



# Woman: At the Well (Daily Gospel Special Edition Book 1)

*Clinton LeFort*

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Jesus Leaves Judea

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself was not baptizing, just his disciples), 3 he left Judea and returned to Galilee. (Jn. 4:1-3)

Jesus had already begun his ministry to the Jews and had taught his disciples how to baptize. There was rumors going round that reached his disciples and the word got to Jesus that the Pharisees were starting to take notice of Jesus' bringing in new disciples thru baptism. Jesus begin a peaceful man didn't want controversy and he only wanted to complete the work the Father gave to him; however, conflict was inevitable.

St. John gives no indication how Jesus got this message, but that "the Pharisees had heard." This is an important indication that Jesus was on the Pharisees radar at the time. We have to consider that the Pharisees were men who were both curious and devout, but strict in their attitudes towards the Law of Moses. The Pharisees are will always be critical of Jesus and they have a hidden agenda, which is their own glory before the people of Jerusalem. (Saldarini, 1984) An Ancient historian named Josephus, who himself was a Pharisee for sometime before being removed by them, says that the Pharisees were particularly interested in letting the Jews know that they had a certain privilege in being able to intepret the Law of Moses. The Pharisees had no political power, but they were seen as supporters of the Roman governors. Since the Pharisees were a literate group within the Jewish Law, they held their greatest influence within their own religious structural system. (Saldarini, 294) The Synoptic Gospels treat the Pharisees in a different light than does St. John the Evangelist.

New Testament Influences

Throughout the life of Jesus, the Pharisees present themselves as enemies or opponents of his message. St. Paul confesses to have been a Pharisee before his conversion to Christianity. (Phil. 3:5) St. Paul later renounces his influential efforts as a Pharisee after he comes to know Jesus and the power of the Gospel message. St. Paul uses his former Pharisaic life as grounds to show others that no one can boast in the flesh, since he himself had all the advantages of being able to boast because of his Jewish roots, both as a teacher and upholder of the Jewish Law as a Pharisee and his illustrious roots of the tribe of Benjamin. Both St. Paul and Josephus were both Pharisees at one time and both look backwards after their having been a Pharisee in their writings.

St. John portrays the Pharisees as "doctors of the law" who show a feigned interest in the teachings of Jesus, primarily for renouncing Jesus. (Saldarini, 297) John shows Jesus confronting the Pharisees when the Pharisees bring the woman caught in adultery before him to have her stoned. (Jn. 8:3) Jesus turns the case on the Pharisees and invites those who are without sin to be the one's who cast the first stone. The Pharisees were greatly concerned with ritual washings and teachings on purity, yet Jesus shows that they cannot teach what they do not possess; that is, to be without sin. On the other hand, Jesus has authority to speak for God, since he is sent by the Father. We are invited to see Jesus leaving Judea and going to Samaria in order to avoid the confrontation with the Pharisees. Jesus knows the Jewish leaders and what they are trying to do. Let us remember that when Jesus was just a young boy he stayed behind in the temple, during the Feast of Passover, in order to carry on his conversations with the teachers of the Law. The teachers of the Law were

surprised at the Wisdom that came from Jesus. No doubt that Jesus had a deeply working knowledge of the competition that was to brew between himself and Jewish religious leaders. Even for all of Jesus knowledge about the political, social and religious climate of Judea he still chose to leave and go to Samaria, where he could continue

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