

The Challenge of the Harvest

“But when these things begin to take place (signs in the sky; frustration of the nations; men fainting because of fear), straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Lk.21:28)

“Straighten up and lift up your heads,” is the command of Jesus. It is time to look ahead and beyond the events that are happening upon the earth. The last days are critical and dangerous days, but the harvest of the world must be brought in. The angel shouted the command to the Son of Man on the cloud who had a sharp sickle in His hand, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev. 14:15). The hour to reap is Now!

The challenge of the harvest has not lessened our responsibility to the commission of Christ Jesus, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them” to obey the word of God. “You shall be My witnesses” to the whole world. The Greek word, *martus*, originally implied to give a testimony of confirmation, but in time “*martus*” became a designation of those who have suffered death in consequence of confessing Christ.

The challenge of the harvest is thrusting workers into many areas of the world that can be considered very dangerous to Christians. It is been reported that more are dying for the gospel at the present time than any time in history. Most of this information is not reported by the media; however the truth remains, bringing in the harvest of souls is dangerous work.

The main characters of Revelation, chapter twelve; the woman, the red dragon, the male child, and the angel tell the story of the last 2000 years of intense battle between God and Satan. The key to the chapter is the “male child” which the red dragon sought to destroy. The “male child” can only be applicable to one being that has appeared in this world, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. No other one has been caught up to God and His throne and been exalted. Eph. 1:20, 21; Heb. 8:1. No other one has received from God the commission to rule all nations with a rod of iron, but He has been appointed to this work. Psalms 2:7-9.

Who sought to devour the “male child”? It was the “red dragon” identified as the “serpent of old that is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...” How did he do it? Biblical history records that King Herod, the Roman governor of Israel, in a fiendish effort to destroy the infant Jesus, sent forth and slew all the children in Bethlehem from two years old and under. From Rome, Herod derived his power. The “old serpent, the devil, named Satan,” was acting through pagan Rome.

“The woman” who gave birth to the “male child” must be the “true seed” of Israel called “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Paul referred to true Israel as “a remnant according to God’s gracious choice” (Romans 11:5). Mary, the mother of Jesus, belonged to that remnant, and gave birth to the Son of God. The battle for supremacy upon the earth raged for 3 ½ years between Jesus and the devil, and Jesus won every skirmish up until the last week. In what is called “Passion Week” Jesus quit fighting and submitted Himself to the cruelty of Satan. He cried out from His cross, “It is finished,” and bowed His head and gave up His spirit. But He arose three days later, offered His blood in the true tabernacle, taught the disciples for another forty days, and then He ascended up into the heavens and sat down on His throne. When Jesus ascended He “disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them” having triumphed over them. Colossians 1:15.

Jesus saw this victory over Satan in a vision recorded in Luke 10:18. "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." This corresponds to "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Rev. 12:9). Satan cannot enter into heaven and accuse the righteous anymore. However the battle continues upon the earth.

The believer overcomes the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of God. The battle for supremacy is currently raging for the control of the earth. "Woe to the earth...because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.

The church of the first five centuries did not love their lives unto death, but willingly spilled their blood for the testimony of Jesus. The church was given eagles' wings, (the same that was given to Israel when they escaped the wrath of Egypt), and fled into obscurity for 1260 years (a day for a year: Dan. 9). Violence, deception and error did not annihilate the church, but it has emerged on this side of the Dark Ages, ever growing in revelation, wisdom and strength. It now is being motivated by the love of Jesus for the world, and has taken its position as a sickle in the hands of the Son of Man. The church is hearing the command, "Put in your sickle and reap!"

Dangerous times? Persecution? Hardship? Deception? The church has been developed by the Holy Spirit for 2000 years in the environment of danger, threat, hardship and error. It will not be intimidated by a roaring lion or an angry dragon.

Arise church! This is our finest hour!

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