

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY TWO

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20

The hour fast approaches when Jesus Christ will return from heaven with power and in great glory. All the misconceptions about who Jesus was and is will instantly be dispelled, and the whole world will be forced to face the full biblical truth about the person of Christ, the Savior who not only died for our sins but is also coming again to judge the living and the dead. We cannot merely emphasize the first coming of Christ as prophet and sacrifice; we must also embrace His coming as judge and king.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE a sickle. That long, sharp, crescent-moon-shaped blade attached to a wooden handle. What ideas come to mind as you envision this object?.

For those living in agrarian societies, the sickle is nothing more than a farming device—just as ordinary as any rake or hoe. In a pinch, this tool can double as a weapon. For some, the sickle is more of a political or even religious symbol. Perhaps most infamous is the image of the Grim Reaper: that fictional personification of death whose face is shrouded in a robe and whose hand is ready to bear down on helpless souls with that massive blade. A gruesome thought!

In the book of Revelation, John used the powerful symbol of a sickle to describe how Jesus will harvest souls from the earth. It, too, is a sobering thought. Yet this image depicts God's mercy and His desire to call all to come to Him in repentance. Evil will not always rule and ruin His handiwork.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you turn to the Scriptures today, say a prayer to your Father in heaven. Ask Him to illuminate His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit so you can respond to Him and grow in Christlikeness. Write your prayer in the space below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The dramatic plot of Revelation centers around the war between the Lamb and the dragon. In [Revelation 14:1–13](#), John demonstrated that the Lamb has claimed victory over the dragon . . . even though the battle still rages on. In [14:14–20](#), John looked ahead to that day of God's swift judgment when He says, "Enough is enough!"



Observation: Two Harvests

John's vision in [Revelation 14:14–20](#) is actually composed of *two* visions. Take your time as you read and observe these visions.¹ They are remarkably similar, so be sure to pay attention to both the similarities *and* the differences. Comparing and contrasting these visions will allow you to come to a stronger understanding of their meaning in the interpretation phase of our study.

The Grain Harvest—Revelation 14:14–16

Whom did John see at the beginning of his vision in [Revelation 14:14](#)? How did he describe this figure? Remember, "Son of Man" is a common moniker for Jesus in Revelation. For a refresher on the meaning of this title, see [Daniel 7:13–14](#).

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As John peered up into the celestial clouds in *Revelation 14:15*, he saw an angelic figure proceeding from the temple. What did this angel say to the Son of Man?

According to *14:16*, what did the Son of Man do in response to the angel's call?

Though John never used the term “grain” in these verses, his original Greek-speaking readers would have envisioned Jesus reaping a wheat field because the Greek term we translate as “harvest” refers specifically to a harvest of grain.

The Grape Harvest—Revelation 14:17–20

John then saw two additional angels in *Revelation 14:17–18a*. How did John describe each of these angels? From where did each angel come?

First Angel: _____

Second Angel: _____

What did the *second* angel say to the *first* angel in *14:18b*?

According to *14:19*, what did the *first* angel do in response to the *second* angel's call? What were the results of this action in *14:20*?

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John painted a picture that may feel foreign to us, though it likely would have looked very familiar to his original audience. To make wine, farmers would harvest grape clusters and collect them in a large vat called a winepress. Then, they would clean their feet, step into the vat, and *trample* the grapes to burst the fruit and release the juice. These large containers included channels that would filter out the flesh and allow the sweet juice to gather in a separate container.

So what do these harvest images mean? Let's explore the answer!



Interpretation: Planting and Harvesting

John's vision contained two main images we must interpret. What does the grain harvest represent? What does the grape harvest represent? Point to specific details from in the passage (especially the differences between the two visions) in your answer. Start by examining your observations. Then, if necessary, look at your Bible-study resources, like *Insights on Revelation* by Pastor Chuck Swindoll, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.com.²

Because the biblical authors lived in an agrarian society, they used familiar farming imagery as often as possible, especially the image of sowing and reaping. Three such passages are [Matthew 9:35–38](#); [13:24–29](#); and [Galatians 6:7–9](#). Read these passages on planting and harvesting and summarize how they help you better understand the visions in [Revelation 14:14–20](#).

God's justice will hold all of us accountable. If there's one truth that Scripture reveals repeatedly, it's our accountability to our Maker. He didn't simply fling us on this earth and carelessly walk away without concern for where we would go with our lives. We will give account, and His justice will hold us accountable.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: An Ancient Harvest

As John recorded the vision he saw in *Revelation 14:14–20*, his mind likely drifted back to an ancient prophecy from a time when Israel maintained rule over its own land:

*“Let the nations be called to arms.
Let them march to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
There I, the LORD, will sit
to pronounce judgment on them all.
Swing the sickle,
for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread the grapes,
for the winepress is full.
The storage vats are overflowing
with the wickedness of these people.”* (*Joel 3:12–13*)

According to *Joel 3:1–3*, what was the context for this prophecy? Why did God choose to execute such judgment against Israel's Gentile enemies?

God's justice is impartial. He may punish the wicked, but He also rewards the righteous. According to *3:17–21*, what would be the results of God's act of justice against the wicked nations? What blessing would the faithful people of Israel receive?

How does Joel's parallel prophecy help you better understand the meaning of John's vision of two harvests? How do these visions work together to offer hope to the people of God?

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That's the way it is with God. Continually, faithfully, patiently cleaning up our messes. He forgives us—never overlooking but always showing grace until He comes, swings the sickle, and reaps the earth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Reaping Freedom

From this vision of two harvests, Pastor Chuck Swindoll crafted two timeless principles for application.

First, *God's justice holds all of us accountable*. We will reap what we sow, harvest what we plant. A life of unending rebellion will reap unending separation from God. Planting the seeds of faith in Christ will yield God's faithful gift of eternal life.

How does God's justice and your accountability before Him help you safeguard against drifting away from Him or toying with sin? In what practical ways can you respond to this truth this week?

Second, *God's grace allows all of us freedom*. Humans are not robots. We have freedom. And that freedom is a gift from God. The nonbeliever is free either to accept or to reject the truth of the good news of Jesus Christ. The believer has been freed from the power of sin and freed into the godward, grace-empowered life.

In what ways do you sense the Holy Spirit urging you to embrace the freedom available to you because of God's grace?

The angels are sharpening the sickles, preparing for the time when the harvest is ready. Yet this is no grim image. When Jesus returns and swings the blade, He will do so as an act of justice against Satan, sin, and death—which is also an act of mercy toward His people. Take joy in what Christ has done for you and let yourself feel the urgency to share with others His wonderful invitation.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for this sobering reminder that You are to be taken seriously and that when You say, “Enough is enough,” You really mean it. Thank you for sending Christ to rescue us and deliver us from the wrath to come. Your mercy and grace are so precious. You are so patient when You do not have to be. Give me the boldness to proclaim the good news and give me strength as I follow Jesus. It’s in His name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

