

Revelation Pt 32 The Harvest and the Winepress

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Revelation / Revelation 14:14–20

Introduction

Revelation 14:14–20 ESV

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.

¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.”

¹⁶ So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

¹⁷ Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.”

¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

²⁰ And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse’s bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

Last week we studied the first half of [Revelation 14](#). We saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000, sealed and singing. We heard three angels proclaim the eternal gospel, announce Babylon's fall, and warn against worshiping the beast. We received the call to patient endurance and the promise of blessed rest for those who die in the Lord.

Today we come to the second half of the chapter, verses 14 through 20. And the tone shifts. The focus moves from proclamation to execution. From warning to action. From the call to repent to the reality of judgment.

These seven verses give us two closely related images: a harvest and a winepress. Both are agricultural. Both speak of ripeness and readiness. And both present the finality of God's judgment on a rebellious world.

This is not comfortable material. We don't naturally like to talk about wrath, blood, and judgment. Our culture avoids these themes. Even in the church, we often soften or skip them. But Revelation does not let us skip them. And if we are going to be faithful Bible teachers and students, we cannot ignore what God has revealed.

So today we will walk through this passage verse by verse. We will look at the Old Testament background, the symbolism, and the theology. We will ask what these images mean and how they apply to us. And we will come away with a deeper understanding of who Jesus is, what judgment means, and why the gospel is so urgent.

Verse 14

Revelation 14:14 ESV

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.

John says, "Then I looked." This signals a new vision. It's a fresh moment in the unfolding drama.

"Behold, a white cloud." Clouds in Scripture are often associated with the presence and glory of God. In [Exodus 13:21](#), God led Israel by a pillar of cloud. In [Exodus 19:9](#), God descended on Mount Sinai in a thick cloud. In [Daniel 7:13](#), the "son of man" comes "with the clouds of heaven." And in [Acts 1:9](#), Jesus ascended into heaven on a cloud. The angels said He would return "in the same way" ([Acts 1:11](#)).

The white cloud here is a throne cloud. It speaks of authority and heavenly origin.

"Seated on the cloud one like a son of man." This phrase, "one like a son of man," comes straight from [Daniel 7:13-14](#) (ESV):

Daniel 7:13-14 ESV

¹³ "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.

¹⁴ 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.

Jesus used this title for Himself repeatedly in the Gospels. It was His favorite self-designation. It speaks both of His humanity (He is the true Man) and His divine authority (He receives the kingdom from the Ancient of Days).

In [Revelation 1:13](#), Jesus appears among the lampstands as "one like a son of man." Here in chapter 14, He appears again. This is Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified Lord.

"With a golden crown on his head." The Greek word for crown here is *stephanos*, which can refer to a victor's crown or a royal crown. Jesus is crowned. He has already conquered. He reigns.

Compare this to [Revelation 19:12](#) (ESV), where Jesus appears with "many diadems" (*diadema*, royal crowns) on His head. The imagery is the same: Jesus is King.

"And a sharp sickle in his hand." A sickle is a harvesting tool. It's used to cut grain or grapes. The sickle in Jesus' hand tells us that the time of harvest has come. The time of waiting is over. The time of separation has arrived.

Verse 15

Revelation 14:15 ESV

¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

An angel comes out of the temple in heaven. In Revelation, the temple in heaven is the place of God's throne and presence (see [Revelation 7:15](#); [11:19](#); [15:5-6](#)).

The angel calls "with a loud voice" to the Son of Man. This is a command, but it's not the angel giving orders to Jesus. The angel is the messenger announcing that the Father's appointed time has arrived. Jesus Himself said in [Matthew 24:36](#) (ESV), "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."

The angel is announcing: the hour has come.

"Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

The word "ripe" here is important. The Greek word is *xeraino*, which means dried, withered, fully mature. The harvest is ready. There is no more time to wait.

This echoes [Joel 3:13](#) (ESV):

Joel 3:13 ESV

¹³ Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.

[Joel 3](#) is a prophecy about the Day of the Lord, when God will judge the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The language of sickle, harvest, and winepress all appear there. Revelation picks up this imagery and applies it to the final judgment.

Jesus also spoke of harvest as a picture of the end of the age. In [Matthew 13:39](#) (ESV), He said, "The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels."

So what is this harvest? There are two main interpretive options.

Option 1: The harvest in verses 14–16 represents the gathering of the righteous. The Son of Man reaps His people, bringing them safely into the kingdom. This is the final ingathering of believers.

Option 2: The harvest in verses 14–16 represents judgment on the wicked. The Son of Man reaps the earth in judgment, separating the wheat from the chaff.

Both views have support. Here's my take: the harvest imagery in Scripture can refer to both salvation and judgment. But the context here, with the sharp sickle and the "fully ripe" earth, along with the parallel winepress image that follows, suggests this is a harvest of judgment. The earth is ripe for judgment. The time has come.

The parable of the weeds in [Matthew 13:24–30](#), [36–43](#) uses harvest imagery for both: the wheat is gathered into the barn (salvation), and the weeds are burned (judgment). The harvest is a time of separation.

In [Revelation 14](#), the primary emphasis seems to be on judgment. The harvest and the winepress work together as two images of the same reality: God's final reckoning with the world.

Verse 16

Revelation 14:16 ESV

¹⁶ So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Jesus swings His sickle. The earth is reaped. The act is swift, decisive, and complete.

This is the moment of final separation. The age is over. The harvest is in. There is no second chance. There is no delay.

Hebrews 9:27 (ESV) says, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."

This is that judgment.

Verse 17

Revelation 14:17 ESV

¹⁷ Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

Another angel appears, also with a sharp sickle. This angel comes out of the heavenly temple, the place of God's holy presence.

This angel is distinct from the Son of Man. He is an agent of God's judgment, carrying out the command to execute wrath.

Verse 18

Revelation 14:18 ESV

¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

Another angel appears. This one comes from the altar. In Revelation, the altar is associated with the prayers of the martyrs and the cries for justice.

In Revelation 6:9-10 (ESV), John saw "under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God," and they cried out, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

In [Revelation 8:3–5](#), an angel at the altar offers the prayers of the saints with incense, and then he throws fire from the altar to the earth, bringing judgment.

Here in chapter 14, the angel from the altar has "authority over the fire." Fire is a symbol of judgment and purification. This angel is involved in executing God's wrath.

He calls to the angel with the sickle: "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

Notice the shift. The first image was a grain harvest. This image is a grape harvest. Both are agricultural. Both involve ripeness. But this one is more violent. Grapes are gathered and thrown into a winepress to be crushed.

The "vine of the earth" is a phrase that contrasts with the true vine. In [John 15:1](#) (ESV), Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser."

The vine of the earth represents humanity apart from Christ. It represents the world system, the rebellious nations, those who have rejected God and followed the beast.

The grapes are ripe. The time for judgment has come.

Verse 19

Revelation 14:19 ESV

¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

The angel gathers the grapes and throws them into "the great winepress of the wrath of God."

Let's slow down and explore this imagery more deeply. The winepress is a powerful and sobering picture of God's judgment.

What is a winepress?

In the ancient world, a winepress was a large stone or earthen vat where grapes were placed after harvest. Workers would step into the vat barefoot and tread on the grapes, crushing them underfoot. The juice would flow out through channels into collecting basins below. The process was physical, messy, and often celebratory. Harvest time and the grape treading were occasions of joy and singing (see [Isaiah 16:10](#), [Jeremiah 48:33](#)).

But the prophets took this everyday agricultural image and turned it into a metaphor for God's judgment. The winepress became a place not of joy, but of wrath. The liquid flowing out was not grape juice, but blood. The one treading was not a vineyard worker, but God Himself, executing vengeance on His enemies.

Old Testament background: Isaiah 63:1-6

The most important background text is Isaiah 63:1-6. Let's read it in full (ESV):

Isaiah 63:1-6 ESV

¹ Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."

² Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?

³ "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.

⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.

⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.

⁶ I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

This is a stunning vision. A warrior returns from battle. His clothes are stained crimson. Why? Because He has been treading the winepress. But the grapes in the press are not grapes. They are people. They are the enemies of God, crushed under His righteous fury.

Notice several key themes:

1. God acts alone.

"I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me." God does not need help to execute judgment. He does not form committees or coalitions. His own arm brings salvation. His own strength upholds Him. He is the solitary Judge.

2. The judgment is personal.

God says, "I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath." This is not distant, impersonal punishment. This is God Himself actively crushing His enemies. The language is intense and unfiltered.

3. The judgment is bloody.

"Their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel." The imagery is violent. Blood spatters. Garments are soaked. This is not sanitary or neat. It's meant to shock us into recognizing the seriousness of sin and the fury of God's response to it.

4. The judgment is just.

God says, "The day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come." Vengeance and redemption go together. God vindicates His people by judging their oppressors. Justice requires that evil be punished. The winepress is the place where accounts are settled.

Old Testament background: Joel 3:12-13

Joel 3:13 (ESV) says:

Joel 3:13 ESV

¹³ Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.

Joel is prophesying about the Day of the Lord, when God will gather the nations into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and judge them. The winepress is full. The vats overflow. Why? Because "their evil is great."

The winepress imagery tells us that sin accumulates. It fills up. And when the measure is full, God acts.

Genesis 15:16 (ESV) speaks of this principle. God tells Abraham that his descendants will return to Canaan in the fourth generation, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

God waits. He is patient. But there comes a point when the cup of wrath is full, and judgment must fall.

Old Testament background: Lamentations 1:15

Lamentations 1:15 (ESV) says:

Lamentations 1:15 ESV

¹⁵ “The Lord rejected all my mighty men in my midst; he summoned an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord has trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.

Here the winepress is applied to God's judgment on His own people, Judah. When they rebelled and broke the covenant, God judged them. He trod them in the winepress. The Babylonian invasion and the destruction of Jerusalem were acts of divine wrath.

This tells us that the winepress is not only for pagans or distant enemies. God's own people, when they persist in sin, can face His judgment.

The winepress in Revelation

Revelation 14:19 picks up all this Old Testament imagery and applies it to the final judgment. The grapes are the nations that have rejected God, worshiped the beast, and persecuted the saints. They are gathered and thrown into the winepress. And God's wrath is poured out.

Revelation 19:15 will return to this image. When Jesus returns on a white horse to judge and make war, the text says:

Revelation 19:15 ESV

¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Jesus is the one treading the winepress. His garments will be "dipped in blood" (Revelation 19:13). He is the warrior from Isaiah 63. He is the Judge executing vengeance.

What does "the wrath of God" mean?

The phrase "the wrath of God" appears throughout Scripture, but we often misunderstand it. Let's clarify what it is and what it is not.

Wrath is not loss of control.

God's wrath is not like human anger, which is often irrational, selfish, or vindictive. God does not fly off the handle. He does not lash out in rage. His wrath is controlled, measured, and just.

Psalm 78:38 (ESV) says, "Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath."

God restrains His wrath. He does not give sinners what they deserve immediately. He waits. He warns. He gives space for repentance.

Wrath is God's settled opposition to sin.

God's wrath is His holy, righteous response to evil. It is the necessary outworking of His justice. A God who does not hate sin is not a good God. A God who does not punish evil is not just.

Nahum 1:2-3 (ESV) says:

Nahum 1:2-3 ESV

² The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

³ The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

God is slow to anger. But He will by no means clear the guilty. His wrath is real. It is personal. And it is just.

Wrath is stored up.

Romans 2:5 (ESV) warns:

Romans 2:5 ESV

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Every unrepented sin adds to the store of wrath. The winepress fills up. And on the day of judgment, the accumulated wrath of God will be poured out.

Wrath and love are not opposites.

We often think that a God of love cannot be a God of wrath. But the Bible does not set love and wrath in opposition. In fact, God's wrath flows from His love.

God loves righteousness. He loves justice. He loves His people. And because He loves these things, He hates and opposes whatever threatens or destroys them. His wrath is the flip side of His love.

If a father sees his child being abused and feels no anger, we would say he does not truly love his child. God's wrath against evil is proof that He loves what is good.

The winepress and the cross

Here is the stunning reality: Jesus stepped into the winepress for us.

Isaiah 53:10 (ESV) says:

Isaiah 53:10 ESV

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

God crushed Jesus. Jesus was trodden in the winepress of divine wrath. On the cross, He bore the full fury of God's judgment against sin. He drank the cup of wrath to the dregs (see Matthew 26:39, where Jesus prays, "Let this cup pass from me").

The cup is the cup of God's wrath. The winepress is the place of judgment. And Jesus willingly entered it so that we would not have to.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) says:

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus became sin. He took our place. He absorbed the blow. And now, for all who trust in Him, there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). We will never face the winepress of God's wrath, because Jesus faced it for us.

The winepress and the gospel

The winepress is terrifying. But it makes the gospel beautiful. If there were no wrath, there would be no need for a Savior. If sin had no consequences, the cross would be meaningless.

But because the winepress is real, because the wrath of God is certain, the good news of Jesus is the best news in the world. He rescues us from the coming wrath ([1 Thessalonians 1:10](#)). He stands between us and the judgment we deserve.

[John 3:36](#) (ESV) says:

John 3:36 ESV

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

There are only two options: believe in the Son and have eternal life, or reject the Son and remain under wrath. There is no third way. There is no neutral ground.

The winepress forces the question: where do you stand? Are you in Christ, shielded by His blood? Or are you still storing up wrath for yourself on the day of judgment?

The winepress of the wrath of God is a terrible and necessary reality. It is the place where sin is finally and fully punished. It is the proof that God is just, that He takes evil seriously, and that He will not let wickedness stand forever.

But it is also the backdrop that makes the cross shine. Jesus entered the winepress so we wouldn't have to. He bore the wrath so we could receive mercy. And if you are in Christ, you will never taste the fury of God's judgment. Jesus tasted it for you.

Verse 20

Revelation 14:20 ESV

²⁰ And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

The winepress is trodden "outside the city." This likely refers to Jerusalem, the holy city. Judgment takes place outside, away from the place of God's people.

[Hebrews 13:12](#) (ESV) says, "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood."

Jesus was crucified outside the city. Now judgment is executed outside the city.

"And blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia."

This is graphic. The blood reaches as high as a horse's bridle (about four feet) and extends for 1,600 stadia (approximately 184 miles, roughly the length of the land of Israel from north to south).

Is this literal? Probably not. The imagery is apocalyptic and symbolic. It's meant to communicate the magnitude and completeness of God's judgment. The number 1,600 is 4 x 4 x 100, a number symbolizing totality and the entire earth (four corners, four winds, etc.).

The point is not to calculate gallons of blood. The point is to see the seriousness and thoroughness of God's wrath against sin.

Joel 3:13 speaks of the winepress being full and overflowing. Here in Revelation, the image is taken to an extreme. The judgment is vast, comprehensive, and final.

Theological reflections

1. Jesus is the judge.

The Son of Man holds the sickle. He sits on the cloud. He wears the crown. Jesus is not a helpless victim. He is not a passive figure. He is the righteous judge who executes the Father's will.

This should change how we think about Jesus. Yes, He is the Good Shepherd. Yes, He is the Lamb who was slain. But He is also the Lion of Judah. He is the King of kings. And He will judge the living and the dead.

Acts 17:31 (ESV) says, "He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

2. Judgment is certain.

The harvest is ripe. The grapes are ready. The hour has come. There is no escape. There is no negotiation.

God is patient. 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV) says, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

But patience has a limit. The day will come when the door is shut, the harvest is in, and the winepress is trodden.

3. Judgment is just.

God does not judge capriciously or cruelly. The grapes are "ripe." The earth is "fully ripe." The judgment comes at the right time, when sin has reached its fullness.

Genesis 15:16 (ESV) speaks of God's judgment on the Amorites being delayed "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

God waits. He gives space for repentance. But when the cup of iniquity is full, judgment falls.

Romans 2:5 (ESV) warns, "But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."

4. Judgment is terrible.

The winepress imagery is meant to shock us. Blood flowing for 184 miles. The wrath of God poured out. This is not a light thing.

We live in a culture that has lost the category of God's wrath. We've softened God into a cosmic therapist or a doting grandfather. But the Bible presents God as holy, righteous, and wrathful toward sin.

Nahum 1:2-3 (ESV) says, "The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty."

God's wrath is not a character flaw. It's the necessary response of a holy God to evil.

5. The cross makes sense in light of the winepress.

If the winepress is what awaits sinners, then the cross is where Jesus stepped into the winepress on our behalf.

Isaiah 53:10 (ESV) says, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief."

Jesus was crushed. He bore the wrath of God. He drank the cup of God's fury to the dregs so that we wouldn't have to.

When we see the winepress, we should fall on our knees in gratitude that Jesus took our place.

6. This passage calls us to evangelism.

If judgment is real, if the winepress is coming, then we must warn people. We must plead with them to repent and believe.

2 Corinthians 5:11 (ESV) says, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others."

Paul knew the reality of judgment, and it drove him to evangelism. It should drive us, too.

Closing

Revelation 14:14–20 confronts us with the reality of final judgment. The Son of Man swings His sickle. The earth is reaped. The winepress is trodden. Blood flows. The wrath of God is poured out.

This is not easy material. But it's true. And it's necessary. A God who does not judge evil is not a good God. A God who lets wickedness go unpunished forever is not righteous. The winepress is the proof that God takes sin seriously. He will not let it stand.

But here's the gospel: Jesus stepped into the winepress for us. He was crushed so we could be spared. He bore the wrath so we could receive mercy. And if you are in Christ, you will never face the winepress of God's wrath. Jesus faced it for you.

So flee to Christ. Trust Him. Rest in His finished work. There is a coming harvest. The hour is near. The grapes are ripe. The King is coming.