



Citadel Of Faith Covenant Church

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ALPHA AND OMEGA

I remember singing in the choir at Northwestern University. One of my favorite arrangements was Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic". Little did I know that the word pictures found their origin in the book of Revelation chapter 14.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightening of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat; He is sifting out the hearts of men before the judgment seat; O, be swift, my soul to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet! Our God is marching on. I love the way in which Charles Swindoll shares the contrasts between the two advents of Christ. As you know we celebrate Advent every year right before Christmas. Well, there will be another "arrival" of Christ to the earth, but His arrival will be quite different than His first!

At His First Coming (1): He came in meekness as a servant (Matt. 20:28); At His Second (2): He will come in power as Judge (Matt. 24:30-31; 25:31-46; John 5:26-29). **1st**: He Came in humility and gentleness (Matt. 11:29; John 5:41); **2nd** : He will come in majesty and splendor (I Thes. 4:16; REV. 1:7); **1st** : He came to seek and save the lost (Matt. 18:11; Luke 19:10; John 3:17), **2nd**: He will come to judge and reign (Acts 10:40-42; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 11:15). **1st**: He came as a servant to suffer wrath for sinners (Matt. 16:21; 17:12; Mark 3:17), **2nd**: He will come as a conqueror to rescue the righteous from wrath. (I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thes. 4:15-17). Finally, **1st**: He came to sow the seed of the gospel (Matt. 13:3-9; Luke 8:11), **2nd**: He will come to reap the harvest (Matt. 13:37-42). Maybe one of the reasons that people are a bit hesitant to accept Christ is that they see Him one-dimensionally; as the baby in the manger and the sacrificial Lamb on the cross. Very rarely are there references to Him as Judge, reigning King, etc.

Chapter fourteen opens with the Lamb of God along with the 144,000 on Mt. Zion. It quickly turns three angels sounding the coming action of our Lord. Now we see another glimpse of Jesus on the throne. Rev. 14:14 mentions one who sat on the throne with a gold crown and a sharp sickle. The crown and throne depicting authority and the sickle: judgment. Chapter 14 acts as the overview of several following chapters in the book of Revelation.



The grain harvest (14:14-16) previews the seven bowl judgments described in Rev. Chapters 15-16. The grape harvest (14:17-20) pictures the Battle of Armageddon that is detailed in 16:13-21 and 19:19-21. As John turns he notices a white cloud (symbolizing the glory of God) and one sitting on the cloud was like the son of man (always a reference to the humanity of Christ). On His head is a golden crown (showing authority and power) and a sharp sickle in His hand (showing Him as Judge). Now we see an angel (vs. 15) who comes out of the Temple of God in the heavenlies who calls out to Jesus to take the sickle He's holding and reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe. This made sense to the agrarian society who might have read this. This may not be as clear to us today. When the day of harvest occurred, the reaping could not be put off. The Greek word for ripe, *xeraino* means "dried" or "withered" suggesting that the spiritual and moral condition of humanity had become "overripe". As we have been mentioning throughout our study of this book, this is a book about the tender mercies of God. He has delayed judgment for as long as possible. (2 Pet. 3:9). Instantly Jesus sweeps His sickle over the earth and executes this judgment. While the wheat harvest represents the sudden, swift intrusion of God's judgment of human history. The grape harvest, on the other hand, signifies the severity of that judgment. Vs. 17 speaks of yet another angel coming out of the Temple of God with a sharp sickle in his hand. Vs. 18 speaks of different angel who had charge of the fire came from the altar and called to the one with the sharp sickle, to take the cluster of grapes from the earth's vine because the grapes are ripe. The word ripe here (*akmazo*) differs from the word ripe as described in the harvest judgment. This word means to be at the prime. In other words, wickedness had reached it's prime! Without delay the angel obeyed the command and swung the sickle and hurled the grapes in the "great wine press of the wrath of God (14:19). John saw a wine press trodden outside the city where the blood from the winepress came up to the nose of a the horses for 200 miles (Rev. 14:20) The bloodshed that will happen at this battle of Armageddon is second to no other event in human history. The judgment of God is getting ready to happen. Both the swiftness and severity remind us of God's commitment to His Word and holiness. He will rid the world of all sin as He prepares the way for this "new earth" of which His Holiness will rule and reign for eternity.

Questions to Ponder:

1. How does God's mercy play out in chapter 14?
2. Why is Jesus wearing both crown and holding a sickle?
3. What does this picture of God's judgment do in your heart as it relates to evangelism?
4. How does God's Word in other places underscore God's commitment to rid the earth of sin?