

## Jesus and the Samaritan Woman



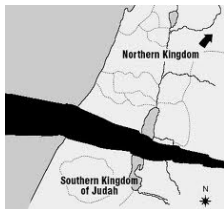
Quick History Lesson from Exodus. The promised Land was divided up into the 12 Israelite tribes. Judges were appointed and there were Problems and divisions. First King is Saul. Rubbish. David is elected to take over. Unites all 12 tribes again. Passes onto his 'unelected' son Solomon. They are OT heroes, but they centralised a power base in Judah (encompassing also the small tribes of Benjamin) This temple is built in Jerusalem and it becomes the place of sacrifice for the 12 tribes.



There was always tension though between the Southern part led by tribe Judah and the larger Northern part led by Tribe Ephraim. However the temple was probably built using forced labour from the Northern tribes especially those from the region known as Samaria (land attribute to the large tribe of Manasseh). Solomon died about 900BC

His son Rehoboam did not have the wisdom of his Father Solomon, nor the God passion and experience of his Grandad David. Also unlike his Grandad David he was not elected. He needed some good council to hold it together. Read the following passage to see how he got on.

### OT reading: 1 Kings 12 v1-19. [Judah & Israel are divided –under Rehoboam]



He made the wrong decision, and lost the Northern tribes, who retained the name Israel and eventually built a new resplendent capital city called Samaria, and set up their own temple near there on Mount Gerizim. The Southern kingdom named themselves over the dominant tribe Judah and retained Jerusalem, although it was right on their Northern border. God could now not only be worshipped in Jerusalem. It all looked good for Israel (who has now escaped the tyranny of Judea). This lasted for 200 years until they were conquered by the mighty and brutal Assyrian army. They besieged Samaria in 722 BC, 28 thousands Israelites went missing, they scattered the political leaders that had not been killed, and settled other foreign tribes in the land. Israel was gone, as was their cultural identity. The remaining Israelites were completely mixed up and inter-married with Assyrians and their later conquerors.

Meanwhile in the land of Judah, the Israelites escaped invasion and kept themselves pure to their Jewish heritage. They kept the Torah and maintained sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem.

750 years later when Jesus was a Man, the places of worship were still going strong. Even almost 3000 years later – today. The slides show Jerusalem temple site today and that of Mount Gerizim. The history of this division sets the scene for animosities that were still strong in Jesus' days.



### NT reading: John 4:5-26.

Purpose of talk – To teach the John 4 passage. To explore Jesus’s realisation that God was there for everyone, even a Samaritan woman. Then look at what that means to those in Church (or not yet) who feel on the outside of the ‘In Crowd’ because their beliefs do not exactly match those of the ‘in-crowd’ i.e. those whose opinions are in the majority or loudest spoken. Bring together the two pivotal points of the God story – Rehoboams decision that divides and loses Israel. Jesus’ unifying decision to see that God was in the business of purifying and pouring out his Spirit on all Israelites even Samaritans



Intro – Play segment of the ‘In-crowd’ (Bryan Ferry) and ask who at school was part of the in-crowd and who felt like an outsider.

[1] Explain in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine, how society was divisive. Those who were in, and more importantly those who were out. Jewish woman (had their place but much like apartheid South Africa had restrictions on what they could do and where they could go). Roman collaborators (Tax collectors), lepers, sinners (i.e. those who flaunted the jewish laws), prostitutes, children with dubious parentage (like Jesus) and one of the worst of all, the despised Samaritans.

[2] I ask you, what is there not to like about the Samaritans. 60 years old, helpline 24-7-365, 200 branches, with over 5 millions calls a year? The listening ear , emotional support for the depressed and suicidal.

[3]Back to the history to understand. So the Northern Tribes of Israel split away from Judah who worshipped in Jerusalem. The border from Israel to Judah was closed so the Israelites needed a new temple. 700 years later in the time of Jesus Jerusalem is still a mighty fortress (though now under Roman occupation) and still the place of worship for the pure Jews, but in the hill country of Samaria, there are still those who worship God in their own way and make sacrifices in their temple on Mount Gerizim.

[4]This was seen as idolatry by the Jews. The true God, Yahweh, resided in the tabernacle in Jerusalem. Whatever they did Samaria was not to the Yahweh. Not only that but they were all of dubious parentage. As we see in the start of Matthews Gospel, ancestry was hugely important to the Jews. Even though Jesus ‘ own Father was not known, and was deemed an ‘illegitimate’, a ‘Mamzer’, this paled into insignificance when compared to a Samaritan. All Samaritan women were regarded by the Jews as continually unclean (and hence untouchable, and a crude proverb of their day heralded them as ‘menstruants from the cradle’. Jesus was brought up in Nazareth in a culture that hated those ‘Samaritans’. There was no way a Jewish man let alone a Rabbi could fraternise with one.

[5] Jesus travels from Judea. He has been with John the Baptist in Judea. John, a cult hero of his age (but hated by the Temple rulers) had upset Herod, and life was dangerous for him and his associates. Word was getting around that Jesus was baptising more than John. When John was later captured he was marched to Herods fort at Machaerus where he was beheaded. It was too dangerous for Johns associates including Jesus down in Judea. He headed back to where he had family, Nazareth. But the safest route avoiding soldiers takes him though the rough Samaritan hill country.

[6] The Encounter with the Woman [Read vs 5-7]. The well was out of town, normally the working wells would be in the centre of the village. This one was old and abandoned. You would have to have a very good reason to take the long walk out of town to fetch heavy water. As it was abandoned there would be no bucket or means to draw water, which Jesus soon discovered. A Jew should not

use a Samaritan bucket anyway. When the woman came, Jesus could see from her light attire that she was no traveller like him, but was from the local village a mile or so away, her hair pinned back in the Samaritan style. But why not draw water and share gossip with the other women. Why, because Jesus knew instinctively that she was the gossip. That's why she was out of town with a ladle on a rope (as a bucket would be hard to haul up) drawing from this abandoned primitive well, a hole in the ground. At first, she was so stunned that he spoke to her, she would have just looked at him in amazement.

[7] The Realisation. I view Jesus as fully man, but with as much God as you can squeeze into a man. As he grew up, he would have been realising more and more of what his God given purpose was in life, but this would have been a gradual realisation. He won't have looked up in the manger and said to his Mum, I am here to die for the World and set them free from their sins. Growing up he would have also been taught plenty of things that were contrary to God's purposes, including Samaritans may be Israelites but the scum can never be part of the In-crowd. In Luke's Gospel he even tells his disciples to go into Samaritan towns. But despite the natural prejudice that all Jews had this was a defining moment for him. What Jesus realised in this pivotal moment in history was to see that **God was in the business of purifying and pouring out his Spirit on all Israelites even Samaritans**. If God could pour out his Spirit on himself Jesus, a mamzer, one of dubious parentage, then he could pour out his Spirit on a Samaritan. It was a defining moment. Soon he would realise that God's purpose was not just for all of Israel but for the Gentiles too. This is the type of realisation that is going to get Jesus into a heap of trouble. John had upset Herod not the Temple Powers. But the central power base of Jerusalem was still there in Jesus' days as it was in Solomon's days. Priests were bigger than anyone else because of all the meat they ate. By seeing God's grace for Samaritans Israelites equal to that of the Jewish Israelites he was setting off on a collision course far more explosive than the one John the Baptist had with Herod.

[8] v20 – He points out her predicament, obvious to him, that she is not married. She recognises him as a prophet and tries to get him on the topic of their 700 year old dispute. Jacob and his family worshipped God on this mountain, like us Samaritans, but you Jews worship God in Jerusalem. Implied is, what's so special about that place, we hold the moral high ground. Jesus dismisses her views (v21 and v22) He will not concede Samaritans know better than Jews – for starters the Samaritan Bible only had the Pentateuch (first 5 books). He then avoids the debate, by bringing her round to the revelation. It won't matter two hoots where the temple is. It is not a temple you will need to worship God. True worship will come when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You know the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. He will be your life giving water. Tap into that well and live for a day (be thirsty again tomorrow). Tap into the Holy Spirit through me and you will live forever. He is saying forget the differences of doctrine, all that matters is me, and the God's Holy Spirit. **What Rehoboam divided through pride, Jesus was going to restore through Love, enabled by his Spirit.**

[9] Jerusalem or Samaria. Are you worshipping in Jerusalem with the in-crowd, or you doing something different in Samaria. As Christians we should be moving towards being more like Jesus, but the journeys we take are unique. So we will not agree with each other on many aspects of our faith, because we have had different experiences and seen God's kingdom from different angles. We have seen different parts of the tapestry. Some of you will be feeling good because you are happy with the worship, of what you believe, what you watch and wear. The views from the front by in large match your own. You are in Jerusalem. Others find some aspects hard to cope with. You may disagree on political views that you have on Gay Marriage or Woman priests, you may not like the style of worship, be uncomfortable with hand raising and tongues, struggle with the creation story or

virgin birth, or other aspects of what you hear week by week. You sometime feel isolated. You don't want to discuss your feelings in case you are told off or rejected in some way. You are in Samaria.

[10] Good news is that these things fade away, when you focus on Jesus and his Spirit. It does not matter if you are in Samaria or Jerusalem. I personally do not care if you prefer Gregorian Chants, think the Earth was literally made in 7 days, and believe the gifts of the Holy Spirits stopped in the book of Acts. I'd happily debate the issues if you wanted. But if you love Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, if you have a relationship with him, then you have found true Worship, and we are one together in Him. If God can pour his blessing down on a Jew of unknown parentage, he can do so for a woman who has slept around, even a Samaritan woman. If he can do that for her, then he can do that for you too, if you focus on him and tap into his life-giving water. Let Jesus be our focus and not our differences. Accommodate each other and love each other, and that will be a witness to others. They will know that we are his disciples, by the love that we show one to another. Amen.