

The Book of Revelation
Revelation 14:14-20 (NIV)
“The Return, The Reaping, The Reckoning”

Introduction

Harvesting the Earth and Trampling the Winepress

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia. **Revelation 14:14-20**

As we have previously discussed, the **Thirteenth and Fourteenth Chapters of Revelation** are meant to be an overview, a summary if you will, of the things that shall take place during the seven year tribulation period. Those events will culminate with the bowl judgments of God and the great battle known as “The Battle of Armageddon”. So when we come to the end of **Chapter Fourteen**, we are actually getting a preview into all that will be described in great detail for us in **Chapters 15-19**.

In **Revelation 14:6-13**, we heard God’s final warning to the unrepentant that judgment is coming. The 144,000 had been gathered to Christ in **14:1**, their mission has been completed. A Voice from heaven (**vs. 13**) declares that all those who are martyred for their faith in Christ are blessed. Now, here in this last portion of the chapter, we are given a glimpse into the final and most dreadful days in all of human existence, when God will reap the harvest on the earth. The Day of the Lord has come. As the tribulation period comes to an end, we see the *Return* (of Christ), the *Reaping*, and the (final) *Reckoning*.

The Return

When Jesus came the first time, He humbled Himself as a servant. **Philippians 2:6-8** describes this in detail:

...Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!

In **Revelation 14:14-20**, we are made witnesses to the return of Jesus. He is returning on a cloud as promised in **Acts 1:11**. He is called the Son of Man (**vs. 14**), which was a term the Lord used for Himself, when He came to earth the first time as God in human flesh (**Matthew 8:20**). It is interesting to note that **Revelation 14:1** is the last time that He is called Son of Man in *The Bible*. When Christ returns to establish His eternal reign, He shall be known as The King of kings and LORD of lords. He first came to earth as the suffering Son of Man, but He will ultimately become the ruler of all nations. Here in John’s vision, we see Him returning to fulfill the prophecy given to the church in Philippi by Paul the Apostle:

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him a Name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God The Father. **Philippians 2:9-11**

The imagery of Christ in John's vision is also strikingly similar to the description given in Daniel, who also saw The Son of Man returning in the clouds at the end of days.

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached The Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. **Daniel 7:13-14**

Just as Daniel and Paul have prophesied, this suffering Son of Man will return to reign in splendor and majesty. John saw him high and lifted up, but the crown that he wears in this vision is a stephanos crown (crown of a victor). And once His foes are vanquished, He will wear the diadem of The King of kings. Those who refused to bow at His first coming will have no choice but to bow at His second. For Christ is Lord of all!

The Reaping

“Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” **Revelation 14:15b**

In **Matthew 13:24-30** and **13:37-43**, Jesus tells a story about a farmer who sowed good seed in a field in hopes of reaping a harvest, but while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the good seed. When the wheat and weeds spring up together, the hired workers asked the farmer if he wanted them to go into the field and pull up the weeds. The man instructed them to wait until harvest time because he did not want to risk damaging the wheat. At harvest time, the wheat would be gathered, and the weeds pulled up and burned. Jesus went on to say that this is how things will be at the end of time, when the angels of heaven are instructed to bundle up all of God's people to protect them, while the children of the devil are destroyed once and for all.

...“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

‘An enemy did this, he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” **Matthew 13:24-30**

Revelation 14:15-20 is the fulfillment of Jesus' parable of the wheat and tares. All of God's remaining servants are carefully harvested, and the weeds are separated for destruction. It is interesting to note that first the Lord swings His sickle to reap in **vs. 16**, and then an angel takes over in **vs. 17**. I am convinced that this signifies the Lord Himself gathering His own before turning the wicked over to His angels. I believe that the Lord Jesus cares so much for His children, that He personally sees to their care. We have not been entrusted to the hired hands, but rather, we are kept safe in His hands alone (**Matthew 10:27-30**).

The Reckoning

It is interesting to note that John uses two types of crops in this harvest, a wheat harvest and a grape harvest. This is confusing to some who feel that John is mixing his metaphors. There are two schools of thought as to why this “reaping” of the earth is separated in such a way. Many believe that it is because the earth shall be “reaped” in two phases. First by the seven bowl judgments, and then finally at the *Battle of Armageddon*.

The seven bowl judgments on ***Revelation 15-16*** are the first part of God’s Reckoning. And then the final judgment will come at the *Battle of Armageddon* (***Revelation 16:16*** and ***19:17-21***). These two events will completely finish destroying all of sinful mankind. Between the rapid-fire bowl judgments and the Lord’s war (which is more like a slaughter) against the armies of earth, none will survive. The Beast and the False Prophet will be cast into hell alive (***Revelation 19:20***), and Satan shall be bound and thrown into the abyss (***Revelation 20:2***). The harvest will be gathered, and the earth purged of sinners.

While it is true that Revelation does teach that the final judgments of God upon the earth will indeed occur in this succession. I also believe that there is another reason for use of two distinct metaphors to describe the reaping of the earth. And I believe that the key to this distinction can be found in ***verses 13-14*** that come just before this passage.

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in The LORD from now on.”

“Yes,” says The Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”

As we have previously discussed, it is Christ Himself (The Son of Man) that reaps the first portion of wheat harvest, and it is just another angel (*allos* Greek, meaning another of the same kind ***vs. 17***) who reaps the “grapes” that are destined to receive God’s wrath. I believe that The LORD will personally see to it that all those who belong to Him are separated and harvested from the earth just as He predicted in ***Matthew Chapter 13***. This is why The Spirit declares, they are “*blessed*.” Those who remain after Christ secures His own are then ripe to receive God’s judgment. So it will indeed be two types of “reaping” that will occur in the end.

The angel declares in ***verse 18*** that the grapes of earth are ripe. The actual Greek used here means over-ripe or rotten. What a fitting description of a fallen world awaiting its judgment. For millennia the wicked of this earth have continued to live and prosper as if there were no final day of reckoning, when all accounts will be settled. Over-ripe is the perfect description for those who have walked this earth in perpetual blasphemy. But rest assured, God will deliver upon **all** of His promises regarding the wrath that is to come. For it is only His great mercy that has delayed the inevitable thus far.

The LORD is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
2 Peter 3:9

There will be no redeeming quality left on earth, once the people of God are harvested. Just imagine what this wicked world will be like when all Christian influence is gone? When God puts all the “rotten grapes” in the wine press of His final judgment *The Bible* says that their blood will spray as high as a horse’s bridle and will stretch for nearly two hundred miles in the valley of *Armageddon* (***vs. 30***). This is the fate that awaits those who will refuse to hear the truth and then take upon themselves the mark of the beast in the last days. Over and over again throughout every age of man, God has begged for sinners to repent and return to Him. Do not put it off until it’s too late. The age of grace is rapidly coming to a close. *We must be ready for the coming harvest.*

TRUTH!