

The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 15

Date: January to February, 28 AD (4 months before the harvest season)

Background to John 4 Who were the Samaritans?

The Samaritans were those people who lived in the area which roughly composed the southern half of the old Northern Kingdom of Israel. In about 721 BC, about 150 years before the destruction and exile of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians. Samaria, the capital of Northern Kingdom was taken and destroyed at that time. Samaria was rebuilt, but never regained anything like its former glory, but the people who lived in that region (formerly the territories of Ephraim and Western Manasseh) took their name, Samaritans, from it. Currently, many people are under the false impression that the people of the Northern Kingdom were all carried into exile. However, as both the Bible and existing archaeological records indicate, only part of them were carried into exile. As was usually the practice with ancient empires in the Middle East, the Assyrians carried away only the upper and middle classes, including the artisans, the smiths, the soldiers, the scribes, and the organizers. They left the simple peasant farmers in the land so that they could produce revenue for the Assyrians.

The Assyrians left the farmers in the land, but they brought in exiles from another conquered territory. That territory was Susa. Susa became the location of the capital of the later Persian Empire two centuries later. In this way the Assyrians felt that they would make it impossible for conquered territories to reorganize and rearm to require reconquest. In the meantime, however, the land and the peasant farmers could still produce revenues and taxes.

The Bible records that both King Hezekiah and later King Josiah invited all the remnants of the Northern tribes to come south and settle in Judah. Some of them did, but most of them didn't. Although the false temples of the perverted and polluted religion (the "great sin of Jeroboam") that had been developed under the Kings of the North had been destroyed, they managed to continue in it after they mixed with the Persian immigrants. They opposed the rebuilding of a distinctly Jewish Temple when the Jews came back from their captivity in 538 BC, and they did everything they could to oppose the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem in 453 to 443 BC in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In about 320 BC, after the destruction of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great of Greece, there was a power struggle for the post of High Priest in Jerusalem between two brothers. The brother that lost out was recruited by the Samaritans to be their High Priest at the new Samaritan Temple which they had built on Mt. Gerizim. The faction of other priests that had supported the losing brother were also recruited to make up the priesthood for the new Samaritan Temple. Since Mt. Gerizim had been the site the LORD had chosen for the recitation of the blessings when the people had first come into the land (see Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8:33) the new temple could at least make a semi-biblical claim for legitimacy. They also now

had a true Levitical priesthood and a High Priest descended from Aaron. This became the center of Samaritan worship for about two hundred years until about 120 BC. At that time, the Jews, under John Hyrcanus, the fourth Maccabean king, conquered Samaria and destroyed their temple. The Samaritans were under the rule of the Jews from then until the Romans took over in about 40 BC.

According to Josephus, one of the Jews' longstanding complaints against the Samaritans was that when the Jews were in favor with the reigning powers (first the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans) the Samaritans proclaimed that they were the same people as the Jews. Whenever the Jews were out of favor, they were the first to proclaim their longstanding enmity and separateness.

The Samaritans did not accept as scripture anything except the five books of Moses, but that was enough for them to understand the promise of a coming Messiah out of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

A few thousand of the Samaritan race and their version of the Pentateuch survive down until this day in the Holy Land. They all live on or very close to Mt. Gerizim which overlooks the well which was the scene of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4.

We can now resume our story at the end of Jesus' nearly one-year long ministry in Judea. It was only recorded in the Gospel of John.

John 4:1-2 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.

This was speaking of a ritual of water baptism similar to what John the Baptist performed. It signified a pledge by the person being baptized to repent from evil. Jesus permitted His disciples to officiate in such baptisms although He had come to baptize, as John had prophesied, with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11).

John 4:3 When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

I believe that Jesus knew that the Pharisees would try to create a rivalry between the disciples of John and Jesus' disciples. I think this was one reason He removed Himself from Judea. That way there would be less likelihood that a rivalry would develop. Certainly, many other passages indicate that the Pharisees, who rejected the teaching of John, tried to foster conflict between the two camps.

John 4:4-5 Now he had to go through Samaria.¹ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

¹ This indicated that it was during winter, the rainy season when the Jordan was impassable.

John 4:6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The sixth hour was the sixth hour after sunrise or close to 12:00 Noon. From the other times John speaks of time in his Gospel (John 1:39, 4:6, 4:52, and 19:14), it is clear that he used Jewish time which began at sunrise. In Jewish time, the first hour is from 6:00 AM to 6:59 AM, the second hour is from 7:00 AM to 7:59 AM and so forth. We can see here the evidence of Jesus' true humanity. He was tired and thirsty.

John 4:7-8 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The last phrase gives us some important and unusual information. This well was outside of the town instead of inside, in the center of it. Why had the Lord arranged that all the disciples left Him at the well completely alone?

John 4:9a The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

You should note that there were normally barriers on both sides. The Jews would have been too proud to ask, and the Samaritans would have been too resentful to give.

John 4:9b (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

This addition piece of information tells us that this Gospel was primarily intended for the Greek speaking Gentile audience which was the main target of John's Gospel. A Jewish audience would not have needed this information.²

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Living water" was a term used for a flowing spring. This contrasted with Jacob's well in the story, from which the water had to be drawn. The Scriptural reference to "living water" in a spiritual sense also wasn't new:

Jeremiah 17:13 "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water."

² This also helps confirm the late date of writing for the Gospel of John.

Jeremiah 2:13 “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

John 4:11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.³ Where can you get this living water?”

This was obviously a well with no bucket attached. Evidently, it kept strangers passing by on the road outside of town from refreshing themselves at the well. Since this was on the main road from Galilee to Jerusalem, the travelers would have been largely Jewish. This also indicates this was not the town well which was almost certainly in the center of the town and surrounded by townsfolk. We must then ask, why was the woman coming all the way out here to use the well? It was probably because of her reputation for sexual immorality and the poisonous comments she had to endure from the other women when she used the town well.

John 4:12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

You will notice that this Samaritan woman rightly claimed descent from Jacob even though the Samaritans were a mixed race, partly descended from the Northern Tribes (mainly Ephraim and Manasseh) and partly descended from the Persians and other groups that had been resettled by the Assyrians in the conquered territory of the Northern Kingdom in about 720 BC. This well was evidently the one that Jacob dug for his camp when he moved outside of Shechem as recorded in Genesis:

Genesis 33:18-20 “After Jacob came from Paddan Aram,⁴ he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent.⁵ There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.”

John 4:13-14 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Of course the water Jesus was talking about wasn't really H₂O. This was the life-giving water which could only flow from the Cross. This was also what the LORD had promised in Isaiah:

³ See Isaiah 12:3 “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

⁴ The country of Laban in modern day northern Syria just across the Euphrates River.

⁵ This was also the plot of ground where Joseph's bones were buried after they were brought from Egypt by the children of Israel during the Exodus (Joshua 24:32). According to Acts 7:16 this was also the burial spot of all the sons of Jacob.

Isaiah 33:15-17 “He who walks righteously ⁶ and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil-- this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.”

John 4:15 **The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”**

The woman didn’t yet understand that what Jesus was promising was Spiritual water.

John 4:16-18 **He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”**

This wasn’t a miracle of healing. It was a miracle of revelation which involved knowing something that an ordinary man couldn’t know. It was enough to rivet the attention of the woman on the rest of Jesus’ message. It is clear from what follows that we only have a partial account of the remainder of what Jesus told her.

John 4:19-20 **“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem (Mt. Moriah).”**

Mt. Gerizim was the mountain to which the woman referred. It overlooked Jacob’s well and was the place that the Samaritans claimed that the Tabernacle had been set up when Joshua and the people of Israel came to Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal to recite the blessings and curses as prescribed in Deuteronomy 27 and 28. An altar was built on Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:5, Joshua 8:30) and the curses were recited from Mt. Ebal.⁷ Mt. Gerizim stood less than half a mile away. Eleven hundred years later, in about 320 BC, the Samaritans built a temple on that mountain in the pattern of the Jerusalem temple and established a renegade branch of the Aaronic High Priesthood in that temple. (Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chapter 8, Verse 2 by Flavius Josephus). That temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the fourth king of the Maccabees, when he conquered Samaria in about 120 BC. (Antiquities, Book XIII, Chapter 9, Verse 1, Josephus).

⁶ *That is he who has the righteousness that only the LORD can give through faith as Abraham did..*

⁷ *Since an altar was a figure of Christ bearing the curse for us, it was fitting that the altar was on Mt. Ebal, the place of the curses.*

On the last page of this lesson you can see the picture of the two mountains and the picture of the archaeological dig which has uncovered the remains of that ancient Samaritan Temple.

John 4:21 Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman (*dear lady*), a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

Jesus avoided getting into the useless controversy over the proper location of the Temple and over the hard feelings which had existed between the Jews and the Samaritans over the destruction of their temple by the Jews under John Hyrcanus.

Jesus’ use of the address “woman” in the Greek does not have the same connotation of coldness or disrespect that it has in current English usage. The Greek word here is γυνή {gü-nā’}. In the Greek usage this address “woman” was not cold and impersonal as it sounds in the English. In the Greek γυνή {gü-nā’} was a term of respect like “dear lady.” It was the same address Jesus used to address his mother when she was mourning Him at the foot of the cross and Mary Magdalene at the tomb.

John 4:22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

However, all scripture pointed to Judea, Jerusalem, and Mt. Zion as the focus of the prophecy of the coming Messiah. Unfortunately, the Samaritans only accepted the five books of Moses. It was the other books of scripture that made it perfectly clear that the Messiah would be a descendant of David of the tribe of Judah. In other words, a Jew. The comment “we worship what we do know” referred to the truth that the Jews had in their Scriptures which the Samaritans didn’t recognize.

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

The reference to the fact that “a time is coming and has now come” refers to the fact that in every age God was only ever interested in worship which comes from the harmony of the Holy Spirit with the individual human spirit in the recognition of God’s truth. This passage also made the point that “buildings” connected with worship were unimportant since true worship wasn’t done in a building like the Temple in Jerusalem or the Temple on Mt. Gerizim, but in the human spirit. The phrase “a time is coming” is subtly prophetic of the time that was coming just 43 years later when there would no longer be a physical Temple in Jerusalem. It would be destroyed.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

This was not a new idea. It was also expressed by the LORD in Isaiah:

Isaiah 57:15 “This is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

John 4:25-26 **The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ)⁸ “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”**

We must realize that neither the long mission of John the Baptist nor the news of John the Baptist’s recent statement that the Messiah had come could have escaped the notice of this woman or the rest of the Samaritans. The Jordan valley, where John preached, bordered the lands of Samaria. When Jesus identified Himself, the woman had probably already heard that John had proclaimed that the Messiah was among them.

John 4:27 **Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?”⁹ or “Why are you talking with her?”**

At this point, the disciples arrived back from buying food in the town. The interval must have taken at least a half hour to an hour. The comment of the disciples indicated that the culture of the Jews in those days tended to regard women as unworthy of serious teaching. Although there was no basis for it in scripture, in the synagogues, women were separated from the men by a screen. The men sat just in front of the teachers.

John 4:28a **Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town**

When the woman left Jesus she had understood His message and believed it. She left her jar there for Jesus and his disciples to use. This was her first offering in gratitude for the gift Jesus had given her. It also indicated her haste to go back and enthusiastically share the grace she had been given with the townspeople who had previously shunned her.

John 4:28b-29 **and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”**

Clearly the short narrative here where Jesus told the woman about her marriages, was only a small sample of what Jesus actually related to the woman. The woman said here that Jesus told her “everything I ever did.” Jesus’ entire revelation, as written, takes 15 seconds to read. We should always understand that when the Gospels recorded the dialogues of Jesus, what was written was almost always a very abbreviated version. What was recorded here just reported the essence of the conversation.

⁸ *This is another instance that John’s need to explain Jewish terms indicated that his Gospel was written primarily to a Gentile audience.*

⁹ *This would have been addressed to the woman.*

John 4:30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

At this point a large crowd of Samaritans came out of the town of Sychar. Since it was on the site of ancient Shechem, it was probably a fair-sized town. As they came out, they not only would have filled the road, but they also have spilled out onto the surrounding fields. Jesus evidently looked up at this point and saw them.

John 4:31-32 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

After the woman left, Jesus’ mind seemed to be consumed with what He had said to the woman, and what He needed to say to the Samaritans who He somehow knew were coming. He wasn’t concerned with food. We aren’t told how long the disciples took to eat and refresh themselves. In the meantime, the woman had returned to the town and had been speaking to the townspeople. She probably went to the well inside the town where she knew that there would be a crowd. I suspect it was at least a half an hour before the woman had told her story and the townsfolk had started to gather to listen to her in large numbers. The Holy Spirit must have been at work as she talked to them because many of them decided to go out to that roadside well and hear Jesus for themselves. At that point Jesus must have looked up and saw the crowd coming.

John 4:33-34 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?” “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Jesus could see the crowd of people who had heard from the woman that He could be the Christ. He had come to preach to such people. Even though they weren’t Jews, they were descended in large part from the ancient people of northern Israel.

John 4:35a ~~Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’?~~ Don’t say that it is yet four months, and the harvest comes.

The literal translation is “Don’t say that it is yet four months, and the harvest comes.” There is no question mark in the Greek.¹⁰ This is not Jesus inquiring about an old Jewish saying. This is Jesus telling them not to look to physical food or a physical harvest. This was Jesus telling them to look to Spiritual food and a Spiritual harvest. This statement is not only important in a theological sense. It is also important in helping to set a correct chronology for Jesus’ ministry. It indicates that the time Jesus spoke this was January or February 28 AD, which was four months before the physical harvest in late May or early June. This means that Jesus ministered in Judea for at least 10 months and that the length of Jesus ministry was three and a half years not two and a half years. This date was clearly after the previous Passover which we just

¹⁰ *In fact there are no punctuation marks in the koine Greek script.*

studied. This tells us that it would have been no more than two months before the next Passover. Between this event and the Passover recorded in John 6:4, when he fed the five thousand the year before His Crucifixion on Passover, Jesus made at least one trip to Jerusalem and performed all the things that happened between Matthew 4:17 and Matthew 14:13. Those events couldn't have happened in two months. This means that at least one additional Passover occurred before the one in John 6. That was a Passover that He didn't spend in Jerusalem. His crucifixion therefore had to take place in 30 AD three and a half years after His Baptism on the Day of Atonement in 26 AD.

John 4:35b I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

At that time, He must have motioned to the road and the fields behind the Disciples. There the crowd of Samaritans, the Spiritual harvest, were coming down the road to learn if Jesus was the Christ.

John 4:36a Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life,

Together, Jesus and His Disciples were about to reap the harvest of souls. Those were His wages and His food.

John 4:36b so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

You may remember that this passage began with the fact that Jesus was going back to Galilee because of the comparisons that were being made between His ministry and John the Baptist's ministry. I think the sower that Jesus had in mind was John the Baptist who had been sowing seeds for years.

John 4:37-38 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

The sower of the word in this passage was the one who "made straight the way of the Lord," John the Baptist. Jesus was paying tribute to the man who was about to be thrown into prison.

John 4:39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

This indicates how prepared their hearts were, to believe on such a slender miracle. Perhaps the more impressive miracle was the change in this woman's heart.

John 4:40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

This doesn't mean that all the Samaritans became believers. Later in Jesus' ministry a village of them refused to welcome Him because of His destination:

Luke 9:51-53 "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus *steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village ¹¹ to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem."¹²

John 4:42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

We are not given the text of Jesus' message to these Samaritans, but the Holy Spirit must have moved powerfully with it in their hearts.

This finished the account of Jesus in Samaria recorded by John. John next passed on to His immediate return to Galilee, just north of Samaria:

John 4:43-44 After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)¹³

It seems to me that John made this comment to contrast the warm reception Jesus had gotten from the Samaritans with the hostile reception He had gotten in Nazareth the last time He had been in Galilee. They had tried to kill Him when He had implied that He was the Christ sent from God and that God also had grace for Gentiles.

Now we can pass on to the other Gospel accounts. As I have mentioned earlier, John was the only one who mentioned Jesus' first Judean ministry. First, we will look at Matthew's account which takes up at the time of Jesus' return to Galilee.

Matthew 4:12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned (*withdrew*) to Galilee.

Between Matthew 4:11, where Jesus had just finished His forty days of temptation in the desert, and this verse in Matthew 4:12 there is an interval of about a year and three months. During that

¹¹ This was the trip to the Feast of Tabernacles recorded in John 7:10 which was taken in secret. During this time of the year, the usual roads the pilgrims took avoided Samaria by going down the east side of the Jordan. This road would have kept his journey low profile.

¹² The Samaritans were offended by the Jewish contention that the Feast should be celebrated in Jerusalem instead of on Mt. Gerizim. During the time of the Maccabees the Jews had destroyed the Temple the Samaritans had built to celebrate the Feasts in their own country.

¹³ Luke 4:24

time Jesus had returned to Galilee for a few months. He had then gone to Jerusalem for Passover followed by a ministry in Judea for about ten months.

Matthew 4:13-16 **Leaving Nazareth,¹⁴ he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali-- to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”¹⁵**



Lands of the Tribes of Israel

¹⁴ This seems to indicate that Jesus passed through Nazareth on the way to Capernaum.

¹⁵ Isaiah 9:1

Above is a map showing the ancient lands of Zebulun and Naphtali. You will notice they were the center of Jesus' ministry in Galilee as they contained both Nazareth and Capernaum.

Below I have put the full text of the prophecy in Isaiah to which John referred. John was quoting a Greek translation from Hebrew. The NIV is an English translation from Greek. Although the words are slightly different, the meaning of both is the same. It is clear it was talking about the Christ:

Isaiah 9:1-2 “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan — The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

The term “Galilee of the Gentiles” would have been a huge rebuke to Israel at the time Isaiah wrote. This was just a few years after the Gentile Assyrians had taken Galilee. It was the choicest agricultural land in Israel. The Gentiles had taken it over and the remaining Israelites were driven south to the much less desirable land of Samaria.

Isaiah 9:3 “You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.”

Jesus enlarged the nation by adding a new peoples to His body. He added the believing Gentiles to complement the believing Israelites. It is noteworthy that the Feast of the Harvest or Ingathering will be fulfilled when Christ returns after the Great Tribulation to gather both Israelites and Gentiles to Himself to start His Millennial Kingdom.

Isaiah 9:4-5 “For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.”

“The day of Midian’s defeat” was recorded in Judges 7. That defeat was also known as the victory of Gideon over Midian. That victory took place in the Jezreel Valley. Isaiah 9 was clearly related to the First Advent of Christ. Isaiah 9:4 connected “the day of Midian’s defeat to its own subject. Therefore, we are instructed to look for the connection between the battle plan on the day of Midian’s defeat with the battle plan of Christ. We will investigate that connection next after we finish with the rest of our Isaiah passage which included the wonderful words:

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For to us a child is born,¹⁶ to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,¹⁷ Mighty God, Everlasting

¹⁶ *Isaiah 7:14*

Father,¹⁸ Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

The Day of Midian's Defeat as Messianic Prophecy

Judges 7:11-15a Then went he (*Gideon*) down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. Gideon arrived just as a man (*a Midianite*) was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed." His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands." When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God.

Gideon heard words that were meant by God for Gideon to hear. One can only wonder why and if they were spoken by Midianites. Did these words come out of two uncomprehending Midianites at the compulsion of God? Were they Midianites at all, or were they angels who had just assumed the guise of Midianites for the benefit of Gideon? Clearly Gideon understood that the thrust of the message for him was that his victory was assured. After Gideon returned to the camp, he gave instructions for victory that merely consisted of displaying symbols. Those symbols proved to be devastatingly effective on the battlefield.

I think the symbols were meant to teach a deeper lesson for the generations to come. What did the symbols mean? The rolling bread was said to stand for the "sword of Gideon." The tent of the Midianites was said to stand for their whole camp. Clearly the "rolling bread" stood for the power that Gideon used to win victory. The Midianites were "the adversary" and stood for Satan, the greater adversary. What does bread symbolize in the Bible? It stands for the body of Christ.¹⁹

Judges 7:15b-17 He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands." Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do."

¹⁷ *He is the living word of God.*

¹⁸ *John 14:9b-10 "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."*

¹⁹ *Mark 14:22 "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'"*

John 6:33-35 "For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' 'Sir,' they said, 'from now on give us this bread.' Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life.'"

Gideon gave his men instructions for actions to take which were inspired by the LORD. This was the greatest challenge to their faith yet. The LORD had diminished their numbers from over twenty-two thousand to just three hundred. The victory wouldn't depend on their numbers or their skill at arms, but in their faith in the LORD. The LORD would deliver a victory by those actions against all reason. The question for us is, why did He do it this way? It was because those actions would be a figure of how the greatest victory of all time would come to pass.

Judges 7:18-21 **“When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’” Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets (*rams horns*)²⁰ they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.**

Symbols are all over this scene. The symbols are jars and torches and trumpets (or ram's horns). Clay jars speak of the human body.²¹ The torches or light speak of the Second Person of the Trinity.²² The ram's horns speak of audibly rallying of God's forces in proclaiming the message of victory. The blowing of the ram's horn is commanded on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 25:9). It will be the Day the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom and defeat the gathered forces of Satan in this same Jezreel Valley (Armageddon). Consider the shout, “a sword for the Lord.” The word of God is the “sword” (Ephesians 6:17). Jesus Christ is the living word (John 1:1). The life, death, and resurrection of Christ is “the sword for the Lord.” It is the sword that He (and His Church) wields by speaking it from His mouth. Revelation 2:16 “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Also Revelation 19:15 “Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.”

Therefore we see in these verses a clear type of how God will achieve His victory. The clay pot (the humanity of Christ) which held the torch (the life that was the light of the world) would be shattered (Jesus' death on the cross) and as the light flooded forth, the victory trumpet could be

²⁰ The Hebrew word for “trumpet” here is שׁוֹפָר {*shō-far'*} which is usually a trumpet made of a ram's horn (Joshua 6:4).

²¹ Isaiah 64:8 “Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” Also 2 Corinthians 4:7, Genesis 2:7, Isaiah 45:9. Christ is described as a broken pot in Psalms 31:12, also Psalms 22:15.

²² John 1:1-5 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was **the light of men. The light shines** in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

sounded. Then the seemingly invincible forces of the Great Adversary would flee in utter confusion and defeat.

Judges 7:22 **When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah²³ toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.**

The LORD has used this tactic many times in the Old Testament to bring victory. He confuses the enemies of the LORD and they turn on each other. This evidently will also happen at the last battle: Zechariah 12:4 “On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness,” declares the LORD.”

Return to the Gospel Accounts:

We can now resume the chronological study of the four Gospels with the account of Matthew of the time Jesus returned to Galilee and John the Baptist was imprisoned.

Matthew 4:17 **From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”**

Note that this was also the message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2). Now that John was in prison Jesus took up John’s message.

Now we can look at Mark’s account:

Mark 1:14-15 **After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee,²⁴ proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”**

Like Matthew’s Gospel, Mark skipped from the end of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness to His ministry in Galilee.

Luke also skipped ahead in his Gospel. First, he had described the ministry of John. We studied those verses in an earlier lesson.

Luke 3:19-20 **But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.**

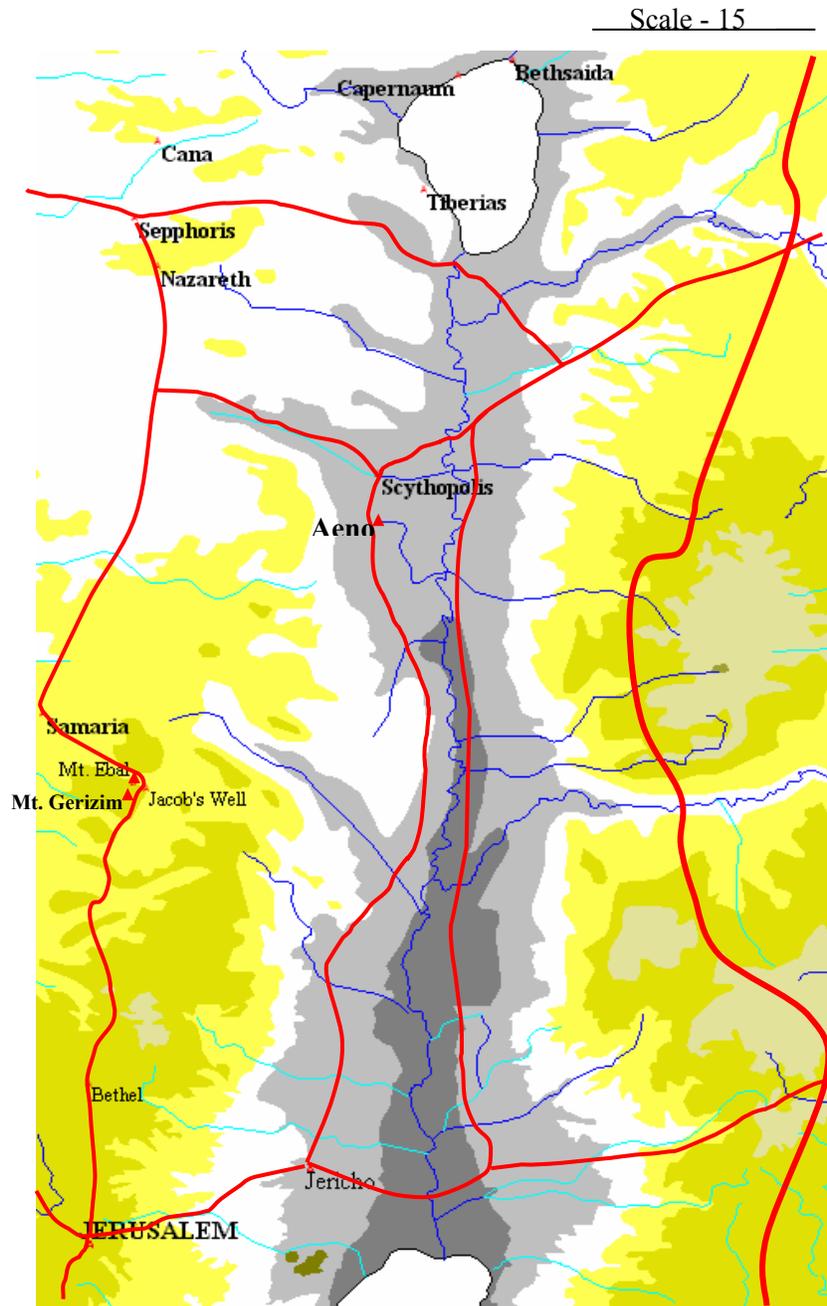
²³ *Beth Shittah is the entrance to the valley of the Jabbok River on the eastern side of the Jordan, about thirty-five miles to the south.*

²⁴ *In this comment, Mark implied Jesus’ Judean ministry which was only detailed in the Gospel of John.*

Here Luke described John's imprisonment by Herod Antipas.

Luke 4:31 **Then he (*Jesus*) went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people.**

The last thing that Luke had described in his account of Jesus' life was His first visit to Capernaum. He then had skipped the ten months Jesus spent in Judea and had gone straight to relating His second ministry in Galilee which He centered around Capernaum.



The Roads of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee

Mt. Gerizim on the left, Mt Ebal on the right



Modern Excavation of the Ruins of the Samaritan Temple on Mt. Gerizim