



## Integral Exegetical Approach on the Samaritan Women on John 4:1- 42

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**Abstract.** *The story about Jesus meet with the Samaritan woman was not interesting. This story is not only uninteresting to many people in general, but also to the Gospel writers. The research interested in reflecting on the story of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The story of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman indicate many lessons for building sincere relation with others, especially lessons about the importance of respecting, loving and establishing brotherhood with people who are different from us. The differences that exist are not a reason for hostility but rather a beauty and uniqueness in brotherhood. The research uses integral exegetical approach which a literature study to explore important messages from the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman. This story shows a portrait of the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus. It is a revealing story with important lessons for us today. Jesus' request to give water from Jacob's well to the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman's willingness to give water to Jesus shows an attitude of sharing with those in need. This story teaches the meaning of life. The implication of this study is an invitation to build true brotherhood.*

**Keyword:** *Brotherhood, Kingdom of God, Samaritan woman, Sharing.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Part of the Gospel of John 4:1-42 is a very interesting story. Why? It is because the Gospel of John clearly describes the openness and humility of Jesus towards different personal differences. Jesus' foundation on the relationship did not follow the cultural tradition. He dismantles the relationships were limited only to people from the same group. Jesus' encounter and conversation with the Samaritan woman had shown a way of life that was different from cultural teachings. Jesus showed to everyone the important and valued relation without prioritizing the differences they have.

This study aims to open up new possibilities on how to relate well to people from different cultural backgrounds. Jesus has given a very relevant example in relating especially through the story in the passage of John 4:1-42. The method used to explain the story of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman is the integral exegetical approach. Through this method author hopes to be able to provide a solid foundation for the story of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Thus, the findings of this study offer a new way of relating that is open to everyone from various differences in character and socio-culture. An open relationship and friendship model without feelings of suspicion will be very useful for building a universal and inclusive brotherhood.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

It should be noted that the Yahwistic Samaritans had a different history from Jesus. This argument is systematically explained by Anderson and Giles referring to research conducted by Knoppers writing about the background of the differences between the tribes of Israel and Samaria in Chronicles as follows:

The Chronicler acknowledges, even promotes, features shared by all Israelites over the centuries. He openly affirms a common identity for all people who see themselves as the descendants of Jacob (almost always called 'Israel' in Chronicles). He does not stigmatize the residents of the former northern kingdom as the descendants of foreign settlers or even as a mixed race. The northern remnant addressed by Hezekiah is as Israelite as the southern remnant is. (Anderson and Giles 2012:20)

The explanation given by Anderson shows that it is possible that the two different communities have the same principle, namely having one God, one nation and one place of worship. However, the two nations still experienced deep divisions over the agreement on the center of the place to worship God. Anderson is guided by Knoppers' research on the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. (Anderson and Giles 2012:20) The Gospel of Luke really describes a friendly Samaritan. Powery remark the attitude of Samaritan who help others "to love a neighbor requires clarification because contexts, circumstances, relationships, laws, and a multiplicity of other factors have bearing on how people might interact with others." (Powery 2022:17) Similar story with the Samaritan woman did not expect to meet anyone else at the well, because the Samaritan woman deliberately came to Jacob's well during the day. The Samaritan woman was sure that the situation at Jacob's well was deserted and that there would be no one she would meet at Jacob's well. In fact, the Samaritan woman did not know that Jesus was also at the location of Jacob's well and was watching the woman's movements. Lieber explains that outside of modern Israel the Samaritans are known not by their own identity, but through the eyes of others. This is seen in the New Testament parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10:30–37). On the other hand, the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the Well (cf. John 4:4–26) is another portrait of the view of the Samaritans. (Lieber 2022:3)

The researcher only focuses on the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-26). Knoppers has also suggested that newer evidence of north/south opposition as follows "The archaeological and epigraphic remains suggest that major contacts between Yehud [Judea] and Samaria preceded the time of Nehemiah and continued after his term(s) of office ended." (Knoppers 2006:280) The researcher's basic reason for focusing on this

passage is to explore the moral message contained in the text, especially in the morality of social interaction. This message is very important, especially in the context of modern society. Based on experience and also learning from the experiences of people encountered in missions and ministries, the researcher still finds that in general everyone still limits their relationships with people who come from the same group, such as similarities in culture, religion, education level, economic level and various other similarities. An attitude of humility, openness and initiative to start a conversation with the Samaritan woman is an important beginning in meeting others.

The important lesson and moral message contained in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman is that universal brotherhood is built on the basis of openness and respect for everyone. This is very evident in Jesus' action of taking the initiative to start a conversation with the Samaritan woman. Jesus said: "Give me a drink." (v. 7). Of course, Jesus' request and words certainly surprised the Samaritan woman. Jesus tried to convey the good news about the Kingdom of God to everyone, including people who were different from Jesus, who in this context was the Samaritan woman. (Burridge 2008:56) We can know and say that the story of the encounter and dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman ended happily. The encounter and happiness experienced by the Samaritan woman gave birth to an attitude of preaching to others. John tells the story that after meeting Jesus, the Samaritan woman left her pitcher and went to the city to tell people about her encounter with Jesus. The woman said, "Come, see! There is a man there who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (v. 28). The author is interested in this story which truly shows that the foundation of mission is an encounter with Jesus. In explaining and interpreting the passage from John 4:1-42, we have used the New American Bible (NAB).

### **3. METHODS**

The method used to explain the story of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman is the integral exegetical approach. Through this method, the researcher attempts to describe the meaning contained in the text in an interpretation or exegesis systematically and comprehensively. Therefore, the researcher uses the inductive methods which are precisely to things that are general by applying the exegetical method to find the meaning and implications of the story of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well as told by the of the Gospel of John.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Content and Structure**

#### **a. Content**

Jesus arrives at the city of Sychar or Shechem, a place with a history stretching back to the patriarch, Jacob (cf. John 4:5).(Burrige 2008:66) Here is where Jesus described himself as the connection between the heavenly realm and the earth, just like Jacob's vision of a ladder with angels ascending and descending. It was the same Jacob who bought the land on his return (cf. Gen.33:18-9).(Lincoln 2005:72) This sentence provides the background for what follows. Jesus returned to Galilee from Judea, where He had been baptizing with His disciples, because the Pharisees were becoming increasingly aware of His broadening influence among the Jews. He wanted to avoid unnecessary premature conflict with them.

The reason given for Jesus' departure from Judea at this particular time is not at all clear. Did he fear persecution? Certainly he had openly opposed the Jewish leaders before in the Temple. John really doesn't tell us why Jesus chose this time to return to Galilee. Some have suggested that the Pharisees turned their attention to Jesus because John the Baptist had now been thrown into prison. But the text gives no hint of this. In any case, perhaps Jesus simply did not want to provoke a confrontation at this time (knowing that his "hour" had not yet come). The general Structure of the text John 4:1-42. Some author made the structure of John 4:1-42 on five sections: Verses 1-6 set up the story that follow by discussing Jesus' change of location and his arrival at a well near Sychar; verses 7-26 contain the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan women at the well; verses 27-30 there is a transition as the disciples arrive and the women departs. There is then a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in vv. 31-38; finally the episode concludes with the encounter between Jesus and Samaritan from Sychar in vv. 39-42. The structure the text is as follows: Introduction (vv.1-6), first dialogue (vv.7-26), second dialogue (vv.31-38) and conclusion (vv.39-42)

### **B. Literary Context**

#### **1) Immediate context: John 3:31-36 and John 4: 43-45**

John the Baptist's disciples complain about the success of Jesus. John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Messianic bridegroom and tries his best to persuade his own disciples to become Jesus' disciples. As the best friend of the Bridegroom, he is ready to die himself. He feels the fullness of selfless joy at the success of Jesus'

baptismal ministry. He strongly desires that he himself must decrease and Jesus must increase. This is because Jesus is not only the Messiah but also the one who has come from heaven, the Spirit-filled Son of God whom the Father loves and has empowered to give eternal life to those who believe in him (cf. John 3:31-36).(Mlakuzhyil 2008:44)

Like John 3:16-21, maybe the author's reflection on what he had written accords better with the style of John 3: 16-21 than with that of John the Baptist. It is valuable as testimony to the person of Christ.(Culpeper 1983:105) It declares in no uncertain terms that: 1. Jesus came from heaven and spoke with a higher authority than one of the earth; 2. That Jesus spoke from observation, not from theory; 3. That Jesus spoke the words of God; 4. That the Father's love had caused Him to endow the Son with complete authority to execute His purpose.(Gaebelein 1973:52)

The Son, however, was not merely the messenger of God. He was the revealed object of faith. Once again the dividing line is affirmed. The believer in the Son has eternal life. The unbeliever will never possess that life, for he is already under condemnation. John 4: 43-45, this text gives a brief overview of the relationship between the text before and after the events of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.(Harold 2010:216) The progress to Galilee is closely connected with the episode at Samaria. John seems to focus his Gospel on clusters of events.

Compare with John 1:19, 29, 35, 43 and John 2:1, as well as those chronological groupings that appears later.(Harold 2010:220) Chronologically that episode occurred later than the visit to Galilee recorded in this chapter. The author was applying to the immediate situation a principle that Jesus stated on two other occasions. While the immediate context might be taken to relate to some previous experience in Judea, there is no indication that Jesus had at this time been the object of a wholesale rejection there, though some hostility may have been manifested by the Pharisees (John 4:1).

## **2) Proximate context: John 2:1-4:54**

The action of the narrative is framed by the movement of characters in the story, Jesus, his mother and the disciples (cf. John 1:2, 12). There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The wedding at Cana is linked to the preceding text by a chronological tie: "on the third day." This may mean that "the next day" of vv.29, 35 and 43 refers to three events on the same day. The notation of succession in signs mentioned in v.54 is not repeated in the remainder of the Gospel. Though John says

little about Jesus' Galilean ministry in general, he regarded it as important. The Galileans were unlikely to believe in Jesus because he was well known to them, the convincing character of the two signs recorded here and forceful demonstration of God's response to the faith afforded by the second provided cogent illustrations for the main theme of believe.(Lieber 2022:162)

The wedding serves merely as the backdrop for the occasion of Jesus's first miracle in this gospel. John ends this section by pointing out that this was the second sign Jesus did (Cf. John 4:54), in the same way that he began it by noting that the water into wine was the first (cf. John 2:11). For the evangelist, the important thing is not the event but the fact that Jesus was there (cf. John 2:2).(Burridge 2008:75) The Word made flesh, God dwells among us, goes to wedding parties, joins in our everyday activities and gets involved with human affairs.

### **3) Remote context: John 1:19-12:50**

John 1:19-12:50 was describing the public ministry of the Word. Having introduced the figure of the incarnate Word by the prologue, and having identified the forerunner by his name and by his mission, the author precedes to present the ministry of the Word in some detail. Broadly, the book can be divided into two chronological sections: the latter is brief and is closely related to the passion, which concludes the narrative.(Burridge 2008:35) In the text of John 1:19-12-50, the author begins at the point which is aptly called "The Book of Signs." It moves by the way of narrative and discourse through seven distinguishable episodes, or themes, and through seven sign-miracles. (Karris 1992b:983). John's terminology regarding these sign-miracles is very distinct: they are "signs" pointing to some deeper theological truth.

## **C. Analysis structure of the text**

### **1) Grammatical Analysis**

We will mention the main clauses in the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in the terms of narrative as follows: the Samaritan woman came...(V. 7), the Samaritan woman questions Jesus...(V. 22), discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman...(V. 14), the Samaritan woman understands...(VV. 15-19), the Samaritan woman recognized Jesus' as a prophet...(VV. 20-26), On the text also there is the part to show the subordinate clause: the disciples return and the woman flees, leaving her water jar behind. (VV. 27-28) (Moloney, *Sacra Pagina*, 129) This part shows us a change in time and situation, before only Jesus and the Samaritan woman were present, after that the disciples were included.

## 2) Breaks in pattern of thought or transition

This text shows the reality of transition on v. 27. This text gives the unresolved Christological confession of the women. It is a part of the disciples' experience as they return to the scene and marvel that Jesus is talking with women. The disciples join a scene almost already at its conclusion. The imperfect use of the verb "to speak" shows that the disciples are aware that Jesus has been speaking to this woman for some time. They are shocked. The situation was changing because the woman flees, leaving her water jar behind. This detail has been the subject of considerable speculation. It is simply a sign that although she may have departed from the scene, the Samaritan story has not yet come to an end. (Moloney 1998:131)

### D. Structure

In detail, we will understand the conclusions concerning the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman are as follows:

- V. 7: The initial talks between Jesus and the Samaritan woman began with the event: "The Samaritan woman came to draw water." The woman came alone underlines the likelihood that she was not welcomed among the other women. (Keener 2003:593) The Samaritan woman is a timeless figure-not only a typical Samaritan but a typical human being.
- V.12 : That Jesus may be a special person, however, is suggested by her question which in Greek expects a negative answer: Jesus could not be greater than Jacob. Of course, Jesus is greater. (Laymon 1971:715)
- VV. 7-14 : They were discussing the "living water". The water of Jacob's well is surpassed by the water that Jesus will give, "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v.14). (Arterbury 2010:65)
- V. 15 : The woman begins to understand but is apparently still thinking of the quenching of this -worldly thirst. (Lieber 2022:34)
- V.19 : In this event there is transition: Jesus' knowledge of the woman's past moves her toward faith: "Sir, give me this water (*touto to hydōr*), so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here (*mēde dierchōmai enthade*) to draw water". (Moloney 1998:186-87) Another response by the Samaritan woman to Jesus, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet" (Laymon 1971:987) The genitive in *ten dorean theou* is objective, indicating that Jesus promises a gift that has its origins in God. But the "living water" (*hydōr zōn*) is open to two meanings. On the one hand it can mean flowing water from a stream or spring, as opposed

to the still water of a cistern or a pond. Jesus' command, the woman's answer, and Jesus' rejoinder culminate in a startling revelation about herself, which she can only acknowledge as true (v.19). But the expression also has a long history in biblical and other religious traditions from antiquity. It takes to that point beyond the physical reality of the water (cf. Barreth, Gospel 233-234 for Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic examples).(Moloney 1998:117)

VV. 20-26 : The woman's understanding regarding Jesus is changing. She recognizes Jesus as a prophet. Her question reflects the ancient dispute and tension between Jews and Samaritans (v. 20). The Samaritans were worshiping on Mount Gerizin and for Jesus this is false worship. Jesus proposed a new way of worship for Jews and Samaritans, worship in the Spirit and truth. "Yet the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshiper will worship the Father in Spirit and truth" (v. 23).(Powery 2022:59) The woman begins to think in terms of the Messiah. Jesus states that it is he. The woman's response to Jesus (v. 25) seems to reflect Jewish messianic expectations. But perhaps she refers not to the Davidic Messiah but to a prophet like Moses (cf. Deut 18:15-22). Jesus confirmed his identity to the Samaritan: "I am He" which is characteristic of the Gospel of John (cf. 8:12).(Moloney 1998:186)

## **E. Semantic and Syntactical Analysis**

### **1) Semantic Analysis**

In this section, I focus on the key words that would have an important meaning in the text. In my analysis of the text, I will focus on the first part of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (cf. John 1:7-26). In this part, the key words are "living water" and "worship". In the first dialogue (cf. John 4:7-26), I will summarize the discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman regarding the "living water." In this dialogue there are different viewpoints regarding the "living water." For Jesus, "living water" means salvation, but the woman understands the "living water" as ordinary "running water" in the well.(Moloney 1998:185) Jesus was giving a more straightforward answer (vv.13-14), revealing that the water he gives is of a radically different sort and meaning.

### **2) Syntactical Analysis**

Through the syntactical analysis of the text, the words "living water" and "worship" have a special and significance meaning. The "living water," means the gift of God through Jesus to lead the people to eternal life (cf. 3:16), but yet the woman is



not in a position to realized the symbols of living water as Jesus understands them. At the ordinary human level, water and living water signify that which is in the well and which is necessary for survival to get fresh running water.(Lincoln 2005:173)

The contrast between the word of Jesus and the response of the women is obvious in the following table:(Moloney 1998:187)

Table 1. Words of Jesus and the Response of the Women

Words of Jesus	Words of the Women
(Whoever drinks) of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty	Give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty
(The water...) will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.	Or have to keep coming here to draw water

### 3) Literary Devices

In the same text (vv. 20-26), Jesus explains the deepest meaning of “worship” with the division between Jews and Samaritans over the proper place for worship. “The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” A new epoch will be inaugurated which makes possible authentic worship of God, known and addressed as the Father, and which will not require adherence to particular cultic sites.(Moloney 1998:177)

In the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman there is a contrast that identifies literary devices with an imperative. On two accounts Jesus should not speak to her because she is a woman and she is Samaritan, but Jesus begins the dialogue with her, “give me a drink” (v. 7b). The woman’s response highlights the irregularity of the encounter. Also, in the text we can see the contrasts between the question of the Samaritan woman and the answer of Jesus. Jesus promises living water, the gift of God (vv.10-14). Jesus' words and actions, especially by giving the water of life, show love for the good of others. The similar meaning has mention by Powery, “that is, one must act through the body for the sake of the physical well-being of another body.”(Powery 2022:127)

## F. Contextualization

### 1) Discern the Theological Themes or Motifs

The text of John 4:1-42 in the narrative articulates a point of view about how one should respond to Jesus, and the fruit of such a response. With “the word” of Jesus as the criterion, the story of Jesus’ presence among the Samaritans points to the responsibility of no faith (vv. 1-15). Here, it is important to note that the conversion of the Samaritans is effected, not by any miraculous sign, but by the force of Jesus’

word: “many more began to believe in him because of his word... we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world” (vv. 41-42). A consequence of her belief is when the Samaritan woman brings everyone from her town to meet and believe in Jesus.(Jeremy 2012:220) The Samaritan woman wondered if Jesus, who was able to tell her all she ever did, could bring others to faith through her. However, now many believe because of Jesus’ words.(cf. John 4:41)(Moloney 1998:218–19) The testimony of others may enable us to see how God acts in each of our lives individually, but in the end we all have to hear and believe for ourselves that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world.

The text of John 4:1-42 has many theological emphases such as: the water which Jesus spoke of symbolized the Holy Spirit and His work of recreating us in God’s image and sustaining in us eternal life which comes from God. Jesus is God’s gift, a spring of water welling up into eternal life.(Karris 1992a:986) The word of Jesus in conversation with the Samaritan woman is powerful. The words of Jesus change her life completely, and she fully believes that Jesus is the Messiah. The text gives instructions on how to forgive the lost and sinful "soul", and the courage to start anew from the simple word. The text emphasizes that the new way of worshiping God is in the spirit and truth. The necessary elements for belief are the testimony of others and personal contact with Jesus. Maloney said that, “The unconditional and total directing of one’s life toward God is the only acceptable act of worship.”(Moloney 1998:207) Unwavering faith can overcome all differences and encourage dialogue with other people. It is the way of the proclamation of the faith.

## **2) Engage the Text in Dialogue with Contemporary Issues or Realities**

The text of John 4:1-42, especially the point of dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, can be applied among issues in contemporary society today. Jesus’ began his dialogue with the Samaritan woman using a human issue, specifically the need for water. But finally this dialogue yielded virtues. This is because in this dialogue they were accepting each other without any judgment, willing to understand the differences and respecting others as equal human beings. In our time today, there are many problems of pluralism and discrimination against women. If each of us can create a dialogue with others as Jesus had done, it will create peaceful and prosperous lives. If every person can accept the beautiful differences of each other and receive all people as equal human beings, finally every person will be happy and at peace, as was the Samaritan woman after Jesus accepted her at the well.

### **3) Significant of the Morality Text John 4:1-42 in Contemporary Time**

Jesus and the Samaritan woman are different in religion, but Jesus, as Jewish, was accepted and appreciated by the Samaritan women. Jesus has successfully shown that being suspicious of others hurts human dignity. The same thing was also conveyed by Utomo in his research which said that acts of injustice are contrary to God's will and hurt human dignity.(Utomo 2023:18) Jesus and the Samaritan woman had a powerful connection that crossed all of that society's boundaries and separations. Is it possible for us to have similar connections, or have we insulated our lives from everyone different? This separatism is really still relevant in today's society. There are differences in our society, such as culture, religion and social class. If everyone is to appreciate the differences, then the difference has beauty and meaning. Discrimination and humiliation due to different tribes and because they are women as experienced by Samaritan women, are also experienced by Batak Toba women, especially regarding the status of leadership.(Naibaho 2023b:160) Batak Toba culture is very firm that the person who deserves to be a leader is a man.

Jesus has shown the best way to build a harmonious brotherhood. This is a model for us today. Everyone needs to repent and realize that others are companions on the journey towards the common good. Human's openness and an attitude of being ready to accept others with love require awareness that everyone has a noble dignity. This attitude demands continuous and orderly development. Openness and an attitude of being ready to accept others with love require awareness that everyone has a noble dignity. This attitude demands continuous and orderly development. This is also emphasized by Megawati about the development of prospective catechist for awareness of significant moral values.(Naibaho 2023a:3916)

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman which an invitation to all people to drink water from a different well and also to offer be openness to other people with difference culture, religion, sex and so on. In attitude of accepting diversity, everybody will enrich through other people. We believe that encounter and dialogue with others is an opportunity to recognize the richness and value that are present in the other. Our differences become the beauty given by God. It is become a source to build the friendship and brotherhood as the gift of unity and diversity. We need to realize the beautiful in the differences and how meaningful our lives will be if we can dialogue with all the people with ordinary lives.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

It is important to understand that the conversion of the Samaritans is effected, not by any miraculous sign, but by the force of Jesus' "word": "Many more began to believe in him because of his word...We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world" (vv. 41-42). This text is an inviting everyone to follow the footsteps of Jesus in everyday life. Being positive and having an open attitude for accepting others. The differences that each person in society has are not a threat, but rather an important value for mutual enrichment in dialogue and brotherhood. Jesus has shown us a concrete example of how to dialogue in this manner. Let us follow the footsteps of Jesus the true teacher.

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