People of Promise
The Samaritan Woman
605 words

A Personified Promise

The Samaritan Woman:
The Future Is Now

John 4:26

To be a Samaritan during the time of Christ was to be sandwiched between people (Jews) who didn't like you. Samaritans were supposedly Jews who had departed from the true faith and had intermarried with Gentiles during the turbulent five hundred years prior to Christ. Jews traveling from the south (Judea) to the north (Galilee) would cross the Jordan River and travel on its east bank just to avoid passing through Samaria. With this racial prejudice and ethnic isolation came a sense of despair about the present and a focus on the future. Samaritans longed for the day when the Messiah would come and vindicate their faith and beliefs.

Jesus, unlike most Jews (even his own disciples), did not share common perceptions about the Samaritans. In fact, he used a Samaritan man as the "hero" in one of his most powerful stories ("The Good Samaritan;" Luke 10:25-37). On another occasion a Samaritan man was the only one out of ten who returned to thank Jesus for his healing (Luke 17:16). So it is not surprising that he took his disciples straight through the middle of Samaria as they walked from Judea to Galilee. There, Jesus encountered a woman who was embarrassed about her past, resentful about her present, and had no idea that her future was about to ask her for a drink of water.

Many people today are like the Samaritan woman--even people who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation. Though forgiven of their past, they still wear it like a heavy yoke. Though aware of God's love, they still labor under the self-doubt of hurtful relationships. Therefore, the future is what they live for. Instead of leaving the past and living in the present--really living--they endure it at best. People like these need the final promise Jesus gave to the Samaritan woman. By that promise, a discouraged, wounded woman realized that the future hope of all in Samaria and in Jerusalem was standing at Jacob's well asking her for a drink of water. Jesus gave her other promises, but it was not until she realized that she was talking to a promise personified that her life changed.

Jesus promised her that her past wasn't a problem (John 4:17-18), and offered her living water for her present spiritual needs (4:10). But when the conversation got too personal, she switched the focus to the future: "When [Messiah] comes, he will explain everything to us" (4:25). When Jesus responded, she realized that her future was standing in her presence: "I who speak to you am he," Jesus said (4:26). It was Isaiah who first revealed to Israel that the coming Messiah doesn't just fulfill the covenant--he *is* the covenant (Isa. 42:6; 49:8). He doesn't just make promises about the future, he *is* our

promise. “No matter how many promises God has made [about the future], they are “Yes” [today] in Christ” (2 Cor. 1:20).

The next time you find yourself looking to the future as an escape from the past or present, think of the Samaritan woman:

•Though forgiven, are you still laboring under your past?

•How would the personal presence of Christ change your present circumstances?

•Have you forgotten that he is a risen Savior, present with you moment-by-moment through the Holy Spirit?

By definition, promises usually focus on the future: “I will . . . .” But for Christians, the hope of the future (eternity in the presence of God) is also the reality of the present (living in the presence of Christ). For Christians, as well as for the Samaritan woman, the future is now.