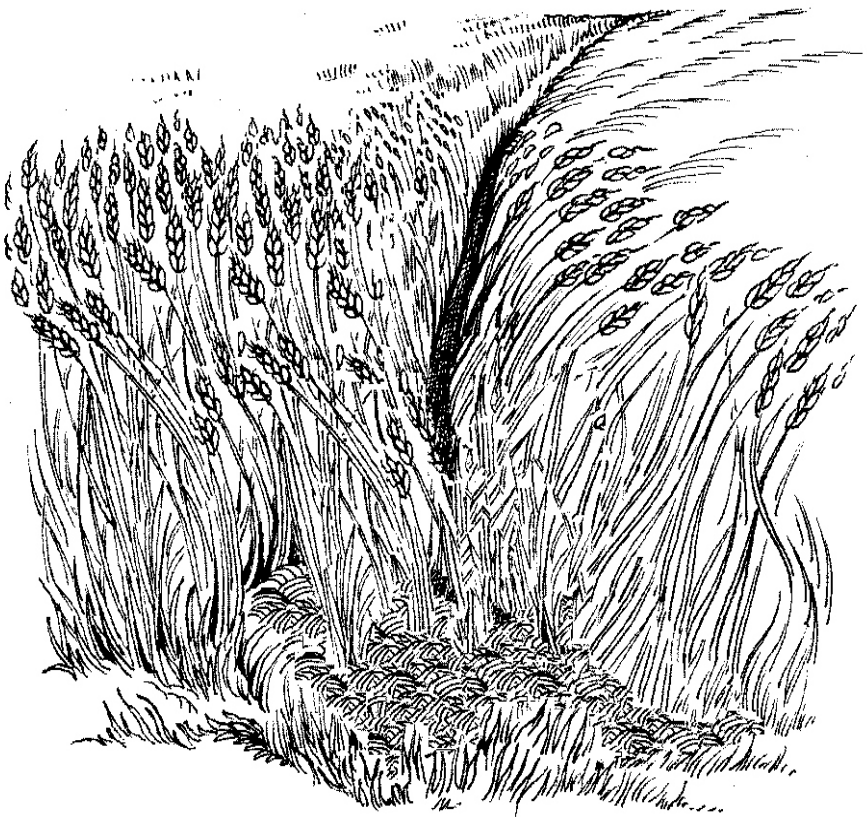


The Glorious Harvest

by Dale Rumble



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Preface

A move of the Holy Spirit is touching lives in many places around the world. Laughter, weeping, trembling, shaking, falling to the floor, and signs of drunkenness are some manifestations occasionally seen in meetings. These are blended with testimonies of a new awareness of God's love.

What is happening? Are we experiencing a new "great awakening?" What should our response be?

I believe there is a divine significance to what is taking place, and that it can be understood within the context of the end-time harvest that is destined to close this age of grace.¹ I further believe that God is beginning to prepare His people for the many difficulties and the great ingathering that lies ahead.

Introduction

Harvest . . . that wonderful season when farmers gather in the fruits of their labor.

It has always been harvest time for the church. The world is a field that has been white for harvest in every generation. The great commission to gather in that harvest has never been taken back.

However, a final ingathering lies ahead for the church that is totally different than all previous harvests. Because of the eternal consequences from what will take place, it is imperative that we believers understand why this ultimate harvest is different and what makes it so uniquely important.

The following are where these differences will exist:

- The condition of the field
- The condition of the grain that is harvested
- The seasons
- The magnitude of the harvest
- The tares
- The sovereignty of God; His role in the harvest

Let us examine each of these six areas so as to better prepare ourselves as profitable laborers for the Lord of the harvest. A church that fails to move in the Lord's vision and purpose for His harvest will be a failure in that day.

The following parable by Jesus provides vital and pertinent understanding of this final harvest.

*. . . the one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the **field is the world**; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one, and the **harvest is the end of the age**; and the reapers are angels . . . The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom **all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness** . . . Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 13:37-39, 41, 43)*

Condition of the Field

. . . and the field is the world . . . (Matthew 13:38)

Individuals and nations are subjected to evil influences from the god of this world, both by forces on earth that represent his realm of darkness, and by spiritual forces of wickedness located above in the heavens. The church is also restrained by these principalities and authorities in the heavens. There are specific evil personalities placed by Satan over cities, regions and nations. Through these principalities and demons, Satan attacks believers in many ways; however, one of his greatest strategies is turning believers against one another to bring disunity in the church. This is epitomized in the words that God uses to describe Satan: "the accuser of our brethren."

As this age draws to a close, Satan knows that his time is short. As a consequence, he will initiate new heights of lawlessness in both conduct and deception upon the earth (Matthew 24:4-24; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 3:3-4; Jude 17-19). The prophet Isaiah speaks of these days as follows:

For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples . . . (Isaiah 60:2)

The following words describe the inhabitants on earth in the last days: lovers of self, disobedient to parents, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, brutal, ungrateful, unloving, irreconcilable, haters of good, treacherous, conceited, lovers of pleasures, devoid of the Spirit, worldly minded and mockers.

In reality, these words describe the field from which the harvest is to be reaped. Lawlessness will abound in the evil, world system of that day, making it the most difficult field in history for the church to reap from.

Condition of the Grain

In another parable, Jesus describes the condition of many who will be saved in the last days.

*. . . go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the **poor and crippled and blind and lame** . . . Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:21, 23)*

As a consequence of the growing evil in society, one in which moral absolutes in the family, schools and courts have been corrupted and where deception is rampant, many converts in the final ingathering will be more crippled in body, soul and spirit than in previous harvests.

Through mercy and compassion the Lord will reach out and bring into His kingdom many of the dysfunctional souls that society has discarded. He will build His house with broken boards, bent nails and warped shingles. Material that man has thrown away will become precious material in the Lord's hands. Thus, we can expect many to come to Christ from the sin-ridden streets of our cities.

When we also consider that this final harvest will be gathered from every nation on earth, which includes Islamic countries, Japan, China, Israel, and cultures which today are closed and resistant to the gospel, we begin to recognize that the grain will be more difficult to reap, and require greater care and shepherding than the souls from previous harvests. House churches will play a vital role. The power of God must accompany the preaching of the word. Traditional methods and ministries simply will not suffice. The Lord must intervene to give all laborers His heart of mercy, compassion and love, and the church must become a spiritual hospital. Without these divine resources much of the grain would be lost.

The Seasons

Following the Reformation, there were long seasons between sowing and reaping in world evangelism. Travel and communication technologies, including literature publication, were in their infancy. Much time was required by missionaries to travel to their foreign field, learn the native lan-

guage, translate scripture into that language, and then teaching them to read before there were converts.

At the turn of this century, baptism in the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts introduced more of the power of God which served to demonstrate and prove the gospel. All of these factors have helped to reduce the time between sowing the word of God and reaping souls for Christ.

At the end of this century, because of a wider emphasis of the power of God in preaching the gospel, and because of technological advances such as television, satellites, video and audio media, and the personal computer, there has been a further shortening of the season between sowing and reaping. However, the promise of God for the last days is even further change in this trend.

Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seeds . . . (Amos 9:13)

Not only will the field and grain be most difficult, but there will also be essentially no season between sowing and reaping. A great harvest would appear to be an impossible task!

Magnitude

Because of our human tendency to calibrate things by what has happened in the past, it is very difficult for us to grasp the dimensions of what lies ahead.

There is no pattern for the future; no revival or harvest from the past can compare to the ingathering that will close this age.

Unfortunately, the faith of many believers, especially in America, has been weakened by a theology that projects failure for the end-time church; one where she barely escapes destruction through the rapture, instead of a victorious, overcoming church that has impacted every nation on earth.

The history of Israel in the Old Testament revolved about three major feasts. The first of these feasts, Passover, was fulfilled by the death of Jesus. He was the Passover Lamb. The second feast, Pentecost, was also fulfilled on the day of Pentecost that followed our Lord's resurrection. The feast that has yet to be fulfilled is the Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Ingathering). There is a harvest associated with each feast. Jesus was the first-fruits at Passover; the harvest of souls throughout the church age relates to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The feast of Tabernacle is

the final great, end-time harvest that will close this age, being consummated by our Lord's return (James 5:7-8). It will be the ultimate and largest harvest of all.

God has promised to pour out His Spirit on all mankind (Joel 2:28-32). This double portion of the Holy Spirit is likened to the early (fall) and latter (spring) rains which bring the crops in Israel to a maturity for harvest (Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:2-3).

And the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. (Joel 2:24)

The ingathering will be so great that the abundance will make up for what was not gathered in previous harvests because of Satan's demonic attacks.

Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust . . . (Joel 2:25)

The prophet Isaiah describes nations and kings of the earth being drawn to the glory of God resting upon the church (Isaiah 60:1-7).

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you . . . But the Lord will rise upon you. And His glory will appear upon you. And **nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.** (Verses 1-3)*

Verses six and seven identify five regions of Islamic people who will be in this company of the redeemed. As fulness of Gentiles comes to pass, Israel as a nation, will also return to the Lord (Romans 11:25)

The Lord speaks of this harvest in another parable, one which describes the hiring of laborers at different hours of the day to work in a vineyard. The laborers who were hired last, at the eleventh hour, were honored above the other laborers by being paid first at the close of the day; presumably because of the greater abundance of fruit they had gathered (Matthew 20:1-16).

All people will be brought to a place of decision as the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed.

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)

It will be a glorious harvest. Satan will seek to take as many to hell with him as he can, but the battle for souls will belong to the Lord!

The Tares

The end-time harvest will also be unique in that it is the only one in which tares will be gathered out from among the good grain. Tares look like true grain. However, at harvest, grain will bend low with the weight of ripe kernels, whereas tares stand erect having no fruit. Throughout church history, tares have always existed in that which the world calls Christendom. Religious but without Christ, they have corrupted the witness of true believers. A vital part of this harvest will be the removal of all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness (Matthew 13:30, 39-43).

This purging work of the Holy Spirit will prepare the bride for her Lord's return; once the tares are gone, the saints will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Hence, the harvest is not only a day of ingathering, but also a day of separation and purification.

Just as many will be drawn to the Lord because of God's glory upon the church, others will fear the glory and run from the light because their deeds are evil. Because these individuals will not receive the truth so as to be saved, they shall be deceived and drawn away by the mystery of lawlessness, that even today, is at work in the world.

There will come a climax in lawlessness brought about by a visible unveiling of the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, to the world (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He will be an incarnation of evil who will work great, lying signs and wonders of deception. God will allow this revelation of evil to be a deluding influence upon those who refuse to come to Him, so that they might believe what is false.

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

Thus, in a time of great shaking and spiritual warfare, the tares will be gathered together out from among the grain.

The Sovereignty of God

When we consider the first five areas of difference that characterize the final harvest, it has to be obvious to all that it is an utterly impossible task for the church today to accomplish. Only the sovereignty of God can bring it to pass; and this is the sixth difference that will mark this harvest.

The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)

God foreknows all things, and what He has purposed to do will take place; nothing will stop it! Everything taking place in the earth does so within the context of God's permissive or directive will. Consider the following examples of His sovereignty:

- Satan can only go so far in his attacks on us. Ponder the story of Job, and Jesus' words to Peter:

Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail . . . (Luke 22:31-32)

- It is God who raises up and brings down nations and leaders (Psalm 47:8). The nation of Israel is a good example.

And He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation. (Acts 17:26)

- Many are called, but God sovereignly chooses some individuals for His purpose. Abraham, Joseph and Paul are examples.
- Church history reveals that God has sovereignly moved many times during periods of backsliding to revive His inheritance. The great awakening is one such example. Revivals are fruits of His sovereignty.

And that is what the Lord is beginning to do today. He is sovereignly bringing His fire into the church. He intends to prepare His body to bring in the harvest; and our need is very great! The darkness that will cover the earth is evident today, but where is the glory that should be seen on the people of God? This is the key issue.

Disunity is pervasive in the church. While there are many good programs and zeal to evangelize, there is not the love, mercy and compassion necessary to effectively bring in the poor, crippled, blind and lame from our streets; nor is the power of God present as it should be to demonstrate the gospel of the kingdom to all nations (Matthew 23:14).

We cannot even imagine the great work in the earth that the Lord is going to do through His body. Nothing can stand before a united church, that with purity of heart, is committed to worship and intercession—a church crowned with the glory of God!

It is important to have faith as He moves to prepare us in these days. There can be many, strange manifestations when He touches the depths of

our hearts, for it is here that change must begin. Our flesh cannot but respond when He touches our innermost being so deeply. Jeremiah describes such an experience as follows:

. . . my heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble; I have become like a drunken man, even like a man overcome with wine, because of the Lord and because of His holy words. (Jeremiah 23:9)

Thus, some believers may experience laughter, weeping, falling to the floor, visions, etc. Such things are not to be promoted, they are not to be sought, they are not to be feared, nor should one be alarmed by them. They are not a sign of greater spirituality. They simply arise from the intensity by which God sovereignly touches hearts.² The fruit that follows the manifestations is important; that is what must be judged. The transition of renewal will not be without pain. Psychological and demonic components can be expected to surface, as well as attention-seeking behavior. Good leadership will handle such things so that they do not detract from the purpose of God. As the Lord moves in renewal power, some in the church will oppose what is taking place. However, they will not be able to withstand the sovereignty of God.

The glory will come to the church as hearts are purified and His people come into greater intimacy with Him. We need to remember that there can be no glory on the church apart from humility and brokenness. There is no place for pride or self-sufficiency. As Lord of the harvest, He alone will receive all the glory, for He alone can bring it to pass.

As sin increases in the world, there will also be an increase in persecution, suffering and even martyrdom for some believers. However, God will sovereignly increase His grace as He reaches out to all mankind in a final great demonstration of love and mercy before the day of His wrath and judgment comes. This grace, which reveals the love and compassion of Jesus, is where our hope is to be focused.

Therefore, gird up your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)

A significant aspect of God's renewal today is His sovereign work in the hearts of children, preparing them for the days ahead. Possibly because he knows this, Satan is seeking to destroy the youth of today. It is quite possible that the eleventh hour laborers will come from our children and youth. This highlights the great responsibility that parents and church leaders have in training children, a ministry that was foretold by the prophet Malachi (Malachi 4:5-6).

The Open Heavens

A unique event, one that brings a climax of good and evil during the harvest to come, takes place when Satan and his angels are thrown down to the earth from heaven.

A mighty culmination of God's power and authority, along with unprecedented lawlessness, is destined to take place near the end of this age.

A great hindrance to the church is the oppressive, restraining influence of evil by principalities and powers in heavenly places. Satan is prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). Spirits of condemnation, deception, despair, depression, hopelessness, etc., in concert with Satan's accusations, are constantly opposing the saints.

As a consequence, God will sovereignly arise to shake all things; not only on earth but in heaven as well (Hebrews 12:25-29). Powers of the heavens will be shaken (Matthew 24:29). It will be a time of intense persecution, with martyrdom becoming a doorway to glory for some (Revelation 12:11; Matthew 24:9-13, 21-24). Overcomers will arise (Revelation 2:26-27, 3:12, 21; 2 Timothy 2:11-12). Unity and power will be restored to the body of Christ. The ministry of angels will again be commonplace; perhaps even more than in the early church.

This will take place in a time of great spiritual warfare. This warfare will be manifest on earth through intercession, worship and the gospel of the kingdom. In heaven, warfare will be waged by the army of angels led by Michael, who do battle with Satan and his angels (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7).

The result of this cosmic warfare will see Satan and his angels cast out of heaven onto the earth (Revelation 12:8-9). This climactic event has two consequences:

1. Heaven will be open above the church. There will no longer exist the hindering influence of Satan, the accuser of our brethren, in the heavens. As a result, great power and authority will rest upon the church resulting in signs and wonders never seen before upon the earth (John 14:12).

... now salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. (Revelation 12:10)

2. Being cast into the earth, Satan will impart all his power and authority in the man of sin. This son of destruction will be visibly present in the world, and by great lying signs and wonders, he will deceive all who dwell on the earth whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 13:8).

Paul's second epistle to Thessalonica presents a scenario of this man of sin's sudden appearance. It shows how the Lord uses the deception of his false signs and wonders to gather together all unbelievers, including the tares.³ The following two verses of scripture are taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament because of its more accurate translation of the Greek words "ginomai" meaning "to be" or "to become," and "mesos" meaning "midst."

*And now you are aware what (or who) is detaining (or restraining) for him to be unveiled (or revealed) in his own era (or time). For the secret of lawlessness is already operating. Only when the present detainer may **be coming to be out of the midst.** (Verses 6 and 7)*

*And **then that lawless one will be revealed** whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming. (Verse 8)*

Satan will continue to be a restraining influence in the heavens against the church until the day that he and his angels are cast out of heaven onto the earth. At that time, in order to be worshipped as God, he invests his power and authority in a man through whom the fulness of his lawlessness then becomes suddenly visible to the world. Thus the man of lawlessness come to be (or appears) out of the midst of mankind. He is then able to deceive unbelievers by lying signs and wonders which God allows in order to gather together all who would not be saved.

Culmination of the harvest takes place when the Lord Jesus returns to gather His church to Himself; at that time He will destroy the lawless one by the brightness of His coming.

Conclusion

We cannot, and we must not, anticipate the future based on what has happened in the past. There is no pattern in church history that will foretell what lies ahead. Like Noah, we must prepare for unheard of times that we have never before experienced.

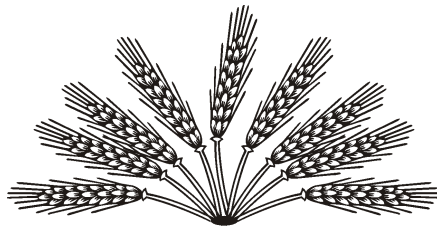
Do not call to mind the former things or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it . . . (Isaiah 43:18-19)

The church today is not in a position spiritually for the task ahead, and God is sovereignly arising to prepare her. A deep work is being done in hearts. We need a passion for God, one that will intercede in love, mercy and compassion for the lost, while recognizing that it will not be our might or power, but by His Spirit, that the harvest will be brought in.

Much of what man has built in the church will be shaken. Jesus must restore her so that He is truly Lord and Head in all things. She is being prepared for glory!

Our Father is revealing how much He loves us just as we are! As we respond to His overtures of love, He changes us, for we must have His heart to be successful in the harvest field. Manifestations that may take place today are not what is important; how we are changed for tomorrow is important—very important!

Lord, light the fire in our hearts; help us behold Your glory in the face of Your Son, and prepare us for the days ahead . . . Amen.



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