

John 4:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus' promise to the Samaritan woman introduces the profound metaphor of 'living water' (ὕδωρ ζῶν/hydōr zōn), contrasting physical water from Jacob's well with spiritual water He provides. The phrase 'shall never thirst' (οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) uses the strongest Greek negative construction, indicating absolute and eternal satisfaction. Unlike physical water that temporarily quenches thirst, requiring daily return to the well, Jesus' water produces permanent satisfaction. The imagery shifts: the water Jesus gives 'shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον). This water becomes an internal, self-renewing source. The verb 'springing up' (ἀλλομένου/hallomenou) conveys leaping, bubbling, flowing—dynamic, abundant life. The destination is 'everlasting life' (ζωὴν αἰώνιον)—not merely endless existence but qualitative, eternal life in communion with God. Jesus is describing the Holy Spirit's indwelling (John 7:37-39), who regenerates believers and continuously sustains spiritual life. This living water contrasts with all human religious effort—it's received, not achieved; internal, not external; eternal, not temporary. The woman's religious tradition (Samaritan worship at Mount Gerizim) and moral failure (five husbands) left her spiritually dry. Jesus offers what no human relationship, religious system, or temporary pleasure can provide: eternal satisfaction through the Spirit's indwelling.

Historical Context

This conversation occurred at Jacob's well near Sychar in Samaria, a region Jews typically avoided due to ethnic and religious animosity. The Samaritan schism dated to the Assyrian conquest (722 BC) when foreigners intermarried with remaining Israelites, and the subsequent building of a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. Jews considered Samaritans ethnically impure and religiously heretical. Jesus' engagement with this Samaritan woman violated multiple cultural norms: rabbis didn't speak publicly with women; Jews avoided Samaritans; religious leaders didn't associate with known sinners. The woman came to draw water at noon (sixth hour), unusual timing suggesting social ostracism due to her immoral history. Wells were central to community life—places of daily gathering, social interaction, and often romantic encounter (Isaac's servant found Rebekah at a well, Jacob met Rachel at a well). By meeting this woman at the well and offering living water, Jesus positioned Himself as the bridegroom offering covenant relationship. The woman's focus on physical water ('Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not') parallels Nicodemus's confusion about physical rebirth (John 3:4)—both struggle to move from literal to spiritual understanding. Early church fathers saw this encounter as demonstrating salvation's extension beyond Judaism to Samaritans (Acts 8) and ultimately to all nations. The living water Jesus offered fulfilled Old Testament promises of God providing water in the wilderness and the Spirit being poured out (Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 36:25-27, Joel 2:28).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the contrast between physical water (temporary satisfaction) and living water (eternal satisfaction) challenge where we seek fulfillment?
2. What does it mean that the living water becomes 'a well springing up' within believers rather than an external resource we repeatedly access?
3. How does Jesus offering living water to a sinful Samaritan woman demonstrate the inclusiveness and transformative power of the gospel?
4. In what ways does this passage connect the Holy Spirit's indwelling to eternal life and ongoing spiritual vitality?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δ'	ἄν	πίη	ἐκ	τοῦ	ὑδατος	ὁ	ἐγὼ	δώσω
that	But	G302	drinketh	of	G3588	of water	that	I	I shall give
G3739	G1161		G4095	G1537		G5204	G3739	G1473	G1325
αὐτῷ	οὐ	μὴ	διψήσῃ	εἰς	τὸν	αἰῶνα	ἀλλὰ	τὸ	ὑδατος
him	G3756	G3361	shall	into	G3588	G165	but	G3588	of water
G846			G1372	G1519			G235		G5204
ὁ	δώσω	αὐτῷ	γενήσεται	ἐν	αὐτῷ	πηγὴ	ὑδατος		
that	I shall give	him	shall be	in	him	a well	of water		
G3739	G1325	G846	G1096	G1722	G846	G4077	G5204		
ἀλλομένου	εἰς	ζωὴν	αἰώνιον						
springing up	into	life	everlasting						
G242	G1519	G2222	G166						

Additional Cross-References

John 6:35 (Parallel theme): And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Isaiah 49:10 (Parallel theme): They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Revelation 7:16 (Parallel theme): They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

John 11:26 (Parallel theme): And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

John 6:58 (Parallel theme): This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

1 John 5:20 (Eternal Life): And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

2 Corinthians 1:22 (Parallel theme): Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Romans 6:23 (Eternal Life): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 10:10 (Parallel theme): The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

1 Peter 1:22 (Parallel theme): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: