

When the Crop Permits

By Francis Frangipane

[*\(En Español\)*](#)

Certainly, the period prior to Christ's return will be both difficult and perilous. Scripture warns that God's voice will shake all things, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. Everything that can be shaken, will be shaken and removed (Heb. 12:27).

Yet, there is more on the calendar of God than increasing judgments and the rapture. There will also be the advance and establishing of God's kingdom (Dan.2:44; Matt. 24:14; Matt. 13). A spiritually mature people will serve as the vanguard of His kingdom. Before the Lord is glorified in the earth, He shall be glorified in the church (see Isa. 60:1-3; Eph. 5:27). Indeed, the attainment of Christlike maturity in those who pursue the Lord shall not be a mere sidebar on the scroll of end-time events; it will be the main attraction.

Listen carefully to what Jesus taught. He said,

"The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26-29).

Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a farmer waiting for the maturing of His crops. During the harvest season, farmers are concerned about two primary things: the quantity and quality of the harvest. I live in eastern Iowa. Some corn and soybean fields, which may have started strong, fail or are stunted due to unusually high or low temperatures or lack of rain. As a result, farmers plow under their fields because their crops did not reach maturity. There was no "mature grain in the head."

Just as the farmer will not harvest without the grain becoming mature, so God is seeking a crop of Christ-followers that have reached spiritual maturity. God is after full stature not just full numbers. Take note: Jesus said, "when the *crop* permits," God puts in the sickle. The return of Christ isn't about a certain "day or hour," for it is the spiritual stature of the harvest that triggers the great unfolding of end-time events. You see, God is not looking at His watch; He's looking at His crop.

What does spiritual maturity look like? Recall Paul's words. He wrote, "We are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete" (2 Cor. 10:6). What does complete obedience look like? It looks like Christians taking "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Again, God is looking for Christlikeness to ripen within us as we approach the end of the age. Indeed, our maturing can actually hasten the coming of the day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:12).

"Man...in the image of God" is the seed-idea purposed by the Almighty from before time began (Gen. 1:27). It does not in any way mean we think we are gods or that we take Christ's place; it means Christ has truly taken our place (Gal 2:20). The original plan was for man to be conformed to Christ. This is what the "mature head in the grain" looks like: mature Christlikeness.

For too long we have assumed that only the numeric size of the harvest was the focus of the Father. Certainly, the number of people saved is pivotal: "the fullness of the gentiles" must come into the kingdom (Rom. 11:25). However, the Almighty does not just want numbers; He wants spiritual maturity.

Thus, the Lord is not looking at a calendar thinking, "Oh, it's the year 2011 (or 2020, etc.). I have to destroy the world on that date." No. A farmer does not reap his crops without first walking his fields, holding samples of the grain, and studying the moisture and integrity of the seed head before he begins his harvest. Again, the maturity of the crop determines the day of the harvest.

So many Christians are frozen in spiritual immaturity. They are easily offended, often distracted and without prayer or spiritual discipline. We think God is requiring of us simply to hang on, yet the Lord is looking for more. Paul says the goal of God in the church is that "we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *to a mature man*, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Even now, believers around the world are becoming increasingly more Christlike. They live in India and China, Africa and South America, Europe and North America, and places beyond. Yes, they are comparatively a little flock, yet "with unveiled face," they are "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" and "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). When this crop permits, the Father shall put in His sickle for the harvest has come.

Let's pray: *Lord Jesus, as You continue looking for spiritual completeness in the harvest, help me to grow to full stature, that I may truly represent a planting which has grown up into Your likeness.*

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