

Revelation 14: 14-20; “Christ on the White Cloud”, Sermon # 109 in the series – “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 6th, 2011, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

These verses at first glance appear to be speaking of the time when Christ returns and the Last Judgment. The picture of Christ on the white cloud can easily be associated with Christ’s “coming in the clouds” of Revelation 1: 7. The pictures of a harvest and the vintage of a winepress of the wrath of God may draw the reader’s mind to the torments of eternal punishment. And so they should. As we begin this sermon we need to remember this important truth; that all of the temporal judgments (that is all of the earthly judgments) which God brings against societies, nations, and systems of evil which Satan has raised up; will find their greater fulfillment in the Judgment of the last Day. There are judgments in time which find their ultimate fulfillment in fallen angels and unrepentant sinful men being cast into the lake of fire. It says in 2nd Peter 2, verse 4 – “God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.” And Jude verse 6 says, “The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the last Day.” So, I believe that it is spiritually right to think of the Last Judgment even as we think about the meaning of these words that we are studying this afternoon.

But, if we remember the context of all that we have studied so far in Chapters 11-14; we will find that these verses have a more particular application to the time of the earthly judgment and destruction of the Antichristian powers (or Spiritual Babylon) at the end of the 1260 days prophecy. This takes place sometime after the end of the time period called the “slaying of the witnesses”, which is predicted in Revelation Chapter 11, verses 2-10. The slaying of the witnesses is not the killing of 2 real men; New Testament prophets who prophesied for 1260 literal days in the streets of literal Jerusalem. The slaying of the witnesses, as I have told you many times before, is rather the killing of the public witness of the visible church’s teaching and government for a period of 3 and a half literal years, in the sight of all the nations in the earth; each of these time periods (the 1260 days and the 3 and half days) being understood as a year for a day, as I have explained before. If I am reading and understanding these things rightly, this will not necessarily mean that there will be great numbers of Christians being martyred in various places of the world; although there may be. It may perhaps be so; that many Christians might be persecuted at that time, in many places of Europe; the ten kingdoms of the Beast, and in other places in the world as well. But I think that it will rather more specifically mean that the public witness of the visible Church of Jesus Christ, to the truth of the gospel, will be so suppressed at that time, that it will appear to have been killed. The whole cause of the gospel of Christ and the Word of God prevailing among men, to the conversion of many people and even nations, will appear to have been lost. It says in

Revelation 11: 10 – “And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.” The cause of Christ and His truth presently, still has many enemies. But remember; these two mystical witnesses are going to have “the breath of life” enter them after 3 and a half days. (3 and a half literal years) They will stand on their feet again, and great fear will come upon those who see them. This breath of God entering in to them is God’s breathing new life into the Church’s witness after the three and a half years of deadness, and they shall then go forward with the truth in a mightier way than ever before. So much so, that “the kingdoms of this world will become, in that time period, the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ,” as it says in Chapter 11, verse 15. So the way that I would like to approach these verses this afternoon is to speak first of all of Christ sitting on a white cloud, mentioned in verse 14. 2ndly, I would like to speak of the harvest of the earth being reaped in verses 15 and 16. And 3rdly, I would like to speak of the harvest of the grapes of wrath, mentioned in verse 17-20.

1st of all – Christ sitting on the white cloud.

“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.” Here is an obvious description of our Lord Jesus Christ in relation to His coming to save His Elect people, and His coming to judge the false Antichristian system which waged war against the saints. The description is one which relates to a certain and specific prophetic time in the history of the Church; the time when the kingdom is given to the saints by God the Father, through Jesus Christ Himself. I believe that the evidence for this is found in the prophecy of “the Son of Man” which is found in Daniel Chapter 7. If you will turn over there with me, we will begin reading at verse 7. “After this (the description of the 3 World Monarchies which came before Rome) I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong.” “It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet.” “It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.” “I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.” “And there, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.” (I will not take the time again to prove that this is the Roman Papal Antichrist, which grew up out of the 10 kingdoms of Europe; which countries came into being after the fall of the Pagan Roman Empire) The Papal rule and kingdom is the “little horn” being spoken of. “I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool.” “His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.” “The court was seated, and the books were opened.” “I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” “As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion

taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.” “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!” “He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.” “Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him.” “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

This prophecy here, is the main prophecy related to the one that we are studying this afternoon. The Antichristian Beast and its little horn kingdom, ruled over by one who has “the eyes of a man” and who “speaks pompous words”, is being judged by God the Father, the Ancient of Days. A courtroom scene opens before Him to try these Beasts and especially the Roman Beast. The pompous words were heard by all present; God, the prophet, and the holy angels. And then a verdict is rendered by God, that the beast would be slain and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. The rest of the Beasts survived as kingdoms; not in their original form, but continue on for a season and a time. Then the Son of Man arrives in this vision, and He comes “with the clouds of heaven”. Now this is not His second coming where He is “coming with the clouds” and “every eye shall see Him. No, this is a visionary scene in which Daniel beholds something very special indeed. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ (the Son of Man) being given “dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him.” He is given this, based not only upon the fact that He is the Son of God, but even more, because He is the Son of Man; that He would indeed become incarnate and fulfill the righteous requirements of God’s Holy Law, and then willingly suffer, bleed, and die in order to redeem a people unto God. He would be given glory by the God; His being recognized as the King of Kings by all the nations. He would be given a kingdom so that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. This is why the golden crown is on the head of the Son of Man in Revelation 14: 14. And this is the reason that He is sitting upon “a cloud” rather than all the clouds of heaven in this vision. It is because this one cloud is like a judgment throne, and it represents well His coming to rule and reign in His kingdom upon the earth spiritually at this particular point in Church History. This is why I do not believe that it refers at all to His Second Coming; when He will come with literal physical clouds, and with all of His saints and the holy angels. No, this is a different time, and a different work, in certain ways, which we will think about over the next few minutes.

Now, 2ndly, I would like to speak of the harvest of the earth being reaped. (Verses 15 and 16).

Something else is made known to us concerning “the Son of Man” in our text. It is the fact that He is holding in His hand a sharp sickle. Verse 15 says, “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.” Now, we need to understand at this point that there are two harvests that are being spoken of in this passage; two separate uses of the sickle

which are being spoken of. There is this first one, which we are speaking of here now. It does not refer to the harvest of judgment. It refers to a great harvest of souls being saved to the glory of God and Christ. The sickle is thrust on the earth, and the earth was reaped. This is an all inclusive reaping; a reaping of peoples and nations. But I believe before we consider the fact that Christ has a right to such a reaping, I think that you and I need to see our own personal responsibility in relation to our everyday witness in this regard. I would like you to turn to Matthew 9: 35. “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” “Then He said to His disciples, the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” This is how Jesus saw the people of His day. I wonder if this is how you and I view them as well? People need direction into the truth. People need a shepherd. They need the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and there is a great general need for laborers to work in the harvest. There is a great need for pastors. This is a good reason for praying to the Lord of the Harvest that He would send out laborers into His harvest. It is Christ’s harvest. He has the spiritual sickle to reap them with. And yet we find the Apostle Paul speaking of ministers, as one sowing and another reaping, but God giving the increase.

Turn also to John Chapter 4, and verse 35. “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then come the harvest?’” “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” “For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’” “I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” You can see here that the fields are the multitudes of people around the ministers and believers who are sowing the word. Many times we think that there has to be a waiting time before the grain, or the people can be harvested; or brought into the kingdom of God. But Jesus is looking on it in a larger way; the fields are white for harvest. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Reap or it perishes. We need to remember this afternoon that we are Christ’s witnesses. If people around us do not hear of the gospel from our lips, then will they hear it from some other source? Perhaps, but God is watching. Proverbs Chapter 24, verse 11 – “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.” “If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this’, Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it?” “He who keeps your soul, does He not know it?”

But let’s think of the this principle of reaping and the harvest on a bigger level. For that is what this passage we are studying today is talking of. Turn with me to Mark 4, verse 26. “And Jesus said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should

sprout and grow, he does not know how.” “For the earth yields crops by itself first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” Now these words tell us of “the earth” yielding crops by itself. This is indeed the working of God’s Spirit in connection with the efforts of Christ’s “angels”, His messengers of the gospel, as they represent and obey Christ’s commission to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”. Notice that this “angel” who is crying out with a loud voice is coming out of the “temple”. He is coming out crying from the temple of God; the Church of Jesus Christ, in prayer. I believe that our text is teaching that someday all of the Church’s prayers and efforts to share the gospel and the Word of God will come to fruition, here upon the earth. They will come to full fruition in the Millennium, and Christ will reap a very great harvest of both people and righteousness to His own great name and cause. How shall this come about? Zechariah Chapter 4, verse 6 says, “Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah Chapter 1, verse 10 says, “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion!” “For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst, says the Lord.” “Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people.” “And I will dwell in your midst.” “Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.” “And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.” But before this happens, however, something else very great will need to take place.

3rdly - I would like to speak of the harvest of the grapes of wrath, mentioned in verse 17-20.

Verse 17 says, “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 out with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Thrust in your sharp sickle into the earth 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 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.” These 2 angels are God’s angels of judgment assigned to this particular destruction. This is the sickle of judgment coming upon and against the Antichristian power of Papal Rome. The measurement of 1,600 furlongs is an Italian or Roman measurement. It is about 184 miles in all. Adam Clarke in his commentary says: “It is said that the state of the Church, or St. Peter’s patrimony, extends from Rome to the Po, two hundred Italian miles, which make exactly one thousand six hundred furlongs!” “If this be really so, the coincidence is certainly surprising, and worthy of deep regard.” The angels in this part of the passage are said to be “coming out of the temple of heaven” which means that they are spirit angels rather than preachers of the Word. The second angel came out from the altar; which shows that the issue which would bring about this judgment was related to the sacrifice of Christ being falsely misrepresented as being

sacramental; people be told that participating in the Mass would bring them salvation; rather than its being proclaimed as being of grace through faith.

This second angel had power over fire; that is, that it would be his responsibility to enact this judgment of fire upon the beast of Rome and those Ecclesiastics who kept propagating this false doctrine. This false Church is referred to as “the vine of the earth” having born for fruits; clusters of grapes; which are thrown into “the great winepress of the wrath of God”. It is Christ Himself who will trample these grapes in the wine press and order the specific overthrow of this false system. It is described in Isaiah 63, verses 1-6. “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?”—“I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” “Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?” “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me.” “For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.” “For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.” “I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me.” “I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth.” I believe that this is saying that Christ will personally come to judge this great system of Antichrist by His turning its forces upon itself in battle. I will attempt to tell you what this might mean in later sermons, but suffice it to say that Rome will at some point in the future be involved in a very bloody battle; a battle which will put an end to the Beast of Rome.