The Final Reapings of the Earth and the Grapes of Wrath
Revelation 14:14–20

As we open our text in Revelation, we find ourselves in the worst time in world history; and it is about to get worse; the seventh trumpet has sounded (11:15) but we do not learn the effects of the bowl judgments until chapter 16; these bowl judgments poured out on the earth will end all catastrophic judgments; what we do know is: the abomination of desolation by the Antichrist in the temple in Jerusalem has taken place; the persecution of Israel has reached fever pitch as the Antichrist now attempts to annihilate the Jews as a people; the execution and martyrdom of Christians worldwide is taking place; Satan is ruling the world with an iron fist through the rule of the Antichrist aided by the False Prophet; the whole world is deceived into worshipping the Antichrist as if he were god while blaspheming the true God and His Son Jesus Christ.

We find ourselves in the second half of the great Tribulation with 3½ years left before the Lord and His Church return to earth when He will eradicate evil all together; that will be a time when the Antichrist and the False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire; a time when the Lord Jesus stuffs Satan into the bottomless pit; a time when Christ sets up His Millennial Kingdom where He will rule from the throne of David in peace, bringing truth, righteousness and justice to the earth.

But judgments must come first!

In our text we see God’s final reapings of the earth; these reapings are the unprecedented final holocaust that gives the world the greatest bloodbath ever, the fury of Christ released in final and devastating judgment.

The promise of judgment is not new in Scripture; John the Baptist warned of judgment to come; in speaking to his generation he said, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7); the apostle Paul gave warning of “the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all
unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18); in 2 Thessalonians, Paul says that when the Lord is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, He comes “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 2:7–9); Peter writes that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat, both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness” (2 Peter 3:10–11).

As we get into our text, it is the final vision in this chapter and it is a vision of judgment; there are two judgments and they are both depicted with a reaper and a sickle in hand, for the harvests are ripe; one harvest judgment is a grain harvest (vss. 14–16) and the other harvest judgment is the grape harvest (vss. 17–20).

The Reaper of the Harvest (14:14)

“Then I looked, and behold a white cloud, and on the cloud sat one like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle” (14:14).

The scene that John sees is taken right out of the book of Daniel 7:13–14; John is having a vision of the Ancient of Days, a title for God the Father; he writes: “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

Both Daniel and now John speak of the Son of Man surrounded by clouds which reveals His glory and majesty; He is coming in clouds to establish His kingdom on earth so that all peoples from every nation and language should worship and serve Him.

When Jesus spoke of His second coming, He said He will come in the clouds; clouds are associated with His appearance; He said of His coming, “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30); He further said, “... you shall see the Son
of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64); when Jesus ascended into heaven He was taken up in a cloud, and the angel said to the dumbfounded apostles who were a witness to His ascension, “This same Jesus shall come in like manner as you’ve seen Him go” (Acts 1:9–11); He will return in the clouds of heaven.

He ascended in a cloud and He will return in a cloud; the reaper in the final judgments is the Messiah, referred to as one “like the Son of Man.” We may ask, “Why does it say, ‘one like the Son of Man?’ Why the word ‘like?’ Is it the Son of Man, Jesus, being referred to or not?” The only reason I can think of for the use of the word “like” is that John is getting his vision from the vision of Daniel, who used the phrase in describing the Messiah as “One like the Son of Man, coming in clouds...”; perhaps with Daniel, the “like” is used to speak of the eternal God becoming incarnate in the form of man; the identical phrase is used in Revelation 1:13.

This is the last time Jesus is referred to as the Son of Man; the first time it is used is by Jesus Himself, “The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20).

The Son of Man coming in the clouds has a golden crown on His head, suggesting He comes as a conqueror; the word for crown is stephano, referring to a victor’s crown, rather than diadem, which is a crown worn by a king; while He returns to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords, in this case, He comes to judge evil and to eliminate evil; He comes as the conqueror of evil.

He also comes with a sharp sickle in His hand; a sickle has a long curved blade and before modern machinery was used for harvesting crops; John sees the Lord Jesus sitting on a cloud waiting for final orders to come and use His sickle for harvesting the final judgments.

The Ripening of the Harvests (14:15–18)

“Another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped” (14:15–16); this is the first judgment: the grain harvest.
“Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud voice to Him who had the sharp sickle saying, ‘Thrust in Your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe’ (14:17–18); this is the second judgment: the vineyard harvest.

Here we have the major Reaper in the Messiah, Jesus, being assisted in the reaping of the harvest by three angels; one angel with a sickle tells the Messiah, “It is time to thrust Your sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” This harvest quite possibly is a reaping of the tares which have grown alongside the wheat; tares are weeds that look like wheat but are not wheat and are totally useless; they need to be uprooted; two more angels come, one with a sharp sickle; the one without the sickle tells the Reaper-Messiah to thrust His sickle into the vineyard for her grapes are fully ripe; this other angel assists the Messiah with harvesting the vineyard with its overripe, bitter and withered grapes.

Judgment is often depicted in terms of harvesting; while all judgment is committed to the Son (John 5:22), angels are also instruments of judgment; we have seen that in the seven angels who each had a trumpet, and with the blowing of each trumpet, judgments from God fall upon the earth; we have yet to meet seven other angels who have in their hands seven bowls of wrath which they will pour out on the earth just before the Lord comes to earth in glory and power (Revelation 16); when He comes He will be accompanied by the angels of heaven as well as the raptured Church; He comes to fully and finally obliterate evil from this world and to establish His kingdom on the earth.

In our text there are two judgments mentioned; let’s see if we can understand them.

1. The reaping of the Gentiles for growing tares among the wheat... Could this be a judgment of the Gentiles? Remember the parable of Jesus concerning the wheat and the tares? He said the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; while he was asleep, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat; eventually, the tares grew up among the wheat; the servants came to the owner of the field wanting to know if they should pull out the tares; the owner said, “No, lest when you gather up the tares you pull up the wheat. Let both grow together until the time of harvest, then I will say to the reapers, first gather the tares and bind them in bundles and burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:24–30).
Jesus interpreted the parable saying, “The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one; at the end of the age there will be the harvest and the reapers are angels who will gather the tares and burn them with fire where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth; on the other hand, the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:36–43).

In this parable the field is the world, referring to the Gentile nations; there is coming an exact time, at the end of this age, when the Lord Himself, with the assistance of His reaper angels will separate the wicked unbelievers from the righteous and cast the wicked into hell while the righteous will enter the kingdom of God.

The prophet Joel speaks of a similar event in the judgment of the nations; after Christ returns to earth all the nations will be gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and will enter judgment on behalf of God’s people Israel; these are the nations that mistreated God’s scattered people and who sought to divide the Holy Land; in that Valley, God is going to judge all the surrounding nations of Israel; then He will say, “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.” And what is the reason for this judgment? Not only is God going to punish those who mistreated Israel, but He says, “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again” (Joel 3:1–3; 12–17). This is a different judgment than the reaping of the Gentile nations with its tares.

It is my viewpoint that not every person who has ever lived will be gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat in the judgment of the nations, but those political leaders throughout history who mistreated God’s people and sought to either drive Israel out of her land, or sought to divide the land with the Palestinians; this judgment has to do with how Gentiles treated Israel.

Back to our text; there is coming a day of harvest for the Gentiles and it is on a specific day known only to the Lord; when that day comes, curiously, an angel, who came from the temple of God reminds this One like the Son of Man sitting on the cloud—Jesus Christ, “It is time to thrust Your sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Then we read, “So He who sat
on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped” (14:16); there will be a reaping of the Gentiles who have tried to destroy God’s harvest by planting tares among His wheat and that reaping will result in Gentiles being cast into hell.

2. *The reaping of Israel for producing grapes of wrath...* Israel is spoken of in Scripture as God’s vineyard; He planted her in His land to bear fruit for His glory, but instead she brought forth wild grapes.

The prophet Isaiah mentions Israel’s sins in chapter 5 and refers to them as “wild grapes” (5:2); they were greedy, as the rich were stealing from the poor (5:8–10); they lived for the sensual pleasures of hedonism and intoxication (5:11–17,22); they were careless by sinning in a way that dragged others into their sins (5:18–19); they were moral relativists calling evil good and good evil (5:20); they were conceited, being wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight (5:21); they were corrupt, justifying the wicked for a bribe (5:23); such behavior is summed up in these words: “... they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (5:24b).

These sins of Israel are described as “woe” — six woes altogether; when God says “Woe” you know that judgment is not far behind; Isaiah spoke of God’s judgment like this: “Therefore the anger of the Lord is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuge in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still” (5:25). That is, His wrath continues and will until He decides to bring an end to evil altogether!

Is there any sin committed by Israel that is listed that we don’t understand? These sins are as prevalent today as they were in the days of Isaiah and God is no less angry; as Solomon said, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9); we must never forget that harvest day is coming and people need to be warned!

Jesus told a parable that spoke to this matter; it was the parable of the wicked vinedressers; a landowner planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it; he dug a wine press and built an observation tower; he leased his vineyard to vinedressers and then went into a far country; when the vines produced he sent his servants to gather its fruits; but the
vinedressers badly mistreated his servants, beating one, killing one, and stoning another; he sent more servants and they were treated as brutally; at last he sent his son, believing they would respect him; when the vinedressers saw the heir coming, they said, “Let’s seize his inheritance,” and they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him; then Jesus asks this question, “When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?”

Their reply was, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their season.”

In this parable the owner of the vineyard is God; the vinedressers were the Jews who were to take care of God’s vineyard; the servants whom God sent to collect the fruit were His prophets who were brutally mistreated and some even killed for doing God’s work; then God sent His Son, Jesus, believing the Jews would have more respect for Him, but they instead, took Him outside the vineyard and crucified Him; that is when Jesus told the chief priests and Pharisees who were listening, “The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruit of it” (Matthew 21:33–45).

Israel has rejected God’s Son and their Messiah; that is why God took the kingdom from them and gave it to the Gentiles to proclaim His truth (see Romans 11:11–25), but judgment will come to all who reject His Son, Jew and Gentile alike.

**The Ruination of the Harvest (14:19–20)**

“So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs” (14:19–20).

When the angel struck his sickle into the earth, he gathered the vine and threw it into the winepress of God’s wrath; the winepress was a large carved-out piece of stone, then below it would be another hollowed stone that would catch the juice; there would be a trough that would connect the upper and lower basins; workers would stand in the upper trough and trample on the grapes to get all the juice out of them; the juice from the upper trough would splatter over those trampling the
grapes and they would look as if they were in a bloodbath; that is the intended image; a literal bloodbath is coming.

The splattering of the grapes becomes the splattering of the enemies of God who stand against Christ when He returns at the climax of the battle of Armageddon.

When Christ returns to earth the second time He comes as a warrior; He comes with the armies of heaven and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives; He will fight against those nations that God has gathered together to fight against Jerusalem in what is known as the battle of Armageddon; these armies suddenly turn against Him when they see Him and His army comes in the air; what a mistake that will be for they will suffer a bloodbath like the world has never seen before (Revelation 19:11–16; Zechariah 14:1–4).

This bloodbath will run from the plain of Megiddo in the north of Israel through the Jezreel Valley all the way south below the Dead Sea; it will run 200 miles in length or almost the entire length of the nation of Israel (see Isaiah 63:1–6).

This winepress was trodden outside the city, undoubtedly a reference to Jerusalem, so the Lord is sparing the city; in fact, we read in in Zechariah 14, Daniel 11, and Joel 3 that this battle will be around Jerusalem, not in the city itself, so the Lord is protecting the city from this bloodbath.

The text appears to say the blood is running like a river four feet deep up to the horses’ bridles; this seems incredible, almost unimaginable; how do we understand this? How many people are going to be involved in this battle? It is not unreasonable to believe there will be millions of soldiers; but even that number of dead soldiers would not create a river of blood 200 miles long and 4 feet deep.

As far as the blood reaching the horses’ bridles, could we assume that this is splattered blood rather than the depth of the blood. Could it be that at some places along this valley that blood is four feet deep but not four feet deep the entire 200 miles? Others see this as symbolically describing the completeness of the judgment.

However you want to understand this bloodbath, you can imagine the carnage is going to be great; once the battle is over and the Antichrist and his armies are defeated, we read in Revelation 19:17–21 that an angel, standing in the sun, cried with a loud voice to the birds that fly in the midst of the heaven, “Come and
gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

Then the Antichrist and the False Prophet are seized and they are cast into hell; once all those who opposed the armies of God are killed and the birds have had their meal, we then read, “And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

If we are to take anything from this lesson, it would those words from Hebrews, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God” (Hebrews 10:31); no wonder the psalmist wrote, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are those who put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12).

We are living in fearful times today, but today is nothing to fear like that day when God decides to send the Reaper, Jesus, and His angels with their sickles to harvest the tares and bundle them up for the fire, and to harvest the wild grapes that will be trampled in the winepress of God’s wrath; both pictures of the harvests are a symbolic representation of what it will be like when Christ returns at the end of the battle of Armageddon and defeats His enemies in a slaughter like the world has never seen.

I am glad I am on the Lord’s side and I imagine you are too! Amen!