



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Papers | Reviews | Essays

Look Again At The Fields

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Only those who rely totally on study done long ago have never had the experience of discovering that a Bible passage doesn't mean exactly what they had always thought. The reaction typically occurs in stages. There is the "double-take" as the new understanding dawns. Then there's the re-reading followed by the excitement which accompanies discovery. Finally, there is the realization of what the new discovery means for faith's practice.

Bear all that in mind as you think with me about John 4. Out of necessity, Jesus passes through Samaria on his way from Judea to Galilee. It's lunch time, and He stops at Jacob's well to rest while the disciples go to town for food. The woman who comes to the well is amazed that Jesus, a Jewish man, would deign to ask her for a drink. His reply that He was living water provokes a discussion which will eventually lead her to leave her water jar behind as she rushes to the city to tell her friends to come and see the man who must be the Christ.

Having found food, the disciples return and wonder when they find Jesus talking with the woman. Her departure lets them get down to business—"We've got lunch, Teacher, here's yours." Speaking of spiritual things while they think only of the physical, He surprises them (again) by telling them about the food He has of which they are unaware. As they ponder what He might mean, Jesus presses His point (and them) further: Why are they not as concerned for the Father's will? "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest'" (vs. 35 RSV).

There it is, the reminder that there are millions who have never heard the gospel. Where are the missionaries and the dollars to support them? Where is the urgency to send those brave mission-minded Christians to far-off fields teeming with a harvest waiting to be reaped?

It's a great sermon—one which flows readily from several Bible passages. But it's not the main point Jesus makes here. Read again, more carefully. They wonder why He is talking to the Samaritan woman. He asks them why they didn't talk to her neighbors. They've been to a city filled with people—the wrong ones from the Jewish perspective, but people nonetheless—who are waiting for the Christ. When those people are told, they will investigate, and come to faith. They will ask Jesus to stay, and will respond to His word (vs. 30, 39-42). The woman leaves the city and discovers Jesus while the disciples go to that city full of lost souls and keep Him secret.

No wonder Jesus chastises them. “I sent [past tense] you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor” (vs. 38).

Millions around the world are lost, for they’ve not obeyed Jesus. If they did not need to hear, He would not have told His church to take the good news to the whole world. They will not hear unless preachers are sent (Rom. 10:14-17), and we are accountable if we have no interest in helping them hear. But the truth is that most of us will not have the opportunity to go personally to the millions. And it’s easy to use that fact to justify not going anywhere.

Look again at the fields. Jesus did not reprimand His disciples for failing to tell the millions “out there” about Him, He held them accountable for not talking to the one, five, or ten where they were.

There are yet “Samaritans” with us. Have you looked at your field lately?

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