

June 19, 2022

The Fields Are STILL “White For Harvest”

*“Do not say, ‘There are still four months and **then** comes the harvest.’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are **already** white for harvest!” (John 4:35).*

At the time Jesus uttered these words, He was speaking to His disciples who had returned from the city of Sychar (ancient Shechem) where they had gone to purchase food (John 4:8). While His disciples were away purchasing food, Jesus “*being wearied from His journey,*” sat by Jacob’s well, at which time a woman of Samaria “*came to draw water*” (John 4:5-7). To the woman of Samaria Jesus made a simple request; He said “*give Me a drink*” (John 4:7). Because of the long-standing, underlying tension which existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, the Samaritan woman expressed her surprise that Jesus, a **Jew**, would ask **her** for a drink of water!

However, you can be sure that the Samaritan woman was not mentally prepared for the answer she received. Instead of referring to the animosity that existed between Jews and Samaritans, or of directly answering her question, Jesus simply said, “*If you knew the gift of **God**, and **who** it is who says to you, ‘give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water*” (John 4:10). Wow! What a transition in thought — from water for the body to “*living water*” for the soul — from water which only quenches thirst for a short time to “*living water*” of which those who drink “*will never thirst,*” and which becomes “*a fountain of water springing up into eternal Life*” (John 4:10-14)!

By now, you can be sure that Jesus had her attention! But her amazement continued to intensify — especially when Jesus mentioned the five husbands she had in the past and then said “*the one you now have is not your husband*” (John 4:9). Very shortly she called Him “*Sir,*” and a few sentences later she said “*I perceive that you are a prophet*” (John 4:15,18). However, in only a matter of moments, the woman referred to the coming “*Messiah,*” and Jesus replied, saying, “*I who speak to you am He*” (John 4:25,26)! Can you imagine how the Samaritan woman must have felt when she came to the realization that here she was — a sinful, adulterous, Samaritan woman — speaking face to face with the long-awaited “*Messiah*” of Old Testament promise and prophecy! Perhaps of even greater amazement (of which she was doubtlessly aware) was the fact that she was speaking face to face to the second Person of the “*Godhead,*” the Being Who had created the very ground upon which she was then standing! Cf. John 1:1-3).

At this point, we are not at all surprised that the Samaritan woman “*left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ‘Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’*” (John 4:27,28). In such a short time the sought after became a seeker of others. The Samaritan woman’s priorities underwent

a dramatic reversal, for whereas she had been primarily concerned about obtaining water to quench physical thirst, she was now trying to lead people to the “*Messiah*” Who is the Source of “*living water!*” Perhaps because of her excitement, the joy she evidenced for having met the Messiah, or the obvious sincerity she manifested — or all of these factors combined — she had an immediate influence for good. Concerning the men to whom she spoke, the record says, “*they went out of the city and came to Him*” (John 4:30). They, too, because of the influence of the Samaritan woman, were anxious to meet Jesus!

Meanwhile the disciples returned from the city with food and they urged Jesus, saying, “*Rabbi, eat*” — only to hear Jesus reply, saying “*I have food to eat of which you do not know*” (John 4:31,32). This was an occasion in which “*food*” was used figuratively, for Jesus elaborated, saying, “*My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to finish His work*” (John 4:34). In this short reply is revealed the real secret behind Jesus coming to the world, and the secret for His great success as a Teacher. The very substance of His life was to “*do the will of God.*” And, for that matter, you can be certain that our own influence for good would be far greater if we all that same “*magnificent obsession!*”

It was at this juncture that Jesus mentioned the fields which were “*white for harvest*” (John 4:35). He knew of the response of the woman of Samaria. Perhaps He, even then, could see the people of the city as they “*came to Him*” (v. 30). The obvious results of what some may regard as a chance conversation with the woman of Samaria was sufficient to arouse in her heart an interest in spiritual things. But the Jewish leaders were too interested in maintaining the Status Quo and protecting their own standing among the people than to manifest any concern for the apostate, mixed-breed Samaritans. For that matter, Jews, in general had “*no dealings with the Samaritans*” (v. 9), so they showed no interest in the spiritual needs of the very people whom most of them virtually despised. Even so, the Samaritan “*fields*” were “*white for harvest,*” though most Jews considered it beneath their dignity to cultivate such “*fields.*”

Based on the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-8; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:5-8), we recognize that people vary greatly in their response to the gospel message. Quite frankly, not everyone has a “*noble and good Heart*” (Luke 8:8:15), which constitutes the kind of soil that is so essential for the gospel “*seed*” to produce lasting fruit. For that matter, concerning “*the way which leads to life,*” even Jesus said “*there are few who find it*” (Matt. 7:14). However, Jesus also said “*the fields are white for harvest*” (John 4:35). We agree that time and circumstances, such as affluence or poverty, sickness or wealth, etc., can affect the attitude of people in general toward the gospel. There was a time in the not too distant past in this country in which a gospel meeting could simply be announced, and people from throughout the community would fill the meeting house (or tent) from beginning to end — even though the meeting may have lasted for several weeks. Admittedly, in this respect and in this part of the world, times have changed. However, we maintain that the fields are still “*white for harvest.*”

Why The Field Are Yet “White For Harvest.”

1. Because of their vastness. The world has never been so densely populated as

it is now, and Jesus said “*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15). We must not judge the **whole** world by what we observe in our own “little world.”

2. Because Materialism brings no happiness. No society has ever had more, or enjoyed it less, than those in our own society. Multitudes have learned, by experience, that “*one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses*” (Luke 12:15). Material wealth can clutter our lives with things, but it can not buy peace of mind.

3. Because human philosophy is unable to quench the thirst of the soul. The world is saturated with the philosophies of men, and multitudes are being forced to conclude by bitter experience that “*it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*” (Jer. 10:23). If we consistently share with others “*the wisdom that is from above*” (James 3:17), some people will recognize it for what it is worth, and will yearn for the thirst-quenching word of God.

4. Because all forms of escapism come to naught. Seeking a thrill, excitement, or momentary peace of mind, multitudes have turned to illicit sex, booze, and drugs of every kind, both legal and illegal. But what do they have to show for such stupidity? Venereal disease, Aids, unwanted pregnancies, perpetual shame, hangovers, chemical dependencies, broken homes, diseased bodies, poverty, wasted lives, wasted hopes, and sheer agony. They have learned (the hard way) that “*the pleasures of sin*” (Heb. 11:25) are seasonal at best, and that those who sow to the flesh “*reap corruption*” (Gal. 6:8). Multitudes who have drunk the bitter dregs of sin, upon learning of the blessedness and happiness to be found in Christ, like the jailer of old, will cry out, asking “*what must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30). At least, they will, if there are enough concerned Christians out there sharing the good news of salvation in Christ!

5 Because every person will die, and every accountable person knows it! Only Jesus Christ and His gospel can release the captives of sin from the “*fear of death*” (Heb. 2:15), and replace that “*fear*” with the “*hope of eternal life*” (Tit. 1:7). In the judgment of this writer, in every community, there are those who would leap at the opportunity to exchange doubt for faith and to replace fear with hope — if only earnest Christians were pointing them to “*the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29),

Conclusion:

The “*fields*” of Samaria were “*white for harvest,*” but most Jews of the first century were ignorant of that fact — ignorant because they neither cared for the Samaritans nor did anything to interest them in the things of God. Before we decide that the gospel “*fields*” in our own area are not “*white for harvest,*” let us demonstrate our concern for the local residents by doing all within our power to share with them the soul-saving gospel of Jesus Christ!
—Bobby Witherington
