

XVI. Revival in Biblical Perspective

Revive Us Again!

“The Sycharian Revival”

John 4:1–42

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

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This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. John 4:1–30 says [1] Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John [2] (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), [3] he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. [4] And he had to pass through Samaria. [5] So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [6] Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

[7] A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) [9] The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) [10] Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” [11] The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? [12] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” [13] Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” [15] The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

[16] Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” [17] The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” [19] The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” [21] Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” [25] The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” [26] Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

[27] Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” [30] They went out of the town and were coming to him.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

For this year we have focused upon the theme our elders have chosen for us and that is revival. Having developed it we have come to a definition for revival which is, revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. This all came from Old Testament texts except for one study when we were in Acts 1 and 2.

We learned that revival is not worked up but it comes down. Revival doesn't come from man but God joins in and it comes from God who brings man in. It is an extraordinary work where God takes what looks dead and brings it to life but it's done with ordinary people in ordinary places through ordinary means – preaching, prayer, fellowship. It is nothing exotic just the ordinary means He has put into place. It is also for extraordinary purposes/consequences and there are two salient evidences when revival shows up. Evidence one is that it is vertical for it is God-centered worship where God's people unstoppably will assemble together to give praise to God. The second evidence is horizontal in that God's people will be an unstoppable witness where there will be a Gospel harvest, a Gospel awakening.

If we are to reach all the nations then we must have a heart for this nation and this nation is in desperate need for a Gospel awakening. You can go to every possible solution that you think is out there – political, educational, cultural, economic – but they are not the answer. I'm not opposed to dealing with all the issues attached to all of them, in fact I think we need to bring a Christian world and life view to every one of them but the answer to the needs of this nation is a Gospel awakening. A Gospel awakening will only come through His church therefore the church in this country is in desperate need of revival. I used to say the church in this nation was five miles wide and one inch deep but I don't think I can say that anymore because it's shrinking. It's no longer five miles wide and it's more shallow than one inch deep. So we are in great need of this revival and it needs to start with us, in our lives, in our hearts. It needs to start with me.

Now that we are going to a New Testament passage revival will this definition and evidences of revival be born out in the New Testament? Will the New Testament accounts of revival affirm what we have studied about revival? This is an interesting text we have come to. I'm beholden to my systematic professor of theology Sinclair Ferguson who really opened up this text for me. The first thing he pointed out to me was that this was the longest personal recorded conversation of Jesus by the Spirit of God in the Scripture. I'm sure Jesus had longer conversations because I can't even imagine trying to get away from Peter at a camp fire. This particular text I think not only affirms and illustrates what we have learned but at least for me it inspires me in terms of what I've learned.

I want to walk through this text very briefly for there are so many subjects Jesus has covered in this text and then I'll give you a couple of takeaways from this passage as well that directly deal with this issue of a Biblical revival leading to a Gospel harvest/awakening. So here we are in Samaria and not by accident. Jesus said in John 4:4 that He must go through Samaria. That is a pretty insightful statement because if you had lived at that time in the days of Jesus in that place you would have taken the Jordan River route to get back to Galilee because back then Samaria was a place of apostasy. It had all begun under Jeroboam when ten tribes in the area of Samaria were led astray in rebellion and walked away from the house of David, Jerusalem and temple worship. Then it continued throughout the years with the hand of God's redemptive judgment upon them as He brings the Assyrians in and takes many away into captivity. Then it continues as they apostatize further in paganism under the Greek Empire and now under the Roman Empire. So it's almost past recognizable from having any context of Biblical truth found in God's Word when they had settled in the Promised Land under Joshua and then under the

judges. So therefore no self-respecting Jew would even walk there and let the dust be upon their feet.

Jesus makes a number of trips and normally goes the normal route which is from Galilee down the Jordan River and then from Jericho up to Jerusalem or He would come back that normal route but this time He says He must go through Samaria. So in this text we are in Samaria and at a place that Jesus, humanly speaking, has some title to. We are in Joseph's field which had been given to him by Jacob at Jacob's well and the town is Sychar. We are about to see the Sycharian revival. It is right here where Jesus finds Himself. I have sat at Jacob's well and it's over one hundred feet deep. I think about that sometimes when I think of this small woman coming to draw up water from this well that is equivalent to a 15 story building in depth.

This woman comes to the well in the middle of the day, at noon and the disciples have gone into town to get food. So Jesus and the woman are at this well. This is a nameless Samaritan woman. The noon hour is significant. The reason Jesus is there is that He is wearied from His journey so He sits beside the well. He needed some water. Women didn't normally come at noon but in the morning and evening. She came in the blazing heat and it was because of the lifestyle she had adopted. She would not have felt any acceptance at the well when anybody else was there. So instead of dealing with all that ostracism where people would put her away, she goes at noon where she doesn't have to deal with it. This day she is not there by herself. Here is a Jewish Man and He asks her for a drink.

When Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink from her water pot I often wonder if He is thinking of His family line. Here they are in Joseph's field and at Jacob's well. It was Jacob's field before it was Joseph's field. There wouldn't be Jacob without Isaac and Rebekah. How did Isaac get Rebekah? His father Abraham got tired of his lack of dating or whatever and decides to handle it by telling his servant Eliezer to get a wife for his son from the land in which Abraham came from. Eliezer had already created the plan by trusting in the providence of God and he goes to this well at noon. He asks a question to the first woman that comes and that is 'will you give me a drink?' Then his next question to her is 'will you go with me?'

I don't know whether this event is in His mind or not but here Jesus is at that same well and that woman Eliezer talked with belonged to Jacob from which Isaac comes from and the same questions are asked from Jesus to the woman at the well but there are not the same answers. She doesn't say 'yes' and finds a multitude of ways to say 'no.' To the first question instead of saying 'no' she responds by saying 'now why are you asking me that question?' She has a number of reasons for asking why with the first being that she is a Samaritan and He is a Jew. Secondly, she is a Samaritan woman and He is a Jewish Man. So these reasons have to do with social and cultural reasons which would allow her to say 'no' to His request for water but Jesus is persistent.

Jesus then says to her 'if you knew who was asking you for a drink then you would ask Me for a drink and I would give you water from which you would never thirst again.' When she hears that response she thinks 'I would never have to come back to this well at noon anymore' and then says 'give me that water.' Before He answers to her He says 'go call your husband.' Now why does He do that? It is because He is taking her to the well she has really been drinking from. This is a woman that has been convinced that satisfaction, significance, and security in life is going to come from men and if she has to marry them she will or if I just have to give myself to them intimately and sexually without marrying them she'll do that as well. That is the well she had been drinking from – sexual immorality and rebellion against the Lord, and it's idolatry. So Jesus is now identifying her well.

She says to Jesus ‘I don’t have a husband’ and Jesus says ‘you’re right that you don’t have a husband.’ Notice that Jesus is careful and compassionate but He does not avoid the subject of sin because the Gospel is only Good News when the reality of bad news is present along with our helplessness and hopelessness. You cannot have a Gospel if the god you preach has no wrath. You cannot have a Gospel if the ones you preach to have no sin. You cannot have a Gospel if eternity has no hell. It is only when the truth of a holy God and His wrath is preached that His grace becomes amazing. It is only when the reality of our sin is identified with its helplessness, hopelessness and emptiness that the depth, breadth, height and width of His love overwhelms us. And it is only when the reality of hell is displayed that the rescue of the Redeemer brings joy. Jesus doesn’t dodge the issue.

Jesus tells her she has had five husbands and it isn’t because all five of them have died. He also tells her the one she is with now is not her husband. She didn’t even bother with the ceremony this time. I find it rather sanctified humor in her response which is ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.’ So has now she put Jesus at arm’s length socially, emotionally, culturally and religiously. Then she says ‘this is where we ought to worship but Your people say we ought to go to the temple.’ So again she brings up religion and yes all religions will lead to God but that is not the question for it is what will you say when you get there? Jesus is very clear in His response for He says ‘No, it’s not all the same. You can’t know this God unless you know His Word and the fact is that God’s road of redemption comes through the Jews to you so this matter of worship, where you worship and what is acceptable worship is no incidental matter at all.’

Notice where we are in this passage for what is an evidence of revival? As our Lord steps into this apostate region to bring the message of living water, refreshment and revival, the first evidence is God-centered worship. The Father seeks true worshippers and Jesus says this two times. It’s the only thing that the Bible says He seeks. These worshippers seek Him in Spirit and truth. Psalm 103:1 says *[1] Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!* And all that we bring to God is according to His Word (truth). We have assembled today to do the one thing that He seeks, to worship and every element we are walking are way through comes from His Word which is truth and He says it pleases Him. So now the question is ‘did we do it in Spirit, Biblically principled and passionately delivered’ or did we just check the boxes today? That is the evidence of revival and He takes it on with this woman.

Then she says she knows the Messiah is coming but that does not mean she is on the verge of conversion. What she thinks is a way to end the conversation actually becomes the moment of truth. Jesus takes the very sacred name of God and says to her ‘I Am.’ It is Yahweh – I am that I am. This woman is gloriously and wonderfully delivered into the presence of God. She leaves her water pot and goes into the city and she begins to tell them all about this glorious Redeemer and Savior.

So now the second evidence of revival shows up and that is a Gospel harvest. The people of the city all start coming out and at the same time the Disciples show up. John 4:31–42 says *[31] Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” [32] But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” [33] So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” [34] Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.* (This is where real nourishment for us is found and that is doing the will and work of the Father. It is not work to be saved but doing work for the One who has saved us.) *[35] Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’ Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.* *[36] Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that*

sower and reaper may rejoice together. [37] For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ [38] I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.’

[39] *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” [40] So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. [41] And many more believed because of his word. [42] They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”* Now revival has led into a conversion and the conversion has led into a Gospel awakening.

Here are some takeaways from this text, some life lessons on revival. Number one is to seek the lost. No one that you meet wants to come to Jesus unless Jesus has come for them. They will all say ‘no’, why? Romans 3:10–12 says [10] *as it is written:* “*None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; no one seeks for God. [12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*” We are called to seek them. No one is seeking Him because we’re dead. If someone you are talking to wants to know more about Jesus then you can rest assured that Jesus has been working on them. We are dead in our sins and if we’re coming to Him it’s because He has already come to us. This woman has every reason to say ‘no’ but our Lord will not be stopped. This brings me to the second thing.

Secondly, is His irresistible grace. I am not saying grace isn’t resisted but when God’s work of grace is sent and determined our resistance will be overcome. It will be dealt with. When we resist His grace is irresistible and He overcomes it. Let me put it this way. We will say ‘no’ but Jesus will not take ‘no’ for an answer from His people and that’s why that’s why Jesus says to the Father in John 6:39, [39] *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.* Jesus will not lose any of His elect and will secure them all. We don’t want Him but amazingly God’s grace in a process of dealing with our hearts will change our wanter. He will work on our hearts so that emotionally, rationally and intellectually the One we didn’t want, we will want Him and to come to Him.

Thirdly, is something you should always remember. When you are talking with people who don’t want Jesus but you like Jesus in the name of Jesus keep bringing it, you know that you don’t have to convert them. In fact, you can’t convert them for none of your converts are going to make it anyway. God will use what we plant, sow, and reap but Jesus alone does the conversion. As you are bringing the truth of God’s Word in love, patiently, persistently, compassionately, courageously, with conviction into their life, be assured that what they are drinking from is not satisfying them. Why did the woman need five husbands? Why did she give up on marriage no matter what it cost her morally? It is because sin and idolatry never work. It never satisfies.

The Athenian philosophers were always talking about something new and why were they always talking about something new? It was because it doesn’t work. Man-made religion and idolatry doesn’t work. It may give a moment of exhilaration but it does not satisfy. The well the woman was drinking from was not going to satisfy so try to always remember that whoever you are talking to that don’t know Jesus, is not working in their life. They may say they don’t want Jesus but what they have is not working. Always remember as well that Jesus saves. He loves to save sinners and when He saves them He starts working on them and that always works. That’s what really works. Know that Jesus will do what He promises and it will work upon them.

Fourthly, there is an amazing blessing that happens when revival comes in our souls and our hearts as it comes into this woman at the well. When it comes not only do we begin to worship the Lord but God turns us into a witness. In other words, when we drink from the Well, we become wells of living water. He said to her ‘springing up within you is a well of water to life.’ When I attended East Carolina the golf team always played at the Aiden Golf Course because it only costs fifty cents for 18 holes. I went there last summer to play and it cost me \$27. I will never forget hole 14 and it’s still there – an artesian well that is just springing up. On those hot summer days we couldn’t wait to get to it. That is the way Jesus says that you’ll become.

When you drink from the Well of Life it begins to spring up in you and you become an artesian well. That is an amazing, glorious blessing for not only do you get blessed with the water of life that satisfies as God’s at work in your life but you become a well that other people can drink from just like all these Sycharians who came to hear Jesus because they were drinking the water from the woman’s testimony. Her testimony brought them to hear about Jesus and they said ‘We didn’t believe Him because of you but we came to hear Him because of your testimony. We believe because we’ve heard Him.’ What we drank brought us to Him and when we drink from Him we received life evermore.

I want to ask you a question about a Gospel harvest. Is there anybody out there that doesn’t know Him that is finding out about Him from you and me? I’m not talking about trying to live a life that will attract people to Jesus. That is wonderful if you do but nobody is going to come to Jesus because of observing your life. They come to Jesus when they hear Jesus speaking to them through you. People come to Jesus by faith. Romans 10:17 says *[17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* Is your testimony there, at the well, the office water cooler, the coffee shop, the place where we have lunch? Will people be able to say ‘Jesus saved me and the reason I came to hear Him was because of your testimony because springing up in you is a well of living water’?

Number five is the flow where revival came to Samaria, conversion to the woman and then a Gospel harvest to the town. Remember our revival definition? Is this an extraordinary work of God’s grace? Yes! Is this woman an ordinary person? Yes because we don’t even know her name. Was this done through ordinary means? There were no signs, wonders or miracles here other than the redeeming, converting work of Christ. Then a Gospel harvest happens as hundreds are being swept into the Kingdom of God.

Number six is we are to pray to the Lord of the Harvest. Here is someone who harvested that becomes a harvester. When the Disciples return and ask what has happened, Jesus has just harvested and said ‘Look the fields are ripe unto harvest.’ And I’m speculating here but when He said that the Disciples look up and here comes that woman with all those people from the village of Sychar in the middle of the day during a hot time and in those days they are dressed in white gowns. You look at a field and it’s white unto harvest. He is pointing toward that town and here come the white robe Sycharians. Here is another white harvest coming for you. The Disciples didn’t do a single thing. They just went to get food. Jesus did the work, the woman did the work and now the Disciples are going to get a chance to talk to all these people. Hopefully their personally counseling skills were ready for they got the chance to enter in. I get the privilege to do that all the time because when you all share the Gospel with people and bring them to church you ask ‘preacher can you help me out here’ and ‘I say sure I’ll help you out’ so I get to enter in with the labor that you are doing. We are all entering in with the labor that Jesus has secured.

So where do you need to pray? You pray to the Lord of the Harvest. Who is the Lord of the Harvest? It is not Jesus. The Lord of the Harvest is the Holy Spirit. You need the Holy Spirit to give you the heart and ability to speak. We need the Holy Spirit to go before us to give people ears to hear and eyes to see.

The last takeaway is to pray to the Lord of the Harvest, look the fields are white unto harvest, go seek the lost for there is none who seek Him, and finally leave. Leave what? There is something in this text that is very interesting. When the woman left the well to go into the city, did you notice what she left? She left the water jar. There are a lot of us who aren't going to tell because we haven't left the water jar and we're dipping into the wrong wells every day. We need to leave the water jar. Drink of the well of Jesus and then springing up within us will be the water of life.

In Jesus' ancestry was a servant named Eliezer who at noon ask a woman for a drink of water and now Jesus is at this well that belonged to the child of that woman, Jacob and now Jesus is asking a woman for something to drink and for her to follow Him. Will you go with Me? She says 'no' and then she ends up 'yes' because God's grace is greater than her sin. Praise His Name. Then Jesus tells her that if she drinks of Him she will never thirst again and the one reason that is true is because the water of life from Jesus alone satisfies the depth of our soul. Another reason why she will never thirst again and why you will never thirst again is there is coming another noon not many days after this one. On that noon this same Jesus will go to a cross and take our sins and you'll hear Him with our cry, 'I thirst.' The reason you and I will never thirst again is because we have a Savior who has taken away our thirst at the cross, so come to Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer. If you need to pray with someone feel free to call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and someone would be happy to pray with you confidentially. Holy Spirit come and speak to our hearts. Those whom You have sought out that are seeking Christ, may they come to Him today and drink freely from the One who takes our thirst away, Jesus. He is the One who saves us from our sins through His glorious atonement at the cross and His persistent, patient, relentless pursuit of us even when we are saying 'no' to Him. Thank You Jesus that You have turned our 'no' into 'yes.' Now, Jesus fill us so that we might rise up to praise our God in worship as our greatest Delight and that we might go into this world and people might hear from our lips and see in our lives Jesus saves from the cisterns of despair to bring us to the well of life. He Himself is that Life for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. {note}

GOD-SENT REVIVAL EVIDENCES

1. God-centered worship
2. Gospel Harvests

THE SYCHARIAN REVIVAL

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

1. Seek the lost
2. Irresistable Grace
3. Always Remember
4. An Amazing Blessing
5. Revival–Conversion–Gospel Harvest
6. Pray to the “Lord of the Harvest”
7. Pray–Look–Go–Leave