

## The Harvest of the Earth

### Revelation 14:14-20

#### The End Times

In my last post, we examined a **Revelation 14:13** to consider **Blessed Are the Dead**. In this post, we move on the **Revelation 14:14-20** to explore **The Harvest of the Earth**.

*"Then I looked, and there before me was a white cloud. Sitting on the cloud was someone like a Son of Man with a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. <sup>15</sup> Another angel came out of the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, 'Start using your sickle to reap, because the time to reap has come — the earth's harvest is ripe!' <sup>16</sup> The one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. <sup>17</sup> Another angel came out of the Temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup> Then out from the altar went yet another angel, who was in charge of the fire; and he called in a loud voice to the one with the sharp sickle, 'Use your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because they are ripe!' <sup>19</sup> The angel swung his sickle down onto the earth, gathered the earth's grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's fury. <sup>20</sup> The winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress as high as the horses' bridles for two hundred miles!"* ~ Revelation 14:14-20 (CJB)

#### The Harvest of the Earth

As a whole, the passage echoes Joel 3:9-13, in which grape harvesting and wine pressing are a metaphor for judgment in the context of the eschatological war. It also echoes Isaiah 63:1-6, in which God treads the winepress in His fury, pressing out the lifeblood of the peoples. The same metaphor is in Jeremiah 25:15, 28-31.

The harvest also symbolizes judgment at Jeremiah 51:33 and Hosea 6:11. **Yeshua's** parable of the wheat and the weeds, especially Mark 4:29 and Matthew 13:39-42 depict the Father's judgment. Both there and here the Messiah is the reaper at the final judgment, using angels as his instruments. Moreover, here it is the Messiah who treads the winepress (see Revelation 19:15).

This chapter began with a vision of the **firstfruits** (v. 4) and closes with images of **the final harvest**, with an era of preaching the **Besorah** in between. The **seals** and **shofars** had carried the panorama to the end of chapter 11. Chapters 12-14, returning to the start, contain another series that runs to the end: the development of **the beast**, ending in his defeat at the hands **of the Lamb**.

*"Then I looked, and there before me was a white cloud. Sitting on the cloud was someone like a Son of Man with a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. <sup>15</sup> Another angel came out of the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, 'Start using your sickle to reap, because the time to reap has come — the earth's harvest is ripe!' <sup>16</sup> The one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.*

**On the cloud was someone like a Son of Man.** The identity of the one described in verse 14 is unquestionably the **Lord Yeshua HaMashiach**. We are told in Acts 1:9-11 that He will return, in the clouds, as we have seen Him go. In Luke 21:27 it states, **"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with tremendous power and glory."** Do not confuse this with the **rapture**, which has already occurred (Revelation 4:1-3). What is depicted is the second phase of **His Second Coming**. Don't forget, the **Second Coming of Christ** is in two stages: in the first stage He comes for His saints (**the rapture**), and in the second stage He comes with His saints (**the revelation**). These two phases are separated by seven years, which is Daniel's seventieth week. The prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14 is made to refer to **Yeshua**.

The angels in this chapter are working in concert with one another, to give an overview of the **Battle of Armageddon**. Do not confuse this battle with the battle of Gog and Magog described in Revelation 20:8-9. The **Battle of Armageddon** will come at the close of the tribulation period, whereas the battle of God and Magog will come at the end of the millennial reign of **Yeshua**. The campaign described here is a battle of blood, whereas the battle of Revelation 20:8-9 is a battle of fire. Fire will come down from God out of heaven and consume the armies of Gog.

**Yochanan** has given a fore view of the **Battle of Armageddon** that will take place in Revelation 19:11-21. However, the Lord wants to show a little more descriptive view of the battle, so **Yochanan** continues to write. Have you ever had someone say, "Tell me what happened, but spare me the bloody details?" God has chosen not to spare the gory details but wants to portray the full impact of what's going to happen.

**The earth's harvest is ripe** (v. 15) has a bearing on the reason the Lord delays His coming: He is waiting for the crop to ripen. The harvest of the human race had been spoken of long before in the Old Testament, in Joel 3:13-14: "**Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, and tread, for the winepress is full. The vats are overflowing, for their wickedness is great...For the Day of Adonai is upon us in the Valley of Decision!**"

### The Grapes from the Earth's Vine

This vision refers to the wicked, for the winepress is the **great winepress of God's fury**. It is another representation of the doom of the wicked, as Jesus said: "**They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where people will wail and grind their teeth.**" ~ Matthew 13:42 (CJB) and "**they will go off to eternal punishment, but those who have done what God wants will go to eternal life.**" ~ Matthew 25:46 (CJB)

**Another angel came out of the Temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Then out from the altar went yet another angel, who was in charge of the fire; and he called in a loud voice to the one with the sharp sickle, 'Use your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because they are ripe!'** Warren Wiersbe writes concerning the **earth's vine:**" <sup>1</sup>

*The grape harvest is often a picture of judgment (see Joel 3:13, which anticipates the Day of the Lord). In actuality, Scripture portrays three different "vines." Israel was God's vine, planted in the land to bear fruit for God's glory; but the nation failed God and had to be cut down (Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; see also Matt. 21:33-46). Today, Christ is the Vine and believers are branches in Him (**Yochanan** 15). But the world system is also a vine, "the vine of the earth" in contrast to Christ, the heavenly Vine; and it is ripening for judgment. The wicked system—Babylon—that intoxicates people and controls them will one day be cut down and destroyed in "the winepress of the wrath of God. (Emphasis added.)*

**The angel swung his sickle down onto the earth, gathered the earth's grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's fury. <sup>20</sup> The winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress as high as the horses' bridles for two hundred miles!**" Gary Cohen and Salem Kirban write: <sup>2</sup>

*Here the portrait is essentially the same as that found in those two remarkable prophecies, Isaiah 63:1-6 and Joel 3. Zechariah 12 and 14:1-7 also speak of this. The wicked armies of the end-time are depicted as ripe grapes. The winepress of God—the place where He will smash the armies—is the great Armageddon Pass (which is the great Plain of Esdraelon and the Jezreel ~Jordan Valleys). This is the 10 by 40 mile northwest-to-southeast gateway to Jerusalem through the mountains, and it will be the latter-day wine press of God. The red juice of the ancient Palestinian grape well represents visually the blood of the wicked which will here be shed.*

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<sup>1</sup> A Layman's Commentary on Revelation by Don Jones.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The devastation of Armageddon is so extensive that it is probably best viewed as a war which destroys most of the earth, so great, that most of the earth's population will be annihilated. As this is understood, it is easier to understand the development of events in Revelation fifteen through nineteen.

**Outside the city** of Jerusalem, in the valley of Y'hoshafat (the name means "God judges"), mentioned in Joel 4:2, 12(3:2, 12). Jewish authorities understand this as Kidron Valley (Yochanan 18:1) or the Hinnom Valley.

**Two hundred miles.** Several translations use **1,600 stadia** is about 180 miles, which is approximately the length of Israel from north to south. The blood of those fallen covered this area and reached as high as the bridles on the horses. It is thought to mean the complete destruction of the Holy Land or perhaps of the whole world. Joel prophesies about this war (Joel 3:2, 10-14), and the comparison is striking. It is likely a description of the **Battle of Armageddon** (16:16). Also see Zechariah 14:2, which refers to the gathering of all the nations to fight against Jerusalem.

### Special Comparative Note on Chapter 14:14-20 <sup>3</sup>

#### Historicist Approach:

**Historicists** again see these verses as describing the destruction of Rome. Yet, in Israel, the wheat is harvested in the spring and the fruit in late summer. Here at the end of the world, the picture shows the destruction of the wicked on the last day. Some take the **two hundred miles** as the breadth of Italy; others as symbolic of the universality of the judgment.

#### Preterist Approach:

**Preterists** again see these verses as describing the fall of Jerusalem. There is some question whether the harvests symbolize different events or are two ways of describing the same event. Many see the first harvest as the salvation of Believers and the second as a judgment on the wicked.

#### Futurist Approach:

**Futurists** all agree that the second harvest is a terrible judgment upon the wicked. They are divided on the meaning of the first harvest. Some believe that it is an ingathering of the Tribulation saints, while others see it as a judgment of the wicked.

#### Idealist Approach:

**Idealists** seem to agree with the **Preterists** as to the two harvests and the **Historicists** as to the meaning of the **two hundred miles**.

In my next post, we will explore a **Revelation 15:1-4** to examine **The Song of Moshe and The Lamb**.

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<sup>3</sup> Material in this post is taken from "Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated" by Steve Gregg. Notations in brackets, if any, are my comments.