

18a REV

This is Friday, the 16th of December, 2005. We are continuing our study tonight in the book of Revelation in chapter 14, the very end of chapter 14. Let's take a moment as we begin to exercise our privilege of going to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are thankful for your sustaining grace that you have brought us safely through another week. We thank you for the opportunity to conclude the working part of the week as we began it with a time of meditation and study in your word. We thank you for each one that is here, the spiritual gifts that you have distributed amongst us.

We thank you for the encouragement and the fellowship that we enjoy because of the enthusiasm and the faithfulness of those who are interested in your word and in living by it in the time that remains to us on this earth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will guide us as we study this section of your word. May we find in it those truths that will equip us for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. As I said, Revelation 14, the very last half dozen verses or so here.

We saw last time the unholy trinity. So everybody remember the good trinity and the bad trinity study that we did? How many beasts are there? How do we denote them? There is the beast that comes from the pit, bottomless pit. Satan himself, the analogy he would like to make us believe is that he is analogous to God the Father.

Then we have the beast that comes up out of the sea, which is the Antichrist proper, indwelt, guided and motivated and empowered by Satan. Then we have the beast out of the earth, who is the false prophet. He is the one that does the Holy Spirit role in terms of running an ad campaign for the Antichrist.

We saw that in the middle section of chapter 14, verses 6 through 13, the three angels come forth and make proclamations that deal with these three areas of false spirituality, false religion. They proclaim messages, and we studied all that last time, so this brings us to chapter 14, verse 14. Revelation 14, verse 14, let's read it.

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat one like 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 who sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time has come for you to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. So he who sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Then 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, who had power over fire, and he cried

with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the horse's bridles for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

Okay, so if we shut our Bibles and handed out little blue books and pencils, and said, write a three page essay on the meaning of these verses, what would we say? You've got two individuals with sickles doing some reaping, you've got angels telling them to do the reaping, something gets reaped, and at the end we have a lot of blood for some distance measured in furlongs, we have to figure out what a furlong is, and that's our observation. Interpretation is what? Yeah, well, that's what I thought too when I first started looking at it. I had to do a lot of work on this because it's somewhat opaque at a first reading.

Who are these people? Is it Jesus? I noticed there are capital letters on one of these individuals and not on the other. Capital letters give you a clue as to who the translators think the first reaper is, and who the second reaper is not. So let's take a closer look at this.

Again, verse fourteen, I looked and behold a white cloud. It's easy to skip over the little connecting words and the little section markers, but remember John can't use boxes, he can't use icons, he can't use symbols from the little wingding set that comes with Word or something to mark off, you know, you can pick little flowers, little crosses or whatever, and make little sections in your documents. He doesn't have any of that, and if he did put any of that into his original document, as soon as it starts getting copied, that stuff is going to drop out.

The original manuscripts of the Bible, it would appear, were not illustrated, they weren't adorned, they didn't have any fancy little helps in them. They didn't have nice notes. By the way, no chapter markers, no verse markers, just raw text.

We have all these nice little things. So, why is it that in our New King James here, we have a new section heading here that says, reaping the earth's harvest in big bold letters. The reason is because it is denoted in the Greek by, then I looked and behold.

Okay, so this is not completely arbitrary on the part of the English translators. There are markers in Greek, and I looked and behold. This is helpful to us because somebody reading in the original, or early copies of the manuscript, would have not the first clue as to where one section leaves off and another begins without these little verbal hints.

That's the purpose that this serves. Then I looked and behold. This sets off a new vision, distinguishes this from the previous.

We talked about the fact that there are seven visions. Maybe as a Christmas present, I'll give you a list of the seven seals, and then the seven intermediate visions, and then the seven trumpets, and then the seven intermediate visions, and then the seven bowls, and the seven intermediate visions. Line them up all nice and neat.

They're not numbered here, even in your helpful annotated Bible, but they are there. This is all about sevens. Why? Because this is the culmination, the fulfillment of human history.

You're finishing up the sixth day and moving into the seventh day of human history. So it's all about completion, all about fulfilling all of God's promises, both of blessing and of judgment. Now, I looked and behold a white cloud.

What's the first thing you think of when you see that phrase white cloud? That's exactly right. That's what I think of. It's a brand of tissue.

White cloud. You see they're soft, comes in big rolls. Behold white cloud.

I only bring that up not to be facetious, but because there is a distance between our modern day and the day in which John wrote this letter. God gave it to him to communicate. And we have to be aware of that difference and not impose modern Western forms and thinking on an ancient Near Eastern text.

So the things that immediately jump to our mind aren't the things that would have jumped into the minds of the early hearers and readers of this letter. What would they think when they see the term behold a white cloud? Well, let me ask you this. What if it had been a dark thundering cloud? That communicates something.

Remember the beginning of Ezekiel? And you've got the whirlwind and the dark cloud and all the thunder and lightning and so on. Did that bode well or bode ill? Dark storm clouds aren't generally God's metaphor for blessing and happiness and let's walk with Jesus through a field of daisies, right? It connotes, it communicates something. This is a white cloud.

What does this tell you? Not judgment, not thunder, not lightning, not hail, not fire and brimstone. It's a white cloud. Why do you think they named the tissue this? It has positive connotations.

By me, I'm white cloud. I'm soft and fluffy. It's a positive thing, right? Well, pay attention to these clues in the text because these are aids to interpretation.

I can't tell you how all over the map commentators are on this particular section of the Revelation. I looked and behold a white cloud and on the cloud sat one like a son of man. One like a son of man.

You notice your English says the son of man. That's an interpretive translation. One like a son of man is what it says.

And this harks back to Daniel chapter 7. Daniel chapter 7. Don't hurt yourself getting there. Specifically verse 13 of Daniel chapter 7. Daniel says, and we're about to see this in our Daniel study, I was watching in the night visions and behold one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He came to the ancient of days and they brought him near before him.

This is the context. This is the background for those who are reading and listening, hearing the words of John. One like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

Now, the first thing I notice here is that cloud for John is singular. Clouds for Daniel are plural. One like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

It says coming with the clouds of heaven. What's he doing in John? Is he coming with the clouds of heaven? What's he doing? Sitting on. And generally you can't sit on multiple clouds unless the clouds are very small and you're very large.

So it becomes a singular cloud. Sitting on a cloud. We also have the additional information that this is a white cloud, which we've already discussed.

That's not a detail found in Daniel. But the identification is suggested, isn't it? Now, on the cloud sat one like a son of man having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle. This golden crown is exceedingly important as another clue for interpretation.

You may remember in times past or in days past that I have raised mild objections to some of the hymns in the hymnal that are given to us as church-age believers, as Christians, to sing. Do you remember what some of those are? Crown Him with many crowns. Or the Gaither song, The King is Coming.

Thank God He's coming for me. Do you remember my observation about that? Jesus is many things to the church and He's many things to Israel. But He's not the same things to the church that He is to Israel.

What does a crown denote? A king. For whom and to whom is Jesus a king? Always and without exception, it is Israel, not the church. So all the people that see the rapture of the church here as a precursor to the judgment that might be symbolized by the pressing out of the grapes of wrath have failed to note that helpful detail.

This isn't Jesus presented in His relationship to the church because He doesn't wear a crown when it comes to the church. The crown He wears is the Davidic crown. He is the Mashiach, the Anointed One, the Worthy One to Israel.

So, white cloud. And of course, you have this in Daniel 7. One, like the Son of Man, behold, He cometh with clouds. Every eye shall see Him.

You also have this a couple of times in the first chapter of our book. Another reference for this is Luke 21, verse 27, where Jesus is speaking. And He says, Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Then He's talking about the last days. He's talking about this same episode. So, line upon line, precept upon precept, Scripture interprets Scripture.

Your best way to stay straight and stay accurate and discern the truth is to let Scripture comment on itself. By comparing the Son of Man passages where He's associated with a cloud, it becomes clear that this is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory mode, in blessing mode, white cloud, to do what? Reap. What kind of reaping? This is where the Greek helps us out a little bit.

Because the angel cries out with a loud voice to Him who sits on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time has come for you to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And the clue here is the word harvest. Because there's nothing in here that says what kind of crop this is.

Right? We've got the same word reap used for grapes. So, what are we reaping here? Well, the word here for harvest is therizmos. Now, hang in there.

I know the Greek won't kill you. It's just a different set of sounds. But it's important here.

Therizmos. Think about the root of that. T-H-E-R.

We have thermometer, thermo, that sort of thing. The therizmos here is a reference to the crop to be harvested. It is used, for example, in Matthew 9, 37 and following when Jesus says, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will send workers in to reap. The passage in John 4, 35 says, Jesus is speaking, Do you not say, There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look at the fields. They are already white for harvest.

And all of this tells us that this is the grain harvest. Therizmos refers to the grain that is growing in the fields. This is the word used in Matthew 13, 30 in the parable of the wheat and the tares.

And the Lord of the harvest says, Let both grow together until the harvest. And at the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares, gather the wheat into my barn. So this is a wheat harvest.

One like a son of man sitting on a cloud with a sickle is going to go down and reap

wheat. Even though the word wheat is not there, we know this from the word therizmos. It's going to be a different word used for ripening and so on when we get to the grapes.

Now it says the harvest of the earth is ripe. And this is another clue because the word is not ripe. The word is actually a verb and it's from Zerino.

And basically this means to dry or dry up. Green grain is moist and not ready to be harvested. When it becomes ripe, it dries.

And that's when you know that it's ready. They go out there and they crumble it in their hand and they can tell by the texture that it's ready for harvest. But literally it means the harvest is dry.

The harvest of the earth is dry or dried up. That's the same word that's used to stop a flow of liquid or to stop sap that's leaking out of a tree or to dry up a liquid, a river or creek drying up. But when it's used for the harvest, it's talking about being ripe.

Okay, so he says, and this is what confuses me. See if this confuses you or not. Maybe you've got this figured out and I'm the only one that's bumping into things in the dark.

Does it seem odd to you that if the Son of Man is the Lord Jesus and he's wearing the crown and he's sitting on the cloud, by the way, in the Old Testament, in fact in the Bible, the only person you ever see sitting on a cloud is God. There is no other person in the Bible that sits on the cloud except God until you come to this passage. Of course, one like a Son of Man, but every other sitting on the cloud passage is a clear reference to God himself.

So yet another reinforcement of our correct understanding that the Lord Jesus Christ is in fact both God and man, the second person of the Trinity and he is qualified and sits on the cloud because he is in fact deity. But he's sitting on the cloud and then he gets instructions from an angel. Now this kind of makes me scratch my head.

If Jesus is the King, he's wearing the crown, he's got the sickle, seems to me like he would just reap whenever he feels like it. Why does an angel cry out to him in a loud voice and say, thrust in your sickle and reap? Well, I'll let you muse on that for a minute. Do you see any clue here as to why that might be? I'll give you a clue.

Where does the crying out angel come from? The temple. So where do you think he got his information? Who's in the temple? Who dwells between the cherubim? Whose throne is pictured by the Ark of the Covenant in heaven? It's God the Father. This is God's messenger angel.

His orderly. His factotum. He says to the guardian cherub, one of those surrounding his throne perhaps, go out there and tell my son it's time for him to collect the harvest.

So the angel comes forth. But he is essentially speaking for God the Father. And that's the only one qualified in heaven to give the Lord Jesus any instructions, isn't it? But once you have that helpful observation that this angel comes forth from the temple, you know why it is that an angel is probably very respectfully crying with a loud voice telling the Lord Jesus that it is time to reap.

Who chose the time of reaping? God the Father. He's the one who makes the plan. Interpretation, application for us.

The Lord Jesus is our Savior. The Lord Jesus is our intercessor. But God the Father makes the plan.

God the Father handles our provision. It's His grace. It's His attention to our details that brings blessing or judgment into our lives.

And He is aware and He knows and He has a time. And He orders our lives just as He orders human history. There was a fascinating documentary they had recently on fractals and the Mandelbrot set.

And if that sounds like gobbledygook, why, just bear with me. But it's a relatively simple mathematical formula that yields endless depth of detail. You look at a picture and it looks like a little round thing with a couple little ears on it or like a little Buddha there.

And when you start magnifying it, you see that around the edges there are similar little designs. And you zoom in on that and no matter how far you zoom, the detail remains the same. The level of detail.

You never get down and it doesn't start getting grainy. It doesn't start breaking down. It doesn't pixelate.

No matter you zoom a thousand times and you see a level of detail. You zoom that a thousand times and you have another level of detail. And it is a reminder of the infinite depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

God orders all of human history. And you say, well, I'm just one small human being in a sea of humans on a tiny planet in the vastness of space. God isn't going to be paying any attention to me.

Au contraire. God pays just as much attention to you and to me as He does to humanity, to the innumerable details of our life as He does to the macro order of the universe. Remember what Jesus said about the hairs on your head? They're numbered.

At this moment, in the infinitude of God's knowledge, He knows exactly how many hairs are on your head and how many are even now there but have dislodged. And the next time you comb it, they're going to fall out. The older you are, the more often that

happens.

The very hairs on your head are numbered. Why? I ask myself, why? Do we need this information? Do any of us know the number of the hairs on our head? No, we don't. Unless you went in and got plugs or something.

You might know the number in a small portion of your head. I think Hugh Downs knows and some others. But most people have no earthly idea how many hairs are on their head.

God does. And it's a relatively meaningless detail except for the fact that it tells us there is no limit to the depth of God's knowledge. And that has an interpretation and an application.

There is no problem too small. There is no detail too insignificant for God to take it into account and work it together in His plan for good to those who love Him, to those who are the called according to His purpose. We make that choice.

We can be the called or we can ignore the called and be the uncalled. We can be the ones for whom things don't work together for good. It's our choice.

Interestingly, if you get a chance to see this PBS documentary, they're running stuff multiple times because they've got the basket out for money again this time of year. But one of these secular scientists in a completely unrelated context to anything said, you can see looking at the Mandelbrot set how God was able to give His creatures free will. I mean, this came completely out of left field.

And he said, you can see looking at the Mandelbrot set how God is able to give creatures free will. He's a secular scientist. He got this conclusion looking at the Mandelbrot set.

And they use this. It has practical applications. Digital cameras now have fractal enhancement to digital zoom.

Have you seen this? It says something about fractal. I don't know exactly what they call it. Fractal enhancement.

This is not just interesting pictures on your computer screen. They are using it to enhance resolution to model things that used to take them weeks of graduate student time and computer time to digitally model something like a fern. Maybe to put into one of these 3D rendered movies that they make now.

Now they can do it in a matter of minutes because they plug values into Mandelbrot equations. And where there is symmetry and they get two even branches. If you look at the classic Mandelbrot set and look at one of the little spurs that comes off.

It looks like a little lightning bolt. It always splits into two. And if you follow one of those

it splits into two.

And if you follow one of those it splits into two. If you follow one of those it splits into two. And it just continues this ad infinitum.

Well, they can change the values and cause those to be asymmetrical. When they plug this into sort of a tree making program initially you have a thing that looks like a fuller brush because everything splits at the same place and gets smaller and smaller and smaller. And you have this little computer looking tree.

But by just a few small tweaks they create a digital tree that looks like a photograph of a mighty oak that grew out here in the forest. It's asymmetrical. It's like nature.

And they're finding more and more that nature seems to be guided. How did God cram so much information into the DNA molecule? Man is just scratching at the hem of his garment discovering that God did it all with math. And now they're finding that my goodness, with this little small equation we've got all the information to model a tree or a fern or a mountain range or any one of a number of other things.

I say all that to say this. Do not underestimate the attention that God is paying to you. We should not underestimate the level of detail that God keeps in the forefront of his mind as we go through our minutes and through our hours and through our day.

There's no such thing as getting lost in the shuffle. There's no such thing as God sort of overlooking us because he's busy elsewhere. If we learn anything from nature, we learn about God's power and deity.

It's what it says in Romans 1. And when you look at math, you find that God's resolution, the picture of our life on his screen is infinitely detailed. He knows every thought. He knows every motive.

He knows every desire. He knows everything that we think. He hears our silent prayers.

And it is as though, from our point of view, God is paying attention to nothing but us. And it ought to create in us a sense of responsibility. Well, back to the Son of Man sitting on the cloud.

The angel comes forth and communicates to him the will of the Father. He is a messenger sent from God to communicate the will of the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is our example.

And we are commanded to follow in his steps. We have the Holy Spirit who is God's messenger bringing to us the word of the Father through the mind of Christ that we have here in the pages of Scripture. What do you think would happen if Jesus said, you know, this is really a comfortable cloud.

The sickle's feeling kind of heavy. I don't want to reap right now. And, you know, the grain goes bad in the field.

God the Father said reap. The Son says, well, I really don't feel like reaping. I'm not going to do it right now.

I'll do it later. I mean, it's inconceivable, right? It ought to be equally inconceivable for us when there is communication from God the Father directly to us through his messenger, the Holy Spirit, that it is time to do something, that it is the place to do something, that we have goals and priorities and values set for us by the Scripture and just blow them off. And yet, as Christians, we do this quite often.

And there is a reckoning that will be made, if not now, in the age to come. God chooses the time and place. Do you remember the story of Elisha and the young men who were mocking him and saying, go up, old bald head, go up, old bald head.

Somebody engaged me in conversation about this story here recently. What is the problem that a lot of people, especially secular people, have with that story? Do you remember how it ends? The young guys are mocking Elisha. And Elisha turns around and looks at them and pronounces them vile in the name of the Lord.

That's all he does. He says, in the name of the Lord God of Israel, I pronounce you vile. That's all he does.

Well, two she-bears come out of the woods and rip them all to pieces. Forty-two of them die. And people look at that and say, oh, you've got a harsh, murdering God or a harsh, murdering prophet or whatever.

Of course, you read into the story that Elisha asked God to, you know, rip up these wayward little children. There aren't children at all. They are young men.

Anywhere from 15 to 30 years of age based on the usage of the word that describes them in other places. But here's my point. Here's my point.

Two she-bears come out and rip these guys up. But does this happen every time somebody mocks a prophet? Remember the man after the law came down from on high, the Ten Commandments and so on, and then you had a guy out there gathering sticks on the Sabbath? And they grabbed him and had to stone him to death in the wilderness? Now, has everybody that ever broke the Sabbath been stoned? How about Achan? Stealing the dedicated things out of Jericho when God gave him victory over that city and said, don't take any spoil. And he took some gold and took some clothes and hid them in his tent.

He dragged Achan out and stoned him and his family and put him under a big pile of rocks for all time. Does that happen every time somebody tried to cheat God out of the

things that are due to him? What do we know about this kind of story? This is archetypal, isn't it? It's an example. God makes an example and lets the example stand forever after.

Right? God doesn't have to repeat Himself over and over. He makes an example and that's supposed to suffice. We're supposed to get it from that.

And God doesn't kill every thief and He doesn't stone every Sabbath breaker and He doesn't tear up every loud mouth teenager who mocks the things of God. By the way, you know why they were saying go up, old bald head? You remember the context of that story? What happens just before that? The beginning of that same chapter in Kings. Elijah goes up in the chariot.

And now, Elisha is the new prophet in Israel. And so, these guys are harassing Elisha, saying, oh, well, if you're a prophet, why don't you go up too? We'd like it if the holy man of God would disappear. So, you go up, old bald head.

Go on up. And Elisha is God's messenger. Elisha is God's representative, speaking the truth of God to the nation of Israel.

That's his office. That's his function. That's his calling.

He's got a double portion of the Holy Spirit as he wears Elijah's mantle. And to mock him is to mock God. To disregard him is to disregard God.

The way you treat the prophet reflects your attitude toward God himself. It's not mocking the prophet that is the issue. It's mocking God and the things of God.

And God makes an example. And you can bet, I mean, it sure sticks in the minds of people, doesn't it? Even these rank unbelievers can't get over that story. They think God is so cruel.

Why? They don't understand the issues in that story. But that's God's messenger. And the attitude toward the messenger makes a difference.

We have God the Holy Spirit. And what does He do for us? He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He leads us into all truth.

He reminds us of the Scriptures that we memorize, the Scriptures that we study. And we're supposed to listen to Him. What happens if we don't? Well, what's the example God has left us in Scripture for those who don't listen? All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and stiff-necked people.

What's the example in the Old Testament? It's the nation of Israel, isn't it? What happened to them? They lost their territory. They lost their possession. They lost their blessings.

And ultimately, they lost their lives. Is God going to do that in every single case when somebody flaunts their negative volition and flaunts their apathy and indifference toward Him? Not necessarily. Sometimes it happens in time.

Sometimes it happens in eternity. But the consequences will be no less severe if they happen later than if they happen now. Well, all of this is related to what we see when the angel from the Father comes to the one like a son of man having on his head a golden crown.

The crown doesn't go to his head, does it? He doesn't say, well, you know, I think I'll be like the Most High. I think I'll ascend my throne above the stars of heaven. I think I don't really need the Father telling me what to do.

I've got the crown and I've got the sickle. I'll just pick my own time and my own agenda. He is subordinate to the will of the Father and He is our example.

That's what we are to do. So this angel comes out of the temple and tells him it's time to reap because this grain harvest is dry. It's ready.

So he who sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth and the earth was reaped. Now, what does this mean? What is he reaping? Well, we don't have to look far for the answer to this. We're looking at the last book of the Old Testament.

Let's go back and look at the first, I'm sorry, the last book of the New Testament. Let's look at the first book of the New Testament. Let's look at the Gospel of Matthew and look at verse 11 and 12 of chapter 3. Matthew 3, 11 and 12.

I indeed baptize you with water, with a view toward change of mind. But he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. So John the Baptist, before Jesus ever began His public ministry, communicated to the people of Israel the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Lord of the harvest.

In this case, He is the one with a winnowing fan in His hand. In Revelation, He is the one with the sickle in His hand. He is in charge of the harvest.

What is He looking for? He is going to gather the wheat into His barn. He is going to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. He is going to sort out believers.

Now, look at the sequence. We read all of these verses. What happens next? Another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven, also having a sharp sickle.

Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud

voice to Him at the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. I'm going to contend, I'm going to argue in advance, that the reaping of the wheat harvest is the Lord Jesus gathering tribulational saints to Himself. And this precedes the trampling of the grapes of wrath here.

And that's important. Don't forget. What happens first? Reaping the believers.

Pulling in the wheat into the barn. Burning up the chaff. Wheat and chaff.

Judgment of believers based on their works. Sorting them out into what is useful for the future, and what has no use for the future, and is going to be judged by fire. Now, how did Jesus get the instructions to do this reaping? Angel comes out of the temple.

Now, let's look at this second section. Another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven. He has a sharp sickle.

He walks out of the temple with a sickle in his hand. Where does he get his instructions? Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire. Now, why do we need this detail? All he's going to do is tell the reaping angel, Go get the grapes.

Why does he come from the altar? And why are we told that he has power over fire? How come another angel doesn't come out of the temple and talk to an angel with a sickle that comes from the altar? Why isn't it reversed? Does this have any significance? Do you think? Or not? Well, of course it does. It's highly significant. We're not going to understand what's going on if we don't assign values, assign interpretive meanings to this.

So, first of all, the reaping angel is sent forth from the temple. Now, why do you think he comes out of the temple? Who told him to leave? Who sent him forth? God the Father says, Go out there. He comes forth from the presence of God.

He's a reaping angel, sent directly from the throne of God. As he emerges from the temple, this angel comes out from the altar, who has power over fire. And he cried out with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth for her grapes are fully ripe.

The altar angel, the fire angel, has authority to choose the time of the reaping for this angel that comes out of the temple. He's a holy angel. He's commissioned by God.

But he doesn't get his marching orders until he reports to the altar angel who has power over fire. What does the fire of the altar represent? Always. Judgment.

What kind of judgment? Judgment for sin. Judgment for sin. That's what the altar represents.

You bring a sacrifice to the altar. You send it up to God. You send up the olah, the minkah, the sin offering, all of the different offerings we studied in Leviticus 1-6.

Right? But the sacrifice is judged. It is evaluated. It is sent to God via the flame and impurities are judged.

They're removed. So this altar angel with power over fire, i.e., in charge of judgment, this is temporal judgment. The altar speaks of judgment on the earth.

Right? The coals of fire that surround God's throne, that's a different kind of judgment. That's the barrier of righteousness that surrounds God. But this altar means this is where man meets God.

Man meets God at the altar. Do we have any record of angels coming to an altar and offering any sacrifices or doing anything? We don't. It's a man thing.

It's a human thing. So this angel commissions the reaping angel to go. And what does that tell us? The sin, the time of the Gentiles and all of that is consummated.

It is fulfilled. It has reached its fullness. The fullness of times has come.

It is time for the sin on the earth to be judged much as it was back in the days of the flood. The imagination of man's heart is only evil all the day. God says, stench of my nostrils and he wipes it clean.

And in that great chiastic parenthetical structure that you find in human history, you have an analog to the flood here and the great and terrible day of the Lord that culminates the 70th week of Daniel. So, thrust in your sharp sickle. This is a different kind of reaping, a different kind of judgment.

The first judgment, the sickle reaping the wheat, you get the wheat and going back to Matthew chapter 3, you find that that wheat is then separated into what is stored and what is burned. But here it is reaped. All the believers are brought out who remain non-tribulational saints, all of the unbelievers.

And they, as representatives of all of the godless of all of the ages, are judged. The angel thrust in his sickle, gathers the vine of the earth, threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. The cup of God's wrath is a common theme in the Old Testament.

The winepress is trampled outside the city and blood came out of the winepress. Where have we seen wine represent blood before? You all know this. The Lord's table, right? This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

So, if you do not partake of the new covenant in Christ's blood, what's left? You get to partake of the covenant that constitutes your own blood. And this blood runs as high as the horse's bridles for 1,600 furlongs, which for us Americans means 180 miles. As your

homework assignment, you can go look up the size and length of the Vale of Megiddo, Har-Megiddo, Armageddon, and see how long that particular topographical feature is and where the southeastern end of it terminates.

But for now, we'll pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll continue our study here in Revelation chapter 14 and 15.