



Artwork by Pat Marvetho Smith, © 1982, 1992 - www.revelationillustrated.com

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"Don't Fear the Reaper"

14:14-20

I like movie trailers (except that they tend to show too much). In many cases they are better than the movie!

- being changed to bring change -

Our verses at the end of chapter fourteen are like a trailer for the coming Battle of Armageddon that occurs at the end of the seven year Great Tribulation.

They do it using the illustration of a harvest. Jesus and His holy angels are depicted as harvesters coming to harvest souls with their sickles in hand.

The reaper sickle is the most common symbol known to mankind to represent death. Faithfully carried by the Grim Reaper, death personified, it has been widely depicted in everything from movies and games to religious scripture and mythology.

(By the way, is there a Glad Reaper? Why call him Grim?).

Not the Grim Reaper but angels will assist Jesus by gathering the human race and by separating believers from nonbelievers. Believers will live on into the kingdom of Heaven on earth that Jesus establishes for one thousand years. Nonbelievers are reaped and thus lost for eternity having rejected God's many offers of salvation.

The verses describe this harvest of mankind by comparing it first to a harvest of *grain* and then to a harvest of *grapes*. Each focuses on a particular aspect of the final harvest of judgment at the second coming of Jesus.

The harvest of grain is the first illustration. It focuses on the separating of believers from nonbelievers. The harvest of grapes focuses on the crushing of the armies gathered against the Lord at His Second Coming.

Revelation 14:14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

It's gotta be Jesus! He previously described Himself in just this manner.

- Jesus said that the Son of man shall be seen coming upon the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30). John here sees the Son of Man sitting upon a white cloud.
- Jesus says that his coming shall be with great power and glory. John now sees upon the head of the Son of man a golden crown.
- Jesus said (Matthew 24:31) that he will send his angels to gather the elect. John hears an angel bid him who sat upon the cloud, to reap the earth, for its harvest was ripe (v15).

Charles Spurgeon says,

How different it will be to see him with a crown of gold upon his head from what it was to see him wearing that terrible crown of thorns which the cruel soldiers plaited, and thrust upon his brow! The word used here does not usually refer to the diadem of power, but to the crown won in conflict; and it is very remarkable that it should be said that, when Christ comes to judge the world, he will wear the

garland of victory, the crown which he has won in the great battle which he has fought. How significant of his final triumph will that crown of gold be about those brows that were once covered with bloody sweat when he was fighting the battle for our salvation!

Jesus has “in His hand a sharp sickle.” He is the Lord over the harvest.

Dr. Newell calls attention to the fact that the word “sickle” occurs only twelve times in the Scriptures, of which seven are in the verses of this section. Also, the word “sharp” occurs seven times in the Revelation, and four times in this chapter.

Revelation 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Because this angel tells “Him who sat on the cloud” what to do some scholars say it can’t be Jesus on the cloud. No one gives Him orders!

True, but this isn’t a case of the angel commanding the Lord. It’s an announcement. All of this plays out like a stage production with perfect timing.

The particular words chosen in chapter fourteen describe overripe grain. I’m told that wheat and tares look alike; they are left to over ripen because the grain heads of wheat will eventually bow down whereas the tares remain erect.

The harvest of grain is describing the process of separating believers and nonbelievers at the return of Jesus. In Matthew twenty-five this same event is described as separating the sheep from the goats.

- The wheat or sheep represents believers who have survived the Great Tribulation; they will enter into the kingdom of heaven on earth as its first citizens.
- The tares or the goats represent nonbelievers who have survived the Great Tribulation; they will be cast into Hades to await their final

judgment at the end of the one thousand year kingdom of heaven on earth.

Revelation 14:16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

This is an image of judgment: Christ is separating the faithful from the unfaithful like a farmer harvesting his crops. This is a time of joy for the Christians who have been persecuted and martyred - they will receive their long-awaited reward.

Christians should not fear the Last Judgment. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

We will appear at the Reward Seat of Jesus. It will be glorious, wonderful - no matter how many or how few rewards you receive.

The harvest of souls is next compared to a harvest of grapes. That harvest, in verses seventeen through nineteen, is describing the events immediately upon the return of Jesus to the earth, before He sits and judges between sheep and goats, the wheat and tares. The armies of the world will be gathered together to oppose the Lord in the Valley of Megiddo; it's what the Bible calls the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus will easily overcome His enemies. Those who die in this harvest will die in their sins and be lost for eternity.

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

If you're counting, this is the fifth angel in this chapter. We have no idea how many angels there are. We are told that the number of angels is very great (e.g., Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22). It appears that all angels were created at one time. No new angels are being added to the number. Angels are not subject to death or any form of extinction; therefore they do not decrease in number.

Revelation 14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."

"Power over fire" probably means this is the same angel which is mentioned in chapters eight and nine who stands by the altar of burnt-offering. He has authority over its fire to offer the incense to God that represents the prayers of the saints.

The coming forth of this angel is the answer to the prayers of the Tribulation martyrs. Again we note that God's prophetic calendar has definite time periods and final moments. The fact that we live during a long break from counting the days should not be construed as if prophecy was some mystical allegory.

The angel Gabriel explained to Daniel that God had determined a certain number of days upon the nation of Israel. It is the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks. The prophetic timing was interrupted by the rejection of the Messiah by the leaders of Israel at the first coming of Jesus.

One week of seven years remains to be fulfilled. It is the seven year Great Tribulation we are studying in the Revelation. The time in which we live, the church age, has no timing. It's been going on for about two thousand years. It could end right now, with the resurrection and rapture of the church. Or it could go on a while longer.

If it goes on it's only because God is longsuffering with sinners, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to eternal life.

Revelation 14:19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

A "winepress" was a large vat or trough where grapes were collected and then crushed. The juice flowed out of a duct that led into a large holding vat. The winepress is often used in the Bible as a symbol of God's wrath and judgment against sin.

(Lucille Ball demonstrated this in a great *I Love Lucy* skit).

But these angels are not producing grape juice. It's an illustration for the punishing, crushing judgment at the Second Coming of Jesus.

Revelation 14:20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

The "city" is Jerusalem. Blood from the human armies Jesus defeats at His Second Coming might be pooled as high as a horses bridle for about 180 miles. I say "might be" because some scholars suggest that the verse only means blood will spatter as high as a horses bridle. Either way this is a terrible bloody battle in which multiplied thousands are killed.

J.A. Seiss:

What strength have grapes against the weight and power of a man when he comes to set his feet upon them? And the riper they are, the more helpless... The heel of Omnipotence is upon them, and they can only break and sink beneath it.

People object to the mention of horses since we live in such an advanced technological age with much more sophisticated weapons of war. Well, remember that Jesus returns on a great white horse and we, the church, return with him on horses.

Today God is speaking to the world in grace. He is inviting men, women, and children to come to Him so He can bear their burdens.

In the future He will get the attention of nonbelievers through judgment.

The time for reaping is coming. Today is a time for sowing the Word of God. There's a different harvest of souls as we seek to witness for the Lord.

Because the Lord seems to delay coming scoffers tend to ignore it. Intellectuals believe that any coming judgment is not the result of God intervening but of our own stupidity in contributing to the possibility of the annihilation of life on earth.

These verses remind us that the judgment of God is real and inevitable. We add that it is near. We see too many last days prophecies being fulfilled. And not just being fulfilled. They are converging in the sense that they all are necessary in order for them to be occurring at once.

Not only is the nation of Israel again in their land as prophesied, but,

- There is the real potential for a global cashless society involving a personal identifier.
- There is an exponential explosion of knowledge and technology unprecedented in history.
- The territory of the European Union includes most if not all of the former Roman Empire.
- There is an alignment of hostile nations against Israel just as we see predicted in Ezekiel 38 & 39.

All these topics and trends predict the soon Second Coming of the Lord.

We look for His imminent coming to resurrect the believers who have died during the church age and to rapture living believers.