

Reaping the Earth's Harvest

Revelation 14:14-16

INTRODUCTION

- A. "There's a bright day coming, A bright day coming, There's a bright day coming by and by; But its brightness shall only come to them that love the Lord."
1. There is a bright day coming when the Lord returns, and we are able to join him in heaven.
 - a. "The King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Mt. 25:34).
 - b. At the Second Coming, "we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).
 - c. "It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2).
 2. What a glorious day it will be when we see the Lord coming in the air to give us the crown of life.
- B. Tonight's text speaks of the end of the righteous.
1. We need to remember something important about Revelation - the book is not necessarily in chronological order. What we study tonight will occur at the end of the world, but there is much that follows this section that, from our standpoint, is history.
 2. Tonight, let us examine the harvest of the righteous at the end of history.

THE REAPER, v. 14

- A. John looked and saw a white cloud, and One sitting on the cloud like the Son of Man.
1. John saw a white cloud.
 - a. Throughout this book, white symbolizes purity; thus, the One upon the cloud must be pure.
 - b. One is seated upon a cloud; Jesus is often depicted as coming again on a cloud.
 - 1) "The sight of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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" (Mt. 24:30).
 - 2) Jesus ascended to heaven on a cloud, and the men in white apparel standing beside the apostles told the apostles that Jesus would come back from heaven the same way he went to heaven (Acts 1:9, 11).
 2. One was sitting upon the cloud like the Son of Man.
 - a. There is much discussion as to whether or not the One upon the cloud is in fact Christ.
 - 1) The Greek is literally "one like a son of man," a human. Had the article "the" been used, it would be an obvious reference to Christ.
 - 2) This simply means that the figure John saw here looked like a human being instead of the angels John had been seeing.
 - b. However, this text reminds one of Dan. 7:13-14 where One like the Son of man comes with the clouds of heaven to receive a kingdom; without any doubt this passage is based upon the passage in Daniel.
 - c. Based upon the similarities between this text and Daniel, one cannot deny that this is Christ.
- B. The one on the cloud had a golden crown, and he had a sharp sickle in His hand.
1. The crown spoken of here is a victory crown in Greek, not a diadem or crown of authority.
 - a. The crown a victor was given was golden; thus, this depicts Jesus as One who has been victorious.

- b. Indeed, we find that Jesus has been victorious.
 - 1) “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).
 - 2) “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).
- c. Because Jesus has overcome, he has the right to judge; he has earned that right.
- 2. He had a sharp sickle in His hand.
 - a. The sharp sickle in Greek means a crooked knife used for gathering the harvest by cutting off the clusters of grapes.
 - b. Jesus is ready to harvest the world, to judge the world.

THE HARVEST, vv. 15- 16

- A. 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,” v. 15.
 - 1. This angel came from the temple and gave instructions to the One who sat on the cloud.
 - a. How is it that an angel gave instructions to Christ? If this angel is giving instructions, can the One on the cloud really be Christ?
 - b. This angel came from the temple where he was in the presence of God, thus the One who really gave the instruction to Christ is the Father.
 - c. This well accords with what we read about Christ’s subjection to the Father.
 - 1) “No one takes it [Jesus’ life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” (Jn. 10:18).
 - 2) “I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak” (Jn. 12:49).
 - 2. The One on the cloud was told to thrust his sickle and reap.
 - a. The harvest is an Old Testament figure for divine judgment.
 - 1) “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow - For their wickedness is great” (Joel 3: 13).
 - 2) “The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor When it is time to thresh her; Yet a little while And the time of her harvest will come” (Jer. 51:33).
 - b. Jesus also spoke of the final judgment in terms of a harvest – “The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels” (Mt. 13:39).
 - c. He was to thrust his sickle and reap. Just what was this harvest?
 - 1) In the following verses (17-20), we have the harvest of judgment, of wrath; this, therefore, cannot be that judgment.
 - 2) This seems to be a harvest - the judgment- of the church.
 - 3) There are passages which speak of the judgment of the world being separate from the judgment of the righteous.
 - a) “I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn then, but gather the wheat into my barn’ ” (Mt. 13:30).
 - b) In Mt. 25, Jesus first told the righteous to inherit their reward, and then he told the wicked of their eternal doom.
 - 4) There will not be a judgment of the wicked at one point and a judgment of the righteous at another point.
 - a) “I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened” (Rev. 20:12).
 - b) Jn. 5:28-29.
 - 5) However, there are two judgments in that there are different results - one result for the righteous and one result for the unrighteous. Notice Jn. 5:29 speaks of two resurrections

that occur at the same time - the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation.

3. The time had come for him to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
 - a. The harvest was ready, thus it was time to reap.
 - b. There is much discussion among the linguists and commentators whether the word for “ripen should be translated “ripe” or “over-ripe.”
 - 1) The word often means to dry up, to wither, to wither away.
 - a) If that is the meaning here, it seems unlikely that this harvest is a judgment of the righteous.
 - b) The meaning would seem to be that this harvest is past due, that this is judgment against sin, and that God cannot bear to allow sin to become any worse.
 - 2) But, we need to understand words in their context; a word in English doesn’t necessarily mean the same thing every time it’s used, let alone a word in Greek or any other language.
 - 3) What the word more than likely means in this context is that the time for growth is over that this harvest is fully ripe.
- B. The Son of Man puts forth his sickle, and the earth is reaped, v. 16.
- C. What on earth does all this mean? There are two main possibilities:
 1. This could simply be a picture of the harvest of the righteous, just an apocalyptic way of depicting the gathering of the righteous to Christ.
 2. But, this could mean that the righteous are kept from the judgment of God.
 - a. Verses 19-20 of this chapter - the harvest of the wicked - speak of the wrath of God.
 - b. But, since the Christians were harvested before this shows that they will not experience God’s wrath.
 - 1) Remember, this is the harvest of Christians at the end of the world; this is not some rapture to prevent their enduring the Great Tribulation.
 - a) I firmly believe the “Great Tribulation” spoken of in Scripture refers to the Judean War in the first century.
 - b) It is history from our standpoint, not something in the future.
 - 2) But, Christians are kept from God’s wrath.
 - a) If we are faithful to God, Jesus’ Second Coming will be a glorious event for us.
 - b) At that time, we will not experience God’s wrath, but we will lay aside this body of flesh, put on an immortal body that shall never decay, that shall never grow old, but that is perfect for the heavenly city. Are you ready for that day to come?