

The gospel of John is the life story of Jesus purportedly written by the Apostle John. It's most likely the last of the four gospels in the Bible in terms of when it was written. This conclusion comes from language/vocabulary choices as well as the opinion that the theological reflection in John is much more developed and mature than in Mark, Luke and Matthew. John's account of Jesus is filled with poetry and paradoxes between light and dark, deafness and hearing, blindness and sight. John tells us his purpose for writing the gospel in 20:31, "But these [stories] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." We jump into the early middle of John, in a chapter that is commonly read during the season of Lent in worship.

SAMARIA: they were the descendants of two groups of people: 1) the remnant of native Israelites who were not deported at the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE; and 2) foreign colonists brought in from Babylonia and other conquerors resettled in Samaria (2 Kings 27). There was division between them and the Jews over the proper place to worship God. The Samaritans refused to worship at Jerusalem, and the Jewish high priest had the Samaritan Temple on Mt Gerizim burned in 128 BCE. The Jewish population viewed the Samaritans as ritually impure, seen as less than equal, and of a bastardized faith tradition. Samaria was the area between Judea (which contained Jerusalem) in the South and Galilee the region in the north (around the Sea of Galilee – Jesus' home-base area). Many travelers would go around it, rather than cross it.

WATER – Jesus talks of the water of life, but the woman is thinking of flowing water. Isaiah 55 may be heard as an inter-textual conversation with the common in the first century calling of the Torah as both "the gift of God" and "living water." "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. ⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;" Isaiah 55:1-3, 6

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John 4:1-42

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" ² — although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— ³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through **SAMARIA**. ⁵ So he came to a **SAMARITAN** city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A **SAMARITAN WOMAN** came to draw **WATER**, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy *food*.) ⁹ The **SAMARITAN WOMAN** said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of **SAMARIA**?" (Jews do not share things in common with **SAMARITANS**.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying 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 no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living **WATER**?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this **WATER** will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the **WATER** that I will give them will never be thirsty. The **WATER** that I will give will become in them a spring of **WATER** gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this **WATER**, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw **WATER**." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your *husband*, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no *husband*." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no *husband*;' ¹⁸ for you have had five *husbands*, and the one you have now is not your *husband*. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on **this mountain**, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, **the hour** is coming when you will worship the Father neither on **this mountain** nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But **the hour** is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks

such as these 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 proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” ²⁸ Then the woman left her WATER jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the **Messiah**, can he?” ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” ³² But he said to them, “I have *food* to eat that you do not know about.” ³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My *food* is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how *the fields are ripe for harvesting*. ³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

³⁹ Many **SAMARITANS** from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” ⁴⁰ So when the **SAMARITANS** came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly **the Savior of the world**.”

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What shimmers in your attention in this reading?**
- **Imagine yourself in this story. Who are you? What do you hear, see, feel, experience as the story unfolds?**
- **What invitation for living and acting do you hear in this text today?**

Husband: it’s possible that she has been widowed multiple times. At this time, Jews were allowed only 3 marriages. We don’t know if the Samaritans practiced this as well. Some have read the word “*husband*” as allegorical, implying that she worships multiple gods.

the hour: The Gospel of John has an intentional focus on “the hour” of Jesus. Before his first miracle, Jesus said that “My hour has not yet come” (2:4). During his early life and ministry, we are twice told that “his hour had not yet come” (7:30 and 8:20). Toward the end of his life, Jesus realized that the hour was at hand, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23). He recoiled from the horror of it, but knew that this hour was the fulfillment of his mission, “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour” (12:27). The forward momentum of Jesus’ hour in the Gospel of John reaches a climax at the Cross, “Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father” (13:1). “After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you’ (17:1).

this mountain The Samaritans worshipped on Mt Geirzim where Joshua had been told to set up a shrine in Deuteronomy 27:4-5 “⁴ So when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall cover them with plaster. ⁵ And you shall build an altar there to the Lord your God,”

the fields are ripe for harvesting either Jesus is remarking on the fields that literally surround them, or he’s speaking metaphorically of the harvest of the townspeople who are coming out to him.

the Savior of the world this title was not commonly used in the Hebrews Scriptures where Yahweh is instead the Savior of Israel (see Psalm 24:5; Isaiah 12:2 and Luke 1:47). This title in Greek was commonly used for the Roman Emperors such as Hadrian. The term Savior is also commonly used for Jesus after his resurrection. Is John incorp-orating a socio-political term into a religious tradition, redefining the power of the Emperor versus Jesus?