

The Harvest

By Mark Mayberry

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INTRODUCTION

Sacred Scripture speaks often about “the harvest.” In fact, the word “harvest” occurs 75x in 65 verses in the NASB.

The first reference is found in God’s response to the sacrifice that Noah offered after the flood (Gen. 8:20-22).

Genesis 8:20-22 (NASB95) — 20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. 22 “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.”

The last reference is in the Book of Revelation, where Christ, the Son of Man, wields His sickle, reaping the earth in judgment (Rev. 14:14-16).

Revelation 14:14-16 (NASB95) — 14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” 16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

In between, there are many passages which speak of the harvest, both in a literal and symbolic fashion.

GOD OF THE HARVEST

The Lord God, Jehovah, is God of the harvest. He is the source of blessings and curses, which are apportioned in response to man’s conduct (Psa. 107:33-38).

Psalms 107:33-38 (NASB95) — 33 He changes rivers into a wilderness And springs of water into a thirsty ground; 34 A fruitful land into a salt waste, Because of the

wickedness of those who dwell in it. 35 He changes a wilderness into a pool of water And a dry land into springs of water; 36 And there He makes the hungry to dwell, So that they may establish an inhabited city, 37 And sow fields and plant vineyards, And gather a fruitful harvest. 38 Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly, And He does not let their cattle decrease.

LABORERS IN THE HARVEST

Man has a responsibility regarding the harvest.

We must be active and industrious, manifesting diligence rather than sloth (Prov. 6:6-11; 10:4-5; 20:4).

Proverbs 6:6-11 (NASB95) — 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest” — 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.

Proverbs 10:4-5 (NASB95) — 4 Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. 5 He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

Proverbs 20:4 (NASB95) — 4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

Let us, therefore, labor for physical provisions (Eccles. 9:10; 11:6; Acts 20:33-35; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-24).

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NASB95) — 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 (NASB95) — 6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

Acts 20:33-35 (NASB95) — 33 “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. 34 “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. 35 “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

Ephesians 6:5-8 (NASB95) — 5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Colossians 3:22-24 (NASB95) — 22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

May we also labor diligently in the Lord's vineyard, actively spreading the borders of His kingdom (Matt. 9:35-38; Rom. 12:10-13).

Matthew 9:35-38 (NASB95) — 35 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. 36 Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Romans 12:10-13 (NASB95) — 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

We should trust in the promises of God, who provides both a physical and spiritual harvest (Isa. 9:1-3; Matt. 4:12-17).

Isaiah 9:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. 2 The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them. 3 You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence As with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

Matthew 4:12-17 (NASB95) — 12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; 13 and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. 14 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 15 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a Light dawned." 17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Even in our present age, men dwell in the shadow of darkness, but God's word provides needed illumination (Psa. 82:5; Prov. 2:1-22).

Psalm 82:5 (NASB95) — 5 They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Proverbs 2:1-22 (NASB95) — 1 My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, 2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; 3 For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; 4 If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will discern the fear of the Lord And discover the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. 9 Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course. 10 For wisdom will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; 11 Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, 12 To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things; 13 From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness; 14 Who delight in doing evil And rejoice in the perversity of evil; 15 Whose paths are crooked, And who are devious in their ways; 16 To deliver you from the strange woman, From the adulteress who flatters with her words; 17 That leaves the companion of her youth And forgets the covenant of her God; 18 For her house sinks down to death And her tracks lead to the dead; 19 None who go to her return again, Nor do they reach the paths of life. 20 So you will walk in the way of good men And keep to the paths of the righteous. 21 For the upright will live in the land And the blameless will remain in it; 22 But the wicked will be cut off from the land And the treacherous will be uprooted from it.

Jesus emphasized the need for workers in sending out the seventy on their limited commission (Luke 10:1-24, esp. vs. 2).

*Luke 10:1-24 (NASB95) — 1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. **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.** 3 "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. 5 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' 6 "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. 8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure*

of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' 12 "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. 13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. 15 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! 16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." 17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." 21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 22 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." 23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, 24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

Jesus emphasized the importance of the harvest in His encounter with the Samaritan woman, and the inhabitants of the city of Sychar (John 4:7-42, esp. vs. 34-38).

John 4:7-42 (NASB95) — 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say

that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.” 27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why do You speak with her?” 28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, 29 “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” 30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. 31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” 32 But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?” **34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. 35 “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 “Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 “For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 38 “I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.”** 39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I have done.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”

The apostle Paul also spoke of a harvest of righteousness in discussing the collection for needy saints (2 Cor. 9:6-15).

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (NASB95) — 6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written, “He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever.” **10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. 13 Because of the proof**

given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, 14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

CONCLUSION

Avoiding the tragedy of a lost harvest (Jer. 8:18-22), let us redeem the time (John 9:4; Eph. 5:15-17; Col. 4:5-6).

Jeremiah 8:18-22 (NASB95) — 18 My sorrow is beyond healing, My heart is faint within me! 19 Behold, listen! The cry of the daughter of my people from a distant land: “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not within her?” “Why have they provoked Me with their graven images, with foreign idols?” 20 “Harvest is past, summer is ended, And we are not saved.” 21 For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me. 22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?

John 9:4 (NASB95) — 4 “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Colossians 4:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

May we be diligent in reference to our own salvation, and also regarding the spiritual needs of others.