



MISSIONS

Exists

because

WORSHIP

Doesn't

John 4:1-43

I struggled with this chapter of John more than any other so far. This is the well-known story about the Samaritan woman at the well. And what makes it extra challenging for a preacher is that it is a long story—43 verses long. The story is so long yet so full of rich and wonderful details that you don't want to skip over any parts. But at the same time you need to maintain the integrity of the whole story. You definitely do not want lose sight of the forest because of the trees.

Let me go off for a moment and talk about the types of preaching. There are two basic ways to preach—topical or expository. Topical preaching is easiest to understand. A sermon on fatherhood is a topical sermon. Many, but not all topical sermons, are less concerned about the context of a passage. The preacher is mostly concerned about what one or two verses says as opposed to the whole passage. So you could take Ephesians 6:4—Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. That's an awesome verse, but if you build a whole message from this one verse, it may not do justice to the larger context of the passage. This is why preachers who only preach on one or two verses at a time—and I hear a lot of them do this on the radio—are not really preaching expository messages. In reality, what they are doing is preaching an ongoing series of topical sermons on 1-2 verses at a time.

There is nothing wrong with topical sermons and I preach that way on occasion. But in general, they do not let the text of Scripture speak for itself. It is far too easy to put the preacher's message into the text than to allow the text to craft the preacher's message. And this can be especially true in the gospels. As I said, this story is 43 verses long. I can't possibly cover it well

in a single message. But neither do I want to chop it up into little pieces. This amazing story is supposed to be kept together as a single story. This means that even in a section of Scripture this large. There is one overarching big idea. There is one message. In this one message there will be a lot of sub-points. Honestly, by the time I am done I should have at least 30 sub-points, but all of those sub-points together support the big idea.

And here is that big idea—Missions exists because worship doesn't. Some of you will recognize this as a direct quote from John Piper, so you might be wondering "How can a quote from someone serve as the big idea of a passage like this?" Let me show you the quote in its context—right, because context is king whether it's the Word of God, or a book or a personal conversation. Would you want someone to take your words out of context and twist them to say something different? Of course not, then we should especially never do that with the Bible.

Here is the longer quote from Piper's book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*.

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."

Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!" (Ps 97:1). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps 67:3-4).¹

Now let me immediately apply this to Jesus and the woman at the well. Jesus is clearly on mission. In this chapter, Jesus shared the good news of salvation with this sinful, broken woman. His mission can be summed in Luke 19:10. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That is his mission but his mission does not stop with salvation. Salvation leads to worship, which is God's ultimate purpose for salvation. And this is exactly the conversation that Jesus and the woman have in chapter four of John. They talk about worship, where to worship, who to worship, how to worship. So this means that Jesus was on a mission to turn this Samaritan woman into a born again worshipper. Or as our big idea puts it, missions exists because worship doesn't.

To be clear, by mission we mean anything from cross cultural missions to neighborhood evangelism. I will now read this passage but as I do, try to keep in mind the big idea as read along and listen.

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. 4 And he had to pass through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

6 Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings 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 nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 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 now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 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 is seeking such people 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 (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" 28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" 30 They went out of the town and were coming to him. 31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 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, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.

36 Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and 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 town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." 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 indeed the Savior of the world."

43 After the two days he departed for Galilee.

Were you able to catch glimpses of the big idea as I read? It's all over this story to be certain. I have broken down the big idea—Missions exists because worship doesn't—into three main sub-points or 3 smaller big ideas, if you will. We'll be tackling the first one this morning.

1. The Reliability and Sufficiency of the Mission.
2. How to Share the Mission.
3. The Results of the Mission—Worship

The Reliability and Sufficiency of the Mission

I want you to see this story is anchored in 4000 years of history. Now you could say that about any part of the New Testament, but there are some unique and exciting ways in which this is especially true of this story. Why is this important? It's important because as believers, I don't think we can ever have enough confidence in the Word of God. The Bible is a book rooted and founded on history—thousands of years of history. These are not fairy tales and myths! So as we see the mission laid out before us, I also want you to be assured of its reliability and truthfulness.

1. Samaritans existed because Israel failed to worship God.

The apostle John inserted a simple explanation in verse 9 (and the translators put it in parentheses for us). *For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.* This was all John told us about the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, but anyone with some basic OT knowledge would have known the background. This was no ordinary conversation between Jesus and a woman. This was between Jesus the Jew and a *Samaritan* woman. That is really important to understand.

And the brute fact of this story is that the only reason the Samaritan people existed is due to a miserable failure on the part of the Israelites to worship God. As you may know, the Samaritan people are a mixture of original Israelites many other foreign nations. In 722 BC, King of Assyria took most of Israel into captivity but just left the poorest of the poor to tend the land. Then he mingled the remaining Israelites with other nations.

And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities (2 Kings 17:24). Between the giving of the law in about 1400 BC to the captivity of Israel in about 700 BC, for those 700 hundred years, the people of God continually resisted God. About half of that 700 years was ruled by judges and the second half by kings but regardless, the leaders and the people rejected God and followed after other false gods and practiced false worship.

But when the foreign nations mixed with the remaining Israelites, you can guess what their worship looked like. *So these nations feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day (2 Kings 17:41).* These people were the Samaritans and the woman at the well was one of their descendants. So the Jews looked upon them as half-breeds who were under God's judgment. They were often viewed as worse than other Gentiles because they were the product of pure Israelite blood mixed with Gentiles. But what these prejudiced Jews failed to grasp is that

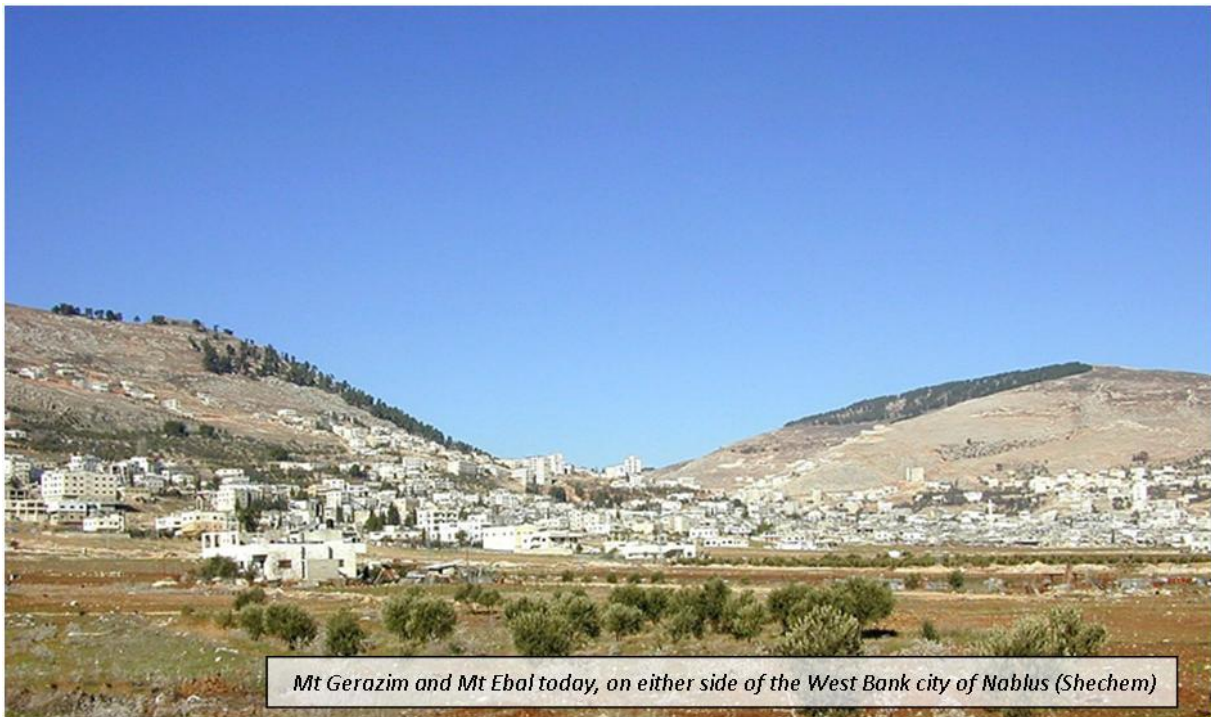
the very existence of the Samaritans was their own fault. They themselves has created this race of people for whom they had such loathing. It's a strange twist of irony.

2. This small town was the center of Jewish worship.

But there is a positive side to the Samaritan history as well. The Samaritans only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament (called the Pentateuch—a Greek words which means “five scrolls”) and rejected the rest. As a result, it was natural that their religious site was found in those five books and in those people. The Pentateuch ends with Jacob giving Joseph the plot of land on which Jesus and the woman were standing. This land, and perhaps especially the mountain behind them, was their holy place.

In verse five, John tells us that Jesus *came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph, and that Jacob's well was there.* This was no ordinary town in Samaria. Sychar is the Old Testament city of Shechem. Let me paint you a picture of the significance of Shechem.

First, here is a photo of modern day Shechem which is called Nablus. In verse 20 when the woman said to Jesus, “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain,” the two of them were literally standing in this town nestled between these two mountains.



Here is why Shechem was such an important city.

2100 BC—Abram was called by God out of his pagan land and his pagan worship into the Promised Land. Guess where he first set foot?

Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I

will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him (Genesis 12:6-7).

Abram not only first set foot in Shechem but the promise of all promises was spoken by God to him while standing in the exact same spot where Jesus and the woman had their conversation. So even then, God was on mission. In 2100 BC in the life of a pagan named Abram, mission existed because worship did not. Abram did not worship the one true God, so that same God called him into a new land where true worship could be established. And it happened right here in Shechem.

But that’s not all.

1900 BC—Jacob was nearing the end of his days and he gathered his sons together to speak a blessing to them. While speaking to Joseph, Jacob said:

Moreover, I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.” (Genesis 48:22)

Do you know which mountain slope Jacob had in mind? This one right here. When John the gospel writer tells us that this town where Jesus stopped was “near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph,” John got that information from Genesis chapter 48. They are one and the same place. But there’s more yet!

1400 BC—After 400 years of slavery in Egypt, God miraculously delivered the Israelites. Then after forty more years of wandering and judgment in the wilderness, God brought them into the Promised Land. Do you know where did they first set foot in the Promised Land? No, not Shechem (tricked you!). They crossed the Jordan right at Jericho. But immediately after the battle of Jericho they went to...wait for it...Shechem. While I read this, look at the photo and picture it exactly the same except for that there were no building and probably more trees. One more thing—picture about 2 million Israelites spread out in front of these two mountains. This is where the text picks up in Joshua 8.

At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law (Joshua 8:33-35).

Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal.

They copied the Law of Moses onto new stone copies.

Two million Israelites gathered together

Joshua read to the people from the Law.

And it all happened on and between these two mountains.

This is another reason why I love the Bible and Biblical history. All of these pieces fit together so perfectly. And do you see that God was on mission here? God wanted to establish true worship among His people who he had just delivered from Egypt, from the wilderness and from the mighty city of Jericho. The first thing God did was to establish true worship. Mission existed because worship did not. But there's still more pieces to this amazing puzzle.

1375BC—Joshua and this new nation had a battle in front of them. They fought against all of the Canaanite nations for several years before this Promised Land—which was promised to them in this very spot—could be their own. Thirty years later, Joshua spoke these famous words.

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15).

Do I have to tell you where Joshua was standing when he spoke these words? Shechem. And now for the final piece of the puzzle. In the last few verses of the book of Joshua we read:

As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph. (Joshua 24:32)

We've just come full circle. This is a description of the land which Jacob bought and which John tells us that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there.

2100 BC—God spoke to Abram in Shechem.

1900 BC—Jacob willed Shechem to Joseph.

1400 BC—The Law was copied and read in Shechem.

1375 BC—Joshua renewed the Covenant in Shechem.

1375 BC—Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem.

Shechem was the epicenter of the Promised Land.

30 AD—Jesus met the Samaritan woman in Shechem.

And to top it all off, here are some photos of the church in modern day Shechem that claims to host the Jacob's well.



This was 1900 years later! Was it the exact same well? Is it the same well that is built within a church to this day? Maybe, maybe not, but it is the same general area.

God has always been on mission to reach the world and convert them into worshippers. Jesus was always on mission and next week we'll dig deeper into Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman. But for now, let me leave with this question. Are you on mission to see more and more people become worshippers of our precious Lord Jesus Christ?

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¹ John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993/2003), 17.