

Week #3 Geographical Studies Presentation

Jacob's Well

John 4:1-26

Therefore, 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) 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

4 But He needed to go through **Samaria**. 5 So He came to a city of **Samaria** which is called **Sychar**, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his Son Joseph. 6 Now Joseph's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7 A **woman of Samaria** came to draw water. Jesus said to her, **"Give Me a drink"**. 8 For his disciples had gone into the city to buy food.

9 Then 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.

10 Jesus answered and said to her, **"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink, You would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."**

11 The woman said to Him, Sir, **you have nothing to draw with**, and the well is deep. Where do you get **that living water?** 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us **this well**, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?

13 Jesus answered and said to her, **"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but 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"**.

15 The woman said to Him, **"Sir, give me this water**, that **I may not thirst**, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, **"Go call your husband, and come here."** 17 The woman said "I have **no husband**". Jesus said to her, **"You have well said, I have no husband, 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."**

19 The woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers **worshiped** on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to **worship**.

21 Jesus said to her, **Woman** believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. 22 You **worship** what You do not know; we know what we **worship**, for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour is coming, and now and now is when the **true worshipers** will **worship** the Father in *spirit and truth*; for the Father is seeking such a to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who **worship** Him must **worship** in *spirit and truth*.

25 The woman said to Him, I know that *Messiah* is coming” (who is called *Christ*). When He comes, He will tell us all things,” 26 Jesus said to her, “**I who speak to you am He**”.

Key Verses: Jn 4:1-26; Gen 33:18-20, 48:22; Dt 27&28; Jos 8:30-35

Key Words: Samaria, Sychor, woman, water, living water, drink, thirst, husband, worship, spirit, truth, and He.

Biblical History of Geographical Features

Jacob’s well, located in the biblical town of Sychor (Shechem) of Samaria, is only mentioned once by name in the Bible. Though its origin goes back to our Patriarch Jacob, the well itself becomes a point of reference in an important teaching of Christ. Chapter 4 in the Gospel of John we find Christ at the northern border of Samaria resting beside Jacob’s well and sitting alone, as the Disciples had gone into town to purchase food. Christ then encounters a Samaritan woman with whom He engages in conversation with, and within a few minutes of talking, offers her living water and reveals Himself to her as the Messiah (Jn 4:26). This marking the first time Jesus had reached out and extended His ministry to a non-Jew.

The history of Jacob’s well starts in Genesis 33:18-20. Here we read that Jacob had left Paddan Aram and arrived safely in Shechem, a city in central Canaan and purchased a plot of land from Hamor, father of Shechem, for which to pitch his tent. This well was dug at the base of Mount Gerizim and accredited to Jacob, though Jacob does not remain in the land for long. Genesis 34 tells us that he is quickly forced to flee to Bethel, when Jacob’s sons, taking revenge on Hamor and over their sister Dinah’s rape by Hamor’s son Shechem, kill the men, seize the women, children, and livestock, then plundered their homes taking all with them.

In Genesis 48:22 the ridge land where the well is located is spoken of once again as it is given to Joseph just before Jacob’s death.

Sychor (Shechem) is located at the base of two mountains, Mount Ebal, north of Shechem, and Mount Gerizim, north west of Shechem. This Samaritan city was known as Shechem in ancient history and as Sychor during the time of Christ. Some believe that the cities are two different locations situated close to each other, and others say that it is the same city known by two names. Some Biblical maps support it being two cities or towns beside each other with Shechem being

just south west of Sychar. If this is true, Sychar would be at the base of Mt. Ebal and Shechem at the base of Mt. Gerizim.

The rich history of these two mountains is further enhanced by events surrounding Moses and Joshua in their taking of the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 reports of the reading of the Blessings and Curses taking place on these two mountains. The natural acoustics of these mountains act like a microphone as the sound travels with the natural downdraft of the airflow, as Mt. Ebal has a height of 3061 ft. above sea level and Mt. Gerizim having a height of 2887ft. Since the two mountain tops are only 2 miles apart the valley between the two mountains captures and amplifies the sound making it a perfect place to hold a ceremony for huge crowds. Moses read the curses from Mt. Ebal, while the people on mount Gerizim responded Amen to each curse, and then he read the blessings from Mt. Gerizim, while the people there responded Amen to each blessing. Joshua later re-established this in a similar ceremony (Jos.8:30-35). Both patriarchs dedicated an alter to God on Mt.Ebal, in praise and worship for what God had done for them.

The Road of the Patriarchs is the main route of travel from Galilee to Jerusalem, it runs along the Hill Country, sandwiched between the Coastal Plain and the Rift Valley. The land of Samaria is positioned in the middle of this route, just south of Galilee and north of Jerusalem. Sychar and Shechem are positioned in the northern half of the Samaritan country.

The extreme changes in terrain make it difficult to travel east to west in most places. Therefore, the major roads that intersected north to south with east and west roadways were busy routes and promoted city growth along them. The easiest way to travel from Galilee to Jerusalem was to take the north south road of the patriarchs through the Hill country. Detours were possible but the terrain was rugged and dangerous in places and more time consuming than the main roadway.

The Samaritans

Samaria was originally a region occupied by the Old Testament Israel. After the Assyrians took Israel captive in 722BC, the land was resettled by pagan populations worshipping pagan gods. A few Jews were left behind by the Assyrians and the various groups learned to live side by side worshipping according to their forefathers. Therefore, there was quite a mix of religious beliefs. When the remnant of Jews returned to the land to build the Temple in Jerusalem (Ez 4:3-4), dissension arose because the people of Samaria did not want the Temple to be built. This caused many delays and much grief to the Israelites and brought great animosity between the Jews and the other nations living among them.

Believing to be direct descendants of Israel, the Samaritans claimed to be Jews, but chose to worship differently from the Jews. They had a dedicated Temple on Mt. Gerizim using their own version of the Pentateuch and refused to acknowledge The Temple in Jerusalem. By the time of Jesus's ministry, the two groups had been at odds for hundreds of years, each group claiming to know the better way to worship God. It is this mentality that sets the stage for this Pericope of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman, as found in John chapter four.

Summary of John 4:1-26

In verses 3&4 we read that Jesus left Judea to go to Galilee but needed to go through Samaria. This is significant because Jesus had earlier told His disciples to avoid Samaria, because the Samaritans would not receive them. Prior to this event the Gospel of Christ was only shared within the Jewish community. This is Christ's initial outreach to the Samaritan community. This opens the door, to salvation being offered to Jews and Gentiles alike, a pre-empt to the great commission.

As we read this, we wonder why Jacob's well was chosen to deliver this message of salvation. One reason may have been the prime location geographically in terms of ease of the roads traveled. Another reason is revealed as we understand the type of water offered in this well as the perfect selection for the lesson being taught. Jacob's well had a uniqueness about it. The water was known for its soft, light water that is supplied in two ways: First it comes from underground sources defining it as a true well. Secondly, the surface water percolates making it a cistern. This makes Jacob's well better tasting than the other wells in the area. The locals would walk a little further to take from this well because of the pureness of the flavor.

In verses 7-15 several points are made. When Jesus asks her for a drink, she confusingly asks why a Jew would make such a request to a Samaritan, referring to the religious feud that the two sects had endured for 200 years. Here is when Jesus begins to speak to her about receiving living water that will cause her to never thirst again. In verse 14, he says, "But the water that I shall give Him will become a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life". This spiritual statement was in reflection of the effervescence of the physical well upon which He was sitting, using it to enhance the understanding of the lesson at hand. She, being intrigued at the thought of never thirsting again, inquires as to how to receive this water.

Verses 16-20 shows how Jesus lovingly, yet truthfully, reveals that he knows of her sins of living immorally, as she had had several divorces and now had a live-in. The woman in response, perceives that He is a prophet and cleverly changes the subject by asking a question regarding the correct place of religious worship. In this, she was referring to the feud of the Samaritans claiming that the proper worship is on MT. Gerizim, against the Jews who worship at their Temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus responds to this in verses 21-26 by first respectfully addressing her as "woman", which was like using the word Madame as a respectful social title. Then he said, "The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father". Jesus then says, "you worship what you know". (This refers to the polytheism being a standard in Samaria and on the temple mount at Gerizim.) "But the hour is coming when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him". These very words extend salvation to her, with the stipulation that worship must be done in spirit and truth.

Lastly the Samaritan woman, says that she believes that the Messiah is coming. Therefore, in one final expression, Jesus reveals Himself to her as the Messiah by responding, "I who speak to you am He".

Jesus shows that He loves us regardless of our sin. But that salvation is conditional upon recognizing the truth of our own sin first, and then seeing Him as the greater truth and receiving Him in Spirit. His spirit will bubble-up inside us as an eternal fountain of living water, and we can receive this new life as a Jew or Gentile alike.

Geographical Maps

The Geographical maps are:

Map 1 shows the positioning of Jacob's well in relation to the town of Sychar. Also the main travel routes in relation to the terrain of Samaria towns. Also, where they would sit in relation to Mt. Gerizim.

Map 2 shows the general terrain of Samaria, as well as the positioning of the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim in relation to Shechem.

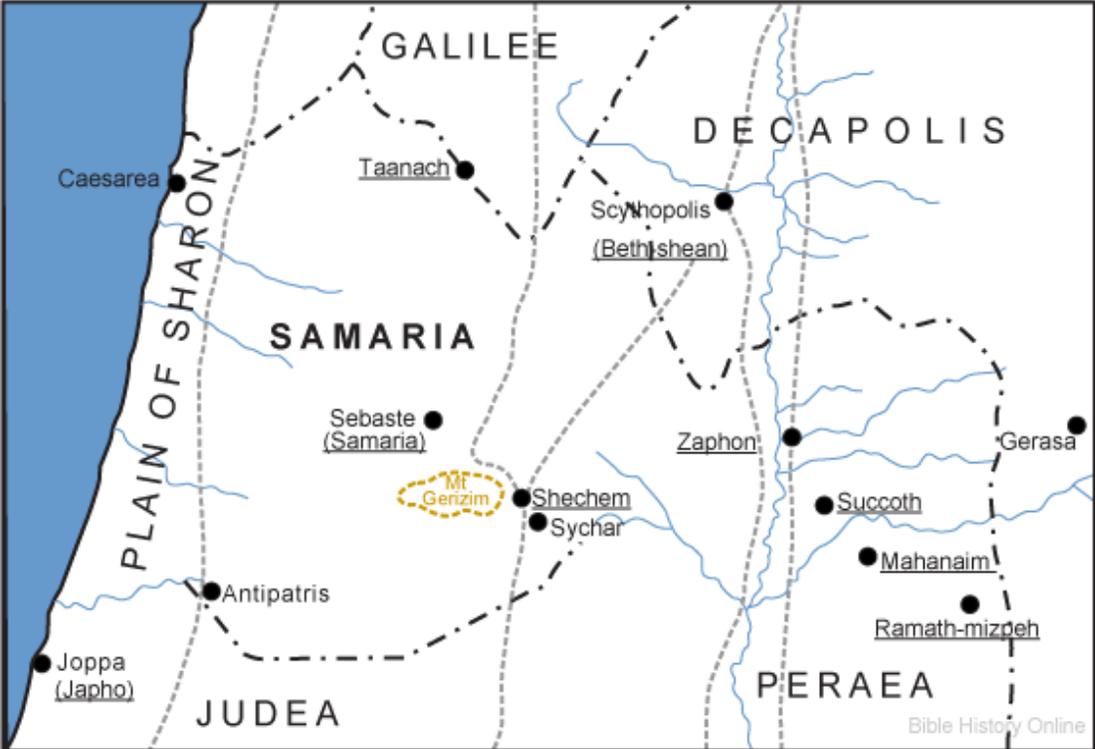
Map 3 shows the possible positioning of the two cities of Shechem and Sychar as separate towns. Also, where they would sit in relation to Mt. Gerizim



Map 1



Map 2



Map 3