

## **Jesus in Samaria**

SS/HN 27/06/04 am

Reading: Luke 9:28-56, John 4, 2 Timothy 4

Study: John 4:1-8

Psalms:

Jesus had come down to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Offended at the merchants doing business in his Father's house, Jesus turned on these men and drove them out of the temple. This naturally put him offside with the temple authorities and the religious leaders.

Jesus went out to the Judean countryside with his disciples to continue his ministry. Crowds thronged to hear Him and to be baptised, so much so that John's disciples got very upset (3:36). If they were upset how would the Pharisees feel? They had heard that Jesus was drawing bigger crowds than John.

### **Jesus fled**

Soon there would be a delegation from Jerusalem to interrogate Jesus about what he was doing and why? Already John had been subjected to such questioning by the religious leaders (1:19). He was not the Christ he said. Jesus would not be able to answer in the same way. But he was not yet ready to reveal who he was to the people and least of all to the religious leaders. So Jesus decided to leave Judea immediately and return to Galilee.

Jesus turned his back upon a thriving ministry there in Judea. He gave up baptising it appears. Why was this? Remember how his own brothers pressed him to go up to Judea at a later Passover (7:3). It was in Jerusalem that he should do his work and become famous they said. How did Jesus answer them? *My time has not yet come.* Jesus knew that the world and especially the Jews hated him because of what he preached.

His Father directed his ministry. He was not out to get fame and fortune. His mission was to do the will of the Father. His mission was to proclaim the Kingdom of God. *The Kingdom of God is a hand* he said. *Repent and believe in the gospel.* The timetable by which Jesus operated was that given by God. And the places where he ministered were also those ordained by God. It was time for him to leave Judea because it was not yet time for him to be delivered into the hands of men.

And what about baptism? We have a very interesting clarification here in 4:2 – put in parenthesis in some versions. The clarification applies to what John's disciples had been saying to him about Jesus (3:26). It was not Jesus himself who baptised but his disciples. Jesus mission was not to baptise but to preach the Kingdom of God. He sought to reach the heart of men not simply to wash the outside.

The apostle Paul followed his master in this matter. In the church at Corinth a dispute broke out about between those baptised by this person and those baptised by another. Great importance was placed on this outward sign, just like John's disciples – and just like many ministers today.

The Roman church places great emphasis on this sacrament. It is not just a sign but the means whereby one enters into the Catholic Church and moreover into the kingdom of God, according to

their teaching. The Church dispenses salvation in this manner.

Some modern day evangelists similarly put great emphasis upon baptism. They measure their ministry in terms of the number of baptisms they perform. In India some evangelists were so eager to baptise that they would preach in a village for a few days, and then baptise the whole village.

John wrote this gospel that *you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that believing you may have life in his name* (20:31). Jesus preached with the same purpose- that people would believe in him. Paul said *Christ did not send me to baptise but to preach the gospel* (I Corinthians 1:17). People did not believe because they were baptised. The focus of the ministry of Jesus, and of Paul, was not baptism but preaching the gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

Baptism is a divine ordinance. We are called upon to repent and be baptised. It is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. But we must not say all those who are baptised are saved nor that any who are not baptised are not saved. Nor must we place value on baptism according to the man performing that divine duty. Jesus did not baptise – it was his disciples who did the baptising.

Jesus then *left Judea and departed again to Galilee*. He knew he would be seen as a threat to the religious power base in Jerusalem. Up in Galilee he would be well away from religious leaders who were tied up with the temple and worship.

### **Fathers will**

To get to Galilee Jesus *needed to go through Samaria*. Along the way he stopped to rest at a place called Sychar, and it was there that he had this most amazing encounter with a Samaritan woman. Let us get a picture of the geography and the people groups before we argue about this word 'needed'.

Samaria was the region north of Judea- the old northern kingdom that broke away after the time of Solomon. This region was captured by the Assyrians in 722BC and many people were deported. They also brought in people from other regions and so a mix of races and religions resulted (II Kings 17:33) – *they feared the Lord yet served their own gods*. They had their own shrines and a temple on Mt Gerizim – until the Jews destroyed it. They held to the first five books of the Bible only as canonical- the Samaritan Pentateuch.

The Jews in Judea regarded their worship as corrupt and the Samaritans as 'unclean'. There was intense hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans down into New Testament times. Consequently when going from Judea to Galilee, strict Jews often took the longer route up the eastern side of the Jordan.

In Luke 9:51f we read of the trouble Jesus and his disciples had in passing through Samaria from the north. They were refused hospitality whereupon John and James wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritan village. The Jewish historian Josephus also records that although passage through Samaria was the shortest (3 days) it was often involved conflict.

Jesus did not share this hatred with his fellow Jews and disciples – as this encounter demonstrates. He had no problem going through Samaria. It was the quickest way to get to Galilee. The 'need' to go through Samaria reflects the difficulties that Jesus may encounter as he hurriedly makes his exit

from Judea. He was of course moving within the will of his Father, as always in his ministry, so that in the providence of God he would meet this woman and share the gospel with her.

Samaria was still within the 'promised land', the old United Kingdom. This place Sychar where Jesus stopped had historical significance for Jews – and also to the Samaritan woman. It was near Shechem, the city which features in the life of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. Jacob bought some land from Hamor before his sons killed all the males in Shechem (Genesis 34). Joseph's bones were buried here and his sons inherited this plot of land (Joshua 24:32). Jacob apparently dug a well there when he bought it. It is there still today, with a half built church around it.

### **Fatigued**

Jesus was tired from his journey when he arrived at this well. It was the sixth hour, which most understand as mid-day. He sat down by the well, while his disciples went into the city to buy food. In the providence of God this woman came draw water from this well while Jesus rested. Jesus asked her for a drink. He probably felt like a drink weary as he was, but he was alert not only to his own needs but the needs of this woman also.

A hostile environment, a fatigued body, and a stranger suddenly appears. Not the ideal time and place to be evangelising we might think. What about preparation? What about a program? *Be prepared in season and out of season* to preach the Word was what Paul told Timothy (II Timothy 4:2). Paul saw this was true in the life of Jesus. And practiced it in his own life. It was while in prison at Philippi that he had opportunity to preach to the jailer and see him and his family saved.

'When I am weak then I am strong' Paul learned from his thorn in the flesh. Still today much evangelism is done by weak instruments in the hands of the mighty God. Whilst it is not wrong to plan – Jesus sent his disciples out to preach in the villages – it is nevertheless imperative for us to be prepared, to be ready at all times, to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

It will often be at moments we least expect that we will have opportunity to share the gospel. It is often in our weakness that we have opportunity. Let not our independence and self-sufficiency hinder opportunities to witness. Similarly let not a sense of insufficiency and inadequacy hinder our witness.

Let us be walking in the will of God, giving thanks and praise to him always and praying always. Let us be growing in grace and knowledge of his word. Remember it is God who gives the strength. Jesus was fatigued but later refused the food his disciples brought because God gave him strength. God also promises to give words to say (Luke 21:15, I Peter 4:11). May we each one be prepared and be ready to give testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ at any time.

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