

**Scott A. Starker**

**Revelation NT 550**

**Dr. Grant Osborne**

**February 4, 1988**

***The Grapes of Wrath***

**Sermon from Revelation 14:14-20**

## ***The Grapes of Wrath***

### **Sermon from Revelation 14:14-20**

#### I. Intro:

A. My dad does not farm for a living but I think he is a farmer at heart.

1. Every spring he plants a huge garden—it's a lot of work but he loves to watch things grow
2. He is amazed at how a little seed can grow into such big plants and produce food that we can eat
3. He does the same thing year after year but until the harvest in the fall he never knows how the crop will turn out
4. Many factors effect Dad's garden: rain, sun, storms, bugs, turkeys, deer, jack rabbits, baseballs, etc.
5. Only when he gathers the items in at the proper time at the end of the long growing season will he be able to see the results

B. Such is also the case with God's work in the world:

1. Many factor affect the spread of the gospel: faithful witnesses, discipleship, persecution (which seems to help more than hinder in the long run!), prayer, etc.
2. It is hard to judge the current progress what with traitor and hypocrites and those whose heart is known only to God
3. Only on the day of God's harvest will the full results be known

C. This passage puts before us in very stark terms the inevitable judgment of God upon the unrighteous.

1. By so doing it serves as a stiff warning for those still outside of his kingdom and know that they are.
2. For those who hope they are a part of his kingdom or who don't know for sure this passage will make you want to make sure!
3. For those who know for sure that they are part of his kingdom it will force us to re-examine our hearts and lives and commitment to discover if we haven't just been going through the motions and fooling ourselves.
4. If we are truly a part of his kingdom then we can rejoice that when that day comes we will be spared by his grace and his grace alone. PTL!

II. The first half of the passage (vs 14-16) depicts a general judgment at the end of time that includes all people (righteous and unrighteous).

A. Let us try to imagine what John saw... [read vs 14]

B. Who is this “one like a son of man?”

1. Rev 1:12, 17-18: “...someone ‘like a son of man,’ ...said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!’ ” is Jesus
2. Dan. 7:13-14: [whole thing] It is obviously a description of the Messiah (i.e., Jesus)
3. Note: the same phrase “one like a son of man” and in the same context: his “coming with the clouds of heaven” is a description of Jesus’ second coming
4. He is also described as wearing a crown of gold on his head which also serves to distinguish him from the angels in the context—he is special and important
5. He is the victor over sin and death and evil and can therefore judge with authority (Tenney, p. 73)

C. He is seated on a white cloud with a sickle in his hand

1. The sickle was an instrument of harvest:
  - a. The word is used to describe the tool used for harvesting grain, grapes, etc.
  - b. As well as the tool used by vinedressers for pruning grape vines (BAGD p. 206d). Both ideas fit this passage.

D. Verse 15: An angel comes out of the temple and signals Jesus that the earth is ripe and it is time for the harvest to begin

1. It is **not** odd that the angel seems to be commanding Jesus to begin the harvest because he does so only after coming out from the temple
  - a. This indicates that he has just come from the presence of God and thus bears a command from God the Father to be conveyed to Jesus
  - b. Therefore, the angel is serving as an emissary (Ladd)
2. 1:4 tells us that Revelation was sent to the 7 churches in the province of Asia: since the chief occupation of the people there was agriculture, harvesting would have been commonplace. (Tenney)
  - a. They would have been well aware of the swift, decisive action of a sharp sickle swung against a ripe crop
  - b. “Harvesting is an apt figure of final judgment” because it is the climax “of a long growing season, and marks the absolute end of the process.” (Tenney)
  - c. As reaping the harvest must take place at exactly the right time when the crop is fully ripe so must the reaping of the earth’s harvest
  - d. Verse 15 tells us that in John’s vision “the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

- e. History is moving towards its inevitable end. Time is running off of the clock and there are no more “time-outs”!
  - f. “The time for the intervention of him who bore the sickle is not chosen arbitrarily.” (Morris)
  - g. “God is watching over history, and the hour will come in his divine wisdom when mankind is ripe for judgment. History will not get out of control; in God’s hour, the issue will be settled.” (Ladd)
3. Harvest imagery is used frequently in the Bible to symbolize the final judgment of men (Ladd)
- a. [Don’t read; these are references for future use: Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, Jer. 51:33, Hos. 6:11, Joel 3:13, Mark 4:29]
  - b. The prophet Joel in 3:13 uses both of our images here (harvesting with the sickle and crushing of the grapes) as necessary because of wickedness
  - c. In Matt. 13 Jesus gives and explains the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares in which the harvest is the end of the age when the sons of the kingdom are separated from those who do evil
  - d. [Read Matt. 13:40-43] The results of the harvest are twofold:
    - i) those who do evil will be sent to eternal punishment, and
    - ii) “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” and so receive their eternal reward
4. In the first half of our passage, judgment is seen in a general way and so includes both aspects: eternal punishment for the ungodly and eternal reward for the righteous
- E. Verse 16 ends the first half of this passage in a very terse way by explaining simply that the sickle was swung and the earth was harvested
- 1. In its simplicity it stresses that what God purposes nothing can thwart. God will overcome all evil
  - 2. The signal is given and Jesus accomplishes the harvest. The separation is immediate
  - 3. There is a sharp line drawn between those who are sent to eternal punishment and those who are received into God’s eternal kingdom
    - a. There is no gray area—no middle ground when this day comes!
    - b. You and everyone else will be in either one group or the other
    - c. The question that you need to ask yourself is, “If God were to call for the harvest today, at this very hour, which group would I be in?”
    - d. Maybe you find yourself in the group that will be separated out to face God’s full wrath...
    - e. Or maybe you have been deceiving yourself by thinking that you will be able to make a defense for yourself before God on that day like you might before a court of law? “God will understand once I explain it to him!”

- i) I recently got a ticket for supposedly going through a red light at an intersection...
- ii) I decided to go to court to plead innocent...
- iii) It came down to my word against the officer's word and the judge had to decide between the two of us.
- iv) Our facts were very different and I was very sure of mine because I wrote it all down just minutes after getting the ticket
- v) The officer's "facts" reflected a situation in which the light would have been red for **a number** of seconds before my even getting to the intersection!
- vi) Yet the judge found me guilty and I had to pay the fine!
- vii) I tell this story not as a polemic against the system but to point out the difference between:
  - (a) An human judge who does not necessarily have all of the most accurate and pertinent information needed to make the right judgment, and
  - (b) A Divine Judge who knows all and sees all and will not have to put us all on trial and deliberate before deciding our eternal destinies!
- viii) Do you think that God will require that we tell him our side of the story before he judges us?
- ix) If so, then you have not understood that God, unlike human judges, knows all of the evidence necessary for making a fair and accurate decision without any help from us or anyone else!

F. The reason why the earth is not yet ripe is that God is waiting for non-Christians to repent

1. [Read II Peter 3:9-10] "...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance..."
2. If you haven't repented yet and turned to God for deliverance from his wrath do it now; now is the time! God will not wait forever!
3. [Read Rom. 3:23-28] "...all have sinned...a man is justified by faith part from observing the law."
4. [Read Eph. 2:8-9] "...saved by grace through faith not by works..."
5. Turn from your sins and your sinful way of life and turn to God to live completely for him trusting only in the death of Jesus on the cross to make you acceptable to God
6. [Rom 8:1] "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!"
7. [Eph. 1:13-14] "...having believed, you were marked in him with a seal...until the redemption of those who are God's possession..."
8. [John 1:12] "...children of God..." i.e., Sons of the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 13) and therefore fellow heirs with Christ! (Rom. 8:17)

G. For those of us who have already become children of God these are exciting promises!

1. Knowing that we shall be spared the full wrath of God on the day of Christ's return we should be moved to persevere and endure hardships and sufferings with patience.
2. Life isn't easy but you don't have to be facing martyrdom in order for the promise that God will vindicate his saints to spur you on to remain faithful to Him!
  - a. Are you experiencing ridicule or unfairness at work or school simply because you are a Christian?
  - b. Are you frustrated because those who do evil seem to be prospering around you?
  - c. Be patient. If not in this life, God will surely vindicate you and reward you for your faithfulness on the day of the harvest!
3. One of the main themes in Rev. is that eternal life is the reward for those who endure in the faith and overcome, so don't give up or compromise now!

III. The second half of the passage (vs 17-20) is an intensification of the previous scene which specifically and graphically describes the judgment of the unrighteous

A. In verse 17 we see that another angel comes out from the temple i.e., from the presence of God and therefore, to carry out his directions

B. He, also, is carrying a sharp sickle. This introduces another scene of divine judgment

C. In verse 18 another angel signals the angel with the sickle from the previous verse to use the sickle to gather the grapes from the earth

1. The angel is said to have come from the altar:

a. In 8:3-5 the altar is connected with the prayers of the righteous and the judgment of the unrighteous

b. As there, it seems, that "the prayers of the faithful play a definite part in bringing about God's judgment upon the wicked." (Mounce)

c. John seems to see "the judgment as God's final answer to the prayers of his suffering saints." (Morris, p. 180)

d. "The prayers of God's people play a necessary part in ushering in the judgment of God." (Morris, p. 118)

e. "This judgment is expressive of the holiness of God [in that it is the necessary response to the continued defiance of the patience and grace of a righteous and loving God], but it is also related to the prayers of the saints for deliverance." (Beasley-Murray, p. 229)

2. The word for "ripe" means "to be at the prime" and also occurred in an idiom which means "on the razor's edge" i.e., "at the critical moment" (Mounce, p. 281)

D. Verses 19 and 20 give us more detail about what happens to the grapes after they are gathered than verse 16 did after the harvest of the earth

1. Verse 19: They are thrown "into the great winepress of God's wrath."

2. There can be no mistake that this scene is meant to describe the judgment of the unrighteous as we see that the grapes that were harvested are destined for God's wrath
  3. Verse 20: This is a very graphic description of God's judgment of the unrighteous
    - a. In Rev. 19:13, 15 we find that Jesus as the conquering Messiah is the One who will tread "the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty."
    - b. The ancient winepress "consisted of an upper and a lower trough connected by a channel. The grapes were put into the upper trough which was on a slightly higher level. They were then trampled with the feet and the juice flowed down the connecting channel into the lower trough." (Barclay)
    - c. But in the vision, John sees not juice from the grapes but blood flow out of the winepress!
    - d. This depicts the cataclysmic destruction of the unrighteous at the end of the age. (Morris, p. 181)
    - e. The amount of blood described is an incredibly grotesque amount about 4 feet deep by 184 miles long!
    - f. Since the amount can hardly be imagined it is probably symbolic of "a radical judgment that crushes every vestige of evil and hostility to the reign of God." (Ladd)
      - i) 40 x 40 → punishment, or
      - ii) 4 x 4 → earth which is the abode of the wicked and 10 → completeness
- E. As we shudder at this vision of the wrath of God against the ungodly and let the terror they will know register in our minds we will be moved to two responses that go hand-in-hand:
1. Let us praise and worship God and Jesus his only Son who have saved us from his wrath which is to come!
  2. Let us seek to do whatever we can to keep other people from God's wrath before it is too late. There is time left until the harvest is ripe.
    - a. We need to make evangelism more of a priority in our lives.
    - b. We need to wake up to the **awfulness** of being the recipient of God's wrath.
    - c. Remember when you were a kid and one of your brothers or sisters got it trouble and you could look on and gloat and laugh?!
    - d. Not so here. This situation is **much** more serious. We need to see the predicament of the lost from God's perspective.

IV. Conclusion: This passage contains messages for two groups of people: 1) believers, and 2) non-believers.

- A. To non-believers: God's wrath will one day arrive and you will not have an excuse
1. He delays until the earth is ripe so until then it is not too late

2. God is waiting for you. Do **not** reject his offer.
  3. If you wish to inquire further, please talk to me or one of the elders after the service.
- B. To believers: the less obvious message is fourfold:
1. Make sure of your standing now:
    - a. [I John 5:11-13] He who has the Son has life
    - b. [Rom. 8:16] Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit
    - c. [Gal. 5:19-24] the fruit of the Spirit
  2. Praise and worship God for his wonderful salvation!
  3. Life's trials and temptations, no matter how great, will be nothing compared to the suffering of the ungodly on the day of the harvest, therefore, live with patient endurance to persevere to the end.
  4. Let us include evangelism more and more in our daily lives and routines.
    - a. As you leave today begin to see unbelievers not with pride but with an aching heart over their future.
    - b. It would be wonderful if the whole church could be involved in a training program e.g., Evangelism Explosion, etc.
    - c. We were all once heading for the destruction described in this passage, now we need to help rescue others as well.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barclay, William, *The Revelation of John*, Volume 2.

Beasley-Murray, G. R., *The Book of Revelation*, The New Century Bible Commentary.

Ladd, George E., *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*.

Morris, Leon, *The Book of Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

Mounce, Robert H., *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament.

Tenney, Merrill C., *The Book of Revelation*, Proclaiming the New Testament.