

# Revelation 14:20 is NOT the Battle of Armageddon

***We can't fault our eminent teachers entirely for what is found to be a common misconception among religious Scholars and their many Reference Works relied upon by so much of the Christian Community.***

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Growing up in a Fundamentalist Baptist Church, back in the early 1950's, I recall hearing what I again heard in the Worldwide Church of God a decade and more later. It was this background which led me to accept the confident pronouncements regarding the verse in question, never giving it further thought. It seemed reasonably logical at the time, and having such widespread acceptance among most religious communities, why question it?

## **Battle or Harvest?**

Some years later, I noticed a sub-title applied to chapter 14, which gave some pause. It was in one version of the KJV that sub-titled the chapter, "*The Harvest of the World*". A NKJ version, (Nelson Publishers, 1979) does a similar thing, sub-titling verses 14-16 as, "*Reaping the Earth's Harvest*". Above verses 17-20, they sub-title that portion as, "*Reaping the Grapes of Wrath*", revealing that they recognize that there are two separate reapings being presented here..

That raises an obvious reconsideration. What are we reading about, a battle (against the armies of the adversary forces as the JF&B Commentary explains), or is this scene describing something even more insightful than just that?

Now, keep in mind that it's just this one verse that was used, not the several verses prior to it. It's considered by itself, as though the context had no relevance. (And, we can understand why, when we read them!) Reading what is stated in those previous verses should have rung some cognitive bells, but rote orthodoxy can at times be a potent matrix.

But the clues provided by those particular popular translations gave rise to the realization that we

perhaps have assigned verse 20 to something well outside of what it was intended to reveal to us.

## **Considering the Sickles**

Another clue to the real event is seen in the particular instruments used to accomplish this task, or should we say, tasks. A sickle is rarely if ever pictured as a battle instrument, such as the usual battle instruments: arrow, spear or sword.

But it's the scene itself that ought to evoke major questions. What is the significance of the White Cloud scene and why is it presented here in this context? Secondly, are the two reapings related to one another? The urgings of the angels out of the Temple also strongly suggests a single event, though carried out in two distinct phases.

## **After Group Discussion**

At a recent local Bible Study, we considered the meaning of Revelation 14:20 in light of its explained teaching by the WCG years ago and which is retained by many of its successor groups. What prompted this was my Day 7 message given at the Feast of Tabernacles in 2016 <sup>1</sup> and similar messages given in 2017 in western Canada at the Feast and afterward in Montana and again in Grand Junction. The 'different take' on the meaning of the latter half of Revelation 14 being the 'issue' involved.

This matter has relevance to a number of related longstanding WCG teachings, such as:

1. That the third resurrection involves the 'wicked only'

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<sup>1</sup> Message entitled: "*The Great Transition*" available on the website: [www.ccofgod.org](http://www.ccofgod.org). explains how the millennial age will transition into the Great White Throne Judgment era.

2. That Matthew 25:31-46 does not represent an actual event
3. That Revelation 14:20 is a description of the Battle of Armageddon

It was peripherally accepted that Revelation 14 describes the Harvests of Humanity: The first (firstfruits) harvest, and the second (general) harvest of the rest of humanity at the end of the Age of Man. The idea that verse 20, or its related verses (17-19) describes the actual Battle of Armageddon (the destruction of the forces of the antichrist, as JF&B Commentary alleges) at or near Jerusalem places verse 20 in a time setting 1000+ years prior to the verses just before: (14-16).

### **Bible Versions Weigh-In**

In that the Nelson NKJ version sub-titles 14:14-16 “*Reaping the Earth’s Harvest*”. it apparently sees no basis to suggest this ‘reaping’ involves just an armed force, ignoring all the rest of humanity as do some highly-regarded commentaries. One KJV translation that sub-titles the whole chapter “*The Harvest of the World*”, demonstrates that they also had a better sense of what the chapter presents than did / do some commentaries.

### **A Break from the Running Narrative**

Chapter 14 is recognized as an “inset” chapter, of which the book of Revelation contains many. It is topically comprehensive in that it deals with a single topic: that being the harvests of humanity. (Better said, the latter being the final harvest of all of humanity together). It is comprehensive also in that it presents ALL the spiritual harvests that there ever will be.

Chapter 14 is also topically consecutive, in that there is a consecutive time progression continuing throughout the chapter. It begins with the first harvest and concludes with the great harvest at the Final Sentencing Event.

There are three main segments of the narrative in Chapter 14. They are:

1. Considering the 144,000 who at this point are seen standing with Christ, (v.1-5)
2. Directives to the survivors of the Great Tribulation, announcing their ‘judgment period’ has begun, (v.6-13)

3. A dramatic scene picturing the Final Sentencing of all who have ever lived. (v.14-20)

Verses 1-5 describe the 144,000 standing with Christ on Mount Zion, indicating that the first (firstfruits (v.4)) harvest / resurrection has already occurred. This importantly gives us a time-reference, and a subject identification, by presenting the scene showing that the ‘first harvest’ is now accomplished.

Verses 6-11 then addresses / introduces the next important phase of the harvest process, the introduction to and imposition of true religion upon the survivors of the Great Tribulation, who live on to become the founding generation of the Millennial Age. They are sternly admonished by three angels basically to:

1. Worship the True Creator God,
2. Realize that spiritual Babylon (all of its spawned false religions) has collapsed,
3. Stern prohibition against restoring or practicing any of those former belief systems on pain of eternal death.

These intermediate verses (6-11) maintain subject and timing continuity in that they are harvest related and announce the open a judgment period for all that falls between the First Resurrection and the Final Sentencing. Presently, the Church of God is under a similar ‘judgment’ but it’s an evaluative judgment. (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:17) Not all are under judgment at this time!

### **Reward in the Resurrection**

Verses 12-13 also interject a related statement, explaining that those who live under this ‘dispensation’ (to use a popular Protestantish term) live and die just as people do today, and that their accrued accomplishments toward conversion will not be forgotten after their decease, but will be realized at a determined future date. (That being the ‘Judgment of the Great Day’, spoken of in Jude 6.) (A similar thing as is the case with people who live and die in this present age. Isaiah 65:20 supports this also, showing that people will die in the millennial age, both the ‘child (of God)’ and the ‘wicked’ alike as they approach the century milestone in their lives.)

That date when their accomplishments are to be remembered is then explained in great detail in the remaining verses of this chapter which reveal two phases of the Final Harvest.

### **The White Cloud Harvest**

Verses 14-16 describe the Son of Man sitting on a “White Cloud” reaping His acceptable contingent, harvested from a great mass of humanity there assembled. The instrument used in that event is a sickle, a harvest instrument, NOT any instrument of war. These are ‘taken’ from the wrath to come upon the rest in the next phase.

### **The Grapes of Wrath ‘Harvest’**

Verses 17-20 then address the situation with regard to the ‘rest of humanity’, those who were not harvested in the previous reaping. These are assigned two angels, who ‘reap’ (again employing a sickle) all the rest of unconverted humanity into the Winepress of God’s Wrath. They pay the penalty for their own sins, in that they didn’t accept or avail themselves of Christ’s blood, by having their own blood shed instead! All sin, as a result of this action, will have had its penalty PAID FOR and the experience of physical humanity is then concluded. (“...without the *shedding of blood there is no remission*”. (Heb. 9:22))

This second harvest event occurs at that point in time when “...*the harvest is fully ripe*” (Re.14:15). In other words, at a point in time when no further ripening of humanity’s spiritual condition could reasonably be projected to happen.

### **None Left in the Grave**

The vast number of individuals - who are to be the source of this massive blood flow - include the wicked from all time with those who refused to become converted during the millennial age and those who similarly refused conversion from the second resurrection era. This will be a much greater number of individuals than just the antichrist’s army.

This places this event at that point in time at the very end of the physical human experience, which is consistent with the time-continuity of the chapter. We progress from the first harvest at the Second Coming to the second (great) harvest

which is accomplished at the Final Sentencing Event at the end of the Age of Man.

This explanation, of course, is at odds with that longstanding teaching which we may have thought originated in the WCG. (It didn’t!) It shows that the Final Sentencing of humanity, as will occur at the end of the Age of Man, what is referred to as the “Third Resurrection”, will include BOTH the righteous and the wicked (unconverted), and not just the ‘wicked only’. This is backed-up by what Christ explained in Matthew 25:31-46, which we know as the “sheep-from-the-goats” sentencing event. This passage unequivocally pictures the righteous (sheep) rising up together with the unrighteous (goats), co-mingled among one another, and needing to be segregated from one another before they can be group-assigned to their appropriate destinies. That there is a concurrent co-mingled resurrection is unmistakable!

These two passages (Rev. 14 & Matt. 25) also show that such Sentencing will occur simultaneously, with all together at one event, NOT on an ongoing basis as each person dies.

It is these two passages which show that such a teaching – that the third resurrection involves the wicked only – is and was comprehensively and significantly incorrect.

What facilitated these views was the assignment of Revelation 14:20 to the Battle of Armageddon. If we want to insist that the WCG teaching on this verse was ‘inspired’, then we should take into account that much the same position is offered by Protestant commentaries (such as JF&B) compiled generations before the WCG came to be. Such a position obviously was not unique to the WCG. Some of our ‘eminent scholars’ relied heavily on the established theological positions of Protestantism.

### **The Battle of Armageddon?**

The JF&B Commentary – reaching for an answer from their limited understandings – assigns the source of the blood-flow to the armies of the antichrist. But to identify this event as the Battle of Armageddon (ignoring the fact that the Plains of Megiddo are 55 miles northwest of Jerusalem) we are compelled by that to assign verse 20 to a

point in time more than 1000 years out of context with timeline of the rest of the chapter. This ‘difficulty’ was explained by alleging that the Plains of Megiddo is to be merely the staging area for this battle. Then if the actual battle is to be at Jerusalem, then why not identify it correctly as the Battle of Jerusalem?

This mis-assignment of verse 20 forces us to be distracted away from the real point of the latter third of the chapter, which pictures the final harvest of all of humanity.

### **Is There a “Final Sentencing”?**

A question at this point: Will there be an actual Final Sentencing Event, involving all who ever lived? Main-stream religion effectively disregards the need for such a thing, in that they expect that people are ‘sentenced’ individually at the time of their personal deaths, before being accepted into heaven or assigned to hell.

We should also note that the JF&B and other commentators did not correctly understand what occurs at death. Nor do they correctly understand the resurrections, the millennial Kingdom of God on earth or the Final Judgment, which are set forth as the fundamentals of biblical theology in Hebrews 6:1-2. Their assignment of Revelation 14:20 to the Battle of Armageddon, of necessity, involves only then-currently-living individuals. They do not consider the rest of humanity, then living, who are not included in this ‘army’, nor do they consider what the situation is as it regards all those in their graves from past ages who are to be resurrected to stand with them.

Then, we must ask ourselves, what is the White Cloud event, and why is it presented here in this place? Who would these individuals be? They can’t be the first resurrected Saints, as those are shown in the first verses of the same chapter already made spirit beings, standing WITH Christ. Assigning verse 20, as has been done, to the Battle of Armageddon skewers the time continuity of the chapter and raises a question that cannot logically be explained. That likely explains the lack of mention by ministers of this ‘White Cloud’ scene of the narrative, skipping by that to focus just on what is thought verse 20 pictures.

In addition, we see no resemblance at all to the actions of these two harvesting angels in the actual description of the Battle of Armageddon, which is related rather graphically in Ezekiel 39:9-14.

### **A Harvest, NOT a Battle.**

The White Cloud reaping event is clearly a harvest of those found within God’s good graces! These are the ones who are taken for inclusion in the Family of God, children of Christ and His Bride. (Rev. 22:17).

### **The Great White Throne**

This raises another important question: Is the White Cloud Harvest event one-and-the-same as the Great White Throne Judgment that is introduced in revelation 20:11? In Revelation 20:11, Earth and Heaven spread back before Him that sits on the Throne. We should note also that a resurrection occurs at this point in time: where it presents the ‘small and great’ standing before God, with the ‘books’ being opened to them, suggesting that they weren’t opened to them before this time. (Note that this description does not identify their spiritual condition, only their status in life relative to one another. Reason being, their spiritual status can’t be established at this point, as they never were afforded an opportunity for conversion in their original lifetimes.)

In Revelation 14 the ‘seat’ is a cloud, but in Revelation 20, it is a Throne. These different scenes, with differing ‘seats’, suggests they are not one-and-the-same event! The presence of a cloud in Revelation 14 raises a question with the scene in Revelation 20, where Earth and Heaven flee away. Would that not have included all clouds?

When we realize that the Great White Throne Judgment event is associated with the Second Resurrection Era, and the White Cloud Harvest is associated with the Third Resurrection (which is not an era), then the distinction becomes clear. With the Second Resurrection, only those who hear <sup>2</sup> are raised (suggesting that there are others who do not hear this particular call to arise), but with the Third Resurrection, ALL will hear, excluding none. (These distinctions are explained in the John 5:24-30 narrative, one of the two places that discuss all three resurrections in order.)

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<sup>2</sup> John 5:25

The White Cloud Harvest clearly shows a no-further-work – the redemptive effort having been ‘finished’ – situation, where the Great White Throne before it, after the millennium, indicates an ‘opportunity period’ in which a response and a personal record is established where these raised at this time can have their names added into the Book of Life.

We have traditionally recognized Revelation 20:11-12 as presenting the Second Resurrection Era, while verses 13-14 present the Third Resurrection Sentencing Event. A corresponding passage, found in John 5:24-30, casts a similar light on the multiple resurrections, both presenting all three resurrections in order (same source / same writer). John 5:24 identifies the First Resurrection / verses 25-27 presents the ‘evaluative judgment’ scene of the Second Resurrection / verses 28-30 presents the sentencing phase of Judgment where ALL in the grave will hear and arise, restored to physical life, standing then for Final Sentencing.

We need to appreciate what we are given in these passages, in that they give us a graphic description of the Final Sentencing Event which will end the Age of Man. Redemption will be complete. Why wouldn’t we want to include this in our teachings?

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This discussion was preceded by a presentation of the major events in sequence leading to the end of the Age of Man. Though many incidental events could have been included, for simplicity’s sake, these set the stage for the discussion:

The Great Tribulation: Mt.24:21; Mk.13:19

Two Witnesses prophesy: Rev.11:3-12

The Second Coming: 1Cor.15:51-57; 1Ths.4:16; Rev.11:15-18

The First Resurrection: Rev.20:4-6; Jn.5:24; 1Cor.15:42; Heb.11:35

The Battle of Armageddon: Rev.19:15-21; Rev.16:12-16; Hag.2:22; Eze.39:1-20.

Beast & False Prophet cast into Lake of Fire: Rev.19:20.

The second and final fall of Babylon: Rev.18:1-24; Rev.16:19

Satan being bound for 1000 years: Rev.20:1-3

Kingdoms of Earth taken-over by Christ: Rev.11:15-19; Isa.9:7.

Three Angel’s Messages delivered to Tribulation survivors: Rev.14:6-11

The 1000 year Millennium: Rev.20:4; Rev.5:10

Satan’s short-time post-millennial release: Rev.20:7-10

Satan cast into Lake of Fire: Rev.20:10.

Earth and Heaven spread back: Rev.20:11

The Second Resurrection: Jn.5:25-27; Rev.20:12; (Ezek. 37: pictures Israel only – other nations of the world to experience it similarly).

The Second Resurrection Era: Rev.20:11-12; Lk.11:31-32; Mt.12:41-42; Ezek. 37:

Resurrection to Final Sentencing (Earth Harvested): Rev. 20:13-15; Rev.14:14-20; Matt.25:31-46; Jn.5:29

Death and Hell consumed in the Lake of Fire: Rev.20:14; 1Cor.15:26

Descent of the Father to Earth: 1Cor.15:24; Rev.21:3-4

Elements melt with fervent heat (Day of God): 2Pet.3:10-12

Kingdom is surrendered to the Father: 1Cor.15:28; Ps.110:1

New Heavens and New Earth: 2Pet.3:13; Rev.21:1; Ps.102:26

New Jerusalem descends from Heaven: Rev.21:2 & 9-27

Father and Son dwell with spirit-born humanity on Earth: Rev.21:3; Rev.22:3.

Indeterminate Eternal Age beyond: Isa.9:7

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### **Additional reading from Golden sheaves:**

[www.goldensheaves.org](http://www.goldensheaves.org)

*“The 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Revelation”*

*“No Place for Them!”*

*“Blood to the Horse Bridles”*