

# At Jacob's Well

by C.I. Scofield

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*The sermon contrasts the old order of laborious ceremonial with the new life of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the importance of faith and yieldedness in bearing the fruit of the Spirit.*

**Scripture:** John 4:5, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:1

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Christian Character"

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## Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, emphasizing the humanity of Christ and His tireless service in reaching out to others. The lesson highlights how Jesus engaged in meaningful conversations, avoided sectarian debates, and pointed individuals to their need for a personal encounter with Him. The heart of the lesson lies in contrasting Jacob's well, representing legalism and traditionalism, with the upspringing fountain, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's transformative work in believers, producing the fruit of the Spirit and shaping Christian character.

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## Transcript

(John iv:5-14.)

I The Analysis.

(1) The Human Christ, verses 1-2. Our adorable Lord was as truly human as He was truly Divine. As we are wearied in His service, though never wearied of it, so was He in His Father's service.

(2) The lesson in wayside service, verses 7-26. With their not common fatuousness the lesson committee fail to give us the whole of even this brief story, so we must go beyond the strict lesson limits to get it. Note:--(a) That weariness does not keep the model Servant from working. (b) That the Wise Servant began at some point of common interest, verse 7. (c) That He refused to be drawn into a sectarian discussion, verses 8-10. (d) That He responded to the woman's first gleam of personal interest by touching her conscience, verses 16-18. (e) That He swept aside ceremonialism and mere religiousness as the resource of an awakened conscience, verses 19-24. Too many moderns would have said: "Join the church, and live right." (f) That He revealed Himself as the alone resource for a sinner, verses 25-26.

II The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson is to be found in the contrast between Jacob's well and the upspringing fountain. Jacob's well is the Law, the old order of laborious ceremonial, the old legal system of personal merit by

obedience. The water in the well was good, but the well was deep (verse ii). Every drop gained from that well cost effort. Bucket by bucket, a little at a time--that was the law of the Well at its very best. But Jacob's well had come to stand for mere traditionalism in religion, for mere intolerance of new light. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" was the woman's answer to him who was speaking of the upspringing water. As a matter of fact, Jacob was the father of the Samaritans in no real sense. The Samaritans of our Lord's time were a hybrid race, outside of real Judaism. Jesus was careful to set that right: "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." Spiritually, the Samaritans drawing water from Jacob's well were precisely in the position of modern Gentile believers who put themselves under the Law; conceiving that as Christians, the Law is their rule of life. That is the very error against which the Spirit by Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.

The upspringing fountain is, first of all, the Holy Spirit Himself, indwelling the believer; and then the nine-fold "fruit of the spirit," which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And that fruit of the Spirit is Christian character. Under the Law, character is sought to be formed by habits of obedience to a rule of life--thou shalt, and thou shalt not. The formula is: "Our choices make our habits, and our habits form our characters." That is drawing water out of Jacob's well. It is that "other" Gospel, of which the Apostle speaks in Galatians. It is Samaritanism--that is, neither pure Judaism nor pure Christianity.

Christianity is not a kind of pump in Jacob's well, helping us to draw life out of the law; it is the Spirit of life, and the life of the Spirit implanted in, and outflowing from the believer himself. That is the least understood fact of Christianity to-day, after nineteen hundred years of preaching. "The water that I shall give shall be in him a fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life."

The contrast between Jacob's well and the upspringing fountain is just the contrast between the VII of Romans and the VIII. In the former, a believer is in an agony of effort to do something under the law of merit, the goodness of God. In the later, a believer is, by the indwelling Spirit, made "free from the law," and so finds that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled (not "by," but) "in" him as he walks after the Spirit.

It is very remarkable that the Epistle to the Ephesians, after stating in the first three chapters the exalted position into which the believer is brought by grace through faith, in turning to the walk that should characterize one in such a position, gives as the test of the walk, and as that which gives it its distinctive character, not the law, but the new position: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"; "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

The transformation of Christian experience from the average one of painfully drawing blessings out of Jacob's well, to the triumphant one of bearing the fruit of the Spirit, is effected by two acts, one of faith, one of the will. The act of faith is just to believe that the Spirit does dwell within (1 Cor. vi:19). The act of the will is just to live in yieldedness to the Spirit.

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