

BARRIERS TO EVANGELISM

JESUS OVERCOMES SEXISM, IMMORALITY AND FALSE WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **John 4:3-27**. From Roy H. Enoch (06-05-1994).
- B. We have already studied how Jesus broke down many barriers in teaching the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.
 - 1. There were ethnic and racial barriers.
 - 2. They used different religious authority.
- C. Now we want to look at other barriers to evangelism.
 - 1. She was a woman and men did not speak to women in public.
 - 2. She was immoral and considered an outcast.
 - 3. She was from a different religious background.
- D. Jesus still brought her to an understanding that He was the X who could teach her all things.
- E. She brought the men of her city to Him also.

I. JESUS BROKE DOWN BARRIERS OF SEXISM TO TEACH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN.

- A. The Jews gave more respect to women than most societies, yet they still discriminated against them and demeaned them.
 - 1. One Rabbi is reported to have prayed in worship, "Blessed art thou, O Lord...who hast not made me a woman." (Leon Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, p. 126.)
 - 2. They would not speak to a woman in public, even one's own wife, daughter or sister.
 - 3. Some took this to such an extreme that they were known as the "bruised-and-bleeding Pharisees" because they would their eyes when approaching a woman and often ran into walls.
 - 4. Many thought it was a sin to educate a woman--even in the Law of God. "It is better that the words of the Law be burned than be delivered to a woman!" (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Alive*, p. 50)
 - 5. Women were considered intellectually inferior and spiritually insignificant.
- B. Nothing has done more to elevate women to their rightful place in society than the teaching and influence of Jesus Christ and the apostles.
 - 1. It is unfortunate that the radical feminist movement has not recognized that.
 - 2. It is unfortunate that even some in the church have not recognized that.
 - 3. It is unfortunate because rather than appreciating and respecting the teachings of the scriptures, some would overthrow God's plan and establish for themselves an inferior plan. (Anything different from God's plan is inferior.)
- C. John 4:7.
 - 1. That Jesus would speak with "a woman" is every bit as astonishing to the Jews as that she was "of Samaria."
 - 2. The depth of these prejudices seem to be reflected by the apostles marveling that he talked with "a woman" (Jn. 4:27).
 - 3. The rabbinical attitude toward women was partly defended as caution against situations which might lead to immorality and also to protect one's reputation.
 - 4. But Jesus talked to this woman in an open public place in broad daylight.
 - 5. This is especially significant when we realize that she had a very poor moral reputation.
 - a. As evidence of her immoral character, we have Jesus' own statement that she had had five husbands and was now living with a man she was not married to.
 - b. Many writers have pointed out that she came to this well at an odd time of day--at noon when most would be serving a meal, and to this well some distance from the city when there was a well there, might indicate that she was an outcast by her own people.
 - c. Self-righteous people would dismiss her with contempt.

- d. Many of us might consider her a hopeless case.
- e. But Christ gave time and patience to the spiritual needs of a moral reprobate. Mt. 9:13
- D. What Jesus demonstrated here is what is taught throughout the NT.
 - 1. Both males and females have equal standing with God. Gal. 3:28
 - a. This is not to say that both are given the same roles in serving God in the home and church.
 - b. But having different roles does not indicate inferiority.
 - c. It is heresy to ignore the fact that God gave men and women different roles or positions in His service.
 - d. It is also stupid to think that this means that men are somehow intellectually, morally, or spiritually superior to women.
 - 2. God's law is equally intolerant of wicked conduct in men or women.

II. JESUS ALSO DEALT WITH THE BARRIER OF HER IMMORALITY.

- A. God's laws regarding wicked conduct cannot be ignored.
 - 1. The world may approve of mate swapping and living together without marriage as was the case of this woman, as well as homosexuality, drunkenness, and blasphemy, but God's laws against such do not bend an inch.
 - 2. But there is a great difference between the Lord's attitude toward sin and His attitude toward the sinner.
 - a. Sin must be hated. Psa. 119:104
 - b. But sinners need to be loved.
 - c. Sin cannot be excused or overlooked, but sinners can be forgiven.
- B. The moral complications of this Samaritan's life seem especially relevant in today's world.
 - 1. Today X's teaching regarding the sanctity of marriage is hardly known and generally ignored.
 - 2. We would not be too surprised to find in our society a person who had been married five times and was now "shacking up," but what is our response.
 - a. Is it not cowardly and unchristian to avoid such a person rather than trying to help them deal with their problems?
 - b. Our strong stand against the immorality of unlawful divorce, seems hypocritical when we are not ready to help people untangle the complications of such sin.
 - 3. Paul named several depraved lifestyles, some of which some of the Corinthians were guilty of, and mentioned their forgiveness of these sins (1Cor. 6:9-11).
- C. We must have tender compassion for those deep in sin, but it must be according to divine principles, which are practical.
 - 1. When she asked for "living water," Jesus responded by making her face her sin.
 - a. "Go, call your husband, and come here," was not changing the subject, nor a mistake on Jesus' part, but a tactful, and forceful way to get her to look at her lifestyle.
 - b. His call for her husband was really a call for her to confess her sins.
 - c. Before she could receive the "water of life" she had to accept the necessity of changing her life.
 - 2. Her quick reply, "I have no husband," was simply a screen to hide her shameful life.
 - a. But Jesus took her words and cut straight to the conscience.
 - b. She had had five husbands and was now living to a man she had not married.
 - c. Jesus was compassionate, and willing to ignore the barriers of social convention, but He could not ignore the barrier of sin.
 - d. He knew that there can be no conversion unless there is real conviction and regret for sin.

III. JESUS ALSO OVERCOMES BARRIERS OF FALSE WORSHIP.

- A. When Jesus pointed out her sinful life, she changes the subject to worship.
 - 1. When He showed a knowledge of her marriages and present situation, she was convinced that He was a prophet and asked Him about the controversy between Jews and Samaritans on the proper place of worship.
 - 2. In Part I of this lesson, we looked at the origins of the Samaritan people and their mixed religion.
 - 3. We do not know exactly what the Samaritan religion was at the time of Jesus, but we have his description of it (Jn. 4:22).
 - a. The Samaritans only accepted the books of Moses.
 - b. They claimed that Mount Gerizim, rather than Jerusalem was the proper place of worship. (From Samaritan copy of the Law where they have Mount Gerizim rather than Mount Ebal in Deut. 27:4).
- B. Many today want to take a broadminded attitude toward contradictory forms of worship.
 - 1. Some would say that her religion was cultural.
 - 2. Some advise, "You go to your church and I will go to mine."
 - 3. But Jesus, who had been so patient and tolerant in reference to social conventions about sexual, cultural and ethnic differences, is absolutely uncompromising on what constitutes acceptable worship: Her religion was wrong.
- C. At that time the Law of Moses was still in force.
 - 1. It was still important WHERE they worshipped (Jn. 4:21).
 - 2. At that time the new worship would be like the present in that it would also require that they worship according to God's truth and with the right attitude (Jn. 4:23-24).
 - 3. Although different covenants differed in the acts of worship, all required genuine, sincere dedication to the directions that God gave under that covenant.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Jesus broke down many barriers in personal evangelism, such as ethnic, race, sexism, immorality and false worship.
- B. We must see the needs of souls in spite of barriers of indifference, materialism, ignorance, selfishness, social prejudice, racial bigotry and traditional religions.