

## REVELATION 14:13-20

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<sup>13</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

<sup>14</sup> And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

<sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

<sup>16</sup> And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

<sup>17</sup> And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

<sup>18</sup> And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

<sup>19</sup> And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

<sup>20</sup> And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs. (Revelation 14:13–20)

**A. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. (Revelation 14:13)**

1. Voice from heaven

John does not identify the speaker. Here is a voice that utters the second beatitude in the Book of Revelation. There are seven Beatitudes in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

2. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth

This beatitude is aimed at the dead. The dead can be used to describe unbelievers (20:5), but the qualifier “die in the Lord” clarifies its meaning. Believers whose eyes are fixed on Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

What is the significance of the phrase “from henceforth”? Should it be interpreted with the first clause “Blessed are the dead” or with the entire sentence? Are only the saints who die a martyr’s death called blessed or are all believers blessed? And when does “henceforth” begin?

All the saints who look forward to residing in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 11:10). Here John adds the clarifying clause “who die in the Lord” to specify a relationship to Jesus. This relationship was a comfort to the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor in John’s day.

Next, it is comfort to all believers who know that Christ welcomes them at the portals of heaven. And these words encourage those Christians who even now or in the future endure the full impact of persecution, injustice, insult, and slander because of Christ’s name (Matt. 5:11–12).

3. Saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours

The Holy Spirit affirms the words spoken by the heavenly voice.

The assurance from the Holy Spirit is that “they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13)

Immediately upon death, all those of the faith obtain rest (Isa. 57:1; Dan. 12:13; Luke 23:43; 2Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

4. Their works do follow them. (Revelation 14:13)

God does not forget their works, for in heaven he crowns them with his blessing of grace and glory (Rev. 6:11; Heb. 6:10). The saints will not lose their rewards (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8).

**B. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. (Revelation 14:14)**

The first part of this chapter revealed the lot of the saints, whose spiritual future is secure (14:1-4). The second part contains the messages of the three angels that mention the hour of judgment in which God’s enemies receive the full strength of his wrath (14:9-13), while the saints enter into his rest. The last part of the chapter (14:14-20) concerns the harvest of the earth and the reaping of the grapes of God’s wrath; that is, positively the ingathering of the saints and negatively the condemnation of the unbelievers.

These harvest pictures symbolize the judgment that is evident in both the Old and New Testaments (Joel 3:13; compare Isa. 63:1-6; Lam. 1:15). In the NT, we have the parable of the wheat and tares, and sheep and goats (Matt. 13:29-30, 37-43; 25:31-33)

1. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud like unto the Son of Man

This is the third time in chapter 14 that John writes the words “and I saw” (14:1, 6), and each time he introduces a new but related topic. They are the

place of the saints (14:1), the messages of the angels (14:6), and the swinging of the sickle by the Lord and an angel (14:14).

John alludes to Daniel's prophecy (Dan 7:13)

John also refers to the white cloud, which is the only place in Scripture where the phrase "a white cloud" appears. White in this instance is a symbol of holiness and judgment, and these clouds are the exact opposite of dark foreboding clouds that intend to hide God's glory (Exod. 19:9; 1 Kings 8:12).

Here in full view on a single cloud sits a person like a Son of Man, and this has been recorded in the Gospels (Matt. 26:64, Mark 14:62).

The term "Son of Man" in John's vocabulary unmistakably refers to the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Coming.

2. Having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Our Lord Jesus is described here as wearing a golden crown on his head to show that he is a victorious conqueror (compare 6:2; 2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Chron. 20:2).

He also holds a sharp sickle in his hand as a symbol of the harvest. The sickle has been sharpened to be a ready tool in the reaper's hand to accomplish without opposition and delay the task of gathering the harvest.

**C. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. (Revelation 14:15)**

1. And another angel...

When John writes the term "another, he is not implying that the "Son of Man" is angelic. The expression, therefore, should be seen in the sequence of the angels mentioned earlier in verses 6, 8, and 9; this angel is the fourth one, and there are two more to come.

The angel is not commanding Jesus what to do; neither is the angel telling the Son what the Father wants him to do. Here, I take it that the angel is declaring what Christ knows to do. The angel in this case is heralding that the harvest has come.

2. Came out of the temple

The angel comes forth out of the temple, from the very presence of God. The angel is sent forth to shout in a loud voice so that everyone far and near can hear him tell the "Son of Man" to come to harvest.

This is the symbolic wheat harvest that is harvested at the right time when the stalks and the kernels are dry. Without delay the grain is threshed. Here the time for harvesting refers figuratively to the Judgment Day (see Jer. 51:33; Joel 3:13; Matt. 13:30, 40–42).

3. For the time is come for thee to reap;

The longsuffering and grace of God and His desire that all should have opportunity to repent now finally draws to a close for He knows that no more will come (2Pe. 3:9).

This is the end of the age, the long period when both good and evil were allowed to grow side-by-side. Now there will be a separation in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom.

4. For the harvest of the earth is ripe

The harvest is used throughout the Scriptures to symbolize the final gathering and separation of that which is desirable and productive (wheat) from that which is useless and for the fire (tares, chaff) (see Jer. 51:33; Dan. 2:35; Mic. 4:12).

At the harvest at the end of the age, there are both wheat and tares. The harvest includes a reaping of both and their separation. The wheat is gathered and preserved, the tares are gathered and destroyed (Matt. 13:26-30).

There are no two harvests, only one, but there two different gatherings – a harvest of redemption and a harvest of wrath.

**D. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. (Revelation 14:16)**

It is the time of gathering the believers into the kingdom, for the sickle goes forth to reap God's people (Mark 4:29; John 4:35-38).

The "Son of Man" has been given the authority to put the sickle to work, though he uses his angels to assist him (Matt. 13:39; 24:31).

1. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. (Rev. 14:17)

At first sight, this verse seems repetitious and superfluous. But notice the intricate design of the revelation with respect to the last two angels of the six mentioned in this chapter.

- The fifth angel, who comes from the temple (14:17), parallels the fourth angel, who comes from the same place (14:15).
- The fourth angel communicates to the "Son of Man" that the time of the harvest has come to put in the sickle (14:15). The sixth angel

(14:18) instructs the fifth angel (14:17) to take the sharp sickle and harvest the ripe grapes.

- The “Son of Man” harvests God’s elect, while the fifth angel harvests all those who throughout their lives opposed God, his Word, and his kingdom.
- The expression firstfruits (14:4) refers to the harvest of God’s elect; separate from them is the harvest of reaping the grapes (the depraved) destined for the great winepress of God’s wrath (14: 19).

The second sickle is used not for the harvesting of grain (God’s people) but for the grapes of wrath (God’s enemies). It is also interesting to point out that John uses two different Greek words for harvesting.

In verse 15 with regard to the gathering of grain, the word he uses is “reap” [*therisai*]. In verse 18, with regard to the gathering of grapes, he uses the word “gather” [*trugēson*]. Even more interesting, here the gathering of grain is not followed by threshing, and the gathering of grapes is not followed by treading (cf. 14:20).

**E. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. (Rev. 14:18)**

1. And another angel came out from the altar

This is the sixth angel mentioned in succession. But note that this angel comes forth from “the altar,” which is the altar of incense and prayer already discussed in preceding passages (8:2-3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; see also 16:7).

2. Him that had the sharp sickle, saying...

Here at the altar the prayers of the saints rise up to God (6:9-10), who answers their petitions by sending forth an angel to announce the judgment. Another angel with a sickle is told to reap the grapes of God’s wrath. Here is the fulfillment of Jesus’ word on judgment.

3. Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

The command is uttered in a loud voice so that everyone in heaven and on earth is able to hear the message of judgment that begins as soon as the fifth angel puts in the sickle.

The sharpness of the sickle indicates that the work of gathering the grapes will be accomplished quickly.

**F. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. (Revelation 14:19)**

Verse 19 parallels with verse 16, where Jesus flings forth his sickle on the earth and harvests the earth, is evident. Here the fifth angel casts his sickle to the earth and reaps the earth. The one gathers the sheaves and the other the clusters of grapes. The difference here is that the gathered grapes are cast into the winepress. John here alludes to Isaiah 63:2

The word “winepress” denotes God trampling the grapes of wrath (Lam. 1:15). The grapes are the nations, that is, God’s adversaries (Joel 3:13). He stands alone trampling them under foot at a time which Isaiah calls the day of vengeance (63:4).

It is the day of judgment when God metes out just punishment on the nations and grants redemption to his people. He tramples the nations in his wrath “and poured their blood on the ground” (Isa. 63:6).

**G. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs. (Revelation 14:20)**

1. And the winepress was trodden without the city...

In a picture of judgment, Isaiah wrote that the Messiah, trampling the grapes in the winepress alone, trod them in his wrath as their blood stained his garments.

The shedding of blood might not take place within the walls of the city (Matt. 27:31; Mark 15:20; Luke 23:32; John 19:17; Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12). Some scholars identify the place with Jerusalem, for the holiness of this city might not be violated. Other simply take “without the city” to mean outside the New Jerusalem.

2. Blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

John paints a picture by using the symbolic images of grape juice from a winepress representing blood, and horses with bridles portraying warfare. The enemy faces complete annihilation to the degree where the level of blood rises as high as the horses’ bridles. The length of this river of blood is 1,600 furlongs, that is, about 180 miles or 300 kilometres.

The picture John draws is one of a global conflict that envelops all the nations of the world and leads to their ultimate destruction. God’s judgment is universal.