

# Harvest Time

**Genesis 8:22**

**As long as the earth remains,  
there will be springtime and  
harvest, cold and heat, winter and  
summer, day and night."**

**A Teaching Outline**

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## **Harvest Time**

**We will reap a harvest if we do not grow weary.**

### **Galatians 6:9**

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

While good works will never earn salvation, Paul did encourage believers to persist in doing what is good. While we do good, we should not get discouraged and give up.

To continue the analogy of sowing and reaping, a farmer will have no harvest to reap if he becomes too weary to labor in the fields or if he gives up altogether. The harvest will not reap itself. Every aspect of farming, planting, maintaining, and finally the harvesting takes hard work. So, too, believers must not become discouraged and give up when they follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, grow spiritually, and do good for God's Kingdom.

While it may seem at times like a losing battle, we are assured that we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.

### **What kind of harvest did the apostle have in mind?**

A Christian will reap a harvest of present blessings:

1. The fruit of the Spirit,
2. Well-instructed believers,
3. Restored sinners, and
4. Mutual support.

But ultimately he or she will reap the harvest of eternal life in the Holy Spirit (6:8).

Though the appropriate time is the time of God's own choosing, Paul was most likely referring to the time of the fulfillment of God's promises at Christ's second coming (1 Timothy 6:15).

**Put in the sickle when the harvest has come.**

**Mark 4:29**

"But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

The farmer lets the seed grow in the fields and goes about his other work (4:26-27), but as soon as the grain is ready, he has work to do. The farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle (a curved blade mounted in a short handle). Likewise, the time will come when God will intervene decisively into the world's affairs.

**The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.**

**Matthew 9:37**

Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

Jesus looked at the crowds following him and referred to them as a field ripe for harvest, but the workers to bring in the harvest are so few.

These "workers" were the disciples, then few in number.

Jesus commanded his disciples to pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields.

These workers must warn people of coming judgment and call them to repentance. Many people are ready to give their lives to Christ if someone would show them how.

We are to pray that people will respond to this need for workers. Often, when we pray for something, God answers our prayers by using *us*. Be prepared for God to use you to show another person the way to him.

**It is time to seek the Lord of the harvest.**

**Hosea 10:12**

Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.

Hosea repeatedly uses illustrations about fields and crops. Here he envisions a plowed field. It is no longer stony and hard; it has been carefully prepared, and it is ready for planting.

When your life ready for God to work in it, you can break up the unplowed ground of your heart by acknowledging your sins and receiving God's forgiveness and guidance.

**Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.**

**Luke 10:2**

And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Far more than 12 people had been following Jesus. Here Jesus designated a group of 72 to prepare a number of towns for his later visit.

These disciples were not unique in their qualifications. They were not better educated, more capable, or of higher status than Jesus' other followers.

What prepared them for this mission was that they had been equipped with Jesus' power and a vision to reach all the people. It is important to dedicate our skills to God's Kingdom, but we must also be equipped with his power and have a clear vision of what he wants us to do.

## **With weeping, plant precious seed.**

### **Psalm 126:6**

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

God's ability to restore life is beyond our understanding. Forests burn down and are able to grow back. Broken bones heal. Even grief is not a permanent condition. Our tears can be seeds that will grow into a harvest of joy because God is able to bring good out of tragedy.

When burdened by sorrow, know that your times of grief will end and that you will again find joy. We must be patient as we wait. God's great harvest of joy is coming!

## **The fields are white unto harvest.**

### **John 4:35-36**

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. [36] And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

Sometimes Christians excuse themselves from witnessing by saying that their family or friends aren't ready to believe. Jesus, however, makes it clear that around us a continual harvest waits to be reaped. You will find people ready to hear God's Word.

The wages Jesus offers are the joy of working for him and seeing the harvest of believers. These wages come to planter and harvester alike because both find joy in seeing new believers come into Christ's Kingdom.

The phrase "Others had already done the work" may refer to the Old Testament prophets and to John the Baptist, who paved the way for the Good News.

## **The enemy sows seed in the harvest field.**

### **Matthew 13:24-43**

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: [25] But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. [26] But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. [27] So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?

[28] He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? [29] But he said, nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. [30] Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

[31] Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: [32] Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

[33] Another parable spake he unto them; the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. [34] All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: [35] that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. [36] Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. [37] He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; [38] the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

[39] The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. [40] As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. [41] The Son of man shall send

forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

[42] And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus gives the meaning of this parable in verses 36-43. All the parables in this chapter teach us about God and his Kingdom. They explain what the Kingdom is really like as opposed to our expectations of it. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a geographic location but a spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in his eternal life. We join that Kingdom when we trust in Christ as Savior.

The young weeds and the young blades of wheat look the same and can't be distinguished until they are grown and ready for harvest. Weeds (unbelievers) and wheat (believers) must live side by side in this world. God allows unbelievers to remain for a while, just as a farmer allows weeds to remain in his field so the surrounding wheat isn't uprooted with them. At the harvest, however, the weeds will be uprooted and thrown away. God's harvest (judgment) of all people is coming. We are to make ourselves ready by making sure that our faith is sincere.

The mustard seed was the smallest seed a farmer used. Jesus used this parable to show that the Kingdom has small beginnings but will grow and produce great results.

other Bible passages, yeast is used as a symbol of evil or uncleanness. Here it is a positive symbol of growth. Although yeast looks like a minor ingredient, it permeates the whole loaf. Although the Kingdom began small and was nearly invisible, it would soon grow and have a great impact on the world.

At the end of the world, angels will separate the evil from the good. There are true and false believers in churches today, but we should be cautious in our judgments because only Christ is qualified to make the final separation. If you start judging, you may damage some of the good "plants." It's more important to judge our own response to God than to analyze others' responses.

## **Jesus will gather the wheat into his barn.**

### **Luke 3:15-17**

Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Israel had not seen a prophet for more than 400 years. It was widely believed that when the Messiah would come, prophecy would reappear (Joel 2:28, 29; Malachi 3:1; 4:5). When John burst onto the scene, the people were excited. He was obviously a great prophet, and they were sure that the eagerly awaited age of the Messiah had come. Some, in fact, thought John himself was the Messiah.

John spoke like the prophets of old, saying that the people must turn from their sin to God to avoid punishment and to experience his mercy and approval. This is a message for all times and places, but John spoke it with particular urgency; he was preparing the people for the coming Messiah.

John's baptism with water symbolized the washing away of sins. His baptism followed his message of repentance and reformation. Jesus' baptism with fire equips one with power to do God's will. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was first given at Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Holy Spirit came upon believers in the form of tongues of fire, empowering them to proclaim Jesus' resurrection in many languages. The baptism with fire also symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God's judgment on those who refuse to repent.

John warned of impending judgment by comparing those who refuse to live for God to chaff, the useless outer husk of the grain. By contrast, John compared those who repent and reform their lives to the nourishing wheat itself.

The winnowing fork was a pitchfork used to toss wheat so that the kernels would separate from the husks. Those who refuse to be used by God will be discarded because they have no value in furthering God's work. Those who repent and believe, however, hold great value in God's eyes because they are beginning a new life of productive service for him.

**He who gathers in summer is a son.**

**Proverbs 10:5**

He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

Every day has 24 hours filled with opportunities to grow, serve, and be productive. Yet it is easy to waste time, letting life slip from our grasp. Refuse to be a lazy person, sleeping or frittering away the hours meant for productive work. See time as God's gift, and seize your opportunities to live diligently for him.

**Put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe.**

**Joel 3:13**

Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

Joel described multitudes waiting in the "valley of decision" (the valley of judgment of verses 2 and 12). Billions of people have lived on earth, and every one of them—dead, living, and yet to be born—will face judgment. Look around you. See your friends—those with whom you work and live. Have they received God's forgiveness?

If we understand the severity of God's final judgment, we will want to take God's offer of hope to those we know.

**Accept Christ during the harvest.**

**Jeremiah 8:20**

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

These words vividly portray Jeremiah's emotion as he watched his people reject God. He responded with anguish to a world dying in sin. We watch that same world still dying in sin, still rejecting God.

But how often is our heart broken for our lost friends and neighbors, our lost world? Only when we have Jeremiah's kind of passionate concern will we be moved to help. We must begin by asking God to break our heart for the world he loves.

### **The harvest of the earth is ripe.**

#### **Revelation 14:15-20**

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

[16] And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. [17] And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. [18] And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying,

Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. [19] And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. [20] And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

This is an image of judgment: Christ is separating the faithful from the unfaithful like a farmer harvesting his crops. This is a time of joy for the Christians who have been persecuted and martyred—they will receive their long-awaited reward.

Christians should not fear the Last Judgment. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

A winepress was a large vat or trough where grapes were collected and then crushed. The juice flowed out of a duct that led into a large holding vat. The winepress is often used in the Bible as a symbol of God's wrath and judgment against sin (Isaiah 63:3-6; Lamentations 1:15; Joel 3:12, 13). The distance of 180 miles is approximately the north-south length of Palestine.

The depth and length of the blood flow provides a sickening scene of the immensity of God's judgment. But unless we face the necessity of God's judgment, we will never see our desperate need for his mercy.

A god with only a grandfatherly kindness would not inspire our repentance, obedience, or worship. God has promised a harsh harvest for those who reject him. Those who know God well enough to fear his wrath know God well enough to desire his grace. The crushing wrath of God is coming. Blessed are those who have had their sins forgiven, and blessed are those who lead others to God's mercy.

**An invitation is given to open your heart's door.**

**Rev. 3:20**

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:**

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

