

The Seven (or Eight!?) Women in the Gospel of John



There are seven or eight women in John's Gospel. The uncertainty (if it exists!) arises in two main ways. The first concerns how to understand John 19:25: does John describe three women at the cross or four? The second concerns the possible identity of Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene, and I hope to discuss this below. (A possible additional area of uncertainty concerns the genuineness of the Woman taken in Adultery pericope in John 7:53-8:11, but of course, as adherents to the Received Text, (and for many other reasons too!) we treat these verses as genuine!)

The women are:

- 1) The Mother of Jesus (John 2:1, 19:25 etc.)
- 2) The Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42)
- 3) The woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11)
- 4) Mary (of Bethany) (John 10:40-12:11)
- 5) Martha (John 10:40-12:11)
- 6) The sister of Jesus' mother (John 19:25)
- 7) Mary (the wife) of Clopas (John 19:25)
- 8) Mary Magdalene (John 19:25, 20:1-18)

Are 6) and 7) the same? (I suggest they are different)

Are 4) and 8) the same? (I suggest they may be the same)

Plan

In these notes I wish to look at just two passages, and for each passage to briefly discuss two issues.

- 1) Mary and Martha and the raising of Lazarus—John 10:40-12:11

- i) How John values Mary and Martha equally.

ii) Are Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene one and the same?

2) Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman—John 4: 1-42

- i) Was the Samaritan woman a sinful woman?
- ii) Was the Samaritan woman really “unschooled, without influence, despised, capable only of folk religion . . .” (D. A. Carson’s estimate!!)?

Both these passages occur following a “tactical withdrawal” by Jesus from Judea/Jerusalem—in the first case to *another* Bethany (Bethany “beyond the Jordan” - John 10:40, c.f. John 1:28) and in the second case, to Galilee via Samaria.

1) Mary and Martha and the Raising of Lazarus

1i) How John Values Mary and Martha Equally

The wording in John chs. 11 and 12, where we read about the dying and raising of Lazarus, can sometimes seem a little “odd” – for example, in v. 5, John refers to Martha by name, but Mary is “her (Martha’s) sister”, and in v.28, it’s exactly the other way around - Mary, not Martha, is mentioned by name. In v. 39, Martha is referred to as “the sister of him that was dead” – surely redundant information at this stage of the narrative - unless John has a special purpose in speaking in this way. No doubt John is avoiding too much repetition of names, but I also think that John has a further reason for writing the way he does, and that, even in such “details” as the number of times and the order in which names are mentioned, John has a “theological” purpose. In this section, I wish to begin to explore this topic by looking at the occurrences of Mary and Martha’s names. We will also find further evidence to support the identification of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany (please see next section).

In these chapters, Chs. 11 and 12, there is a careful and equal balancing of the mentioning of both Mary and Martha’s names as I shall demonstrate. (Interestingly, in his Gospel, John studiously avoids calling Mary the mother of Jesus by name: she is always “woman” or “His mother” etc.)

Mary and Martha are each mentioned nine times in the Lazarus account. (John really likes odd, rather than even, numbers!)

If Martha is denoted by “M” and Mary by “m” then the sequence of occurrences of their names is as follows:

m M m M M m M m M
M m M m m M m M m

- a total of 18 letters in all, Mary and Martha occurring nine times each, and I have divided the total pattern up into two “inverse” sequences of 9 letters each.

However, there is a further “sub-pattern” - mMmM and its inverse MmMm, as shown below:

mMmM M mMmM (5M’s, 4 m’s)
MmMm m MmMm (5m’s, 4M’s)

So, in the first half, m starts off the sequence, but this is “balanced” by the extra M in the middle, and the opposite happens in the second half.

From this pattern we can see that John is determined that neither Mary nor Martha shall have preference. We can see that John is determined to uphold fully Mary’s reputation, and to treat her exactly equally to Martha.

There is a lesson here for us too. We must not show partiality in our treatment of our fellow Christians. We must value all equally, and everyone more highly than ourselves (Phil. 2:3)

John’s determination to value Mary and Martha equally goes even further than this! Lazarus’ name is mentioned eleven times. (Knowing a little of John’s methods, we are not surprised to learn that the middle occurrence is the “Lazarus” of “Lazarus, come forth!”) The pattern of occurrences is quite complicated, and is incorporated in the diagram below:

LmMmLMLLLMmMmMMmMmmMLmLMLmLLLL

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From the diagram we can see that Lazarus’ name occurs between those of the two sisters 4 times and next to each sister on her own exactly twice each, and in a symmetrical order in every case (e.g. Lm occurs once and mL occurs once).

Furthermore, Mary’s wonderful action in anointing Jesus’ feet is balanced by Martha’s magnificent confession of faith in v. 27. What care! What honour!

Finally, (looking ahead to the next section) we note the curious fact that Martha, the “arch organiser” doesn’t seem to be organising the mourning for Lazarus! She is free to go to Jesus, and “impetuous, impulsive” Mary stays “in the house” (John 11:20) until Jesus specifically calls for her.

This all makes perfect sense if Martha lives with her husband Simon the Pharisee in “the big house” and Mary and Lazarus live in “the small house”. The mourning takes place, appropriately, in Mary and Lazarus’ house, and Mary is in charge. Finally there is a touch of humour amidst the seriousness of John’s account! Martha calls Mary “*secretly*” and tells her that “the Master is come and calleth for thee” (v.28). Martha can be discrete and subtle, but she (and Jesus!) must surely have known that her attempts at propriety would be doomed on this occasion! In her haste to be with Jesus, Mary rushes out of the house in full view of everybody – followed by all the other mourners - thus setting the scene for the public raising of Lazarus with its momentous consequences.

iii) Are Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene One and the Same?

Rather than trying to “prove” this, I just wish to show what the Gospels “look like” if we make this connection. Here are the passages involving Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene with brief comments:

An initial observation is that Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene never appear together in the Gospels. Also, Mary of Bethany is not actually *called* Mary of Beth-

any—she is just referred to as Mary in John 11:1 when he tells us that Bethany was “the village of Mary and her sister Martha”.

Let us look at the relevant passages in the Gospels:

Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus



The Ointment of the Magdalene, James Tissot, 1886-94

In Matthew 26:6-13, shortly before His Passion, Jesus was reclining at table in the house of Simon the leper when an unnamed woman anointed Jesus' head with expensive ointment (Mark 14:3-9 similarly). In John 12:1-8 we have the equivalent account but with several pieces of additional information. (John 12:1 is often mistranslated: some translations say that “Jesus came to Bethany, the *home* of Lazarus . . .”. This perhaps gives the impression that the subsequent dinner was held in Lazarus' home. However, the passage actually says, “Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was . . .”. This leaves open the possibility that the dinner was held in Bethany, but not necessarily in Lazarus' house.)

The additional pieces of information provided by John include the facts that Martha served, and that the previously unnamed woman was actually her sister Mary. Also, we are told that Mary anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair.

Well, why was Martha serving in the house of Simon the leper? The most reasonable explanation is that Martha was actually married to Simon, and that the (important, big) celebration for Lazarus was being held at the “big” house in Bethany rather than in the “small” house in Bethany, that of Mary and Lazarus. Do we know that Lazarus lived in a small house and Simon in a big house? Well, apart from the above inference, we have, in Luke's Gospel, (Luke 16:19-31) the parable of Dives and Lazarus! Is Simon the “prototype” for Dives?! This identification would add irony, and perhaps some amusement, to Jesus' otherwise serious parable. (Perhaps also this throws additional light on v. 31?) We will come back to this presently.

We may reasonably ask, why are Matthew and Mark unable, or unwilling, to name the woman, and it is only John, writing later, who names her as Mary (of Bethany)? A possible reason is that Mary of Bethany became a well-known personality in the early Christian community, and, if the woman who anointed Jesus was known to have been a sinful woman at some earlier time, neither Matthew nor Mark would wish to damage Mary of Bethany's reputation. There are other possibilities also however, but if this is the reason, there is a lesson for us in how we should be careful with the honour and reputation of our fellow Christians. We can speculate further that John, writing later, was writing when perhaps Mary of Bethany had died, and the full truth could be told—at least in part to enable Jesus' words in Matt. 26:13 about what Mary had done to be fully realised.

Finally, we note that Luke omits, at the corresponding point in his gospel the account of the anointing recorded for us by Matthew, Mark and John, although Luke has a similar account earlier in his gospel (please see below), and we may ask whether this might be the *same* account, but “out of chronological sequence”?

Mary Magdalene at Jesus' Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection



Noli Me Tangere: The Magdalene and the Resurrected Jesus. Fra Angelico. 1440s.

At Jesus' Crucifixion: Matt. 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49 (Mary Magdalene not specifically named in Luke), John 19:25-27

At Jesus' burial: Matt. 27:61, Mark 15:47, Luke 23:55-56. (Again, Mary Magdalene not specifically named in Luke)

At Jesus' resurrection: Matt, 28:1-11, Mark 16:1-11, Luke 24:1-11, John 20:1-18

Other Passages in Luke's Gospel

Luke 7:36-50

In Luke 7:36-50 we are told of an unnamed woman whose tears wet Jesus' feet and who wipes them with her hair, who kisses His feet and anoints them with ointment. This takes place whilst Jesus is dining at the house of Simon the Pharisee. Let us suppose that this is the same event as the one recorded in Bethany. Thus Simon the Pharisee in this account would be the same as Simon the Leper (married to Martha) in the accounts in Matthew Ch. 26 and Mark Ch. 14. Thus, the unnamed woman in Luke Ch. 7 on this hypothesis would actually be Mary of Bethany—Simon's sister-in-law—and this would answer the intriguing question as to how Simon the Pharisee knew that the woman "is a sinner" (Luke 7:37, 39).

Also, although poorer people were often allowed to be present at feasts, even though they hadn't been invited, it would perhaps be unusual for a "known" sinful woman to be so bold as to present herself at a feast held by a Pharisee. However, if the sinful woman was actually the Pharisee's sister-in-law, he could hardly keep her out!

Immediately after this account in Luke Ch. 7, Luke goes on to tell us about Mary Magdalene "from whom seven demons had gone out". Is Luke giving us a "coded message" here by means of this juxtaposition. If so, is he doing this to preserve Mary Magdalene's reputation in the Christian community, just as Matthew and Mark had done earlier in relation to Mary of Bethany, whilst at the same time perhaps "dropping a hint" to those already "in the know"?

A Possible Objection to the Above Identification

One objection to the identification of this account in Luke Ch. 7 with that of Matthew Ch. 26 and Mark Ch. 14 is that Luke's account appears to occur earlier in Jesus' ministry. Indeed, in almost all translations of Luke 8:1 (which comes immediately after the account of the anointing) we read this (or something equivalent):

"Soon afterward, He (Jesus) went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God".

Now, if "soon afterward" is an accurate translation, and if Luke is also intending to describe the *same* event as the one that took place at Bethany, then he would appear, (in his zeal to protect Mary of Bethany's reputation?) to give a "time reference" to the event that isn't actually true.

But is this an accurate translation?

Here is the Greek text:

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς, καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευε κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην . .
And it was in the kathexes and (that) He was travelling through city and village . .
(in order)

A translation that gives a different sense is that of Godbey:

“And it came to pass consecutively, that He was going through city and village, proclaiming and preaching the gospel of God, and the twelve along with Him”. (Godbey New Testament translation).

According to BDAG (a leading NT lexicon) *kathexes* refers to putting something in an orderly sequence in terms of time, space or logic.

Here, on the proposed understanding of the expression “in (the) *kathexes*”, Luke is referring to the orderly way in which Jesus went through cities and villages proclaiming the gospel, rather than referring to this proclamation as occurring chronologically after the woman anointed Jesus. (c.f. Acts 18:23 where *kathexes* refers to Paul’s orderly progression through the Galatian/Phrygian region strengthening all the disciples.) *Kathexes* can also refer to a chronological progression in relation to what has preceded it, but I don’t think that it is necessary to require this meaning here in Luke 8:1. Luke 8:1 starts the so-called “tour section” of Luke’s Gospel which goes from 8:1—9:50, and so our proposed meaning would work quite well here.

The Gospel writers often present some of the events in Jesus’ life in an order that is not strictly chronological, and such variant ordering often seems to have an intentional thematic and/or theological structure. Here in Luke (Luke 7:29-35, noting especially v. 34) attention has just been drawn to the contrasting responses to the gospel – starting with John the Baptist and continuing with Jesus Himself—between the “Pharisees and the lawyers” on the one hand and “all the people and the tax collectors and sinners” on the other. The account of Simon the Pharisee and the woman “who was a sinner” fits here thematically and paradigmatically as an illustration of this contrast.

Further we note that it is the Lord’s feet that are anointed here (in contrast to His head in Matthew and Mark. However, John brings these contrasting accounts into conformity by telling us that Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus’ feet, and John is describing the same event as Matthew and Mark!

Luke 8:2

Immediately after this, in Luke 8:2-3, we read of many women who had been healed and who accompanied Jesus. Four are named, and the first of these is “Mary called Magdalene” (Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή) from whom seven demons had gone out. (Also Mark 16:9) Is Luke here cryptically indicating the identity of the woman in Luke 7:36-50? Why was this (albeit interesting!) information included at this point in Luke’s narrative? (Luke 8:1-3 is “unique” to Luke—it is not found in the other Gospels.). Also, is there perhaps something significant in Luke’s naming of Mary—she is “Mary, the one called the Magdalene”. Is this addition of “(the) Magdalene” to Mary’s name here perhaps a way of distinguishing her from the other Marys in connection with Jesus and the early Christian community? After all, this is the only reference to

“Magdalene” in connection with Mary prior to the crucifixion. Is it possible that at the earlier stage in Jesus’ ministry described in Luke 8:1-3 (and following) that she was simply “Mary”, but Luke is using this way of speaking to clarify that this Mary is the later well-known Mary Magdalene? Mary’s deliverance from seven demons is perhaps a detail that Luke, writing later than Matthew and Mark, felt able to provide but which might have been inappropriate for the earlier writers to give.

Luke 10:38-42—Mary and Martha

This section is introduced by the rather indefinite clause, “Now as they went on their way”. Here we are told that Jesus entered a village (which we know from John’s Gospel to have been Bethany), and Martha welcomed them into *her* house. Why not *their* house (or Lazarus’ house)? I suggest that this could be because Martha was married to Simon, and it really was Martha and Simon’s (big) house into which Martha welcomed Jesus. This famous little pericope is given a slightly different slant if we realise that Mary was not simply being “domestically irresponsible” in her desire to hear Jesus and sit at His feet, but actually, it wasn’t her house or her responsibility, but she nevertheless, had a “right” to be there! Mary’s connection to the head and feet of Jesus is a significant theme in the Gospels (e.g. John 20:12) so the reference to her sitting at Jesus’ feet here is appropriate.

I hope I have shown that Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene may be “one and the same”, and that this identification throws light on some interesting passages in the Gospels. If this Mary really was the “sinner” of Luke 7:36-50, and the same person as in the Bethany anointing, we can see a clear rationale for preserving some anonymity for that Mary in the early Christian community (only clarified when John writes his later Gospel, and perhaps Mary has died) Again there is a lesson for us today in how we should treat our fellow Christians— especially holding our Christian sisters in the highest honour. It is perhaps noteworthy that the failures of the Disciples are known right from the start—no attempt is made to hide them in the Gospels—but Christian women are everywhere spoken of with circumspection.

Jesus’ Encounter with the Samaritan Woman

Introductory Comments

This narrative is full of marital imagery. This takes two main forms. The language of wells, fountains (“fountain” is an alternative description for Jacob’s well in John Ch. 10) and water is often marital—there are many OT references for this. The second is the connection between husbands and worship—the root idea here being the marriage between Yahweh and Israel in the OT, and Christ and the Church in the NT.

2i) Was the Woman of Samaria a Sinful Woman?

This is a very interesting, but as far as I can see, and contrary to the view of most commentators, also a very difficult question. Perhaps John has been deliberately ambiguous in this aspect of his representation of the woman of Samaria. John’s Gospel includes the woman of Samaria and the woman of Jerusalem taken in adultery. This

surely relates to the “sisters” Samaria and Jerusalem in Ezekiel Ch. 16, and also, under the names Oholah and Oholibah, in Ezekiel Ch. 23. In Ezekiel Ch. 16, it is stated that Jerusalem’s abominations have made her sisters appear righteous (16:51-52). It is perhaps fitting then that there is a deep (moral) ambiguity in John’s description of the Samaritan woman. It is also possible that, whilst the *pattern* of the woman’s history parallels Samaria’s history, she herself was not immoral i.e. she is a “living parable” rather than a “living exemplar”!

Some points to note:

1) Jesus never accuses the Samaritan woman of sin, (nor does he challenge her claim, as a Samaritan, to have Jacob as her “father”). To have had five husbands is certainly unusual, but given that the Samaritans held to the Pentateuch, and it was men, not women who could initiate divorce under the Law, I don’t think one can *assume* immorality on the part of the woman. Early deaths and levirate marriages could account for some of her marriages, and she could simply have been a “victim of circumstances”.

2) Much ill-informed speculation in commentaries is presented as fact. For example, the woman’s coming to Jacob’s well at mid-day: surely she is a social outcast because of her sin, and comes alone at an unusual time because she has been shunned by the other women?! Well, no, her spiritual forebear Rachel also came to a well associated with Jacob at around mid-day (Gen. 29:7)!!

3) Far from being in a sinful relationship, the Samaritan woman was demonstrating that she was looking for a husband, and she was doing it in a typologically appropriate way! (The future wives of Moses, Isaac and Jacob were all found at wells!)

4) When Jesus says, “He whom you now have is not a husband of you”, we should certainly not take this automatically to mean an immoral relationship! Rather, in the 1st Century Mediterranean world, as indeed throughout history (up until our strange modern Western culture!), women, married or unmarried, “belonged” to men—their husbands or their fathers or a leading “patriarch” or patron who would take on the responsibility for them. Society was, and for many still is, patriarchal. Tamar went back to live with her father (Gen 38:11) and when Boaz saw Ruth, he asked the foreman, “To whom does this young woman *belong*?” (Ruth 2:6). Can I suggest that the Samaritan woman was living in a tight-knit local community where open immorality would not be tolerated: whatever might go on in private, the outward “belonging” would have to be respectable and “above-board”. Certainly the inhabitants of the city treated the woman with great respect—dropping everything at her word, (John 4:28-29) and indeed believing in Jesus because of her word (John 4:39). Also, the fact that she was able to go alone to the well in broad daylight suggests that her patron, like Laban the father of Rachel, was an important local dignitary who could not be crossed lightly.

5) One cannot rule out the possibility that the Samaritan woman may have been immoral at some point in her life. But at any rate, her life history appears to have been well-known to her fellow citizens (4:29-30) and of a character so unusual that supernatural knowledge of it constituted *prima facie* evidence for Jesus’ claim to be the Christ.

5) Why was this woman held in such apparent high regard (or if not in high regard exactly, nevertheless as a woman of great significance) by her fellow citizens? Is it possible, that for her fellow citizens, she somehow represented them? Was she an emblem or even a sort of talisman for the people as a whole? (Please see 6 below). Clearly, in a symbolic sense in John's account and for John's readers and hearers she represents Samaria, and given that the woman taken in adultery in John 8:1-11 represents Jerusalem, we should perhaps recognise the unusual aspect of the woman having had five husbands in this light. Perhaps in his treatment of these two linked narratives, John is drawing on Ezekiel Ch. 16 where Jerusalem makes Samaria (and Sodom!) appear righteous (Ezek. 16:51), and in which (New Covenant!) restoration is eventually promised (16:59-62)? Is John presenting the Samaritan woman in a symbolically appropriate way that reflects both Ezek.16:51 and verse 61? (Ctt. Ezek 23:11, and Ezek Ch. 23 generally, which represent Samaria and Jerusalem in less hopeful, but nevertheless historically accurate, terms).

6) The personal history of the woman of Samaria does indeed correspond to the history of the northern kingdom of Israel! Following the fall of Samaria in 722 BC and the exile of the northern tribes, inhabitants from five cities were "imported" to Samaria as recounted in 2 Kings 17. They brought their gods (and goddesses?) with them, and worshipped these along with worshipping Yahweh. Over the course of time, these religions died out, but the Samaritans continued to worship God, although the worship was centred on Mt. Gerizim, rather than at the "correct" Old Covenant worship location of Jerusalem. The Samaritan woman's unusual personal history seems to correspond closely to this national history. There is a connection between these gods ("Baals" or lords) and husbands: such gods were seen as "husbands" of their respective (feminine) cities, and this is, I suggest, part of the "sub-text" in the transition from "husbands" to "worship" in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman. (This biblical idea also finds expression in Jerusalem seen as the bride or wife of Yahweh (E.g. Ezek. Ch. 16)). An attempted chiasmic analysis of this conversation is given and discussed in Section 2ii) below:

7) Hosea

An interesting possibility, but one which the commentaries do not mention, is that the Samaritan woman's history might not only parallel the history of Samaria/Israel/the Northern Kingdom directly, but that she might also parallel Gomer, the wife of Hosea, who in the course of the book of Hosea, enacts the wayward history, culminating in eventual redemption, of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Hosea's relationship with Gomer parallels Yahweh's relationship with Israel—and has a New Covenant fulfillment in Christ and the Church (Rom. 9:26, 1 Pet. 2:10). This is discussed briefly below. (It is interesting that in this connection, Jesus accepts the Samaritan woman's claim that the Samaritans, (even though a "hybrid" nation), have Jacob as their father: Ephraim, the predominant Northern tribe, is often synonymous with the Northern Kingdom in Hosea, and Ephraim was the "leading" son of Joseph, the firstborn son of Rachel who met Jacob at a well!)

[The interpretation of Hosea is a big topic! There is discussion as to whether the woman who appears in Hos. 3:1 is Gomer herself or a second woman. We will adopt the

view that the woman is Gomer herself, whilst noting that Hosea's reticence to name her may point to some change in her "symbolic referent" - discussed further below. In some commentaries, "Israel" is taken to be the whole nation, not just the Northern Kingdom, but it seems to me that Hosea draws a fairly clear distinction between Israel/ and Judah—e.g. by referring to Israel as Ephraim. We should also note that in Rom. 9:24-26, the restoration of Israel/Gomer is interpreted as the inclusion of the Gentiles in the New Covenant. (C.f. 1 Peter 2:10) This sort of paves the way for seeing the New Covenant redemption of the "hybrid" Samaritans, exemplified by the Samaritan woman, as included in Hosea's prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel and as enacted by Gomer.]

Some connections (not very well explained—sorry!) between the Samaritan woman and Gomer/Israel are suggested below (points i) to iii) are "preliminary"):

i) Samaria/Israel (the Northern Kingdom) was initially part of the covenant nation and

ii) Samaria/Israel was idolatrous throughout its history prior to its exile. Hosea marries Gomer who was a "wife of whoredom" and who was unfaithful. (Gomer corresponds to Israel starting at this point.)

iii) Samaria/Israel was exiled. Gomer appears either to have been sent away in a "quasi divorce" or to have left on her own accord. The commentaries provide details about this.

iv) The imported inhabitants to Samaria had five pagan gods. Correspondingly, Gomer continued her immorality. The Samaritan woman had five previous husbands or "lords". (The Samaritan woman's "history" seems to start at this point, rather than going all the way back to an initial marriage, as was the case with Gomer and Israel).

v) A further aspect to Israel's restoration is that Israel was, in part, returned from exile at the same time as Judah returned from exile (1 Chr. 9:3; Ezra 8:35). Gomer was bought back by Hosea. The Samaritan woman, and we also, are bought with a great price—Christ's redemption on the cross, which was an "exile and return" on our behalf.

vi) The pagan gods were gradually abandoned by Israel/Samaria, but Samaria continued in a sort of "distant" relationship with Yahweh for "many days". God's plan was to "starve" Israel of good things (Hos. 2:7-9) so that Israel would return. Gomer had to be bought with the very things that God had originally given to Israel (silver and grain) and which were subsequently withheld (Hos. 2:9, 13). Gomer also continued for "many days" protected by Hosea. (Hos. Ch. 3), but not in a formal marriage relationship. The Samaritan woman had for some time a protector who was not her husband. This period appears to have awakened a desire in Israel/Gomer/the Samaritan woman so that she would eventually respond positively to Yahweh/Hosea/Christ.

vii) In Hosea, God allures Israel, Israel responds (I will go and return to my first husband . . .) and the relationship is promised to be fully restored, with acknowledgement of David the king. Eventually, Gomer would be restored. The Samaritan woman too is seeking a husband, finds Jesus, and she, and the Samaritans she represents, are re-

stored, in a sense to their first husband (Yahweh) but in New Covenant terms (i.e. to Christ who represents the Father). Acts Ch. 8 continues the positive response of the Samaritans to the Gospel.

It is generally recognised that there was, at least in part, a more proximate restoration of Israel/Samaria during the reign of Hezekiah of Judah (2 Chr. 30:1)

viii) In both Hosea and John, the renewal/salvation is expressed in “agricultural” terms—“they shall flourish like the grain” (Hos 14:7); Jezreel means “God sows” (Hos. 2:22-23) and John speaks of the Samaritans as “fields white ready to harvest”.

ix) Samaria—the city or the region—is specifically mentioned six times in the prophecy of Hosea. Perhaps then we could expect a New Testament fulfillment in the “five plus one” aspect of the Samaritan woman!?

A helpful commentary on Hosea is *The Book of Hosea* by J. Andrew Dearman in the NICOT commentary series. A really helpful article on the history of the Samaritans which includes an account of the abandoning of the pagan gods and the restoration of a form of worship of Yahweh is:

www.biblicalelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Brindle-Samaritans-GTJ.pdf

8) The John-Revelation Project (Warren Gage)

There are some interesting chiastic links between John’s Gospel and Revelation which have been investigated particularly by Warren Gage. The Samaritan Woman narrative thus has some links to the latter part of Revelation. These are given below (and taken from Warren Gage’s and R. Fowler White’s writings):

The Samaritan Woman

4:7 The Samaritan woman who has come to draw water says “I have no husband” (4:17)

4:18 Jesus describes the Samaritan woman’s old life in the city: “you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband”
“(Jesus) remained there two days” (4:40)

4:21 “neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem”

4:27 “His disciples . . . marveled that he spoke with a woman”

The Samaritan Woman

4:29-30 The Samaritan woman calls for the people to
“Come . . . (and) they came out of the city”

4:10, 28-29 “I would have given you living water . . .
So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men, “Come . . .”

The Whore of Babylon

17:1 The Babylonian harlot, who sits upon “the waters,” says, “I am not a widow” (18:7)

17:10 The angel describes the life of the Babylonian harlot in the city: “five (kings) have fallen, and one is, the other has not yet come; when he (the seventh) comes, he shall remain a little while”

16:20 “and the mountains were not found”

17:6 John the disciple writes, “And when I saw the woman . . . I marveled”

The Bride of Christ

18:4 A voice from heaven calls: “Come out of her (the city of the harlot), My people”

22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come . . .”
And let the one who thirsts come . . . let the one who will take the water of life without cost.”

Gospel of John and Revelation—Some Possible Links

2ii) Was the Samaritan woman really “unschooled, without influence, despised, capable only of folk religion . . .”?

Jesus’ conversations with women in the gospels are some of the liveliest narratives in Scripture! There is frequently a lightness, wit and humour not always present in His conversation with men which often have a more confrontational quality. A classic example is His punning, verbal sparring with the Syro-phoenecian woman (e.g. Mark 7:24-30) In His conversation with the Samaritan woman, it seems to me that the commentators who insist that the woman is ignorant and has to be gently led by the Lord to an appreciation of spiritual things have badly mis-read the text! For example, it is the woman’s “forcing the issue” that puts Jesus in a position where He is not only obliged to reveal truths about New Covenant worship, but as a result of Her direct questioning and indirect probing, He is obliged—yes obliged—to acknowledge Himself to be the Christ (and, also her spiritual husband!) (The earlier discussion about water and living water has also, in my view, been badly misrepresented. Why are commentators so sure that the woman does not appreciate the difference between the two? I suggest she is aware of this as well as of the “marital overtones” in this part of her conversation with Jesus as well: why else would she come alone to Jacob’s well at mid-day?) (Please see also e.g. Proverbs 5:15-18, Song of Solomon 4:12,15, Jer. 2:13)

On the next page is an attempted chiasmic analysis of the second half of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman.

Notes:

- 1) The diagram shows the second half of Jesus’ discussion with the Samaritan woman. The first half of the discussion concerned the relationship between water and “living water” representing marriage, the Holy Spirit, eternal life and other spiritual realities.
- 2) The second half of the discussion concerns the relationship between husbands and worship. A contrast is drawn between “in (*en*) this mountain” and “in (*en*) Jerusalem on the one hand, and “in (*en*) spirit and in (*en*) truth on the other.
- 3) “Salvation is of the Jews” (section E) perhaps corresponds with “ . . . seeking David their king” in Hos. 3:5. Both of these are fulfilled in Christ—the Lion of the tribe of Judah and Son of David.
- 4) Reading “chiasmically” (or “helically” as it is sometimes called), Section A corresponds to A’, and so Jesus is the Samaritan woman’s (spiritual) husband!
- 5) I hope to attempt a structural analysis of the first part of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at some stage, but the analysis of the second half given here suggests the (spiritual) marital connection between the Samaritan woman (as representative of the Samaritans) and Christ.

Says to her Jesus, “Go, call the husband of you and come here”

A Answered the woman and said, “Not I have a husband”

B

Says to her Jesus,

- a) “Well you say that
- b) a husband not I have.
- c) For five husbands you had,
- b’) and now whom you have not is your husband..
- a’) This truly you have said”

C

Says to Him the woman,
“Lord, I perceive that a prophet you are”

D

P

W) The fathers of us in this mountain worshipped

X) and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it
is right (*dei*) to worship.

Q

Says to her Jesus,

Y) “Woman, believe me, that comes an hour when

Z) Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you
worship the Father

E

You worship what not you know
We worship what we know
since salvation is of the Jews.

D`

Q`

Y) But is coming the hour and now is

* when the true worshippers

Z) will worship the Father in spirit and in truth

P`

W) For also the Father such seeks those to worship
Him

* a spirit God is and those worshipping Him

X) in spirit and truth need (*dei*) to worship

C`

Says to Him the woman,
“I know that Messiah is coming, the One called Christ .

B`

When comes that One, He will announce to us all things”

A`

Says to her Jesus, “I AM, He speaking to you”

John 4:16-26—an Attempted Chiastic Analysis

27.1 The Book of Hosea

- a Israel is God's wayward wife: he will cause her to return home (1:1–3:5)
- b condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (4:1–5:7)
 - c condemnation for political faithlessness and corruption and empty sacrifices; Yahweh's efforts to bring Israel back (5:8–6:11a)
 - d CENTER: Israel has not returned to Yahweh, though he has called it to return (6:11b–7:16)
 - c' condemnation for political faithlessness and corruption and empty sacrifices; Yahweh's efforts to bring Israel back (8:1–9:7b)
- b' condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (9:7c–10:15)
- a' Israel is God's wayward son: God invites him to return (11:1–14:9 [11:1–14:10])

27.2 Hosea's marriage to Gomer (Hosea 1–3)

- opening narrative: sign of Hosea's unfaithful wife and their three children (1:1–11 [1:1–2:2])
- a Yahweh's first punishment: Yahweh will no longer love the children of wayward Israel, and he will remove her land's fertility (2:1–5a [2:3–7a])
 - he will make her a desert, slaying her with thirst
 - begins: say (ʾāmar); My People (ʿammî) and Loved (ruḥāmā)
 - b Yahweh's second punishment: Yahweh will stop Israel from going after her lovers, until she returns to him in desperation (2:5b–7 [2:7b–9])
 - nature is made to oppose Israel
 - c Yahweh's third punishment: Yahweh will take back all the gifts he gave Israel because they continue to worship Baal and attribute the gifts to him (2:8–13 [2:10–15])
 - topic: Baal and Baals
 - d TURNING POINT: Yahweh will woo Israel back (2:14–15 [2:16–17])
 - c' Yahweh's positive action in response to the third punishment: he will take the names of the Baals from Israel's lips (2:16–17 [2:18–19])
 - topic: Baal and Baals
 - b' Yahweh's positive action in response to second punishment: he will remarry returning Israel (2:18–20 [2:20–22])
 - nature is made to cooperate in Israel's restoration
 - a' Yahweh's positive action in response to first punishment: Yahweh will restore the land's fertility, and he will love Israel's people (children) again (2:21–23 [2:23–25])
 - he will restore her fertility; rains and wine
 - ends: "I will love Not Loved (lōʾ ruḥāmā) and will say (ʾāmar) to Not My People (lōʾ ʿammî), you are My People (ʿammî)"
- closing narrative: sign of Hosea's unfaithful wife and his taking her back (3:1–5)

From *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament—A Commentary on Genesis—Malachi* by David A. Dorsey,
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