

God's Reaping Of The Earth

(Revelation 14:14-20)

Scripture Reading—*Revelation 14:14-20*

14 And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." 19 And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Intro: This morning we take up where we left off last Sunday in Revelation chapter 14. This 14th chapter presents a series of angelic announcements contrasting the fate of those bearing the mark of Christ on their foreheads, to those bearing the mark of the Beast on their right hands or on their foreheads. The chapter opens with the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, standing triumphant on Mount Zion with a group of 144,000, who have His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. This group of 144,000 are identified as the Jewish evangelists of chapter 7 who were sealed by God and sent forth to share the good news of salvation in Christ with the people of the world. Having completed their evangelistic ministry they are now standing triumphant with Christ on Mount Zion in heaven. They are singing a new song, which no one else could learn but them. Perhaps this is a song praising God for their redemption and deliverance from the Beast (14:1-5).

The remainder of the chapter, verses 6-20, presents a procession of six angels making announcements about dramatic events that will take place during the last days of the Tribulation period. We examined the first three angel's

announcements last Sunday. **The first angel** was dispatched to fly through the midheavens announcing the everlasting gospel to all the peoples of the world (vv. 6-7). This is God's final offer of grace before Christ returns in judgment, and the people are made to drink of the wine of the wrath of God. **A second angel** followed after the first angel announcing the final overthrow of Babylon (v. 8). The point of this proclamation is that the political-religious and commercial system over which the Beast is the head is doomed to destruction. This destruction will be detailed in chapters 17 and 18. **A third angel** follows the first two angels announcing the doom of beast-worshippers (vv. 9-11). Anyone who worships the beast and receives the mark of his name "will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of His wrath." The torment of those who reject God and worship the beast will last forever and ever. Unlike those who bow to the Beast, the Saints of God who experience persecution and martyrdom at the hands of the Beast are promised eternal rest and blessings (vv 12-13). In a certain sense, believers of every age can draw comfort from these words. The believer does not face death as the end, but proceeds to be with Jesus until being glorified at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Blessed are those who have fallen asleep in Jesus!

The remainder of this chapter, verses 14-20, describe God's final reaping of the earth. The harvest of God's judgment is pictured as reaping the wicked Beast worshippers of earth, like ripe clusters of grapes, who will be thrown into the great wine press of the wrath of God. The divine reaping depicted in these 7 verses actually introduces the final 7 Bowl Judgments coming up in chapters 15 and 16.

The passage lends itself to a threefold division. **First**, the reapers involved in this harvest are the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His holy angels (vv. 14-18). **Second**, the reason for the reaping is because the wicked, Christ-rejecting world, is ripe for judgment (vv. 15 and 18), **and third**, the results of the reaping (vv. 19-20), pictures the wicked Beast worshippers of earth, like ripe clusters of grapes, being gathered and thrown into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

I. The Reapers Involved In The Reaping (vv. 14-18)

A. One like a Son of man (v. 14)

14 And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand.

John next sees, One like a Son of man sitting on a white cloud, and wearing a golden crown on His head, and holding a sharp sickle in His hand. This is a description of the Lord Jesus Christ (Dan. 7), who will be coming from heaven to earth as the victorious Warrior King to Judge the wicked people of earth. The sickle in His hand represents judgment (Rev. 19:11-21).

B. Angels announce and carryout the reaping (vv. 15-18)

15 Another angel comes out of the temple in heaven, and crying out in a loud voice, directs Christ to proceed with the harvest. **16** And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped. Christ is pictured here as carrying out His Father's command to execute the final judgment, however, He will use His angels to accomplish the frightful reaping, vv. 17-18,

In verses 17 and 18 John sees two more angels come out of the temple in heaven. In verse 17 he describes an angel with a sharp sickle, who according to verse 19 swings his sickle upon the earth and gathers the clusters of ripe grapes, and throws them into the *great* winepress of the wrath of God.

In verse 18, another angel who has the power over fire, came out from the altar of God, And calling out with a loud voice, instructed the angel with the sickle to put in his sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the vine of the earth, and throw them into the great winepress of the wrath of God (v. 19).

This angel, described as possessing the power of fire, stands for God's glory (Exodus 24:17), and God's righteous judgment (Gen. 19:24; Rev. 20:15). This angel proceeds from God's altar, as the representative of His glory, and instructs the reaping angel with the sharp sickle to commence with God's righteous judgment. Several writers suggest that the reference to fire may have a connection with the altar of incense. You may recall from our earlier studies of Revelation 6:9-11 and 8:3-6 that the souls of the martyred believers of the Tribulation reside under the altar of incense, and they cry out continually for God to avenge their blood by judging the wicked people of the earth who persecuted and killed them. Here we see God dispatching His holy angels to vindicate the Tribulation saints who were persecuted and martyred by the Beast and his wicked followers for holding on to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason for this reaping is recorded in vv. 15 and 18.

II. The Reason For The Reaping (vv. 15, 18)

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” **18** And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.”

Twice we read that the reason for this horrific judgment is “because the harvest of the earth and the grapes of the vine are ripe”; that is, the wicked people of earth are ripe for judgment.

It is noted that two figures of judgment are used in these verses, the harvest of the earth (v. 15), and the gathering of grape clusters from the vine (v 18). These two figures of judgment are different. The first reference to the harvest of the earth *refers to grain*. The grain is ripe, meaning it is actually withered and rotting. **RIPE** speaks symbolically of the wicked people of the earth, who are spiritually lifeless, and long overdue for God’s judgment. In the same way, *the grape clusters on the vine are also ripe*. Again, the grapes on the vine refer to the wicked people of earth who have reveled in their wickedness and immorality for far too long. God’s righteous judgment upon them is long overdue, and has now come!.

Concerning the judgments depicted here Dr. Ryrie says, “The picture here is that all the false religion of man is fully ripe and ready for harvest. Thus the harvest is ready because man in his own efforts apart from the life of God has fully developed an apostate religious system” (Revelation, 92). **The situation in our present world suggests that God’s judgment is not far off!**

Verses 19 and 20 describe the results of God’s reaping.

III. The Results Of The Reaping (vv. 19-20)

19 And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. **20** And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and

blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

John watches as the reaping angel swings his sharp sickle over the earth, and the clusters of harvested grapes are thrown into the great wine press of the wrath of God. They will be trodden outside the city, with blood coming forth from the wine press as high as the horses' bridles, and flowing for a distance of "1,600 stadia," which is equivalent to 180 miles.

John is here describing the final judgment of God on the wicked Beast worshippers of the Tribulation period. This judgment is commonly referred to as the Battle of Armageddon. It is described by John in Revelation 19, and by the prophets Ezekiel (ch. 39), Joel (ch. 3), and Zechariah (ch. 14). This final battle to be waged by the forces of Antichrist against the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming, will take place in the valley north of Jerusalem called Jezreel or Megiddo. It is not really a battle, but a final blood bath executed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and His angelic reapers. It results in the worst carnage of human flesh the world has ever known. The reference to blood coming forth from the wine press as high as the horses' bridles (or four and one-half feet), and flowing for a distance of 180 miles is not literal but hyperbolic. Hyperbole is a literary device that uses deliberate and obvious exaggeration for effect. Hyperbole is very common in apocalyptic literature.

In any event, while this final judgment of God is pictured as a great slaughter, it is a judgment upon the Beast worshippers who have spurned God's repeated offers of salvation. They spurned the witness of the 144,000 who preached God's grace to them. They spurned the two witnesses who preached God's grace to them for the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation. They spurned the witness of God's angel who flew across the skies preaching the everlasting Gospel to every person on earth. The wrath of God will come upon this wicked world. God's wrath is His righteous response to man's sin. He is loving and compassionate, but He is also a holy and righteous Judge.

Conclusion: While a majority of modern Bible teachers and preachers scoff at and deride the subject of God's judgment, preferring rather to preach about a God of love and tolerance, who will accept everyone in the end, the Book of Revelation makes it clear that the wrathful judgment of God is coming.

The good news for us this morning is that as believers we will never have to experience the horrors of the Tribulation. God promises to deliver us from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10). **Today is a day of grace.** The invitation remains open to anyone who will trust in Christ by receiving God's gracious gift of salvation. If you are here this morning and have never asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart as Savior, and to forgive you of your sins, I urge you to speak with Him as I close in prayer. God knows your heart, and is far more concerned with the attitude of your heart than your words.

Closing Prayer:

Closing Song: *How Great Thou Art!*