

God's Just Response – Part 3

Revelation 14:14-20

I. Introduction:

1. As we enter the last section of chapter 14, John shares a vision of a still future battle of Armageddon. *This passage is one that many genuine Christians have varying outlooks and, therefore, many disagreements about.* While I will not try to catalogue all these differences, I will point out some of the bigger ones along with noting what I believe is in view.

II. Revelation 14:14-16: There is One Judging and Reigning

1. There is much debate in Christian circles about who is on the cloud, which temple is in view, and even the timing of this reaping of the earth. *For the record, I believe the One on the cloud wearing the royal crown is King Jesus and it is the original, heavenly temple in view.* It is He wielding the sickle of judgment.
2. In V14, some have questioned if this is Jesus for several reasons, with the two most often noted being (1) *the Greek means “a son of man” and NOT “the Son of Man”* and (2) that an angel would give orders to Jesus, as some read v15, is unthinkable.
 - A. Against these thoughts is the plain reading of the verse, including that clouds are most often associated with God's presence and power. *Further, angels don't wear the crown of royalty.* There is also a sense in this passage, very much unlike the next passage, that this harvest may indeed include believers. *It seems that Christ is judging some to life and some to death for it can be hard to discern the wheat from the chaff until the harvest is ready.*
 - B. I believe the passage presents the angel as not issuing a command, but proclaiming an announcement, approved by the

Father, for all to hear. Further, there is no indication that this is the earthly copy of the heavenly temple in view. Rather, with Christ's presence here prior to His 2nd coming, it seems sure this is the heavenly original.

3. Some have tried to link this passage back to the time of the rapture with the elect being brought to Christ's presence and the others left behind for the reaping we will read next. This seems to strain the language and unnecessarily read in additional assumptions. However small the crop may be, that Christ (and not an angel) is harvesting here seems consistent with the thought that some will come to faith throughout the tribulation period after the rapture; including here as we bump up against the battle of Armageddon and Christ's return.
4. I want to note that the word for "ripe" both in this passage and the next conveys the idea that the harvest is so ripe as to actually be over-ripe. God, ever faithful, patient, and long-suffering has allowed mankind's hearts to fully bloom and then some!

That the world is cruel and immoral is readily apparent even to us...how much more so to God. As the generations have come and gone, mankind's amazing progress in technology, transportation, manufacturing, and communication has led us to ever greater visions of self-grandeur as we use our advances to be quicker, faster, more inventive, and more thorough in becoming slaves to our own depraved hearts...as John notes in this passage, we are becoming "ripe" to the point of rotten.

5. Keep in mind that while a response to Satan's attempt to eliminate God in Chapter 13, John's visions in chapter 14 occur just before the catastrophic bowl judgments begin. It is a preemptive final call to any that have not been fully turned over to following the beast.

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III. Revelation 14:17-20: A Fearful & Powerful Word Picture

1. V17 seems to confirm that it is the original temple in heaven in view in John's vision. *This time an angel will be doing the harvesting.*
2. It would not surprise me if the reference to the angel coming out from the altar in v18 is a reference to **Revelation 6:9-11** when the martyrs cried out to the Lord to avenge their blood by judging the unrighteous. *That the sickle gathers the "vine of the earth" represents spoiled fruit or evil AND stands in direct contrast to Jesus (as said in **John 15:5**) being the vine, meaning good fruit or holiness.*
3. V19 reminds us of a couple of prophetic verses. First, Isaiah 63, specifically verses 3-4:

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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.
- Isaiah 63:3-4

And second, Joel 3:13 (9-16):

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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."
- Joel 3:13

4. Finally, verse 20 has stirred much disagreement between various "experts". *Some argue that it is impossible to have a 5' deep river of blood running some 184 miles in any circumstances.* Others note this river is of greater length than the territory of Israel is long - although this is greatly disputed. *Yet, still others say there would not be an army big enough to have this much blood present.*
- A. Based on the average man having 6 liters of blood, 200 million men (**Revelation 9:16**) would be nearly 317 million gallons of blood. *This is a pretty simple math problem with a 10' wide by*

5' deep river running 161 miles; make it 9' wide and you easily have the envisioned river.

5. Now, while I chased that rabbit for a few minutes, I want to make a language point and then bring us home to the reality of what is being presented here.
 - A. The language point is that the verse never says it is a river 5' deep, it only says that the juice/blood splattered or otherwise made it up to a height of 5'. This says nothing about the thought we relayed back when studying **Revelation 9:16** that the 200 million may include demonic beings of unknown size.
 - B. The real point being made with this incredible word picture is that God's judgment is sure and true. Don't miss it among the colorful description...God is sovereign and His power is unrivaled!

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IV. Closing: A Preemptive Call for Today's Unbeliever

1. As we close tonight, there are people that have received Jesus as Lord and those that have NOT. I note this for the simple reason that John's vision is not just for a future time in the tribulation period. It is for us today.
 - A. First, it is for those that have never received Christ. It is a preemptive exhortation, warning, encouragement for you to know that a choice is required and your choice has a very great consequence regarding your remaining life here-and-now as well as on the other side of your eternal judgment...with one verdict being freed to live with Christ and one verdict being incarcerated in the doom of never having a relationship with Him.
 - B. Second, it is for those that have received Christ as Lord. For you, it is a reminder to be thankful in thought, word, and deed for the victory Christ has given you. It is also a reminder that you have something precious that is your duty, responsibility,

and privilege to share with others – the Gospel of Jesus Christ that all may be offered and encouraged to receive His gift of salvation as we have.

Revelation 16:6-13

Discussion Prompts

Don't be shy or embarrassed, this is a safe place to talk, learn, and grow. All of us should walk with an attitude of grace and Godly love in encouraging one another to contribute to our shared growth in the Lord.

For more discussion questions helping your faith to grow, please download the sermon documents typically posted the day after each sermon on the watch tab of our App or website.

1. Discuss why you suppose God determined to share this part of the vision with John before the bowl judgments.
2. If the character on the cloud was an angel and not the Lord, how would this change your understanding of the passage? Would it change your faith?
3. How does the battle of Armageddon inform your faith? What does it suggest to you about God?

For Notetakers

Revelation 14:14-20

God's Just Response – Part 3

I. Introduction:

II. Revelation 14:14-16: There is One Judging & Reigning

III. Revelation 14:17-20: A Fearful & Powerful Word Picture

Additional Scripture References: Rev 6:9-11; Is 63:3-4; Joel 3:13; Jn 15:5; Rev 9:16

IV. Closing: A Preemptive Call for Today's Unbeliever

5-Day Devotional
Revelation 14:14-20
God's Just Response – Part 3

Day 1: God's Sovereignty & Our Choices Reading: Deut. 30:15-20, Josh 24:14-15

Devotional: God's sovereignty and human choice are two powerful themes that run throughout Scripture. In today's reading, we see how God sets before His people life and death, blessing and curse. Yet, He doesn't force their hand. Instead, He invites them to choose life by loving Him and walking in His ways.

Reflect on the choices you face today. How are you exercising the free will God has given you? Are your choices drawing you closer to God or pulling you away? Remember, our God is sovereign, but He desires a relationship with us built on love and trust, not coercion. Choose today to align your will with His, knowing that in His sovereignty, He works all things for the good of those who love Him.

Day 2: Urgency of Salvation

Reading: 2 Cor. 6:1-2, Heb 3:7-15

Devotional: In Revelation, we see a vivid picture of the final harvest - a time when it will be too late to change one's eternal destiny. This sobering image reminds us of the urgency of salvation. Today's readings echo this theme, urging us not to delay in responding to God's grace.

The phrase "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" is a powerful call to action. It reminds us that every moment is an opportunity to turn to God, to soften our hearts to His love, and to embrace the salvation He offers freely through Christ.

For those who have already accepted Christ, this urgency translates into a call to share the Gospel. Who in your life needs to hear about God's love and salvation? How can you be a vessel of God's grace today?

Day 3: Divine Justice and Mercy

Reading: Ps. 103:8-18, Rom 2:1-11

Devotional: The vision of judgment in Revelation can be unsettling, but it's crucial to remember that God's justice is always perfect and is balanced by His incredible mercy. Today's readings remind us of God's compassion and His desire for all to come to repentance.

God's justice isn't about vengeance, but about setting things right. His mercy isn't about overlooking sin, but about providing a way for redemption through Christ. As you reflect on these passages, consider how God's justice and mercy have intersected in your own life.

How does the reality of God's perfect justice shape your view of the injustices in the world? How does His mercy impact how you treat others, especially those who have wronged you?

Day 4: Assurance of Christ's Return**Reading: 1Thes. 4:13-18, Titus 2:11-14**

Devotional: The vivid imagery in Revelation of Christ returning on the clouds reminds us of the blessed hope we have in His second coming. Today's readings affirm this hope and encourage us to live in light of this promise.

The assurance of Christ's return isn't just about future events; it's meant to transform how we live today. It gives us hope in the face of suffering, motivation for holy living, and urgency in our mission to share the Gospel.

How does the promise of Christ's return impact your daily life? Does it fill you with hope? Does it motivate you to live differently? Take time today to reflect on this blessed assurance and let it renew your spirit and refocus your priorities.

Day 5: Faithful Endurance in Trials**Reading: James 1:2-12, 1 Pet. 1:3-9**

Devotional: The book of Revelation was written to encourage believers facing persecution to remain faithful. Today's readings remind us that trials have a purpose in our spiritual growth and that enduring faith is precious to God.

Just as a harvest is declared ripe when it has endured the full growing season, our faith is proven genuine when it endures trials. This doesn't mean we seek out suffering, but when it comes, we can face it with the assurance that God is using it to refine and strengthen us.

What trials are you facing today? How might God be using these challenges to grow your faith? Remember, the testing of your faith produces perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Small Group Guide

Revelation 14:14-20

God's Just Response – Part 3

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord will open your hearts and minds to His word and to see what He wants you to see.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. God is sovereign and choices have consequences.
2. God's judgment is righteous, true, and inevitable.
3. Christ will return to judge the world and gather His followers.
4. The vision in Revelation 14 serves as both a warning and an encouragement.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. The sermon emphasizes two main threads: God's sovereignty and the consequences of our choices. How do these concepts relate to each other in your understanding of faith?
2. Discuss the imagery of Christ wielding a sickle for judgment. How does this impact your view of Jesus as both loving Savior and righteous Judge?
3. The sermon mentions disagreements among Christians about the interpretation of this passage. How can we approach differing viewpoints within the church with grace and humility?
4. Reflect on the concept of God allowing mankind's hearts to "fully bloom" before judgment. How does this relate to God's patience and long-suffering nature?
5. How does the vivid imagery of God's judgment in this passage make you feel? Does it inspire fear, awe, or something else?
6. The sermon suggests that this vision serves as a "preemptive call" for unbelievers. How can we effectively communicate both the urgency and hope of the Gospel to non-believers?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Examine your own life choices. Are there areas where you need to align more closely with God's will?
2. Commit to sharing the Gospel with at least one person this week, keeping in mind the urgency expressed in this passage.
3. Spend time in prayer, thanking God for His patience and the gift of salvation through Christ.
4. If you struggle with the concept of God's judgment, study other Bible passages that speak about God's justice and mercy. Journal your thoughts and questions.
5. Reflect on how the reality of future judgment should impact your daily life and decisions.

Closing Prayer: Thank God for His sovereignty, patience, and the gift of salvation. Pray for wisdom to live according to His will and courage to share the Gospel with others.

Discussion Questions

Revelation 14:14-20

God's Just Response – Part 3

1. How does the concept of God's sovereignty and human free will interact in this passage? What implications does this have for our understanding of personal responsibility and divine judgment?
2. In what ways might the imagery of the harvest and winepress in Revelation 14 challenge or affirm our modern perspectives on God's justice?
3. How does the portrayal of Jesus in this passage (wearing a crown and wielding a sickle) compare to other depictions of Christ in the Bible? What might this reveal about His various roles?
4. What are the potential implications of interpreting the 'son of man' figure as Jesus versus an angel? How might this affect our understanding of Christ's role in end-times events?
5. How do you reconcile the image of a loving God with the vivid descriptions of judgment in this passage? What does this reveal about the nature of God's love and justice?
6. In light of the 'over-ripe' harvest metaphor, how might we understand God's patience and the concept of 'fullness of time' in both personal and global contexts?
7. How does the contrast between 'the vine of the earth' and Jesus as 'the true vine' (John 15:1) deepen our understanding of spiritual fruitfulness and judgment?
8. What role does the concept of martyrdom play in this passage, and how might it inform our perspective on suffering for faith today?
9. How might the vivid imagery of blood and judgment in this passage serve as both a warning and an encouragement to believers? To non-believers?
10. In what ways does this passage challenge or reinforce your understanding of evangelism and the urgency of sharing the Gospel?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Revelation 14:14-20

God's Just Response – Part 3

1. God's Sovereignty and Choices

How do you see the concept of God's sovereignty playing out in our lives today, and can you think of a time when a choice you made had significant consequences?

2. Interpreting Revelation

The sermon talks about differing interpretations of Revelation. Why do you think people have such varied understandings of this part of the Bible, and how can we approach discussions on these topics with others who might disagree?

3. Judgement and Mercy

In the context of the sermon, how does the idea of God's judgment coexist with His attributes of love and mercy, and what does this teach us about consequences and accountability in our own lives?

4. Imagery in Revelation

Revelation uses dramatic imagery, such as the reaping of the earth and the river of blood. How do you feel these images help us understand the message of this book, and what impact do they have on your perception of future events?

5. Sharing Our Faith

The sermon encourages believers to share the Gospel. What are some ways our family can actively share our faith with others, and how can we support each other in this mission?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Revelation 14:14-20

God's Just Response – Part 3

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **God's Choices:** Explain that every choice they make, like telling the truth or being kind, is important.

Discussion Question: What choices did you make today that made God smile?

2. **Understanding Consequences:** Teach them that actions have outcomes, like sharing leading to making friends.

Discussion Question: If you choose to share your toys, how does that make others feel?

3. **God is a Guide:** Use the idea that God guides us to make good choices, just like parents help kids know what's right.

Discussion Question: Can you think of a time when you needed help making the right choice?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Digital Choices Matter:** Help them understand that the things they say or share online are important, just like in-person conversations.

Discussion Question: What kind of things are okay to share online, and why do some things need to be private?

2. **Impact of Peer Pressure:** Discuss how sometimes friends may suggest doing something they know isn't right, and how God helps us stand firm in our decisions.

Discussion Question: How can you say "no" to a friend nicely if they want you to do something wrong?

3. **Living Out Faith:** Encourage them to share kindness online and offline as a way to live like Jesus.

Discussion Question: How can you show kindness to someone this week?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Thinking Before Posting:** Explore the idea of thinking about the consequences of what they post or share online.

Discussion Question: How can remembering that God sees everything help you decide what to post on social media?

2. **Dealing with Social Pressure:** Discuss how making choices that align with their faith can sometimes be challenging in social situations.

Discussion Question: What are some strategies you use when you feel pressured to do something that goes against your beliefs?

3. **Being a Faith Role Model:** Encourage them to consider how they can influence their peers by living out their faith through actions and words.

Discussion Question: How can you be a role model to your friends at school or in your social media interactions?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for GenZ

Revelation 14:14-20

God's Just Response – Part 3

1. Navigating Group Settings with God's Sovereignty

Application: Recognize that God sees and cares about the choices we make in group settings, such as peer gatherings or team activities.

Bible Basis: Proverbs 3:6 - "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

Scenario: When you're with friends and they encourage you to participate in gossip or unhealthy behavior, remember God's presence. Seek His guidance on how to respond in a way that honors Him.

Discussion Question: How does knowing that God is watching help you make better choices in group settings?

2. Building Healthy Relationships with Choices and Consequences

Application: Understand that the choices you make in relationships, whether friendships or romantic, have significant impacts.

Bible Basis: Galatians 6:7-8 - "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Scenario: Consider how choosing to be honest and respectful can strengthen a friendship, while deceit can lead to broken trust.

Discussion Question: Can you share a time when a choice in a relationship had a positive or negative outcome? How did it affect you?

3. Digital Integrity and Witness

Application: Reflect Christ's love and integrity in your digital communication and the content you share online.

Bible Basis: Colossians 3:17 - "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Scenario: Before posting, comment with kindness and respect rather than reacting impulsively to negative comments or peer pressure online.

Discussion Question: What are some ways you can be a positive influence in digital spaces, and how can you encourage others to do the same?

These application points aim to help Gen Z navigate their daily environments while faithfully following Jesus' teachings with Biblical integrity and living out the gospel.