

Revelation 14:14–20

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[0 : 00] Today it can be found in Revelation chapter 14, it's on page 1036 if you picked up one of the blue Bibles in the back. And at this time any kids up to the age of 5th grade are dismissed for Team Kids and Team Tots.

Please stand for the reading of God's word. Revelation 14, beginning of verse 14 and going through verse 20.

Then I looked and behold a white cloud and seated on the cloud one like a son of man with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

And another angel came out of the temple calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud. Put in your sickle and reap for the hour to reap has come for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.

So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven and he too had a sharp sickle.

[1 : 11] And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire. And he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle. Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth for its grapes are ripe.

So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood flowed from the winepress as high as a horse's bridle for 1,600 stadia.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Thank you, Kevin, and thanks to all who have led us in worship so far in this service.

And we continue to worship even as we open our heads and hearts to God's word. Let me say a couple of things just by reason of what will be happening on next week.

We will be distributing a brochure as it concerns the downtown associate pastor. We want to get that information before you in preparation for a vote that will take place, we trust, in March.

[2 : 29] And on this morning, there was an installation service for John Dennis into the senior pastor role of Holy Trinity Church on the west side. Here on next week, south side, that will be a part of our service as well as downtown.

So you want to be with us and be in prayer for those very special events that are on the horizon for us. We are a church that's on the move, and we're glad that you are part of it.

Why don't you pray with me? Father, we thank you for this day and your goodness to us. Lord, we praise you for the music and words that have led us into your very presence on this afternoon.

And pray similarly for that kind of impact for the proclamation of your word. We pray that we would be connected in a very real and intimate way with your own heart through the proclamation of your word.

And may the words of my lips and the meditation of my heart be in that vein on this afternoon. We pray these things in Christ's name.

[3 : 44] Amen. Revelation chapter 14. Dave has done two messages. This is the third in that particular chapter. And we're dealing with verses 14 through 20.

Let me tell you how I want to handle the material that is before us on this afternoon. And then we'll get started into it. I want to ask three questions.

I want us to interact with these questions as you listen. The first question is an observation question. And it's simply this.

As we look at these verses, what is it that we see? What do we see in these verses that are laid out before us?

The second is an interpretation question. Not only do we need to look at what it is that we see, but how, what are we to understand from what we see in these verses?

[4 : 45] And of course, the third is an application question. Having looked and attempted to understand, what are we to do?

Oftentimes when we are in literature like this, the what to do is not so easily apparent as we look at signs and symbols and numbers.

What do you actually do with all of that data, all of those pictures? Oftentimes they're not easily applicable or sometimes even graspable so that we can apply what is before us.

My prayer on this afternoon is that each of us would embrace what is here and then that we would allow the Holy Spirit to move us to action on the basis of what we see.

So on this afternoon, what is it that we see? Well, there's some things that are pretty plain in this passage. The scene, first of all, it is a harvest scene.

[5 : 52] Did you hear the language of harvest as Kevin read for us? The ESV header includes the fact that this is the harvest.

You see that there? The harvest of the earth. Very simple. It's there for us. But also I want you to see some things that are indications that there is a harvest going on in the text.

We see, first of all, there are reaping instruments. I don't know if we have any farmers among us.

You don't see John Deere tractors in here.

You don't see other kinds of modern implements of harvesting implements. But we do see ancient implements or instruments of harvest.

We see sickles. There is a sharp sword in the hand of the first heavenly being that we see in verse 14. I looked and behold a white cloud and seated on the cloud, one like a son of man with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

[7 : 01] Oh, when I think of sickle, I think of an incident that I had when I was a kid. Never will forget it. As a matter of fact, I have a mark to show that me and a sickle had a run in.

Huh? We were sent to do some chores in the back and it was one of those sea kind of sickles. And I was grabbing the grass and trying to cut and I didn't cut the grass.

I cut my hand. I've got the mark to prove it even today. I still think it's there. So sickles are not near and dear to me. But this is a sharp instrument in the hand of this heavenly figure.

And it's used to cut ripe stalks of grain and clusters of grape. Another heavenly figure, look at verse 17. And there's a reason that I'm calling these heavenly figures at this point.

But look at the heavenly figure where it is clearly an angel in verse 17. Another angel came out of the temple in heaven. And he too had a sharp sickle.

[8 : 11] So we see the implements or the instruments, reaping instruments, which are sickles used to cut grain and clusters of grapes.

I want to move on. We'll get back to these figures. But the reaping agents. So not only are there reaping instruments, sickles, there are reaping agents, these heavenly beings, these two of these heavenly beings are reapers.

Clearly, the one in verse 17 is an angel. The text makes that clear. As a matter of fact, this is one of three angels that we see in this particular segment of Scripture, these particular paragraphs that we're looking at today.

We looked at there were three angels that appeared last week. Look at verse 15. Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud.

Look at verse 17. Another angel came out of the temple in heaven. And he too had a sharp sickle.

And then we see a third angel in verse 18.

[9 : 21] Another angel came out from the altar. The angel who had authority over fire. But let's look back at this first reaper.

In verse 14, he first appears there. Now, some see this person as an angel that appears like and represents the interest of Christ.

But it seems best to see that this person, this heavenly being, as the son of man, as the divine Christ himself. We've seen him similarly coming on a cloud, on a cloud, the nomenclature, the name, a son of man, a golden crown on his head.

We've seen a similar image of Christ in chapter 1 and verse 7. Turn over there with me to chapter 1 and verse 7. You'll see these words. Behold, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him.

Even those who pierced him and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. Look down at verse 13.

[10:35] Here we see this Daniel, Danielic figure, the son of man who would be given dominion in Daniel chapter 7.

And we see this again, chapter 1 verse 13, where he appears as a judge who is walking in the midst of his churches. This is the Christ who is coming for his harvest.

The revelation chapter 14 depicts him as we have seen him in chapter 1. He comes with this emblem of victory. It's a golden wreath, a golden crown that he's wearing.

He comes as the son of man and the implication of that is that he will deal with the children of men who are on earth. He comes prepared for reaping with a sickle in his hand that had a flint or an iron blade that was on a shaft of wood or bone.

John the Baptist speaks of Christ's reaping role as a gatherer of wheat and chaff. Listen to what John says about him. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear the threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn.

[11:58] But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. The angels in the gospels are mentioned as reapers. We see in passages like Matthew chapter 13 verse 30.

Let both the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest and at harvest time I will tell the reapers. Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned.

But gather the wheat in my barn. And then the interpretation in verse 39. And the enemy who sold them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age. The reapers. Or the angels there.

Angels as well as Christ will have a reaping role at the end of history for the harvest. Right grain and grapes are to be reaped.

We see in this. The command from heaven to put in the sickle to reap. Verse 15. It is a harvesting that we are looking at here. The grain is harvested as well as the ripe grapes in verse 18.

[13:03] Harvest time here marks it at the end of the age. So determined by God himself. And God knows exactly where the tipping point has been reached for the sins of humanity.

He knows when the balling point has been reached. I don't know how he calculates that. Because as we weigh the sins of humanity and the balance of justice.

It seems like with all of the ugly that we have going on in this world. What will it take? One more murder. One more abortion.

One more rape. One more incident of racism. All of these things. Again, this tipping point. God knows and at the point in time.

He will come. Huh? It will be a point at which God's wrath will be restrained no longer. And then whereby mercy triumphs over judgment now.

[14:07] Judgment then will triumph over mercy. At that right point in the history of mankind.

But as we've already implied. What we see here is not only a harvest scene. It is a judgment scene that we see here. And what we see in here in Revelation parallels in a couple of ways what we see in Joel chapter 3.

Page 763 in the Bible that's been prepared for you. And as we've tried to say over the weeks. And as we've tried to say over the weeks. That what happens in Revelation is that the prophets are somewhat in a round table kind of fashion.

And they come to rendezvous here in Revelation. And John obviously stooped in scripture. And with a mind that thinks back to these particular incidents.

And these prophetic footsteps that have marched down through time in Old Testament history. And he sees how they apply in the particular scenes that he is looking at in his vision.

[15:17] But look at Joel chapter 3. It mentions both the harvest of grain as well as the grape vintage. Let the nations stir themselves up, verse 12.

And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Which means Jehovah is my judge. For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

Put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread for the winepress is full. The vats overflow. Why? For their evil is great.

We see a similar scene in Revelation chapter 14. The harvest of the grain. The gathering of the grapes to be trampled.

But we also see, look at verse 18, Revelation chapter 14. We see fire as a tool or as an implement of God's judgment.

[16:16] Another angel came out from the altar. The altar who has authority over fire. 23 out of the 24 occurrences of fire in the book of Revelation.

They imply judgment. They depict the very judgment of God. And elsewhere we see fire as a tool of judgment. An instrument of God's judgment.

It's a judgment scene that we're looking at. Look at verses 19 and 20. Well, you see, the winepress of God's wrath. The term wrath of God is clearly judgment language.

Another biblical term that references the judgment is winepress. The trampling of the grapes elsewhere in Scripture. It is figurative of the very judgment of God.

We see that in Isaiah chapter 63, verses 1 through 4. Please turn there with me. I want you to see this with me. Because this is a judgment scene. A judgment scene at the end of history.

[17:19] That we're looking at here in these passages. 63, verse 1. Who is this that comes from Edom?

In crimson garments from Basra. He who is splendid in his apparel. Marching in the greatness of his strength. It is I.

Speaking in righteousness. And I love this term. Mighty to save. Why is your apparel red? The question comes. And your garments like his who treads the winepress.

And here's the answer. I've trodden the winepress alone. And from the peoples. No one was with me. I trod them. How? In my anger. And trampled them.

How? In my wrath. Their lifeblood splattered on my garments. And stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart. And my year of redemption had come.

[18:18] Just like Isaiah 63 is a judgment scene. Even so, Revelation 14. We're looking at a judgment scene here, folks. The harvest judgment is heaven's judgment.

It's God's judgment. And executed on the earth dwellers who do not follow the lamb. And this brings us to a third observation. The scene contrasts with what David preached about two weeks ago in Revelation chapter 14, verses 1 through 5.

You remember that glorious scene that was there? The glorious worship of the redeemed. Sealed and protected followers of Christ.

That's what's in view in verses 1 through 5. They are at home in the glories of heaven are their portion. They are the first fruits of the redeemed from the earth.

Verse 3. They belong to the lamb and their character demonstrates their likeness to him. But that is not what we see in the verses that are before us this afternoon.

[19:26] And particularly in verses 17 through 20, rather than being marks for God's favor, as we see in verses 1 through 5, they are targets for his wrath.

His righteous anger. So what do we see? We see the end of the age harvest. Where people are pictured as grain and grapes that are gathered for judgment.

That's the picture. That's the picture that we see. So what are we to make of this scene? What are we to understand from what we see?

The cycles of Revelation again. They have made their way through the age and we find ourselves at the end of history. The cycles already, we've seen them.

Seven seals, seven trumpets have brought us to a similar place before. The bold judgments that we'll look at in the few weeks, they will do the same. It works its way through the age and we find ourselves again at the end of the age.

[20:38] Matter of fact, turn back with me to Revelation chapter 6, verses 14 through 17. And we will see a similar language. This is the sixth seal has been open between the sixth and the seventh seal.

And we again have come to the end of the age. And this is what we see in verse 14, chapter 6. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up.

And every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne.

And notice, from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath, the wrath of the Lamb and the one who sits on the throne have come. And who shall be able to stand?

What we're looking at here, brothers and sisters, what we see is that the coming of Christ in judgment is both certain and it is severe.

[21:59] It is a certain judgment and it is a very severe judgment for the Son of Man is going to come with his angels. Matthew 16, 27, in the glory of his Father.

And then he will repay in each person according to what he has done. I know, brothers and sisters, that the subject of judgment is not popular.

It's one of those kind of subjects that we would rather not talk about, isn't it? It's like the relative that you would like to forget, but that person is in the family.

You don't talk about so-and-so, but they're part of the family. Right? Huh? If others knew that such and such a person was a part of your family, you would be embarrassed.

Are you embarrassed about the judgment? Huh? I was on the train, joined Dave in Philadelphia on Thursday morning.

[23 : 00] And there was this lady that she was a flight attendant and we began to engage in conversation. I let her know I was a preacher. And basically, she wanted to know was I one of those evangelical kind.

And evangelical is a very loaded word these days, so I sort of had to weave my way through there to let her know what kind of evangelical that I was.

Huh? Are you one who believes in the very judgment of God? Huh? Those who adopt Scripture's perspective on judgment can easily be dismissed as backward or quirky or crazy or uninformed.

Ever get those kind of labels when you identify with a biblical perspective on God's judgment? Huh?

There's nothing aesthetic about judgment, is it?

What we see here in our text is not pretty. It would be easier if you and I had editorial rights and we could edit out references to hell and punishment and separation from God.

[24 : 16] Huh? Huh? But allowing this kind of fanciful behavior because that's what it would be. It would be inconsistent with the holy and just character of Almighty God.

Judgment is severe because of the exceeding holiness of God. His very name is holy. He's in a class all by himself.

Huh? Huh?

Separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. That's the Son. Huh? He, though he is holy, he humbles himself and beholds the likes of you and me.

Huh? And loves the likes of you and me. The one who could be satisfied totally within himself has made man for his pleasure.

[25 : 37] And for his pleasure all things are and were created. The judgment of God is so severe because the God that we serve is so holy.

Ah. But not only is judgment so severe because God is so holy. Judgment is so severe because we are so sinful.

And the exceeding ugliness of sin is seen in what you and I do to each other. How we wound one another with our words and actions creating scars that we bear for the rest of our lives.

That's ugly, folks. The ugliness of personal and social sins where one group of people subjugate another group of people and take advantage of them and lauded over them for the roots of supremacy of one people over another.

In fact, generations of both groups. That is ugly. I'm reading a team of rivals these days.

[26 : 40] And you hear about some of the ugly of the past. But when you see it in print and work your way through it within a historical context, it had a way of really gripping me.

And I just want you to see some of the politics of race that went on, you know, over 150 years ago. And this is as it concerned the Lincoln and Douglas rivalry for the Senate seat in Illinois.

At every forum, therefore, Douglas, Stephen Douglas, missed no opportunity to portray Lincoln as a Negro-loving agitator bent on debasing white society.

This was the color that he wanted to paint him. And I quote, That the signers of the Declaration of Independence had no reference to Negroes at all when they declared all men to be created equal.

[28 : 09] They did not mean Negro, nor savage Indians, nor the Fiji Islanders, nor any other barbarous race. They were speaking of white men. I hold that this government was established for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever and should be administered by white men.

Well, he should see it now, huh? And none others. Cries of, that's the truth, erupted from the agitated throng amid raucous applause.

What we do to one another, the depth, the roots that have infected you and me in our day. And this is but one example of the ugliness of the human behavior, the exceeding sinfulness of our sin and how we hurt and how we pain each other as a race.

Listen, I could go on. I won't read any more, but you get the drift. God's judgment is so severe because God's holiness is so holy.

But man's sinfulness is so, so sinful. The exceeding sinfulness and ugliness of sin is seen, brothers and sisters, in the judgment of the cross of Christ, where the spotless Lamb of God bore our sin.

[29 : 31] Where he who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. The ugliness of sin is seen at Calvary when darkness covered the earth for three hours, huh?

The gravity of human sin is seen in the loneliness experienced by the Son of God on the cross. His cry was, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That says it all, doesn't it? But it is through the one who bore the very wrath of God at Calvary that a way has been provided for our cleansing and our forgiveness and a right standing with him.

God, who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all. How shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Guilty, vile, and helpless we.

The spotless Lamb of God will see full atonement? Can it be? Hallelujah. What a Savior. Oh, the passage before us is one that puts us in touch with the certainty and the severity of God's judgments.

[30 : 44] And with other passages, it speaks of a day of reckoning. A day when the righteous will be warded and the wicked will be punished. And with other passages in the book alone, we see that God's judgments are certain.

And God's judgments are severe. So we come to the application question. What are we to do? You don't see any particular commands in this scripture.

What we are to do. But what are we to do with this scene? Don't we dismiss it as unnecessary and inapplicable? Or might there be implicit in what we see a true pastoral word in this passage as it was in John's day for the hearers and the doers of this prophecy are declared both in chapter 1 and chapter 22 as being blessed.

So passages like this remind us, brothers and sisters, of several things. This is a very graphic reminder of a harvest to come at the end of the age.

And we must not be content alone with the assurance of our salvation based on God's already pouring out his wrath on his son and our embracing that as our own.

[32 : 07] We must see passages like this as in fact a call to action to proclaim the good news of forgiveness through his son so that people will escape the very judgment to come.

People are ripe for harvest. And they're ripe for harvest now. They're ripe, huh? Though the glories of what we see in verses 1 through 5, they await us and embrace us.

We must not and cannot be indifferent about the judgment of God that will target others. Brothers and sisters, I believe it's time for you and me to mourn.

Because of our passivity and indifference about the very judgment of God. Because of our dry eyes and lack of tears for the judgment of God and the salvation of the lost.

Passages like this should stir us both to prayer and to action. And several passages in the gospels, one was already read earlier, help us to see that through the ministry of Jesus we can be instructed.

[33 : 30] Matthew chapter 9 that Dave read earlier. When Jesus, listen to this, when he saw the crowds, he had compassion. And what that means, it's an internal kind of feeling.

And when you see it in the gospels, it is really spoken of about divine action. Here we see it in Christ. Luke chapter 15, it speaks about the father of the prodigal son having compassion.

But it's not just an internal feeling with which you can do nothing. It demands an external kind of response. He saw them. He had compassion on them. Why? Because they were harassed.

And helpless. They were like sheep without a shepherd. Ever seen anybody harassed and like offering kind of children? They are all around us.

Do we really, really see them? But listen to what Jesus said. And what Jesus does in this passage is that he shares his heart with them. So that they might share his ministry.

[34 : 37] That's what he ended up doing. He spoke about he had compassion on them. Seeing them harassed like sheep without a shepherd. But then he says this. The harvest is plentiful.

But the laborers are few. And listen to his command. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest. That he would send forth laborers into his harvest.

Oh, and he says in another place in John chapter 4. He speaks about the reaping for souls in the kingdom. The time is now.

Do you not say there are yet four months? Then comes the harvest. He says, look, I tell you, lift up your eyes. Lift up your eyes.

What do you see? Lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. They live on our blocks and in our neighborhoods. They go to school with us and they work with us.

[35 : 38] How do we do business with them? He says, already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life.

So that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true. One sows, another reaps. I sent you to reap for that which you did not labor.

Others have labored. You've entered into their labor. The fields, the souls of men and women, youth and children, are ripe for today.

Upon seeing the judgment. And listen to this. What Jesus did as he made his way to the cross, as he was entering into Jerusalem, he saw what they did not see.

He saw 70 AD ahead of them. And he knew what was coming upon his people. And as he drew near and saw the city, listen to what he did.

[36 : 36] He wept over it. He wept over it because of the judgment that was coming toward them, coming for them. And listen to what he said. Would that you, even you, had known this day the things that make for peace.

But now they're hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side. And tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you.

They will not leave one stone upon another in you because you did not know the time of your visitation. He wept when he saw that judgment was on the way for his own.

What am I saying? The judgment that awaits this world is certain. And it is so, so severe.

It is a trampling of the grapes kind of judgment. It is a harvest of the grain kind of judgment. It is a judgment depicted in ugly, ugly kind of terms.

[37 : 41] It is the judgment of a just God. The God that who has made us for his pleasure. The God who has sent his son in order to redeem us. It is certain.

And it is severe. The certainty and severity of judgment should inspire us to both live and to labor for Christ now.

And may you and I be found trusting, brothers and sisters, in the power of the cross for ourselves as well as for others.

Forgiveness awaits all who trust in the one who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all. And may we believe in him with all of our hearts.

May God stir in us anew and afresh. May we have a vision for these empty pews to be filled.

[38 : 43] And not only may we have a vision for that, may we have some kind of God-given strategy that may be unique, absolutely unique to who you are and your family situation and your place of employment.

You remember the 3-1-2 plan, huh? Praying for three people over two years and that one would come to Christ and have all got on board with that.

Expanding our networks of relationships, speaking boldly in the name of Jesus. Having an eye for the harvest. May you and I find ourselves believing and sharing the power of the cross of Christ, who bore the very wrath of God for us in the past so that we would not have to face the wrath of God in the future.

May we embrace that and share it with others. That's the implications of this passage. That's the pastoral word from this passage.

What we see here provides a warning for us. An underlying exhortation for us. May we be found faithful in him.

[40 : 11] Shall we pray? Father, we bless you. We honor you. We celebrate you.

Give you the praise. Praise you for sending your son. Who satisfied the demands of your holiness. Provided a surety, a guarantee for our sins through his saving death. May we embrace that for ourselves.

And may you use us to share the truth of the cross of Christ where the wrath of God has already been satisfied. May we encourage people to get under that umbrella under the cross.

May we be gripped afresh, Lord. May we as pastors and leaders lead the way. May there be faithful followers of Christ.

[41 : 18] This is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen. Won't you stand as we sing? God?