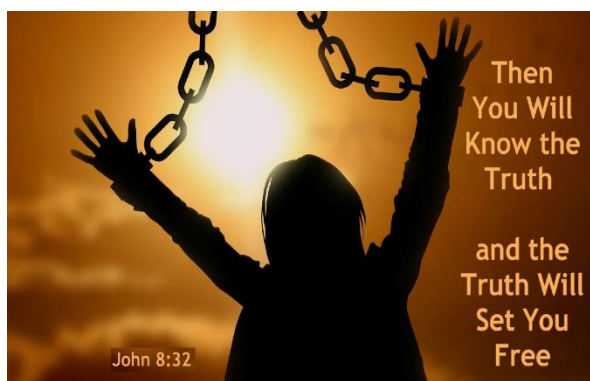


Who is Jesus?

John 8:48-58, 4:1-42

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

When Jesus addressed the people, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life," His statement stirred significant controversy among the Pharisees (John 8:12-20). Jesus declared that He was not of this world but from above, and that when He would be lifted up as the Son of Man, they would then recognize



His identity and understand that He lived according to His Father's will (John 8:21-30). Many Jews believed in Him that day, and to them, Jesus promised, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). However, to the Pharisees who refused to accept Him as God, Jesus said they sought to kill Him because they belonged to their father, the devil (John 8:44). Infuriated, the Pharisees resorted to name-calling, accusing Him

of being a Samaritan and demon-possessed (John 8:48). Jesus responded by emphasizing that He did not seek His own glory, but that His Father, who sought glory for Him, was also their God and judge (John 8:49-50). When Jesus proclaimed that their father Abraham rejoiced at seeing His day, the Pharisees mocked Him, saying, "You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?" (John 8:57). Jesus then made the profound declaration, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58).

How I loved reading from the book of John! While the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke focus primarily on Christ's life as a fulfillment of Scripture, His miracles



demonstrating His sovereignty over all things seen and unseen, and parables that elucidate His teachings, John's focus shifts towards Christ's identity and the divine reasons for His incarnation. While John, like the Synoptic Gospels, recounts the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, which clearly showcases His divine power and compassion, he also delves into its theological significance: Christ is "the bread of life. Whoever comes to Him will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Him will never

be thirsty" because "everyone who looks to the Son shall have eternal life" (John 6:35-39).

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, which do not mention the death and resurrection of Lazarus, John presents this miracle as an opportunity to highlight Christ’s profound statement, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die” (John 11:25-26). John further reveals Christ as the Light of the World (John 8:12), the Door (John 10:7), the Good Shepherd (John 10:14), one with the Father (John 10:30), “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and the Vine (John 15:1). Let us now review the story of the Samaritan woman to understand why these seven “I AM” sayings of Christ are so important to us today.

The Samaritan Woman

The story begins with Jesus arriving in the Samaritan town of Sychar. Tired from His journey, He sat down beside Jacob’s well (John 4:1-6). When a Samaritan woman came to draw



water, Jesus asked her, “Will you give me a drink?” She responded, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (John 4:7-9). To understand the significance of this interaction, it's important to consider the historical context. The Jews and Samaritans had a long-standing animosity. The Jews did not associate with Samaritans because the Samaritans had intermarried with foreigners, believed in many gods, and only accepted the Pentateuch as their Bible. The Samaritans, in turn, resented

the Jews for excluding them from the rebuilding of the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah and for rejecting Mount Gerizim as a legitimate place of worship. The hostility between these two groups was so deep that they would typically avoid any contact with each other. This leads us to our first roadblock to knowing Jesus that the Samaritan woman gives.

Why Would God be Interested in Me?

Not only was the woman struggling against these racial and gender stereotypes, but she also faced severe self-esteem issues, being an outcast from society due to having had five husbands and living with a man who was not her husband. While societal pressure discourages belief in Christ from a world that hates Him (John 15:18-25), the main reason people view the cross as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18) is their sin reigning in their lives. John states, “Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their evil deeds will be exposed” (John 3:19-21). The sin this woman had committed was a great source of shame, making her feel unworthy of God’s love. Many nonbelievers offer excuses to avoid approaching a holy God, saying things like,



“You don’t know who I am, you don’t know what I have done, you don’t know what I have been through, I have sinned too often, I am too far gone, and I am unredeemable.” However, in this story, Jesus, who “knew everything she ever did” (John 4:39), boldly tells 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” (John 4:10).

My Problems are Physical, Not Spiritual

The second roadblock the Samaritan woman faces in knowing God is her reliance on physical, rather than spiritual, perception. When Jesus speaks of living water, she responds with skepticism, saying, “You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it



Focus is
Heavenward
Phil. 3:13-14

Life is
Like a Mist
James 4:14



himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?” (John 4:11-12). She clearly misunderstands, thinking Jesus refers to literal H₂O.¹ Her problem of sin and subsequently being ostracized from society was not being fixed by drawing water in the heat of the day to avoid society! Similarly, we often interpret life’s challenges through a physical lens, attributing our misery to factors like insufficient money, job dissatisfaction, a difficult marriage, or lack of control over our lives. Often in life we do not have a solution to our problems because we ask God with the wrong

motives that tends to focus on our coveting what was not given to us by God (James 4:1-3). What if we, like Apostle Paul, focused on “the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14)? Life is fleeting, “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14). Instead of stressing over temporary concerns like wealth and appearance, we should “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33), thereby storing up eternal treasures. Preparing for our eternal destiny is far more crucial than clinging to a temporary, earthly existence that is not our home nor will it last!

Religion is Just a Bunch of Rules

The third roadblock the Samaritan woman faces in knowing God is her perception of organized religion. She says, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem” (John 4:19-20). By raising the issue of worship locations, she tries to divert the conversation from her

¹ Taken from the “I AM” series from Sermon Central.

personal sin,² questioning how one can worship God correctly amidst numerous religious divisions. Indeed, there are an estimated 45,000 different Christian denominations worldwide



Worship
Spirit & Truth



due to theological and practical differences.³ The fragmentation of the early catholic (universal) church, coupled with contemporary political and social scandals, has led to a significant distrust in organized religion, with only about one in three Americans expressing trust in it.⁴ However, does apparent corruption within the church justify abandoning the institution Christ loves, of which He is the cornerstone, and for which He sacrificed His life (Ephesians 2:20, 5:25)? Would Christ approve of us seeking Him independently, without the support of His

body, the church, which is meant to build us up in faith (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)? Instead, the solution lies in introspection and recognizing that personal pride and covetousness often fuel conflicts within the body of Christ. Like the woman at the well, Christ calls us to reform the church, urging its members to forsake selfish ambitions for social and political power and to worship Him in Spirit and truth, becoming the true worshippers the Father seeks (John 4:23).

Conclusion

I would like to conclude with the final roadblock that prevented the Samaritan woman from having a relationship with God: a wait-and-see indifference. In our fast-paced world, opinions abound, but absolute truth is rare. Many have either embraced outright atheism or assumed they are worthy of heaven or divine favor just as they are, imagining a paradise fit for kings and queens. Others, like the Samaritan woman, are aware that the Messiah will return, and believe they will be declared sheep rather than goats, merely lost and waiting for the Good Shepherd to reveal Himself (John 4:15; Matthew 25:31-46). However, Scripture testifies against those who reject or mimic faith, as reconciliation with God and adoption as His child can only occur through believing in Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Being born again is not about one's lineage, religious affiliation, or philanthropic deeds; it requires a total surrender of the heart to Christ, who purchased our redemption with His life (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore, I appeal to you as one of Christ's ambassadors, saved by grace through faith,

² Taken from the "I AM" series from Sermon Central.

³ Taken from the following website: <https://www.livescience.com/christianity-denominations.html#:~:text=There%20are%20more%20than%2045%2C000%20denominations%20globally.&text=Followers%20of%20Jesus%20span%20the,Methodist%20%E2%80%94%20the%20list%20goes%20on.>

⁴ Taken from the following website: <https://research.lifeway.com/2023/07/13/americans-trust-in-the-church-remains-near-historic-low/>

to be reconciled to God before His Son returns, lest you find yourself eternally separated from your Lord, Savior, and King.