
The Gospel of John

Part 3 - by: Ronald L. Dart

Jesus was full of surprises. His disciples often had trouble figuring Him out, but Jesus had an agenda. Everything He did was for a reason.

Take an incident early on in Samaria. Jesus thought it was a good idea to get out of Judea because things were getting a little hot for Him down there. The shortest road North led through Samaria. It was not a road that most Jews took when they went north to Galilee. They normally crossed the Jordan and went a longer and more difficult route because they just couldn't stand the Samaritans.

Samaria and The Samaritans

Most Christian readers are aware that the Samaritans were despised by the Jews but not so many Christians really know why that is true, and there may be something in this and the reason why Jesus on this occasion did what He did. Now you may know that Israel after the death of Solomon was divided into two kingdoms, here is a summary of what happened to the house of Israel, that is the northern kingdom, composed of what we now call the lost ten tribes of Israel. You can find it in second Kings chapter 17 beginning along about verse 20.

It says, "The LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of the spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight."

The LORD just kept delivering Israel over and over and finally He just got rid of them all, they were gone. They were out of the land. They were carried away captive into Assyria. Now when He says Israel here, he is not including Judah and Judea, and Benjamin who were with them or the Levites. He basically is dealing only with the ten northern tribes of Israel.

It says, "He tore Israel from the house of David, and those people made Jeroboam the son of Nebat King and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord and made them sin a great sin."

The story of all this is earlier in first Kings and second Kings. Jeroboam actually turned the people deliberately against the LORD and made it difficult for them, to go to Jerusalem to keep the feast days.

It says in verse 22, "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them."

Finally {23} "The LORD just removed them out of His sight, as He had told them again and again by his servants the prophets."

So, Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day? That is what the author of Kings tells us.

Now {24} "The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and he placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel."

You can't afford to let land like this go idle and there's no reason to do so. What the king of Assyria did was, He picked up all the Israelites and carted them off to God knows where. Literally, God does know where. He brought them in and colonized it with people from Babylon and from other colonies that they had. So, they settled in.

Now at the beginning of their dwelling there, 'they feared not the Lord,' which basically means they did not worship Jehovah (or Yahweh) in any way at all. They didn't know anything about Him. So, they moved into the land and {25} "The LORD sent lions among them and killed some of them." They were having trouble with mountain lions.

So {26} "They spoke to the King of Assyria and said, "The nations which you removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, don't know the manner of the god of the land.'"

I think this is kind of funny in a way. They didn't recognize that the land they were squatting on had a different god from theirs and they didn't know how to placate this God. They knew how to handle the god in their own land, but they couldn't handle this God in the new land. He sent lions among them, and look what was happening, they were getting killed because they didn't know the manner of the God of the land.

So {27} "The King of Assyria commanded, saying, "Carry there one of the priests whom you brought out of there. Let's send somebody back who knows something about the proper religion with the proper way of placating the god of the land and let them go live there. Let them teach them the manner of the God of the land."

Funny how they repeatedly referred to this as 'the god of the land,' and in a way it's true. It is His. He owned it, God had given it to Israel and there they were squatting on it.

Well, {28} "One of the priests they carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and he taught them how they should fear the LORD."

He gave them a set of rules that they were supposed to do on this occasion.

So, {29} "they made gods of their own and put them in the houses of the high places."

They had their god. They also made an effort at worshiping the true God. They actually however burned their own children in the fire.

So {32} "So they feared the LORD and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places."

So, we have a mixture, a strange admixture of religions in this place. You have the Law of God on the one hand and then you have all these pagan ideas on the other hand and they have some kind of order to placate the god of the land and mingled all this stuff together.

The author of Kings says, {34} "Unto this day they do after their former matters. They fear not the LORD, neither do they do after their statutes or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandments of the LORD."

He says basically, they don't do anything. They don't do their own god's right. They don't do the LORD right, they don't do anybody right. These people are up there just like they always have been.

The Samaritans

Now by the time Jesus showed up at the well in Samaria on this day, the Samaritans claimed to serve the same God, having only the first five books of the Old Testament. In fact, they are still there.

Much to my surprise, several years ago, I was rummaging through some old National Geographic's and I came across an article. I think it was back in the 40s about the Samaritan Passover. It had a complete article with pictures and the whole works, where back in the 1940s, the Samaritans up on Mount Gerizim in the northern part of Israel, were still observing the Passover. Now these people are not Jews. They were never Jews. They have no Jewish blood. They came from other nations in Babylon. They were Babylonians for the most part, to start with, and yet they had the Pentateuch. They had Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy in their own versions and actually the texts are very close to the ones the Jews claim to this day and they still, even right up until 2003, they have a web site up in which they described and had pictures of their most recent Passover that they observed on Mount Gerizim.

Now as I said, they are not Jews and they never have been. They were despised by the Jews, who made every effort to bypass Samaria when they were traveling. It's a curious thing, these people, the Samaritans who tried to keep the law in a way, were more despised than other neighbors of Judah who made no effort at all. Go figure.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

So, here's Jesus, at a well, in Samaria and a woman comes out to draw water.

John 4 and verse 7, and Jesus said to her, "Would you give me a drink," {8} (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat) and He was there by Himself. {9} The woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, asks me for a drink, who is a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.""

Now that is a predictable reaction, you know, "You people will not have dealings with us normally, but now because you want to drink of water, you'll talk to me!" Normally a Jew would not talk to her by her being a woman and he sure wouldn't talk to her being a Samaritan. This was a pretty sassy girl.

Jesus answered {10} and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that said to you 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." {11} The woman said, "Sir, you don't have anything to draw with, and it is a deep well. Where are you going to get living water? {12} Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank thereof himself and his children and his cattle?"

Now I don't know where the Samaritans got the idea that Jacob was their father because they were not Israelite born.

Jesus said to her {13} "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again, {14} But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst, for water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life."

Now here's Jesus at a well in Samaria, doing something no other Jew would have done, talking to a woman, talking to a Samaritan, and telling her important things about Himself.

The woman said to Him, {15} "Sir, give me this water so that I will not thirst neither will I have to come here to draw water anymore."

She is still being sassy by the way. So Jesus tries to put an end to that. He decides to get her attention.

Jesus said to her, {16} "Go, call your husband and come back." {17} The woman said, "I have no husband." Jesus said, "Ah, you told the truth that you have no husband. {18} For you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband, in that you have finally told the truth."

That must have really dropped her jaw and she said, {19} "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. {20} Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, but you say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men are to worship."

This is a whole question of, our fathers have this tradition that year after year after year, we followed Moses and we worshiped in this mountain here where it is mentioned all the back in the book of Moses. They had a long continuity. "You people are trying to tell us that we have to come down to Jerusalem to worship the Father."

Jesus said, {21} "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming, when neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father."

I think what Jesus is saying is, it is not going to be a question of being required that you worship here or you worship there.

Jesus said, {22} "You don't know what you worship, we know what we worship, for salvation comes from the Jews, {23} But the hour comes and now is, when the true worshipers, shall worship God in spirit and in truth for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God," Jesus said {24} "is spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.""

And just after this Jesus is going to tell this woman one of the most astonishing things she ever heard in her life.

The woman at the well with Jesus by this time has kind of gotten jerked around and she realizes something is going on here.

The woman said to Jesus, {25} "I know that Messiah comes who is called Christ and He's going to tell us all things. He will sort this out."

She is really troubled by the difference between the Jews and the Samaritans and now she's kind of got a little bit of a hickey from Jesus who said, "No, no, that's not your husband, that's somebody else."

After the woman said, "I know that Messiah comes who is called Christ," Jesus said to her, {26} "I that speak to you am He."

Now this is the earliest and probably the most stark admission from Jesus that He is the Messiah! Jesus' disciples knew that He was. John the Baptist knew that He was, but as far as I can recall, I think this is the first time that Jesus just came right out and said, "You got it. I am the Messiah," and oddly, it was to a woman and not only to a woman, it was not to a virtuous woman and it was not to a man, it was to a Samaritan. This is really striking when you think about it. Jesus did not march up to the High Priest in the Temple, and to the leaders and say, "I'm here, I am the Messiah, I am ready to take over." Jesus started at the bottom end of society and worked His way right along.

It may well be that the Samaritans got this break because they did at least accept Moses. They actually had a Pentateuch. They did keep the Passover and Jesus was here as our Passover Lamb and maybe that's the reason why He went there. Maybe that was Jesus' agenda on this occasion.

About this time Jesus' disciples showed up and they said, {27} "Look He's talking to a woman and a Samaritan woman at that." But nobody would ask Him "Why are you doing this?" {28} The woman left her water pot. She went into town and said to the men, "I want you to come and see a man who told me all things I ever did. Isn't this the Christ?" {30} Then they went out of the city, and came to Jesus, to see what the story was. {31} In the meantime, His disciples urged Him saying, "Master, eat." {32} But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you don't know anything about."

His disciples were really puzzled by this. They are still not caught up with Him at all and will not be for a long time.

"Therefore, His disciples said to one another, {33} "Has anyone brought Him something to eat?" {34} Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work."

The very food of Jesus, the meat that He ate was the work that God gave Him to do. Food was not His thing. It was the work.

"And Jesus said "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work. {35} Don't you say there are four months and here comes the harvest?""

Fields Are White for Harvest

Now this gives us a little bit of an idea of the time of year it was because there was some time to go before there was actually a harvest in the fields.

Jesus said, "Can't you open your eyes and look on the fields for they are white already to harvest. {36} He that reaps receives wages and gathers fruit to life eternal and he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together and here is a saying true, one sows, and another reaps. {38} I sent you to reap that where you bestowed no labor, other men labored, and you are entered into their labors."

Now what on earth is Jesus talking about here? Jesus is going into the agricultural metaphor. He is trying to help them understand what's going on. It was four months until the normal harvest would come, but he says "Look, people all over the place, Samaritans, Jews, whoever it is, these are the harvest." Now what He means when He says, "You are entering in on other people's labors, He means that years, generations have gone by, men have labored to have the word in these people's hands. We go back to Moses. We go back to Abraham. We go through all the prophets and things that they had done, and He says, "I'm sending you now to reap, something upon which you have bestowed no labor. Other men have labored. Other men have suffered. Other men have died, and now you're going to enter into their labors. We are going to change people's lives based upon the work that has been done ahead of us.

Many Samaritans Believed on Jesus

Let's continue in John 4 and verse 39, "About that time many of the Samaritans of the city were beginning to come out and they believed on Jesus because of the saying of the woman who testified saying, "He told me everything I ever did." {40} So when the Samaritans were come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed with them for two days."

This is truly from the understanding of the context of the times, an astonishing thing for Jesus to do, because Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. The Jews would not eat with them. They wouldn't stay with them. They wouldn't have anything to do with them. Jesus not only talked to them, He stayed with them.

"And many more believed because of His own word, {42} And they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard him ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world."

Here are people, in a despised part of the countryside, who believed Jesus, having heard what He said. It's almost as though they had a need to distance themselves from the woman's testimony, but they need not have, being a sinner herself, she had plenty of reason to appreciate the Savior.

Jesus Enters Galilee and Heals the Nobleman's Son

Continuing in John 4, "Now after two days Jesus left there and went on up into Galilee, {44} For He had said, "A prophet has no honor in his own country."

It is almost as if He had to go up there and prove that.

"When He came to Galilee, the Galilean's received him. They saw everything He had done in Jerusalem. They had been at the feast and saw what He had done there. {46} So Jesus came up into Cana of Galilee, where He had made the water wine and there was a nobleman there, whose son was sick at Capernaum."

There is some distance here between these towns.

"When he heard" {47} "that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to him and said "Please come down and heal my son. He is at the point of death," {48} and Jesus said, "Except you see signs and wonders you just won't believe, will you?" {49} The nobleman said, "Sir, come down here before my son dies, please."

The man was very concerned about his child, and I understand that, and Jesus must have too.

Jesus said, {50} "Go on home, your son lives!" And the man believed what Jesus spoke to him and he went on home."

This is interesting because the nobleman was consumed with his son. He's heard about Jesus, He comes to Jesus and Jesus says, "Go home, your child is going to live," and the man believed what Jesus said on this occasion. {51} "And as he was going down his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your boy is okay, he is alive." {52} And he inquired of them of what hour did the boy began to amend" and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." {53} And the father knew that it was at that same hour when Jesus said to him, "Your son lives."

It's amazing the things that happen and the way they happen in people's lives. It didn't happen to everybody, but it happened often enough, in different places, to really begin to impress upon people's minds that when Jesus came to town, they had something totally different than anything they had ever seen before.

"This man believed and his whole house believed, and why not? {54} This was the second miracle that Jesus did, when He came out of Judea into Galilee."

An Angel Troubled the Water

Now we are in John chapter 5 and verse 1, "Not long after that, there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus decided it was time to go back to Jerusalem again. {2} Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool, and it's called Bethesda, having five porches."

It is interesting that we have a big hospital in this country named The Bethesda Hospital.

Verse 3, "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, crippled, paralyzed and withered waiting for the moving of the water. {4} For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water and whoever was first in, after the troubling of the water was made whole of whatever disease he had."

Now the first time I ever read that, I looked at that and I thought what a strange thing for God to do. What a strange way of healing people. This section, by the way, is not in all the old Greek manuscripts and it's an odd thing, though, I would think for a copyist to insert this, where would he get this out of the blue, and stick it in there. It is not so odd, I think that someone might delete it from the text because they might have a problem with the theology, but what is the theology of such a thing as this?

Why would God do this and why would He do it this way? It is comparable to the simple fact that Jesus Himself did not always heal. There were times when He healed this person and did not heal another. It may be that God did this to keep hope alive, to remind everyone that He was there, but He had no intention to this people, who were really not in the best relationship with God. He was not prepared to heal everybody, but He did want them to know that He was there and that He could forgive sins and He could and would forgive. Another way, it may have been to prefigure what Jesus would do there on that day because with dozens of sick people around Him, Jesus healed only one.

Man Crippled for 38 Years

There was a man lying there who had been crippled for 38 years. We are in John chapter 5 and verse 6, "When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been there for a long time, He said, "Would you like to be made well?"

It's hard to imagine this poor fellow, 38 years is a long time. Where were you 38 years ago today?

The poor man said, "Sir. I have no man when the water is troubled to put me in the pool, but while I am coming, somebody gets down there before me, so it has not worked for me yet."

It's a painful thing to consider this poor fellow. You wonder why in the world was he there? Why did he keep coming back year after year after year? It's a testimony, I guess, to the power of hope.

Now his statement would be totally incomprehensible without the explanation of the moving of the waters. It was there. It was a real thing and he was there before the real thing and people were

healed. I guess, one a year or one ever so often in order for them to know that God cared, that He did know.

Jesus Healed the Crippled Man on the Sabbath Day

Continuing in John 8 and verse 8, "Jesus said to crippled man "Get up, take up your bed and walk!" {9} Immediately, (one minute before the man was crippled the next minute he was whole) and he picked up his bed and he walked, and that same day, was the Sabbath day."

Now Jesus could easily have omitted the "take up your bed" part of this, He could have said, "Get up and walk." That would have been one thing. The simple fact that He said this is vital. Jesus was opening a serious controversy with the Jews. He was being deliberately provocative on this occasion.

"The Jews therefore said to him that was cured. "This is the Sabbath day and it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

Now all this bed of his was, was a pallet. It wasn't much more than a blanket folks that he carried along under his arm and laid down there by the pool or that somebody brought for him and laid it down for him. Now all he had to do was roll it up and stick it under his arm and go walking off.

The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for you to carry your bed." {11} He answered them and said, "He that made me whole, the same said, "Take up your bed, and walk." {12} Then they asked him, "What man is it that said to you, "Take up your bed, and walk?" {13} And the poor man that was healed did not know who it was that healed him, for as he was rolling up his bed, Jesus left and disappeared."

That's remarkable all by itself.

"Later on," {14} "Jesus found him in the temple, and He said to him, "Look, you have been made whole, sin no more, lest a worst thing come upon you." In other words, "straighten up your life and let's not have any more of this. Live a clean life and sin no more."

Is there a connection between sin and disease? It's awfully hard to imagine why Jesus would have said this, to this poor guy if it hadn't had a connection of some kind.

"Well the man departed, and he told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him whole {16} And therefore the Jews persecuted Jesus and tried to kill him because he had done these things on the Sabbath day."

I have to tell you, I'm in a dead loss to understand that. Here's a man crippled for 38 years, lying around in hope, painful hope, desperate hope, of someday being healed with the moving of the waters, never being able to quite make it. And now he can get up and he can walk, and the Jewish leaders want to kill the man who made him whole.

The Jews Sought to Kill Jesus

"Jesus answered them and said {17} "My Father works here, and I work," {18} Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, not only because He had broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was his Father, making Himself equal with God."

Let's get something straight. There is not a word in the Law of Moses to prohibit anything that Jesus or this man did. There is no law that says you can't roll up your bed and pick it up and take off with it on the Sabbath day. According to Moses and all the law of Moses, Jesus did not break the Sabbath. He didn't do anything except to tell the man to "Take up your bed and walk." But that was work by Jewish standards of the time.

Now let's consider what's going on here.

"Jesus answered and said to them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son of man can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things so ever He does, so does the Son likewise. {20} For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that He himself does: and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. {21} For as the Father raises up the dead and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He will."

I don't know if they understood what Jesus said on this occasion or not. I think that it may have slipped right by these people. But what He had just told them, is "You are going to see bigger things than these, for just like the Father can raise the dead, so can I." And it is not going to very long after this, when a man who had been dead and buried for four days is brought back to life by Jesus. And the result will be the same as on this occasion, they will want to kill Jesus for it. Why? Because Jesus was a threat to their power.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever looked closely into the history of Samaria?
2. What new things did you learn that Mr. Dart points out?
3. Isn't it interesting that the king of Assyria sought to find out how to worship God to the point that there became a mixture of religions in the land?
4. Did you know that there are Samaritans still to this day, and that they have the Pentateuch and keep Passover?

5. What are your thoughts about the point that the first time Jesus ever confessed to being the Messiah was to a Samaritan woman?
6. Why do you think the Samaritans were quick to believe in Jesus and the Jews were not?
7. Why do you think Jesus went to Samaria and taught them?
8. What are your thoughts about the pool of Bethesda?
9. Why do you think the Jews became so angry about Jesus healing someone on the Sabbath?
10. Do you find it interesting that they were so concerned about what Jesus did on the Sabbath, but yet they were willing to break the commandment: "Thou shall not kill"?