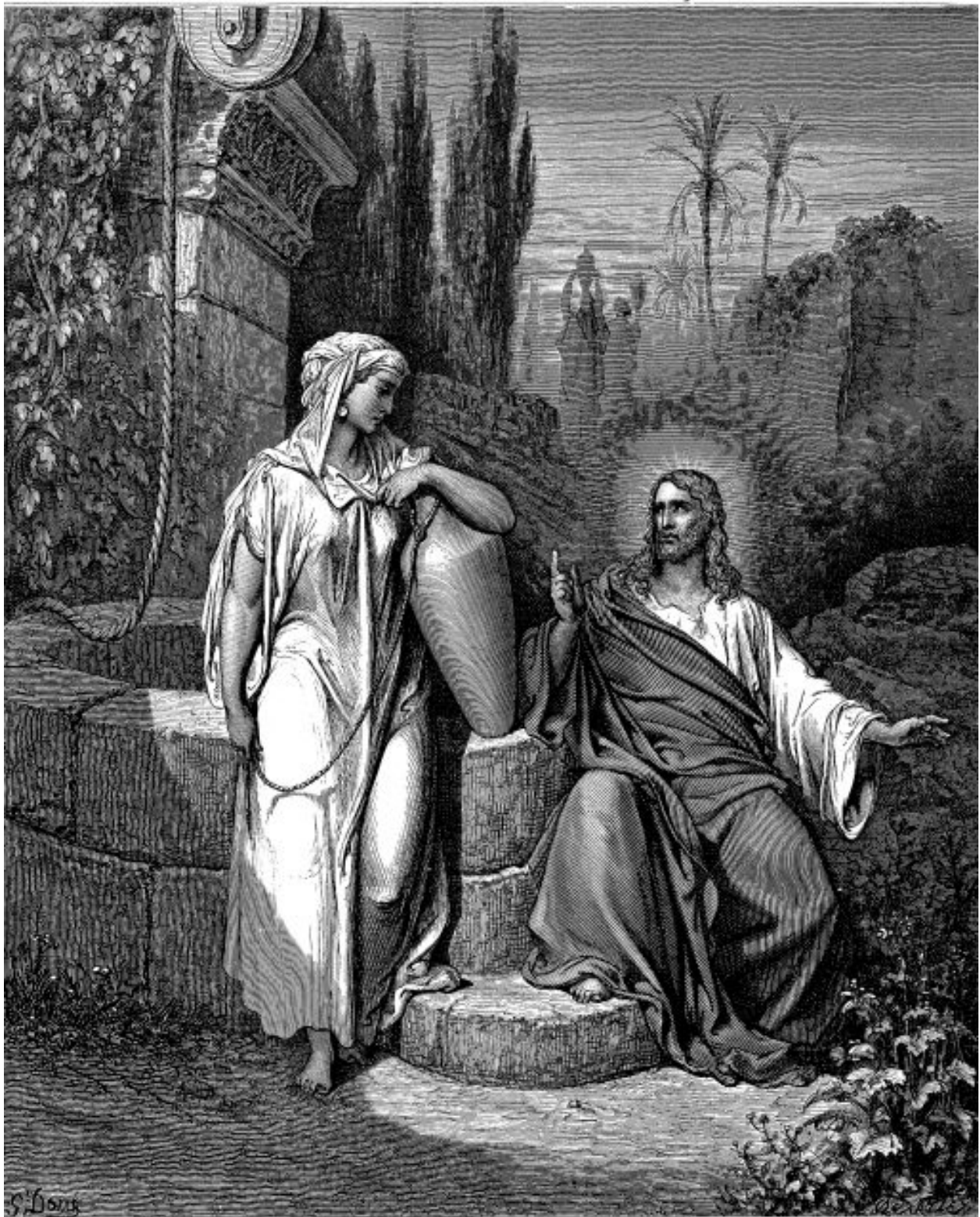


**"Jesus and the Woman of Samaria" by Gustave Doré**



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Joh 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; ...

## Talking With Women

**John 4:4-27 - close encounters of the marvelous kind. 4:27**

**Conceptions and Preconceptions. 4:9**

**Here's a quarter kid, get lost. 4:8**

**The Bridal paradigm. 3:29**

**The paradigm shift.**

It is very difficult to know what to call what I'm about to say. It is difficult, because I know, or think I do, what the preconceptions are. This is a favorite sermon text. It would be difficult to count how many times I've heard it preached, generally with the same emphasis, the same preconceptions. I would like to try to get beyond the preconceptions, but when we get beyond preconceptions, we are likely to be "*reckoned among the transgressors.*"

Jesus was very aware of the problem, even in the preconceptions of His disciples. In saying what I'm about to say, I have to hope that there is some deeper understanding of what, by now, Jesus Christ has done for us, to us, and in us. But just in case, I want to place the passage in context just a little bit.

In John 3, beginning at about verse 22, we get a fresh perspective from John the Baptist, a perspective on who John is, who Jesus is, and who we are. As is typical, a certain kind of rivalry surfaced. John had been baptizing, and still was, and now Jesus disciples were baptizing. This bothered John's "... *disciples and a certain Jew*" John 3:25, 26.

When they brought their concern to John, he said, "*A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him. The BRIDE belongs to the BRIDEGROOM. The friend who attends the BRIDEGROOM waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the BRIDEGROOM'S voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.*" John 3:27-29

Clearly, John had seen and understood, at least in part, the great mystery that Paul speaks about in Ephesians 5:31,32: "*For this reason, a man will leave his father*

*and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church."*

John knew that a wedding was coming down. He also knew that he was one of the attendants. He himself was neither the Bridegroom nor the bride. He was a friend of the Bridegroom. John's role was limited. As a friend of the Bridegroom he had been privileged to attend to both the bride and the Groom, but all the while he knew that the bride belonged to the Bridegroom. This was a fairly radical understanding of what was happening. It violated, and continues to violate our preconceptions to this day.

In his role as the friend of the Bridegroom, John has an ear for the Bridegroom. He is so looking forward to hearing the Bridegroom that he is filled with joy at the hearing of His voice, and by the time of his explanation, he had heard His voice, and could see, even by the complaint of his disciples, that the bride and the Bridegroom had found each other. John's joy was complete, John 3:30. Now, rather than a preconception, a new conception was taking place.

John, the apostle has already told us about Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, and we ought to know that, even a new birth requires a conception. The greatest enemy of a conception is a preconception.

Perhaps enough said - now to the text. Jesus was heading to Samaria. We know from all those sermons, that this was already a problem. When He came to Sychar, He knew that he would have a conversation with a woman. How often have we heard an emphasis on what kind of a woman she was, and not altogether without some justification, (*"For Jews do not associate with Samaritans."*) But, having heard enough about that, I would like to over-look that preconception, and focus on another. I think not without some justification, Verse 27: *"Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?'"* Isn't that the way we are when our preconceptions get violated? We get surprised, but we're afraid to ask. The answer might damage our preconceptions. Perhaps I should add that this is a particular problem for males. Asking questions of this kind is just too vulnerable for most of us men.

The focus of what I want to share is not the conversation that went on between Jesus and the woman, I am quite willing to take the word of the woman that it was substantial and quite intimate, Verse 29, *"Come see a man who told me everything that I ever did."*

Rather, my focus for present purposes is on the fact that the conversation happened and with what it took to make such a conversation possible. Jesus had to go to a place where Jews do not go, sit with a person who Jews do not sit with, and talk with a woman, Jews do not talk to.

We had a saying when I was growing up, “*Here kids, here's a quarter, why don't you go to a movie.*” The price of admission might be giving away my age, but the point is, everyone understood what this meant, parents wanted some time alone together.

Jesus needed some time alone in order to do something that the kids were not ready to handle. This is the same Jesus who is about to be presented to us as the one who has the power to do wonderful things for lunch, Chapter 6:11. So when John tells us, “*His disciples had gone into town to buy food,*” it becomes particularly significant that they were not there for the conversation. Especially since he also informs us that on their return, they are surprised to see him talking to a woman. There is nothing in the text to indicate that she is a particular kind of a woman, other than that she is a Samaritan. The word used for “*woman*” is the same as that used elsewhere to refer to Jesus mother, so there is no indication that she is particularly “fallen,” other than in the conversation which they were not there for. They were just plain surprised that he was talking to a woman.

The Bridegroom was courting His bride, but it was still a great mystery. Jesus knew it, John the Baptist might have understood it, but the religious did not understand, and were afraid to ask. Things really haven't changed so much, where the religious are concerned. Women are beginning to be recognized as people among the religious, but this is not the fault of the religious. The change is being forced on the church, because the very stones are crying out. It's beginning to look like Jesus will have his Bride after all.

Jay Ferris - 2004