

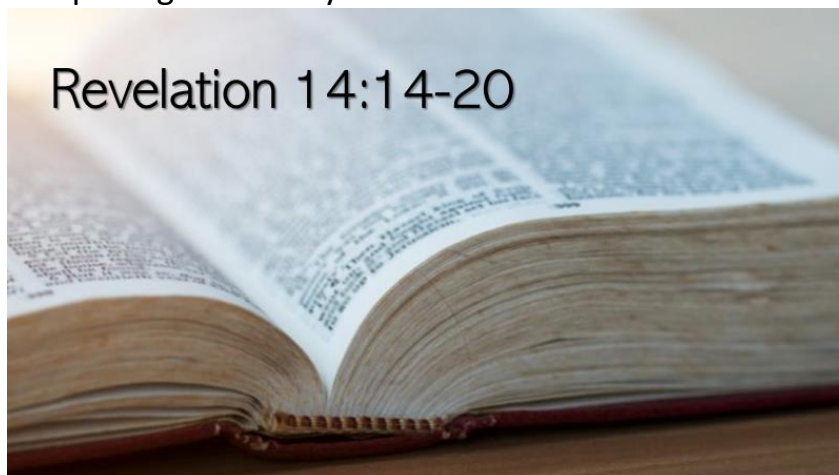


Coffee/Question:

Where do you think history is headed?
Where is your life headed? Explain.



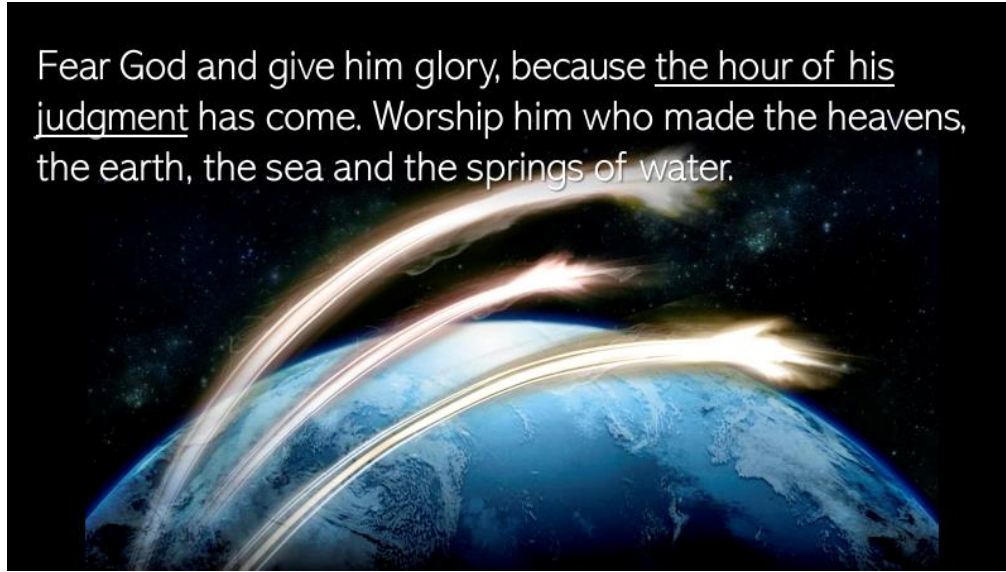
The passage for today is...



Three weeks ago, we studied Revelation 14:6-13.
Let me remind you of the emphasis of these verses.

John saw three different angels who each announced a message from God to those who live on the earth.

The First Angel



The Second Angel



The Third Angel

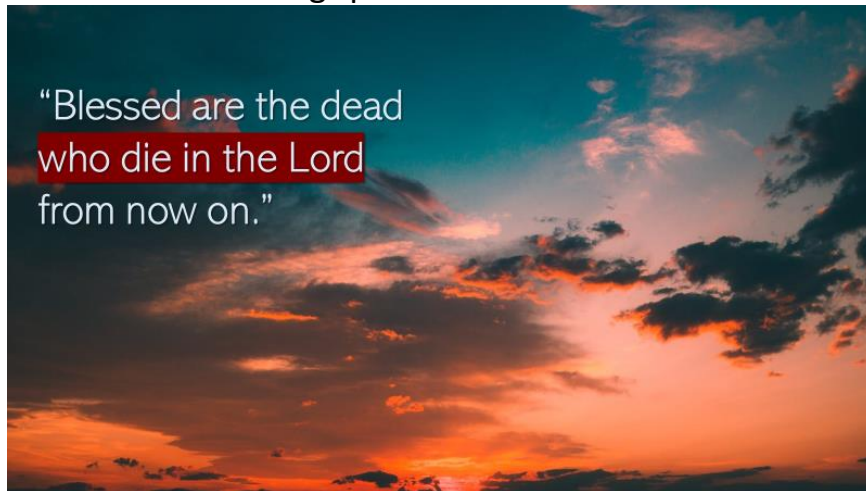
"If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb."

"And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

These three messages warn of judgment.

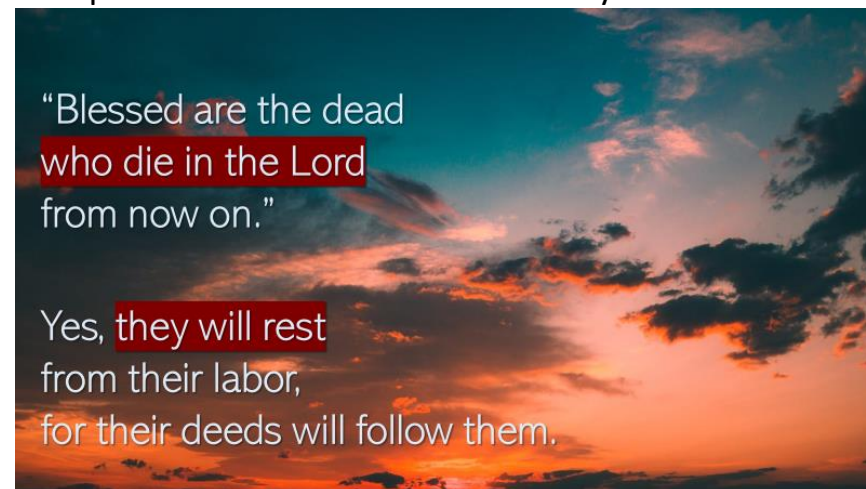
But they also urge the listener to turn their life towards God and to worship him. Those who are in Christ...will not experience judgment because Christ faced it for them.

Listen to the blessing spoken from heaven.

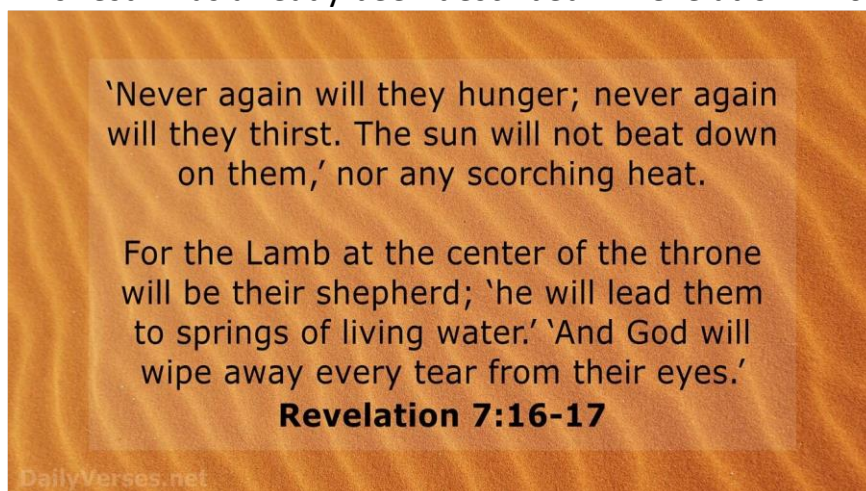


God's people are in Christ... his righteousness is ours... and because it is... we are assured of the Father's welcome.

The Spirit of God confirmed the veracity of this.



This rest... has already been described in Revelation 7:16-17.



For God's people...Jesus' return will bring to completion our adoption into God's family and will be the moment when our bodies are transformed to be like the resurrected body of Jesus – see Romans 8:23.

This certain hope is why the Scripture urges Jesus' followers to patiently endure in their faith.

After seeing and hearing these things.... John was shown another vision. In the passage for today this is what we will see:

1. There is one God
2. There is one earth
3. There are two reapers
4. There are two sharp sickles
5. There are two angels who speak on God's behalf
6. There are two specific directives
7. There are two scenes of harvest

Let's work our way through the passage.

1. There is one God... and he is in control; he is sovereign over history, everything happens by his will and at his initiative.
2. There is one earth... which is the focus of God's redemptive activity. Five different times in our passage the earth is mentioned.

v.15 – ...the harvest of the earth is ripe.
v.16b - ...swung his sickle over the earth...
v.16c - ...the earth was harvested.
v.18 - ...gather the clusters of grapes from
the earth's vine...
v.19 - ...swung his sickle on the earth...

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3. There are two reapers.

- The first reaper is said to be “like a son of man” – v.14.

When John's original audience read this description, their minds would have immediately gone to Daniel 7:13-14...

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

John’s original audience would have known... this one who was like a son of man is the Lord Jesus.

- The second reaper is an angel – v.17.

Who is this angel?

What does the passage say? Look at v.18-19.

This angel who serves God in the temple in heaven, is commissioned by God... “to gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine... and throw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath.”

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4. There are two sharp sickles – v.14, 17

What is a sickle?



A sickle is an agricultural tool used in harvesting.

In the vision seen by John, God purposefully draws upon agricultural imagery because he wants the reader to know that in this present time... he waits...like a farmer waits for their crops to ripen.

Similar imagery was used by Jesus in the parable of the weeds – Matthew 13.

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5. There are two different angels who speak on God's behalf – v.15, 18. While God is more than capable of speaking for himself, he involves his holy angels in the work of salvation.

The same is true for God's people on the earth.

God involves us in his work of salvation.

We too are sent by God to men and women, teens and children... and we too are commissioned by God to bless them with his grace and to speak to them on his behalf... the good news of salvation... and to warn of impending judgment.

This is incredible - the triune God graciously welcomes the holy angels and the redeemed into the family business.

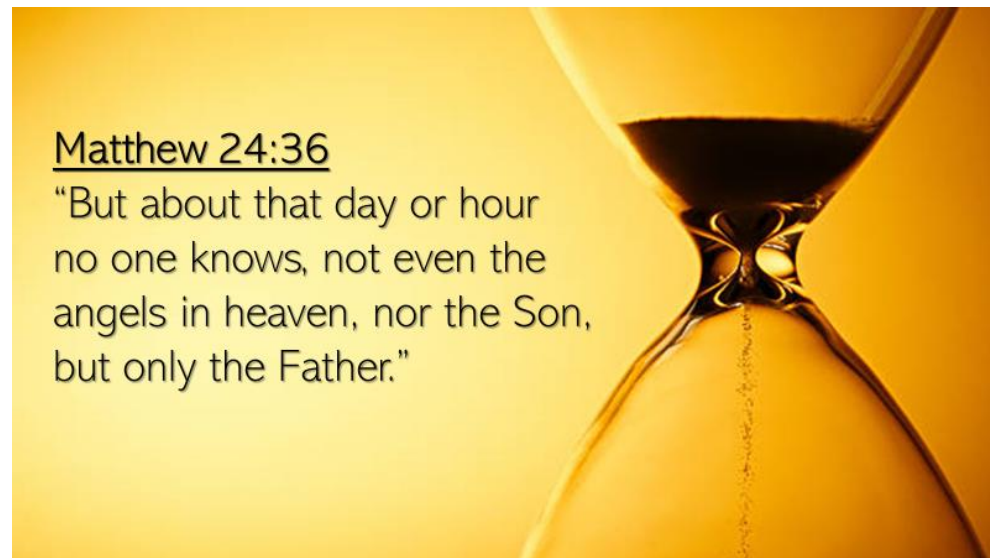
There is no greater cause to live for... than this!

6. There are two different directives given.

- To Jesus: Takes your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
- To the angel: Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe... and then throw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

Days before his death Jesus' disciples asked him when the end of the age would come.

This is what Jesus said to them...



Jesus continued....

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they

knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

It is God the Father who alone knows, using the agricultural image, when the earth is to be harvested.

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7. There are two scenes of harvest.

v.15 - ...the reaping of the earth

v.18 - ...the gathering of the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine

Let's consider the first scene – the reaping of the earth.

The context here is very important.

Warning was given to the followers of Jesus in Revelation 13 regarding the dragon... and the beast that came out of the sea... and the beast that came out of the earth.

Heaven revealed to John the true identity of these three and also exposed their insatiable craving to be worshiped.

These three collaborate together to deceive humanity to worship them and when and where possible to compel worship from the inhabitants of the earth.

Revelation 13 also reveals how the dragon empowers the beast that comes out of the sea to war against the followers of Jesus.

[The beast] was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

Revelation 13:7

Jesus warned his followers of this in John 16:33 when he said – in this world you will have trouble.

But even in the midst of trouble, in the midst of spiritual war, the followers of Jesus take heart...we are assured... our God reigns, and in wisdom and with sovereign power, he is more than able to turn the malicious plans of the unholy three... into the saving of many lives.

Remember the testimony of OT Joseph to his brothers?

“What you intended for evil,
God intended for good
to accomplish what is now being done,
the saving of many lives.”

Genesis 50:20

When we move two chapters ahead in the book of Revelation, we read of God’s people singing in the presence of God...

REVELATION 15:2-3

And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God³ and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations.”

How do the people of God go from the dragon and the two beasts warring against them to this scene of victory and celebration?

Our passage provides the answer...because the time to reap came.

At the word of the Father to harvest the earth, the people of God will be gathered and brought home, where they forever will live with God.

The war of the dragon and the two beasts will be ended by the great harvest.

But what about the second scene of harvest – the gathering of grapes that are then thrown into the winepress of God’s wrath?
How are we to understand this?

For God’s people, the return of the King will be a day of great joy... it will be the moment of moments...when faith becomes sight.
But it will not be so... for those who have rejected God and his Savior.

As Jesus said in the parable of the weeds, Matthew 13:41-43, on this day...

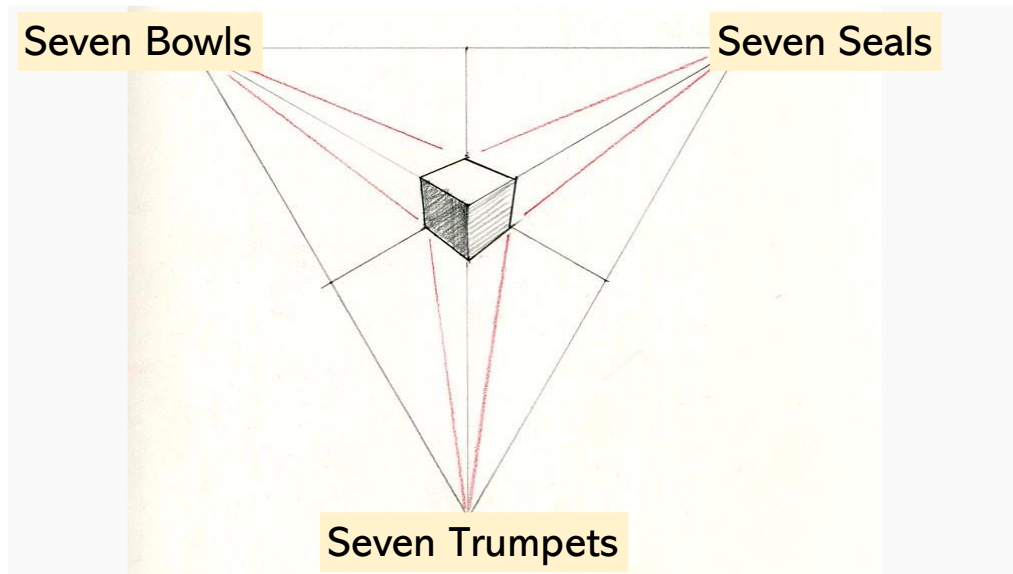
“The Son of Man will send out his angels,
and they will weed out of his kingdom
everything that causes sin
and all who do evil.

They will throw them into the fiery furnace,
where there will be weeping
and gnashing of teeth.”

When the Father gives the word to harvest... gospel opportunity will end.

We have read so far in the book of Revelation of two series of judgments – that of the seals and the trumpets.

From chapter 15 and onward John was shown a vision of the third and final.



I remind you... that each of these three visions looks upon the same glorious reality... but from a different perspective.

When the sixth seal was opened John was shown the reaction of the inhabitants of the earth who refused to turn their lives towards God.

They called to the mountains and the rocks,
"Fall on us and hide us from the face of him
who sits on the throne and from the wrath
of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath
has come and who can stand?"

Revelation 6:16-17

When the sixth trumpet was sounded, John again saw the response of the inhabitants of the earth to the reality that God is... and the amazing offer of his salvation, which is all of grace.

...they still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 9:20-21

In the pouring out of the seven bowls, the reader is reminded of the truth that our God is a God of wrath.

We love to read of God's love and his mercy... to speak and sing of his grace, his kindness and his longsuffering.

But God has also revealed himself in the Scripture to be a God of justice and wrath.

The fact that God's love and wrath are not contradictory... will challenge us... but unless we rightly understand these attributes of God, not only do we diminish him, we will not rightly know him.

This is why over these next weeks we will purposefully focus on the holiness of God – we must linger on this truth ... that our God is the high and holy One.

It is this attribute that will singly reveal to us the horror that sin is, and enable us to understand from God's perspective... why... there can be no compromise with... nor accommodation of sin.

Sin is a moral and spiritual cancer that will be decisively dealt with when the Father says it is time to harvest the earth.

It is only as we rightly perceive and understand the justice and wrath of God that his love and grace becomes increasingly precious... while filling our lives with a great urgency that the gospel of Jesus be announced... to the world of humanity.

Remember how it was in the days of Noah?

For one hundred years as he built the ark, Noah was said to be a preacher of righteousness.

God had told him judgement was coming.

But God had also commanded him to build an ark... that would be the means of salvation for all who would believe the news and enter into the ark.

Today the church of Jesus is a community of righteousness.

Like Noah we know judgment is coming.

Like Noah we too preach of the righteousness of God... that is by faith from first to last as Romans 1:17 says.

Like Noah we point people, not to an ark that will save, but to the person of Jesus Christ.

It is the glory of God to save the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

It is also the glory of God to judge sin and forever remove from the creation the presence of evil and those who practice it.

Life Connection/Question

How has this passage encouraged you?
given your hope?

What question(s) has it raised in your mind?

Has the passage made you uncomfortable?

Why? Why not?

Has your understanding of God been stretched?

Explain.

In what way has the passage challenged
your lifestyle? your priorities? your faith?

But until the last day – the day of harvest... the day of wrath... there is still opportunity to be saved – by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Before we sing together our final song, I want to encourage you to speak together regarding what truth

It is only as we understand sin from God's perspective will the immensity of his love and the enormity of his grace that saves sinners and adopts them as his own.

Rightly understanding the triune God who is love and wrath, will fill our hearts with urgency to

We will obviously want to understand from the

From the first book of the Bible, and throughout the pages of Scripture... God has revealed himself as the Judge of the earth.

God is the Judge because he is the Creator.

All of humanity will give an accounting to God for their actions and their words.

In this present time there is opportunity for any who will come, to

W

Vines, grapes and the wine which they produce are regularly used in Scripture as an image of God's people.



But how are we to understand v.19 that speaks of the grapes being gathered and then thrown into the great winepress of God's wrath?

Again, we must turn to Scripture to interpret Scripture.

Isaiah 63:1-7

Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments-stained crimson? **Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save."** ² Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ³ "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations **no one was with me.** I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and **I stained all my clothing.** ⁴ **It was for me the day of vengeance; the year for me to redeem had come.** ⁵ **I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm achieved salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me.** ⁶ I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

⁷ I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

In this passage wrath and kindness are juxtaposed in this One who in the greatness of his strength comes to save; to redeem.

But this is not the first time that the reader of Isaiah has met this One who comes to rescue.

In Isaiah 9 the Scripture spoke of a child to be born; a son to be given who would be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

This child would reign on David's throne, and his kingdom which will never end will be distinguished by justice and righteousness.

In Isaiah 11 the Scripture speaks of One who would come and be called the Root of Jesse.

The Spirit of God would rest upon him and empower him to bring justice and righteousness to the earth.

The nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

In Isaiah 42 the Scripture speaks of a Servant upon whom Yahweh would put his Spirit so that the Servant might bring justice to the nations.

This Servant would be distinguished by these qualities:

He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out... He will not falter or be discouraged... 42:3-4

In Isaiah 53 the Scripture says that this Servant would suffer; that he would be crushed for our iniquities, and that his crushing would be the will of God.

The One who portrayed in Isaiah 63 is the same One described in Isaiah 9, 11, 42 and 53.

In Revelation 19:11-16 John was shown a vision of our Lord Jesus that bears remarkable similarity to the One whom Isaiah foretold would come:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The Scripture teaches the followers of Jesus that our Savior has conquered through his blood, when he offered his life in sacrifice upon a Roman cross.

This means that the vision of the robe which Jesus wears in Revelation 19, is stained by his own blood.

The way in which God works salvation, and the way in which God works wrath, are intimately connected because they met on the cross.

Tom Wright believes this is the message of the vision because v.20 says the winepress is trampled outside the city.

Had this vision been a picture of God's judgement on Babylon, the winepress would have been at the center of the city?

But the phrase "outside the city" is highly significant.

It points the reader to the letter written to the Hebrews, 13:8-14:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

⁹ Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

It is also highly significant that the Scripture says this about the first Christian martyr, Stephen – Acts 7:57-60

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ **dragged him out of the city** and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

How are we to understand the description in Revelation 14:20 of blood flowing out of the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle and for a distance of 1600 stadia?

This image is meant to remind the reader of the vision seen by the prophet in Ezekiel 47 of a river of life that flowed out from the temple.

The life is in the blood.

The blood of Jesus saves.

The blood of the martyrs is not shed in vain but is used by God as it was in the case of Saul of Tarsus who himself was gripped and saved by the same grace of God that had enabled other followers of Jesus to lay down their life rather than deny their God and Savior.

Today's passage communicates a message that is as needed today as it was when John first received it.

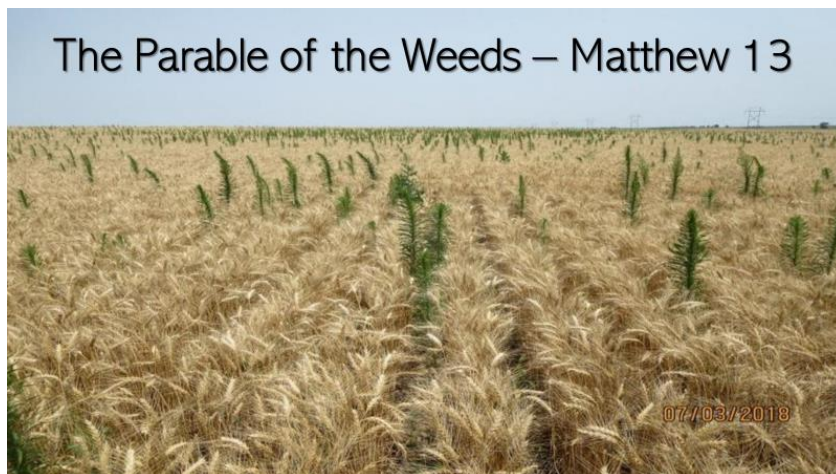
God is in control.

God has determined where history is headed and when it will end.

God will bring his people safely home.

The grace that sustains in this present time is enough to finish in us what God by the Spirit has begun.

Even if we lose our lives for the sake of Jesus this too will be bound up in God's great purpose to undo sin and death and evil, and will be turned by God and used to save many lives.

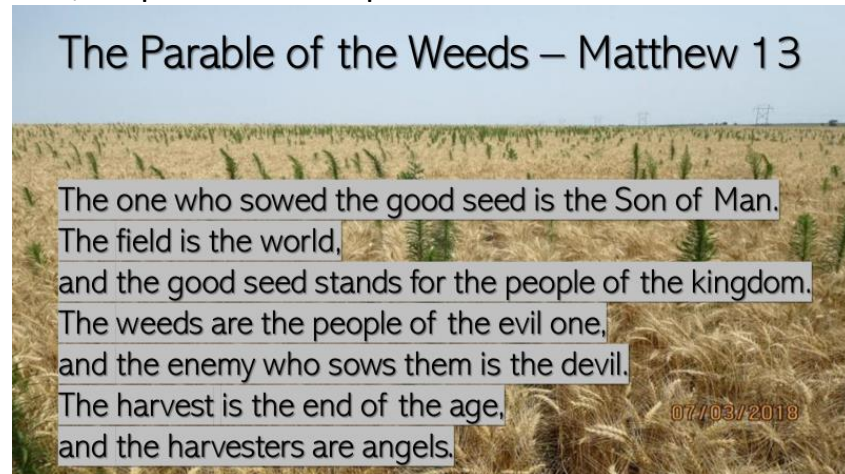


The Parable of the Weeds – Matthew 13:24-30.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ “An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.’³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”³⁷ He answered,



⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

God allows the world to continue as it does, with good and evil co-existing... because he does not want the work of grace in his people to be uprooted. He waits ...so that the fruit of grace in Jesus’ followers would both develop and mature.

But both the followers of Jesus and the inhabitants of the earth need to realize... there will be a last day... when... the earth will be harvested.