

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #35
5/02/2007

The Judgment of God, The Great Tribulation, The Great Day of God's Wrath
Chapter Fourteen - An Interlude

1. The Lamb on Mt. Zion With the 144,000 Saints
2. The Everlasting Gospel
3. Pronouncement of Judgment on Babylon
4. Pronouncement of Judgment Upon Those Who Receive the Mark of the Beast
5. Praise for Those Who Die In the Lord
6. Preview of Armageddon

In his first vision in this Chapter, the scene was first set in heaven where John saw the 144,000 tribulation saints worshipping the Lamb. In that vision, John also saw the **“everlasting gospel”** being proclaimed to every living person on the earth. He then saw and heard a prelude to the judgment upon Babylon and those who had openly declared their allegiance to Satan by receiving the **“mark of the beast.”** Finally, in that vision John heard a **“voice from heaven”** pronouncing a blessing upon those who **“die in the Lord.”**

John's second vision in Chapter fourteen begins in verse fourteen, continues through verse twenty, and is quite different from the prior one since it presents a picture of Christ reaping His harvest of judgment at His **Second Coming** in Revelation nineteen. It is helpful to read the parable Jesus told about this event, often called the parable of the sower, found in Matthew 13:24-30, which He explained later in the Chapter in verses 36-43.

Let us consider what John recorded about this vision.

Revelation 14:14 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.

John tells us that he both hears and sees what he records. Every detail is significant and full of meaning.

First, he saw a **“white cloud.”** **“White”** symbolizes holiness (see 20:11). **“Clouds”** symbolize the throne, the power and the glory of Christ. John would have been reminded of what Jesus had said. First, in Matthew 24: 30 when He was teaching His disciples about the last days: **“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,”** and again when Jesus addressed the High Priest at His trial: **“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven”** (Matthew 26:64). Also, it is highly likely that John would not have forgotten what happened when Jesus spoke His last words to His followers and then ascended up into heaven: **“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight”** (Acts 1:9). The clouds were as if they were as His throne and were used to symbolize the presence of the holiness of God (see Exodus 16:10; 24:16; 40:35; Numbers 16:42; 1 Kings 8:11 and 2 Chronicles 5:14). It is reasonable to conclude that John would have been familiar with these passages also.

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The **second detail** in this verse, **“one sat like unto the Son of man,”** is only the second time this title for Jesus has been used in this book. The previous use, in 1:13, was when John first saw His Lord in His awesome holiness, standing in the midst of the seven candlesticks: **“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”** A number of other titles for Jesus had been used between these two verses.

As he saw Jesus so presenting Himself, the title was surely meaningful to John, reminding him of words he had written in his gospel about **“the Son of man.”** At least five times (1:51; 3:13; 6:62; 12:23; 13:31) he had written his Lord's words when Jesus used the expression **“the Son of Man”** to refer to His future glory, glory like unto what John was now seeing. Furthermore, the words which John wrote in his gospel (5:29-29) surely would not have left his memory, though they had been spoken years before for Jesus had said that the Spirit would **“bring all things to your remembrance”** and those words spoken by Jesus at that time fit most appropriately at the time of this vision.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (5:25-29).

In addition, a number of times when this phrase, **“the Son of Man,”** is used, it has to do with the sudden appearance of Christ in judgment, such as: **“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not”** (Luke 12:40) and **“For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day”** (Luke 17:24). All of this has a relationship to the vision John is now seeing, because, as we shall see, it is related to a time of certain and awful judgment.

The **third detail** that John mentions is that He **“had on His head a golden crown,”** emphasizing the aspect of His deity that is to be emphasized. When Jesus came the first time, He humbled Himself to come as a servant, dying in sinful man's place so He could offer him grace and redeem him from his

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bondage to Satan. This time He will come as the ***"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,"*** asserting His rightful omnipotent authority over all of creation and judge of all mankind. He will not come to offer grace, but, rather, justice and judgment to all. From His ***"great white throne"*** (20:11) He will administer that justice and judgment to all.

In Matthew 13:24-30 Jesus had described these events in a parable which He explained it in verses 37-43. At that time He concluded His parable with both an invitation to ***"hear"*** and respond. What John had heard as a parable he now sees coming true.

"... He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The fourth detail that John describes in verse one is as follows: ***"in His hand is a sharp sickle."*** Even as the golden crown signifies that Christ is coming to reign, the ***"sharp sickle,"*** a razor-sharp, curved, pruning hook, signifies the time of the harvest of judgment. Christ, Himself, is seen doing the judging. In John 5:27 God's Word tells us that all judgment has been given to Christ because He is ***"the Son of Man."*** He is the One Who will be seen sitting upon the ***"great white throne"*** in 20:11 summoning before Him all those who have rebelled against Him and rejected His grace and forgiveness. When they appear before Him they will be compelled to ***"bow their knees ... and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"*** (Philippians 2:10,11). It is something that, if they had done before, when urged to do so during their lifetime, they would have received His forgiveness. Now, they will only be expressing the due respect which the judge demands the condemned give to the judge, but it will not result in any benefit for the condemned.

While, according to the parable which the Lord told in Matthew 13, the false ***"tares"*** so resemble the true ***"seed"*** that man cannot distinguish between them, neither the LORD of the harvest nor His angels who do the reap-

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ing in the parable, have any such difficulty. His pruning hook, the **“sharp sickle,”** moves with certainty and quickness, without making a single mistake, separating the false from the true in preparation for casting the **“tares”** into the **“fire”** (Matthew 13:40) of judgment which have been prepared for **“the devil and his angels”** (Matthew 25:41).

Revelation 14:15 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.

While Jesus is **“the LORD of the harvest,”** His angels, who have been watching the rebellion on earth over such a long period of time while Jesus has exercised great patience (2 Peter 3:9-10), seem to be eager for Him to act in judgment against the rebels. One of them comes crying out to Him, **“Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap.”** It may seem to them that judgment is long overdue, but Jesus has waited because He has not **“been willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). However, they know that the time has come for justice and judgment, not grace, to be exercised. They are **“the reapers”** (Matthew 13:30,39) in the parable, ready to reap and separate the evil from the good and to cast **“the tares into the fire.”** The **“end of the world”** is thus pictured with awesome finality and suddenness.

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

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

Revelation 14:18 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.

It is a fearful, awesome, overwhelming picture that is painted here. Only the stubbornly foolish will ignore it, take it lightly, explain it away or deny it, and they will do it at their own peril. In His grace, God makes it absolutely clear that the **“end of the world”** is coming and that justice and judgment are certain. Only the foolish will fail to be ready since the warning is so clear. The **“temple,”** the **“sharp sickle,”** and the **“grapes”** with the **“winepress”** imagery is used because of this being set in a uniquely Jewish and Old Testament setting, but the judgment covers all sinners of all time.

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Revelation 14:20 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.

The picture presented in this prelude to judgment concludes the description of an almost unbelievably horrible scene.

“The winepress of the wrath of God” produces a river of blood stretching over a distance of **“a thousand and six hundred furlongs,”** or about 180 miles long! The distance of the river of blood would reach from one end of Palestine to the other, a scene beyond anything prior to this in our world. We are also told that the blood was so deep that it came up to **“the horses bridles,”** or about five feet.

While skeptics have mocked such a picture, and even some serious Bible students have tried to explain this away by “spiritualizing” it, which is common for some when they encounter great difficulties in understanding God’s Word, the enemies of God do number in the billions, and there is no linguistic basis in this passage for not taking the statement literally. The pictures of God’s judgment throughout this Book of Revelation are generally beyond anything that this world has known and there is no reason for discounting the literal meaning of what we read in this passage. Several times in the Scriptures we are told of armies of this size being foolish enough to fight against God. For instance, in Ezekiel, Chapters 38 and 39, we read of similiar descriptions and in Revelation 9:16 we are told of an army of 200 million fighting against God.

The imagery of this pouring out of **“the wrath of God”** is quite uncommon for us today. Most of us know nothing about winepresses except what we read. For the people of John’s day, when Christ gave this Revelation of Himself, the knowledge of winepresses was common. Grapes were gathered, placed in a large container, and men took their shoes off and walked and stomped around on the grapes. We are told that the juice would squirt out until the men were sloshing around in knee-deep grape juice. The squirting juice would be all over the place even covering the clothes of the men. As such, **“the winepress”** presented appropriate imagery of the wrath of God to those of John’s day.

Though it is an awesomely fearful picture, it does portray the message God intended. Even those who find it difficult to accept should do so. To fail to accept God’s warning would be a foolish and fatal choice.