

Do you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying, "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labors. John 4:35-38



Revelation 14:14-20 Sermon Notes

Do these verses describe two different end-time harvests, or only one?

Scholars debate whether Revelation 14:14-20 describes two different harvests, or at least different aspects of the harvest, or if they describe the same event just with slightly different imagery?

At first glance it appears there are two harvests: 14:14-16 and 14:17-20. In the first half, the Son of Man harvests, while in the second an angel does the work. The word for "harvest" in vv 14-16 is different from the word for "gather" in vv 17-20. Furthermore, the return of Jesus is portrayed elsewhere in the NT as a harvest of both the elect and unbelievers (see Matthew 24:24-30, 36-43; 26:64). This has led some to suggest that the first harvest in Revelation 14:14-16 depicts the ingathering of God's people at the return of Jesus, while vv 17-20 tells of the collection of unbelievers for destruction.

While this is a possible interpretation, it seems more likely that the two harvests actually describe the same reality, namely the judgment of unbelievers at the return of Christ. First, notice the similarities in both texts. Both follow the same pattern: vision of one holding a sharp sickle, an angelic summons "in a loud voice" from the temple to reap, and finally a description of the harvest with the sharp sickle. These parallels suggest that the two visions describe the same event.

Second, in the first harvest (14:14-16), the angel says that the "time" has come to reap. The Greek word for "time" here is *hora* (literally, "hour"), and it's used exclusively in Revelation to describe the hour or time of God's wrath. This suggests that

the Son of Man's reaping in vv14-16 is focused on judgment, rather than gathering the saints.

Third, both harvests are patterned on Joel 3:13, which deals specifically with judgment on unbelieving nations.

So while it is true that at Christ's second-coming he will "harvest" both the elect and reprobate, both believers and unbelievers, our text focuses on the latter gathering of unbelievers for judgment.

Three Central Old Testament Texts Used in Revelation 14:14-20

Son of Man

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14

Swinging the Sickle of Judgment

Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness! Joel 3:12-13

The Winepress of God's Wrath

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. . . . I trampled down the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground. Isaiah 63:3,6

SSBC's Doctrinal Statement on the Final Harvest

17. The Righteous and the Unrighteous

We believe that only those who through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and are being sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in his view.⁸⁸ There is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the unrighteous⁸⁹ and all those who continue in unrepentance and unbelief are, in his sight, wicked and under his curse.⁹⁰ This distinction continues to hold both in life and after death.⁹¹

18. The World to Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching, though God has not revealed its exact time.⁹² At the end of the age Christ will descend from heaven.⁹³ He will raise the dead from the grave for final judgment.⁹⁴ A solemn separation will take place:⁹⁵ the unrighteous will be assigned to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy in a new heaven and new earth.⁹⁶ This judgment will fix forever the final state of people in heaven or hell in accordance with God's righteousness.⁹⁷ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The Harvest is Plentiful

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scattered seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." Mark 4:26-29

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." Luke 10:2-3