

REVELATION – SERMON 58

THE HARVEST OF THE EARTH

Revelation 14:14-20

INTRODUCTION

- Today's generation want a life free of offence, where every place is a "safe space"
- There are many things in the Bible that offend man's fragile sensibilities
- The wrath and judgment of God is offensive to many people
- Some think that the Old Testament God is severe and judgmental, while the New Testament God is merciful and forgiving
- The doctrine of the coming wrath of God is found throughout the New Testament (Matthew 3:7; Romans 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Peter 3:7)
- The closing verses of chapter 14 give a preview of the judgment Christ will execute upon the ungodly at his coming at the end of the great tribulation (19:11-21)

I. THE LORD WILL COME FROM HEAVEN IN WRATH (14)

- A. He is upon a white cloud
- B. The clouds speak of his glorious deity and heavenly abode (Psalm 97:2; Isaiah 19:1; Matthew 17:5)
- C. Christ's coming is associated with clouds (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9,11; Revelation 1:7)
- D. He is the Son of man
 1. Some have questioned whether this is Christ, seeing he is only *like* unto the Son of man
 2. Yet the apostle has only borrowed Daniel's language to describe second coming of Christ (Daniel 7:13-14)
 3. This title highlights the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:13)
 4. The Son of man is "he that soweth the good seed" (Matthew 13:37), and will oversee the harvest at the end of the world
 5. This harvest however is in wrath, and deals with the judgment of the wicked (v.19)
- E. A golden crown

1. This is a golden wreath (*stephanon chrusoun*), a victor's crown
- F. A sharp sickle in his hand
1. The sickle is used for reaping wheat and other crops
 2. This shows the intent of his coming – judgment (John 5:22; Acts 17:31)
 3. It shows his authority to reap the earth, as its rightful owner (Psalm 2:8; cf. Deuteronomy 23:25)
 4. The words “sharp” and “sickle” both occur seven times in Revelation

II. THE LORD WILL COLLECT THE HARVEST OF THE WORLD (15-19)

- A. An angel from the temple (15)
1. This is the heavenly temple, where God's throne is
 2. The angel pronounces the time for the earth to be reaped
 3. The Son receiving this pronouncement does not imply inferiority, but merely indicates that it is God's ordained time to proceed with judgment
 4. There is an appointed day, known to the Father, when Christ shall judge the world (Mark 13:32; Acts 17:31)
- B. The ripeness of the grain harvest (15)
1. This word indicates dried and withered
- C. The reaping of the grain harvest (16)
1. This reaping is described in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30,37-42)
 - a. As the Son of man sows good seed, the enemy, the devil, sows his tares which are called “children of the wicked one”
 - b. At the end of the world, those “tares” will be gathered and cast into a furnace of fire
 2. The seven vials (ch.16) are the pouring out of God's judgment and wrath upon the world, which culminates with Armageddon
- D. Another angel with a sickle (17)
1. Christ will reap the harvest of the earth, but will employ his angels to assist in the reaping (Matthew 13:41)
- E. Another angel from the altar (18)

1. This is the altar of incense in the heavenly temple where the prayers of the saints are offered (Revelation 8:3)
2. The martyrs' prayers for vengeance from under this altar will be answered at this time (Revelation 6:9-10)
3. He has "power over fire" which may indicate his authority to execute punishment
 - a. In the judgment, the chaff and the tares will be burned up with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:11-12; 13:42) He withheld his judgment on the Canaanites until their iniquity was full (Genesis 15:16)

F. The ripeness of the grapes

1. This is a different word to that used in verse 15 and indicates full maturity
2. God does not execute his wrath early or hastily, but is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 103:8)
 - a. He waited 120 years before sending the flood on a thoroughly corrupt world (Genesis 6; 1 Peter 3:20)
 - b. He withheld his judgment on the Canaanites until their iniquity was full (Genesis 15:16)
 - c. He gives even the worst of sinners "space to repent" (Revelation 2:21)
 - d. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

G. The reaping of the vine of the earth (18-19)

1. Both these reapings describe the same judgment at the end of the great tribulation
2. Israel is described as the Lord's vine (Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7)
3. Christ is the true, and believers are the branches (John 15:1,5)
4. The wicked world under Satan's control is the "vine of the Sodom" (Deuteronomy 32:32-33), the "vine of the earth", ripening for judgment, ready to be reaped and crushed in the winepress of the wrath of God

III. THE LORD WILL CRUSH THE HEATHEN IN HIS WINEPRESS (20)

A. The treading of the winepress

1. The winepress of former times extracted juice from the grapes by people trampling them with their feet
2. The image of Messiah crushing his enemies as in a winepress and being stained with blood is drawn from the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 63:1-6; Joel 3:11-14)

B. The location of the winepress

1. It is “without the city”, that is outside of Jerusalem
 2. This city, which has been the site of continuous conflict for some 4000 years, will again be the epicentre of the world’s final and greatest war
 3. The Old Testament prophets foretold of a final battle that will take place at the valley of Jehoshaphat/Kidron Valley (Joel 3:12), and the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-4) on the outskirts of Jerusalem
 4. Isaiah specifies Bozrah in Edom, east of Jordan, as another location in this war (Isaiah 63:1-4)
 5. Armageddon (16:16) is thought to be the plain of Esdraelon, which is about 60km north of Jerusalem
 6. From this, it seems that the whole land of Israel will be invaded by the beast’s armies to war against Christ and to destroy Jerusalem
- C. The blood from the winepress
1. The extent of the blood is 1,600 furlongs which equates to 320km
 2. This is approximately the length of the nation of Israel
 3. The depth of the blood is to the horse bridle, about 1 metre
 - a. This may refer to an actual river of blood (of unknown width) that flows across the land of Israel
 - b. This may also be understood as the spattering of blood that reaches this height on the horses
 - c. It describes in shocking imagery the unprecedented bloodshed that will take place when Christ destroys the ungodly at the close of the age

CONCLUSION

1. Christ’s judgment at the end of the age is depicted by different images—sheep separated from goats (Matthew 25:31-46), wheat separated from tares (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43), good fish separated from bad fish (Matthew 13:47-50)
2. They all describe the fact that on that day there will be a separation of the wicked from the just—the former to eternal damnation, the latter to eternal life
3. The last battle will take place in the “valley of decision” (Joel 3:14)
4. Every one of us must come to a decision—between sin and righteousness; between the world or Christ; between death or life, between hell or heaven (see Deuteronomy 30:19)
5. Think, O man, O woman, how would you fare were He this night to strike! If not *in the city*, in reconciliation with the King, outside is only death and damnation, and nothing can make it different.” —Joseph Seiss