

WOULD I HAVE FOLLOWED JESUS?

Scripture: John 4:5-42

March 18, 2020

As I read the New Testament accounts of Jesus' interactions with The Twelve and his other followers, I am sometimes envious. If only I had lived 2,000 years ago! It would have been exciting to have heard Jesus deliver the Sermon on the Mount and to eat a portion of the loaves and fishes he miraculously multiplied! Maybe I could even have made it on the list we're given in Luke 8 of some women who travelled with Jesus!

But I remember reading decades ago Kenneth Roberts's novel *Oliver Wiswell*. The book is historical fiction set in the time of the American Revolution and told from the perspective of a British officer. As I read, I thought: Was it a certainty that had I lived at the time of the Revolution I would have sympathized with the Colonists? Or would I have interpreted Paul's statement to the church in Rome (Romans 13:1) "The powers that be are ordained of God" as requiring me to side with the Tories against my own family, those ancestors I now celebrate and honor because they had, in my opinion, the good judgment to assist in the struggle for independence?

Would I have followed Jesus during his earthly life, or would I have supported enthusiastically the religious leaders of the day in opposing him?

As I slowly read chapter 4 of John's Gospel, I noticed something I hadn't observed before in verses 40 and 41. "When the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And **because of his words** many more became believers." (NIV) Rather than envying the Samaritans who got to hear Jesus's message from Jesus himself, I began to feel gratitude that I have access to printed copies of the Bible, in which I can read and re-read the recorded words of Jesus as often as I like. Rather than relying on memory that can fade or become unreliable or carrying around a piece of papyrus, a container of ink, and a pen or brush (no convenient ball-point pen or smart phone!) to make my personal record of his teaching, I can simply open a copy of the book available at stores across the country and read these ancient words. May they have the power in the lives of the people of today (and me) as they did in the lives of the Samaritans!

Prayer: Dear Lord, we have no way of knowing if we would have followed You while You were here as a physical person. We are Your followers here and now. Give us strength to carry out the mission of making disciples for the kingdom. Amen.

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