

Revelation 14

The harvest of the earth is ripe. Revelation 14:15

Brief Idea: The Second Coming will not be a disaster for some true Christian who had the misfortune to be only part-way along the path of perfecting Christian character. Christ does not return until the harvest is “ripe.”

Introduction

An earlier study established the reality of perfection in the last generation. This paper observes a very encouraging theme in connection with that truth.

Our parents and even some of our grandparents lived in fear of Christ’s coming. That generation believed that we must be like Jesus when He comes, but they feared that He would come before they had attained the goal and would, consequently, be lost.

They have reacted poorly, changing their theology to match their experience. But if they had understood this study, it would have saved them much unneeded perplexity.

The Harvest Theme

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the revolution of the year. Exodus 34:22, margin.

There were two times of harvest in the Jewish year as outlined by the feasts of Israel. The first harvest, celebrated by the Feast of First-fruits (otherwise known as the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) commenced in the second month.

The second harvest brought with it the Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Harvest. This harvest marked the “revolution of the year” when the cycle of sanctuary symbols came to its completion, though several months of the calendar year were still to come.

These two annual harvests represented two distinct harvests of souls. Jesus was the first-fruits and those that were raised at his resurrection fulfilled the typical wave-sheaf. The second harvest feast, bringing an end to the great seventh-month feasts, prefigured the harvest of souls at the end of the world.

The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. Matthew 13:39

How is the harvest timed?

But when the fruit is ripe (margin), immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Mark 4:29

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. Revelation 14:15

The certain day to harvest grains can not well be predetermined when the seeds are planted. The harvest is gathered when the fruit is ripe. So it is with the harvest at the end of the world.

Even the wicked, as tares in Matthew 13 and as grapes in Revelation 14 and Joel 3, are ripened for their judgments, and are harvested when “fully ripe.”

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.¹ Matthew 13:30

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.² Joel 3:13

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 sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. Revelation 14:18

No second probation follows the harvest, and so Jeremiah records the mourning thoughts that will fill many minds at that time.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. Jeremiah 8:20

Jesus was aware of the harvest to be gathered at Pentecost and alluded to the ripeness of the grains prior to His passion. The generations living then and now are each rebuked for not keeping the ripeness of the fields in mind. Additionally, the last generation is reprimanded for forgetting the needed out-pouring of the Spirit that would prepare the grain for harvest.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. John 4:35. See Matthew 9:37-38.

Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.³ Jeremiah 5:24

When are the righteous “ripe” for the harvest of Revelation 14:15?

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Mark 4:28

And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. Luke 8:14

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. James 5:7-8

While the fruit may be perfect at every stage of development, the harvest is not conditioned on perfect buds and blades and baby ears. The finishing of the process, brought about almost entirely before the latter rain yet dependant on that rain for its completion, marks the field for reaping.

James presents our duty as that of seeking stability, of settling into the truth in such a way that we can not be moved, “for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

This fear is unwarranted. The very same passages that proclaim the ascension-day church to be without fault, blame, or spot, also remove all Biblical reasons for fearing that the harvest will come before the harvest is ripe. We will consider first the passage in 2 Peter 3.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The Lord is not slack concerning his

¹ Verse 26; the tares do not appear until a crop is produced; and can not be safely gathered until the harvest, v. 28.

² Verse 14 speaks of the valley of “decision.” The marginal reading allows “threshing.” Whichever is intended, and perhaps the double meaning was not an accident, the prophecy is of a special time of decision-making that would determine one’s destiny in the shaking and harvest. See Jer. 51:33.

³ Verses 25 and 26 portray the cause of the delayed harvest and rain. “Your iniquities have turned away these things; and your sins have withheld good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men.” While a certain blame is attached to the false teachers, the nation is implicated. “and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end?” v. 31, NKJV. When Judas was no more and among the praying disciples were found no “wicked men” the early rain came.

promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

While ungodly men will be burned in the final fire, God's unwillingness to prematurely bring their destruction is motivated by His will that not one should thus "perish." But why does He wait? While the coming in Matthew 24 is timed on the finishing of the gospel commission, the coming in 2 Peter 3 is timed like that of Revelation 14, on the ripening of the harvest.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting [margin] the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

The day waits for a certain "manner of persons" that having "holy conversation and godliness" are ready for the day that will melt the world. Men ought to be seeking this state and thus be found "hasting" the Coming. There will be a new heaven and a new earth appropriate for those that escape the fire of the last day.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

If we expect that the end will come that way, we ought to be diligently preparing. The word "found" implies a finished judgement by "Him" that is coming. Then to what should we account our salvation in the last days? Are we saved because we have become so good? Do our characters then stand in place of our characters before? Are we our own saviors? Peter answers the question by reminding us why the Coming was delayed. It waited for us to be ready.

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

When do we count that God's longsuffering "is Salvation"? At the time when, on account of that longsuffering, God postpones His return so that not one need be lost. *God waits for His people, and if it were not so, our case would be hopeless.* Before someone mumbles "carnal security" let him reread the chapter. Who is God waiting for? Those that are seeking. Those that look for such things. Those that are "diligent" accordingly.

The class who are entering into the Day of Atonement by soul searching, the very ones most inclined to be discouraged with what they find in their souls, they are the ones for whom Christ waits. He waits, not impatiently and fretfully, but with a longsuffering that is our salvation.