

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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The Miracle at Shiloh

CASTING LOTS AT SHILOH

"And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, 'How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?' And Joshua said, 'Give out from among you three men for each tribe, and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me. And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coast on the north. Ye shall describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me that I may here cast lots before you here before the Lord our God" (Joshua 18:2-7).

We see the manifold wisdom of God in his overruling of the division of the land. In Joshua 14:1 we learn, "And these are the countries ... which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed for inheritance to them" (Number 34:17-28).

Here, no prince was taken of the tribes of Rueben, Gad, nor of the half-tribe of Manasseh. These had been assigned their portions by Moses on the eastern side of the Jordan (Numbers 32:33) and care was taken to define their boundaries. (Joshua 13) After Caleb had put in his lawful claim to mount Hebron, the tribes of Judah, and the second half of Joseph — Ephraim — were given their allotments on the west side of Jordan. A full enumeration of the land they were to occupy is furnished in Joshua, chapters 15-17.

For the remaining tribes, we learn in Joshua 14:2, "by lot was their inheritance." How the lot was cast in this case cannot be determined with certainty, but the following is probable: first, the land was geographically divided and each portion was called by a particular name. There would need to be a consensus that each portion was of equal value. Finally, some method of "casting" would be employed to discern which tribe would come up in order and which district God had chosen for the tribe (Numbers 26:52-56).

Knowing this was the purpose of their reconnaissance, "the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts of a book, and came again to Joshua and to the host at Shiloh" (Joshua 18:9). These men and their work differed markedly from those who had searched the land in the time of Moses. In Moses' day the spies went only to discover the nature of the country and the state of its inhabitants; but these now went to take an actual geographical survey of the land in order to divide it among the tribes which had not yet received their portions. We may suppose that the country was exactly described in a book, that is, a map, pointing out the face of the country, accompanied with descriptions of each part.

We find in Joshua 18:10, "And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions" (See Numbers 34: 17, 18).

FIRST LOT — BENJAMIN

First, "And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph" (Joshua 18:11). We recall that two striking predictions had been made respecting Benjamin, although at first they almost appear to be inconsistent with each other.

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The earlier one was made by Jacob: "Benjamin shall raven as a wolf; in the morning he shall divide the prey and at night he shall divide the spoil" (Genesis 49:27). It is evident from this language that Jacob did not follow his natural inclinations on this occasion, for Benjamin was his youngest and most dearly beloved son. It appears that he was under divine inspiration when he uttered this remarkable prophecy.

Benjamin was indeed the fiercest and most warlike of the tribes. The reference to what he should do "in the morning" and "at night" intimates a distinct reference to both the earlier and later history of the tribe. The fierceness and cruelty of the men belonging to this tribe is shown in the treatment of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19-20:7). Their warlike character, ability, and tenacity in fighting is seen in their singly withstanding the combined forces of all the other tribes in two pitched battles, in one of which 20,000 of them defeated the opposing army of 400,000 and later refusing to yield until they were almost completely destroyed (Judges 19:14-30, 20:12-14).

King Saul — David's fierce persecutor — was of this tribe. Other examples of their fierceness and valor are found in 2 Samuel 2:15, 16, 1 Chronicles 8:40, 10:2, 2 Chronicles 17:17. In their later history Benjamin allied himself to Judah, and thus "divided the spoil," sharing in their privileges.

Esther and Mordecai were also of the tribe of Benjamin, and through them the enemies of Israel were destroyed. But the most renowned and honorable of all Benjamin's descendants was Saul of Tarsus (Philippians 3:5). The terms of Jacob's prophecy were most remarkably made good in him as the great Apostle Paul, for in the morning of his career, when he persecuted the Christians, he ravaged as a wolf; but at the close, by his labors and by God's grace, he richly "divided the spoil."

The later prediction concerning this tribe was made through Moses, "the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12).

This has reference chiefly to the favored and honored position or portion that the tribe would occupy. It is intimated that the temple, in which Jehovah would dwell, would be situated within the territory of this tribe. And such was the case, for Jerusalem, the holy city, was in the lot of Benjamin (Joshua 18:28).¹

Though Zion, the city of David, is supposed to belong to Judah, yet mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, was in Benjamin's lot. God is Himself said to 'dwell between his shoulders' because the temple stood on that mount as the head of a man upon his shoulders" (Matthew Henry).

The borders of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph" (Josh 18:11). Behold the gracious ruling of Divine providence in arranging for "little Benjamin" (Psalm 68:27) to be located between two of the most powerful of the tribes. In the prophet benedictions of Moses we find that Benjamin came right after that

of Judah and immediately before Joseph's (Deuteronomy 33:7-17).

There was also a peculiar propriety in this appointment, for Benjamin was Joseph's full brother. Later Benjamin was the tribe which united with Judah in supporting the throne of David and the temple at Jerusalem. We see in this arrangement God's wisdom in overruling the casting of the lot, for nothing was more likely to secure a united Israel than to make Benjamin the link between the two most powerful and naturally rival tribes. It was through the mutual affection of Judah and Joseph for Benjamin, as their father's youngest and dearest son, that the brethren were reconciled (Genesis 44:18; 45:24).

SECOND LOT — SIMEON

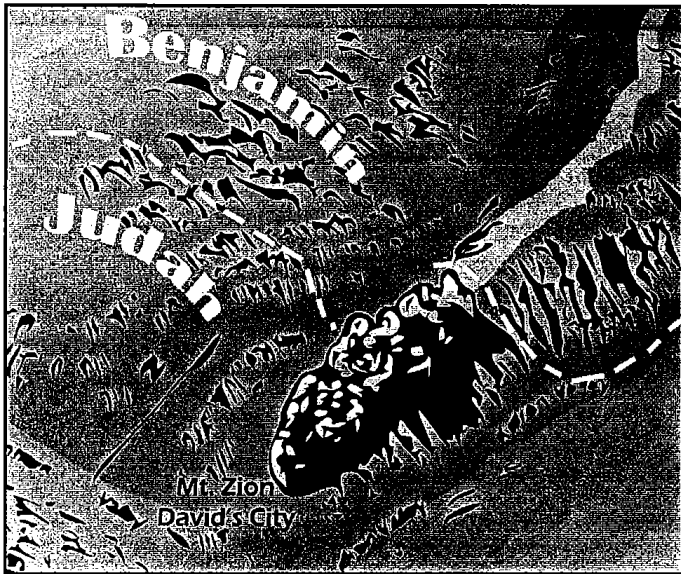
"And the second lot came forth to Simeon, for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah" (Joshua 19:1). The portion of the children of Judah was too much for them; and it is worthy of note that this is the only recorded instance of the portion being too large for any of tribe.² Yet it is also significant that it was Judah's which proved to be the exception, for it was the tribe from which our Lord Jesus sprang. It appears that we have here foreshadowed that grand truth of the fullness of Christ. In Christ there is an abundance of grace and inexhaustible riches for the saints in the narrow way to draw upon.

This second lot fulfilled the prophecy of Jacob. He had linked together Simeon and Levi in judgment, who earlier had been united in wickedness. (Genesis 34:25) He said, "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:5-7). Jacob's prophetic word was fulfilled, for the Levites had as their portion in Canaan forty-eight cities, which were scattered throughout the inheritance of the other tribes. (Numbers 35:8, Joshua 14:4, 21:3) So too in the case of Simeon was there a scattering. His descendants had their portion within the allotment of Judah, and as Joshua 19:2-8 shows, the tribe of Simeon was widely "scattered," being dispersed among the many different cities.

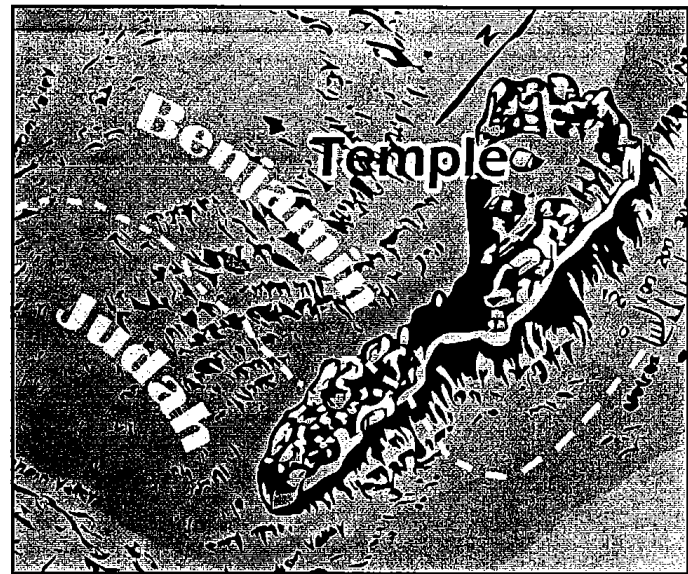
THIRD LOT — ZEBULON

"And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulon, according to their families" (Joshua 19:10). Jacob foretold that Zebulon shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be for a haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon" (Genesis 49:13). Moses said, "And of Zebulon he said, Rejoice, Zebulon, in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand" (Deuteronomy 33:18, 19).

And so it came to pass, for Joshua 19 goes on to say of the lot of Zebulon, "and their border went up toward the sea." The expressions, "thy going out," and, "they shall suck of the abundance of the seas," received their fulfillment in their seagoing life and trading in foreign parts. But it is also



The Portions of Benjamin and Judah, showing David's City in Judah's portion.



The Portions of Benjamin and Judah, showing the Temple in Benjamin's portion.

important for us to note what portion Zebulon receives in the New Testament. Matthew 4:15, 16 states that the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali which adjoined it are none other than "Galilee of the Gentiles." This is the region of which it is promised, "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matthew 4:16).

Nazareth, where the Savior spent so much of his time, was in its borders. It was also on the shores of its sea that Jesus did so much of his preaching and wrought so many miracles. Well might the Voice of prophecy bid Zebulon "re-joyce" (Deuteronomy 33:18). We may also perceive the deeper and spiritual allusion in the words, "Rejoice, Zebulon, in thy *going out* ... They shall call the people unto the *mountain*." The *mountain* refers to the kingdom of Messiah, and was done by the preaching of Jesus and his apostles. Literally, the word "apostles" means those who are *sent out*.

It is remarkable that with the exception of Judas, and Paul his replacement, all of the apostles were men of Galilee.³ Zebulon was also "for a haven," and it was in its borders that Joseph, Mary, and the child Jesus found a haven after their return from Egypt. It afforded Jesus shelter when the Jews sought to kill him in Judea (John 7:1).

FOURTH LOT — ISSACHAR

"And the fourth lot came out to Issachar" (Joshua 19:17). Since this tribe was united with Zebulon in blessing (Deuteronomy 33:18, 19) there is less need to make separate remarks. The phrase "in their tents" was in apposition to the phrase "ships" used of Zebulon. Issachar would be a pastoral people rather than a seagoing one. Their lot was to be cultivating the land. Their inheritance was the fertile plain of Jezreel with its surrounding hills and valleys. Afterwards this region was known as lower Galilee. It extended from Carmel to the Jordan and in breadth to Mount Tabor.

FIFTH LOT — ASHER

"And the fifth lot came out to Asher" (Joshua 19:24). Jacob foretold, "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties" (Genesis 49:20). This refers to the great fertility of the lot which was to be given to Asher, and which appears to have corresponded with the meaning of his name, i.e. "happy or blessed." His great prosperity is described by Moses in this figurative way: "Let Asher be blessed with children, let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil" (Deuteronomy 33:24).

The general position of Asher was on the seashore from Carmel northward, with Manasseh on the south, Zebulon and Issachar on the southeast, and Naphtali on the northeast. (Joshua 19:24-31, 17:10, 11, Judges 1:31, 32). They possessed the maritime portion of the rich Plain of Esdraelon, probably for a distance of 8 to 10 miles from the shore. This territory contained some of the richest soil in all Palestine.

SIXTH LOT — NAPHTALI

"And the sixth lot came out to Naphtali" (Joshua 19:32). Jacob had prophesied, "Naphtali is a hind let loose, he giveth *goodly words*" (Genesis 49:21). Moses foretold, "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord! Possess thou the west and the south" (Deuteronomy 33:23). In the apportionment of the land, Naphtali was enclosed on three sides by those of other tribes. On the west lay Asher, on the south Zebulon, and on the east the trans-Jordanic Manasseh.

Scarcely any of the tribes was more particularly favored by the wondrous mercy and kindness of God than were Naphtali and Zebulon. In Naphtali the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shined brightly, (Matthew 4:13-16) for Jesus' chief residence was at Capernaum and Bethsaida which were

in the borders of Naphtali. It was there that Christ and his apostles did most of their preaching and gave forth “goodly words.” The word “Gospel,” or “Evangel” literally means, “Good words.”

SEVENTH LOT — DAN

“And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan” (Joshua 19:40). Dan, whose name signifies “judgment,” was the eldest of Jacob’s sons by Bilhah, Rachel’s maid. He is here promised an equal rule with those tribes that came from either Leah or Rachel, the legal wives of Jacob. (Genesis 30:1-6) In the division of the Promised Land Dan was the last of the tribes to receive his portion, which was the smallest of the twelve.

Notwithstanding its smallness it had eminent natural advantages. On the north and east it was completely embraced by its two brother tribes, Ephraim and Benjamin the south-east and south it joined Judah. Thus it was surrounded by the three most powerful tribes of Israel.

Jacob said, “Dan shall judge (avenge) his people as one of the tribes of Israel” (Genesis 49:16). “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse’s heels, so that his rider shall fall backward” (Genesis 49:17). Moses said, “Dan is a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan” (Deuteronomy 33:22). It is intimated that Dan should gain the principal part of its conquests by cunning and stratagem, and this is seen particularly in their conquest of Laish (Judges 18). It appears from Joshua 19:47 that the portion originally assigned to Dan was not sufficient for them. Thus they fought against Laish (Leshem) taking it and adding it to their territories.

Jacob, in his prophetic blessing of Dan, represents this tribe under the notion of a “serpent in the path,” while Moses likened Dan to a “lion’s whelp.” Sampson was of this tribe, and in him the characteristics prophesied of Dan are combined, that is, cunning, stratagem and courage. Sampson judged (avenged) the people of Israel 20 years (Judges 18:2, 15:20). For Sampson’s courage see Judges 14:5, 6 and see chapter 15:9-17. For examples of stratagem and cunning see Judges 15:1-8, 16:26-30.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The order in which the tribes are here mentioned is not that of seniority. Rather, it appears to be a spiritual one, according to the meaning of their names given in Genesis.

Scripture	Tribe	Signifies
Genesis 35:18	Benjamin	The son of the right hand
Genesis 29:33	Simeon	Hearing
Genesis 30:20	Zebulon	Dwelling
Genesis 30:18	Issachar	Hire or Reward
Genesis 30:23	Asher	Happy
Genesis 30:8	Naphtali	Wrestling
Genesis 30:16	Dan	Judging

Combining these scriptural references we get: The son of the right hand (the place of honor and power) is the hearing one, dwelling (no longer tossed about like the restless sea) in Christ; great is his reward, for he is happy or blessed. Such a one is marked by wrestling against (instead of submitting to) the powers of the world, the flesh, the Adversary. He judges all things yet he himself is judged of no man, because he compares spiritual things with spiritual, having received the spirit which is of God that he might know the things freely given to him of God.

— David Skein

(1) Both the tribe of Benjamin and the tribe of Judah held what later became the city of Jerusalem. Joshua 18:21, 28, Judges 1:21 says part of Benjamin’s portion included “Jebusi, which is Jerusalem.” For Judah, Joshua 15:8 says “And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward.”

(2) Under Simeon, it is not necessary to conclude that Judah’s portion was too big for them. Rather the inclusion of Simeon within Judah’s borders was part of a punishment for their role in the fall of Shechem. Neither Simeon nor Levi had a tribal inheritance, though in Levi’s case the punishment phase seems to have been overruled for their good because of their faithfulness in the matter of the Golden Calf.

(3) The most probable meaning of “Iscariot” is from, “Ish Keriioth” i.e., “man of Keriioth.” This was a town in the territory of the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:25).

The Law and the Gospel

But what does it mean when Christ says: “The poor have good tidings preached to them?” Is it not preached also to the rich and to the whole world? Again, why is the Gospel so great a thing, so great a blessing as Christ teaches, seeing that so many people despise and oppose it? Here we must know what Gospel really is, otherwise we cannot understand this passage. We must, therefore, diligently observe that from the beginning God has sent into the world a two-fold word or message, the Law and the Gospel. These two messages must be rightly distinguished one from the other and properly understood, for besides the Scriptures there never has been a book written to this day, not even by a saint, in which these two messages, the Law and the Gospel, have been properly explained and distinguished, and yet so very much depends on such an explanation..the Law of God convicts us, even by our own experience, that by nature we are evil, disobedient, lovers of sin, and hostile to God’s laws.

From all this either self-confidence or despair must follow. Self-confidence follows when a man strives to fulfill the law by his own good works, by trying hard to do as the words of the law command. He serves God, he swears not, he honors father and mother, he kills not, he does not commit adultery, etc. But meanwhile he does not look into his heart, does not realize with what motives he leads a good life, and conceals the old Adam in his heart. For if he would truly

examine his heart, he would realize that he is doing all unwillingly and with compulsion, if he be not prompted by things of less importance, as honor, goods, health and fear of being humiliated, of being punished or of being visited by a plague.

In short, he would have to confess that he would rather lead a wicked life if it were not that he fears the consequences, for the law only restrains him. But because he does not realize his bad motives he lives securely, looks only at his outward works and not into his heart, prides himself on keeping the law of God perfectly, and thus the countenance of Moses remains covered to him, that is, he does not understand the meaning of the law, namely, that it must be kept with a happy, free and willing mind. For this reason the Scriptures conclude, "All men are liars," Psalm 116:11. "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity," Psalm 39:5. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one," Psalm 14:3.

Despair follows when man becomes conscious of his evil motives, and realizes that it is impossible for him to love the law of God, finding nothing good in himself; but only hatred of the good and delight in doing evil. Now he realizes that the law cannot be kept only by works hence he despairs of his works and does not rely upon them. He should have love; but he finds none, nor can have any through his own efforts or out of his own heart. Now he must be a poor, miserable and humiliated spirit whose conscience is burdened and in anguish because of the law, commanding and demanding payment in full when he does not possess even a farthing with which to pay. Only to such persons is the law beneficial, because it has been given for the purpose of working such knowledge and humiliation; that is its real mission. These persons well know how to judge the works of hypocrites and fraudulent saints, namely, as nothing but lies and deception. David referred to this when he said, "I said in my haste, all men are liars," Psalm 116:11.

For this reason Paul calls the law a law unto death, saying, "And the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death," Romans 7:10; and a power of sin. 1 Corinthians 15:56 "And the strength of sin is the law," and in 2 Corinthians 3:6 he says, "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." All this means, if the law and human nature be brought into a right relation, the one to the other, then will sin and a troubled conscience first become manifest. Man, then, sees how desperately wicked his heart is, how great his sins are, even as to things he formerly considered good works and no sin. He now is compelled to confess that by and of himself he is a child of perdition. Thus man is crushed and put to naught, and truly humbled.

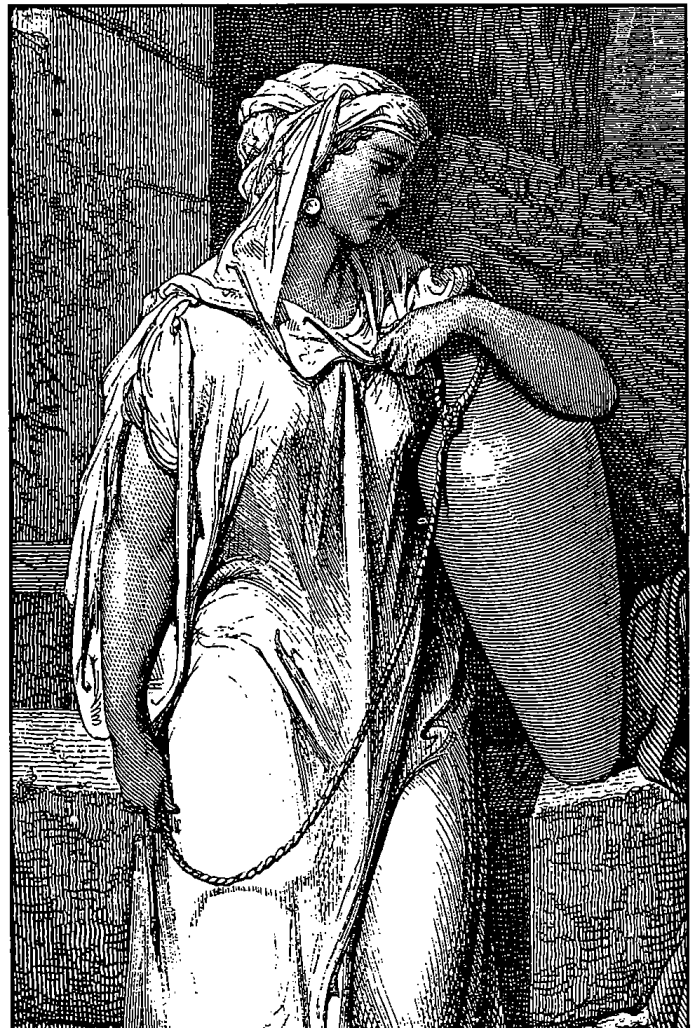
Inasmuch as all this is caused only by the law, St. Paul truly says, that it is a law unto death and a letter that killeth, and that through the commandment sin becomes exceedingly sinful, Romans 7:13. But when that has been done by the first word, namely, the law, it has worked deep despair and wretchedness in our hearts. Then God comes and offers us his blessed and life-giving word and promises.

— Martin Luther (1483-1546), *Sermon on Matthew 11*

The Samaritan Woman

The account of Jesus and the woman of Samaria who came to draw water, and was offered a taste of the "living waters," is recorded in John 4:1-29. Samaria was the name of a stretch of country located between Judea and Galilee, and while the Jews dealt with the Samaritans on a commercial basis, they had no intercourse with them socially or religiously but, rather, treated them as if they were Gentiles, that is, as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

To better appreciate this incident with the Master, we need to understand a little background of the Samaritans. Their ancestors were Gentiles who had been transported to Samaria centuries earlier by the Assyrians even before Israelites had been taken to Babylon. Through contact with the Jews and also through intermarriage with certain renegade Jews, these Gentiles obtained a smattering of knowledge of the Jewish hope and worship and they combined this knowledge in a way that resulted in confusion. The time had not come for God to reveal Himself to the world or, in any sense of the word, to accept Gentiles.



The Samaritan Woman

Thus far, from the days of Jacob, all divine favor had been concentrated on Israel, the seed of Abraham — and particularly on those who had maintained their covenant relationship by circumcision (Amos 3:2). Hence the Jews were right not to acknowledge the Samaritans, to have no dealings with them religiously or socially, nor to intermarry. This exclusivity was a matter not of bigotry but of divine regulation and prohibition (Deuteronomy 7:1-6, Ezra 10:10, 11).

The Samaritans gradually acquired a love for the land in which they were dwelling and its ancient history became their history. They realized that the Jews had been God's favorite people but thought of them as being rejected from divine favor. And they thought of themselves as the successors of the Jews, not only in possessing the portion of the Israelites' territory called Samaria but also, to some degree, in having the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They accepted the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) but rejected the remainder of the Old Testament Scriptures, which the Jews recognized.

An even greater religious antipathy existed between the Jews and the Samaritans than between the Jews and heathen peoples. One reason was that the Samaritan faith came closer to the Jewish faith and was, therefore, in some respects more actively antagonistic to it than the heathen religions, which permitted no competition. While the Jews regarded the Samaritans as impostors, as not the children of Jacob at all, the Samaritans called Jacob their father, thus convincing themselves that they were the children of Abraham and heirs of the oath-bound covenant.

JACOB'S WELL

Our Lord and his apostles, in their journey from Judea to Galilee, passed through the territory inhabited by the Samaritans. They had probably been on their journey for that day since early morning, and at noontime Jesus rested at Jacob's well while the disciples went to a nearby village to purchase food. Water wells in Israel, as in many parts of the world, were comparatively scarce and Jacob's well, dug approximately fourteen centuries before our Lord's time, was a remarkably good well — deep, abundantly supplied with water, and nicely curved at the top. In fact, the well which was considered almost a miracle in its day, had a great reputation throughout the region because of the purity of the water. Samaria was a limestone country, so most of the water was brackish, but not Jacob's well which, being sunk to a depth of over a hundred feet, had struck a crevice in the rock that yielded a very large and never-failing supply of desirable water.

While Jesus was resting on the well, a Samaritan woman came for water. The subsequent account of our Lord's interview with her is one of the most extraordinary presentations of divine truth found in the Gospels. On a number of occasions Jesus made remarkable statements to not very remarkable people under not very remarkable circumstances. Jesus' words have been an encouragement for all of his followers. Indeed we find that his principal communication through the Gospels has been with the humble. As



"The poor of this world," casting in her widow's mite.

the Apostle Paul said, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). Rather, God has chosen "the poor of this world rich in faith" to be heirs of the Kingdom (James 2:5). By His purposely taking the ignoble with a view of making them the noble, those who make their calling and election sure will reflect His glory and show forth His praise throughout all eternity as marks of His grace (Ephesians 1:5, 6, 2:10, 1 Corinthians 1:27-31).

The Master at once recognized the woman as a Samaritan, and she immediately recognized him as a Jew — not merely by facial lineaments but also by distinctive features of his dress. So tightly were these lines of social etiquette drawn that under ordinary circumstances no self-respecting Jew would have asked a Samaritan for any favor, especially for a drink of water, which signified fellowship or a covenant of goodwill. Therefore, the narrative manifests the humility of our Lord. His request of the woman to allow him to have a drink of the water she had drawn was really a most tactful method of approach to her heart. By doing this, Jesus put himself, in a measure, under obligation to her. For a Jew to make a request or ask a courtesy of a Samaritan was very unusual. Consequently, the astonished woman inquired how it came that he, a Jew, would make such a request of a Samaritan. Her question contains an element of boldness — she acknowledges that she is not a virtuous woman — and all of these details make even more remarkable the fact that our Lord condescended to have any communication with this woman. A lesson along this line is found in the Apostle

Paul's advice that the Christian is to "condescend to men of low estate" (Romans 12:16).

JESUS' KIND APPROACH

Jesus broke the icy barrier that existed between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews claimed superiority, and although the Samaritans did not acknowledge that superiority, they nevertheless felt it to some degree. The woman was ready to talk, but standing on her dignity she did not hasten to give the drink of water. Instead she parleyed and asked why a Jew of seemingly high character should act so differently from the custom. Why should he ask water of a Samaritan woman and, in a sense, be willing to place himself under obligation to one who was usually treated as inferior? The woman asked for an explanation of the Lord's peculiar conduct, but he replied by attracting her attention to a deeper truth.

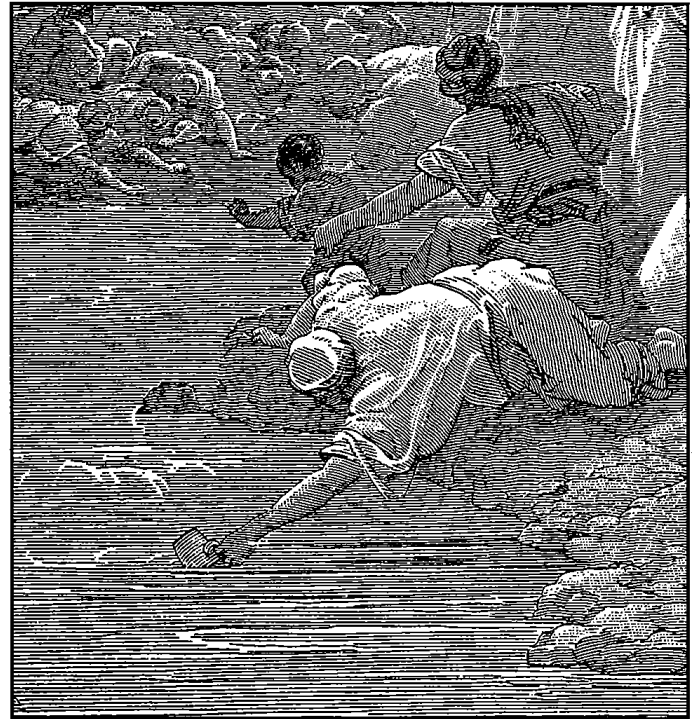
When our Lord sent forth the twelve apostles to declare that the Kingdom of God was at hand, he said to them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5, 6). And on another occasion, he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Because Jesus would not perform his miracles to heal their sick, the Samaritans resented him and would not receive him or permit him to pass through one of their cities on his journey (Luke 9:51-56). The miracles that our Lord did were only intended to be sufficient to establish his identity. Their purpose was not to provide a precedent for healing the world or the Church. His words were, "The same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36). The Lord's great healing time is designated in Scripture "the times of restitution" (Acts 3:21). When the Millennial Kingdom is inaugurated in the near future, then the healing of the nations will become Jesus' great work (Matthew 6:10).

Our Lord's course with the Samaritan woman is an illustration of the apostle's instruction that we should do good unto all men as we have opportunity but especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). Had there been a company of Jews to whom the Lord could have talked, we are bound to suppose that his energies would have been expended on their behalf to the neglect of this disreputable Samaritan woman. But there being none of the children of Israel to be fed at this time, he let some of the crumbs of knowledge and blessing fall to the Samaritans, who, like the Gentiles, were not children but in comparison were "dogs," that is, household pets (Mark 7:27, 28).

Our Lord was obeying his own declaration that it was his "meat" to do his Father's will and to be engaged in his Father's business (John 4:34). Although he was weary, and although he knew that further talking would interfere with his rest and refreshment, he was ready, nevertheless, to sacrifice his own convenience to help another, even a social outcast. The Apostle Paul similarly exhorted all of God's people to be instant in season and out of season in preaching the gospel message to willing ears (2 Timothy 4:2).

Jesus, while probably thirsty, was more anxious to give the water of truth than to receive the natural water. Instead of allowing himself to be sidetracked by the woman's question on the rights and the wrongs of the Samaritans, he ignored her rudeness and turned the conversation by saying, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10). The force of the expression "the gift of God" is only partly seen until we learn that these words were customarily used by the water carriers who went about the city and cried out in their own language, "The gift of God! The gift of God!" With water thus being termed "the gift of God," the woman presumed our Lord's meaning to be, "If you had known about the value of water, the gift of God, you would have asked of me."

The value of water is much more appreciated in the Asian countries than with us. To the inhabitants of those countries, water means the cooling and the refreshing of the blood, the cleansing of the skin, the comfort of life in every



Precious water in the wilderness

way. Thus "living water" is a wonderful and expressive symbol, and so is thirst. Thirst is a desire, a craving, a longing, and physical thirst is said to be more painful than physical hunger, for physical hunger loses its power gradually in weakness, but thirst continues and intensifies hourly until the very last breath. Just as literal water quenches and satisfies the demand of nature, so only the water of life can satisfy soul thirst. Along this line, we will quote an old poem:

*Traverse the desert and then you can tell
What treasures exist in the cold, deep well.
Then you will learn what water is worth;
The gnawing of hunger's worm is past,*

*While fiery thirst lives on to the last,
The hot blood stands in each gloomy eye
And "Water, oh God" is the only cry.
Let heaven this one rich gift withhold,
How soon we find it better than gold.*

The woman understood the expression "living water" to mean fresh water as distinguished from stagnant water. Perceiving that our Lord was not provided with the necessary lowering bucket and camel's hair cord, she said, "If you desire to give me water to drink, it is useless for me to ask, for you have nothing to draw with and this well is very deep. Besides, there is no other place where you can procure better water than at this well. Whence, then, have you 'living water?' Are you greater than our father Jacob and his children and his cattle? Do the Jews have as good a well in their country? Father Jacob provided this well, and he knew of no better water for himself and his family. Are you able to provide better water? Are you greater than he?" (John 4:11, 12, paraphrase).

DEEPER MEANING

Of course the woman did not discern any deeper meaning — how could she? Our Lord tactfully ignored her questions, not to deceive her or to take advantage of her but for her own benefit, leading her mind up from natural water to spiritual water. His answer was, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13, 14). Jesus thus assured her that the water he had to give was of a different kind, which not only would satisfy thirst for the time being but also would be a continual wellspring from within, ever giving satisfaction.

The woman now seemed to sense some kind of deeper attachment to the Master's words, and her curiosity led her to exclaim, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:15). Under ordinary circumstances, the woman's request would be considered very foolish indeed, but this was no ordinary circumstance. Moreover, her native humility shone forth — similar to that of Nathaniel when he responded in the affirmative to Philip's invitation to "Come and see" whether Jesus was the Messiah (John 1:45-49). Her humility was also like the humble curiosity of Zacchaeus when he ran and climbed a tree to view the Master in the way (Luke 19:1-4).

Of course the Samaritan woman did not grasp the meaning of our Lord's words, nor could we have done so in the same situation. The well of truth from which our Lord gives us to drink is deep, and neither the Samaritan woman nor we have anything to draw with. However, we have been abundantly provided for under the new or gospel dispensation of the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle Paul declared, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God — that we might know [that is, that we might appreciate and

be satisfied with] the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12).

The mind of the Samaritan woman swept forward in thought. She recalled the expectation of her people and of the Jews that God would send a great Messiah, an anointed One, who would be all wise and all powerful and would bring relief from all perplexity and complex issues in life. She wondered whether the Messiah could be more wonderfully wise than the prophet and teacher with whom she was talking. Not wanting to ask the question directly, she suggested it in a sideways fashion, saying, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: [and] when he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4:25). Seeing her readiness of mind, our Lord expressed to her, perhaps more plainly than to any other person during his ministry, the great fact that he was the Messiah: "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26).

The disciples, returning at this time, were surprised to find Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman, but they had too great respect to question him. Many since have marveled at the humility displayed by the Master, and the incident has been a good lesson that the Lord's followers are not to despise opportunities for preaching the truth, even though they have an audience of but one. Indeed those possessed with the right spirit will feel richly blessed by such opportunities, which are nourishment to the soul and make them more appreciative of Jesus' reply to his disciples: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32).

If we, like the Samaritan woman, would like to drink of this deep well, then we have an obligation and a responsibility to procure these blessings. Throughout the Christian life we are to prayerfully seek more and more understanding of the precious truths in God's Word, proving all things and holding fast to "that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The principle applies not just at the beginning of our Christian walk but throughout and to the end of our course in the present life: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

— Frank Shallieu

"Rejoice Evermore"

In his retirement, President John Adams (second president of the United States) turned his attention back to Biblical studies and in 1805 challenged the idea of the "perfectability of man" as expounded by the eighteenth-century philosophers. "I consider the perfectability of man as used by modern philosophers to be mere words without meaning, that is mere nonsense," he wrote. Then he added, "[but] this phrase 'rejoice evermore' [1 Thessalonians 5:16] shall never be out of my heart, memory, or mouth as long as I can live, if I can help it. This is my 'perfectability of man.'"

— John Adams (from David McCullough, "John Adams," Touchstone, New York (2001) p.590-1)