

- Three more visions

The judgement of God is a matter of reaping a harvest

- An angel representing Christ

- A second angel announces the timing

- A third angel with a sickle to harvest

- God's judgement depends on our actions

- The consequences are not immediate

- What we sow, we reap

Two phases of harvesting

- The first – the harvest of the godly

- The second – the harvest of the ungodly

In three more visions, the judgement of God is pictured as a time of harvest^{□1}, the last plagues bring God's anger to completion^{□2}, and the entire people of God are revealed in their victory over Satan^{□3}.

The judgement of God is a matter of reaping a harvest. An angel is seen riding on a cloud. John says: ¹⁴*Then I looked and there before me was a white cloud; and seated on the cloud was someone like a human figure. He had on his head a golden crown, and in his hand was a sharp sickle.* The angel is almost described as if he were Christ (especially since 'a human figure' is literally 'a son of man'), and yet in fact he is only an angel, as is clear when the next verse speaks of 'another' angel. We must take it that he is Christ-like in appearance because he represents Christ. There are seven angels in 14:6–20, three in 4:6–13 and four in 14:14–20.

¹⁵*Then another angel came out from the temple, calling out with a loud voice to the one who was seated on the cloud, 'Use your sickle, and reap. For the hour to reap has arrived, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.'*

¹⁶*Then the one who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth; and the earth was harvested.* The second angel^{□1} is responsible for announcing the timing of the judgement. The first angel does the harvesting. In the picture-language the crop being harvested is the grain. The grape-harvest will be later.

¹⁷*Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.* The third angel is about to harvest the grapes. Each time the angels appear they come from the heavenly temple, the special dwelling-place of God where God's decisions are made.

¹⁸*And then another angel came from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire. He called out with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, 'Use your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for its grapes are fully ripe.'* The fourth angel is again responsible for announcing the precise time when the harvesting is to begin. ¹⁹*So the angel swung his sickle over the earth, and gathered the grapes of the earth, and threw them into the great winepress of God's anger.*

Judgement is pictured as reaping in harvest-time. The main implications of this picture are as follows. (i) God's judgement depends on what we do. Our actions are like seeds. They will produce fruit that will eventually be harvested. (ii) There is a time-gap between sowing and reaping. We live in a certain manner and for the moment there are no immediate consequences, but eventually a harvest will be gathered in. (iii) The timing of the harvest is important. Crops are not harvested too early or too late. (iv) The nature of the seed determines the nature of the harvest. We reap according to what we sow.

In Revelation 14:14–20 there are two phases of harvesting. Twice over an angel comes to harvest; twice an angel announces that the time is right. It is likely that the first harvest is the harvest of the godly, but the second is the harvesting of the ungodly. The imagery comes from Joel 3:13 but it is used in its own distinctive way. The wrath of God is mentioned only in connection with the second harvest (pictured as the grape-harvest). The anger of God against sin is pictured as the treading down of grapes to produce red wine. ²⁰*Then the grapes were trodden in the winepress outside the city. Blood flowed from the winepress, as high as the bridles of the horses, for a distance of 1,600 stadia.* The blood is deep. It covers a distance of 1,600 stadia, which is 4 x 4 x 100, symbolizing worldwide judgement (since four is the number representing the earth). The trampling of the grapes is done outside the city. Symbolically this means judgement takes place outside the holy city of God where the people of God dwell.

□1 14:14-20
□2 15:1
□3 15:2-4

□1 in 14:14-20

The sixth vision tells us God's judgements will be thorough and complete

The sixth vision¹ tells us God's judgements will be thorough and complete. John says: ¹*Then I saw another sign in heaven; it was great and marvellous. Seven angels were holding seven plagues. They are the last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is brought to completion.* The picture is not yet developed since the next section will develop the thought in detail. It simply makes the point that God's anger will be carried through to completion.

¹ counting from 12:18

The seventh vision describes the ultimate victory of the people of God



The seventh vision describes the ultimate victory of the people of God. ²*Then I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire. And there standing by the sea were those who had won the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name.* One day the people of God will be victorious, just as the Israelites were victorious over Pharaoh and saw 'the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore' (Exodus 14:30). They will defeat Satan and the paganism that he uses, and the worldliness of those who have 'the number of his name' (that is, who have the worldly, 'beastly' character).

The victory of God's people will increase their worship and praise. In John's vision,

They had harps that God had given them ³and they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

• Worship and praise increased

*'Great and marvellous are your deeds,
Lord God, the Almighty;
righteous and true are your ways,
King of the ages.
⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?
For only you are holy; all the nations shall come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been made visible.'*

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|  | <p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> | |  |
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