

I recognize it's spring and that in the spring our thoughts are focused on cultivating and planting, but we're going to talk about the harvest tonight. Not *a* harvest which occurs every year in the fall, but *the* harvest. I have in mind *the harvest* that God is going to reap at the end of this age.

We read about the final harvest at the end of Revelation 14. It's a scene which should grip our hearts and move our feet into action. Since it occurs in a context, let's begin by reviewing the setting.

Review: Highlights from our previous studies...

*Chapters 6-11 present the Lord's future judgments upon the earth.

*Chapters 12-13 record how the enemy will respond to the Lord's judgments.

--Satan will energize two "beasts" (the first representing a powerful secular authority, and the second a deceiving religious authority).

--People will follow the deception of the beasts, and receive the mark of the beast.

--The second beast will attempt to kill all who refuse to worship the first beast.

Revelation 14--Part 1 (from last time)

John uses five key phrases that serve as "handrails" to guide us through five movements in the drama of chapter 14.

v 1 -- Then I looked

v 2 -- And I heard

v 6 -- Then I saw

v 13 -- Then I heard

v 14 -- I looked

I. John saw the Lamb (1).

A. Where was He? Standing on Mount Zion (either a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem or the earthly city; I prefer the former)

B. Who was with Him? 144,000

C. What was true of the ones with Him? They had *His* name on their foreheads (in contrast with the beast's mark in 13:16). They also had His *Father's* name

II. John heard a sound from heaven (2-5).

A. What did it sound like (2)?

1. *It was like the roar of rushing waters.*

2. *It was like a loud peal of thunder.*

3. *It was like harpists playing their harps.*

B. What was true of the song (3)?

1. *It was a new song.*

2. *It was sung before the throne.*

3. *Only the 144,000 could learn it.*

According to 5:9, the "new song" is about the blood of Christ. This is key. The "new song" is about redemption. Only those who have been redeemed can sing it. Oh, others can mouth the words, but to sing it with meaning a person must first experience the undeserved wonder of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

C. What was true of the 144,000 (4-5)?

1. *They kept themselves pure.*

2. *They follow the Lamb.*

3. *They were redeemed and offered to God.*

4. *Their mouths and lives were marked by truth.*

III. John saw three angels (6-12).

A. The first angel made a proclamation (6-7).

1. *He proclaimed the eternal gospel.*
2. *He commanded everyone to fear God and give Him glory.*

The content of this eternal gospel is significant (see verse 7): "Fear God [not the beast, as in ch 13]...give Him glory [not the beast]...The hour of His judgment has come...So worship Him."

B. The second angel made a proclamation (8).

***Fallen is Babylon the Great!*

C. The third angel made a proclamation (9-12).

1. *If anyone worships the beast, he will wish he hadn't (9-11).*
2. *The saints are encouraged to endure (12).*

IV. John heard a voice from heaven (13).

A. What is true of those who die in the Lord?

They are blessed.

B. In what way are they blessed?

Two ways. One, they will rest from their labors. Two, their deeds will follow them.

New Material...

There is where we left off last time, and where we'll begin to break new ground this evening. Notice the fifth phrase of observation used by John in the chapter...

V. John saw two sickles (14-20).

The "harvest" theme in Scripture is used in different ways. Jesus used it to illustrate the potential for world evangelization in Matthew 9:37-38, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

We see a similar use of the metaphor by Jesus in John 4:35, "Do you not say, 'Four more months and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

But the harvest theme is often associated with judgment. In the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13 Jesus told about an enemy who planted weeds (or tares) in a field full of good seed. The servants asked the master if he wanted them to pull up the weeds? He replied (13:29-30), "No...because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up 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."

So is the harvest theme used here. John saw two sickles...

A. The first sickle was held by one "like a son of man" (14-16).

Q: What's the description of Him? Verse 14

Q: Who is this Person? The Risen Christ (see 1:13). The background is Daniel 7:13-14 where "one like a son of man" comes with the clouds and takes dominion of the earth.

Notice what He did here...

1. *He was told, "The time to reap has come (15)."*

See Joel 3:13, "Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe..."

2. *So he swung his sickle, and the earth was reaped (16).*

Some see this as a reference to the ingathering of the righteous at the return of Christ (see Mounce, p. 280 for options). I see it as a time of judgment on the unrighteous. With the sharp sickle the Lord will reap the harvest of the earth in righteous retribution (Mounce, 279).

B. The second sickle was held by an angel (17-20).

Another angel gave him a message...

1. *He was told, "The grapes are ripe (18)."*

2. *So he swung his sickle and gathered the grapes (19).*

The angel is God's agent to execute God's judgment. Mounce comments (282), "In Biblical days grapes were trampled by foot in a trough which had a duct leading to a lower basin where the juice collected. The treading of grapes was a familiar figure for the execution of divine wrath upon the

enemies of God."

3. *Then he threw the grapes into the winepress of God's wrath (19b-20).*

Ladd comments (202), "The flow of blood is incredible, literally conceived; one thousand six hundred stadia is a distance of about a hundred and eighty-four miles--the entire length of Palestine. The entire land is pictured as being inundated in blood to a depth of about four feet. The thought is clear: a radical judgment that crushes every vestige of evil and hostility to the reign of God."

Lehman Strauss writes (275), "This is the end of man's glory and Satan's rule in the earth. It will be the worst slaughter of human life in all of history."

Ezekiel describes the awfulness of this event by saying that seven years will be required to rid the earth of the weapons of warfare amassed by the nations, and seven months to bury the dead (Strauss; Ezek 39:8-16).

Josephus said that when Titus and his Roman army destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, the dead bodies made the whole city run down with blood (Strauss, 275). But that will pale compared to the coming slaughter.

Discussion:

1. *If you are a believer, what kind of effect ought this study to have on you?*

2. *How about if you are a non-believer?*

A comment by Lehman Strauss is worth pondering carefully (275), "Let the unsaved who read these pages turn to Christ at once and thereby escape the unsparing wrath to come. Men ought to praise God that in this day of grace sinners can find refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ. Today God's mercy is extended to all. Oh, yield to the wooing of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ at once."