

Jesus in Samaria

Here's a full breakdown of **John 4:1–42: Jesus in Samaria** — complete with cultural context, symbolism, theological depth, and the contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.

JOHN 4:1–42 – JESUS IN SAMARIA: THE WOMAN AT THE WELL **1. GEOGRAPHICAL & HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Element	Details
Location	<i>Sychar</i> in Samaria, near the field Jacob gave to Joseph (Gen 33:19; Josh 24:32)
Well	“Jacob’s well” – a deep spring-fed well; symbolic of ancestral heritage
Region Tension	Jews and Samaritans were enemies. Samaritans were considered religious half-breeds and heretics (see 2 Kings 17:24–41)
Route	Most Jews avoided Samaria, taking a longer route east of the Jordan. Jesus "had to go through Samaria" (v.4)—this is likely theological necessity, not geographic.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TIME OF DAY

Detail	Meaning
“It was about the sixth hour” (v.6)	This is noon —the heat of the day. Most women drew water in the morning or evening . Her timing suggests social shame or avoidance due to her reputation (v.18).
Contrast	Nicodemus came at night (Jn 3:2), she comes at noon . Darkness vs. Light.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A WOMAN

Aspect	Cultural Notes	Theological Implications
Gender	Women had lower social status and limited public voice in 1st-century Jewish and Samaritan societies.	Jesus affirms the spiritual and evangelistic capacity of women, elevating their role in God’s redemptive plan.
Social Context	Speaking to a woman alone in public was frowned upon—especially for a rabbi.	Jesus intentionally crosses cultural and social boundaries to bring salvation, showing no one is outside God’s reach.
Samaritan Identity	Jews considered Samaritans religiously and ethnically impure—half-breeds who had corrupted the Torah.	Jesus offers living water (eternal life) to a non-Jew, highlighting the expansion of the covenant to the nations (cf. Acts 1:8).
Isolation	The woman comes alone at noon—suggesting shame, social rejection, or scandal.	Jesus meets her in her shame and transforms her into a joyful witness; grace restores dignity and calling.
Evangelistic Role	Women did not typically lead in religious matters. Her past would’ve disqualified her in Jewish eyes.	She becomes the first public evangelist in John’s Gospel (“Come and see...”), modeling Gospel witness to her community.
Symbolic Identity	She may also symbolically represent Samaria (and by extension, the Gentiles)—a people with a complex spiritual history and many “husbands.”	Jesus, the true Bridegroom (John 3:29), offers covenant relationship, revealing His Messianic identity first to her (v.26).

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4. SYMBOLISM OF WATER & WELL

Element	Meaning
Water	Living water = eternal life, the Spirit (Jn 7:37-39)
Well encounter	Similar to OT betrothal scenes: Isaac (Gen 24), Jacob (Gen 29), Moses (Exod 2). But this is not a romantic encounter—it's covenantal. Jesus is offering spiritual union , not physical.
"You have had five husbands..."	Literal but may also symbolize Samaria's five foreign nations (2 Kings 17:24).
Sixth man (not her husband)	Possible allusion to incompleteness. Jesus is the seventh —bringing fulfillment.

5. THEMATIC STRUCTURE

Verse Range	Theme
vv.1–6	Jesus' journey and weariness (humanity)
vv.7–15	Offer of living water (divinity)
vv.16–18	Revelation of her sin (omniscience)
vv.19–26	True worship—neither mountain nor temple
vv.27–30	Disciples surprised; woman evangelizes
vv.31–38	Spiritual food and mission fields
vv.39–42	Samaritan belief—the only town in John where Jesus is declared "Savior of the world" (v.42)

6. KEY WORD STUDY

Greek Word	Word	Meaning
Ζῶν (zōn)	"Living" (water)	Flowing, life-giving—not stagnant cistern water
Προσκυνέω (proskyneō)	"Worship"	Literally "to kiss toward" – denotes reverent worship
Σωτήρ (sōtēr)	"Savior" (v.42)	Used here uniquely as "Savior of the world" in John's Gospel

7. THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Theme	Description
Inclusivity	Jesus reaches out to the outsider (a Samaritan, a woman, a sinner)
New Covenant	Not about place of worship but heart and Spirit (v.23-24)
Evangelism	Jesus models cross-cultural witness; the woman becomes a messenger
Living Water	Jesus alone satisfies the deep thirst of the soul (cf. Isa 55:1-2, Jer 2:13)

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8. CONTRAST: NICODEMUS VS. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Feature	Nicodemus (Jn 3)	Samaritan Woman (Jn 4)
Gender	Male	Female
Status	Jewish leader, Pharisee	Social outcast, Samaritan
Time of Visit	Night (symbol of confusion)	Noon (light, revelation)
Approach	He comes to Jesus	Jesus comes to her
Understanding	Misunderstood spiritual rebirth	Understood living water
Response	Slow to believe, fades from scene	Becomes bold witness
Effect	No record of immediate faith	Many believe through her

Jesus reveals His **Messianic identity directly to her** ("I who speak to you am He" v.26), something He doesn't do with Nicodemus.

9. OLD TESTAMENT PARALLELS & CONNECTIONS

OT Echo	NT Fulfillment
Isaiah 12:3 – "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."	Jesus offers living water to the woman
Jeremiah 2:13 – Broken cisterns vs. the fountain of living water	The woman's lifestyle echoes broken cisterns
Genesis 29 – Jacob meets Rachel at a well	Jesus meets the woman of Samaria—offering a new covenant, not marriage