



St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church

McKinney (Dallas area) Texas

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The Samaritan woman, Equal to the Apostles, St Photina.

Questions and Answers



QUESTION 1

Who was the Samaritan woman? Tell about her life after meeting Jesus.

ANSWER

The original name of the Samaritan woman is not known, but the church knows her as **Photini** (**Svetlana** in Russian), "**Equal to the Apostles**". She was baptized after the resurrection, and in a continuation of her zealous apostolic ministry begun on the day she met the Lord, preached in many areas, including Carthage and Smyrna in Asia Minor, where she was martyred.

She had 5 daughters and two sons, all of whom became martyrs.

She is commemorated February 28th, and, of course, on the fifth Sunday of Pascha.

"The holy martyr Photina (Svetlana) ... was that Samaritan woman who had the rare fortune to speak with the Lord Christ Himself at Jacob's Well in Sychar (John. 4). Coming to faith in the Lord, she then came to belief in His Gospel, together with her two sons, Victor and Josiah, and five sisters who were called Anatolia, Photia, Photida, Paraskeva and Kyriake. They went to Carthage in Africa. But they were arrested and taken to Rome in the time of the Emperor Nero, and thrown into prison. By the providence of God, Domnina, Nero's daughter, came into contact with St. Photina and was brought by her to the Christian faith. After imprisonment, they all suffered for Christ. Photina, who first encountered

the light of truth by a well, was thrown into a well, where she died and entered into the immortal Kingdom of Christ."

(Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic, The Prolog from Ochrid / Ohridski Prolog)

By the well of Jacob, O holy one, /
thou didst find the Water /
of eternal and blessed life; /
and having partaken /
thereof, O wise Photina, /
thou wentest forth proclaiming Christ, the Anointed One.
(Megalyarion for St. Photina, according to the Byzantine usage.)

QUESTION 2

"Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph." (John 4:5)

Who were the Samaritans? Describe their religion and relationship with the Jews.

ANSWER

The simplest description of the Samaritans is that they were people who followed some of the divinely revealed Jewish religion, and added to it various kinds of false teachings. They were considered to be an unclean people by the Jews, partly because of the history between the Jews and Samaritans, and partly because the Samaritans were not pure in the faith.

"Who were these Samaritans? After Jeroboam divided the kingdom, Samaria became the capital of the Kingdom of Israel which consisted of ten tribes of Israel. Through succeeding generations, the people became increasingly idolatrous and corrupt. In 722 BC God allowed Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, to capture them and take the people away into captivity. He repopulated the land with Assyrians. Because these new inhabitants were ravaged by wild beasts, they assumed that they had offended the god of the land. So a captive priest was sent to teach "how they should fear the Lord." Thus, along with their own gods, they also feared God and were

instructed from the Pentateuch. "

"Generations later, as Judah returned from captivity and began to rebuild the temple, the Samaritans wanted to help. Their help was refused. That further inflamed longfelt animosities. A man named Manasseh, of priestly lineage in Judah, married a Samaritan and was expelled by Nehemiah about 432 BC. He went to Samaria and became high priest of a temple built on Mt. Gerizim and there the Samaritans offered sacrifices of the Law. In their nationalistic zeal they claimed that both their temple and their copy of the Law were greater than those at Jerusalem. On the other hand, Jewish animosity was so entrenched that a traveler went around Samaria on his journey from Judaea to Galilee. "

(<http://www.freedomsring.org/fta/chap12.html> - I DO NOT recommend the theology there, but the description is helpful)

QUESTION 3

"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." (John 4:7)

What time did Jesus meet the Samaritan woman at the well? Is there anything odd about this time? Why do you think she drew water at time?

ANSWER

Jesus met the Samaritan woman, St. Photina, at the well at 12:00 noon, the sixth hour, as the scriptures attest:

"Jesus ... being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour." (John 4:6)

The woman was getting water at this time because of her shame. She wore a scarlet letter on her forehead (since she had married five times, and was now living with a man who was not her husband), and in order to avoid the gossip and cruelty of others, came to the well in the heat of the day, rather in the morning, when others would get their water.

QUESTION 4

What 2 revolutionary things did Jesus do by even talking to the Samaritan woman? The proud Pharisees would have judged Him on at least two accounts.

ANSWER

Jews normally have no dealings with Samaritans, as the woman herself attested.

It was also unusual for a man to speak with a woman in public at that time, and especially a woman who was a "sinner", and especially one who was a scandal in her own society.

QUESTION 5

Water plays a big role in the story of the Samaritan woman. Cite at least 5 other places where water is used to describe or point to our salvation.

In this case, Christ said to her:

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: {14} But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14)

What is the meaning of "water" in this context?

ANSWER

Water is an important part of the story in:

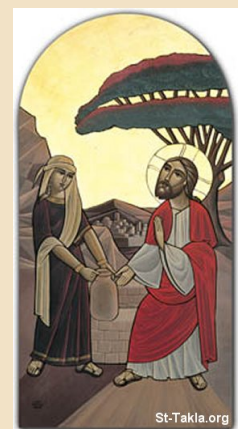
1. The crossing of the Red sea (of course)
2. The teaching of Christ to Nicodemus, when he came to Him by night
3. The healing of the paralytic at the sheep's pool
4. The Great Flood
5. The changing of water into wine.

When Jesus spoke of giving water to the women at the well, He was telling her about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"SCRIPTURE calls the grace of the Spirit sometimes "Fire," sometimes "Water," showing that these names are not descriptive of its essence, but of its operation; for the Spirit, being Invisible and Simple, cannot be made up of different substances. Now the one John declares, speaking thus, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire" (Matthew 3:11): the other, Christ, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) "But this," saith John, "spake He of the Spirit, which they should receive." So also conversing with the woman, He calleth the Spirit water; for, "Whosoever shall drink of the water which I shall give him, shall never thirst."" St John Chrysostom, HOMILY 32, JOHN 4:13,14

QUESTION 6

There was a significant prophesy concerning salvation which Jesus made when He spoke to the Samaritan woman. What was it? Approximate when it was understood by the entire church to be fulfilled (or being fulfilled)?



ANSWER

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. {22} Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. {23} But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. {24} God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:21-24)

These words constitute in part a prophecy. All peoples would come to know Christ, the One who spoke it, including the as yet unevangelized Gentiles. The church understood fully concerning the salvation of the Gentiles after the Holy Apostles Peter's vision, and the ministry of St. Paul.

Think not, He saith, that this is a prophecy of such a kind as shall be accomplished after a long time, the fulfillment is already at hand and at your very doors, "when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." In saying "true," He excludeth Jews as well as Samaritans; for although the Jews be better than the Samaritans, yet are they far inferior to those that shall come, as inferior as is the type to the reality. But He speaketh of the Church, that she is the "true" worship, and such as is meet for God." St John Chrysostom, HOMILY 32, JOHN 4:13, 14

QUESTION 7

The conversation between Christ and the Samaritan woman mystically is actually another conversation between what 2 parties?

ANSWER

The conversation between Christ and the Samaritan woman is mystically that of Christ and the soul. We know this because the fathers have written about this subject, and the mind of the church has believed it. It is very important to read the scriptures according to the mind of the church, in the contest of the services especially, and the writings of the fathers, so that important mystical meanings may be understood, and to insure that we do not make up our own false interpretations.

QUESTION 8

Tell the story of the Samaritan woman. Don't look at the bible when you do it. I won't either. Where is it found?

ANSWER

The story of the Samaritan woman, St. Photina, is easy to remember, not only because it is so powerful and beautiful, but also because it is elegantly recounted many times in the holy services. Praying in the services teaches and reinforces divine truths like no other occupation.

The story is found only in St John's gospel. There are many things in the Gospel of John that are not in the other "synoptic" gospels, because St John wrote Gospel long after the first three were written.

Jesus and His disciples were passing through Samaria, when He arrived at Jacob's well, having sent His disciples into town to get food. It was about the sixth hour (noon). He met there a woman who was there to draw water, at this peculiar hour, when the sun is so intense. He asked her for water, and this began a subtle and nuanced conversation between them.

This conversation is a type of the conversation between God and the soul, or the conversion of the soul from earthly, carnal and sinful ways of thinking to heavenly things.

At length, He asked her to call her husband, to which the sinful woman replied I have no husband. Then Jesus showed His omniscience by uncovering her sinful way of life, and her 5 previous husbands, and finished the opening of this woman's heart to truth.

Just after the apostles arrived from town, and marveled that He was speaking so freely with this newly converted Samaritan woman, she left her waterpot, (which showed her zeal and acceptance of Christ's words, and the leaving off of earthly things which all who imbibe DEEPLY of the living water will naturally do), and ran to tell her townspeople of the Christ.

While she was gone, Christ instructed His disciples about doing the will of God. When the townspeople arrived, upon investigating, begged Him to stay a while and teach them, which He did.

"The Well-spring of the principle of life, Jesus, our Savior, came to the well of the Patriarch Jacob, and sought water from a Samaritan woman that He might drink. And when she addressed Him and said that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the wise Creator diverted her by the sweetness of His words rather to seek of Him the everlasting water, which, when she received it, she proclaimed to all, saying: Come and see the Knower of things hidden, God Who is come in the flesh to save man." . Doxasticon (Glory of the Stichera) of Vespers of Friday of the Samaritan Woman

QUESTION 9

Compare and contrast the reaction of the Samaritan woman and townspeople and the townspeople in the region of the Gadarenes when Jesus visited them.

ANSWER

The Samaritan women reacted with great humility when her sinful life was uncovered, and with her spiritual eyes saw the truth behind Jesus' words, that is, that He is the Messiah. She cared nothing for carnal things once she was convinced that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Because she had a good heart, full of love for her people, she hastened to do the work of an apostle, and preached to her town the good news. The Samaritans received the news with joy and begged Jesus to stay a while. Their hearts were open to the truth, and they were willing to be taught.

The black hearted people of the Gadarenes also felt the power of the God-man when one from among their midst was healed of his demons, but reacted with fear and disgust. They wanted Jesus to leave their coasts, perhaps partially because they did not want their sinful commerce to be discovered by the Jewish authorities (they traded in pigs, an unclean animal according to Jewish law), and certainly because their conscience was pricked, and they did not want to repent and learn.

The reaction of the Gadarene townspeople ranks as one of the greatest tragedies chronicled in all of history. God walked among them, and healed one of their number. Surely they could of believed that the meek God-man would heal them of their infirmities too, just as the Samaritan woman, one with a scarlet letter on her forehead, believed. They did not only hear about the power of God, but they saw it with their own eyes. Instead of becoming evangelists for the good news, they became like those who said later "his blood be on us and our children", and like dogs, returned to their own vomit.

QUESTION 10

The Sunday of the Samaritan woman is more complicated liturgically because of the multiple commemorations this day. Name them. List how many stichera for each commemoration are sung at 'Lord I have cried', and explain why.

ANSWER

The 3 commemorations on the Sunday of the Samaritan woman are:

1. The resurrection (always commemorated on Sunday, except on Great Feasts of the Lord)
2. Mid Pentecost (which was celebrated the preceding Wednesday. The church is still in the "after" feast period)
3. The Samaritan woman

When there are two other commemorations on a Sunday, it is almost always the case that there are four stichera sung from the Sunday Octoechos for the resurrection in the tone of the week, and three each for the other two people or events commemorated at Lord I have cried. There are always 10 stichera at Lord I have cried for vespers on Saturday night.

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