

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 8-18-13 PM NOTES
"THE WRATH OF GOD"
REVELATION 14:14-20
#23 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

The wrath of God is as much a perfection of God as is His love, grace, and mercy.

God's wrath is pure; it reflects His holiness and His settled hatred for sin.

Romans 1:18 (NKJV) "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

Romans 2:8 (HCSB) "but wrath and indignation to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth, but are obeying unrighteousness."

Psalms 90:7 (NKJV) "For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified."

Romans 5:9 (NKJV) "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV) "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

"Your wickedness makes you, as it were, heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock...There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth on you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor."
—Jonathan Edwards

"Not in this book of wonders are there more striking visions than these two, closing chapter 14 of the Apocalypse. The expressive imagery and the awesome administration of God that they unfold would strike terror to a heart that is not given in trust to Christ."
—W. A. Criswell

Joel 3:12-14 (NKJV) "'¹² Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. ¹³ 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.' ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord *is* near in the valley of decision."

I. The Wheat Harvest (vv. 14-16)

A. The Reaper of the Wheat Harvest (vv. 14-16)

Matthew 17:5 (NKJV) "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Acts 1:9 (NKJV) "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

1 Thessalonians 4:17a (NKJV) "Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

Revelation 1:7a (NKJV) “Behold, He is coming with clouds...”

Daniel 7:13b (NKJV) “...and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven!”

Matthew 8:20b (NKJV) “...the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.”

B. The Ripeness of the Wheat Harvest (v. 15)

Matthew 13:40 (NKJV) “Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.”

C. The Reaping of the Wheat Harvest (v. 16)

II. The Grape Harvest (vv. 17-20)

Revelation 16:16 (NKJV) “And they gathered them together to **the place** called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”

A. The Timeliness of the Grape Harvest (vv. 17-19)

Genesis 15:16 (NKJV) “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”

The Israelites were the instruments of God’s judgment on the Amorites (Canaanites).

B. The Terribleness of the Grape Harvest (v. 20)

Isaiah 63:3-4 (NKJV) “³I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. ⁴For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.”

Lamentations 1:15 (NKJV) “The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty *men* in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled *as* in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.”

“Unregenerate humanity faces a frightening future, as this incredible scene indicates. Those who refuse to repent, even after repeated warnings, will learn first hand the sobering truth that ‘it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God’ (Hebrews 10:31). They would do well to heed the psalmist’s admonition in **Psalms 2:12 (NASB)** ‘Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!’”

—John MacArthur

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Recently, a committee in the Presbyterian Church USA decided to exclude from their new hymnal the much loved song by Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend “In Christ Alone”. The committee wanted to include the song because it was being sung in so many churches including Presbyterian churches. There was one line in the song that they just couldn’t accept. It was the line, “Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied”. The committee wanted to substitute this for the line that was troublesome to

them: “Till on that cross as Jesus died, the love of God was magnified”. The authors of the hymn insisted on the original wording, and so the committee voted 9 to 6 that “In Christ Alone” would not be in their new hymnal. The subject of God’s wrath is not very popular. Many who profess to accept the fact of the wrath of God seem to be embarrassed about it and feel the need to apologize for it. Most preachers seldom (if ever) preach about the wrath of God. **The wrath of God is as much a perfection of God as is His love, grace, and mercy.** When we speak of the wrath of God, we are not talking about a divine temper tantrum. God’s wrath is pure; it reflects His holiness and His settled hatred for sin. His wrath is a holy and judicial wrath. There is a present aspect to the wrath of God. **Romans 1:18 (NKJV)** “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”. **Romans 2:8 (HCSB)** “but wrath and indignation to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth, but are obeying unrighteousness”. **Psalms 90:7 (NKJV)** “For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified.” There are many references to the future aspect of God’s wrath. **Romans 5:9 (NKJV)** “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” **1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV)** “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

Allow me to give you an example of a Pastor preaching about the wrath of God. This does not come from an ignorant hillbilly preacher who preached it with face red, eyes bulging, while yelling at the top of his lungs. This comes from a man in 18th century Colonial America who has been called “the most brilliant intellect ever born in America”. Far from yelling and shouting as he preached, he read from a manuscript. This is a short excerpt from what may be the best known sermon ever preached – “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” by Jonathan Edwards. “Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider’s web would have to stop a falling rock... There are the black clouds of God’s wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth on you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.” [Quoted in John MacArthur, *Coming Face to Face with His Majesty*, pages 87-88]. You don’t hear many sermons like that today! Why do we need to hear often about the wrath of God? Until we see the reality of God’s wrath, we will never really comprehend, appreciate, or experience the love, mercy, and grace of God. It is those who are most aware of His wrath that are most thankful for His mercy, love, and grace.

The text we are now going to examine in this message is about the wrath of God that is coming upon the earth. We read in **Revelation 14:19b (NKJV)** about “...the great winepress of the wrath of God.” What we have in verses 17-20 of our text is a preview of the final battle – often called “the battle of Armageddon” where His wrath is poured out in unprecedented waves. This battle takes place in the second phase of the second coming of Christ. The first phase of His second coming is when He comes in the air for His saints. After 7 years of great tribulation, He returns to the earth with His saints and at that time His enemies will be destroyed. We will see many more details of that display of the wrath of God in a moment. This coming back to the earth with His saints will be in stark contrast to His coming to the earth 2,000 years ago. In His first coming, He came in humiliation. The eternal God the Son became a little baby born in a stable. When He comes again to the earth, it will be with great exaltation and he will be worshipped as the King of kings and Lord of lords. When He came the first time, it was as the suffering servant that Isaiah described in detail in Isaiah 53. When He comes to the earth the second time, it will be as the sovereign King in glory and splendor. When He came the first time, He came in poverty; when He comes again, it will be in majesty. When He came the first time, it was to a cross; when He comes to the earth the second time, it will be to conquer. When He came the first time, it was to save sinners; when He comes the second time it will be to judge sinners. When He came the first time, it was in

mercy and grace but when He comes the second time it will be in judgment and wrath. In our text, John is giving us a short preview of that second coming to the earth. Dr. W. A. Criswell says this of the passage that we are examining tonight: "Not in this book of wonders are there more striking visions than these two, closing chapter 14 of the Apocalypse. The expressive imagery and the awesome administration of God that they unfold would strike terror to a heart that is not given in trust to Christ." [W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, page 159]. If your heart is not given in trust to Christ, I hope you experience that terror tonight and come to Christ to experience the mercy of God.

In the Old Testament, both Isaiah and Joel spoke of a coming harvest of divine wrath. Isaiah spoke of a harvest of wrath in Isaiah 63:1-6. Joel said in **Joel 3:12-14 (NKJV)** ¹² "Let the nations be awakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord *is* near in the valley of decision."

I. The Wheat Harvest (V14-16)

There are some Bible scholars that believe that the two harvests in verses 14-16 and in verses 17-20 are the same harvest just using different pictures. I believe that this pictures two harvests, two outpourings of God's wrath in the last days. The two visions are similar, but there are some key differences. This first harvest is superintended by the Lord Jesus Christ and it is a harvest of wheat. The second vision is a harvest of grapes and it is superintended by an angel. Let's examine the wheat harvest.

A. The Reaper of the Wheat Harvest (V14)

This is none other than the Lord Jesus. A white or bright cloud is in several places associated with Jesus. For example, there is a cloud at the transfiguration in **Matthew 17:5 (NKJV)** "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" We see a cloud at the ascension of Christ in **Acts 1:9 (NKJV)** "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." When Jesus comes to catch up His church, we see a cloud. **1 Thessalonians 4:17a (NKJV)** "Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." **Revelation 1:7a (NKJV)** "Behold, He is coming with clouds..." The cloud symbolizes His glory and majesty. The title "Son of man" was the Lord's favorite title for Himself during His incarnation. This was a title Daniel used of the coming Messiah in **Daniel 7:13 (NKJV)** "...and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!" It is interesting that the first time He is called the Son of Man in the New Testament, it was in **Matthew 8:20b (NKJV)** "...the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head." In this last use of the title, He is now ready to take possession of the entire earth.

Notice that He has a crown on His head. There are two Greek words translated "crown". One speaks of the crown of kingship and the other is the crown of victory. Jesus could wear either crown, but the crown He wears here is the crown of victory. It anticipates the battle of Armageddon where He will defeat all of His enemies.

There is a sharp sickle in Jesus' hand. Those of us with a little age on us who grew up in the country know what that is. We called it a scythe. It had a long handle and a sharp curved blade. Before modern machinery it was used to cut down the wheat for harvest. The picture is the Lord Jesus mowing down His enemies like a farmer mowing down grain.

B. The Ripeness of the Wheat Harvest (V15)

This angel delivers a message from God the Father to God the Son that the time for the judgment has come. This reminds us of the harvest Jesus spoke of in Matthew 13:24-30 in what is called, "the parable of the sower." This could be the fulfillment of the reaping Jesus spoke of in **Matthew 13:40 (NKJV)** "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age." I believe that more likely it is likely speaking of the 7 bowl judgments that are going to be poured out on the earth that we will study in chapter 16.

C. The Reaping of the Wheat Harvest (V16)

If this vision pictures the bowl judgments, the details of this thrusting of the sickle are in chapter 16. Those who have sworn loyalty and worshipped the beast will suffer unspeakable wrath. There will be loathsome sores (16:2), all sea life will die (16:3), the rivers and the springs of water become blood (16:4), there will be an intensifying of the sun's heat so that people are scorched by its heat (16:8), there will be a thick darkness over the earth (16:10-11) and the earth will be literally shaken (16:17-21). That is the wrath of the wheat harvest – the seven bowl judgments.

II. The Grape Harvest (V17-20)

While the wheat harvest likely pictured the bowl judgments, the grape harvest pictures the final battle – the battle of Armageddon. Most people have heard this word “Armageddon”, but few realize that it refers to a place. Most relate the word to a movie! **Revelation 16:16 (NKJV)** “And they gathered them together to **the place** called in Hebrew, Armageddon.” This place was a part of the tribe of Manasseh in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is about 60 miles north of Jerusalem. It has been the scene of many battles in both secular and biblical history. I have stood on the mountain that overlooks the plain of Megiddo and you can visualize the final battle involving millions of combatants in the final pouring out of the wrath of God on the earth. It was here where Gideon defeated the mighty Midianite army with his 300 men. It was here that King Josiah was slain in a battle against the Egyptians, and it will be here where the final battle will be fought. Napoleon supposedly looked on this place and declared it, “the world's greatest battlefield”. It has access on the west to the Mediterranean Sea at the port of Haifa, and access on the east to the Jordan valley. The pass of Megiddo gives access to the south by way of the sea and the Carmel mountain range. To the North, the ancient trade route ran to the Sea of Galilee and into Syria. My point is that it has access from all points of the compass. We are going to study this last battle in detail when we get to chapters 16 & 19, but in this grape harvest we have a preview of the battle where the judgment of God is poured out on the followers of the antichrist.

A. The Timeliness of the Grape Harvest (V17-19)

The time for the judgment, the final outpouring of God's wrath on the earth is now come. The grapes of wrath are ripe. In **Genesis 15:16 (NKJV)** God told Abraham, “...the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” But several hundred years later when Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, the land of the Amorites, their iniquity was full and God gave the command to wipe them out. The Israelites were the instruments of God's judgment. Here in Revelation 14, the iniquity of this rebellious world is complete and the time for God's wrath has come. Demon spirits, not knowing that they will be playing into God's hands will gather the nations of the world to Armageddon – this natural battlefield – to wipe out the Jews. When it seems that all hope is gone, Jesus comes and the final harvest, the pouring out of God's wrath as never before begins. It will be at just the right time.

B. The Terribleness of the Grape Harvest (V20)

A winepress consisted of two stone basins connected by a trough. Grapes would be trampled in the upper basin, and the juice would collect in the lower one. The splattering of the juice as the grapes are stomped vividly pictures the blood of those who will be destroyed in this battle when Christ returns. We see this symbolism in **Isaiah 63:3-4 (NKJV)** ³ “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one *was* with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. ⁴ For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.” We see this symbolism also in **Lamentations 1:15 (NKJV)** “The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty *men* in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled *as* in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.” There is seldom any symbolism in the book of Revelation that does not have roots in the Old Testament.

The question we need to address is whether the last part of verse 20 – **Revelation 14:20b (NKJV)** “...and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.” – is literal or using hyperbole. I am not sure, but I lean toward it being hyperbole. However, I hold out the possibility of it being literal since technically “the battle of Armageddon” is not a battle in the sense that

we think of battle. The Lord destroys all of His enemies with the word of His mouth. The Jewish historian Josephus writes that when the Romans came into Jerusalem in 70 AD and destroyed the temple and hundreds of thousands of people (some accounts say over a million) in a relatively small area, there was so much blood flowing that it put out the fire in many houses. At Armageddon, there will be possibly hundreds of millions destroyed.

This wrath really bothers some people and messes up their view of Jesus as only “sweet Jesus meek and mild” or “There’s not a friend like the lowly Jesus”. You must see the whole of biblical revelation. The attributes or perfections of Christ Jesus are not like a cafeteria that you can pick and choose. As the Bible presents Him – that is who He is.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude with a quote from John MacArthur. “Unregenerate humanity faces a frightening future, as this incredible scene indicates. Those who refuse to repent, even after repeated warnings, will learn first hand the sobering truth that “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). They would do well to heed the psalmist’s admonition in **Psalms 2:12 (NASB)** ‘Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!’”