



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 4:4-26, 28-29

SUMMARY:

We read John 4 as a 'one-off, stand-alone meeting' between a man (Jesus) & a woman (a Samaritan) at the village well. The first readers read it differently, as the latest in a series of such encounters stretching back to Israel's Patriarchs. Lacking this perspective, we miss insights that were obvious to them. Let's become better Bible-readers by adopting their view. John 4 is ostensibly a 'betrothal type-scene,' where major Bible-characters meet their future spouse. We compare and contrast Jesus' well-encounter with those of Isaac/Rebekah, Jacob/Rachel, and Moses/Zipporah. 'Connecting the dots' raises new issues: Is Jesus the Samaritan woman's '7th man,' her perfect husband? Is she Jesus' 'spiritual &/or symbolic spouse'? We reject such allegorizing. The key issue is: Why does the 4th Gospel subvert this literary device—the OT 'Wedding-at-the-Well' scene?

1. John 4 evokes the 'OT Woman-at-the-well' Scene

a. John 4 is not the first 'Women at the Well' Episode

- "This passage [John 4]...evokes the rich biblical imagery & themes. Allusions to...well scenes of Genesis 24...Genesis 29 and Exodus 2 are difficult to miss. That Jesus meets the woman at 'Jacob's well' plainly alludes to a different well...where Jacob met...Rachel & provided water for her (Gen. 29:10), as Jesus provides this Samaritan woman 'living water.' But this Jacob scene in Gen. 29 [also] recapitulates...Gen. 24, in which Abraham's steward finds a wife for Isaac." [Craig Keener, *John*, Vol. 1, p. 586]
- The type-scene is...a means of attaching [this episode] to a larger pattern of historical & theological meaning...Isaac & Rebekah, [are heirs of God's] covenant...with Abraham & his seed, [so links to] that first story [Isaac/Rebekah betrothal-scene]...imply some connection of meaning, some further working-out of the original covenant" [Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, p 60]
- "The encounter between Jesus & the Samaritan woman at the well is a conventional type-scene that harks back to similar scenes in the narratives featuring Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, & Moses." [Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, p. 109]

b. Biblical 'Woman at the Well' Cases (Gen. 24, 29; Ex. 2; John 4)

a. Isaac & Rebecca at the Well (Genesis 24)

- "A key point about a *type-scene* is that it shows the creativity of God in keeping his promise to Abraham: 'Through your descendents every family on earth will be blessed'." [Keith Bodner, "Narrative Strategies," in S. Walters, *Go Figure!*, 20]
- "Isaac & Rebekah are the 1st couple in the Bible whose love story begins at a well (Gen. 24). In that story, God promises Isaac's father Abraham that he'll make Abraham's family into a great nation & that this will come about through Isaac. So the story of a wife for Isaac is not just a crucial moment in his personal life but also in *the story of God's promise coming about through him*. [In] the story an older Abraham sends his servant...back to the land of his ancestors to find the woman who'll become part of this family of promise. When he arrives at a well, the servant prays that God would make his journey successful. Before he even finishes speaking, he encounters Rebekah. She draws water for him, & when she learns who he is, she hurries back to her family to tell them the news...The servant shares a meal with Rebekah's family...When they return to Isaac's family, Rebekah & Isaac are joined together" [Carissa Quinn, *Jesus Offers Living Water &...Marriage?* Bible Project]

b. Jacob & Rachel at the Well (Gen. 29)

- "Isaac & Rebekah's son Jacob follows...his parents & finds his wife at a well just one generation later. Jacob's story, though distinct...from that of his father, bears a striking resemblance to the story of Isaac and Rebekah...As he journeys, Jacob comes upon a well. He learns...that this is the land of his ancestors. Before he finishes speaking...he encounters Rachel. As soon as he sees her, he rolls the stone from the [well's] mouth...& draws water for her. When he tells her he is her father's relative, she hurries back to tell [her family] the news. Jacob stays with her family. When the time for...marriage comes, Rachel's father throws a marriage feast & (in an odd turn...) both Leah & Rachel become Jacob's wives." [Carissa Quinn]

c. The "Wedding at the Well" Pattern (Gen. 24 & 29)

- These stories are incredibly similar! In fact, both of them include the following elements:
 - a. Journey: Someone journeys to a foreign country
 - b. Woman at the well: The man encounters a woman at a well
 - c. Draws water: Someone draws water from the well
 - d. News: The woman hurries home to bring news of the visitor
 - e. Hospitality: The visitor stays with the woman's family & there's mention of a meal
 - f. Joining: The 2 parties are joined as one—[a betrothal][Carissa Quinn, *Jesus Offers Living Water &...Marriage?*]

d. Moses & Zipporah at the Well (Ex. 2:15-21)

- This is the shortest 'Wedding at the Well' story in the Bible, yet it contains all of the elements of the pattern...
 - a. Journey: Moses journeys to the foreign country of Midian
 - b. Woman at the well: He encounters a woman at a well (7 actually) iii.Draws water: Moses defends them &...draws water for them from the well
 - c. News: The women go 'quickly' home & tell their father [Jethro] about Moses
 - d. Hospitality: Moses is invited to dinner & stays with Jethro & family
 - e. Joining: One of the women, Zipporah, is given to Moses as his wife

e. Jesus & the Samaritan Woman (John 4)

- Jesus' meeting the woman at a well begins by following the same pattern as the stories of Isaac, Jacob, & Moses:
 - a. Journey: Jesus journeys toward his hometown but passes through Samaria first
 - b. Woman at the well: He encounters a Samaritan woman at a well; 'Jacob's well' links this story to Jacob & Rachel.
 - c. Draws water: The woman comes to 'draw water,' following the typical well-meeting pattern
 - d. But there's a twist. Jesus says that he came to offer her 'living water' instead of [receiving] well-water. [Carissa Quinn]
 - "The *anticipation of the reader*, based on inter-textual associations, *would be a betrothal*."—Herman Waetjen
 - "In this light [i.e., as a betrothal type-scene] John 4...is a *tour de force*. All the familiar elements of the *betrothal-scene* are in play: on leaving his 'family circle' (the Jews) & journeying to a foreign land (Samaria), a 'bridegroom' named Jesus (3:29) encounters a woman at a well. After a request to draw water, news of the stranger's arrival is hurried back home [to Sychar], & he is invited to stay (4:40). [This is] John's adoption of this ancient form...Yet, the Fourth [Gospel] has *twisted the type-scene to potent theological effect*..." [Clifton Black, *Rhetoric of the Gospel*, 14-15]

2. The 'Wedding-at-the-Well,' "Betrothal Type-Scene"

a. Is John 4 a 'Wedding at the Well' — 'Betrothal Type-Scene'?

- “According to a *very dominant consensus*...the meeting between Jesus & the Samaritan woman is modeled upon the betrothal scene of the Hebrew [OT]”—Kasper Larsen
- “There’s a *near consensus* among literary critics that the [Jn. 4] scene at Jacob’s well follows conventions of the betrothal typescene found in Hebrew [OT] narratives.”—Jo-Anne Brant

b. ‘Type-scene’ Links as important as direct OT Quotations

- “The disciples’ remembrance that...‘Zeal for your house will consume me’ (Jn. 2:27) is...[a] quotation of Ps. 69:9...clearly...a visible interweaving of [OT Scripture]. But...*Jesus’ meeting the woman ‘at the well’ is by no means any less meaningful &/or a less...intended [link]*. It serves to stimulate an inter-textual field of vision in the reader [being] comprised of...clustered links to ...similar stories in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., a type-scene).” [Edward H. Gerber, *Scriptural Tale in the 4th Gospel*, p. 78 & #56]

c. At Crucial Junctures in the Hero’s Life

- “The biblical type-scene occurs not in the rituals of daily existence, but *at crucial junctures in the lives of the heroes*, from conception & birth to *betrothal* & deathbed.” [Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 51]
- “‘Biblical type-scenes’...are patterned stories...[about] *certain crucial moments in the biblical heroes’ lives*. E.g...the birth of a son to a barren woman,...*betrothal at a well*...Type-scenes...[are] a form of thematic repetition...a pattern that recurs across... the biblical narrative...It is *dissimilarity as well as similarity that defines the analogy* (rather than the identity) between various occurrences of a type-scene.” [Lieve M. Teugels, *Bible & Midrash*, 51]

d. Importance of Variations & Omissions

- **Note:** Betrothal type-scenes operate between the author and the reader; the actual characters (e.g. the Samaritan woman) in the scene are not affected or aware. [Ricardo Smuts, *Jesus & the Samaritan Woman (Jn. 4:1-42)*, (April 2019) p. 92 #102]
- “For the reader...the narrative *interest lies in the variation* that a specific type-scene plays on its general theme. In the...biblical narrative, the biblical type-scene occurs at the *crucial junctures in the lives of the heroes*, from conception & birth to *betrothal* to deathbed...[i.e.] in *pivotal narrative moments*.” [Nevada L. DeLapp, “Type-Scenes” in the Pentateuch, 16]
- “Betrothal episodes...conform to an overall broad pattern. *Yet, it is in the alterations & particular circumstances* of each typescene *that the text communicates its purpose*.” [Peter Sabo, “Drawing Out Moses,” C. Levin (ed.) *Thinking of Water...*, 417]
- Robert Alter...proposes that *any change or suppression of the key components* in the [type-scene] convention...*convey[s]...an important specific message*.” [W. Janzen, “Jethro in...Exodus,” J. Isaak (ed.) *OT in the Life of God’s People*, p 163]
- “The significance of a *simple omission or innovation*...in a standard biblical type-scene *may not leap out immediately to the modern reader*, but would...*be...plainly obvious to the text’s earliest audience*.” [L. Gartner-Brereton, *Ontology of Space*, 34]
- “*What’s interesting is not the recurring form...but the variations...These variations of...this pattern yield rich interpretive differences*...by comparing the betrothal of Jacob & Rachel, Moses & Zipporah, Boaz & Ruth...In each case...*slight variations* of the pattern can *light the story with new meaning*...” [Robert D. Lane, *Reading the Bible*, 65]

3. Does the Samaritan Woman become Jesus’ Wife?

a. ‘Wooden Applications’— ‘Symbolic/Spiritual Wedding’ of Jesus & the Samaritan Woman

- “Jesus is depicted as entering into a *spiritual marriage* with the Samaritan woman...” —Callum Carmichael
- In John 4, it is implicit that the Samaritan woman & the Samaritans are betrothed to Jesus.”—Priya Paul
- “Jesus comes to meet the woman of Samaria and engage in *spiritual marriage*...Jesus is...a lover seeking his beloved, a bridegroom seeking a bride...*he became her lover, her true husband*.”—Brian Edgar
- “Jesus is the 7th & therefore the perfect man [for the Samaritan Woman]. A *symbolic betrothal* is now suggested”—Mark Stibbe
- “*Jesus [is] being presented symbolically as the ‘bridegroom’ & the Samaritan woman as the ‘bride’*.”—Varghese Johns

- “The...betrothal scene...bring[s] into focus the *symbolic betrothal* between Jesus & the Samaritan woman.” –Varghese Johns
- “Her negative marital & religious ‘baggage’ no longer constitute[s] an obstacle to entering into *the mystical nuptial [marriage] relationship with the Messiah.*” –André Villeneuve
- “The woman of Samaria becomes *the [End-time] bride...in the long-awaited marriage between God & his people*” — Stibbe
- “The story...ends with many Samaritans believing in him. This is not only a *spiritual wedding*, but also a new spiritual ‘birth’ coming out of the *symbolic union of Jesus & the woman.*” —André Villeneuve
- “Instead of natural marriage, a *spiritual one is set in motion*...Both she & the townsfolk confess Jesus to be the Savior of the world which is *effectively spiritual marriage—salvation!*” –Joshua Spoelstra
- “*The relationship* Jesus forges at the well is *not exclusively with one woman which is exactly the point. Jesus [has a] new symbolic [corporate]*” —Andrew Lincoln
- The Samaritan woman is “a *fictive betrothed & bride* of the Messianic bridegroom *on behalf of the Samaritan people*, as a symbolic wife to Jesus who produces abundant offspring...” Adeline Fehribach
- “*Mary of Bethany as the betrothed/bride* of the messianic bridegroom *on behalf of the Jews*, just as the *Samaritan woman [is] the betrothed/bride* of the messianic bridegroom *on behalf of the Samaritan people.*” –Adeline Fehribach
- “In this ‘*betrothal-type*’ *meeting between a Judean man [Jesus] & a Samaritan woman*, Judah & Samaria are once again united into one covenant people of God.” –Mary Coloe

b. Historically ‘Spiritual Marriage’ to Christ meant celibacy

- “By the time of St. Augustine (late 4th century), many virgins had actually taken a...*public vow [of celibacy] & were called spouses of Christ*; a Church ceremony...established in the 4th century...[gave] these women...special veils to wear, *signifying their mystical marriage with Christ.*” [Michael E. Giesler, “*Celibacy in the First Two Centuries*,” Catholic Culture]

c. What’s the Value of ‘Symbolic Marriage’ *per se*?

- “A bridegroom needs a bride, which is the function of the Samaritan woman in Jn 4: ‘As betrothed & bride of the bridegroom on behalf of the Samaritan people, the Samaritan woman *represents the Samaritan people* with whom God desires to establish familial relations...[But,] She’s important only to the extent that she’s a ‘woman’ & ‘Samaritan,’ the 2 aspects of her character... essential for her to fulfill her role... *There’s no real marriage*...Because the Samaritan woman *only symbolically fulfills her role as betrothed bride...she is betrothed, bride...in word (text) only.*” [Adeline Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*,]

d. Critique of ‘Wooden Applications’ & Jesus’ ‘Marriage’

a. Manipulation—“Advocates...manipulate the rest of the symbols in John 4...” – Stephen Um

- “Since...a betrothal type [scenes]...always lead to a marriage relationship...[detecting this] pattern...cause[s] the reader to believe that this episode between Jesus & the woman would likewise end with the same result. Having *assumed correlation between the OT betrothal type scenes and the Samaritan narrative*...advocates of this interpretive model *must then manipulate the rest of the symbols in John 4 to cohere with what they believe [is the inevitable outcome.]*...[But, scholars] *highlight more...the contextual differences...rather than patterns of similarity.*” [Stephen Um, *Temple...in John*, p. 6]

b. Allegorical Interpretations—examples

a. Jesus is her “7th Man”—the perfect Husband

- “She’s been married 5 times and is now living with a 6th man. *This makes Jesus the 7th & therefore the perfect man in her life. A symbolic betrothal is now suggested.*” —Mark Stibbe

b. Her ‘husbands’ represent Samaritans’ Pagan gods

- “Numerous commentators have seen in the woman’s 5 husbands a symbol of the 5 religious cults...brought into Samaria...The Samaritan woman & her 6 men is like the Samaritan people with their 6 religions.” –André Villeneuve
- “*This exegesis is not to be countenanced*, 2 Kings 17:30 mentions 7 gods, not 5, but more importantly the Evangelist[author] *does not allegorize in this manner.*” [George Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 61]

c. ‘Marriage’ is a figure for Worship—‘Infidelity’ = False Worship; ‘Marriage’ = True Worship

- “Some...interpret...marital imagery in John 4 *as a figurative device*; Mark Stibbe...claimed that ‘John 4 is an *ironic betrothal scene in which infidelity is false worship & marriage is true worship.*’” — Stibbe

d. Samaritan woman—simply a symbol of the Samaritan nation

- "It's possible...[she] is a symbol...of the Samaritan people...[&] her 5 husbands represent the 5 nations that settle Samaria...When Jesus tells her to...call her husband...[he] may be saying 'Go & invoke your god'." —John Webster
- "The scene...is symbolically [about] the incorporation of Samaria into the New Israel, the bride of the new Bridegroom, [as] suggested by the type-scene...The entire dialogue...is the 'wooing' of Samaria...[into] the New Israel of Jesus the New Bridegroom. *It has nothing to do with the woman's private moral life.*" [Sandra M. Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, p.]

c. Critique of Allegorical Interpretations

a. Denigrates the woman; denies the historical context

- "This allegorical & symbolic interpretation of the Samaritan woman has taken hold; yet *it denigrates her* in a way not consistent with the biblical text, and reflects a *lack of sensitivity to the story's historical context.*" —James F. McGrath
- "The story betrays a *considerable knowledge of Samaritan beliefs*, local color, geographical factors, & Jew-Samaritan relationships that...*point us in the direction of an historical account.*"—Ben Witherington
- "John's presentation of Jacob's well &...worship...on Mt. Gerizim *cohere with archaeological findings.*"—Paul Anderson

b. Wholesale allegorization is not warranted.

- "There certainly are elements of symbolism in the Gospel in general & Jn 4 in particular, but this fact should not warrant an interpretation which attempts to understand the whole narrative as an allegory." [Stephen Um, *Temple Christology*, p 4]
- Recognizing that "expressions of double-meaning pervade John is not a sufficient basis for the allegorical treatment of the narratives." [Stephen Motyer, *Your Father the Devil?*, 29]

c. Allegorical reading is problematic

- "Reading the text in this fashion...[may] possibly, though not necessarily, *imply that such an encounter* [Jesus with the woman] *did not really transpire.*" [David S. Dockery, "Reading Jn. 4:1-15," *Criswell Theological Review*, V. 3.1, p. 135]
- "Allegorical reading strategy that bypasses the literal sense of the Gospel...is...problematic...References to historical persons and places do not serve as...symbols for contemporary persons, [etc.]...*'Realistic narrative is narrative that means what it says.'*" [Joshua W. Jipp, "...4th Gospel," in R. C. Fay (ed.) *John in Modern Interpretation*, p. 193]
- "The events...in the 4th Gospel would have been regarded by their earliest readers...as a story of Jesus...that is 'true' historically, theologically, & spiritually." [Adele Reinhartz, "*Johannine Community*" in F. Segovia (ed.) *What is Jn.*, p 132]

4. Key Omissions & Variations in the John 4 Type-scene

a. OT Type-scenes create Expectations

- "By modeling the story on the type-scene familiar...from Scripture, the author of [John] 4 is able to draw on the meaning of prior instances to guide the reader's understanding of the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman...*Previous occurrences...always result[ed] in the betrothal of the two characters*, [so] the reader is led to *[expect] the same result.*" [Lyle Eslinger, "Wooing the Woman at the Well," in Mark WG. Stibbe (ed.) *Gospel of John as Literature*, pp. 166-7]

b. Expectations are Disappointed & Diverted

- "Scholars...recognize...the Samaritan woman follows...OT betrothal scenes (e.g. Jacob & Rachel in Gen. 29) *An awareness of the episode's parallels to OT betrothal scenes creates expectations* in the reader *that go unfulfilled.*"—Christopher Skinner
- "Setting the dialogue between Jesus & the Samaritan woman in the betrothal type-scene...leads...readers into understandable expectations...Yet *John twists some features of the betrothal type-scene for...irony or parody...In John's...betrothal type scene ...[expected] events...don't happen, & the story moves in unexpected directions.*" [Jean Kim, *Woman & Nation*, pp. 99-100]
- "The '*betrothal scene*' *does not lead to a beautiful, consummate marriage* between Jesus & the Samaritan woman; and...this circumstance is *designed to disappoint those expectations* that the [episode] had at first created."—Kasper Larsen

c. Omissions—what's missing from the type-scene?

- a. "In John's...betrothal type-scene...*the specified events* which it calls for *do not happen*, and *the story moves in unexpected directions*...[It's] consistent with the betrothal type-scene...*while...[being]*" [Jean Kim, *Woman & Nation*, p. 100]
- b. "In the [4th] Gospel's [betrothal type-scene] *parts are radically altered*. No water is drawn. There's no betrothal, nor is there a betrothal meal. These *differences are keys to an understanding* of how the author is manipulating this literary convention." [Lyle Eslinger, "Wooing the Woman at the Well," in Mark WG. Stibbe (ed.) *Gospel of John as Literature*, p. 167]

d. Key Variations in the John 4 Type-scene

- a. Jesus asks for water & gets none; rather Jesus offers 'living water'

- “In [John 4], it is surely of interest that, unexpectedly in a scene of this type, *Jesus offers water to the woman rather than receiving it from her.*” [Richard B. Hays, “Use of OT by NT Writers,” in Joel B. Green (ed.) *Hearing the NT*,]
- “In John...conventional elements are treated unconventionally; *Jesus asks for water but apparently receives none...*’
- Living water’...rather than well water...[is] the central concern...The woman is *no marriageable maiden; she has had 5*
- *husbands.* Still, Jesus goes to her village, & she receives him as her Lord.” [RA. Culpepper, *Anatomy of...4th Gospel*, p. 136]

b. The woman’s marital eligibility

- “A...contrast between Gen. 29 [Jacob/Rachel] & John 4 is *the woman’s [marital] eligibility.* Whereas Rachel is a beautiful young virgin from Jacob’s [extended] family...the Samaritan woman’s ethnic/religious background & her irregular marital situation...would *normally render her ineligible for communion with the Jewish Messiah.*” —André Villeneuve

c. There’s no conventional marriage

- “*One difference...is significant:* While the encounter between Jacob & Rachel ends with a marriage, *John’s account does not lead to a marriage*, but rather to many Samaritans...coming to faith in Christ.”—André Villeneuve
- When “Jesus accepts the Samaritans’ invitation to stay with them...the point has been reached where the betrothal should now ensue...However, that narrative has itself *forestalled this outcome*—the woman’s previous & current relationships put her in a completely different category than her OT counterparts, & make it clear that *Jesus is not about to embark upon married life.*” [Paul R. Noble, *Canonical Approach*, 318]
- “Within the well-scene...category of betrothal narrative...The OT...typically deals with the literal progeny of a chosen line, this well-scene in *John 4 is different since there is no proposal, no wedding, & no physical progeny.*”—Donald McIntyre

d. There’s no ‘spiritual’ or ‘symbolic marriage’

- “At [the] climactic point...the *audience expects this spiritual marriage* to take place, but instead...John goes *against audience expectations...he fails to deliver the expected spiritual marriage...*” [Andy Angel, “Sexuality of God Incarnate,” in TA. Noble (ed.) *Marriage, Family & Relationships: Biblical, Doctrinal & Contemporary*,]
- “Commentators [aware] of the [betrothal] type-scene in John 4...have understood [it] to *suggest that the Samaritan woman* (or [her] people) is united in a *spiritual or symbolic marriage with Jesus.* Yet the *narrative itself nowhere describes or even hints at a consummation between Jesus & the woman.* Jesus’ refusal of the ‘betrothal meal’ [i.e., the food offered by his returned disciples (4:34)] *points in the exact opposite direction* [i.e., no betrothal &/or marriage].” [Lyle Eslinger, “Wooing the Woman at the Well,” in Mark WG. Stibbe (ed.) *Gospel of John as Literature*, pp. 181-2]
- For “the Samaritan woman...*There’s no literal wedding to allegorize as a spiritual one...There’s no literal betrothal to interpret spiritually.* Jesus is presented as the giver of living water & [ultimately] *not as the bridegroom*”—Eric Wyckoff

e. There’s no betrothal/marriage meal (4:31-34)

- “The narrator wraps up...his own version of *the betrothal meal to celebrate the non-union.* In this instance...we have *Jesus’ refusal to eat the food brought by his disciples* (4:31-34)...*Instead of eating a betrothal meal to celebrate his engagement* to the willing Samaritan, Jesus tells his disciples ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent me’...*This final twist* in the adaption of *the betrothal type-scene...the ‘non-betrothal meal’* ensures...the reader will remember the lesson.” [Lyle Eslinger, “Wooing the Woman at the Well,” in Mark WG. Stibbe (ed.) *Gospel of John as Literature*, p. 181]

5. The Subversion of the Betrothal Type-scene

a. ‘Wedding-at-the-Well’ subverted in John 4

- “The Gospel of John adapts this [Betrothal type-scene] motif or ‘bends the genre,’ *subverting the expectation* of the audience.” [Michael Peppard, *World’s Oldest Church*, p. 158]
- “The *default expectation subverted in John 4 is that the outcome of the encounter is betrothal & subsequent marital fidelity...* In John the ‘marriage’ is re-vision-ed as covenant & worship in the relationship between God & the world, drawing on and expanding...Israel’s prophetic tradition. *Jesus does not ‘marry’ the woman*, at least not in the non-metaphorical [literal] sense of the word. But he does bring the woman & with her many Samaritans, to *pistis* [Gk. ‘faith’]...Jesus in the course of two days brings about an eternal relationship between himself & many Samaritans.” [Tyler Smith, “Characterization in John 4...,” in Kasper B. Larsen (ed.) *Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic*, p. 246]

- “There’s *no interest in* [conventional] *marriage* in the [Jn. 4] scene; having had 5 husbands already, the Samaritan woman is *in need of a different kind of relationship altogether*. But if the larger purpose of the betrothal type-scene is *linked to the promise of Abraham*—through whose offspring every other family on earth would...be blessed—then John 4 exploits...typescene imagery to understand its messianic fulfillment in this conversation.” [Keith Bodner, *Ark on the Nile:...Exodus*, p. 148]

b. Betrothal type-scene’s Subversion in the OT—King Saul (1 Sam. 9:10-14)

- “Numerous commentators have pointed out that there’s a ‘type-scene’ in the chapter [1 Sam. 9], specifically the type-scene of the ‘hero-at-the-well’...But there’s no ‘consummation’ of the [betrothal] type-scene.” [Keith Bodner, *National Insecurity*, 75]
- “In 1 Sam. 9, Saul is on a journey home from home (looking for his father’s [lost] donkeys) & meets a group of young women who are going to draw water from the well. However, contrary to the reader’s expectations, the scene *does not end with Saul’s betrothal*. The type-scene comes to a halt before its happy conclusion. *Instead of getting a wife, Saul meets the prophet Samuel*. Instead of a betrothal feast, there’s a sacrificial feast.” [Paul Evans, *1-2 Samuel*, p. 116]

c. This ‘betrothal type-scene’ produces a Prophet-King Partnership!

- “Instead of a nice relationship with a fair maiden, Saul instead gets the prophet Samuel.” –Keith Bodner
- “The ending...is different from other betrothal type-scenes, for Saul, did not meet his bride-to-be. Soon after parting with the girls, Saul bumped into Samuel...*Instead of a wife, Saul found Samuel, his partner in his royal office* [as king]. The author of 1 Samuel portrays the first *encounter between the future king of Israel & the prophet Samuel as a betrothal type-scene* to teach that [establishing] Israel’s Kingdom requires the cooperation of both king & prophet. The relationship between king & prophet can be compared to that of husband & wife.” [Koowon Kim, *1 Samuel: A Pastoral & Contextual Commentary*,]

6. John’s ‘Betrothal type-scene’ Produces not marriage, but Mission & Worship

a. God’s Purpose not fulfilled merely by Human Marriage & Procreation

- “Jesus’ encounter results in “a ‘betrothal’...*not in marriage but in worship & in mission*.”—Clifton Black
 - “In John 4, Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well is a betrothal type-scene, though a ‘betrothal’ of a very different kind—‘*not in marriage but in worship* (4:21–24) & *in mission* (4:35–42). [C. Clifton Black, *Rhetoric of the Gospel*, p. 17]
 - “Paul Duke [*Irony in...4th Gospel*] has shown the ironic function of this [betrothal] type-scene as played out in the Samaritan well story. Jesus meets no maiden, but a 5-time married woman. *Rather than looking for another husband, our Samaritan woman is just looking for relief. And rather than looking for a wife. Jesus is looking for ‘worshippers in spirit & truth’*.” [W. Howard-Brook, *Becoming Children of God: John...*, 114]
- “Jesus does not come...for a woman to be his [wife], but for a witness who will...invite...people to himself.”—Gail O’Day
 - “In John 4, Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well is a betrothal type-scene, though a betrothal of a very different kind— ‘*not in marriage but in worship & in mission*’ (Black).”—James Resseguie
 - “The woman...does not need a conventional betrothal type-scene; she has apparently had plenty of those already...The 4th Evangelist is saying, this woman needs the living water...The reader can immediately spot both the *continuity & variation with* [OT] *betrothal type-scenes*...Gail O’Day summarizes: ‘In John 4...unlike the OT type-scenes of the maiden at the well, *Jesus does not come to the well looking for a woman to be his* [wife], *but for a witness who will recognize the Messiah* & invite the despised people to himself’. In the economy of the Gospel, there can be some remarkable surprises.”—Keith Bodner

b. The Woman’s Witness

- “*The default expectation* [of betrothal *is*] *subverted in John 4*...The women in the [OT] examples...are maidens who wind up marrying the men they meet at the well...[In contrast] *Jesus does not ‘marry’ the woman*...But he does bring the woman, & with her many Samaritans, to *pistis* [Gk.: faith, belief], a point where they tell the woman ‘No longer do we believe because of your words, for we’ve heard for ourselves, & we know that this one really is the Savior of the world’ (4:39)...Jesus...brings about an eternal relationship between himself & many Samaritans (4:41).” [Tyler Smith, “...Proto-typical Type Scene...,” in K. B. Larsen (ed.) *John as Genre Mosaic*, p. 246]

c. The OT Betrothal Type-Scene is rendered redundant

- Just as the woman left her water jar (as redundant) “The betrothal type-scene of the maiden at the well is now over; it has reached its consummation... In John 4, the unnamed Samaritan woman has found the Messiah—the covenant partner & hence, as readers, we will not need that ‘water jar’ [the betrothal type-scene] again in the canon of Scripture. Abandoning the jar at the well powerfully suggests that the source of living water has been found, & the fulfillment of the ancient promise has arrived... The literary technique becomes a handmaiden to the highest discernment [—the OT betrothal type-scenes point forward to Christ].” [Keith Bodner, “Go Figure...,” in S. D. Walters (ed.) *Figuration in Biblical Interpretation*, p.]

d. From Betrothal Scene to Civic Reception

- “The episode *began like the betrothal stories of Israel’s ancestors, but ended with the kind of civic reception* ... cities... granted... their leaders. By going out to meet Jesus on the road, inviting him into their town, & hailing him as the ‘Savior of the world,’ ... [Sychar’s] people witness to the universal scope of his power.” [Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the 4th Gospel*, p. 50]

QUESTIONS:

1. Usually we read John 4 (Jesus & the Samaritan) as a ‘one-off, stand-alone’ episode. What does reading John 4 as a ‘betrothal-at-the-well’ type-scene (like Genesis 24, 29) add to our understanding?
2. Compare & contrast the 2 OT “betrothal-at-the-well” episodes—Jacob/Rachel (Gen. 29) & Moses/Zipporah (Ex. 2:15-21)
 - a. What are the similarities? How do they fit the “typical pattern” of “Betrothal-at-the-well”?
 - b. What are the differences? What insight do these differences suggest about the two sets of characters?
3. “The ‘*betrothal scene*’ does not lead to a beautiful, consummate marriage [of] Jesus & the Samaritan woman.” So, if there’s no betrothal, no marriage, why does the author present this as a “betrothal-at-the-well” type-scene? Discuss.
4. Consider the two statements below:
 - a. Jesus’ encounter results in “a ‘betrothal’... *not in marriage but in worship & in mission.*”—Clifton Black
 - b. “Jesus does not come... for a woman to be his [wife], but for a witness who will... invite... people to himself.”—Gail O’Day
 - c. Do you agree (or disagree) with these statements? Why, or why not?