

## John Lesson # 6 Articles

Jesus found it “necessary” (*edei*) to pass through Samaria (4:4).<sup>143</sup> The use of *edei*, however, reminds one of the fact that usually Jesus moved not in response to human pressure but as a result of the Father’s direction and the determined hour for his life. Did the evangelist merely mean that Samaria was on the way? Or is there some overtone here that Samaria was on the divine agenda? Given the significance of this story in the Johannine structure and the importance of the Samaritan confession (4:42), I cannot help wondering if the evangelist saw in this story more than just a geographical reference at 4:4.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus did not leave Judea for Galilee following John’s arrest in order to flee from Herod, for Galilee was under Herod whereas Judea was not. He simply waited for John’s removal from his ministry so that Israel would not be confused over which preacher of the gospel to follow. When John was imprisoned Jesus moved to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit to preach there (Luke 4:14). Jesus’ preaching itinerary was carefully organized, for we will find that after Galilee He moved around the country so that all Israel had an opportunity to hear Him. Then, finally, He went to Jerusalem at the end of His ministry so that He would be in the nation’s capital when the opposition against Him reached its peak, resulting in His crucifixion there.<sup>2</sup>

The Johannine understanding of spirit and truth is not to be identified with the Gnostic usage of such terms. The Gnostic perspective is that of a secret godhead that is hidden from all except those who possess the special key of *gnosis* (knowledge). The stress in John is not on the hiddenness of God revealed through an alien messenger from without. Such a messenger in Gnosticism does not actually participate in human flesh because flesh is regarded as the creation of an evil subgod. Such a messenger always remains a spiritual reality even though it might employ the vehicle of flesh to awaken the elite Gnostics from the sleep of forgetfulness.<sup>179</sup> But such a view is hardly the Johannine perspective on Jesus, the incarnate Son of God.<sup>3</sup>

We might note the example Christ sets as a soul-winner. He did not allow personal prejudices or physical needs to hinder Him. He met this woman in a friendly way and did not force her into a decision. Wisely, He guided the conversation and allowed the Word to take effect in her heart. He dealt with her privately and lovingly presented the way of salvation. He captured her attention by speaking about something common and at hand—water—and used this as an illustration of eternal life. (Likewise, at the cool midnight hour, He spoke to Nicodemus about wind.) He did not avoid speaking of sin, but brought her face-to-face with her need.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 1:42.

<sup>1</sup> <sup>3</sup> Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1–11* (Vol. 25A, pp. 198–199). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Mills, M. S. (1999). *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record* (Mt 4:12–Jn 4:3). Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries.

<sup>179</sup> For a brief critical exposition of the free basic Gnostic pattern see Borchert, “Sights into the Gnostic ‘Secret,’” 33–34. Cf. J. Fichtel, “Necessaire oder Valentinianer?” in *Gnostic and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 114–19. See especially E. Pagels, *Archaische Gnostik in Gnostizismus*, 83–86. Schnackenburg helpfully distinguishes between the Gnostic perspective and the Johannine perspective at the point (St. John, 1:44).

Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1–11* (Vol. 25A, p. 200). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (p. 222). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.