

GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

04



CHRYSOSTOM

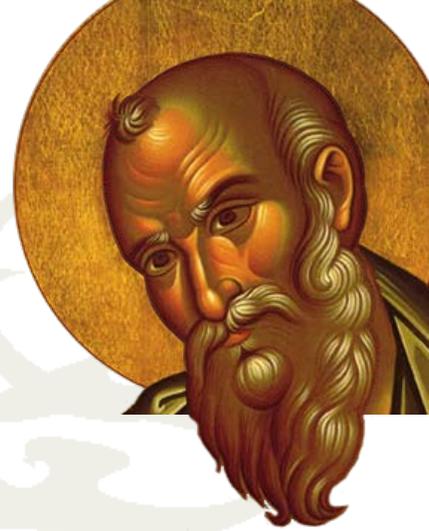
Read St. John Chrysostom's homilies on John chapter 4.



PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of John chapter 4.

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Chapter four begins with Jesus and His disciples going into Samaria (Blessed Theophylact says this was to avoid inspiring envy in the followers of St. John the Forerunner due to the many baptisms performed by the disciples). The fact that Jesus entered Samaria at all—and certainly that he talked with, and asked for water from, a Samaritan woman (4:7)—is significant because Samaritans were enemies of the Jews, having mixed with surrounding nations after being left behind as the other Israelites were exiled to Assyria.

Jesus offered the Samaritan woman “living water” (4:10, 13-14), meaning the grace of the Holy Spirit. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says about this,

Jesus calls the quickening gift of the Spirit ‘living water’ because mere human nature is parched to its very roots, now rendered dry and barren of all virtue by the crimes of the devil. But now human nature runs back to its pristine beauty, and drinking in that which is

life-giving, it is made beautiful with a variety of good things and, budding into a virtuous life, it sends out healthy shoots of love toward God.

After demonstrating His prophetic ability by showing his knowledge of the woman’s marital situation (4:16-18), Jesus proclaimed that He is the Messiah for whom both the Jews and Samaritans wait (4:21-26). He said that the time had come when all true followers of God would “worship in spirit and truth” (4:24). As such teachers as St. Ambrose of Milan point out, worshipping in spirit and truth is Trinitarian worship: “When God is said to be worshiped in truth... it out to be understood that the Son too is worshiped. So, in the same way, the Spirit is also worshiped because God is worshiped in Spirit. Therefore the Father is worshiped both with the Son and with the Spirit, because the Trinity is worshiped.” Blessed Theophylact relates this to us by adding that worshipping in spirit and truth means with the “soul and with purity of mind.”

Jesus went on to point out that His speaking with the Samaritan woman (and the subsequent conversion of many Samaritans) is part of a long work of preparing people for salvation (4:34-38): Ss. John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria teach that this refers to the preparatory work of the prophets (as depicted in the Old Testament) and the evangelizing of the apostles.

After this Jesus went to Cana, where he met a nobleman—meaning a governmental official—from Capernaum (4:46). The nobleman had made the 25-mile trip to ask Jesus to return with him and heal his son (4:47, 49). Jesus,

while lamenting that the people will not believe in Him unless He performs miraculous signs and wonders (4:48), nonetheless tells the nobleman that the child is healed (4:50). The nobleman’s servants, meeting him on the road as he returned home, gave information revealing that the child was healed in the hour that Christ proclaimed the healing—this led to the conversion of the nobleman’s entire household. They realized, in the words of St. Gregory the Great, that “He Who created everything by His will performed the cure by His command alone.”



LIFE TIP

Worshipping in truth also involves, of course, being truthful. St. John of Kronstadt says our lives should be built on truth: “Truth is the foundation of everything that has been created. Let truth be also the foundation of all your works (both inward and outward), and especially the foundation of your prayers. Let all your life, all your works, all your thoughts, and all your desires be founded upon truth.”