of a Jewish rabbi talking to a lone unaccompanied woman, Jesus’ request was reasonable and not threatening or accusing; therefore, she answered Jesus truthfully.

(John 4:17) The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus *said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’;

Though she answered Jesus truthfully, she did not answer Jesus fully. Without suspecting Jesus might have been a prophet, she told a limited version the truth as most of us would do. She had no husband. Jesus commended her for speaking the truth. Perhaps she thought that by denying she had a husband that would end the conversation about her personal life; then, they could go on to talk about other issues without involving anyone else.

(John 4:18) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.”

Recall what John wrote about Jesus knowing what people were thinking and the way they lived; we read in John 2:24-25, “But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone,”

and what Jesus said to and of Nathanael in John 1:47, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” Jesus knew exactly how many men the Samaritan woman had married in the past and why she had married them. John does not tell us if these failed marriages had been the result of her husbands’ or her poor choices and sins. Believing in the five books of Moses, the woman knew that these divorces and fornication were sins. Either way, the trials and tribulations of having had five husbands had to be heartbreaking and humiliating. Neither John nor Jesus needed to describe the details of these five failed marriages and her current situation to her or to us for her to receive the forgiveness and cleansing that Jesus could give her in preparation for her receiving the living water He could give her. Notice the example Jesus gives His followers by loving her and gently leading her step-by-step to saving faith in him.

(John 4:19) The woman *said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.”

Remember Deuteronomy 18:18 above. Through Moses, God explained the role of a true prophet. “I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.” The prophet Jeremiah revealed how we can recognize a true prophet in Jeremiah 28:9, “As for the prophet who prophesies peace, *when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.*” The Samaritan woman concluded that Jesus was a prophet from the fact that He could tell her about her past; therefore, she began to ask Jesus about who was religiously right, the Samaritans or the Jews.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What is the gift of God or what are some of God’s gifts to believers?
2. What are the characteristics of Jacob’s well water, and other water of that type? What happens to people who drink this type of water?
3. What might Jesus have been referring to when speaking of living water?
4. What are some results of the living water that Jesus said He could give?

5. Why did the woman conclude that Jesus was a prophet?

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.