

Harvest Time

Sermon #0637

Study given by W. D. Frazee—November 22, 1957

Turn please to Revelation 14. We study often, and rightly so, those wonderful verses which contain the three-fold message, the last message of God to this world. This evening we want to study verses 14 to 20. This is the sequel to the message; the result of the message:

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" Revelation 14:14 -20.

This is harvest time, and the harvest is the end of the world (Matthew 13:39). Jesus is pictured coming upon the cloud, and He has in His hand a sickle with which He gathers the golden grain. With Him is pictured an angel also having a sharp sickle who gathers the cluster, the vine of the earth, and casts it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

When Jesus comes He finds golden grain for the garner of God, or grapes of wrath for the great winepress. These figures represent people. All the human beings in this world will be in those two classes. They will either be people in whose lives the image of Jesus is reflected fully, or they will be the wicked people in whose lives Satan is worshiped, in whose lives Satan's character is demonstrated. In either case, the statement is made that the harvest is ripe. The 18th verse says:

"Thrust in thy sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the

vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God" Revelation 14:18.

Why are the grapes cast into the winepress of the wrath of God? Because they represent the wicked. Much of the imagery of Revelation is borrowed from the Old Testament prophets. The Holy Spirit has seen fit in the book of Revelation to gather together many of the statements and symbols of the Old Testament prophecies and focus them upon our time. Notice:

"Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great" Joel 3:12-13.

This is the same language we have read in Revelation. Great wickedness is symbolized by this great harvest of dark grapes. This last generation is represented as being outstanding in wickedness. Men are using their invented genius to develop more and more agencies for heaven forgetting pleasures and heaven defying destruction.

I want to read some familiar words from *Testimonies for the Church*. It is the chapter with which this last volume of the *Testimonies* begins, and it is entitled *The Last Crisis*.

"We are living in the time of the end. The fast fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the unsettled of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude.

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones."
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, page 11.

It is harvest time. The same sun and rain that ripen up the golden grain for the garner of heaven ripen up these grapes of wickedness for the winepress of wrath. The same conditions that are getting some ready for heaven are getting others ready for hell.

Do not think that merely by choosing an environment you will escape the destruction of this world and prepare yourself for heaven. It takes more than environment. If there is any place favorable to backsliding, it is in a place where the Spirit of God is working earnestly to develop characters for the Kingdom of God.

Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones. They will be rapid each way. They will be rapid in developing a character for heaven. Some will learn in a few months what others have been years learning. They will be rapid in developing those characters that receive the mark of the beast, and are represented by the grapes and the winepress.

"The condition of things in the world show that troublous times are upon us. The daily papers are full of indications of a terrible conflict in the near future" *Ibid*.

This was written in 1909. Think of the World War I following soon after, and then the World War II. I was reading not long ago where someone rightly said that from the discharge of that weapon in Serbia in 1914, when the Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated, until the present time, there has never been one day of real peace in this world. And there never will be again.

"Bold robberies are frequent occurrence. Strikes are common. Thefts and murders are committed on every hand. Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children. Men have become infatuated with vice, and every species of evil prevails.

"The enemy has succeeded in perverting justice and in filling men's hearts with the desire for selfish gain. 'Justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.' Isaiah 59:14. In the great cities there are multitudes living in poverty and wretchedness, well-nigh destitute of food, shelter, and clothing; while in the same cities are those who have more than heart could wish, who live luxuriously, spending their money on richly furnished houses, on personal adornment, or worse still, upon the gratification of sensual appetites, upon liquor, tobacco, and other things that destroy the powers of the brain, unbalance the mind, and debase the soul. The cries of starving humanity are coming up before God, while by every species of oppression and extortion men are piling up colossal fortunes" *Ibid*, pages 11-12.

Oh friends, if our ears could be tuned we would hear the host of heaven crying to the Almighty saying, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle and gather the cluster of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe."

I want to come back to this symbol in Revelation:

"The angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God" Revelation 14:19.

Are you acquainted with the ancient winepress? The people in the orient gathered their grapes and put them into a great vat. Sometimes it was a vat that

was made of stone. The people got into it with their bare feet and kept treading around until they had pressed the juice out of those grapes. There was a place where the juice could run off to be bottled up. That is the winepress.

I want you to think of these grapes as human souls. That is what is being pictured here. They are cast into the winepress of the wrath of God. This is the imagery that was borrowed by the author of the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage
Where the grapes of wrath are stored."

The people of this world that are ripening up for destruction are going into an awful time of trouble. They will be put into that winepress, and their very life stamped out. It will be an awful agony. Daniel tells us it will be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time. We are also told:

"It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal" *Great Controversy*, page 622.

If we would know something of its meaning, let's go to the cross. Jesus was put into the winepress. In Gethsemane and Calvary the wrath of God was poured out upon His Son as He took the sinner's place. As the treading of the winepress brings forth that blood of the grape, so in Gethsemane and Calvary the drops of blood fell down to the earth from the suffering Son of God. His soul was crushed.

It was God's desire that the suffering of Jesus in the winepress of wrath in Gethsemane and Calvary should never be experienced by any of us. Jesus took it for us. But the thing He took for us was the thing that will come to us unless we accept His substitutionary suffering in our behalf. That's the thing. We are going to the winepress if we are a part of the harvest which is gathered by this sickle of death.

Everybody is going to be in that harvest one way or another. We are either going to be fully prepared for heaven or fully prepared for hell. There will be no middle class. There will be no intermediate group. There will be no neutrals in this war. Every soul will be just like Jesus or just like Satan. The reflection of God or the Devil will be seen in every human countenance.

What a picture of what this world will be during the time of trouble. We think of the plagues. The awful sores. The sea turned to blood. The rivers and fountains carrying that bloody current. The sun scorching men with great heat. Darkness on the seat of the Beast. Wicked spirits gathering the nations to Armageddon. That great voice from the temple that shakes the heavens and the earth. The awful shower of hailstones. The earthquake that moves the mountains and removes the islands. And finally the coming of Jesus that causes the inhabitants of the earth to

quail with fear and wail with anguish, and seek for the caves, the rocks, and the mountains.

All those things are part of that time of trouble. But as I have read here, the most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal.

It seems to me that one of the most tragic parts of the whole is the fact that the world is literally going to be the habitation of devils, and that the devils will have full control of this world. People will be possessed of devils. When Jesus was here on earth there were some people that were possessed of devils, but here there will be a whole world filled with human beings possessed with devils.

Won't it be awful? Grapes, fully ripe. The race come to the end of its rebellion against God. Satan will look upon the human family and behold his image reflected and revealed in that great assembly.

Oh, think of it friends. No wonder heaven cries, "Lord, thrust in thy sickle and reap." Put this harvest into the winepress. Tread it out. Let us have it over with.

"And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" Revelation 14:19-20

Can you picture that winepress filled with millions of human beings? Can you picture that river of blood that issues from its throat? A river of blood hundreds of miles long, and up to the horse bridles in depth. Make the language as figurative as you want it to be. I say it is a terrible, horrible, tragic picture. It is a picture of awful doom. And every soul you meet is headed in that direction unless he is on that narrow way cast up high above the world that is lighted by the glory of this message, and leads to the pearly gate of the city of God. Oh that the intensity of it might grip our souls. It is Jehovah's final hour.

In yonder sun's descending path,
The fruit of sin hangs fully ripe
To feed the winepress of His wrath.
But still the angel watchers hold the angry winds,
Lest there be one last sheep yet to be gathered in
Before the setting of the sun.

Yes friends, that is why the harvest does not come today. The grapes may be ripe, but the grain is not ready. God knows the wickedness of this earth. The increase of it, and the need for it to reach a certain figure is not what is holding up the movements of heaven. God is waiting for the wheat to be gathered, because if wheat is to be put into the garner, it must be ripe.

In Matthew 13:38 it tells us that the good seed are the children of the kingdom. This wheat represents the children of the kingdom, God's children. The

seed is Christ. How can the same expression refer both to Christ and to His children?

That is easy. Seed is like the parent seed. You put one grain of wheat in the ground and, if it grows, by and by you get thirty, sixty, or a hundred grains of wheat. Jesus referred to Himself when He said that except a corn of wheat, a grain of wheat, falls into the ground and dies it abides alone, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit.

Christ is preeminently and specifically and exclusively the seed.

"To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ" Galatians 3:16.

Christ is the seed. We have already read that the good seed is the children of the kingdom.

"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" Galatians 3:29.

In other words, if we come from Christ; if we are the fruit of Christ's sacrifice, Christ's life, we are seed just like Him. So we are included in the promise, and we are included in the harvest.

Isn't it wonderful that the same expression that refers to Christ refers to you and me? And it can only mean that we are to be like Jesus when He comes. You know that from other texts.

"When He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as He is" 1 John 3:2.

"The seed is the word of God" Luke 8:11.

Is Jesus called the Word of God? Yes. Then if you and I receive Christ, the living Word, through the Bible, which is His Word, that Word in us develops the same character that is in Christ, and we become seed. Fruit is brought forth in us as it was in Jesus. That is a wonderful symbol, friends.

The ripening of the harvest represents the full reproduction of the character of Christ in His children.

"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.' Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own" *Christ Object Lessons*, page 69.

When will He come? When His character is perfectly reproduced in His people. And dear ones, He will never come until then. I care not how many signs

may be hung out over this earth or in the sky. No sign in earth or sea or air can bring Jesus until the harvest is ripe, because He is coming to gather the harvest. That is what He is coming for.

So while we should look for these signs, and we should rejoice at every omen of His near approach, every time we see a sign it should remind us of the fact that while He wants to come immediately, the reason He does not come, and has not come long ago, is simply because the harvest is not ripe. That's all. It comes down to the simple truth that when the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

Notice the parable on which this comment is made in what I have read from *Christ's Object Lessons*. This is a wonderful parable for the harvest time:

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" Mark 4:26-29

Do you mean to tell me that a man would wait week after week, and all of a sudden say, We have got to get busy and reap. Why didn't he do it before? It wasn't ripe. But as soon as the harvest is brought forth (the margin says ripe), immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest is come.

Is Jesus going to come just as soon as His people are ready? Immediately. Then can we hasten His coming? Praise the Lord, we can. The next paragraph in *Christ's Object Lessons* says so:

"It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Then reference is made to 2 Peter 3:12:

"Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened and Christ would come to gather the precious grain" *Ibid*.

Let us put ourselves without any reserve in getting ready and helping others to get ready. What do you say?

Isn't that what we are here for? I think we need to review our own program in the light shining from the sanctuary and see if there is anything we are engaged in that has no direct bearing on the ripening of the heart. It is amazing how many things God's people are getting into today that divert and distract.

They are not necessarily bad things. I'm not talking about gambling and boot-legging. I'm not talking about liquor and tobacco. I am talking about all kinds of activities.

Sometimes when you first hear of them you think, Oh my, are Adventists really doing that? Somebody says, Why sure. That is all right. That is a way of getting close to people. That is a way of getting next to people.

That's the point friends. There are ways of getting so close to them that sometimes we stick like flies in the sticky paper.

The only business we have in this world is the business that a fireman has in a burning building filled with smoke. Our business is to go in there and pull someone out as fast as we can, taking care all the time that we don't become overcome with smoke so that there are two lives lost instead of one.

Is that too vivid, too graphic? No friends, it is very real. And if we do not sense the reality of it, it only proves all the more that we are being overcome with the smoke. "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will claim them as His own."

Now I come to something which you may not particularly relish, but you may thank me for it anyway. If we want to see how the harvest of seed down here is ripened, it may be well to see how the original seed was developed.

"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master" Luke 6:40.

Will you be perfect? You will if you are in that harvest with the wheat. Notice the margin on this verse. I will read it again reading the margin:

"The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfected as his master."

How will you be perfected? As your Master. The Master was perfected a certain way. You will be perfected the same way. Will that be all right? Are you sure?

Let's see how He was perfected, and see why I said you might not relish this, but still you might thank me for it.

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" Hebrews 2:10.

Notice the word sufferings begins with the letter S and ends with the letter S. Does that mean more than one kind? Did Jesus have more than one kind? He was sometimes hungry, thirsty, weary, reproached, lied about, misunderstood, forsaken,

betrayed. Many more physical, mental, and spiritual sufferings He endured. And all of these together constituted agencies through which He was made what? Perfect.

That is not to say that He was ever imperfect. Oh, no. But taking our humanity He developed in human flesh a character such as He wants you and me to have.

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" Hebrews 5:8,9.

I want to ask you something. Was the whole life experience of Jesus laid out in a master plan before He ever came to this world? Do you think the Father put any suffering into that plan that could be spared? Was there any needless suffering? No. Everything that was there was necessary, essential. The disciple is not above his master.

If Jesus went through suffering to develop that character, will you ask for an easier way? A way without suffering? No, dear friend. As Sister White saw what God's people must be, she prayed that we might be baptized into Christ's sufferings. Now that doesn't mean we have to go out and manufacture troubles for ourself. That won't be necessary. If we will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, we will get all we need.

I would like to ask each of you to enter especially into that fellowship of Christ's sufferings which comes through bearing the burdens and sharing the sorrows of other human souls. Let us pray that God will help us from settling down into a little nest in which we can be quiet and comfortable and rejoice piously that we don't have to be bothered by a lot of sights and sounds that are afflicting the people of this world. I believe it is all right to thank God for every aid to holiness we have, but God help us if we are content to abide in comparative peace while souls are going down to eternal ruin.

Remember that the harvest time should be, and will be, a time of intense activity. For what are the winds being held? That the servants of God may be sealed in their foreheads. For what are these forces of war and strife and destruction of all kinds being held? That you and I may finish the work of developing our own characters, and finish the work of gathering others in.

And the perfection of the people of God cannot be accomplished without suffering. I repeat, let us be exhorted, let us be entreated, to enter especially into the fellowship of Christ's suffering that comes in taking on voluntarily the problems, the pains, and the woes of others.

In Matthew 8:17 is the inspired record that He Himself took our infirmities and bear our sickness. Oh, what a wonderful burden bearer Jesus was. I want to enter into that. Don't you friends?

I pray that in these closing moments, as we think of these things we have studied together this evening, our hearts shall be blessed with a sense of what it has cost Jesus to make this harvest possible. If it had not been for the sacrifice of Jesus, all of us would have produced only grapes of wrath for the winepress. That is all. It is because of the divine seed sown in human soil that it is possible for God to gather a harvest of golden grain for His kingdom. The seed had to be brought from heaven to earth. Jesus says:

"The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" John 12:23-24.

Who was that corn of wheat that fell into the ground and died? Jesus. He could have spared Himself the suffering and sorrow, the anguish and the pain, the scorn and the reproach. He could have saved Himself all of it. But dear friends, thank God He didn't do it. He was not willing that we should perish. He came, and like the grain of wheat sown in the earth He was covered up and put out of sight. He died. But from Him there springs an abundant harvest from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people of the redeemed.

You and I are to be among them. We are to be transformed and made in His image.

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be" John 12:25.

If I am by the sick bed, He will be by the sick bed. If I am in the house of the dying, He will be in the house of the dying. If I am persecuted, He will be persecuted. If I am in the place of prayer, He will be in the place of prayer. If I lose everything, He will lose everything. Where I am, there shall also My servant be. And bless God, that carries on into eternity.

If we have shared with Him in His shame, we shall share with Him in His glory. If we have shared His death, we shall share His life. Oh, I pray that God may give us that experience. This is what heaven is calling us to in this hour of sunset, this hour of harvest.

"The sunset burns across the sky,
Upon the air its solemn cry
The curfew tolls from tower to tower,
Oh children, 'tiz the last, last hour.

The work that centuries might have done
Must crowd the hour of setting sun,
And through all lands the saving name
Ye must in fervent haste proclaim.

The fields are white to harvest,
Weep, oh tardy workers as ye reap,
For wasted hours that might have won
Rich harvests ere the set of sun.

We hear His footsteps on the way,
Oh work while it is called today;
Constrained by love, imbued with power,
Oh children, in this last, last hour."

Now a very important thing. There is a certain program that ripens up the grain. There is a certain program that ripens up the grapes. Now, the Devil is seeing to it that the world is being exposed to the influences that will ripen it up in sin. That is why evil is increasing the way it is. There must be a counter influence to that, and the counter influence of the Spirit of God must increase in power.

If there was a tug of war across this platform, and there were two heavy men on this side and two heavy men on that side, if we would add a heavy man on this side, unless we added a heavy man on that side they would be quickly pulled across the platform. Satan is throwing all he has into this thing, isn't he? My point is, no ordinary power will hold you and me in this hour. No ordinary efforts will.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that if we are willing to put all we have into it, God will put all He has into it. He has plainly stated that He would send every angel out of heaven rather than suffer one of His children to be overcome. Isn't that wonderful friends? We can have all the help we need.

With that let me point out that it is not in the harvest hour we decide what the harvest will be. That is decided long before, isn't it? Sure. The place we gather wheat is decided where we put the wheat in. The place we gather grapes is decided where we put the grape vines in. Isn't it? Certainly.

And we need not think we are coming up to this crisis ahead of us and then choose one way or the other. The thing we choose then will be the thing we have chosen long before that.

That ought to be a great encouragement to us. That should impress us with the fact that it is not possible to reach full perfection tonight. No. We can no more reach the full perfection of Godliness tonight than we can become entirely like the Devil tonight.

Changing the figure, we can decide which bus we get on. We can decide which direction we are going. We can decide which way of life we are following.

Just as surely as wheat produces wheat and grapes produce grapes, so the seed of the Word of God, the life of Jesus in our life, will produce the same character in us. Won't it?

Therefore we know that if day by day we keep taking the Bible and the *Testimonies* into our life, and by God's grace live them out, we know by God's grace

we will be ready when He comes. We are fully persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day.

I thank God for that, friends. There doesn't need to be any uncertainty, any discouragement about it. But there should be a great intensity in our hearts. There should be an intensity of longing to enter fully into that experience, and an intensity of desire to get out and help others to share in it.

Our courage should not come from viewing the degree of growth that we seem to have attained. Sooner or later that will discourage us, because the standard is what? Perfection. Our courage comes from the precious righteousness of Jesus imputed to us to cover all the past, and from His promise that He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, and present us to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Our courage is not in what we see with these eyes. It is what we see with the eye of faith. It is not what we see in ourselves, it is what we see in Him. That is what gives us courage. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come. Let us come. Thank the Lord.

Precious Lord, Thou who hast given all that the seed of love might be brought to this world, grant that we may share in making Thee glad. Grant that in our hearts the divine image shall be restored, fully reproduced, perfectly reflected. Oh, grant that we shall be among that harvest of golden grain which Thou shalt gather into the garner of God.

We look out upon a world growing fully ripe in wickedness. Oh, how the angels and the inhabitants of the other worlds must long for the end of it all. But precious Jesus, Thou doest hold up those loving hands still marked with the wounds of Calvary. And Thou doest pray for the little remnant, Father My blood, My blood, My blood, My blood.

Shelter us under that precious blood. Cleanse us with that precious blood. Sanctify us with that blood. And send us forth to share with Thee in the fellowship of Thy suffering in taking to our hearts the burdens of others, in working with Thee to gather in the last ones ever to be gathered in this world. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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