

Intro. Just a few days ago, another trailer for the 7th Episode of Star Wars came out, pumping up the movie due to hit the big screen this December. How many of you can't wait? Are the rest of you on life support? This movie is going to be awesome! We ought to go fill a theater & watch it together, dressed up as Star Wars characters—that would be great, right? Do you know what's going to happen with Episodes 7, 8 & 9? I do & I don't mean to ruin it for you, but a new villain is going to rise up & though he will win some battles, the Jedi will win in the end. In a similar way, Revelation 12-14 describes “When All of Hell Breaks Loose on the Earth” with the Antichrist & False Prophet as new villains under Satan, but though he may win some battles, Christ & His people win in the end. Today we look at the end of chapter 14 & “Harvest Time & Judgment Time.”

Theme: Rapture & judgment

Background: Chapters 12-13 focus on the work of Satan through the Antichrist & False Prophet aimed at both Israel & the Church, but chapter 14 reminds us how God will protect His people & grants mercy through the final preaching of the gospel to all the nations.

➤ **Quick overview of where we are in Revelation**—chapters 1-3 are introductory with a vision of Christ & His message to the 7 churches with notes of warning & promise; chapters 4-8:5 begin with visions of God & Christ, the only One worthy to open the 7-sealed end-time document & ends with a vision of the altar in heaven (part of the temple, where God resides); chapters 8:6-11:15 are the 7 trumpets, largely focused on the Great Tribulation, ending with the announcement of Christ's return & a vision of the temple; chapters 12-14 largely focus on the work of the Antichrist, but God protects His people & John shares a vision of the temple at the return of Christ (same song, different verse, several times over in Revelation)

Explanation:

I. When Jesus returns, He will gather His people via resurrection/rapture (14:14-16)

- The vast majority of scholars agree the “son of man” is Jesus Himself (14:14)—it was His favorite self-designation, He wears a golden crown, He describes Himself as returning on the clouds (cf. Matthew 24:30)—the white cloud may symbolize Christ's purity, but probably His holiness & judgment
- The angel doesn't command Jesus so much as carry a message from God the Father that harvest time has come (14:15-16)
- While some scholars see both of these harvests as judgments on unbelievers, it seems more probable to view them in contrast, for reaping can be a sign of harvesting believers, as Jesus spoke in the Parable of the Wheat & Tares (the wheat were believers harvested & the tares were harvested & burned, Matthew 13:24-30; cf. Jeremiah 51:33; Joel 3:13 [LXX of Joel 3:13 uses “sickles” for 2 harvests])
- That this would be the harvest of God's people is spoken of elsewhere as the resurrection & rapture of believers, which takes place at the final trumpet when Christ returns (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52)

II. When Jesus returns, He will put unbelievers to death at the Battle of Armageddon (14:17-20)

- The other angel comes for judgment (14:17)—“sickle” occurs 7x in this passage to underscore the completeness of God's judgment
- The next angel, with authority over fire, calls for the judgment (14:18)
- The “altar” is the altar of incense in the temple, where the saints prayers ascend to God (6:9-10; see also 8:2-3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 16:7)
- The reference to the winepress (14:19) agrees with ancient prophecies made about a day of judgment & a day of redemption (Isaiah 63:2-6; Lamentations 1:15; Joel 3:13)
- God's wrath & the Lamb's wrath are also mentioned in Revelation 6:17; 19:15

- The red-colored grape juice resembles blood & the imagery of crushing the grapes is a metaphor for unbelievers being judged & killed at the Battle of Armageddon, where the nations of the world gather against each other & against Israel & then Christ comes to put an end to it all (described a bit more in 19:11-21)
- Many view the reference to the city (14:20) to be Jerusalem—it's possible, for if this is also a reference to Armageddon (held by many scholars) & since the reference to 1,600 stadia is about 180 miles, then the results of the battle could easily stretch from Megiddo to Jerusalem (about 70 miles)
- 1,600 may not be literal, but symbolic of 4 (# of earth) x 10 (# of completeness) x 40 (# of judgment)=complete judgment over all the earth (Israel wandered 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus was tested 40 days in the wilderness, 40 days of Flood, 40 lashes for an evil-doer, Deut. 25:3)
- If this is indeed the Battle of Armageddon & Christ's return to judge the unbelievers, then we get a more complete picture in 16:12-21 & 19:11-21)

Application:

➤ **Surrender your life to Jesus & serve Him wholeheartedly**

- The reason I mention surrendering to Jesus & serving Him completely is because far too many Americans profess Christ but haven't surrendered their lives to Him. They either think head belief in Jesus will get them to heaven or going through a checklist of "good deeds" will get them there, but Jesus & the gospel demands so much more—a life of denying self, taking up the cross daily & following Jesus—that's complete surrender from your way of life to Jesus' way
 - Others know they haven't surrendered their lives to Jesus but they are trying to fool God & others
- Illus:** Do you know the name Rosie Ruiz, the 1980 Boston Marathon female champion? She set a course best for a female with 2:31 & a few seconds. She came out of nowhere to win, but then the officials began to notice how she wasn't breathing hard or sweating & couldn't recall her splits at key intervals. Further research couldn't locate her in pictures or video of the race. Two Harvard students mentioned seeing her burst out of the crowd with ½ mile to go & ran the final leg. But that's not the end of it. She qualified for the Boston Marathon as a finisher of the New York Marathon. She had been marked as an injured runner, but reports came out of someone accompanying her from the subway to the finish line & then she came up with the story. She never ran more than ½ mile of 2 marathons & tried to get away with it. But the truth always catches up with you. You say, "That could never happen today?" It just happened in the St. Louis Marathon last week when Kendall Schler crossed the line in first place & got her picture with Jackie Joyner-Kersey. Twenty minutes of fame is all she got as race officials figured out she had cheated, entering the race after the last checkpoint, but she got 20 minutes of fame.
- You may be fooling your family members & friends & church leaders into thinking you're a Christian & you know you are living a scam—you may get 20 minutes or 20 years or 50 years of personal fame on this earth, but you won't fool God & what is 50 years of fame compared to an eternity apart from God in hell?

Conc. Did I ever tell you about the time 2-3 years ago when I took the day off & took my kids on a field trip to the annual Star Wars Convention here in Orlando? The kids all dressed up as different characters & we had a blast. Should the Lord tarry, I'll take them again one day & should I be blessed with grandkids, I'll take them one day. We love it! But as fun as it is, we have our limits. I'm not taking them to the one in Europe & other parts of the world, because it isn't worth it. But it will be worth everything I could possibly invest to teach them about Jesus so they surrender their lives to Him & I would give it all for them to go with me to heaven. But as much as I want them to & I'm responsible for telling them & loving them & giving them a picture of God's love, I can't make that choice for them. I can make them go with me on a trip, but I can't force them to go to heaven. Everyone has to make their own choice. Will you surrender to our Lord before it's too late?