

# THE SEQUENCE OF THE HARVEST

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## INTRODUCTION.

Understanding the sequence of a natural grain harvest is critical to understanding the sequence of the supernatural harvest.

## THE BIBLICAL GRAIN HARVEST HAS THREE ELEMENTS.

There are three main elements of the grain harvest listed in the Bible: the firstfruits, the main body of the harvest, and the gleanings. Since the days of Noah, the Lord has covenanted with men that there would be seed time and harvest (Genesis 8:20-22). In His Word, the Lord clearly established the primary elements that make up a grain harvest. Being a God of principles, patterns, and consistency, the guarantee of "seed time and harvest" would of necessity include the essential Biblical elements which make up a harvest. In order to better understand God's plan for endtime, Apostolic, world-wide harvest, we must come to an understanding of the fundamental elements which make up this harvest.

## THE OFFERING OF "FIRSTFRUITS" ALWAYS PRECEDES THE BIBLICAL HARVEST.

The very first part of any harvest is called the "firstfruits." These belong to the Lord as an offering of thanksgiving for the abundance of the harvest about to be reaped. They are always offered in advance as an act of faith.

Leviticus 23:10-11

10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

A "sheaf" is a number of stalks of wheat which have been harvested and bundled together. The very first bundle or sheaf of wheat was to be brought before the Lord and waved as an offering of "advanced" thanksgiving. Again, the sheaf offering was a demonstration of faith. Anyone can be thankful after the results are in, but only true faith can be equally as thankful before the fact.

The figurative use of the word "sheaf" in Scripture generally typifies a person or persons. In Joseph's dream, each sheaf represented the individual whose name was upon it:

Genesis 37:5-8

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

The sheaves spoken of by the Psalmist symbolized a multitude of people who would be "harvested" by laborers who had sowed the "Word-seeds" with compassion. The harvest of multitudes is guaranteed to the WEEPERS:

Psalms 126:5-6

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

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

While some individuals may be hungry and thirsty enough for God to be reaped by laborers who do not weep, the harvesting of multitudes will never be accomplished by dry-eyed sowers and reapers.

Firstfruits were always "the choicest, the foremost, the first, the best, and the pre-eminent" (*Strong's* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs*) of all that was to follow. In Scripture, the term "firstfruits" can be applied to any living thing and to any means of income (Proverbs 3:9-10). In the Bible, humans were also called "firstfruits" both literally and figuratively:

Exodus 13:2,11-12

2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

11 And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,

12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD's.

Jeremiah 2:3 Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

(READ ALSO: Exodus 22:29)

In the context of this chapter "The Sequence of the Harvest," one of the most important points regarding the firstfruits is that the reapers were forbidden to begin the harvest until AFTER the offering of the firstfruits. So, while the firstfruits are technically a part of the harvest, they are in fact preliminary to the main body of the harvest. The offering of the firstfruits is the signal to begin the harvest. The sheaf of firstfruits gives validity to the main body of the harvest and guarantees that there will be an abundantly blessed harvest. The firstfruits introduce the coming harvest to heaven.

### **THE MAIN BODY OF THE HARVEST IS REFERRED TO AS "THE HARVEST."**

As soon as the word of the acceptance of the firstfruit offering by the Lord of the harvest is spread to the reapers, the harvest begins. The reason for the haste is that the harvest is limited by the law of God to only seven weeks:

Deuteronomy 16:9-10

9 Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn.

10 And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

Taking note of the importance of this time limit cannot be over emphasized. The reapers of the main harvest do not have an open-ended opportunity to reap. When the time allotted for the main harvest has expired, no additional "sheaves" can be added to the "crop." Even though the Lord promised He would finish His work, He stated that He would abbreviate the length of the harvest time period — "cut it short" (Romans 9:28). All of the crops which the laborers are unable to harvest during their designated time for reaping will be required to be left to the "gleaners."

## WHAT ARE "THE GLEANINGS"?

The gleanings are the portion of the crop which time (and God's commands) did not allow to be reaped in the main harvest. The gleanings were produced by the same seeds which were sown at the same time and by the same sowers as that which produced the main harvest.

DEFINITION OF "TO GLEAN" (*WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY*): to collect (grain, etc. left by reapers); to collect the remaining grain, etc. from (a [previously] reaped field).

Deuteronomy 24:19-21

19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

Leviticus 19:9-10

9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.

The gleanings served a different purpose than the grain reaped in the main harvest. While the main crop belonged to the owner of the field, the gleanings became the property of the poor. The grain from the main crop became either bread on the owners table, seed for sowing next year's crop, or profit after being sold in the market place. The grain which was gleaned fed those who could not provide for themselves.

Because the gleanings are the sheaves that are dropped and overlooked or the grain which remains in the unreaped corners of the field, the gleanings usually are significantly smaller in quantity than the main body of the harvest. This point cannot be over emphasized! It is very important to note that if we can determine the approximate size of the gleanings, we can more accurately forecast the size of the harvest which precedes the gleanings.

## **WHO ARE THE GLEANERS?**

As the previously quoted Scriptures state (Deuteronomy 24:19-21; Leviticus 19:9-10), the gleaners are not the same people as the reapers who reaped the main body of the harvest. The gleaners do not own the field. Neither were they members of the group who sowed the field. Gleaners are the poor and strangers. The poor gleaners are those who do not own land; therefore, they have no means to grow a crop. They also lack reasonable resources with which to purchase grain. The strangers are those who are not related to the field's owners. In the context of this chapter, the strangers specifically symbolize those who do not belong to the group who sowed or reaped the main body of the harvest.

The main difference symbolically and typologically between the reapers and the gleaners is that they are under different covenants (they were not saved under the same plan of salvation). The Jews celebrated the CONCLUSION of the seven-week harvest period on the Day of Pentecost (this point will be discussed in greater detail in the document, "The Harvest Cycle"). In the case of the harvest which the first century Church reaped, the reapers (before Pentecost Sunday) were under the Old Testament, after the Day of Pentecost (which concluded one covenant and began the next), the reapers were literally gleaners. Jesus told His disciples that they would reap a harvest upon which "they had bestowed no labor" (John 4:38). This identifies them as "gleaners." Those saved after Pentecost were under the New Testament, yet they were actually a product of "Word-seeds" which were sown under the Old Testament. This is the reason why very few instances in the book of Acts describes "sinners" being saved. Almost everyone specifically mentioned in the accounts of salvation in the book of Acts were already believers in God doing all they knew to do — the devout Jews at Pentecost, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Paul (Saul), Cornelius, Apollos, the disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus, etc.

In the endtime harvest, the reapers (of the main body of the harvest) are under the New Testament, while the gleaners are under the plan of salvation in effect during the seven years of wrath. The rapture will be the endtime Church's "Day of Pentecost," which will conclude the main body of the endtime harvest. Those saved during the seven years of God's wrath (traditionally, yet inaccurately, called the "Great Tribulation") were reaped by gleaners. They were saved under a different plan of salvation than the departed Church. Revelation 7:17 specifically states that they do not receive the Holy Ghost until after they arrive in heaven. While these who are the gleanings of the endtime harvest are saved and a part of the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), they are NOT the Church and are not in the Church (see Chapter 15 of the book, "The Time of Abraham's Promise" for the specifics of this point and further proof that those saved during seven years of wrath are the "gleanings").

## **THE SPIRITUAL HARVEST HAS THE SAME THREE ELEMENTS AS THE NATURAL HARVEST.**

The Biblical order of the harvest of the Church Age is also the order of the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:4,5). This sequence is a key to unlocking the secret to many confusing passages of Scripture. Please keep the elements of the harvest and their order in mind as we continue to study the subject of endtime harvest.

The harvest order of both the spiritual harvest and the first resurrection is: the firstfruits — Christ, the main body of the harvest — the Church, and the gleanings — those saved out of "great" tribulation.

## **CHRIST IS THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE CHURCH'S HARVEST.**

The firstfruits was the forerunner sheaf of the coming harvest:

1 Corinthians 15:20,23

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept...

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

The firstfruits sheaf was to represent the main body of the harvest before the Lord's altar. It was also symbolic of the entire main body of the coming harvest, which is the Church, also called "the Body of Christ." The firstfruits sheaf was not the whole harvest but a part of the whole. Yet, the whole was represented in that one sheaf. Christ was the firstfruits of both the coming harvest under the New Covenant and the first of the saved dead to be resurrected. The New Testament harvest could not begin until after He was crucified, buried, resurrected (the harvesting of the firstfruits sheaf), and ascended into heaven (the offering of the firstfruits sheaf before the altar of God - Leviticus 23:10-11).

Christ was, at the same time, both the law and its fulfillment (the Word made flesh). The human part of Christ was "saved" under the Old Testament. (He obeyed all of the conditions required for acceptance by the Father under the Old Testament; therefore, He was sinless. If He had not obeyed, He would have been in need of saving.) While the man Christ Jesus was the last person "saved" under the Old Testament or Covenant, He was the first to be resurrected from the dead under the New Covenant. He was the "firstborn" among many brethren:

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

God the Father in His manifestation as Christ is the testator of the New Testament:

Hebrews 9:14-17

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

*Webster's* says that a "testator" is "one who has died leaving a valid will." The last "will and testament" of the testator is a legal document which delineates the testator's assets and specifies how the testator's assets will be distributed to the heirs.

If Christ is a person of God apart from the Father, then "God the Son" had no inheritance to offer. Only the death of a father bequeaths assets to a son. The death of a son occurring before the death of the father never disburses the assets of the living father. But, if Christ was the only visible manifestation of God the Father (Colossians 1:15), if He was the Creator God of the Old Testament robed in flesh (2 Timothy 3:16), and if His body was the only part of God that could die (Hebrews 10:1-14), then Christ could fulfill legally and legitimately the office of the testator. The office of the testator is the office of the FATHER **NOT** the SON.

**The deity in Christ was, by His own confession, God the Father not "God the Son"** (John 10:38; 14:10,11; 17:21,23). It was for this reason that He commanded His disciples "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the FATHER . . ." (Acts 1:4). Yet, Peter declared:

Acts 2:22-24, 32-33

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it . . .

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the giver and dispenser of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost which began on the first day of the New Testament Church. This alone proves convincingly the Fatherhood of the Deity which indwelt the Christ.

Paul further confirms this theological position with his emphatic declaration:

1 Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

### **THE CHURCH IS THE MAIN BODY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HARVEST.**

The outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) was the beginning of the main portion of the New Testament harvest. The result of this harvest is called "the Church." The Church consists of those who are saved during the Dispensation of Grace — the Church Age. The qualification for being included as a part of this harvest is to belong to Christ:

1 Corinthians 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then those who are alive and are Christ's will be caught up together with those who were dead. Who are those who are "in Christ"? Those who belong to Christ have been baptized into Christ and have had the Spirit of Christ baptized into them:

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.



1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

True worshipers are in Christ and Christ is in them:

John 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Obviously, the "main body" of the harvest is reaped over a 2,000 year period. However, with more unsaved people alive today than in all of the history of man combined, it stands to reason that, quantitatively, the vast majority of the main harvest will come from those alive today — THE LAST DAYS. Surely, God did not exhaust His best efforts on those few (relatively speaking) who were saved at the beginning of the Church. The Lord would not have left this generation of believers with little in the way of spiritual resources while expecting them to accomplish the greatest task faced by any generation in Church history.

God's pattern and its inherent promise is that He saves the best until last. In Haggai 2:9, the Lord proclaimed that the glory of the latter house would be greater than the former. "Latter," in this context, is not intended to imply a different house, but a later version of the same house. The last day Church will not be a different Church but a greater dimension of the same Church which began on the Day of Pentecost.

### **THE GLEANINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HARVEST ARE THOSE WHO ARE SAVED OUT OF "GREAT TRIBULATION."**

Every Biblical harvest has three parts to it: the firstfruits, the main harvest, and the gleanings. Paul stated that Christ was the firstfruits of the first resurrection and those who belong to Christ are claimed at His coming.

1 Corinthians 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Those saved at the end of the main harvest are reaped approximately 2,000 years after the firstfruits. Yet, Christ as the fruits and the Church as the main body of the harvest are only two parts of a Biblical harvest. Biblically, there must be a third part — the gleanings:

Revelation 7:9-14

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

While the Jews were told to conclude the harvest after seven weeks of reaping, it did not mean that all of the grain had been harvested. The grain that they were not allowed to harvest after this date was to be left for the poor and strangers to glean.

It would almost appear as though the harvest was interrupted rather than completed. But this is not so. In the plan of God, He left some of the grain for other reapers, other purposes, and other times of reaping.

The typology of the first resurrection is representative of the three parts of the spiritual grain harvest. By this typology, the rapture would end the main harvest. Accordingly, the gleanings of this harvest would be those who are saved during what is referred to as the "Great Tribulation." As with the souls gleaned after the first Pentecost Sunday (the initial outpouring of the Holy Ghost), the people gleaned after the catching away of the Church would be saved under a different plan of salvation than the main harvest which preceded them.

It is very important to note that the direct connection between the harvest and the resurrection is that the time of the resurrection is at the conclusion of the harvest of souls for each portion of the harvest. For example, Christ, who is the firstfruits, was resurrected at the beginning of the Church Age, even as the sheaf of the firstfruits of the grain harvest was presented before the Lord's altar before the main body of the harvest could even begin. The main body of the endtime harvest is resurrected at its conclusion which is the rapture. The gleanings will not be resurrected until the end of the seven years of wrath. All three of these resurrections are collectively called the "first resurrection." Any portion of the resurrection would be considered in the light of the harvest metaphor as taking the grain to the barns.

Revelation 20:4-6

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

## **THE CONCLUSION:**

The endtime harvest spans the covenants. The beginning and the ending of covenants are transitional periods. Those being reaped (or saved immediately after a transitional point) can be, at the same time, both the firstfruits and gleanings.

Christ was the firstfruits of those who would be resurrected under the New Covenant. At the same time, He was the last person reaped in the main body of the Old Testament harvest. His death concluded the Old Testament (Hebrews 9:14-20). His resurrection and ascension to heaven began, as the firstfruits, the New Testament.

Those saved as a part of the Church starting on the Day of Pentecost were the beginning of the main harvest of the New Testament. Yet, at the same time, they were literally the gleanings of the Old Testament's "endtime (or end of covenant) harvest."

At the termination of the New Testament, those saved after the rapture will be the gleanings of the Church Age. They also will be the firstfruits of the plan of salvation which will come into effect after the rapture.

If the New Testament's endtime harvest's gleanings (those saved primarily by martyrdom "out of great tribulation - Revelation 7:14) were a multitude "no man could number" (Revelation 7:9), then the number comprising the main body of the harvest must be very great indeed. Will we believe and participate or will the Lord be forced to find replacement laborers?

The endtime harvest will be the most significant thing the Lord has ever done through men. It is impossible for the harvest to fail to come to pass. Let us determine that we will be participants not spectators!