

# Asia Harvest



**'Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!' (Mark 4:29)**

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## **A Special China Issue**

**Massive Persecution is Underway**

# From the Frontlines

***“From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.”*** (Revelation 4:5-6).

Many years ago we were in Europe and spent a few hours visiting an ancient palace. There were hundreds of priceless paintings and other antiques adorning the rooms and hallways, but the room I remember most was the throne room, from where the former kings and queens ruled and reigned over their subjects. It may not have been the largest or most elaborate room in the palace, but it was the location where the power and authority of the monarchy was concentrated. Decisions were made there, and laws were issued that had to be obeyed or punishment would ensue.

Going through the Bible and studying all the references to God’s throne is very encouraging. Many of God’s people saw His glorious throne, from Moses and the 70 elders of Israel, to Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel, among others. All struggled to find words to adequately describe the throne. If the throne is indescribably glorious because the Almighty God sits on it, imagine how great the glory of His presence is!

In this newsletter we share some serious prayer requests and news from the Church in China, but as you read them, please keep in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ is firmly seated on His glorious throne and is in total control! The words He spoke after being raised from the dead remain true, and will remain true forever: ***“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”*** (Matthew 28:18).

While governments and wicked men have always plotted to harm God’s people and to thwart His kingdom, the followers of Jesus have nothing to fear! The Church in China and around the world belongs to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who has declared, ***“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.’”***

***The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath”*** (Psalm 2:1-5).

# Please Pray for China

## *Massive Persecution is Underway*

***Note:** The following alert was recently sent to people on our Asia Harvest email list. The email and online version included links to important web pages and a video, which helped readers understand the current situation facing Christians in China. If you have internet access and would like to view those links, please do so by visiting our website: [www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org).*

For decades we have strived to openly share news and prayer requests from Asia, as we seek to help God's people extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In this newsletter we have a deep burden to share with you, and we ask for your fervent prayers and intercession for our brothers and sisters in the Chinese house churches. They are now undergoing a fiery trial that is more fierce than anything experienced in China since the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

In the past 18 months, **the situation for Christians in China has dramatically worsened**. At the start, we hesitated to publicly share the developments for a few reasons. Some of the news we have received from Chinese church leaders is so dire that most believers around the world wouldn't believe it if we told them. We also wanted to ensure that these things were not part of a short-term crackdown, as over the years we have seen numerous seasons of persecution come and go in China. However, we believe the time has come to present the known facts, to help you understand what our fellow believers are experiencing right now.

\* President Xi Jinping—who is about to have the constitution amended so he can remain in power for as long as he wishes—first raised concerns among Christians about three years ago when he spoke about the need to control “illegal religion”. Persecution has markedly worsened since then, and hundreds of house church pastors have vanished over the past few years. Many are assumed to have been killed. Others may be held in “black jails” — secret facilities where they are tortured mercilessly. **When someone enters a black jail they are usually never heard from again.** Their families have no idea of their whereabouts, and all communication ceases.

\* You are unlikely to hear much fresh information about the Church in China, because most mission organizations working in China have been targeted in recent years. Thousands of Western Christians have been expelled from the country, while many of the large 'persecution' ministries have seen their Chinese contacts arrested. The result is that news about the Church in China is becoming difficult to access. The government appears to be **trying to throw a blanket over the Church**, so that the rest of the world can't see or hear what's going on inside the country.

\* Christian activity in China is now being strictly monitored due to the presence of tens of millions of facial-recognition cameras that have sprung up in every city and town, and now even in villages. The data from these cameras is fed into a massive computer network around the clock. Using 'artificial intelligence', alerts are sent to the police if the computers detect any suspicious activity, such as a group of Christians gathering at a home for worship or Bible study.

\* For decades, most members of Three-Self churches in China thought they were safe because they had registered with the government. Many looked down on the illegal house church networks and chided them for not "obeying the laws of the land." The distinctions between the two groups are now blurred. **Hundreds of Three-Self pastors have also been arrested** in the last few years, and church buildings have been demolished by special paramilitary forces. The largest single worship center in China, the Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi Province, had a congregation of more than 50,000 members. The building, which was constructed with official permission, was recently blown up by the Chinese authorities and is now a pile of rubble.

\* Last year the government announced **draconian new laws** designed to punish "illegal religion" (i.e. all worship or activity outside the control of the atheistic Communist Party). These new laws, which came into effect last month, include fines of up to US\$30,000 for holding prayer meetings or Bible studies, while Christians who travel overseas (including to Hong Kong) to attend conferences or other Christian events may be arrested and fined up to US\$50,000. These amounts are more than a lifetime's income for many Chinese believers. Pressure is also being applied to those who associate with Christians. For example, landlords face heavy fines if they rent a property to any believers who subsequently use it for meetings.

\* As a result of this massive suppression, in the past year almost all house church networks we serve have stopped holding large gatherings, and have broken down into **tiny groups of no more than 4 or 5 believers**. Even these small meetings carry the risk of detection and police action, so great is the control being exerted.

\* In some parts of the country, thousands of Chinese Christians have been arrested. The worst of all is in northwest China, where the government has cast a wide net to demolish the threat of Islam, with at least 120,000 people currently believed to be held in concentration camps throughout the region. Many Christians in Xinjiang, both Han Chinese and ethnic minority believers, have been rounded up and **sent to the same concentration camps**. Church leaders we work with have told us things there are now “worse than during the Cultural Revolution.”

\* **The supply of Bibles to Chinese Christians has been severely reduced.** The house churches have never been officially allowed to access Bibles, but now the registered churches are also reporting a great shortage. Last year, the few remaining Bible courier ministries that were operating from Hong Kong also closed down. A decade ago, Asia Harvest was one of about a dozen known ministries providing Bibles to the house churches of China. Most of those groups have since been forced out of the country through threats, intimidation, seduction, and other means.

We have received reports of some foreign Bible couriers recently being stopped at the border. In the past, officials would confiscate the Bibles and allow the person to continue on their journey. Now, those caught with Chinese Bibles have been interrogated for up to 12 hours, expelled from China, and banned from coming back for 10 years. We believe the overall purpose is to isolate the children of God in China by **strangling the supply of God’s Word**. Many Chinese Christian websites, Bible apps and other resources have also been blocked by the government.

\* China is also extending its anti-Christian influence into neighboring countries. We have received reports of believers in Nepal, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam being **warned not to spread the Gospel** across their borders into China, or they will face severe consequences.

**Summary:** Few Christians around the world imagined that China would ever return to an era of intense anti-Christian persecution like during Mao’s rule, but things are in place for a brutal and prolonged period of struggle for Christians in China. In many ways, because of new technology, believers face an even greater challenge than during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution. Many in the West thought that Communism collapsed with the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Politicians were certain that free market reforms would cause China to embrace democracy. They were wrong. The dark forces of aggressive, God-hating atheism are alive and well in China, North Korea, and other parts of the world.

## PRAYER REQUESTS FOR CHINA

\* **Praise God** that He has done a wonderful work of grace in China during nearly 70 years of Communist rule! Today there are at least 100 million Christians in the country, many of whom love the Lord Jesus with all their hearts and are willing to lay down their lives for the Gospel. Pray this persecution will cause the Church to **rise up and claim even more of their country for the kingdom of God.**

\* **Please pray the kingdom of Jesus Christ would be strengthened and would grow** even larger as a result of the current anti-Christian campaign. Pray that Satan would not have his way, but that God's children would be covered by the Blood of Jesus and would come through the tribulations refined like pure gold.

\* Ask God to glorify His Name once again among His people in China, and that by breaking down into tiny groups of believers, the **churches may get back to the basics of the faith** and introduce more people to the Lord than ever before.

\* Most of the younger generation of Christian leaders in China have never experienced severe, physical persecution. Understandably, many are nervous. Please pray our Heavenly Father would reveal Christ's all-sufficiency to them, and they would come through the other side closer to God and better equipped to lead His people.

\* **Pray the Holy Spirit would give His people heavenly wisdom** and strategies to know what to do in this crisis, and that the transformative power of the Gospel will continue to be shared to the one billion people in China who have not yet bowed their knee to the Lord.

\* By God's hand, Asia Harvest has provided almost 11 million Bibles to the house churches in China over the years. We wish it was many millions more! The pressure is intense, but **please pray the Lord will continue to hold open the door for us to continue. Please intercede for our Chinese co-workers** who oversee the projects. As long as there is a slight opening, we want to faithfully continue to obey what God first called us to do 30 years ago.

\* Satan and wicked men have continually tried to destroy God's people in China over the centuries, but His plans have progressed regardless. **Pray the King of Kings would confound the present generation of rulers**, and they would learn the lesson that many have previously discovered, dating back to the time of Pharaoh's persecution of God's children, for the Bible says, ***"The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites"*** (Exodus 1:12).



## ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



*Asia Harvest is supporting 1,255 Asian evangelists among 903 people groups.*



You can sponsor an Asian evangelist among an unreached people group for **\$25 per month** each. Prayer cards and updates are sent to all regular supporters of this project. To date, the evangelists we help have led **249,733 people to faith in Jesus Christ.**

## CHINA BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: 10,925,891 Chinese Bibles printed and distributed.*

Bibles are distributed free of charge to house churchese in China, equipping the Body of Christ. **Each full Chinese Bible costs just \$1.80 to print and deliver.**

## LIVING MARTYRS' FUND



*Asia Harvest is currently supporting 291 living martyrs.*

Supporting church leaders and widows in China, Vietnam and elsewhere who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. **\$35 per month** helps a living martyr.

## ASIAN BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: 843,937 Bibles printed in 95 languages.*

The **Asian Bible Fund** provides the Scriptures in many languages to Christians in **Southeast Asia**, the **Indian subcontinent** and elsewhere. **Each Bible costs an average of \$2.70 to print and deliver.**

## BLESS THE CHILDREN FUND



*So far 137,534 children in Asia have been impacted by the Gospel.*

Providing children's Gospel literature, Sunday school materials, and lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. It costs an average of just **\$10 to impact a child for Jesus Christ.**



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