

Text: Rev. 14:14-20

Title: "The Sickle of the Son of Man"

Time: 3/18/2018

Place: NBBC

Intro: At a pastor's meeting this past week in PA, the pastors who gathered sang "Happy Birthday" to a fellow pastor who is celebrating his 50th birthday. That birthday is a special one because it is the one, it seems, when everyone says you just turned old. My brother Kent was the Grim Reaper at Pastor Tim Potter's 50th birthday celebration in Florida. The legend of the Grim Reaper comes from the Black Death period of Europe's Middle Ages, when 1/3 of the population died.

What this prophecy of future events has in common with the legend of the Grim Reaper is that both are very grim. Armageddon happens in Rev. 19:17-21. Not until then will the reaping judgment predicted here be complete (see Joel 3:9-16). What we have in the passage we are focused on this morning is a metaphorical prelude to the final bowl-judgments of the Great Tribulation period, which bring that period to the finality of Armageddon. There God shall judge the nations of the antichrist and shall save His people Israel.

Where this prophecy diverges greatly from the legend of the Grim Reaper is when it comes to who holds the sickle. In the picture from the Middle Ages, death holds the sickle and is in complete control of those grim circumstances. In this prophecy-prelude to the final judgments of the Great Tribulation period, the Son of Man holds the sickle.

As I studied this passage this past week, I was struck by the wonderful comparison and contrast this work of the Lamb

during the Great Tribulation period makes with the work of the Lamb in our own day. In this future time, Jesus shall be the Son of Man with the sickle of a harvest of final judgment in hand. Today, Jesus is the Head of the church and the Lord of the harvest. He has sent us out into the harvest field to make disciples of all nations. That comparison will be our focus this morning, and I would like us to see three truths in this regard.

I. Both as the Son of Man with sickle in hand and as the Lord of the harvest, Jesus is the sovereign King of heaven and of earth (v. 14).

Ill: The Yankee great, Yogi Berra, is probably remembered today as much for his unique quotations as for his baseball exploits. These include: "it ain't over till it's over"; "when you come to a fork in the road, take it"; "never answer an anonymous letter" (wisdom we can apply directly as a church); "it gets late early out there"; "pair up in threes"; and perhaps the one I use the most, "it's déjà vu all over again." Reading the Book of Revelation can be a little like experiencing "déjà vu all over again." You often read in this book of the Bible what you think you have already read before somewhere else.

Appl: You may remember that our study of the wild animals of chapter 13 reminded us of Daniel 7. This morning, the reference to the Son of Man in 14:14 also should remind us of that chapter (Dan. 7:13-14). These prophecies envision a day when the Mighty King, the Son of Man, brings judgment upon a rebellious world so that all of its kingdoms bow before His authority, obey Him, and worship Him.

Did you ever think about the fact that Jesus is no less the Mighty King today? We mentioned this truth last week as

we looked at the emphasis of the first angel who shall proclaim the everlasting gospel from heaven (14:7). Before telling His disciples to make disciples of the nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all of His other commandments, He said, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Go, therefore, or for that reason.

The day is coming when the Mighty King, Jesus Christ, brings judgment that will cause people to submit to His authority. The day is here right now, when the Mighty King, Jesus Christ, has brought the grace and truth of the worldwide gospel to invite people to submit to His authority.

He never intended that the free grace of His gospel be used as an excuse to disobey His kingly authority. No, both as the Son of Man with sickle in hand and as the Lord of the harvest, Jesus is the mighty King who is worthy of our worship, trust, and loving obedience. Are you worshipping Him rightly? Are you baptized? Are you obeying His other commands because He is the Lord of your life?

Just like in Daniel 7 and Revelation 14, Jesus is the sovereign king of heaven and earth in our day.

II. Both as the Son of Man with sickle in hand and as the Lord of the harvest, Jesus deals with a ripened crop (vv. 15-18; John 4:35-42).

III: The end of Rev. 14:15 says literally that the harvest is *dry*, and for that reason I believe that the angel is speaking of a grain harvest, just like Jesus did after visiting with the woman at the well in Samaria.

I read a little about how you know wheat is ready to harvest: "Turning from green to brown is one excellent way of

judging the development of the wheat. Then you need to watch the head. Straight up and down means that it's not there yet. When it bends over to better release it's [sic] seeds you know it's very close. The final test is to check the moisture content of the seed. The proper way to do this is to cut a small test sample, take a can of grain to your local grain elevator, and let them use the machine on it. In less than a minute it'll tell you the moisture content. You want it under 15% or they dock you" (<http://dougintology.blogspot.com/2010/06/how-to-tell-when-to-harvest-wheat.html>; accessed 3/15/2018).

Appl: So in Samaria in the days of Christ, as well as in our own day, when souls can be saved, the fields are both white and dry unto harvest. That harvest is a harvest of people out of the field of the world of sin and into the body of Christ, His forgiven and sanctified church. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that saves from sin and imparts new life, just like the woman at the well experienced. It is what you need to have happen to you if you are going to be right with God. You must be harvested by the Lord of the harvest. Christ must pluck you out of your old life of sin and give you a new life of forgiveness and justification unto holiness.

Here in the Great Tribulation, the grain field is also ripe unto harvest, but the harvest is of a different kind. Unlike the picture from the Gospels, this picture of judgment turns into a vineyard of gleaned grapes thrown into a winepress and trampled upon in judgment (v. 18).

So there are two ripened harvests. The harvest of these angels of judgment will be ripe then; our harvest of the saving gospel is ripe now. The angels will execute their work of harvesting flawlessly then. How are we doing at our harvesting work now? Jesus put a sad reality about our ripened harvest this way, "The harvest truly is great, but the labor-

ers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:2-3). The trouble with our ripened harvest is that the laborers are few, and the laborers are few because if you are going to labor in this harvest, you must be willing to live like a lamb among wolves.

And yet, is it not worthwhile to labor for this ready harvest? Does not your heart thrill at the thought of experiencing what Jesus and the woman at the well experienced in Samaria, "And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world'" (John 4:41-42). Who have you told that Jesus is the Savior of the world? Who will you tell in the coming week? Where is the fruit of our labors in the harvest?

Jesus deals with ripened crops. We must labor in our ripened crop for Him.

III. Both as the Son of Man with sickle in hand, and as the Lord of the harvest, Jesus causes blood to flow outside the city (vv. 18-20).

III: The blood of the battle of Armageddon is described for us in verse 20. That battle is going to occur in the Valley of Jezreel by the city of Megiddo. The battlefield is pictured as a winepress outside the city. We are told that as a result of God's wrath on these gathered armies, blood rises to the bridles of horses over an area roughly equivalent to 20 square miles. There will be stacks of slain bleeding bodies there in that day of judgment.

Appl: Why is this winepress metaphor of God's wrath pictured here as "without the city" (v. 20)? It was common in the ancient world to have winepresses inside the village or the city as well as without, so why do we read here that this one is "without the city"? Well, first, the Valley of Jezreel is certainly outside the city a good distance, at least from the perspective of Jerusalem. But more importantly, I think we are supposed to experience déjà vu again when we read about blood flowing "outside the city."

As the Son of Man with sickle in hand, Jesus will cause the blood of judgment to flow on this battlefield outside the city. It will be the blood of those He judges in that day. But also as the Lord of harvest who commissioned His disciples to gather souls into His kingdom, Jesus had to cause the blood of judgment to flow outside the city for that work to be done. In this case, it was His own blood. God's judgment of the sinner fell upon Him. The battlefield was the cross of Calvary. The winepress of the wrath of God was God's wrath poured out upon Him for your sins and mine. The treading of the grapes was His horrific suffering.

The author of Hebrews put it this way: "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Do you see this morning Jesus being tread in the winepress of the wrath of God for your sins outside the city? Can you understand what it cost Him to love you this way? Are you willing to go to Him and to bear His reproach, or will you

instead love the world and seek for the world's approval instead of His?

Conclusion: How often have you and I said to ourselves, "If I knew then what I know now, I would have done differently"? That is a common expression. Maybe it was a car accident due to bad roads. If you knew how bad the roads were, you would have slowed down or stayed home.

This passage helps us know now, what will be undeniable at the end of the Great Tribulation. It tells us that there is a King who is worthy of trust, love, worship, and obedience. He has earned His golden wreath, and He will have His kingdom. It tells us that someday the angels will execute flawlessly a reaping of judgment upon a ripe harvest. And it says that blood will flow outside the city.

When all that takes place, will we wish we had been better laborers in the harvest of grace and truth? Will we wish we had gone to Him outside the camp, that we had loved Him more who suffered so for us, that we had worshipped Him instead of our own desires for possessions, pleasures, and pride? You and I cannot say, "If only I knew then what I know now." We know now, and someday soon we will give an account then for what we have known.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*