

Session 7 Jesus' Early Ministry in Jerusalem and Samaria (Jn. 3-4)

I. OVERVIEW OF JOHN 1-4

- A. Only John describes Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem (Jn. 2:13), Judea (Jn. 3:22), and Samaria (Jn. 4:4).

Just a quick overview of where we have been the last few sessions. This is Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem after He has been anointed by the Holy Spirit. Now remember the gospel of John is the only gospel—chapters one, two, three, and four—that gives the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. The other three gospels start when He begins in Galilee after this. So if you want to get the very beginning, this is it: His first trip to Jerusalem. His very first act there in John 2: He cleanses the temple. How radical! I mean, for your first act in public ministry— to cleanse the temple. The whole city is in an uproar.

Then He goes through the city and heals a whole bunch of people. So now there is a popular following as well as the leaders' antagonism towards Him. The people are rising up around Him, and that is a really negative combination because the leaders are going to be more hostile than ever against Him. He knew that, yet He did it by the Father's leading.

- B. In Jerusalem, He cleansed the temple and did many miracles—the city was in an uproar.

- C. In this session we see conversations that Jesus had with two different types of people (Jn. 3-4).
Jesus spoke with Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin and a representative of rabbinic Judaism.
Next He spoke with a Samaritan woman who probably had a reputation associated with immorality.

In this session, we are looking at John 3-4 where Jesus has conversations with two very different people. First, in John 3, in Jerusalem He meets Nicodemus, one of the most respected, scholarly leaders in all of Israel. Jesus called him in John 3:10, "the teacher of Israel." Amongst the most respected, if not the most respected teacher, in the land and he is a very conservative, orthodox rabbi. He has problems understanding Jesus' approach, as His approach to him is very different.

Then the next personality is a Samaritan woman whom Nicodemus would have despised. Number one, she is a Samaritan, a Gentile. Number two, she was a woman with an immoral reputation. So there could not be two more different personalities than these who are the very first two people that highlight God's introduction of Jesus to the planet in John 3-4. What the Holy Spirit is saying is that God loves every personality in between an old, scholarly, elite man in the system—a political and spiritual leader—and an outcast woman who has been looked down at in her community—a Gentile who is an idol worshipper. These are the two that introduce Jesus' ministry. In the way that the Holy Spirit organized John 3-4, the Holy Spirit is saying that this is His heart for His people. He has a heart for everyone, "for God so loved the world." This includes everyone, every type of personality.

II. JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS (JN. 3:1-21)

- A. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin (Jn. 3:1; 7:50-51).

¹There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (Jn. 3:1-2)

Well, let's get right into it. John 3:1, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus." He was a ruler of the Jews; that means he is part of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a body of seventy men, like the Senate in our nation. He was one of the senators, so to speak, a very highly respected man. He came to Jesus, verse 2, by night. The common opinion is that he came by night because the city was in an uproar and the Pharisees and the Sadducees were troubled because this young man came out of nowhere and disrupted the temple.

So Nicodemus says, as it were, "I better play this cool. I do not actually want to be seen meeting with Him." Of course, Jesus gets it. Nicodemus says in verse 2, "Rabbi," which is very respectful title, seemingly sincere. I think he was even though a lot of the Pharisees were already hostile by the end of the week after what He did in the city, but Nicodemus said, "We know You are a teacher, and we know You come from God"—that is a big statement for a leader in a high position in the Sanhedrin—"for nobody could do the signs that You did." We know Jesus had cleansed the temple and then done a bunch of miracles; those were His first public miracles in His ministry. Nicodemus said, "God has to be with You."

- B. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again (Jn. 3:3-6). Most Jews assumed that they were a part of the kingdom by virtue of being born in a Jewish family and embracing its religious practices.

³...**"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

⁴**Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old?..."**⁵**Jesus answered, "Most assuredly...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."**⁶**"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."**
(Jn. 3:3-6)

Then Jesus looks at him, "Okay, you are saying God is with Me, so let me get right to the point. Nicodemus, your Jewish heritage is not going to be a benefit for you. I mean it is not a negative, but you are going to need more than a heritage with Jewish lineage. You are going to have to have more than Bible knowledge. You are going to need more than being a respected person in the religious community." Right off the bat, verse 3, Jesus said, "You say I am from God. Well, let Me tell you, you have to be born again," Nicodemus takes a step back, "or you cannot see the kingdom," He says here in verse 3. He goes on in verse 5, "You cannot enter the kingdom. To "see the kingdom" and "enter the kingdom" are synonymous.

The problem is, Nicodemus already thought he was securely a part of the eternal kingdom. He thinks, "I have to be born again to get into the kingdom? What about my heritage? What about my scholarship? What about my Bible knowledge? What about my good works? What are You talking about?"

Jesus says, "Even you, Nicodemus, the highest of the elite, a nobleman, you cannot enter into the kingdom until you are born again."

We all know the story well. In verse 4, Nicodemus asks, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus does not understand.

Jesus says in verse 5, "Unless one is born of the water and of the spirit, he cannot enter." Again, "enter the kingdom" and "see the kingdom" are interchangeable. Verse 6, He said, "That which is born of flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit." The point He is making here: the issue between that which is born of flesh and spirit is not an issue of noble behavior or sinful behavior. (See number 3, below.) Some think if you turn over a new leaf, and you are going to get a new beginning, and you are going to start trying to live more nobly, therefore you will be living "of the spirit." Jesus would say, "No, no. Being born of the spirit is something that takes the Holy Spirit. It is a power above you, beyond you. It is only given as a free gift to those who trust Me." He would go on, "If your noble character just comes out of your humanity and your personality,

it is not the same as the spirit realm. You need access to the eternal kingdom, to the family of God, in the eternal sense, and you have to be born of the spirit.”

Now in Paragraphs one and two I have given two different opinions. Both of them have a whole bunch of scholars for them, so I will just put them both out there for you to review, and you pick the one you feel is right. Some think being born of the water is natural birth. Born of the spirit is spiritual birth; that is logical. That seems to be in the flow of what is going on.

1. Many believe that being “born of water and the Spirit” refers to natural birth and spiritual birth. Water refers to the amniotic fluid that breaks from the womb shortly before childbirth.
2. Others propose that being born of the water and spirit *both* speak of the new birth. The Old Testament often used water to speak of spiritual cleansing and empowering when associated with the ministry of the Spirit (Isa. 32:15; 44:3-5; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:9; Zech. 14:8). In Ezekiel 36:25-27, water and spirit come together to signify salvation.

Others believe—and this is very reasonable—that born of the water and of the spirit speak of the same thing because in the Old Testament there are many passages where salvation and renewal is compared to water, and it is associated with the spirit. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus who is a man who knows the Old Testament, so Jesus might have been referring to the spiritual new birth as related to that water of life, that salvation that is associated with water in the Old Testament. Either way it goes, both positions I think are true, but I just wanted to give you those two options of how to interpret that passage.

3. The issue between flesh and spirit is *not* an issue of noble and sinful expressions of human nature (Jn. 3:6). The new birth is much more than a new resolve to make godly choices. It is the work of the Spirit freely giving us a new position with God and a new nature (1 Jn. 3:9).

The big point is that some people think, “If I reform my character, I ought to get into the spiritual kingdom.” Jesus says that there is no amount of reform can get you in. You need access by the Spirit. It is a gift of God that only the Holy Spirit can give you by being born of the Spirit. Nicodemus was a little perplexed by this.

- C. Jesus gently criticized Nicodemus for not understanding these things since he was “the” teacher of Israel (v. 10). His knowledge of the Scriptures should have given him understanding of God’s promise to give His people a new heart by the powerful work of the Spirit and that no one can come to God in his own strength or righteousness without God’s gracious help and cleansing.

⁹Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?” (Jn. 3:9-10)

In verse 10, Jesus said to Nicodemus, in essence, “Why are you so confused?” It is a little bit of a rebuke; it is a gentle criticism. He said, “You are the teacher of Israel. You are notably the best teacher in the land, the most knowledgeable man of the Old Testament. Why is it that you cannot, from your Old Testament knowledge, grasp what I am telling you? Everything that I am telling you is rooted in the Old Testament, Nicodemus.” So Nicodemus takes a step back and he is thinking. Jesus is saying, “Remember in the Old Testament the Spirit gives you a new heart and a new spirit? The Holy Spirit does, right?”

Nicodemus is thinking, “Yeah, I guess so. Yeah it does. That is right.” In the Old Testament, you can only be saved by the gift of God. You cannot earn it, even in the Old Testament. Some people have the idea you earned

it in the Old Testament, then it is a free gift in the New Testament; that is not true. Abraham and David were saved by faith, by believing in God's salvation. Nicodemus says, "Okay, yeah."

Nicodemus, you cannot get there on your own strength! There are many verses in the Old Testament that make that clear. So why are you so confused and why are you so entrenched in the popular idea of the day that because you are a Pharisee you can earn it by your religious devotion? Nicodemus is taking a step back. "You know, I have never had a man talk to me with this kind of clarity and authority, particularly never a carpenter from Nazareth. Where did you learn this?"

- D. Jesus explained that He could speak reliability about heavenly truths because He had descended and ascended from heaven and was presently in a dynamic connection with heaven (Jn. 3:13-16). Jesus was the embodiment of the open heaven reality that He spoke earlier to Nathaniel about (Jn. 1:51).

¹³No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (Jn. 3:13-16)

Verse 13, Jesus says, in essence, "Let Me tell you why I can tell you about spiritual truth. Let Me tell you why what I am saying is reliable." Nicodemus nods to go ahead. Jesus says, verse 13, "No one"—no prophet in the Old Testament is what He is talking about—"ascended into heaven, then came back down to earth, but the Son of Man." Nicodemus does not know that is who Jesus is or that He has gone up and down a few times through history. His origin is in the spiritual realm; that is where He came from. He is the uncreated God there; He was never created, but that is where He came from. So Jesus was saying, "The reason I can say these truths so dogmatically and you can rely on them is because I am the only Man of that realm. There is no other prophet in Israel's history or human history who has ascended and descended from the heavenly realm to the earthly realm numerous times. I have access to that realm."

Then look what He says in verse 13, "Nicodemus, let Me really trip you right now. The Son of Man is in heaven right now."

Nicodemus is thinking, "What?" because Nicodemus is kind of getting the idea that He is claiming to be this Son of Man. Jesus has not quite said it yet, but He is going to get there.

Jesus said, "He is in heaven. That is, right now by the Spirit I have full access to the heavenly realm, full authority at My Father's right hand. Even right now though My body is on the earth, I have full access to the realm of the spirit and full authority in both realms even now. That is why you can take My words as reliable."

You know people say all the time that all religions are the same. Well, they are not at all. Our faith is the only faith in the nation, in history, that is revealed by a Man who has gone up and down a number of times and who lives in both realms. No other prophet has ever had that reliability, that credibility, to speak truth. That is one reason why He was so bold about it.

Now verse 14 is really going to be a shocker. He says, "Nicodemus, remember the story when Moses took the bronze snake and put it on a wooden pole."

Nicodemus thinks, "What does that got to do with being born again?"

Jesus goes on, "I will tell you in a minute, but remember that story?" It is in Numbers 21. Of course Nicodemus knew the story well. He was a profoundly knowledgeable Bible teacher.

In Numbers 21, a great plague broke out in Israel when they were out in the wilderness after Egypt. They were out in the wilderness, and a great plague broke out because the children of Israel were responding persistently in a rebellious, sinful way before God. These snakes broke out all throughout the camp of Israel. People were dying. Thousands were dying.

Now I do not know if Moses knew this was a prophetic sign about Jesus, but God told Moses, "See those snakes biting everybody and killing them? Put a bronze snake on a wooden pole."

Moses says, "Okay. What is that going to do?"

"Then tell everyone to look at that picture of sin cursed on a wooden pole. Tell them to look at it. If they do that, their life will be physically spared, and they will be healed."

Moses must have thought, "Okay, bronze snake on a pole lifted up."

All of Israel looked to it in faith. They did not earn their healing. They looked to it in faith, and they were saved.

Nicodemus says, "I know the story."

Jesus says, "Well, do you really know the story? Because the bronze serpent speaks of sin, Nicodemus. The wooden pole speaks of the cross that I am going to be lifted up on in the days to come. Even as Moses lifted up the serpent on a wooden pole for all to look at and by faith receive salvation and life, even so I am going to be lifted up on a pole. Everyone that looks to Me, I will be the price, the payment, for their sin like the picture of that snake. They will be freed from the debt of sin, and they will have eternal life."

Nicodemus must have been thinking, "What? No one has ever applied that story to the Son of Man!"

Jesus would say, "But nobody had the authority or the insight to apply that story to the Son of Man. Here it is, teacher of Israel. I will be lifted up. All who look to Me by faith, with confidence they will receive eternal life, not just physical life like they did with Moses. It will go way beyond that, because Moses was just a picture. They will receive eternal life."

I mean this must have been blowing Nicodemus' mind. He might have said, "You are saying the Son of Man who is clearly the Messiah from Daniel 7"—very famous, everybody knew that—"is going to be lifted up on a wooden pole?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because God so loved the world that God is going to make a way for everybody to be saved not just from physical death but saved to have eternal life forever and forever."

1. Jesus associated the new birth to the time when Moses lifted up a bronze snake (Num. 21:4-9). Deaths from snakebite had broken out on Israel due to their complaining. They were to look at a bronze serpent lifted up on a wooden pole—all who looked with faith were healed.
2. Jesus implied that it should not be new to Nicodemus that God should give new life to those who looked with faith to a figure on a wooden pole. The serpent was a picture of sin, and the pole was a picture of the cross. This is Jesus' first prediction of His death (Jn. 8:28; 12:32, 34).

3. Jesus clarified why He was to be lifted up (Jn. 3:15)—that anyone may receive eternal life. God so loved the world that He sent His Son at such a great cost to save people (Jn. 3:16).
4. We see Jesus as the One who *reveals heavenly things* (Jn. 3:13). He descended from heaven several times (Josh. 5:13-15), so He was qualified to teach us truths known only in heaven. Jesus is the only reliable source of truth related to the nature of God, man, and salvation.

Number four, we see Jesus in verse 13 as the One who reveals heavenly things. He is the one who ascends and descends. The real point of the fact that He has gone up and down is that His truth is reliable. That is the point He is making to Nicodemus. Jesus is saying, "I may be making bold, exclusive claims, but I have authority. I have credibility to do it. I lived in that realm, I heard the Father in that realm, and I am here to tell you what My Father told Me to tell you." Again, this would be a heavy thing for a great teacher in Israel to look at a man, a carpenter from Nazareth, and conclude these things could be true about Him.

5. We see Jesus as the *suffering and exalted Savior* (Jn. 3:14). To be lifted up includes lifted up on the cross to death and then lifted up from the grave to sit at the Father's right hand.

Jesus is not only the One, but also reveals that perfect yet exclusive truth that comes from His lips that is necessary for salvation, that He is also the suffering and exalted Savior. He is the One lifted on the pole. Now you will find it is a dual reference in the gospel of John when it says the Son of Man is lifted up. He is lifted up in death on the cross, then He is lifted up out of the grave in the resurrection. Remember that to Jesus being lifted up in death on the cross and being lifted up in the resurrection from the grave was one reality that would glorify the Father and would save the nations. It was His hour of glory, even the cross was. It was one reality of being lifted up.

Do you know the song about when Jesus is lifted up? Well, it was years ago. A lot of you do not know, but anyway, in the 1970s we used to sing this song that when He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Himself. Some people think that is just lifted up to the cross, but it is also raised from the dead from the grave, when He is exalted. Both ideas are associated with that phrase in the gospel of John, "lifted up."

- E. Jesus elaborated on the Father's love (Jn. 3:16) by teaching that He did not plan the incarnation of Jesus to judge people, but to provide salvation (Jn. 3:17-18). Jesus came into an *already* lost and condemned world to save some. People were *already* under judgment long before the incarnation. They were in need of a Savior long before Jesus was sent by the Father on His saving mission.

¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in...the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light [incarnate Christ] has come into the world, and men loved darkness... ²⁰Everyone practicing evil hates the light...lest his deeds should be exposed."
(Jn. 3:17-20)

Verse 17: now He is going to look at Nicodemus right in the eye. He says, "Nicodemus, let Me tell you this," because Nicodemus is troubled. He said, "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world or judge the world, but that the world would be saved through Him."

Nicodemus is thinking, "Okay, God sent His Son?" Remember, when Jesus calls Himself the Son of God they understood He was claiming deity, and indeed He was. So Nicodemus was thinking, "God has a human Son? Is that what You are saying?"

He answers, "Yes, God sent His Son in the incarnation. The purpose was not to condemn the world, but to save it." Now but this is one of the most misquoted, misunderstood passages in the Bible, that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it. Jesus qualifies it in the next verse, verse 18, so that people could not draw the wrong conclusion or they should not draw the wrong conclusion. He said, "He who believes in the Son of God is not condemned."

At this point, Nicodemus does not quite understand. He is getting the idea Jesus is claiming that is who He is. Jesus has not said it really directly. Nicodemus is probably thinking, "Please do not say that! No man is God. Please do not go there. If You are the Son of Man, certainly You are not going to be lifted up on a wooden pole, as that for sure means death." By the way, this was the first indication in scripture of Jesus' physical death from His own mouth. It was to Nicodemus on His first visit there in Jerusalem.

He says in verse 18, that he who believes in this Man—of course He is talking about Himself—is not going to be condemned. Here in verse 18 is the balance of verse 17. "He who does not believe is condemned already." That is an interesting truth because in our fallen minds and understanding we would never know that fact unless Jesus revealed it. No man has knowledge about the fallenness of the human race except God declares it from heaven. Jesus came in the flesh and said, "Let Me tell you in the perfect justice of the Father. The world in sin is under condemnation, and that is not a violation of the love of God. God sent Me to become human in the incarnation so I could give people an alternative. I came in the incarnation, not to condemn because the world is already condemned, but to give an option." The reason I say this is one of the most misquoted scriptures is because Jesus came to an **already condemned** world, an **already lost** world. Jesus did not come to a neutral world and said, "Hey, who wants to be saved?" It is not a neutral world. It is a world under judgment, a world filled with sin.

So the person who does not believe is already condemned. Again, with our human mind, in our fallen human logic, we do not like that truth at all. Man demands, "Who has the right to say that?"

Jesus said, "I do. I came from the heavenly realm." That is why He said, "I ascended and descended." He is saying by this, "I have the authority and the knowledge to say this, and it is both reliable and credible. Moreover, if you refuse the incredible, costly sacrifice My Father made in sending Me"—of course Jesus made it too—"if you refuse that indescribably costly intervention of God, there is no answer to free you from condemnation."

Now again many people view the human race as basically neutral. "Yeah, we've all got problems. We all sin, but we do not sin so badly. I mean, we all sin, yes, but you know mostly we are neutral, and we just have bad times, bad weeks, bad months. We are pretty good, not all the time, but you know pretty good compared to others. Why do we need a Savior? Why do we need Jesus?" You see, if people are neutral, they do not need a savior. They can take or leave the savior part.

Jesus comes, and He would say, "No, you are not grasping what I am telling you. I came from that realm. I know the truth of the human condition. I know what My Father is like. I know His justice and His holiness, and His judgment has no contradiction in it. Moreover, the world is under judgment right now."

Then, in verse 19, Jesus gives insight into the human condition. Now we really do not like all that He says. I mean Jesus says so many profound things in John 3 that are mind-blowing to our natural thought process. Even the Christian culture in the Western world does not like a number of these truths. They have drifted away from the authority of Jesus to speak these things. We kind of end up with a philosophy that we are pretty good, we are a do-good religion, and we throw Jesus in at the end, but that is not the truth. Jesus is the source of truth, the

source of life, the authority about life, death, and sin. Jesus said, "I did not come to judge. I already was the judge. I have come to save."

Some people read verse 17 and say, "See, Jesus does not judge anybody."

He would reply, "No, I did not have to accept the incarnation to be your judge. I already was the judge. I had to be made incarnate, I had to become human, to save you." That is why the extreme intervention, because God so loves the world that He wants to rescue the world. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The incredible cost it was to God for the Son to bring salvation.

Now, verse 19, Jesus says, "Nicodemus, I know you are a little thrown off right now because you are a pretty good guy in your mind. You are a religious leader, and you have kept the law better than most people in the nation. Here is the condemnation. Here is the reason people are condemned: that the light came into the world"—the ultimate light is the incarnate Christ—"Here I am." We know there is the light of creation and there is the light of conscience, but they are a dim light; it is a true light from God, but it is a dim one. Jesus would say, "I have come into the world. The fact I put on humanity and stepped into the human experience, beloved, is because God loves you, and I am the source of truth and light. You can trust what I say. I have brought light. I have brought truth and revelation and I have just given it to you now." To Nicodemus, He went on, "The light came into the world, but men loved darkness." In other words, "Here is the problem: men do not like what I say."

People do not like verses 12-15. They like verse 16, "God so loved the world." They do not like verse 17-20. He was saying, "Let Me tell you, I understand the human condition. Men love darkness deep in their hearts. They love it. They are not looking to get free from sin. Rather, they are looking to get away with sin, not be caught, and yet have honor." He says, "They love it in their hearts. I have mercy, so I came to rescue them." He would say, "They do not really love light like they say they do because the light exposes their guilt. So they figure out ways to use even the Bible to get rid of the light that shines on their conscience." Jesus said, "If you really love Me, you will trust and obey My words."

Again, right now in our nation and across the whole West the words of Jesus and the authority of Jesus are under attack, even throughout the Church. Not in the whole Church, but in all the many pockets of the Church. There are people in the Church whom we know, whom we trust, and we take our stand together. We believe He is the light. Because of His mercy we are saying, "Yes" to His salvation, and we are moving into the light in our everyday character, processes, and thinking. We are not afraid to say, "I am sinful. I am broken. I lied. I am proud. I am lustful." We are not afraid to say those things to God because we come into the light, and because we want His leadership in our life, we are honest with Him about our hearts.

Jesus says that men are not typically honest with God about their hearts. They do not grasp that they actually love darkness. They think they do not, but they do. That is why there is condemnation.

- F. Unbelievers are *already* under condemnation (Jn. 3:18) because of refusing to believe on the One whom God sent at such a great cost. Many view human beings as being "neutral," not sinful. One who sees himself as "pretty good" does not think they need Jesus to save them. Such people who think they are neutral, see Jesus' work on the cross as something that they can take or leave.
- G. People refuse salvation for moral reasons—they love darkness and hate the light (Jn. 3:19-20). Jesus gave us insight in the fallen state of the human heart. Men do not grasp that they love darkness.

III. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S RESPONSE TO JESUS' MINISTRY (JN. 3:22-30)

- A. Jesus was with His disciples who were baptizing in Judean countryside (Jn. 3:22), summer AD 27. The location of Aenon (lit. springs) near Salim points to a site a few miles west of the Jordan River.

²²After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. ²³Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim... (Jn. 3:22-23)

Finished with the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus moves on to the countryside of Judea. This is talking more about the rural area; He is moving out of Jerusalem.

Verse 22, "after these things"—after this visit in Jerusalem where He disrupted the temple, did many miracles, had a tremendous response from the people which disrupted the political equilibrium in the city, and then He had this very straightforward conversation with a man who thought he knew more than Jesus knew. Jesus had said, in effect, "I am going to give it to you really clearly because I love you."

When you read the account, it does not look at this time like Nicodemus was very receptive. He was thinking something like, "Wow, this is way too intense! You are the snake-on-the-pole guy from back then? That was a picture back in Moses' day? You are kidding! And You are the Son of Man? I do not think so. You live in heaven and You say You have access to it now? If I do not believe in You, I do not have life? I am not in the kingdom though I have been a religious Pharisee all my life? I do not think so."

I mean Jesus had hard words for him. Jesus said, "My words are the light."

Well, so after He is done with these things—verse 22—He comes into the rural area of Judea. He is there with His disciples. He does not have all twelve disciples in place yet. He is only spending time with them. He has not commissioned them officially as "The Twelve Apostles." He is going to do that a little bit later. He is still getting to know them. Well, better yet, they are getting to know Him. Then, verse 23, "and John was also baptizing right there." They are all in the same area together.

- B. A dispute arose between John's disciples and others over the ceremonial washings that God required. Thus, they were arguing about issues related to purification or how to best be dedicated to God (Jn. 3:25) and were concerned about the decrease of John's ministry influence (Jn. 3:26).

²⁵There arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

²⁶And they came to John and said, "...He [Jesus] is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

²⁷John...said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven..."

²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice..." ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease. (Jn. 3:25-30)

Now there is a dispute. Jesus is baptizing on this part of the river, up from them a mile or two. John is baptizing. The crowds are coming to Jesus because of all the great miracles. I mean, the whole of Jerusalem is in an uproar because what He did in the temple and the miracles and all of this stuff. John had the multitudes, but now the numbers are going to Jesus.

So, in verse 25, there is a dispute going on. In fact, there are two things going on. First, some of John's disciples are arguing with the Jews—some disciples of the Pharisees undoubtedly—about purification. By this they meant the ceremonial rights of washing, and they had all these laws, some in the Old Testament and some they made up. You have to wash this way and that way and your utensils and the sacrifices. They had this elaborate list of laws about purification. They were arguing about it because behind it was a desire to be dedicated to God. So if you really boiled the argument down, they were arguing about how to be really

dedicated to God in the way that God wants. John's disciples are saying not to do it this way, but to do it that way. The disciples of the Pharisees considered John a wild man out in the wilderness and didn't think he had it right, so they thought to do it a different way. They both wanted to be dedicated to God. They both wanted dedication.

So they come to John and want to talk about what is the real way of dedication. Then there is another issue that emerges, the second issue. "John, we are worried about you. That guy that you baptized, the one that you said you saw the Spirit on? Everyone is going to him, and they are just ignoring you now. We are troubled. We are zealous for your reputation. We want to see your day in the sun to continue." This is verse 26, "Jesus is baptizing, and they are all coming to Him." We find out later it was not really Jesus baptizing, but it was His disciples. It says in John 4 that He did not actually do the baptisms Himself, but He was there in attendance with them, overseeing it.

1. A person's sphere of influence is given by God (Jn. 3:27). John rested in God's sovereignty recognizing that God has different assignment for each as well as different times and seasons for their sphere of influence. The way someone gains influence is the way that will keep it. If they gain it by strife, manipulating, or networking then that is the way they will keep it.

John makes, in verse 27, one of the most profound statements. He says, "A man can receive nothing unless God sovereignly gives it to Him." This is one of the anchored truths of John's life. John says here, in effect, "My sphere of influence, my sphere of favor, and the resources of God that He gives to me, God sovereignly determines it, not man." This was a truth that King David had ahold of. David understood he was king because God told him to be king. David never manipulated things trying to become king. Basically John was saying, "The crowds I have had over the last six months was because God had ordained it, and the crowds are leaving now because God has ordained it. I am leaning into His sovereignty. I am resting on sovereignty. I want what God wants."

Here is a spiritual principle that will save your life much, much anguish if you grasp this principle. It is very simple. Whatever means you use to establish your sphere of influence, the way you get your influence, is the way you have to keep it. Meaning if you get your influence mostly by networking, or by manipulation, even subtly by strife, undermining others to get it, the only way you can keep that position is by manipulating strife and all the networking things. You cannot have peace because you never know that God gave it to you. If you get it with human source, that is the only way you can keep it. That is a lifestyle of turmoil for years and years and years.

I know a lot of guys out there who are so fixated on their sphere. They do everything to get that sphere bigger. They just have all kinds of internal anguish, year after year, trying to keep that sphere big. They relax a minute, and their sphere gets small again. John says, "I do not care if it is big or small. I want the sovereign decree of God in my life in every season."

2. Jesus was revealed by John the Baptist as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29), The Scripture describes God as a Bridegroom (Isa. 54:5; 62:4-5; Jer. 2:2; 3:20; Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 2:16-20).

Then in verse 29, he introduces the Bridegroom God. He introduces the Messiah, saying, "He that has the Bride is the Bridegroom." What a profound statement! Let me read the whole thing. Verse 29 is one of the strongest, clearest statement about John's personal ministry identity and what he sees about Jesus.

Verse 29, Jesus is more than a king, more than messiah; He is a Bridegroom King. He has the Bride and He is a Bridegroom. Those are big statements. He says, "But me, I am only a friend of the Bridegroom." I am like the

best man at the wedding. The best man at the wedding is serving the Bride and the Bridegroom so that nothing gets in their way. The best man does not jump in between the Bride and the Bridegroom and say, "Hey, what about me?" He goes, "No, as the friend of the Bridegroom, I stay out of the way. My passion is to get them connected, not to me, but to each other." That is the spirit in which John did his ministry. That is remarkable! The "friend of the Bridegroom" spirit. John did not draw attention to himself.

*That is why I put emphasis on this in our ministry style. We want a "friend of the Bridegroom ministry" style. So much of the platform ministry style in the church today is drawing attention to ourselves so the people are enamored with us and are following us. No! We do not want them following us. We only want them following the words we say or sing or the way that we serve **so they connect with Him**. It is not about them connecting to us. That is the way John carried his heart.*

3. *Jesus is a Bridegroom*—thus, He feels, thinks, and acts as a Bridegroom forever. We are to see the riches of His worth to us and the riches of our worth to Him.

*Now verse 29, he says, "He that has the Bride"—the Messiah, that is Jesus—"He is the Bridegroom." This was a dramatic statement. Jesus does not just act like a Bridegroom. He **is** one. He thinks, He feels, He reasons out of a heart of a bridegroom. He is not a Bridegroom for a few years to accomplish salvation, then goes back to being a King and says He is done with that Bridegroom stuff. John says, "He **is** one." He is not just performing a duty. He is a Bridegroom at the core of His heart.*

4. *Jesus has the Bride*—From ages past, the Father promised to give Jesus a Bride as His inheritance, and Jesus was committed to purchase her on the cross. God's commitments could not be stopped. The enemy wants us to believe the Church is in his hands. The devil does not have the Bride. But Jesus our Bridegroom King has the Bride. He knows how to protect her.

John says, "Not only is He a Bridegroom, He has the Bride."

From ages past the Father promised Jesus, "I am going to give You a Bride as Your inheritance."

From ages past Jesus committed, "I am give My life to purchase the Bride." He has the Bride. The victory is secure. It is final. The Bride does not belong to the enemy. The enemy comes along and tries to tell us the Bride is his. "No," Jesus says, "the Bride is Mine. She is already Mine."

*The Church is guaranteed to be victorious, corporately speaking. There will be great shakings and an outpouring of the Spirit, tremendous persecution but tremendous revelation of God's heart. The Church is going to end up walking in great victory worldwide. The enemy wants us to believe that he has the Bride. John says, "No, he does not. This One I am introducing, **He** has the Bride. He fully owns her. His commitments are secure. His victory is final."*

5. John functioned as a **friend of the Bridegroom**. This speaks of having a specific message and attitude in ministering to people. The message is to make known Jesus' desire, beauty, and commitments as the Bridegroom God and to call people to love Him with all their heart.
 6. John modeled how to carry his heart and operate in the spirit of a friend of the Bridegroom by not getting between the Bride and Bridegroom by drawing attention to oneself.
- C. As we see the Bridegroom in His beauty and His work for us and in us, it frees us from our preoccupation with our weakness, struggles, or position and shifts the attention off ourselves and the size of our ministry impact. In prayer, we declare, "You are a Bridegroom and have a Bride."

- D. The two issues in this passage—dedication to God (3:25) and one's sphere of influence (3:26) are both answered in seeing the Bridegroom God's desire, beauty, and sovereignty, and commitments.

IV. JESUS' PREEMINENCE (JN. 3:31-36)

- A. Jesus has supreme authority and His teachings are reliable because He is from above (Jn. 3:31-32). He testified or taught what He saw and heard from God in heaven (Jn. 8:23-26). Teachers who originate from earth speak from a tainted earthly perspective of the nature God, man, and salvation.

³¹He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth... ³²And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies [boldly teaches] ... (Jn. 3:31-32)

Let's look at Jesus' preeminence. Now John continues, here in verse 31-36. Some people say this is John the apostle, who is writing the Gospel of John, who adds this. Others say it is John the Baptist saying this, continuing his message. Someone might ask which it is. I would say, "I am not sure, but I will take either one." I will just say that John said it, because we know it is from the Holy Spirit. It seems like it is John the Baptist continuing, that his message has not stopped here in verse 31, because John said in verse 30, "I must decrease; He must increase."

He says, "I am very happy to decrease in my popularity, because it is a different season. My passion is not to be popular. My passion is to be faithful. Whatever sphere God wants He will give it. It gets big or little, and that is okay. It is whatever He wants. I rest in sovereignty." We know this because in verse 31, he said, "He comes from above, and He is above all." In effect, "The reason I am happy to decrease is because He is above all. There is none like Him. There is no prophet in the Old Testament that is like Him."

Verse 32, John says that what Jesus has seen and what He heard is what He teaches. The doctrine of Jesus that He is the only way of salvation, the doctrine of Jesus that you get salvation for free if you look to Him and believe in Him and give yourself to Him, the doctrine of Jesus that the world is under judgment if they refuse it, the doctrine of Jesus that men love darkness much more than they think and that God's judgment are reasonable and true. Those are the things that Jesus had said; just a few moments ago we looked at this. Verse 32, John says, "Let me tell you, the things that Jesus has seen and heard in the heavenly realm with His Father, those are the things He is teaching, and they are reliable."

There is only one way of salvation because He says it. There is no other that has revelation about God except for Him. Again, the truth of one way of salvation is so offensive because men think men are neutral and that they mostly love light and mostly deserve heaven. They think they deserve God's presence forever. Jesus says, "No, it is not like that. My Father and I so love you that We are coming after you, but you have to come into the kingdom Our way. There is no other way. There is no backdoor. There is no other one that can offer salvation."

- B. Anyone who receives Jesus' teaching bears witness that the Father's ways are true (Jn. 3:33-35).

³³He who has received His testimony has set his seal to [certified, NKJ] this, that God is true.

³⁴For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.

³⁵The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. (Jn. 3:33-35, NAS)

Verse 33 speaks of "he that receives His testimony"—Jesus' teaching. That is people like us, believers—"they set their seal that God is true." People who really receive Jesus' teaching, His testimony, are saying that God is true, it rings true to us what Jesus says. He and the Father are saying the same thing. There is no disparity between them. That is what a believer says, and the Holy Spirit bears witness to them. God is true. God is not a liar. God is not contradicting Himself because of the way He has declared salvation.

Verse 34, “for He whom God has sent”—that means Jesus—“He speaks God’s words.” He heard them in heaven. He says, “He is the only Man to whom God has given the Spirit without any measure.” You see, in the Old Testament when God had a prophet or a king or a judge, He would put the Spirit on that prophet or king or judge for a limited period of time in a limited measure for a task. Then, when the task was done, the Spirit would lift. John says in verse 34, “This Man has the Spirit with no measure.” He has the fullness of the Spirit as a human, and He has it forever. It is not a temporary anointing. Therefore, we can trust His words. Therefore, we can believe what He says. This is one of the most beautiful portraits of Jesus in the Bible here in John 3.

1. **Spirit without measure:** God has spoken to His people through different prophets throughout the Old Testament history. Each received a measure of the Spirit’s power according to the assignment God gave them. But to Jesus God gave the Spirit without any measure of limit. This validates the truth of Jesus’ words proving His deity, heavenly origin, and the Father’s love for Him (Jn. 3:34). We must listen to Jesus because He is no ordinary prophet.
 2. **God is true:** Jesus so exactly revealed God’s words that to believe Jesus is to believe God and to disbelieve Jesus is to disbelieve God (Jn. 5:19; 8:28; 14:10).
 3. **Set his seal:** We believe God is true by the witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 2:27; 5:10)
¹⁰“**He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself...**” (1 Jn. 5:10)
²⁷“**...the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true...**” (1 Jn. 2:27)
 4. **Given all things:** The Father loves the Son and therefore gave Him all authority (Mt. 28:18).
- C. John concludes by contrasting two responses to Jesus (Jn. 3:36). Faith in Him results in eternal life (Jn. 1:12; 3:3, 5, 15, 16), while refusing His leadership and salvation results in God’s wrath.
³⁶**He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (Jn. 3:36)**

In verse 36, John summarizes it. He puts it right before you as he concludes. He says, as it were, “Let me say it just so clearly: he that believes”—that is more than intellectual assent. It means to believe so much that we give the leadership of our life over to Him, though none of us do it perfectly, saying “We want You as our leader and we trust You for salvation. We trust Your leadership; we trust Your salvation.” That is what it means to believe—“he that believes has everlasting life as a free gift.”

“He that does not believe”—the person who sets aside this costly investment of God the intervenor of the human race—“the wrath of God abides on them even now.” They are under condemnation now. They have to wake up to the seriousness that there is only one remedy. There is only one way out. The Man, the God who became Man and paid the price, who pursued us, who loved us, who wanted us, He is the only way out.

1. Believing in Jesus includes entrusting ourselves to His leadership to receive His salvation as a free gift and to set our heart to embrace His will for our lives. A believer has eternal life the moment they are born again. Eternal life is qualitative as well as quantitative (lasts forever).

2. A holy loving God came to His own world and found few who wanted relationship with Him. God's wrath *already* abides on unbelievers now in the present tense (Jn. 3:18, 36; Rom. 1:18). Because God made available so great a salvation, therefore unbelief is seen by God as an expression of their refusal of His leadership and thus as disobedience (Jn. 3:18).
3. The truth of God's wrath is the most offensive truth in Scripture. Many seek to explain it away. This can only be done by dismissing hundreds of passages that refer to God's wrath.

Now the truth of God's wrath is the most offensive doctrine in the Bible. People who do not understand God's heart think that His wrath is a contradiction to His love. However, in His judgments He is removing everything that is hindering love. We cannot get rid of the judgment of God. You will do violence to hundreds of passages of Scripture. A lot of guys are trying to do that today; it is kind of the "cool, modern" thing to do. Do not buy it! It is a serious, serious deception. God does not change simply because modern preachers in this hour are coming up with a different storyline.

Probably the other most offensive doctrine is that Jesus is the only way of salvation. Beloved, He ascended and descended, so He knows. He has got the Spirit without power. He is the light. I am going with Him all the way, and so are you.

V. JESUS' MINISTRY IN SAMARIA (JN. 4:1-42)

- A. We can learn much about how to minister to people from Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan "woman at the well." Jesus' ministry is intentionally introduced by His conversations with two radically different people—*Nicodemus*, a highly educated religious man who had great status in society and a *Samaritan woman* with a reputation of immorality who was an outcast in her society.

He has moved out of Jerusalem. He had moved into the area where there is baptism for a little while. Now He is on His way up north to Galilee. Remember Galilee is up north, so Samaria is kind of the next stop on the way up north. He is walking. Going up north is about a 100-mile walk from Jerusalem up to the north fully, you know up to Capernaum. It's about 100 miles depending on what route you take. You can go through Samaria to get there, but most Jews walked around. They were so against the Samaritans that they did not want to get defiled by touching their dirt or their food or their clothes or maybe a Samaritan would touch them. They would walk twenty miles out of the way to prove how pure they were. Jesus said, "No, we are going right through Samaria."

The disciples were probably thinking, "Oh boy, this is going to be fun. If He does there what He did in Jerusalem, man, put your seatbelt on!"

- B. To avoid premature trouble due to growing popularity, Jesus returned to Galilee, going through Samaria (Jn. 4:1-4). Many Jews walked *around* Samaria but Jesus "needed" to walk *through it*—the Spirit led Him so that He could speak to the Samaritan woman and touch many in that area (4:41).

¹Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ²(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴But He needed to go through Samaria. (Jn. 4:1-4)

Verse 1 tells us the Pharisees were watching Jesus increase in popularity. He was baptizing more people than John. So the Pharisees were getting stirred up because the popular opinion was going towards Him, and they knew Jesus was hostile to the things they were doing.

So Jesus apparently said, "I had better leave Judea," not because He was afraid of them, but He did not want the chain reaction of events to take place at that time. If He stayed there, it would explode. He thinks, "All in the Father's timing, I will come back and will stir it up again." Three years later He came back and went to the temple and cleansed it again. So He was not afraid of the conflict, but He wanted the conflict in the Father's timing for the chain of events that would unfold.

So it says in verse 4, "He needed"—that is an interesting word—"to go through Samaria." He needed to—that is an interesting phrase. Most people assume the Spirit was leading Him there because the first great revival in Jesus' ministry was not with the Jews, but with the Samaritans, the pagans. Now the Samaritans were half Jew and half Gentile, and some worshipped idols. They had other pagan ideas; it was a mixture.

- C. The Samaritans had a mixture of Judaism and heathenism (2 Kgs. 17:26-41). Samaritans refused to recognize Jerusalem as their place of worship; rather they chose to worship on Mount Gerizim.
- D. Israel's King Omri built his new capital in the city of Samaria (1 Kgs 16:24). Later, the name Samaria also came to describe the district around the city. The Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC, deported many of the Jewish people to foreign lands, and imported idol-worshipping foreigners who intermarried with the Israelites who were not deported. The Samaritans built a worship center on Mt. Gerizim next to Shechem around 400 BC.
- E. The woman was at the well in the city of Sychar in Samaria (Jn. 4:5-26). This well was dug by Jacob. It is a popular tourist attraction today—it is 75 feet deep and a spring flows in it. The sixth hour would have been noon. Jesus shared our fatigue and thirst in His humanity (Heb. 4:15-16).

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour [noon]. (Jn. 4:5-6)

So Jesus came to the city of Sychar. He was on His way up north. He goes to the city of Sychar because, by the Holy Spirit, He knows what is going on. He goes by this well, and He sits down, verse 6. He is weary because He experienced all the human dynamics of fatigue and sleep and hunger and all those things. He is tired. Some people think that if you are anointed, then you will not get tired. Well, He was anointed beyond measure, and He was really tired and He was hungry and thirsty.

Most of you know the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman pretty well. Many points are being made in this story, but when we compare the way He talked to Nicodemus and the way He talked to her and see how they are so different, one point is that Jesus' approach is so different with every single personality. He does not have "one style for all," you know, "one way meets all needs." He adapted completely to the person's need and to their mindset so that He could communicate with them.

One message you get from John 4, at which we will only look at a little bit, is that Jesus knows everything, because here He knows about her secret life. He gives her a simple word of knowledge. Remember she is the woman at the well, and He sits at the well, talking to her. He asked for a drink. He said, "Hey, get your husband."

She said, "I do not have a husband."

He answered, "That is right! You have five!"

She was thinking, "Ah, how did you know that?" That simple word of knowledge opens her heart. By the way, do not miss that word of knowledge; do not try that one and it be wrong.

Anyway, even simple phrases open people's hearts. We do not have to be at Jesus' level, but speaking simple impressions like, "I feel that the Lord wants you to know this..." or, "I want you to know the Lord cares about this area..." You do not even have to say, "The Lord wants you know..." You can say, "Can I pray this for your oldest son, your oldest child?" If that hits it, though it is a simple phrase, it opens hearts dramatically. So do not draw back when you have little phrases like that come. Just ask them if you can pray for that in their life. That is a really gentle way to move forward.

This chapter tells us Jesus cares about the woman with the immoral reputation as well as the Jewish leader. Not only does He care, He pursues them. He knows them. He includes them. He wants them. This putting Nicodemus and the woman at the well as the first two personalities in the entire story of Jesus is shouting to the nations that He wants every kind of person in every group—the two extremes and every group in between—and every type of personality.

- F. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as unclean heathen idolaters. Women did not usually draw water alone in the heat of the day. It is assumed that she avoided others being a social outcast due to her immoral reputation (Jn. 4:18). The message here is how Jesus knows everything good and bad about His people and still pursues, and cares for, and uses us. Jesus related so well to this woman.

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. (Jn. 4:7-9)

Well, verse 7, the woman comes to draw water. It is noon time, the sixth hour. That is noon because they start counting the hours at six in the morning. So it is really hot, and she is coming by herself. The reason why? She is probably a social outcast, because none of the women came at noon in the heat of the day. They all came to the well together, and they talked and had friendships. She would go when no one was there, even though she had to bear the heat. Jesus might have said, "I know exactly why you are here and why you are here alone. I know why I am here; it's because I care about you."

In verse 9, the woman of Samaria said, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink?" I think she could tell by His clothing. She looked at Him and maybe thought, "You are obviously Jewish. What are You doing in Samaria? Why are You walking through the shortcut? All You guys always go the long way to stay away from us. Why are You talking to a Samaritan woman?" See, the Jewish leaders would not ever talk to a Jewish woman alone, but a Samaritan woman? That is real outcast. "Why are You asking me to help You? That just seems so out of character." Of course, Jesus is relating to her in a way that is opening her heart.

- G. Jesus implied that God had a greater gift for her—eternal life that begins at salvation (Jn. 4:10, 14).

¹⁰Jesus 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."

¹¹The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well...?" (Jn. 4:10-12)

Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God, if you knew who it was that was asking you"—you all know the story—"you would ask Me for a drink, if you really knew who I was."

Verse 11, she asked, "Well, who are You? I mean, You think You got water? You do not have a bucket, and You do not have a rope." See, the well was seventy-five feet deep. As a matter of fact, the well is still there today. It is a tourist attraction in Israel still, this very well.

You know I laughed when I heard Misty talk about this story because I got tickled. She said, "This is amazing. For this woman, it is the first time she ever met a Man who had no issues whatsoever."

I asked, "What do you mean?"

She said, "He had no Daddy issues, no rejection, no Momma issues, no lack of nurture, no shame, no bitterness, no lust, no inferiority, no passive-aggressive, none of that. She had never met a man like that. She had five husbands! She had seen everything! No lust at all, no bitterness, no agenda besides her good. She was probably thinking, 'I do not even know how to navigate a Man with no issues.'" Well, bless you, Misty! I thought that was so great. I think that is really right, though it is hilarious. Yet it is really right.

- H. Jesus described living water as springing up within our heart enabling it to be free and vibrant. *Drinks* is a continuous action verb in the Greek. We drink continually by engaging in conversation with the Spirit according to the truth of who God is and who we are to God (Jn. 4:24). The Spirit cleanses, empowers, and renews us by small yet regular moments of inspiration. Jesus referred to this as *abiding in Christ* (Jn. 15:9) *Never thirst* is a promise of a heart freed and satisfied in God.

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." ¹⁵The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (Jn. 4:13-15)

Verse 13, Jesus said, "Whoever drinks this water"—obviously the natural water in that well of Jacob—"is going to thirst again." Verse 14 is the key verse, "but whoever drinks of the water I give will never thirst." By the way that "drinking" is a continuous action. It is not a one-time deal, meaning it is an interaction with God on a daily basis. "They will never thirst." It does not mean they will never have a need, but their heart will not be weighed down and taken out completely. Their heart will be buoyed up by the living water. It does not mean they will not have any troubles ever, but they will not be lost in that pit of despair. It says in verse 14 that they "drink," but "keep on drinking" is what the Greek verb would mean, the continuous action.

He says, in effect, "I want to tell you it will be a fountain! There is no end to it. It will keep coming and coming. Then twenty years later it will keep coming and coming. Fifty years later, then a million years later after the resurrection, then a billion years later, it will keep springing with new refreshment, new reality, new connectedness, if you will keep coming." The way you come to that water is you talk to Him. It is by conversation with Him. It is by saying what He says, agreeing with Him when you talk to Him.

- I. Jesus asked her to call her husband since it would have been improper for a stranger to give a valuable gift to a woman without her husband being present. She was surprised and stirred by Jesus knowing about her marital relationships (Jn. 4:16-19) and concluded that Jesus must be a prophet.

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband..." ¹⁷The woman answered..., "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said... ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband..." ¹⁹"Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet." (Jn. 4:16-19)

That is when Jesus said, "Now go, call your husband."

She said, "I do not have a husband."

He answered, "That is right! You have five, and the man you are living with now is not your husband." Those simple words absolutely blew her mind.

She said, "You are a prophet!" That was big for a Samaritan to call a Jewish man a prophet, because they thought the Jews had missed it.

- J. Jesus highlights two requirements in worshipping God or drinking living water—in spirit and truth. We worship and seek God on His terms, not according our traditions with wrong paradigms. God is spirit—not flesh—thus He is invisible and essentially unknowable without the aid of the Spirit.

²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (Jn. 4:23-24)

She said, "You guys think you are supposed to worship in Jerusalem, but we think it is on Mount Gerizim. We have a reason why this is where God wants us to worship. You want us to worship there; we think God wants us to worship here."

Jesus said, "Let Me tell you something, sweet woman. I want to tell you something you do not know. All of that is irrelevant really."

She thinks, "Really?"

He says, "Yes, the hour is coming and now is." That is, what Jesus was saying is "I am God in the flesh. I am here; it has all changed. You do not know it yet, but the whole worship thing has changed. It does not matter where you are location-wise because I am about to give the Spirit to people and they are going to be able to communicate with God any place on the earth."

1. ***Worship in spirit:*** This includes worship flowing from a sincere heart, by the aid of the indwelling Spirit, and centered on God—its source, goals, and focus are spiritual.

Of course, she is not getting it. He says, "Let Me tell you," verse 23, "the Father seeks such people that will worship Him in Spirit and truth." What does it mean to worship in Spirit? Sincere heart, not just externalism, not just outward form. A heart connect. We are actually talking about worship from the heart; that is part of worship in spirit.

It is more than that as it is also by the aid of the Holy Spirit. I do not mean we wait until the Holy Spirit overcomes us. We are growing in relationship with the Holy Spirit, and He is inspiring us, little by little, in our interactions with God. That is why we have to be born again is the idea. Worship in spirit is God-centered. It is about God and how amazing He is, and it is interacting with Him.

2. **Worship in truth:** This includes worship that is according to the *truth of who God is*—God is our Father and Jesus is our Bridegroom King. We approach a tender father differently than a harsh task master. It is worship according to the *truth of who we are in God*—we are sons of God and the bride of Christ and are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Then, number two, we worship in truth. What does it mean? We worship according to the truth of what the Bible says about God. God is a Father, He is tender, He is not a harsh judge, He is a tender Father. Jesus is a Bridegroom King. He has deep desire for partnership with His people. It is not only the truth about who God is; it is about the truth of who we are to God. We are sons, so we have access to His throne and power. We are the Bride, so we have access to His heart.

Jesus said, "The day is coming, well, it is now. It is actually beginning. I am in front of you, but you do not even know." You see, the first great revival that happened in the New Testament really happened right there with her that day and the day after, the next two days. It was a two-day revival where many in the city came to Jesus, and that was the first revival in the New Testament.

Jesus is saying, "You have to worship God on His terms, not on your tradition's terms, but in spirit and according to truth." You can review those two phrases. They are very, pretty straightforward. God says that you have to worship this way. The external kind of outward form is not the issue. It is the heart engagement that God is after.

- K. In response to the disciples wondering why Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:27), Jesus spoke to a proverb related to the harvest (Jn. 3:35). Four months was referred to as an approximate time between sowing and reaping. The idea is that waiting is necessary after a seed is planted—since the growth of a seed cannot be hurried. This proverb may have meant "there is no hurry" to work for the harvest because one *still* had four months to wait. Jesus wanted them to have a sense of urgency since the harvest had come as seen by the revival over the next two days (Jn. 4:40-41).

³⁵***Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest?...lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (Jn. 4:35)***

Now His disciples have come back, because they had been out of town getting some food while Jesus was sitting there talking to the woman. They are shocked that He is talking to her. They are thinking, "Why are You talking to her?"

He says, "There is a harvest." They wonder where the harvest is. He said, in effect, "It is on us right now. That is why I am talking to her." He is answering the question. And the next two days there was great revival.

Then He quotes this proverb. This proverb is interpreted several different ways, but I will tell you the way I think is the best interpretation. Jesus says, "Do you not say there are still four more months?" In other words, before the harvest, do you not say we still have time to relax because the seed is in the ground? You cannot hurry the seed up. You cannot speed things up. You still have four months, so we can draw back a bit and hang out for a while because four months means we have some time to play with.

Jesus was saying, "No, no, the first harvest of the whole New Testament is breaking out today."

They are wondering, "It is?"

He says, "Yes." He wanted to give them a sense of urgency. That urgency has been on the Church ever since, as it has been harvest time for 2,000 years.

- L. The Samaritan woman spoke of Jesus to others, and many in her city believed (Jn. 4:25-30, 39-42).
³⁹***And many of the Samaritans...believed in Him because of the word of the woman...*** ⁴⁰***So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.*** ⁴¹***And many more believed because of His own word.*** (Jn. 4:39-41)

Now we see the harvest. "Many Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman." Then verse 40, the Samaritans said, "Hey, stay two more days." So many believed the first day that they said, "Come on, give us a couple more days before You go to Galilee." He stayed, and, verse 41, "many more believed."

As He was walking up to Galilee He must have undoubtedly told the disciples, "I told you that we did not have four months to wait for the harvest. It is not like the seeds in the ground which you cannot speed up, because John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets and Anna and Simeon have been sowing and sowing and sowing in prayer and in the Word, and now we are reaping the harvest they have sown over the years. The harvest is upon us."

Beloved, we are in an hour of history where we have 2,000 years of the prayers of the Body of Christ, and it is culminating. The devil is raging, and the prayer movement is growing rapidly. We have the prayers of all history, plus the zeal of God. Beloved, we are in the hour for the global end-time harvest. There is no time to wait. We cannot wait for ten more years. No, it is happening right now.

Well, amen and amen! Let's stand. I want to pray for people that are thirsty, though not like this woman, because as believers we have the Holy Spirit. Still your hearts are thirsty. I think it is common in the Church for believers to be in so much anguish at the heart level and weighed down, whether it is shame, fear, regret, bitterness, worry, all kinds of things. Jesus said, "If you will come and drink, believe who I am and what I say, and talk to Me about it, your heart will recover. I am the source. I am the source, not that well. I am."

I want to invite people to come down if you need a drink. Again, drinking means we talk to God according to what He says is true about us. It refreshes us just little by little, as our drinking is continual. I do not mean every minute of every day, but it never ends. We get new perspectives, and we get a little bit of refreshing, and we need to do it all the time. It is talking to Him according to spirit and truth, the truth of who He is. That is how that drinking works: in spirit and truth.

I want to invite you to come up if you would like prayer tonight. You say, "My heart is hurting." There are twenty reasons our hearts hurt: confusion, anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, addiction, all kinds of things coming at our minds, torments, all kinds. I do not mean they all go away instantly, but we keep drinking, we drink day in and day out, we never let go of drinking, talking to Jesus according to what His Word says is true about Him and us. That is how we drink.

Lord, here we are. We want to drink from You, Lord. Oh, I want to believe what You say, I want to come in spirit and truth. Holy Spirit, I invite Your presence right now in this room. Come release Your glory in this room, Holy Spirit, we ask.

I want to invite the ministry team and any others in any kind of leadership at all in this place to go ahead and come on up. Friendship leader, on the worship team, anything, come on up and pray for folks.

Beloved, I have good news! He who has the Bride is a Bridegroom. He has you! You are in His hands. The One who has you in His hands, He is a Bridegroom God.

Lord, I ask You to touch hearts now. Release refreshing. Release refreshing by the Holy Spirit. God, we want to drink. We want to believe Your Son and His words.

“Come,” says the Lord. “Come,” says the Lord. “Talk to Me about what I say about you. That is how you drink. Talk to Me about who I am to you. Let My Word wash over you. Let what I say renew you.”

Holy Spirit, the Spirit and the Word, we come in spirit and truth, the spirit and the Word together.