

“2010-2020: A ‘Decade from Heaven’”

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As we move into the first year of a new decade (2010-2020), there are hopes expressed in the secular press that the *next* ten years – compared to the *last* decade - will bring an improvement in our lives and new hope for our world. At the close of 2009 “Time” magazine made headlines with their eye-catching story, “The ‘00s: Goodbye (at Last) to the Decade from Hell.” The author took note of the massive Y2K computer scare at the beginning of the last decade (January 1, 2000) and the global financial wipeout at the close of the decade – and ten years of misery, mishaps, and misfortunes - that caused the decade to also be labeled the “Decade of Reckoning,” the “Decade of Broken Dreams,” and even, “The Lost Decade” (Andy Serwer, “Time,” November 24, 2009).

All of that may be true on the surface, especially from the standpoint of North Americans who finally are catching up to the dismal economic realities already experienced for many decades by the “Majority World” (A term used by “New Internationalist” magazine to refer to Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean).

Followers of Jesus Christ, however, operate from a counter-cultural worldview quite apart from the predictions and prognostications of secular materialism. Living in-between the perils of our time and the promises of God, we follow Christ's command to make disciples of all nations, going to the ends of the earth until the end of time (Matthew 28.18-20).

Our confidence is that 2010-2020 will be "A Decade from Heaven," especially on a global scale. Why can we expect this possibility? Already there are signs that the next ten years will be:

1. ***A Decade of Defined Discipleship*** – in the Great Commission community – local churches, denominations, networks, associations, missions agencies, missions training systems, laity in the marketplace, students, youth, children – there is a convergence of a generation of international, interdenominational cooperation and partnership in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is expressed in the great theme of the Lausanne movement for world evangelization, "The Whole Church taking The Whole Gospel to The Whole World." There is unprecedented unity and collaboration in place to reach the remaining unreached people groups and most resistant areas of the world with the gospel and new church planting.
2. ***A Decade of Demographic Destiny*** – In the coming decade, one of the largest demographic blocs in modern history (at least in the United States), the "Baby Boomers" will be firmly moved into retirement years (around the ages of 55 – 75). Those keyed into

kingdom values and the mission of God in the world will use their financial means and mentoring influence to challenge a whole new generation (their children and grandchildren). Already, missiologists are calling for a massive evangelism effort in the “4/14 Window,” the largest global age grouping of ages 4 – 14. While we could shudder at the dismal prospect of losing that generation, think of the strategic potential, the demographic destiny of masses from that age grouping ten years from now. When the current international age grouping of 4 – 14 comes to the close of this new decade in 2020 they will be in the age grouping of 14 – 24 and will have, Biblically/spiritually speaking, far-reaching potential. Just look at the impact of that age grouping in scripture, in Christian history, and in the most recent 100 years of Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal! We must reach, teach, and deploy this group for demographic destiny!

3. *A Decade of Desperate Desire* – From all contemporary reports and accounts, it is precisely this generation of students, teen-agers, and children who are experiencing a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their world and are calling out in spiritual hunger and desperate desire for revival. Here is one report from an eyewitness to the recent Urbana 2009 Student Mission Convention where more than 16,000 students from 100+ countries came together to consider their place in God’s work in the world:

“Many Inter-Varsity staff who have been to Urbanas for decades have said this is the most spiritually hungry group of Urbana students they’ve ever seen. Seminars have been pouring out into adjacent halls and floors, long lines to get into Bible studies, and

students weeping in the main session as speaker after speaker challenged them to live for Christ!”

The “Great Century of Missions,” the era of William Carey and other notables, was preceded by over 100 years of “Concerts of Prayer,” in the Moravian and Pietist tradition – all of them led by laity and students. The modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement was preceded by years of desperate intercession and a longing for holiness in many parts of the world. God answered those cries. In our day, scores of prayer movements such as the “Global Day of Prayer” are mobilizing multiplied millions of believers for ongoing intercession. It could very well be that we are on the verge of the greatest move of God in all of history, “A Decade from Heaven!”

4. ***A Decade of Divine Determination*** – The Bible is a mission book and our God is a missionary God. The entire scripture is filled with God’s directives and determination that, “...this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations...” (Matthew 24.14a) and that, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2.17a). We can rest with 100% assurance that when God’s people meet God’s requirements, then God will “...hear from heaven” and proactively respond among His people and in their world (2 Chronicles 7.14).

As we track the rapid expansion of the Church around the world, may we witness once again in this new decade a recurrence of the affirmation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the young church in Thessalonica:

“The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for his Son from heaven*, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath” (1 Thessalonians 1.8-10).

In a suffering world, may we also be filled with the same “blessed hope” of Christ’s second coming that captured the imagination and actions of the Thessalonians who were promised that, “...the Lord himself will come *down from heaven...*” (1 Thessalonians 4.16a) and their suffering would be relieved when, “...the Lord Jesus is *revealed from heaven* in blazing fire with his powerful angels” (2 Thessalonians 1.7).

Like the first disciples, it is not for us to predict, “...to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1.7) but to, “...receive power when the Holy Spirit comes...” on us and be Christ’s witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). As we move with faith and hope into this new decade, let us – like the early disciples – wait in prayer and expectancy for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that “*came from heaven*” (Acts 2.2; 1 Peter 1.12) and move into our world on mission with God.