

Look! Listen! - And Overcome!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

Look! Listen! – And Overcome!

"The Great Harvest of the Earth"

June 28, 2009

Pastor Jeff Crippen

Sermon Text:

Revelation 14:14 – 15:4

Scripture Reading: Joel 3

Introduction

The following account is taken from the book *Eyes of the Tailless Animals*, by Soon Ok Lee, Living Sacrifice Book Company, 1999 –

"On October 26, 1986 Soon Ok Lee was enjoying a peaceful morning at work in Communist North Korea when her misery began. As supervisor of the material distribution center, she was summoned outside to speak to the bureau chief, but was quickly shoved into a car and whisked to the train station. She did not return to her family that night. In fact, she would not see her husband alive again. Instead, she was taken to prison where she endured 6 years of inhumane

treatment. Her crime was that she had refused to satisfy the greed of a government officer.

Soon Ok Lee did not know the Lord. While in prison, she witnessed the horrendous tortures and mass killings of the Body of Christ, and could not understand why these people stubbornly refused to bend to the government's demands that they deny Christ. Wouldn't it save them from further persecution? She later came to understand their steadfast faith after escaping to South Korea where she found the Lord. Today Soon Ok Lee speaks on behalf of the persecuted church and on human rights issues in North Korea.

"One night in February 1992," Soon writes, "I went to the smelting factory (in the prison). The work was almost done for the day and I had to check the daily production.

I saw 8 Christian prisoners carrying a big metal kettle holding molten iron. An officer called to them using very vile words. 'Tomorrow is the day of re-education training. As you know, it is held because of your stubbornness.

You are supposed to turn yourself in. Tomorrow is a "cleaning the mind" day. Tomorrow you will go out and tell everyone that there is nothing in heaven to believe in; there is no God. Otherwise you will be killed. Do you understand?'

There was silence. Not one of the prisoners responded to the officer. He didn't wait long for an answer because he didn't like to be ignored. He knew that tomorrow was an important day for re-education and he wanted the believers to recant. He yelled at the prisoners, 'Why are you so quite? Answer me! Answer me now!'

No one said a word.

The officer became furious and began to curse at the men. At the top of his voice, he screamed, 'All 8 of you come here and put your face down to the ground!' They came just as he ordered. They sat on their knees and then bent their heads down. The officer called over other male prisoners, 'We cannot let these men live. They think they don't know who I am. Bring boiling liquid iron from the furnace and pour it on them!' The male prisoners' faces were full of fear. The liquid iron was 1200 degrees. They hesitated to do this terrible thing.

The officer gave them a fierce scowl. 'Do you want to die with them?' The

frightened prisoners ran to get a kettle of molten iron. Then they poured it on top of the people of God kneeling so quietly. The bodies shriveled from the intense heat. I fell to the ground and almost fainted from shock. The impact on me was so tremendous that I screamed as if I were crazy. Other prisoners in the factory screamed in horror as the 8 Christians died. I looked at their shrunken bodies and wondered in my heart, What do they believe? What do they see in the empty sky? What could be more important to them than their lives?

In the years I was in prison, I saw many believers die. Yet they never, never denied the God who is in heaven. All they had to do was say they don't believe in religion and they would have been released. I did not understand what made them not fear death. What did they see, I asked myself, that I am missing?"

Soon Ok Lee did come to faith in Christ later in her life. No doubt she now knows why those Christians had conquered the Beast -

NKJ Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

NKJ Revelation 14:9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

You see then why this book of The Revelation is so vitally important and why it is such good news to the Church in the wilderness. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.* Remember and never forget what we learned last time –

- *Rest In Peace* is for those who die in the Lord

- *No Rest Day or Night* is the epitaph for those who choose this world, the beast, and thus hate Christ.

Let's continue then at verse 14 where we find the commencement of the harvest of the earth.

I. The Harvest of Grain and Grapes **14:14-20**

ESV Rev 14:14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. **15** And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." **16** So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. **18** And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

19 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. **20** And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

If you were to drive over to the Willamette Valley right now, you would see fields of grain – wheat and oats. And what do you know for sure when you see them? They are growing, but why? *They are growing for the harvest that will inevitably come.* All that is necessary is for the field to become ripe.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our King, is telling us here that we must look at this world, at the Beast's kingdom, at Babylon – to use the terms of The Revelation – *just like a field of grain.* The world is ripening for The Harvest, and in these verses we are given the account of that future harvest.

During His earthly ministry, Christ spoke of this very thing as you might recall –

ESV Matthew 13:24 He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but

while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 27 And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ 28 He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ 29 But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

And of course we think also of John the Baptist's words on this –

ESV Luke 3:17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

And therefore, anyone who loves and lives for *this present world* is setting their hope and love upon something that is just as transitory as that field of wheat growing along the highway – in

just a few more weeks it will be white and all that will be left is stubble to be burned. A scorched earth, you see. That is how it is with this world and we must never forget this perspective.

Why does Christ tell us this in The Revelation? Primarily *for the encouragement of His people*. At the hands of this world, Christ's flock has been and still is *hated, persecuted, and killed*. Furthermore, this world kingdom is set in direct opposition and rebellion against Christ the King. And therefore looking toward the Great Harvest, Christ's people can take heart. *Things are not as they seem. The Beast is not unconquerable after all, in fact he has already been conquered by Christ*. The harvest approaches. The summer is waning. *Things may seem to go on forever in this world, but be assured they will not*.

ESV 1 Cor 7:29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, **30** and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, **31** and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with

it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

See it? The Apostle Paul is telling us –

“Live in this world, conduct EVERY aspect of your life, in light of the fact that this world and ALL that is in it is temporal, not eternal. Our family, our marriage, our money, our earthly joys and our sorrows – ALL must be ‘lived’ with this truth in mind. The world is a field of grain ripening for the Harvest.

A. The Grain Harvest

Now, why do we mention both grain and grapes? Grain is not overtly named in this text at all. It is because the Greek word in verse 15 – *the harvest of the earth is fully ripe* – is specific to a crop of grain. It means to dry up, to wither, to become stiff. And so we know this refers to a crop of grain. A grain harvest then in vss 14-16 and a grape harvest in vss 17-20.

B. The Grim Reaper?

When you think of the term “Grim Reaper,” what comes to your mind? A *negative* connotation, right? A menacing, faceless, hooded and ghost-like character with a huge sickle coming to bring death on people.



I don't know if this Scripture is the source of that fable, but if it is there has certainly been gross distortion of the image John presents – a distortion which does however reflect man's fear and terror of this Harvest.

Consider the description of the Reaper John sees –

- Seated on a white cloud
- Like a son of man
- A golden crown on his head
- A sharp sickle in his hand

If you have much familiarity at all with the Bible – particularly the book of Daniel, this book of The Revelation, and the Gospels, you will immediately suspect that this Reaper turns out to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it seems to be. [See Daniel 7:13 for example].

However, there are some details here that lead some commentators to conclude that this Reaper is not Christ, but is a mighty angel. These details include –

- It seems improper for Christ the King to be addressed as He is by

the angel who comes out of the temple. Why would Christ need the permission of an angel to begin the harvest?

- In the Gospels, Jesus teaches that He will send His angels to do the reaping.

Let me suggest to you one fact which, I believe, could serve to explain why, if this is Christ, the angel comes out of the temple and tells Him to begin the harvest. Here is Matthew 24:29-36,

ESV Matthew 24:29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is

near, at the very gates. 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Do you see? Where does the angel who tells the Reaper to start reaping come from? He comes out of the temple in heaven. Could it not be, therefore, that this angel is coming out *with a message from the Father to the Son?* And isn't this conclusion consistent with Christ's own declaration that *not even the Son knows the day and hour of The Harvest?* This then is an example of the Son submitting to the Father in the economy of the Trinity.

C. The Harvest of the Elect

Now, notice that Matthew 24 speaks of the angels going out *to gather Christ's elect out of the entire world.* And in Matthew 13 Jesus said that He would send His reapers to first gather up the weeds to be burned, then to gather the wheat into His barn.

All of this is why other commentators have concluded that this first gathering

of the grain (Rev 14:14-16) is a gathering of Christ's people, while the harvest of the grapes in vs 17-20 is the harvest of the wicked for the judgment.

D. The Harvest of the Wicked – Crushed Grapes

These grapes are harvested and thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Only it isn't wine that is pressed out as they are crushed – it is blood. This is a metaphor then for the righteous, just, final outpouring of God's wrath upon the wicked. And like most all of The Revelation, it has an Old Testament backdrop.

ESV Genesis 49:9 Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? **10** The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. **11** Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

ESV Isaiah 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mightily to

save.” **2** Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? **3** “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. **4** For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. **5** I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. **6** I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

ESV Joel 3:11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD.

12 Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. **13** Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.

14 Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

15 The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

16 The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

All of these Old Testament Scriptures then are pointing us forward to this

final harvest of the grapes, and in particular the harvest of the wicked.

E. The Winepress of God’s Wrath

ESV Revelation 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. **12** His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. **13** He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. **14** And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. **15** From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. **16** On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

We need to linger here and consider this matter of the righteous, intense, crushing wrath of God. What do you think of it? How do you react when the Bible speaks of God’s fury against the wicked – *and there will be multitudes of them.*

Do you remember from last time what we said is the greatest sin of man? The sin which has aroused this fierce, intense, settled and holy wrath of God? We stated it this way –

“All human beings are commanded to fear God, to worship and glorify and acknowledge Him and give Him their thanks, because He is their Creator, the Creator of all things and the sustainer and giver of all life.”

“Man is a creature – a created being. He is not self-existent like God. He is not God. God has created man and all things and is the source of all life and sustenance. Therefore, man owes God! He owes God everything. And yet, man chooses to live as if HE were God, as if God did not exist. He marginalizes the true God, his Creator, and sets up his own gods, refusing to even acknowledge the Creator or to give Him thanks.”

What do these multitudes of the wicked look like? Well, they look exactly like every one of us before Christ grabbed hold of us and changed us (though far too often we must confess that we still find ourselves guilty of living as if we were God). If you are here today and you are unchanged, unsaved, unforgiven – if you are not trusting in and following Jesus Christ – *then these grapes ready to be crushed, these people with whom God is so wrathful with – they look exactly like you.*

And what do sinful human beings who are outside of Christ – what do they

think of themselves in respect to this Final Reaping? If they think of it at all (in those moments when their suppression of this final judgment slips for a second) – they think of themselves as wheat. As something pleasing to God. As someone who will somehow come through that Harvest OK.

But what does God say here in His Word? He says, men and women – if you are not in Christ, if you are a person who loves this present world, who has really no time for Christ, if you are living for yourself and your life is really all about YOU, then God says to you –

“You are a ripe grape, ready to be picked and thrown into the crushing, revolving, grinding, pressing wine press of the wrath of God. And you have no more chance of emerging unscathed from that wrath than a grape has of not being squashed by a wine press.”

It turns out – do not miss this – *that the Grim Reaper of whom the world is so fearful, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is HE who treads the great press of His Father’s wrath.* And you can do no more to save yourself than a ripe grape can. It is Christ alone Who is Your Rescuer! Run to Him! Don’t deceive yourself about your so-called “goodness.”

God is the LAST one you want to meet right now if you are not in love with His Son! But God will be the LAST one the wicked meet! And no human being on this earth can know that they will not stand before Him before this present day is over.

II. The Song of Moses 15:1-4

ESV Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

Just before the final 7 plagues – the bowl judgments of God’s wrath – we have this scene in heaven. The bowl judgments are the final and *full* outpouring of God’s wrath. And yet here is what seems quite strange to us –

“The bowl judgments are introduced by a heavenly choir of those who have

overcome the beast, singing praises to God for what He is about to do.”

We have made mention of this theme in The Revelation before, and this is not the last time we will see it. *Heaven praises God and the Lamb for their judgment upon the wicked.*

Listen to what the Scripture here calls The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb –

ESV Revelation 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the nations!

4 Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come

and worship you,

for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

What is Christ telling us – His Church – in all this? In this *Song of Moses*? Well, we have seen already that many

times the Old Testament background of The Revelation is Egypt and the Exodus under Moses. The Exodus of Israel out of slavery in Egypt is a physical, earthly picture of God's salvation of His Church in the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the ultimate Passover Lamb.

If we go back to Exodus and consider the original "Song of Moses," we are reminded that it is recorded in Exodus 15 –

ESV Exodus 14:30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

31 Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

15:1 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying,

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 The LORD is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.

4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

5 The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.

6 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,
your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.

7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.

8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'

10 You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

11 "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

12 You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.

13 "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

14 The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.

15 Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;

trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

16 Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased.

17 You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

18 The LORD will reign forever and ever.”

19 For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea.

So that when the Song of Moses appears here in Revelation 15, just before the bowl judgments upon the world...

“...We are to understand that in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has effected a full, ultimate, and final defeat of ‘Pharaoh’ [ie, Satan], and a full and final Exodus of His people out of slavery, out of the wilderness of this world, into the promised Land of the New Heavens and the New Earth.”

Was it proper and right for Israel to sing and praise God on that day when He destroyed Pharaoh and the

Egyptian army? YES! And so it is right for Christ’s people to take heart in this final defeat of the enemy.

*“Just and true are Your ways,
O King of the nations!”*

*“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for your brought these judgments.
For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve...”*

*“Yes, Lord God the Almighty,
true and just are your judgments!”*

*“Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just...”*

Let’s close then with this question –

“Can you join in singing the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb? Do these announcements of the righteous wrath of God to be poured out upon this world cause you to yearn for the coming of Christ? That is to say, are you one of those whom Christ has pronounced ‘blessed’ because you hunger and thirst for righteousness?”

Because it is only those who have been redeemed by the Lamb who can sing

this Song of the Lamb to Him. To all others, it is the most repugnant music ever composed. Which, we might each one ask ourselves, are we – one who loves Christ's appearing, or are we a Demas who loves this present world. Every human being is one or the other.

ESV 2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. **9** Do your best to come to me soon. **10** For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.