

# The Watford Word

[www.watfordchurchofchrist.org](http://www.watfordchurchofchrist.org)

## What's on

- Sunday 03 March - 10:30AM.** Stefan speaking  
**Sunday 10 March - 10:30AM.** Malcolm speaking  
**Sunday 17 March - 10:30AM.** Visit from Rob Payne of HOPE worldwide (UK)  
**Sunday 24 March - 10:30AM.** Malcolm speaking on Palm Sunday  
**Sunday 31 March - 10:30AM.** Malcolm speaking on Easter Sunday

## ADVANCED NOTICE

**Pentecost Sunday 19 May - 10:30AM.**  
*International Sunday with food from around the world. Would someone like to coordinate the food?*

## A New Thing – The Samaritan Woman ‘New Things from Old Conflict’ John 4 :4-26

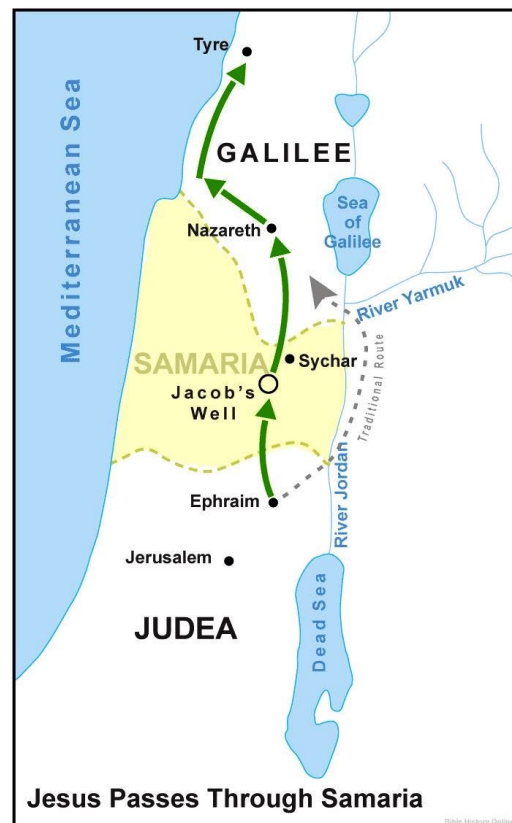
For today’s article on the Samaritan Woman I am indebted to my friend Dawn Burke from the

Thames Valley churches of Christ (with some editing from me).

## General and Cultural Situation

John knew Jewish life well and references the popular Messianic speculations throughout the gospel. He also understands the hostility between the Jews and Samaritans, which features in this story. In fact, the comment in John 4:4 about having to go through Samara, directly reference this as Jews often avoided Samaria by crossing the Jordan and travelling on the east side of the river.

Please see grey dotted line on map below.



## Historical reasons for avoiding of Samaria

Israel divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom, called Israel, established its capital first

at Shechem, a revered site in Jewish history, and later at the hilltop city of Samaria.

In 722 B.C. Assyria conquered Israel and took most of its people into captivity. The invaders then brought in Gentile colonists “from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim” (2 Kin. 17:24) to resettle the land. The foreigners brought with them their pagan idols, which the remaining Jews began to worship alongside the God of Israel (2 Kin. 17:29-41). Intermarriages also took place (Ezra 9:1-10:44; Neh.13:23-28).

Meanwhile, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon in 600 B.C. Its people, too, were carried off into captivity. But 70 years later, a remnant of 43,000 was permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The people who now inhabited the former northern kingdom—the Samaritans—vigorously opposed the repatriation and tried to undermine the attempt to re-establish the nation. For their part, the full-blooded, monotheistic Jews detested the mixed marriages and worship of their northern cousins.

So, walls of bitterness were erected on both sides and did nothing but harden for the next 550 years.

### **General Facts About the woman**

#### **Overview:**

This Samaritan woman goes to the well in the heat of the day most likely because she wanted to avoid running into others who would look on her as a tainted woman. She is surprised to encounter a man, and even more a Jewish man, who initiates a conversation with her. She was already vulnerable because of her past and when she meets this man, Jesus, she could immediately recognise his acceptance. So, she is comfortable enough to respond to his request for a drink of water.

In turn, he offers her more, an invitation to get in touch with the thirst in her soul which she had

tried to satisfy with multiple love affairs. Filled with his acceptance and realising she had found someone who could fulfil her deepest longings, she runs to others to spread the good news.

John 4 :16-18 Also tells us that she had had 5 husbands. Jews held that a woman might be divorced twice, or at the most three times. If the Samaritan woman was aware of this or had the same standard her life would have been considered immoral. Further she had apparently not married her present partner.

This is two major reasons why Jesus could have been considered to not talk to this woman. A third, is that he asked her to get him a drink of water, even though using her cup or jar would have made him ceremonially unclean.

### **‘New Thing’ Lessons**

This woman was drawing water in the heat of the day. Normally this was done at the beginning or end of the day as the sun cooled. At this time women typically drew water in groups in the morning, and it was often a social occasion. The fact that she was drawing water alone at midday probably indicates she was a social outcast. However, it should be noted drawing water in the middle of the day also occurred in Ex 2:15-17).

She isn’t named, yet her encounter with Jesus is the longest between the Messiah and any other individual in the Gospel of John. Representing the lowest of the low — a female in a society where women are both demeaned and disregarded, a race traditionally despised by Jews, and living in shame as a social outcast — she not only has a holy encounter with Christ but also receives eternal salvation. Her testimony later, convinces an entire town to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

This woman appeared to see through His parables and glimpse the truth behind His words when so many others, including Jewish experts and scholars, could not.

## God

Jesus' and therefore God's love of the world. Jesus spoke to the woman regardless of gender, race, and marital status - they talked directly, almost as equal conversational partners, Jesus' came for all people not just for some.

Jesus does offer salvation but also offers living water — eternal life. These are linked but two separate entities to understand.

It tells us how Jesus is the Messiah. He says He's the Messiah, and the woman and the townspeople believe Him. As the Samaritans told the woman at the end of the story, "We know that this man really is the Saviour of the world" (v. 42b)

Testimonies have impact. When the woman believed, she immediately ran off to tell others. Her words made an impact. As Scripture tells us, "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (v. 39)

Jesus was rejected by His own people. This the woman was a Samaritan yet believed. The account of the woman at the well comes shortly after Jesus' encounter in John 3 with the Pharisee Nicodemus — a race and class of people her polar opposite. Yet Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council and likely an expert on his faith, did not understand the significance of what Jesus was saying. Indeed, as Jesus told Nicodemus, "You are Israel's teacher ... and do you not understand these things?" (John 3:10).

## Ourselves

The story of the woman at the well is a rich example of love, truth, redemption, and acceptance. Jesus does not only accept her, but He accepts me, too. Where I am, what I am and whatever background, with its failings and victories God has given me.

He wants us all in His holy kingdom.



## New Things:

- New interactions with new people from different walks/areas of life – no boundaries
- New acceptance regardless of gender, race etc.
- New salvation for those that want to question, learn and know about God
- New Eternal Life – with our creator, for those who want comfort
- What new interactions can I have?
- What new people can I just accept (or existing people and change my mindset!)?
- What questions can I invite or allow people to ask?

God bless, Dawn

## Other useful resources

Jesus and the Woman at the Well. Retelling the story of the Samaritan... | by Abhishikth Aleti | Nuts and Bolts of the Bible | [Medium](#) )

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/significance-of-the-woman-at-the-well.html>

The Woman at the Well - Bible Story Study Guide ([learnreligions.com](#) )

There is a great clip from 'The Chosen' here:  
Jesus and the Outcast Woman at the Well  
([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com))

Don't forget the daily devotional podcasts accompany the 'A New Thing' teaching and preaching series. You can find them in the Watford podcast feed (below) or my personal podcast — RSS feed: <https://audioboom.com/channels/4909728.rss>

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## Future Staff Update

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Over the last few weeks we've expressed our vision to employ someone to focus on the preteens and teens in the congregation and to be trained for broader ministry.

What I think we are looking for is not someone to work with our young people exclusively, but also to take on a wider pastoral role as they gain more experience. They would be expected to preach and teach as appropriate, grow in understanding of various life situations, and become capable of mentoring other leaders.

As things stand we are considering looking for someone full-time, or perhaps two people part-time. Although the youth ministry aspect would not take up enough time to merit them being full-time, the training they will receive and additional work they would do outside of the youth ministry would make a full-time or full-time equivalent role meaningful.

Please be praying that we get the job description right, discern the Lord's will in this, and, if and when the time comes, we are guided to the right person or persons.

If you have any thoughts on job description, responsibilities, training or anything connected, please speak to me or any member of the leadership team.

Your brother, Malcolm

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## Unity Process Update

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As has been announced a few times we are participating in a countrywide unity process. The majority of our sister-congregations in the nationwide charity ICCM are taking part.

We have had two meetings on zoom so far with the representatives of the unity group allocated to Watford. Those people are Valdur Koha (elder and teacher in our congregation in Boston) and Magdalena Hoijer, (a sister on staff in the Helsinki church). Those meetings have so far been focused on helping Valdur and Magdalena understand our perspective on the issues that have caused strains between some of our congregational leaderships.

This 'discovery' phase will soon be completed. We are currently preparing a summary of our thinking on two questions: 1. What have been the main contributing factors leading to our unity challenges? 2. What do we think could contribute to changing things for the better? The unity team will move on to consolidating the lessons from across the country, and providing recommendations. This is likely to take place in the autumn. I will keep you updated, but please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions.

God bless, Malcolm

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## Watford Media

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj9Qa8D9zumJZdoAtARDUww>

Podcast: <https://www.podbean.com/pu/pbblog-aiinq-iaef90>