

# The Apocalypse

## A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ

by  
J. A. Seiss, D.D.

### Lecture Thirty-Fifth

THE VISION OF THE HARVEST--A HARVEST OF WOE AND JUDGMENT--THE PARTICULARS OF THE DESCRIPTION--THE ANGEL--CRY FOR THE SENDING OF THE SHARP SICKLE--THE REAPING--THE VISION OF THE VINTAGE--THE ANGEL OUT OF THE TEMPLE--THE GREAT CRY FROM THE ALTAR FOR THE SENDING OF THE SHARP--SICKLE--THE GATHERING OF THE VINE OF THE EARTH--THE TREADING OF THE WINE-PRESS.

Rev. 14:14-16 (Revised Text):

*And I saw and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud is seated one like a son of man, having on his head a crown of gold, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a great voice to him who sat on the cloud, Send thy sickle, and reap; because the time to reap is come, because the harvest of the earth is dried [dead ripe]. And he who sat on the cloud cast his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in the heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the altar, he who has power over the fire; and he cried with a great cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Send thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, because her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast [what he gathered] into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden outside of the city, and blood came forth out of the wine-press up to the bits of the horses, for a distance of a thousand six hundred stadia.*

Proclamation having gone forth that the hour of judgment is come, that great Babylon is on the brink of her fall, and that the damnation of every worshiper of the Beast is at hand, we find ourselves face to face with the last great administrations of divine wrath. And the nature and machinery of those administrations is the matter which now comes before us. The more specific details are given in the succeeding chapters, but a general summation is first presented in two visions, the Harvest and the Vintage, which, for awful brevity of narration and expressiveness of imagery, are perhaps the most wonderful in all this wonderful Book. God help us to consider them with reverent and believing hearts!

#### I. THE VISION OF THE HARVEST

Some worthy expositors take this as a foreshowing of the final gathering home of the people of God. That the Scriptures often speak of such a harvest of the good seed of the Savior's sowing there can be no question. John the Baptizer spoke of a time of threshing, when the Lord "will gather the wheat into His garner" (Luke 3:17). The Savior commenced His heavenly instructions with an account of His sowing and husbandry, the harvest of which he said would be "the end of the age," when He "will say to the reapers, Gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13). He also said, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how; for the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because *the harvest is come*" (Mark 4:26-29).

But that this is the harvest foreshown in the text seems to me very improbable, if not entirely out of the question. According to the record up to this point, the great harvest of the good seed has already been reaped. The Living Ones, the Elders, the innumerable multitude, the Man-child, and the 144,000, all of whom are of the good seed, are in heaven before this reaping comes. This reaping is also immediately preceded by the gathering of a great company to glory, which is very unaccountably separated from the harvest of saints directly to follow, if so we are to understand it. Ordinarily, indeed, we would think of harvest as a thing of gladness and blessing. The Scriptures also speak of harvest as a great joy. But it is the same with respect to the vintage, which all accept as here applying exclusively to the punishment of the wicked. Any argument of that character bears as strongly against taking the vintage in the sense of a destruction as the taking of the harvest in that sense.

It must be remembered that evil has its harvest as well as good. There is a harvest of misery and woe--a harvest for the gathering, binding, and burning of the tares as well as for the gathering of the wheat into the garner of heaven. And this harvest of punishment has quite as prominent a place in the Scriptures as the harvest of the gathering home of the saints. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while and the time of her *harvest* shall come" (Jer. 51:33). Here is a harvest of judgment--a harvest of woe to Babylon--and the harvest of the text follows as the direct consequence of the proclamation of great Babylon's fall. Is it not, therefore, most naturally to be taken as the same in both cases?

So again in Joel (3:11-16), looking to the very time and events with which we are here concerned, the word is: "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about. Cause thy mighty ones to come down here, O LORD. Let the heathen be awakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for *the harvest* is ripe. Come, get you down, for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake." Here is both a harvest and a vintage; the one like and part of the other, and both exclusively applicable to the destruction of the wicked. This harvest and this vintage are unquestionably the same described in the text. They belong to the same period of time, they are called for after the same manner and for the same activities; and they respect the same parties, whether as to the bearer of the sickle, the reapers, or the persons whom the reaping touches.

It seems to me impossible, therefore, rightfully to take this harvest as anything else than the final cutting off of the hosts of the wicked, the visitation upon them of the fruits of their sowing. That harvest of which the 144,000 are a first-fruit is a very different matter from this. That is a harvest of gathering to the Lamb on Mount Zion; this is a gathering to the Valley of Jehoshaphat for destruction. Verse 15 is a literal allusion to Isaiah 27:11, which refers to a scene of breaking and burning, and final withdrawal of all mercy. The express mention of the sharpness of the sickle also shows that we have to do with a scene of judgment.

The mention of the cloud likewise points to a work of judgment, for wherever Christ appears on a cloud, the work immediately in hand is always a judgment. The name of the Son of man also points in the same direction; for it is as the Son of man that all judgment has been committed to

Christ (John 5:27). And such a contrast as would make only the vintage expressive of wrath and punishment and the harvest one of a purely gracious character has not a single trait or item of the account to support it.<sup>1</sup> The harvest is simply one phase of a great final visitation upon the apostate world, of which the vintage is another phase. Let us look at it, then, a little more particularly.

*"I saw, and behold a white cloud."* From this we may be quite sure of what is coming. That cloud is the signal of the second advent of the Lord Jesus. When He ascended, "a cloud received him out of their sight;" and at the same time it was told from heaven, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1). The cloud took Him, and the cloud shall bring Him. "They shall see the Son of man coming *in a cloud* with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27). And what was thus predicted, the Apocalyptic seer here beholds fulfilling. That cloud is "*white*," like fire at its intensest heat, like the lightning itself, portending the purest as well as the hottest wrath towards the powers which have usurped the dominion of the earth.

*"On the cloud is seated one like a Son of man."* No one else is here to be thought of but our blessed Lord Jesus. In John's first vision, he saw in the midst of the golden candlesticks "One like to a Son of man," and that One said, "I am the First and the Last, the Living One; and I became dead, and behold I am living for the ages of the ages; and I have the keys of death and of hell" (Rev. 1:17,18). It was the glorified Son of Mary there, and it is the same here. As the Destroyer of the works of the Devil, and as the Judge of the quick and the dead, it belongs to Christ to reap the earth and to clear it of the hellish seed of the great enemy. The man of sin is to be destroyed only by the manifestation of the Savior's presence (2 Thess. 2:8).

*"Having on his head a crown of gold."* Daniel "saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom" (Dan. 7:13,14). It was the same Son of man, in the same cloud, settled in all the regal prerogatives of the same supreme dominion, and manifested for the same purpose of dispossessing and destroying the Beast. The sitting of Christ on the throne of His glory is for the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31,32), and the taking to Him of His great power as the King is to destroy them who corrupt the earth, that He may set up in their place His own glorious dominion (Rev. 11:17,19; 19:16).

And to this end this heaven-crowned King holds "*in his hand a sharp sickle*." There is nowhere such a description or holding forth of the instrument in any harvest scene that refers to the gracious home-bringing of the good. The earth is to be cleared of its *ill* products now, and therefore only a cutting implement is in hand and so conspicuously displayed. The work is one of vengeance and sore judgment; therefore it is "*sharp*."

Thus seated in regal majesty, with His terrible instrument in hand for His appointed judicial work as the Son of man, there goes up to Him a mighty cry to send forth His sickle and reap, claiming that the time of the reaping has come, and that "*the harvest of the earth*" (not *the Church*) is dried to dead ripeness. This cry is from an angel, called "*another angel*," in allusion to those mentioned in verses 6, 8, 9. Some take it as the commission of the Father for Christ to

<sup>1</sup> Mede, Bishop Newton, Lowman, Doddridge, Bengel, Hengstenberg, Faber, Stuart, W. Robinson, William Jones, etc., agree that the *harvest* as well as the *vintage* here denotes a harvest of wrath. Mede well observes, "that the idea of harvest includes three things: the reaping of the corn, the gathering of it in, and the threshing of it; whence it is made a type in Scripture of two direct opposites: of *destruction*, when the reaping and the threshing are considered; of *restitution and salvation* when the ingathering is considered." It is here *the reaping* only.

proceed; but that commission the great Harvester must already have had in order to take the position and equipment in which He here appears. It is not so much a commission as a *prayer*, a plea, an urgency. It does not come from the Father, but from the quarter of the afflictions and abominations calling for vengeance. This angel comes "*out of the temple*"--not "the temple which is in heaven" (as in verse 17, or it would be so stated)--but "the temple" as distinguished from "the temple which is in heaven." Hence, it is the temple on earth, referring either to the material temple rebuilt and reconsecrated, or the spiritual temple as made up of those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, or both; that is, from the very point and place where the Antichrist has enacted his greatest enormities of wickedness. Abel's blood cried unto God from the ground (Gen. 4:10). The cry of Sodom's wickedness came up unto Jehovah (Gen. 28:20,21). In like manner great Babylon's sins came up into heaven (Rev. 18:5). And this cry to the sitter on the cloud comes out of the earthly temple as the cry of righteous indignation at the abominations that are being done against that temple and its God, attesting the over-ripeness of the transgressors, and claiming the due judgment upon them, as the time has come.

The interests of God on earth are all more or less under the guardianship of angels. An angel had charge of the healing in Bethesda's pool, and angels have charge of God's temple too. The Archangel Michael presides over the affairs of the children of Daniel's people, and in the time of the Antichrist it is prophesied that he shall stand up for them (Dan. 12:1). And this angel-cry from the temple to the crowned, seated, and armed King of Judgment, to send His sickle and reap, is plainly connected with the administrations of these angel-helpers against oppression and oppressors. It shows us that when the time of judgment comes to the full, everything will be in a condition of one grand outcry for speedy vengeance. Iniquity will then have come to the full, to a thorough drying out of every modifying particle of immaturity, giving mighty argument for the loud outcry of every holy being for judgment to strike.

And as the cry is, the answer comes. "*He who sat on the cloud cast his sickle (επι) on, or against, the earth, AND THE EARTH WAS REAPED.*" Tremendous words! What an experience for the race of man is bound up in their awful brevity! What plagues descend with that sharp sickle! What a crash comes with its alighting upon a world now dead ripe for final judgment! What powers and systems fall before it! What sores and agonies it brings to them who bear the mark of the Beast and worship his image! What pestilential putrescences it strikes into the sea whence that Beast rises, and into the rivers and fountains whence his subjects drink! What new blazes of consuming heat it gives to the sun! What torment it inflicts upon the throne of the Beast, and darkness and anguish upon his kingdom! What cries, and thunders, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and hailstorms, and trembling of nations, and anxieties of men it arouses into activity! How does every upas [poisonous?] growth give way before the sharp edge of that terrible sickle!

Just how much of this great Harvest pertains to the reaping, as distinguished from the vintage, we are not fully informed; but it cuts from their foundations all the main sinews of the Antichrist. It includes all the disasters that come from the pouring out of the great bowls of wrath. It brings down great Babylon with a crash that fills the world with lamentations and horror. It strips the great Adulteress of all her pride and queenliness, and fills here with torment, and sorrow, and burning. It sinks all the riches and glories of a godless world into one common ruin, never to be brought up again. And of the two phases of those ministrations of the wrath of God which are to clear this planet of the products and representatives of rebellion against His Throne, this is one, and perhaps the most general and far-reaching of the two. When the seer says "*the earth was reaped,*" he tells of an amount of cutting down, divesture, and

sorrowful sweeping away forever which the Scriptures describe as the termination of the whole present order of things; for "the Harvest is the end of the world" (Matt. 13:39). But it is nevertheless only one phase of the destruction which shall then be wrought. After the grain-harvest comes the grape-harvest. Accordingly we have

## II. THE VISION OF THE VINTAGE.

"Another angel" appears. He is "another" as a comer forth from the temple, and he is an "angel" with reference to his *mission*, not with reference to his nature; for this angel is really the same as the Sitter on the white cloud. As to office, Christ is often represented as an angel, both in this Book and elsewhere. His very name, *Christ*, or *Messiah*, implies as much. He is the One sent and appointed of the Father. In the Old Testament He is continually spoken of as the Jehovah-angel. In chapters 10 and 20 He appears as an angel. And in the very nature of the case we must here understand the Lord Himself, though in the character of an angel. The two images of the Harvest and the Vintage are too closely inter-connected for us to assign one to Christ and the other to a created angel. The sharp sickle in the one is the same as in the other. The work is so great, and belongs so essentially to the mission and prerogatives of Christ, that it would trench upon the honor and appointment of Him to whom the Father has committed all judgment to refer it to a single ordinary angel. The destruction wrought is unquestionably the same which is more particularly described in the latter part of chapter 19; but there it is specifically assigned to the Lord Jesus himself. And so in Isaiah 63, the treader of the wine-press, corresponding to the picture here given, is none other than Christ. We would therefore involve ourselves in too many difficulties not to admit that this *another messenger* is the same as the Sitter on the cloud.

He comes "*out of the temple which is in heaven;*" the temple which is in heaven as distinguished from the temple which is on earth. "The holy places made with hands are the figures of the true," fashioned after "the patterns of things in the heavens" (Heb. 10:23,24). It is in the heavenly temple that Christ now is, there appearing in the presence of God for us as our great High Priest; and out from thence He is to come when He comes the second time (Heb. 10:24-28). We have here reached the time appointed for the destroying of them who corrupt the earth. Hence the great commissioned One appears. He leaves His place in the temple which is in heaven, and stands ready with sharp sickle in hand for the work assigned. Where he stands is not said, but the silence naturally carries us back to the white cloud.

Appearing with the sharp sickle, a great cry goes up to Him: "*Send thy sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, because her grapes are fully ripe.*" He who makes this cry is an angel who comes "*out of the altar,*" of course the earthly altar (or it would be otherwise stated as in the preceding verse). This angel is "he who has power over the fire." The altar-fire is the fire of divine justice; the fire which ever burns against sin and sinners; the fire which spares no victim however innocent when in the place and stead of transgressors; the fire which ever cries out with mighty voice for the burning up of all rebels against God's righteous authority. There is a living spirit in charge of it, and that spirit calls for vengeance against the Antichrist. The grapes in this case are the grapes of Sodom, "*sour grapes,*" the clusters of wickedness ripened to the full. Such iniquities, blasphemies, tyrannies and systematic abominations as the Antichrist develops have no parallel on earth.

In these all the depravities head up to their maturity. In these appears the consummation or final ripeness of the whole earth-growth and mystery of evil. The angel of the altar-fires is never so outraged as by this perfected vintage of earth's wickedness. Hence the loud and clamorous

outcry for vengeance upon these clusters. The "grapes of gall" are "ripe." The time for cutting them has come. The Messenger with the sharp instrument is present. And the spirit of the justice-fires cries for the sickle to come in all its whetted sharpness. From under that altar had gone forth the plaint of murdered saints: "Until when, Thou Master, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood from them that dwell on the earth" (Rev. 6:10). But now the very angel of the altar adds his mighty voice, and there can be no more delay.

*"And the Angel cast His sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth."* The vine of the earth is that which stands over against "the vine of heaven." The true vine is Christ, and Christians are the branches. "The vine of the earth" is Antichrist, and its branches are his adherents and followers. The saints are not of the earth, but born from above; these are of the earth, born from the wisdom that is from below--the seed of the Devil's sowing--the children of the wicked one. The grapes of this vine of the earth are the matured children of wickedness, and "their wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps" (Deut. 32:32,33). They have by this time gone as far as, in the nature of things, they can go. They are "*fully ripe.*" Hence the sharp sickle of the great judgment strikes, and the vine of the earth is cut, and its clusters gathered into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

A more particular description of this gathering of the hosts of Antichrist into the wine-press, and the treading of it by the King of kings and Lord of lords, is given in the latter part of chapters 16 and 19. It is in reality a war scene, the gathering of armies, the bringing together of the kings of the earth and of the whole world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. It is for military purposes that they come--seduced, drawn, and impelled by unclean spirits that issue out of the mouth of the Dragon, out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the False Prophet. The region of their assemblage is the Holy Land.

The various names denotive of the locality all circle around Jerusalem. "*Armageddon*" is the place named in the Apocalypse, which is the mount or city of Megiddo, or the great Esdraelon plain, "the Valley of Megiddo." That has ever been one of God's great battlegrounds for the judging of the armies of the wicked. There Jabin's hosts, with their 900 chariots of iron, were utterly overwhelmed by Jehovah's special interference. There the Midianites, and Amalekites, and children of the East were routed before Gideon's 300 men with pitchers and lamps. There Samson triumphed with his crude instrument over the might of the Philistines. There the ruddy son of Jesse met and slew the great Goliath, and opened a breach of destruction upon those who defied Israel's God. And it is but fitting that here should be the seat of the wine-press for the final crushing out of the mightier Jabin and Goliath of the last evil days. "*The Valley of Jehoshaphat*" is named by Joel as the place which, geographically taken, denotes the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, or else that part of Idumea where, by the special aid of heaven, Jehoshaphat put down the rebellion of the Edomites.

"*Bozrah*" is named by Isaiah as the place where the mighty Savior treads the wine-press alone and stains all His raiment with the blood of His foes (Is. 34:6-8; 63:1-6). The probabilities are that all these particular localities are included, and that a line of encamped forces shall extend from Bozrah on the southeast to Megiddo on the northwest. And singularly enough, this would measure exactly 1600 *stadia*, the distance named in the text as that over which the blood from this great wine-press of Jehovah's anger flows. This same would also best realize Habakkuk's vision of the same scene, where he beheld, and "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of

His power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood and measured the earth; He beheld and drove asunder the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered. The perpetual hills did bow. . . .Thou did march through the land in indignation; thou did thresh the heathen in anger. Thou went forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed. Thou struck the head out of the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck" (Hab. 3:3-6, 12-16).

The march of the terrific indignation of God on this occasion would, therefore, seem to be from the Sinaitic hills, crashing through Idumea, thundering by the walls of the holy city, and thence on to the great field of Esdraelon, where the chief stress of the awful pressure falls. Along this line will the main bodies of these assembled nations lie--eager, determined, and confident in the schemes that occupy them, not knowing that they are already in the great wine-press of the wrath of God. "Multitudes, multitudes," armies on armies, hosts on hosts, are there. The Beast is there; the False Prophet is there; and the kings, captains, mighty men, and drilled legions of all the nations in league with Antichrist are there; all gathered into one great pen of slaughter.

*"And the wine-press was trodden."* What strength have grapes against the weight and power of a man when he comes to set his feet upon them? And the riper they are, the more helpless. They must needs be crushed, their existence destroyed, their life-blood poured out. And so with these "fully ripe" clusters now gathered into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. No weapon they can raise and no resistance they can make can avail them. The beast was hailed as the Invincible, but his invincibility is nothing now. The False Prophet could make fire come down from heaven in the presence of men, but he can command no fires to withstand the lightnings of the angry and inexorable Judge. The heel of Omnipotence is upon them, and they can only break and sink beneath it.

Long ago had Jehovah spoken of this time and said: "Let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be loosed, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a fallen fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven; behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment. . . . For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion" (Is. 34:1-5, 8). But men would not hear, neither believe; therefore, the sword of the Lord is filled with their blood. He comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, treading the wine-press alone, treading them down in His anger, trampling them in His fury, and staining all His raiment with their blood. "When they say 'Peace and safety', then sudden destruction comes upon them, and they cannot escape."

It is *"outside of the city"* that this treading of the wine-press takes place. "The city," mentioned thus absolutely with no other note of identification, can be none other than *"the holy city"*, the city of Jerusalem. The fact that this great judgment does not come within its gates is evidence of its being *"the holy city,"* the place owned of God, the memorial of His salvation in the time of His fierce anger. Amid all the consuming wrath, the judgment stays outside the walls of Jerusalem. Within its holy enclosure is safety. And by some gracious interposition of Heaven, none of the doomed hosts of Antichrist are at this time inside it. Has it become the possession of the 144,000 whom we saw on Mount Zion? Has the Lamb by this time cleansed it with judgment as in

Ezekiel's vision (chapter 9)? Has He already consecrated and appropriated it as the intended metropolis of the new kingdom? Has His wonder-working power come forth in such force, in connection with the glorification of the 144,000, as then already to have started there an administration expelling the dominion of the Beast?

Joel says that Jehovah shall then utter His voice with power from Jerusalem (Joel 3:17). Has it not then already become the seat of His throne? If so, this would explain why all these armies of the nations are there. Even apart from this, the implication is clear that these forces are gathered for war against the holy city and against the Lamb. In the ordinary course of things, there would be nothing in Jerusalem requiring or occasioning such a tremendous gathering of the kings and armies of the world. If, however, some visible presence of the heavenly kingdom about to take possession of the earth has there begun to display and assert itself, or if divine majesty, miracle and power have by this time taken hold introducing a new rule and order, exhibiting the presence of the eternal reign of the Son of man, and manifesting the potencies of the world to come, then there is ample call and occasion for this mustering of all the powers of earth and hell. Determined to crush it out, "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed" (Ps. 2:2).

A power which could thus cleanse and clear the temple and city of everything contrary to God, and hold at bay all attempts of the unsanctified to enter, would be a thing wholly intolerable to Antichrist. He who claims to be the only rightful object of human adoration could not endure the presence of such temerity against his majesty. If strength in earth and hell exists to subdue and crush it, that strength must be called forth. And thus these kings and nations, with their armies, are convened. It is meant to make sure of success. They fill the land with their collected forces. They mass themselves in line from Bozrah to Megiddo. They compass about the holy city. But into it they dare not enter. And when the wine-press of their destruction is trodden, it is "trodden *outside of the city.*" Before they are able to strike a blow, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" is upon them in all the terribleness of His great exterminating judgment.

*"And blood came forth out of the wine-press up to the bits of the horses for a distance of 1600 stadia!"* A river of human blood 160 miles in length and up to the bridles of the horses in depth tells an awful story. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, so great was the bloodshed that Josephus says the whole city ran down with the blood to such a degree that the fires of many of the houses were quenched by it. When Sylla took Athens, Plutarch says the blood that was shed in the marketplace alone covered all the ceramicus as far as Dipylus, and some testify that it ran through the gates and overflowed the suburbs. Nor are we to think of any exaggeration or hyperbole in the very definite description of what John here saw as the consequence of the treading of this wine-press. It is *"the great wine-press of the wrath of God."* It is the last great consummate act of destruction which is to end this present world.

The masses on whom it is executed are "the kings of the earth and of the whole world, and their armies" (Rev. 16:14; 19:19), stationed in a line from Bozrah in Edom to Esdraelon in Galilee. They are to be utterly consumed so as to "leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1). It is "the great and dreadful day of the LORD" about which all the prophets of all the ages have prophesied. It is the result of the resentment and anger of Him who is Faithful and True, who in righteousness does judge and make war, whose eyes are as fire, on whose head are the many crowns, whom all the armies of Heaven follow upon white horses, out of whose mouth goes a sharp sword, and who "treads the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." And it must needs be all that John here states, a belt of blood from Bozrah to Esdraelon up to the

horses' bridles in depth! Isaiah says: "The land shall be drunk with blood, and its dust made fat with fatness, for it is the day of Jehovah's vengeance, the year of recompenses for the controversy against Zion" (Is. 34:7,8).

Ah, yes. Men in their unbelief may laugh at the Almighty's threatenings. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, their hearts may be fully set in them to do evil. And the proud rationalism of many may persuade them that God is too good and merciful ever to fulfill in any literal sense these sanguinary comminations. But it will be no laughing matter then, no mystic fancy, no meaningless orientalism of the age of extravagant speech. God has set His own eternal seal to it and said: "Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read: no one of these things shall fail" (Is. 34:16). And yet people make light of it, and turn away to their sins and follies as if it were all nothing!

Child of Adam, hear and be admonished now while salvation is so freely offered. Be not deceived, for God is not mocked. Those impieties of yours, those guilty sports and gayeties will yet have to be confronted before the judgment seat. Those gatherings in the gaming-halls and taverns of Satan, those sneers and witty jests at sacred things, those fiery lusts burning on the altars of carnal pleasure are all written down in the account books of eternity, to be brought forth in the great day. That wicked profaning of your Maker's name, that broken pledge, that unfulfilled vow to God and man, that scene of riot, that hidden going to the haunts of the profligate, all are noted for future settlement. The blood of wronged and murdered innocence will not always cry in vain. The wail of trampled helplessness will not be unheard forever. The mother who destroyed her babe, the clerk who dipped too deep in his employer's till, the enemy who set fire to his neighbor's goods or sought to blacken his good name, the boy who cursed his parents in secret, the spiteful slanderer and persecutor of God's ministers and people, and every despiser and neglecter of the great salvation must each answer at the tribunal of eternal justice. And if clean repentance out of these and all such sins be not speedy and complete, there is no hope or mercy more. Before us stands the Angel with the sharp sickle for all the enemies of God, and beside Him is the great wine-press of destruction. Think, O man, O woman, how would you fare were he this night to strike? If you are not *in the city*, in reconciliation with the King, then know that outside is only death and damnation, and nothing can make it different.