

**Exegetical Notes, John 4:31-38**  
**“What Jesus Needs From You”**

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
[charleshjensen@aol.com](mailto:charleshjensen@aol.com)

**John 4:31-38**

**Verses 31-33**

*Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”*

<sup>32</sup> *But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”*

<sup>33</sup> *Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”*

- While Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman, his disciples returned from Sychar (see verse 27). But they said nothing to him until after the woman had left to go into the city. They were shocked to find him in conversation with a Samaritan woman. They recognized that he was breaking culturally normal practices, but they were unwilling to follow his example. They said nothing, but they disapproved.
- When the woman left, they asked Jesus if he would like something to eat. Remember that they had left him by the well resting and had gone off to buy food for him and themselves, but they did not offer him anything to eat until the Samaritan woman left.
- Jesus told them that he had a supply of food about which they did not know.
- This made the disciples wonder if somebody else had brought food to Jesus.

**Verse 34**

*“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”*

- Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, corrected their misunderstanding. He was not nourished by physical food alone but also by doing the will of the Father. He was fulfilled in knowing that he was doing what he was sent to do and that he would bring his assigned task to completion.

**Verses 35-36**

*Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Even now the one*

***who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.***

- Among the people of that time there was a proverbial saying, “It is still four months to the harvest.” It meant that you could not rush things. When the time came for the harvest, the time came for the harvest. The grain would ripen in its time. There was nothing anyone could do to ripen the grain before its time.
- Jesus said that the time had already passed for the harvest. Though no one had noticed, the four months had already passed and the fields were “white,” ready to be harvested.
- He was, of course, not talking about wheat or barley. He was saying that the time had come to harvest souls for eternal life. He was talking about a spiritual harvest.
- The ones who had planted the crop, the prophets and teachers of old, would rejoice with those who were sent to harvest the crop, Jesus and his disciples. The time had come to bring the harvest home.

### **Verses 37-38**

***Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.’***

- Jesus quotes another proverbial saying, “One sows and another reaps.” It simply means that one person may sow the seed and another reap the harvest. However, as the Apostle Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 3:3-9, the harvest is dependent on the work of the entire team. Unless the sower sows, the reaper will have nothing to reap. And if the reaper does not reap, there will be no harvest. Each one must do his part.
- Jesus said that the disciples were to join him in gathering the harvest, but they were reaping from the work of those who had gone before.

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