

# The Grapes of Wrath

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*Revelation 14:17-20*

## **INTRODUCTION**

- A. Illustration about the woman's changing her mind on capital punishment, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #6512.
  - 1. Man can, indeed, inflict terrible punishment upon lawbreakers - man can do everything from throwing someone in prison for the rest of his life or even taking his life.
  - 2. But, God can do far worse and has far more wrath than man. Although God is a loving Being, he is a God of justice and of wrath.
    - a. "He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn. 3:3).
    - b. "Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience" (Col. 3:6).
- B. Tonight's text speaks about God's wrath and the judgment God will bring upon the world.

## **THE COMMANDMENT OF REAPING, vv. 17-18**

- A. Another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle, v. 17.
  - 1. Like the angel who told Christ to reap the harvest, this angel comes from the temple.
  - 2. Being in the temple means that this angel has been in the presence of God.
    - a. "The glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD" (1 Ki. 8:11).
    - b. After the construction of Solomon's temple, the temple was the physical manifestation of God's presence with the Israelites.
      - 1) Thus, this angel has been in God's presence, being in the temple.
      - 2) Since this angel has been in God's presence, he is able to execute wrath on God's behalf; he knows what God wants and he proceeds to do what God wants.
  - 3. This angel has a sharp sickle - the sharp sickle will be the means that he uses to reap his harvest.
- B. Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for the grapes are fully ripe," v. 18.
  - 1. An angel came from the altar who had power over fire.
    - a. This seems to be the angel who offered the saints' prayers on the altar in Rev. 8.
      - 1) He brought the saints' prayers and offered them with incense upon the altar before God's throne.
      - 2) He filled his censer with fire from the altar and threw it to the earth.
    - b. If this is the case, this angels' executing judgment seems to be a response to the prayers of the saints.
      - 1) The saints had been praying for God's judgment to come upon those who afflicted them, and here we see God fulfilling those prayers.
      - 2) Revelation concludes with "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).
        - a) The Apostle John prayed for the Lord to come, a time when the Lord will both reward the faithful and punish the wicked.
        - b) Should we not pray this prayer, too? For the Lord to come and give us the crown of life, and to inflict punishment upon those who do evil?
  - 2. He cried loudly to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."

- a. The grapes were fully ripe-the time for God’s patience had run out and God was ready to execute vengeance upon the world.
- b. God, although he is patient, will tire of the sin in the world, and he will execute judgment.

## **THE COMPLETION OF REAPING, vv. 19-20**

- A. 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, v. 19.
  - 1. Here we see the realization of what the angel of fire told this angel to do: reaping the harvest of the earth.
  - 2. The angel threw the vine of the earth into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
    - a. Because crushed grapes could look like human blood, the image of crushed grapes representing human blood, of warfare, was common in the ancient world.
    - b. Those who first read this would have understood clearly that this was a figure of death, of severe judgment.
- B. The winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridle for one thousand six hundred furlongs, v. 20.
  - 1. The winepress was trampled outside the city.
    - a. In the biblical era, grapes were trampled in a trough, which had a duct leading to a lower basin where the juice was then collected.
    - b. The treading of grapes was a figure of divine judgment in the Old Testament.
      - 1) “Through God we will do valiantly, For it is He who shall tread down our enemies” (Ps 60:12).
      - 2) God said that he would send Assyria “against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like mire of the streets” (Is. 10:6).
    - c. The winepress was trampled outside the city.
      - 1) Under the Old Covenant, defilement was to be taken outside the camp.
        - a) About the leper, God instructed, “You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell” (Num. 5:3).
        - b) The one who violated the Sabbath was to be stoned “outside the camp” (Num. 15:35).
      - 2) Since God dwelt in the camp, the camp could not be defiled.
      - 3) The idea in this context seems to be this: just as penalty and defilement were taken outside the camp, this penalty and defilement are taken outside the city.
  - 2. Blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.
    - a. The blood coming from the winepress illustrates quite well the judgment of God.
      - 1) Ancient reports of battles often referred to blood flowing down the streets of town after a massive slaughter.
      - 2) Josephus, the Jewish historian, reports that when Titus took Jerusalem the Romans killed everyone they met and that the whole city was overcome with blood; he reports that the fires of many houses were extinguished by men’s blood.
    - b. The blood rose to the height of a horse’s bridle for one thousand six hundred furlongs.
      - 1) This demonstrates the severity of divine judgment, for this is a large amount of blood.
      - 2) 1,600 furlongs is about 200 miles.
        - a) 1,600 is a square number (40 x 40).
        - b) Thus, the idea is probably that this is just a large number; there is a great amount of blood that has been spilt by this divine judgment.
  - 3. What a comfort this must have been to the first century Christians!
    - a. They were suffering unfathomable terror at the hands of the Roman authorities, and the Romans were apparently getting away with it.

- b. But, God makes abundantly clear that no the Romans would not go away with what they were doing.
- 4. Just as this text comforted our earlier brethren, this passage can comfort us, as well.
  - a. There are so many times that the wicked seemingly get away with what they have done - child molesters go free, murderers are acquitted because of some technicality, people whose hearts are as hard to the Gospel as can be have success upon success while we Christians struggle.
  - b. But, there is coining a day in which God will equal the score, when he will repay us far our faithfulness and punish the wicked.
- C. This text needs to do more than just comfort us; this text ought to serve as a solemn warning.
  - 1. God will judge the world, and his judgment will be terrible.
    - a. “The heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7).
    - b. “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to inflict all who are ungodly among them of an their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14-15).
  - 2. Illustration about how those in Tehran punish jaywalkers, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #6520.
  - 3. That’s quite a severe punishment for jaywalking, but think about how far worse God’s judgment will be.
    - a. Unless we prepare ourselves, we will meet God’s judgment.
    - b. Are you ready to meet that judgment?