**Revelation**

*Lesson 29 – Revelation 14:14-20*

* Last time in Revelation, we saw the elect of God gathered to Himself with the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion and angels proclaiming the fall of Babylon, symbolic of the world that is opposed to the Lord, and the eternal fate of those who worship the beasts and receive his mark rather than worship the Lamb and receive His name. That eternal destiny of punishment is described to make us feel the weight of what is happening. It’s torment. It’s the full strength of God’s wrath poured out. It’s fire and sulfur in the presence of the Lamb and the angels.
* Now we come to the last scene in this cycle. This is the end of the 4th cycle and chapter 15 will begin a new cycle that parallels the other cycles we have seen.

*Verses 14-16*

1. Verse 14 describes for us Jesus Christ using the language of Daniel 7:13. “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came **one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.” Matthew 26:64 – “Jesus said to him [Caiaphas], ‘You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see **the Son of Man** seated at the right hand of Power and **coming on the clouds of heaven**.’” Revelation 1:13 – “and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.”
2. This cloud is not what we think of as some cotton looking cloud or a dark thunderstorm cloud. This cloud is symbolic and is acting like a chariot to deliver Jesus to His appointed destination. This cloud represents the cloud of God’s glory. This is the cloud that filled the temple when Solomon was king (1 Kings 8:10) and also the cloud that left the Temple in the days of Ezekiel representing that God was no longer going to be present with His people because of their sin (Ezekiel 10:18). Jesus was clothed in a cloud at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) and ascended into the cloud in Acts 1:9.
3. And the Son of Man being borne along by the glory of God is wearing a crown. There are 2 Greek words for crown. The one used here represents a victor’s crown. This is the word used to describe “crowns” given to victors in the Olympic games. John sees Jesus coming as the Victorious One. He has conquered sin, and death, and Satan.
4. Then another angel comes and tells Jesus to do something. Now this has caused some question among commentators whether the one “like a son of man” is really Jesus or an angel. How can an angel give a command to Jesus Christ? But notice that this angel “came out of the temple.” It seems that this angel has been commissioned by the Father to tell this to Jesus. If that’s the case, then the angel is not acting on his own authority, but is simply relaying to the Son a message from the Father. Remember, only the Father knows the hour and time of judgment (Mark 13:32) so how is this angel able to know that the hour to reap has come unless the Father told it to the angel in order to give it to the Son. Even in this vision, we still see that the Son does nothing but what the Father commands (John 4:34; 5:19).
5. It’s interesting that Jesus, who was a carpenter while on Earth, does not come back with carpenter’s tool but with a farming instrument. He has a sickle and is told that the harvest is ripe and it’s time to reap.
6. This imagery as should be expected comes from the Old Testament and the predominant idea of harvest and reaping is judgment. Isaiah 17:5 – “And it [judgment on Israel] shall be as when the reaper gathers standing grain and his arm harvests the ears, and as when one gleans the ears of grain in the Valley of Rephaim.” Joel 3:13 – “**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.” Jeremiah 51:33 – “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come.”
7. But in the NT there is also a sense of a harvest having the positive sense of God gathering in His elect. Luke 10:2 – “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” John 4:36 – “Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.” Turn to Matthew 13:36-43.
8. So Jesus in verse 16 does exactly what His Father tells Him to do. This is the 2nd coming. We’ve seen the 2nd coming previously, we see it here, and we will see it again later in the book. Again, this demonstrates that Revelation is not written to be read linearly but as a series of cycles.

*Verses 17-20*

1. In the next verses, the focus is on the non-elect in this end time harvest.
2. This time the vision depicts 2 angels coming out of the heavenly temple, one of whom has a sharp sickle in his hand. One angel who is described as having authority over the fire tells the other angle to harvest the grape clusters because they are ripe. The angel with authority over fire most likely refers back to Revelation 8:3-5 where an angel takes a censer and takes the prayers of the saints from the altar and throws these prayers, pictured as fire, to the earth. This shows that God’s final judgment on the wicked is His answer to the prayers of the saints crying out for vindication.
3. In ancient times, grapes would be placed in a trough and a circular stone would be pulled by a pack animal and that stone would crush the grapes so that the juice flowed out and was collected to be turned into wine. Alternatively, the grapes would be put in a huge vat and would be trampled under the feet of servants who would press down the grapes with their feet so that the juice came out.
4. This becomes a picture of judgment upon the wicked. Verse 19 says the grape clusters are harvested and thrown into the winepress of the wrath of God. God is going to eternally trample under His feet the wicked so that they are eternally crushed under His wrath. It’s a picture of eternal condemnation and judgment for refusing to acknowledge Christ on earth AND for persecuting God’s people while on earth.
5. Isaiah 63:3-6 – [God speaking] “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. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. 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. I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”
6. Finally in verse 20, we’re given both the location and size of God’s winepress. First, it is outside the city. That’s where the unclean had to be. That’s where the dung and waste of the city was placed. Outside the city symbolically represents uncleanness. It’s also God’s ironic judgment since Jesus was crucified “outside the city” (Mark 15:22; Heb 13:12-13).
7. Next, God’s winepress is so full of blood that the blood is described “as high as a horse’s bridle” which is standard battle language to indicate severe judgment. And this vast amount of blood in God’s winepress extends as far as 1,600 stadia (~184 miles). 1,600 is symbolic of the squares of 4 and 10. Remember that 4 is symbolic for universal (4 winds/corners of the earth) and 1000 is symbolic for completeness. So God’s judgment is symbolically depicted as being universal in nature and complete in scope. None of the wicked escape God’s final harvest judgment.
8. In the entirety of this vision that John is seeing, God through visions to John is simply re-affirming the same things that were said in the Old Testament and which Jesus spoke to His apostles.
9. Matthew 16:27 – “For the Son of Man is going to come **with his angels in the glory of his Father**, and then **he will repay each person** according to what he has done.”

**Message for Us**

1. “This final paragraph of Revelation 14 is a symbolic portrayal of the final judgment that will come when Jesus Christ returns to this earth at the end of history. People don’t won’t to hear that. They prefer to think that life will simply continue on as it currently exists and that when it comes time for them to die they will go to a place in the sky called “heaven” and be reunited with their loved ones and friends, regardless of whether or not they have ever trusted and treasured Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. To suggest that judgment is coming when Christ does, to suggest that not everyone who is ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’ or ‘good’ or ‘law-abiding’ will enjoy eternal fellowship with God, is politically incorrect to the highest degree.” –Sam Storms
2. “Believer, on that great and dreadful day of judgment, when heaven and earth shall pass away, Christ shall come on the clouds of glory and with a crown of victory upon His head. And you, believer, as His faithful servant, will receive “a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4). The apostle Paul says, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). We will appear before Him without shame on that day because our Savior has triumphed over sin, death, and the grave, and His victory is our victory. He is coming with the Victor’s crown on His brow to judge the living and the dead.” –Joel Beeke
3. “There are two places where God can deal with the problem of your sin—at Calvary, in the person of a substitute Savior, or in hell. If you will not come to Calvary and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you must bear the consequences of your sin forever in hell. Now, there is nothing unjust or unfair about that. God has provided a Lamb for a burnt offering. He has provided a Savior for sinners. Dear friend, there is no reason why you should perish under the wrath of God. God has made provision for the salvation of sinners.” –Joel Beeke
4. God’s final judgment is going to be a terrible reality. It’s dreadful for those who will be eternally tormented and trampled by God Himself. How often do you seriously take this when considering the eternal state of people around you? Are you read for the final judgment?
5. It should comfort those of us who believe because God’s people are pictured as being gathered in first. God always deals with His people first. Noah and his family were shut in before the waters of judgment descended. Lot and his family escaped before fire and brimstone destroyed Sodom & Gomorrah. We get to meet Him in the air first before He pours out His wrath.
6. People don’t like to think of God as a God of wrath. People want God to be a God of love **only**. Some people think an angry God is either leftover from other religions or that the Bible is simply wrong here. But we must consider the reality of God’s wrath, both for ourselves (our own sins) and for others (who will have to deal with God’s wrath). God’s wrath isn’t a divine loss of self-control or a capricious temper tantrum. God’s wrath is His posture toward all that is unholy and unclean, including people.
7. Divine wrath also helps us better understand divine grace. “Unless we give a real content to the wrath of God, unless we hold that men really deserve to have God visit upon them the painful consequences of their wrongdoing, we empty God's forgiveness of its meaning. For if there is no ill desert, God ought to overlook sin. We can think of forgiveness as something real only when we hold that sin has betrayed us into a situation where we deserve to have God inflict upon us the most serious consequences, and that is upon such a situation that God's grace supervenes. When the logic of the situation demands that He should take action against the sinner, and He yet takes action for him, then and then alone can we speak of grace. But there is no room for grace if there is no suggestion of dire consequences merited by sin” –Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*