

The Book Of Revelation Study 75

Revelation 14:13 (NKJV)

¹³ *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*

Now we learned last study that these Saints lived with perseverance.
Today we want to see that they died with promise.

This is the sixth time in Revelation that John **heard a voice from heaven** (10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:2)
He will hear such a voice three more times (18:4; 19:5; 21:3)

The **voice** commanded John to write.

Revelation 14:13 (NKJV)

¹³ *'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord'*

That includes martyrs such as Antipas (**2:13**), those seen under the heavenly altar (**6:9-11**), and the great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (**Rev 7:9, 14**)

These martyr's are blessed not only because they lived life to the fullest in obedience and trust, but also because they **died in the Lord**.

They will experience in death the fullest reward, because ;

Psalms 116:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ *Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints.*

With Paul they will be able to call out triumphantly;

1 Corinthians 15:55 (NKJV)

⁵⁵ *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

The **voice** informed John that not only those already dead, but also those who die **from now on** are blessed.

The martyred believers from that point until the end of the Tribulation will have nothing to fear.
Their deaths, too will be blessed.

The **Holy Spirit** is quoted directly in Revelation only here and in **22:17**.

His emphatic "Yes" (the Greek particle *nai* indicates strong affirmation)

As their sustainer and comforter, who loves them and is grieved by their pain, the Holy Spirit longs to see that suffering end.

He adds two more reasons for the Tribulation martyrs' blessedness

First the Spirit declares them blessed because **they may rest from their labors**.

Labors (*kopos*) describes hard, difficult, exhausting toil. It can also refer to bother, annoyance, or trouble.

Certainly the Tribulation saints will experience the whole gamut of the word's meanings.

They will be filled with deep sorrow as they watch those they love, children, parents, spouses, and friends suffer torment and death.

Their lives will be a hard, difficult, dangerous struggle for survival.

Not having the mark of the beast, they will be excluded from society, be unable to buy or sell, and live lives on the run as hunted fugitives.

Death will grant **rest** from all the difficulties and sorrows of their lives, it will be a welcome relief.

In stark contrast are the damned, who will know not a moment's rest throughout all eternity (**14:11**)

Second the Holy Spirit pronounces the Tribulation martyrs blessed because **their deeds follow with them.**

Erga (deeds) refers to their service to the Lord.

When these believers go to heaven, the record of their diligent labor will **follow along with them.**

The Bible teaches that God will reward believers in heaven for their earthly service to Him.

Hebrews 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

Facing imminent execution, Paul triumphantly declared,

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

⁸ *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

The following passage describes God's testing of believers works;

1 Corinthians 3:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*

¹³ *each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.*

¹⁴ *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.*

After being tested and have had all of the wood hay and stubble removed, the rewards are based on what is left.

Those works are described as gold, silver, and precious stones.

The dead who have lived in obedience and trust will be blessed with rest and reward after they die.

Those who live now for wanton pleasure are dead even while they live (1 Tim 5:6)

Being dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1), they face the horror of eternal damnation in hell.

The sobering truth is that the choices people make in this life will irreversibly chart the course of their eternal destinies.

A Christ-less eternity of unrelieved torment or the blissful rest and reward of heaven: that is the choice faced by every person.

THE FINAL REAPING OF THE EARTH

Now we come to the final reaping of the Earth

Revelation 14:14-20 (NKJV)

¹⁴ *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

¹⁵ *And 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."*

¹⁶ *So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

¹⁷ *Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

¹⁸ *And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."*

¹⁹ *So 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.*

²⁰ *And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.*

Jesus first coming was one of humiliation, a time when He:

Philippians 2:6-8 (NKJV)

⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Jesus came the first time as a servant; He will return as the Sovereign King.

In His first coming, He came in humility: in His second coming, He will come in majesty and splendor.

The first time He came to earth;

Luke 19:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ *for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

When He returns, it will be to;

2 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

Jesus came the first time as a sower

He will come the second time as a reaper.

God's final judgment on the earth is the theme of *14:6-11*.

Verses 12 and 13 form a brief respite, presenting the encouraging, comforting truth to the perseverance of the saints.

After that brief rest to encourage the faithful, the theme of divine wrath resumes in verses *14 to 20*

The judgment introduced in these verses will take place at the worst time in human history, the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:21-22).

After years of enduring Antichrist's oppressive rule, demonic assaults, and the terrifying, devastating, staccato judgments of God, people will wearily hope that things are about to get better.

It will seem as if life couldn't possibly get any worse, but it will.

The cataclysmic "Day of the Lord" judgment is about to fall on Satan, his demon hordes, Antichrist, and all the wicked, unrepentant people of the world.

That judgment is depicted in this passage as the final reaping of the earth.

In an unprecedented holocaust, the full fury of the Lord Jesus Christ will be released in devastating judgment.

The theme of coming judgment is certainly not unique to Revelation.

Even before the Messiah preached the good news of the gospel His forerunner proclaimed the bad news of judgment.

Matthew 3:7 (NKJV)

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

During His earthly ministry Jesus repeatedly warned of the coming day of judgment.

Paul also wrote;

Romans 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 2:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

⁶ who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

The Old Testament also speaks of God's eschatological judgment on the world.

Isaiah 13:11-13 (NKJV)

¹¹ "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

¹² I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.

¹³ Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.

Isaiah 24:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ It shall come to pass in that day That the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth.

²² They will be gathered together, As prisoners are gathered in the pit, And will be shut up in the prison; After many days they will be punished.

²³ Then the moon will be disgraced And the sun ashamed; For the LORD of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem And before His elders, gloriously.

Our Lord also spoke of this;

Matthew 13:38-42 (NKJV)

³⁸ *The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*

³⁹ *The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.*

⁴⁰ *Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

⁴¹ *The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,*

⁴² *and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

Now back to our main passage. Here we see the pictures of the final harvest. We see that John reveals what he saw of the divine wrath in two agricultural motifs:

He uses the grain harvest in verses *14-16* and then the grape harvest in verses *17-20*

The first aspect of this harvest involves the seven bowl judgments (*16:1-21*), a rapid fire sequence of frightening and deadly worldwide judgments that will destroy the final Babylon, the Antichrist's empire.

The second aspect is the Battle of Armageddon, at which point Jesus Christ returns to judge and destroy His enemies (*19:11-21*)

THE GRAIN HARVEST

Revelation 14:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

¹⁵ *And 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."*

¹⁶ *So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

The grain harvest symbolizes the seven bowl judgments, the grape harvest the judgment of Armageddon. Both harvests involve a sickle and reaping, and both can be described by the same three points:

The reaper, the ripeness, and the reaping.

THE REAPER

Revelation 14:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

What caught John's attention was a white cloud; an image drawn from Daniel

Revelation 14:14-15 (KJV)

¹⁴ *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

¹⁵ *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*

John saw **sitting on the cloud one like the son of man** = the Lord Jesus Christ.
The Lord coming to establish His kingdom in fulfillment of Daniels's prophecy.

The brilliant, white **cloud** symbolizes His glory and majesty
He is ready to take the dominion of which Daniel prophesied; the reaper is **sitting** as He waits for the proper time to stand and begin the reaping.

That reaping (the seven bowl judgments) will be followed by Christ's return to establish His kingdom.

The description of Christ as **one like the son of man** also derives from Daniel's prophecy

Daniel 7:13 (NKJV)

¹³ *"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.*

This was the favorite title used by Jesus when he walked the earth. He called himself the son of man.

Matthew 8:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

The reaper is further described as **having a golden crown on His head.**

This **crown** is not the *diadema* worn by a king but rather
The *stephanos* worn by victors in war, it is a crown of triumph.

It pictures the Son of Man not in His identity as the sovereign ruler but as the triumphant conqueror victorious over all His enemies.

The reaper also had a **sharp sickle in His hand.**

The sickle being the long, curved, razor-sharp iron blade attached to a long, broomstick like wooden handle.

These sickles were used as you may know to harvest grain;

They were held with both hands spread apart and swept back and forth, their sharp blades would cut off the grain stalks at the ground level.

The picture is the Lord Jesus Christ mowing down His enemies like a harvester cutting grain.

THE RIPENESS

Revelation 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ *And 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."*

Another angel, the fourth one mentioned in this chapter appears on the scene.

The first three angels proclaimed that judgment was coming: the fourth brings the command to execute it.

This angel **came out of the heavenly temple**, from before the throne of God.

He comes with a **loud voice** conveying urgency, power, and the authority delegated to him from God, the angel cried out

Revelation 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ *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."*

He delivers the message from God the Father to the Son of Man that it is time for Him to move in judgment.

God's anger has reached its limit, and His wrath is poured out.

The time for grace is over, and there will be no more delaying the harvest of judgment. The Son can now exercise the right to judge that the Father has delegated to Him.

John 5:22 (NKJV)

²² *For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,*

John 5:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ *For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,*
²⁷ *and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.*

Reason for execution of the judgments is that the **earth is ripe** for judgment.

In fact, the verb translated **is ripe** actually means "dried up, withered, overripe, or rotten" The grain (the earth) pictured here has passed the point of any usefulness and is fit only to be gathered up and burned with fire"

Matthew 13:40 (NKJV)

⁴⁰ *Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

THE REAPING

Revelation 14:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ *So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

Here is one of the most tragic and sobering statements in all of Scripture. Simply, and without fanfare, it records the executing of divine judgment.

The frightening details of that judgment are unfolded in *Chapter 16*

1. Loathsome and malignant sores on the worshipers of Antichrist (v-2)
2. The death of all life in the world's oceans (v-3)
3. The turning of the world's rivers and springs of water into blood (v-4)
4. The intensifying of the sun's heat until it scorches people (v-8)
5. Painful darkness over all of Antichrist's kingdom (v-10)
6. The drying up of the Euphrates River in preparation for a massive invasion by the kings of the east (v-12)
7. The most powerful and destructive earthquake in history (v-18)

Those seven rapid-fire bowl judgments mark the first phase of the final reaping of the earth. Thus the grain harvest.

Next study we will look at the grape harvest. (14:17-20)