



ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν. 20 καὶ ἐπατήθη ἡ ληνὸς ἐξωθεν τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα ἐκ τῆς ληνοῦ ἄχρι τῶν χαλινῶν τῶν ἵππων ἀπὸ σταδίων χιλίων ἑξακοσίων.

Weinpresse, die den Zorn Gottes bedeutet. 20 Außerhalb der Stadt wurden sie in der Presse ausgedrückt. Da kam ein Blutstrom aus der Weinpresse, der stieg so hoch, dass er den Pferden bis an die Zügel reichte, und floss sechzehnhundert Wegmaße weit.

was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.

about 180 miles long and as high as a horse's bridle.

## INTRODUCTION

The command to write the beatitude of blessing in verse thirteen triggers the next vision (Καὶ εἶδον) of John and this one is big! It's harvest day judgment upon the earth. In apocalyptic visionary thinking one can skip around topics at will. And John clearly does that here primarily by skipping over the seven bowls of wrath to center in primarily on final judgment, here pictured as a giant harvest.

Both the good (v. 16) and the evil (v. 19) are harvested out of the earth, with the emphasis upon the evil then being cast into "the great wine press of the wrath of God" (v. 19). This twofold harvest raises one of the interpretive issues in the passage. The language of vv. 14-16 seems to favor a grain harvest while that of 17-20 is clearly of a grape harvest. Clearly inside the Bible generally and especially inside Revelation a grape harvest symbolizes divine wrath upon evil. But the grain harvest image generally represents a collecting of the saints of God before the wrath of God is poured out on evil.

Here that day of harvest is pictured as located outside a city and it results in the flow of blood as deep as a 'horse's bridle' for a distance of two hundred miles out in all directions. What a grizzly sight! In 20:11-15, the image of divine judgment shifts from a grape harvest to a gigantic white throne before which all the dead are brought in order to be sentenced to eternity -- either damnation or eternal bliss, with the latter being described in detail in the following two chapters. So at least Revelation ends on a positive note.

The imagery of Christ in chapter fourteen shifts from the Lamb having gathered 144,000 believers on Mount Zion (vv. 1-5) to "one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand" seated upon a white cloud in the sky (v. 14). Yet this Son of Man image may not be referring to Christ, given some of the signals in the text, which we will examine below. Why John possibly portrays Christ in this section in such dramatically different ways will merit careful analysis. Comparing these two images to the others presented in Revelation can be illuminating for understanding the apostle's message.

### 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

First, we need to examine the background issues that play an important role in the interpretive process.

#### Historical Aspects:

The historical aspects somewhat shift roles in this passage with the Internal aspect of ancient harvest days becoming an important background issue, while the Transmission History of the passage poses fewer text variations than usual.

**External History.** The editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 27th rev. ed.) considered only one place with variations of wording to be of enough importance to list in the Text Apparatus of the printed Greek New Testament.

**14.18 ἄγγελος [ἐξῆλθεν] ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου,** angel [came out] from the altar. The basic issue is both the presence or absence of the verb ἐξῆλθεν, as well as its position in the sentence.<sup>1</sup> As noted, it has little real impact on the translation since the idea of 'coming out' is implicit to the thought flow.<sup>2</sup> The uncertainty of its



<sup>1</sup>{C} ἄγγελος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ὁ C 2329 i<sup>th</sup> vg<sup>cl</sup> arm (eth) Beatus // ἄγγελος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου κ (051 1854 ἐξῆλθεν after θυσιαστηρίου) 205 209 1006 Byz [P 046] cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> Andrew // ἄγγελος ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ὁ A it<sup>ar, g16</sup> vg<sup>ww, st</sup> // ἄγγελος ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου P<sup>47</sup> 1611 2053 // ἄγγελος Primasius [Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>2</sup>“The variant reading is not very significant for translation since even if the shorter reading is followed, it may be natural or necessary to make the verb “came out” explicit in translation. On the one hand, it can be argued that the verb ἐξῆλθεν was inserted by copyists from v. 17, sometimes after ἄγγελος and sometimes after θυσιαστηρίου. On the other hand, repetition is characteristic of the author of the Apocalypse, and the absence of the verb in some witnesses may be due to either accidental omission or deliberate omission by copyists who considered it unnecessary in view of its presence in the preceding verse. On the basis of the manuscript evidence, ἐξῆλθεν is included in the text, but because of these conflicting considerations, it is enclosed in brackets to indicate uncertainty regarding the original text.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Page 755]

presence in the original, as indicated by the (C) rating, leads to placing it in brackets, [ἐξήλθεν], as a reflection of the division of evidence across the possibilities.

Of course, across the broad spectrum of several thousand manuscripts containing the passage more than just one place with variations surface in the hand copied texts. In the Text Apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (N-A 27th rev ed) some twenty places are listed which cover the majority of these manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> Careful analysis reflects either carelessness in Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 542.]



<sup>3</sup>**Offenbarung 14,14**

- \* -ος -ος (1854) M<sup>A</sup> (alternative spelling for καθήμενον ὁμοιον)
  - | -ος -ον P<sup>47</sup>
- \* υιω P<sup>47</sup> C 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053 M<sup>A</sup> lat (alternative spelling for υιόν)
  - | υιος 1854 pc
  - | txt x A (P) 046(\*). 2329 M<sup>K</sup> vg<sup>mss</sup>; Bea
- \* εχοντα P<sup>47</sup> n\* 1006. 1841. 2053. (2329) al (alternative spelling for ἔχων)
- \* την -ην A 1611. 1854 al (alternative spelling for τῆς κεφαλῆς)

**Offenbarung 14,15**

- \* ουρανου 051. 2053 M<sup>A</sup> (ναοῦ is replaced)
- \* αυτου x pc (αὐτοῦ is added after ναοῦ)
- \* ανακρ. P<sup>47</sup>; Prim (κράζων is replaced)
- \*<sup>1</sup> εζηλθ. P<sup>47</sup> (ἦλθεν is replaced)
- \* σου η ω. θερισαι 051 M<sup>A</sup> (ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι is replaced)

Bea

- | η ω. του θερισμου x pc
- | ο θερισμος P<sup>47</sup>
- | txt A C P 1611 M<sup>K</sup> (vg) sy

**Offenbarung 14,16**

- \* την -λην C 051. 1006. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2329. 2344 M<sup>A</sup> (alternative spellings for τῆς νεφέλης)
  - | τη -λη M<sup>K</sup>
  - | txt x A 1611 pc

**Offenbarung 14,17**

- \* αυτου P<sup>47</sup> pc (τοῦ is replaced)
- \* C (τῶ is omitted)

**Offenbarung 14,18**

- \* P<sup>47</sup> A 1611. 2053 pc lat (ἐξήλθεν is omitted)
  - | txt x C (° 051. 1854) M h vg<sup>cl</sup> sy co
- \*<sup>1</sup> P<sup>47</sup> x 051 M (ὁ is omitted)
  - | txt A C 2329
- \* κραγη P<sup>47</sup> C 051 M (φωνῆ is replaced)
  - | txt x A 046. 1006. 1841. 2053 pc latt
- \* -σεν η -λη της γης M<sup>K</sup> (alternative spelling for ἤκμασαν αἱ σταφυλαὶ αὐτῆς.)

**Offenbarung 14,19**

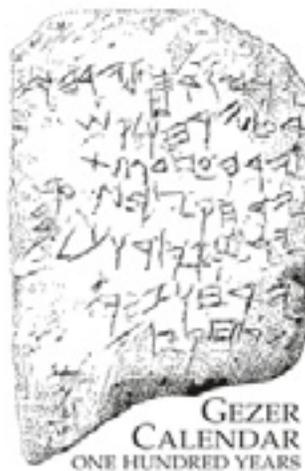
- \* επι τ. γ. (της γης x) P<sup>47</sup> x 1611 pc (εἰς τὴν γῆν is replaced)
- \* την μεγαλην x 1006. 1841. 1854. 2053 al gig sy<sup>ph,hmg</sup> (τὸν μέγαν is replaced)
  - | του μεγαλου P<sup>47</sup> 1611 pc sy<sup>h</sup>

copying or efforts at stylistic improvement. No meaning of the text is altered by the variations.

Thus we can exegete the adopted reading of the text in full confidence that it is the most likely original reading.

**Internal History.** The image of a harvest is central to this passage. A better understanding of this idea in John's world can be helpful to the exegesis of the passage.

Harvesting (ingathering) is the culmination of the agricultural cycle followed immediately by the processing of crops and fruit into foodstuffs such as grain, wine, oil, and dried fruit. In a good year the season of ingathering was time for merrymaking (Judg 9:27; Isa 9:3; 16:9–10; Ps 126:5). A good agricultural year would have been one in which one ingathering activity did not end before another started (Amos 9:13).<sup>4</sup>



GEZER CALENDAR	
Line 1	ירחו אסף ירחו 2 THRU TWO MONTHS OF HARVEST THRU MONTHS OF PLANT.
Line 2	רע ירחו לקש THRU TWO MONTHS OF EAR PLANTING
Line 3	ירח עמד פשת A MONTH OF HOUSING FLAX
Line 4	ירח קצר שערם A MONTH OF BARLEY HARVEST
Line 5	ירח קצר וכל A MONTH OF HARVEST AND FEASTING
Line 6	ירחו זמר THRU MONTHS OF VINYL PRUNING
Line 7	ירח קץ A MONTH OF SUMMER FRUIT
עבר	אביה

In the Ancient Near East, some five periods of harvesting are listed in the [Gezer calendar](#).<sup>5</sup> Our text

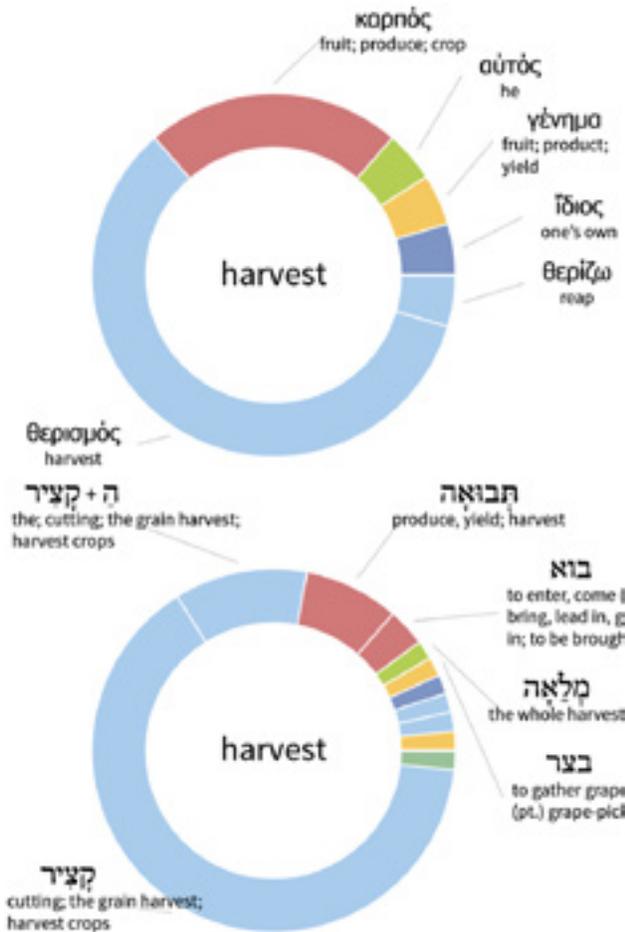
**Offenbarung 14,20**

- \* εζω x 051. 1854 M<sup>A</sup> (ἔζωθεν is replaced)
- \* εζ. εζ 2036 (ἔξακοσίων is replaced)
  - | διακοσιων x\* pc sy<sup>ph</sup>
  - | πεντακοσ- gig

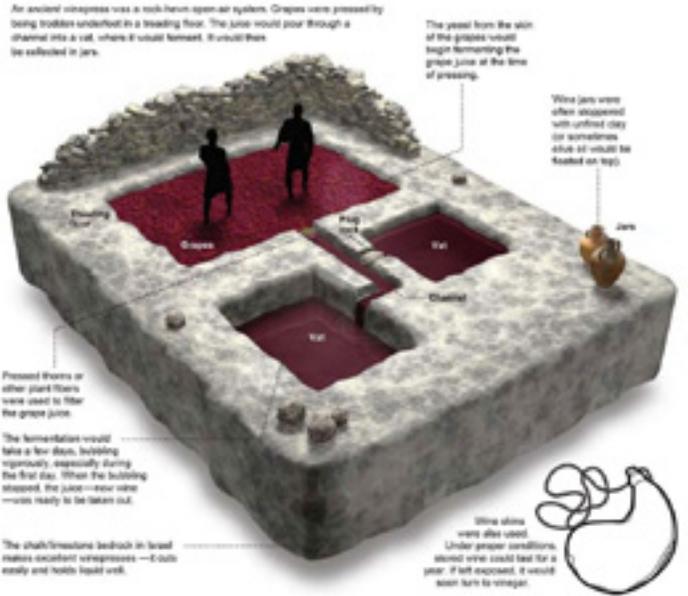
[Eberhard Nestle et al., Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 661–662.]

<sup>4</sup>Oded Borowski, “Harvests, Harvesting,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 63.

<sup>5</sup>“The Gezer calendar, an ancient record of agricultural activities, designates five periods totaling seven months for ingathering activities, beginning with the harvesting of cereals. The first period, *yrh qsr š’rym* (a month of harvesting barley), is named in the Bible *qēšîr šē’orîm* (Ruth 2:23) and lasted from the spring equinox in mid-March to mid-April. This was followed by *yrh qsr wkl* (a month of harvesting [wheat] and measuring [grain for taxes]) ending at the autumnal equinox in mid-May and mentioned in the Bible as *qēšîr hittîm* (Gen 30:14; Judg 15:1). The time of cereal harvesting, referred to in the Bible as *qāšîr* (Gen 8:22; Exod 34:21), opened with the festival of *pesah/masšôt* (Passover/Unleavened Bread) and ended with the festival of *šābu’ôt* (Weeks). These two periods of harvesting cereals were followed by *dayîš* (Lev 26:5),



## A Winepress in Ancient Israel



touches upon two of those: the grain harvest of barley in mid-March to mid-April or of wheat in May, and the grape harvest in mid-May to mid-July. One must remember these are approximations and are regionally specific with variations across the middle east and the northern Mediterranean coastal areas. But in the northern Mediterranean region the focus would have been on a grape harvest that was followed into mid-August with an olive harvest. Most of the wheat and barley for the Roman world of the first century was grown either in Egypt (for the Italian peninsula) or in Galilee for the rest of the eastern Mediterranean world. But [farms across the northern Mediterranean](#) did provide grains, wines, olive oils etc. for the local populations as well. The province of Asia was a significant agricultural region in that part of the empire, but wine and olives dominated the agriculture of this region.

As the charts reflect, different sets of terms apply to a grain harvest and to a grape harvest. In vv. 14-16, θερίζω with a δρέπανον alludes to harvesting grain with a sickle. But in vv. 17-20, τρυγάω with a δρέπανον alludes to harvesting grapes with a sickle. One should note that the δρέπανον, *sickle*, in the ancient world functioned much like a Costa Rica machete. They came in many sizes and shapes and were used for a wide range of actions.<sup>6</sup> The one requirement of the Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 63–64.]

<sup>6</sup>“The term δρέπανον can refer to various types of curved knives (Jos. J. W. 3.95, 225), including a scythe or sickle (LXX Deut 16:9; 23:25), a pruning knife (LXX Mic 4:3; Joel 3:10 [MT 4:10]; Isa 2:4), a vintager’s knife, or a scimitar (LSJ, 449). Bentzen (VT 1 [1951] 216–17) argues that the curved scimitar was a symbol of royalty, like the crown in Babylonia, Egypt, and Phoenicia, that the Son of man in this verse is being portrayed as a king, and

threshing and winnowing to separate the grain from the chaff.

“Cereals were harvested during a hot period—an activity well described in Ruth 2. The ripe crops were either pulled out whole by hand or cut with a sickle (*maggāl* [Jer 50:16; Joel 4:13] or *hermēs* [Deut 16:9; 23:26—Eng 23:25]). At times, only the top of the stalk was cut, leaving the rest of the plant standing in the field for grazing animals. At other times, when straw was needed, more of the stalk was cut. Sickles were made either of segments of sharp flint chips attached with some adhesive to a bone or wooden frame or were made of metal (bronze, iron) with a wooden handle. The stalks were bound into sheaves and transported to the threshing floor for threshing and winnowing. From there the clean grain was transferred for storage in specially constructed pits or other facilities where it was stored in jars.

“According to the Gezer calendar the two periods of cereal harvest were followed by a third period, *yrhw zmr* (two months of grape harvesting [and wine making]), from mid-May to mid-July, mentioned in the Bible as *bāsîr* (Lev 26:5; Isa 24:13). The fourth period in the Gezer calendar, *yrh qš* (a month of [ingathering] summer fruit), extended into August and is referred to simply as *qayis* in the Bible (Jer 40:10, 12; Amos 8:1–2). This was followed by *yrhw ’sp* (two months of ingathering [olives and pressing oil]), referred to as *’āsîp* in the Bible (Exod 23:16; 34:22). If it is correct that the Gezer calendar is a product of the N, then this period lasted there for two months, while in Judah it lasted only one month. The agricultural year closed with the autumn festival of *’āsîp/sukkôt* (Booths, or Tabernacles).”

[Oded Borowski, “Harvests, Harvesting,” ed. David Noel

δρέπανον in both harvests was that they must be ὀξύς, -εἶα, -ύ, sharp.

Due to the hot climate, particularly in the middle east, the wine presses were usually located close to the vineyards and the wine making process began immediately at harvest time.<sup>7</sup>

The symbolical use of these two harvests inside that the LXX reading of Zech 5:1 (discussed above) was based on ancient Near Eastern royal ideology. According to Vit. Proph. 22.11, the term can also be used of an axehead. The Hebrew term מגל *maggāl* in Jer 50:16 and Joel 3:13(MT: 4:13) is more narrow in meaning, but it can include both a scythe or sickle and a vintager's knife (Galling, *BibReal*, 475–76). [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 844.]

<sup>7</sup>“The cultivation of vineyards served as a way to diversify crops. For instance, in Deut 8:8 vines are being cultivated alongside grain, olive trees, fruit trees, and honey. Wine soon became a desired agricultural product. This liquid resource was easily stored, could be exchanged for other products, and contributed to the economic stability of the farmers. But even more significant, the production of wine indicates a significant shift in the human control of food, moving beyond food as mere sustenance, to food that exists to be enjoyed. In the parable of the Trees Who Wanted to Have a King, the vine's refusal to be king refers to this latter aspect when it says: ‘Shall I stop producing my wine that cheers gods and mortals?’ (Judg 9:13).

“The production of wine required only two elements: grapes and yeast. The grapes were harvested in the fall at the height of ripening, at which time the water/sugar ratio (70 to 80 percent water, 10 to 25 percent sugar) would be optimal for producing the most wine. If harvested too early, the grapes would be smaller and sour (compare the image of the sour grapes in Ezek 18:2).

“A natural amount of yeast on the grape skins began to work as soon as the grapes were crushed-typically by being trodden in WINE VATs or presses (see Jesus' parable of the Wicked Tenants [Matt 21:33; compare Rev 14:18–20; 19:15]). Considering the warm climate and this natural fermentation process, unfermented grape juice was most likely rare in ancient Israel. The fermentation process reached its peak about six to twelve hours after the treading of the grapes and then proceeded at a slower rate for another two to five days. The wine was transferred into jars for storage where the fermentation process would be completed. At this point, it was important to allow the carbon dioxide to escape, but at the same time prevent exposure to air.

“There was a definite social aspect to the grape harvest and the ensuing production of wine. The event of picking and treading grapes constituted a celebratory occasion to which friends and family were invited to share in the labor, as well as to enjoy the forthcoming wine. Despite wine producers' best efforts to prevent prolonged contact with air (which converted wine into VINEGAR), toward the end of the agricultural year, wine may either have become scarce or turned sour. The grape harvest and new wine that it yielded was thus greatly anticipated. This joyous expectation is evident in the numerous references to shouts of joy, song, and dancing women (Judg 21:21; compare also texts like Isa 16:10 and Jer 48:33 that refer to the absence of joy, gladness, and song when the grape harvest, due to enemy attacks, did not take place).”

[L. Juliana Claassens, “Wine,” ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 859.]

the Bible<sup>8</sup> generally matches a somewhat similar use in the surrounding literature.<sup>9</sup> Typically the grain harvest signals a positive action of God in collecting His people out of their situation on earth, while the grape harvest usually signals the wrath of God in judgment upon evil by people.<sup>10</sup> Clearly the image of harvest day is closely linked to the return of Jesus in the gospels: Mt. 13:39, 41, 49; 24:31; Mk. 13:27.

Although the image is common throughout the New Testament with a wide variety of meanings, only here in Revelation is it used in regard to divine judgment at the end of time. The idea of divine judgment is presented in Revelation more often through both other images and in direct depiction. But the role of angels in enforcing divine judgment is the most noticeable aspect of these depictions across the varied presentations.

### Literary Aspects:

As is so often the case in Revelation the literary aspects place a critically important role in understanding this passage.

**Genre:** The broad genre of apocalyptic vision continues in vv. 14–20. It is introduced by John's standard phrase Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ, *And I saw and behold* (v. 14). The sometimes random gathering up of events etc. that would be separated out on a historical time line but in apocalyptic vision are often bunched together as a unified apocalyptic event can be confusing to the reader. This seems to be the primary approach of John here in vv. 14–20. Its clear unitary nature as a single unit of text has led to a wide variety of understandings.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>“Harvest, the reaping of the ripened agricultural produce of the land, is a rich biblical motif with a wide range of theological and symbolic connotations. But it is never merely agricultural, for the ancient Israelites embraced a holistic worldview, in which the Creator God, the covenant people and the land formed one inter-related framework. This is reflected in the overarching concept of the covenant, in both creation and redemption, and underlies the biblical theme of the harvest.” [T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).]

<sup>9</sup>“The Bible demonstrates that almost every aspect of agricultural work assumed a figurative meaning in the minds of ancient speakers and writers (e.g., Isa. 21:10; Amos 9:13; Mic. 4:12–13; Matt. 9:37–38; 13:3–32; Luke 9:62; 1 Cor. 9:9–11; Gal. 6:7; Rev. 14:14–20).” [Gerald L. Mattingly, “Farming,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated) (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 284.]

<sup>10</sup>“Harvest became a natural metaphor for divine action at the judgment, whether in a negative (e.g., Jer 51:33; Matt 13:39–42; Rev 14:15–16; 4 Ezra 4:28–32, 35) or a positive sense (Matt 9:37–38; Rom 1:13; Jas 3:18).” [James C. Vanderkam, “Harvest,” ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 738.]

<sup>11</sup>“Earlier critics tended to regard 14:14–20 as the conclusion of an independent apocalypse, or the conclusion of the Grund-schrift underlying Revelation, though this view is problematic.

Clearly the central theme of divine judgment controls the passage. Dominantly John seems to be describing here the final judgment described in 20: 7-10 and 11-15 under two very different images. Additionally with some of the same language the Rider on the White Horse image of divine judgment in 19:11-16 is included, as well as the banquet table of Christ theme of divine judgment in 19:17-21. But also in a secondary role the pouring out of the seven bowls of temporal judgment in 16:1-21 are caught up in this theme of divine judgment coming down in vv. 14-20.

In terms of sub genre forms utilized by John, one must first note the clearly expressed doublet parallel of vv. 14-16 with vv. 17-20.<sup>12</sup>

<b>Rev 14:14-16</b>	<b>Rev 14:17-20</b>
figure with sickle seated on cloud	figure with sickle comes out of temple
another angel comes out of the temple	another angel comes out from the altar
calls with loud voice to first figure	calls with loud voice to first figure
“Put in your sickle” [πέμψον τὸ δρέπανόν σου]	“Put in your sickle” [πέμψον σου τὸ δρέπανον]
to harvest	to gather clusters
for harvest is ripe	for grapes are ripe
first figure used his sickle on the earth	first angel used his sickle on the earth
the earth was reaped	vintage of the earth gathered

The grape harvest imagery is extended in vv. 19c-20 with the related image of wine making with the wine press, which had no counter part in a grain harvest. The obvious parallelism emphasizes by way of imagery first a grain harvest (vv. 14-16) and then a grape har-

This unit of text is introduced with one of the author’s customary formulas for beginning a new subject, ‘I saw, and behold’ (v 14), and concludes in v 20, which is followed by an introductory phrase indicating the beginning of a major new section of the composition: ‘I saw another sign’ (15:1). Rev 14:14-20 consists of two units, the first in vv 14-16 and the second in vv 17-20, which are essentially doublets (Wellhausen, *Analyse*, 24). Since other doublets are also present in Revelation (e.g., 14:1-5 and 7:1-17), the problem to be solved is the relationship between these two versions. Were they taken from the author’s apocalyptic sources and intentionally placed here as a pair? Should 14:15-17 be considered an interpolation (Charles, 2:20-21)?” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 798-799.]

<sup>12</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 799.

vest (vv. 17-20). Given the background patterns of the figurative use of harvest day metaphors, the positive nature of the grain here in the command of v. 15b and the statement of reaping in v. 16b point to the collecting out of the earth the saints of God first -- in a reversed sequence to Jesus’ words in Mt. 13:30 where the ‘weeds’ are collected first to be burned and yet in the same sequence of Mt. 24:30-31 -- and then the ‘grain’ for storage. Here in Jesus’ parable weeds are those outside the Kingdom and the grain are the people of God. Quite clearly the grape harvest in 14:17-20 is an image for the wrath of God upon the people who do not belong to Him.

From a literary standpoint, these two parallel units merge together both the *angelic action* and the *angelic speech* motifs into two presentations.<sup>13</sup> This is much more compact than the early expression in 7:1-17, but more detailed than the three angels in 14:6-12 where the angelic action is only presented with the first angel in v. 6.

The setting up of the two metaphors of harvest day here plays off of John 3:13 (MT 4:13).

ἐξαποστείλατε δρέπανα, ὅτι παρέστηκεν τρύγητος·

εἰσπορεύεσθε πατεῖτε, διότι πλήρης ἡ ληνός·

ὑπερκεχεῖται τὰ ὑπολήνια, ὅτι πεπλήθυνται τὰ κακὰ αὐτῶν.

Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

Go in, tread, for the wine press is full.

The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

John’s use of the Joel passage reflects his distinctive understanding of it, while Mark 4:29 reflects a slightly different use of the same passage.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>“The composition of Rev 14:14-20 is distinctive in Revelation and appears to combine the two literary forms that the author uses in various contexts in Revelation, the angelic speech and the angelic action (see B. Rev 14:6-12 above), into a mixed form, the angelic speech and action, which occurs in vv 14-16 and 17-20 (Rev 7:1-17, Form/Structure/Setting, III. Literary Forms). This suggests that this section is not drawn from an existing source but is the composition of the author, though it contains many stereotypical apocalyptic motifs. It consists of several elements: (1) introductory phrase: καὶ εἶδον (14:14); (2) object of vision: an angelic figure (14:14 [‘one like a son of man’], 17); (3) description of the figure (14:14, 17); (4) introduction of a second angel (14:15a, 18a); (5) a command given to the first angel by the second (14:15b, 18b); and (6) the fulfillment of the command by the first angel (14:16, 19-20).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 799.]

<sup>14</sup>“While this passage originally centers on the metaphor of the vintage harvest alone, John understood it to refer both to the grain harvest and to the grape harvest (קציר *qāšîr* is normally used of the grain harvest, while בציר *bāšîr* is used of the vintage harvest). The tradition in Rev 14:14-16 is also reflected in Mark 4:29, which also alludes to Joel 3:13 as a grain harvest (see Bauckham, “Conver-

**Literary Setting:** The literary context is relatively easy to determine. Verses 14-20 stand as the climax of the 'interlude' in 12:1-14:20. It presents 'the Son of Man' (υἰὸν ἀνθρώπου) on 'harvest day' (ὁ θερισμὸς τῆς γῆς) prepared to separate out the 'sheep' and 'goats' in divine judgment, to use the image of Jesus in

sion," 290-96). Elsewhere the cutting of the grape clusters or the treading of the vintage is used alone as a metaphor for divine judgment (Lam 1:15; Isa 63:1-6; Jer 25:30-31), as is the metaphor of the grain harvest or the image of the threshing floor (Isa 17:4-5; Jer 51:33; Mic 4:13; Matt 3:12 [= Luke 3:17]; Matt 9:37-38 [= Luke 10:2; Gos. Thom. 73]; Mark 4:29; cf. Gal 6:7-9). Charles proposes that vv 15-17 contain an intrusive doublet whose removal makes sense of vv 14, 18-20. This is true, but it is also an unacceptable solution." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 800.]

Matthew 25:31-46. The positive thrust of God's people being collected out of an evil world is encouragement right before the depiction of the most intense expression of temporal judgment by God in the entire book of Revelation to this point in chapters 15 and 16. The depiction of the wrath of God unleashed upon evil people is a vindication of the righteousness and justice of God who holds all deeply accountable for their deeds. Their loyalty to the 'beast' of this world backfires on them and leads to their doom. God's justice sees to that!

**Literary Structure:** The block diagram below in English represents the syntactical structure of the original Greek language text. It shows visually the inner relationships of the primary and secondary ideas as developed by John in the composition of the passage.

14.14           And  
**441**           **I saw,**  
                  and  
**442**           **a white cloud (was),**  
                  and  
                          upon the cloud  
**443**           **(was) One sitting**  
                          like a Son of Man,  
                          having...a gold crown  
                          and  
                          in His hand  
                  ----- a sharp sickle.

14.15           And  
**444**           **another angel went out**  
                          of the temple  
                          crying . . . to the One sitting|  
                          with a loud voice                   upon| the cloud  
                  /-----|  
**A**            **Send your sickle**  
                  and  
**B**            **harvest**  
                  because has come the hour to harvest  
                          because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.

14.16           And  
**445**           **the one sitting . . . his sickle**  
                          upon the cloud                   upon the earth  
                  and  
**446**           **the earth was harvested.**

14.17           And  
**447**           **another angel went out**  
                          out of the temple  
  that is in heaven  
                          having also his sharp sickle.

14.18           And  
**448**           **another angel went out**  
                          out of the altar  
                  who has authority  
                          over the fire,

and  
 449 he spoke . . . to the one having the sharp  
 in a loud voice  
 saying:  
 C *Send your sharp sickle*  
 and  
 D *gather the clusters of the grapevines of the earth*  
 because their bunches of grapes have grown ripe.

<sup>14.19</sup> And  
 450 the angel cast his sickle  
 into the earth  
 and  
 451 he gathered in the vineyards of the earth  
 and  
 452 he cast  
 into the winepress...the large one  
 which is God's wrath

<sup>14.20</sup> And  
 453 the winepress was trodden  
 outside the city  
 and  
 454 blood went out  
 out of the winepress  
 up to the bridles of the horses  
 away from 1,600 stadia

### Summary of Rhetorical Structure

A careful analysis of the text reveals a twofold division at the first level: 1) #s 441-446, and 2) #s 447-454. The thematic pattern is organized around first a grain harvest and then a grape harvest. At the next level of subdivision the interaction between sets of angels controls the thought flow.

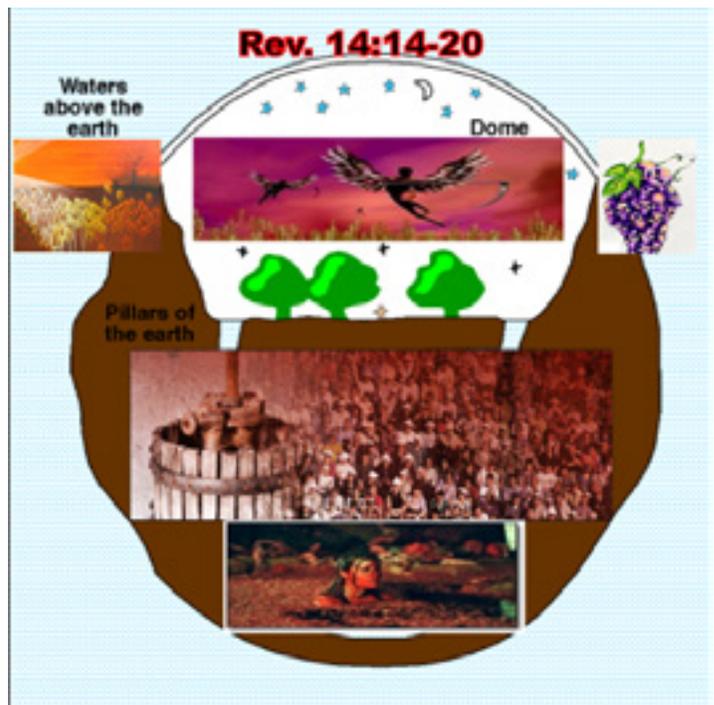
In the first grain harvest (#s 441-446) the flow moves from a depiction of a Son of Man figure sitting on a cloud (#s 441-443) to an angel issuing the command to Him to harvest the grain (# 444) and then the Son of Man figure complying by harvesting the earth (#s 445-446).

In the second grape harvest (#s 447-454), another angel departs from the heavenly temple with a sharp sickle (# 447). Another angel, exiting from the altar in the heavenly temple with authority over fire, issues a command to his fellow angel to gather the grapes (#s 448-449). This fellow angel complies by gathering the grapes and dumps them in the wine press outside the city where they are trampled (#s 450-454).

Several interpretive issues arise from within the text itself but the organizational structure of the passage is laid out very clearly.

### Exegesis of the Text:

The twofold natural division of the passage provides the outline structure around first the gain harvest and then the grape harvest. The distinctive develop-



ment of each of the units will provide the next level of exegesis of the passage.

### A. The grain harvest, vv. 14-16.

14 Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ νεφέλη λευκὴ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην καθήμενον ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ στέφανον χρυσοῦν καὶ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ δρέπανον ὄξυ. 15 καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ κράζων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ

τῆς νεφέλης·

πέμψον τὸ δρέπανόν σου καὶ θέρισον, ὅτι ἤλθεν ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι, ὅτι ἐξηράνθη ὁ θερισμὸς τῆς γῆς. 16 καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐθερίσθη ἡ γῆ.

14 Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand! 15 Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

16 So the one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

In one of John's standard introductions of visionary experience,<sup>15</sup> Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοῦ..., And I saw and behold..., he signals a new perspective to his readers.<sup>16</sup> This intro covers vv. 14-20 with the next Καὶ εἶδον coming in 15:1. Also John follows his established pattern of describing what the visionary figure is sitting on before describing the figure.

The progression of thought in this pericope is clear. First we are introduced to the Harvester (v. 14). Second the divine messenger gives the command to harvest (v. 15). Third, the Harvester completes the grain harvest in one gigantic action (v. 16).

The figure of νεφέλη λευκή, a white cloud, signals something positive with the adjective λευκή, white (16x in Revelation). Four of the seven uses of νεφέλη, cloud, occur in chapter fourteen. The other three uses in 1:7; 10:1; and 11:12 generally connote a positive meaning as well. The foundational image of a grain harvest in vv. 14-16 points also to something positive.

The knotty issue in this pericope is the identification of the one sitting on the cloud, ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην καθήμενον.<sup>17</sup> This image is repeated three times in vv.

<sup>15</sup>καὶ εἶδον functions in three ways: (1) It introduces a new vision narrative (8:2; 10:1; 13:1; **14:1, 6, 14**; 15:1; 19:11, 17; 20:1, 4, 12; 21:1; cf. Acts 11:5; Dan 8:2; 10:5; 12:5; Ezek 1:4; 3:13; 8:2; 13:1). (2) It introduces a major scene within a continuing vision narrative (5:1; 6:1; 8:13; 13:11; 15:2; 19:19; 21:2; 21:22; cf. Ezek 2:9). (3) It is used to focus on a new or significant figure or action that occurs within a continuing vision narrative (5:2, 6, 11; 6:2, 5, 8, 12; 7:2; 9:1; 16:13; 17:3, 6; cf. Acts 11:6; Dan 12:5; Ezek 37:8; 44:4). See also μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον in the Comment on 4:1a." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 338.]

<sup>16</sup>Vv 14–16 constitute a textual unit with two main problems for the interpreter: Should the 'one like a son of man' be identified with Christ or an angel, and does the harvest represent judgment or salvation?" [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 839.]

<sup>17</sup>1854 and M<sup>A</sup> change καθήμενον ὅμοιον to καθήμενος ὅμοιος, since a scribe felt the unnaturalness of having an accusative construction where a nominative would be most suitable in describing the figure 'sitting on the cloud' (cf. similarly P<sup>47</sup>). On the

14-16: ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην καθήμενον (v. 14); τῷ καθήμενῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης (v. 15); ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης (v. 16). Individuals linked to clouds outside of this passage are limited to:

- 1:7, ἰδοῦ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, Christ coming with the clouds.
- 10:1, ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, another strong angel descending clothed with a cloud.
- 11:12, ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, the two prophets went up into heaven in the cloud.

Each of the images is distinct. In 1:7, Christ comes μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν as though the clouds formed part of the army descending out of heaven to the earth. In 10:1, the mighty angel descends out of heaven clothed with a cloud, περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, as though it was his armor. In 11:12, the two prophets ascend into heaven ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ as though the cloud was a chariot carrying them from earth to heaven.

But here the figure is sitting on top of the cloud, ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης, as though a king being carried down from heaven to earth on a platform. Most commentators are convinced that the image here and in Rev. 1:7, 13 are adapted from Dan. 7:13

καὶ ἰδοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο, and behold upon the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man arose

To be sure Daniel's ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου is not exactly the same as ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου in 14:14 and 1:13.<sup>18</sup> But the difference between the two comparative particles ὡς and ὅμοιον is exceedingly small, if at all. Both can easily translate the original Hebrew compara-

other hand, the change from ἔχων to εχοντα is an attempt to bring the nominative into conformity with the accusative καθήμενον ὅμοιον (so P<sup>47</sup> κ\* 1006 1841 2053 2329). But the nominative is original, being either loosely appended or the result of a change of focus, with the object becoming the subject.<sup>472</sup> Or it could be seen as an independent verbal use of the participle." [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 771.]

<sup>18</sup>To complicate the issues of identification more, John does not use the correct case with the comparative ὅμοιον. For comparisons ὅμοιον requires either the dative (=instrumental of comparison) or the genitive cases. Using ὅμοιον with the accusative case as in 1:13 and 14:14 is not found anywhere in ancient Greek literature.

The acc. of comparison appears to be a solecism and nothing more in ὅμ. υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου one like a human being Rv 1:13; 14:14 (both have υἱῶ as v.l.), but s. RCharles, comm. ad loc.—B-D-F §182, 4; Rob. 530.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 707.]

tive כּ in כְּבֶר אִנְשׁ, 'like a son of man.

But one of the difficult issues here is the phrase ὁμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου in 1:13 and 14:14 with the alternative ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου where the articles are used almost completely in the gospels as a reference to Christ, e.g., note the examples below. The phrase without the articles υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου used in often in the prophets of the OT, and usually have the sense of 'human being.' If this is in the background of the use in Rev. 14:14, then the sense is an angel with human form and appearance. But this same phrase is used in 1:13 clearly with the meaning of *the Son of Man*, i.e., Christ. A messianic figure also lies in the background of the use in Dan. 7:13.<sup>19</sup> Thus all these signals point to ὁμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου as having the sense of 'like the Son of Man.' Very likely John deliberately reproduces the anarthrous form in Dan. 7:13 as a signal that this is his reference point.

The main difficulty with this understanding is another angel (v. 15) telling Christ what to do. But this difficulty is perhaps overcome with the reference that this angel ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ, *came out of the temple*. This particular phrase would underscore his role as a messenger from God Himself sitting on His throne and sending the angel with instructions to be given to the Son of Man who now is in the sky above the earth.

Additionally the prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τῆν νεφέλην has echoes of Mt. 24:30 and 26:64

**Mt. 24:30.** 30 καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς· 31 καὶ ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης, καὶ ἐπισυνάξουσιν τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ' ἄκρων οὐρανῶν ἕως

<sup>19</sup>“It is also significant that both here and in 1:13 the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου is anarthrous (i.e., it does not refer to a figure well known by the audience, presumably the Son of man of the Gospel-sayings traditions) and therefore is an allusion to Dan 7:13. When Justin alludes to the son of man of Dan 7:13 (as opposed to the Son of man of Gospel tradition), he uses the anarthrous phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου (Justin 1 Apol. 51.9; Dial. 31.3; 76.1; 79.2; Borsch, Son of Man, 43–44). This is followed by the appearance of three other heavenly beings, each referred to as ἄλλος ἄγγελος, ‘another angel,’ in vv 15, 17, and 18. The context suggests that the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου is a reference not to the exalted Jesus but rather to an angelic being (Kiddle-Ross, 285; Casey, Son of Man, 148–49); note that the term בְּנֵי אָדָם *bēnē `ādām*, ‘sons of man,’ is used of an angelic being in Dan 10:16. Holtz (Christologie, 16; followed by Rusam, “Formeln,” 7) argues unconvincingly that the author has consciously replaced ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου with this phrase. It is clear, at any rate, that the phrase in context (in both 1:13 and 14:14) betrays no awareness of the Son of man traditions of the Gospels but alludes directly to Dan 7:13 (Borsch, Son of Man, 238–40).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 841–842.]

[τῶν] ἄκρων αὐτῶν.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see *‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’* with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

**Mt. 26:64.** 64 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· σὺ εἶπας, πλὴν λέγω ὑμῖν· ἀπ' ἄρτι ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθήμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and *coming on the clouds of heaven.*”

All of these verses have been linked to Dan. 7:13 down through the centuries.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly in the parallel

<sup>20</sup>καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην καθήμενον ὁμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, ‘and upon the cloud was seated one like a son of man.’ This (along with 1:7, 13) is one of three allusions in Revelation to Dan 7:13, two of which have the phrase ὁμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου (1:13; 14:14), ‘son of man,’ ‘human being.’ The phrase ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην, ‘on the cloud,’ suggests an allusion to the LXX version of Dan 7:13 (Matt 24:30; 26:64; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 3.19.2; 4.33.1, 11; Tertullian *Carn.* 15.1; *Acts Peter* [Latin] 24), whereas the phrase μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, ‘with the clouds,’ in Rev 1:7 suggests familiarity with the Theodotianic version of Daniel (Mark 14:62; Rev 1:7; Justin Dial. 31.3; Tertullian *Marc.* 3.7.4; 4.10.12; 4.39.11; *Adv. Iud.* 14.4; Hippolytus de Ant. 22, 26, 44; *Comm. in Dan.* 4.11.1; cf. P. Grelot, “Les versions grecques de Daniel,” *Bib.* 47 [1966] 386–87; Bodenmann, *Naissance*, 46–47). Justin alludes four times to the phrase ἐπάνω [τῶν] νεφελῶν from Dan 7:13, in approximate agreement with the LXX (1 Apol. 51.9; Dial. 14.8; 31.1; 120.4), and once to μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, in agreement with Theodotion (Dial. 31.3). The preposition ἐν is used in Mark 13:26 (ἐν νεφέλαις, “with clouds”) and Luke 21:27 (ἐν νεφέλῃ, “with a cloud”). The Aramaic phrase in the MT of Dan 7:13 is כְּבֶר אִנְשׁ עַל עַבְיָא *im `ānānē sēmayyā*, ‘with the clouds of heaven,’ translated by the LXX as ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ‘upon the clouds of heaven,’ in which ἐπὶ might appear to presuppose the Aramaic preposition עַל *al*, ‘upon’ (S. P. Jeansonne, *The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7–12*, CBQMS 19 [Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1988] 65), and by Theodotion as μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ‘with the clouds of heaven.’ Some scholars have suggested that the use of the preposition ἐπὶ, ‘upon,’ reveals a theological motivation and could only refer to God coming on the clouds (based on Canaanite imagery of Baal riding the cloud-chariot, reflecting the Ugaritic epithet of Baal, *kbb rpt*, ‘rider of the clouds’; cf. LXX and MT versions of Isa 14:14 and 19:1), while the preposition μετὰ, ‘with,’ refers to the rider as something less than divine (Jeansonne, *Daniel 7–12*, 109–10; Montgomery, *Daniel*, 303). Jeansonne (*Daniel*, 7–12, 112), however, argues that since Dan 7:13 is the only place in the OT where someone other than God rides the clouds, the evidence is too meager to argue that עַל *im*, ‘with,’ should have been used rather than עַל *al*, ‘upon.’

“The singular term νεφέλη, ‘cloud,’ found in Rev 14:4, 6 (cf. 11:12) is unusual in allusions to Dan 7:13, where a plurality of clouds is mentioned. Elsewhere in the NT the singular occurs only

statements to Mt. 24:30

**Mt. 24:30.** ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς

**Mk. 13:26** has ὅτε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης and **Lk. 21:27** has τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλῃ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς.

With Daniel's ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, upon

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in Luke 21:27, though more frequently in patristic allusions (*Acts Peter* [Latin] 24; Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 3.19.2; 4.33.1, 33; Tertullian Carn. 15.1; see Bodenmann, Naissance, 45 n. 107). That does not mean that Rev 14:14, 16 is dependent on Luke 21:27 (Vos, Synoptic Traditions, 146–47), however, since the ‘one like a son of man’ in Rev 14:14 is presented as sitting on a cloud, an image that would be awkward if a plurality of clouds were in view.

“In view of the parallel structure and themes of vv 14–16 and 17–20, it appears likely that the author has added the phrases ‘like a son of man’ (v 14b) and ‘with a golden crown upon his head’ (v 14c) to an existing composition.

Clouds are used as transport in a number of ways (see Vermes, Jesus, 186–88: “Excursus I: the cloud, a means of heavenly transport”): (1) As a means of transportation from earth to heaven (Rev 11:12; 2 Kgs 2:11; 1 Enoch 14:8; 39:3; 52:1; 70:2; 2 Enoch 3:1; T. Abr. [Rec. A] 10:1; [Rec. B] 8:3; 10:2; Acts 1:9; b. Yoma 4a [“Moses ascended in the cloud”]; Pesiq. R. 20.4 [96b]: “the cloud covered Moses and carried him up” [A. Jellinek, Bet Ha-Midrash 1:59]); Ares ascends to heaven ὁμοῦ νεφέεσσιν, “with clouds,” in Iliad 5.867. (2) As a means of transport from one area of heaven to another (Pss 68:4; 104:3; Isa 19:1; Dan 7:13; T. Abr. [Rec. B] 12:1, 9; 4 Ezra 13:3). (3) As a means of transport from heaven to earth, often associated in early Christian sources with the coming of the Son of man (Rev 1:7; 10:1; Mark 13:26 = Matt 24:30 = Luke 21:27; Mark 14:62 = Matt 26:64; T. Abr. [Rec. A] 9:8; 15:2). (4) As a mode of enthronement (Rev 14:14–16; Sir 24:4; Vergil Aeneid 9.638–39: “cloud-enthroned [nube sedens] Apollo”). (5) As a symbol associated with theophanies or angelophanies (Rev 10:1; Exod 14:24; 16:10; 24:16; Lev 16:2; Num 12:5; Deut 1:33; Lam 3:44; 2 Macc 2:8; Mark 9:7 = Matt 17:5 = Luke 9:34–35).

“The unusual image of the ‘one like the son of man’ sitting on a cloud in this verse may preserve allusions to the earlier combination of Ps 110:1 with Dan 7:13, such as that found in Mark 14:62 (cf. Matt 26:64), καὶ ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου [Dan 7:13] ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως [Ps 110:1], καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ [Dan 7:13], ‘and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ The two participial phrases linked with καὶ coordinate the ‘sitting’ and ‘coming’ of Jesus as the Son of man and may lead to the logical textual development found in Rev 14:14, i.e., one like a son of man seated (i.e., enthroned) upon a cloud. Other passages that similarly reflect combined allusions to Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1 include Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56; Justin Dial. 32.3, 6 (see Lindars, Apologetic, 48–49; Bodenmann, Naissance, 204–6). In the Parables of Enoch, the Son of man is seated on the throne of his glory for judgment in 1 Enoch 69:27. While the allusion to Dan 7:13 is certain, in the end, the possible allusion either to Ps 110:1 or to Mark 14:62 is extremely doubtful (Yarbro Collins, “‘Son of Man,’” 563).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 840–841.]

the clouds of heaven<sup>21</sup> comes then Matthew's ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, upon the clouds of heaven, but Mark's ἐν νεφέλαις, in clouds, and Luke's ἐν νεφέλῃ, in a cloud.

In addition to sitting upon a cloud two additional identify features are given by John.

First, ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ στέφανον χρυσοῦν, having upon His head a golden crown.<sup>22</sup> The

<sup>21</sup>In the Theodotion text tradition of Daniel 7:13 reads ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὁράματι τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος καὶ ἔως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔφρασε καὶ προσήχθη αὐτῷ. As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a *a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven*. And he came to the Ancient One of days and was presented before him. The preposition shifts from ἐπὶ, upon, to μετὰ, with. Mark and Luke with their use of ἐν, in or with, may be reflect awareness of the Theodotion version of Daniel

<sup>22</sup>“In the ancient world, wreaths were used in a variety of settings with a spectrum of connotations, including victory, peace, honor, and immortality.

“(1) Glory, honor, and status. This meaning is made explicit in the phrase ‘crown of glory,’ which occurs frequently in Jewish and Christian sources (Isa 28:5, צִבְיָהּ אֶתֶרֶת שֶׁבִי; LXX Jer 13:18; LXX Lam 2:15; 1QS 4:7 [כְּלִי כְבוֹד] klyl kbwd]; 1QH 9:25 [כְּבוֹד לְכִלִּי lklyl kbwd]; 1 Pet 5:4: Asc. Isa. 9:10–11: T. Benj. 4:1). (a) A symbol of honor and emblem of office representing kingship, often associated with a special robe, often purple, and a signet ring (2 Kgs 11:12; 2 Chr 23:11; Esth 2:17; 1 Macc 1:8–9; 6:14–15; Sir 40:4; Jos. As. 5:5; 18:6; Jos. J. W. 1.671; Ant. 17.197; John 19:1–2; Artemidorus Oneir. 1.77). The phrase στέφανος δικαιοσύνης, ‘wreath of righteousness,’ is used of the king in Ep. Arist. 280, but it also has other applications in T. Levi 18.2 and 2 Tim 4:8. (b) Awards for benefactors of cities and κοινά, or voluntary associations (Aeschines Against Ctesiphon 45; Jos., Ant. 14.153). Numerous examples of inscriptions on gravestones depict a wreath encircling the word ὁ δῆμος, ‘the people,’ indicating that the deceased had received such an award during his or her lifetime (see Petzl, Smyrna 1/23, nos. 1–117; Lucian De luctu 19); see Epictetus 1.19.29. Occasionally wreaths were awarded posthumously, generally by the demos or city, but occasionally by the society to which the deceased had belonged (see Fraser, *Funerary Monuments*, 68); sometimes these wreaths were of gold (Aeschines Against Ctesiphon 10, 46, 147, 258; Demosthenes De corona 54–55, 84, 116; OGIS 339.96; IGRom 3:739, col. 4, chap. 15, line 94; col. 5, chap. 17, line 47; col. 11, chap. 30, line 12; J. Benedum, ZPE 25 (1977) 272–74, 274–75). (c) Gold wreaths or crowns were the typical torse in which gifts were presented to kings, emperors, and generals by individuals and cities seeking to honor them (Jos., Ant. 14.35, 304; 16.296; Jos. J. W. 7.105 [Vologeses, the Parthian king, presented Titus with a gold crown after he had conquered the Jews]).

“(2) Victory or achievement. (a) Wreaths or crowns as prizes in competitions, particularly athletic contests (Aeschines Against Ctesiphon 179; Philo, Quod Omn. Prob. 26; T. Job 4:10), especially the Olympic Games (Klein, Kranz, 64). The tombstones of famous athletes could depict prizes they had won, such as the unknown athlete from the Rhamnous deme in Attica whose tomb depicts a pine crown encircling the term ‘Isthmia’ and a wild celery crown encircling the term ‘Nemea’ (B. F. Cook, *Greek Inscriptions* [Berkeley: University of California, 1987] 20). (b) Wreaths or crowns as military awards. The Greeks awarded gold crowns to

soldiers who had distinguished themselves for conspicuous bravery (Arrian *Anab.* 7.5.4–6). The Romans had a more organized system and awarded six different crowns as military decorations, i.e., *coronae militates* (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 5.6.1–27; Pliny *Hist. nat.* 22.4.6–8; Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, 67–81): (i) The *corona obsidionalis*, ‘siege crown,’ was the award for rescuing a besieged army or town. (ii) The *corona civica*, ‘civic crown,’ was awarded for saving a person’s life in battle and then holding on to the conquered area (Pliny *Hist. nat.* 16.3.7; 16.5.14; Livy 6.20.7). (iii) The *corona navalis* or *corona rostrata*, ‘naval crown,’ was for conspicuous bravery in naval battles. (iv) The *corona muralis*, ‘city wall crown’ (actually made in the shape of a wall), was awarded to the first soldier to scale a wall (Pliny *Hist. nat.* 16.3.7; Livy 6.20.7). (v) The *corona vallaris*, ‘rampart crown’ (actually made in the form of camp ramparts), was awarded to the first soldier to breach the perimeter of an enemy army camp (Pliny *Hist. nat.* 16.3.7). (vi) The *corona aurea*, ‘gold crown,’ was for various other forms of military achievements. (vii) The *corona ovalis*, ‘ovation crown,’ made of myrtle, was worn by generals who entered the city in an ovation (Plutarch *Marcellus* 22.1–2; Jos. J. W. 7.124). (c) The *aurum coronarium*, ‘gold for crowns,’ was a form of tribute or taxation in which wreaths of gold were contributed by a conquered country and sometimes worn by the victorious general in his Roman triumph (Livy 37.46.4; 38.37.4; 39.7.1; Cicero *Leges* 24). Over four hundred gold crowns were carried in the triumph of Aemilius Paulus (Plutarch *Aem.* 34.5). Augustus claims that he returned 35,000 pounds of *aurum coronarium* during his fifth consulship (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 21). This practice was derived from the Hellenistic kings, who were presented with gold crowns on their accession and after victories. (d) Wreaths or crowns as ceremonial objects buried with the dead, perhaps symbolizing their victories in life (see Higgins, *Jewellery*, 123–24).

“(3) An expression of joy and celebration. (a) The στέφανος νυμφικός, ‘wedding crown,’ was worn by brides (Euripides *Iph. Aul.* 905–6; Chariton 3.2.16; Jos. As. 21:5). (b) Vegetation crowns were worn by participants at symposia, banquets, or wedding feasts (Plutarch *Quaest. conv.* 3.1–2; Acts *Thom.* 5).

“(4) Roman captives were sold as slaves *sub corona*, ‘under the crown,’ apparently referring to the fact that their heads were garlanded (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 6.4), apparently signifying subjection and subservience.

“(5) Cultic and religious uses. (a) Gold crowns were thought particularly appropriate for deities to symbolize their sovereignty, exalted status, and divinity (Hymni *Hom.* 6.1, 7; 32.6; Philo, *Legat.* 103; Pausanias 1.17.3; Ep *Jer* 9; PGM IV.698, 1027), though crowns of various types of vegetation were also used (Tertullian *De corona* 7; Hymni *Hom.* 6.18), and statues of the gods were frequently crowned (Aristophanes *Pl.* 39; Dio Chrysostom 12.60; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 10.437b; Ep *Jer* 8; Pausanias 2.17.4; Clement of Alex. *Paed.* 2.8), or gold crowns were dedicated to them (Jos. J. W. 1.357 = Ant. 14.488; Pausanias 2.17.6). Isis appears with a *corona multiformis* in Apuleius *Metam.* 11.3. The Sun, a Greek deity without a cult, was regularly depicted as crowned (3 *Apoc. Bar.* 6:2), a conception reflected in Jewish synagogue mosaics such as the one at Beth Alpha and Hammath Tiberias (Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 304–5; NEAEHL 1:191; 2:576). The angel Sandalphon, according to b. *Ḥag.* 13b, ties crowns to the head of God (see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 65–66 n. 135). A crown consisting of the prayers of Israel is placed on the head of God according to 3 *Enoch* 15B.2; see 3 *Enoch* 48B.1. (b) Wreaths or crowns were worn by priests and worshipers when praying and sacrificing (Thucydides 4.80.4; Xenophon *Anab.* 7.1.40; Cyr. 3.3.34; Plato *Rep.* 328C; Vergil *Aeneid* 7.135;

Heliodorus 7.8; Lucian *Tim.* 4; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.24; Mart. Pionius 18.4). A coin of Agrippa I (A.D. 37–44) depicts him sacrificing with a *patera* and crowned with a wreath by two diminutive female figures (Meshorer, *Jewish Coins*, 140, no. 93). Israelite high priests wore a miter or turban (Exod 29:6; 39:30; Lev 8:9; 1 *Macc* 10:20; Jos., *Ant.* 3.157) with a gold ‘frontlet’ (Exod 28:36–37), later referred to as a στέφανος χρύσεος, ‘gold wreath’ (Sir 45:12; 1 *Macc* 10:20; Philo, *Mos.* 2.114; Jos., *Ant.* 3.172; 12.45; J. W. 5.235), or a כתר כהונה *keter kēhunnā*, ‘crown of the priesthood’ (m. *Abot* 4:17), or simply a στέφανος (T. *Levi* 8.2, 9; Jos., *Ant.* 20.12; Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 10.4.2). (c) Sacrificial animals were wreathed with a garland, and the verb στεφανοῦν is sometimes used in this connection, as in Lucian *De sacr.* 12 (see Aeschines *Against Ctesiphon* 164; Lucian *De Syr. dea* 58; *De luct.* 19; Acts 14:13; see Betz, *Lukian*, 68 n. 1). (d) Wreaths were worn by priests and worshipers while marching in religious processions (Livy 27.37.13; 40.37.3; 43.13.8; Pliny *Hist. nat.* 18.2.6; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 5.195a, 197f, 198a) or attending cultic feasts (OGIS 383.138–40; SIG 372.27; 398.36). (e) Crowns were dedicated to various divinities and were permanently placed in their sanctuaries (Aeschylus *Eum.* 39). (f) Wreaths or crowns were used as metaphors for the eschatological reward of the righteous (T. *Job* 40:3; T. *Abr.* [B] 10:9 [Enoch the scribe p 175 wears three “crowns of witness”]; Gk *Ap.* *Ezra* 6:17; Asc. *Isa.* 7:22; 9:24; Wis 5:16; 5 *Ezra* 2:42–45; *Apoc. Elij.* 1:8; 1 *Cor* 9:25; 2 *Tim* 4:7–8; 1 *Pet* 5:4; Rev 3:11; *Hermas Sim.* 8.2.1–4; 8.3.6; see Mach, *Engelglaubens*, 191–208).

“(6) The victory wreath as a metaphor for the reward of the martyr (4 *Macc* 17:15; Rev 2:10; see Jas 1:12).

“(7) The wreath as a symbol of immortality and peace in funerary art. Clement of Alexandria observed that the crown was the symbol of untroubled tranquility and for that reason the dead were crowned (*Paed.* 2.8). The wreath was an extremely common motif in Jewish funerary art (Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 318). A typical form of this motif was a pair of winged Victories (perhaps understood as angels in Judaism; Avigad, *Beth She‘arim* 3:285), holding a single crown or wreath between them (Goodenough, *Art Bulletin* 28 [1946] 143; Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 206–7, 318 fig. 1, 340). See, for example, the lid of the eagle sarcophagus from Beth She‘arim, which is decorated with two wreaths (NEAEHL 1:247).

“In the Hellenistic world, wreaths were made of sprigs of laurel, myrtle, ivy, olive, oak, pine, wild celery, vines, and various flowers or of metallic representations of these leaves in gold, silver, or bronze (the significance of various kinds of crowns made of organic material is discussed in Artemidorus *Oneir.* 1.77). After 200 B.C. some wreaths consisted of stylized leaves in groups of three sewn on a band (Higgins, *Jewelry*, 176). Funeral wreaths were often very flimsy, since they were never actually worn (Higgins, *Jewellery*, 157). The ‘crown of life’ is not drawn from martial imagery, for the simple reason that there is no evidence that Romans ever gave posthumous awards (Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, 138). Golden wreaths were frequently awarded to civic benefactors (Danker, *Benefactor*, 61, no. 3, line 9; 62, no. 4, line 11; 78, no. 12, line 47; 90, no. 16, line 27, Petzl, *Smyrna* 1/23, no. 215, lines 7–8). A similar honor, paid by members of a voluntary association, is mentioned in an inscription from Cyme or Phocaea (CIJ 2:738): ‘The synagogue of the Jews honored Tation the daughter of Straton, son of Empedon, with a gold crown and seat of honor.’

“From the third century on, the Christian martyr was often described as a victorious soldier or athlete (Frend, *Martyrdom*). In a number of early Christian authors, beginning with Paul, athletic

golden wreath referenced here by στέφανον χρυσοῦν most likely underscores the authority and victorious mission of Christ in gathering up His people out of the earth.<sup>23</sup>

Second, ἔχων... ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ δρέπανον ὀξύ,<sup>24</sup> *having...in His hand a sharp sickle*.<sup>25</sup> At this point the image points toward a harvest which will dominate the remainder of the pericope. For details of harvesting in the ancient world see the earlier discussion under [Internal History](#).

An angel emerges out of heaven to the mid-sky region where the first figure is sitting on a cloud: καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ κράζων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλη τῷ καθήμενῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης, *And another angel came out of the temple crying in a loud voice to the One sitting upon the cloud* (v. 15a). John's way of identifying this angel is confusing linguistically. He is labeled ἄλλος ἄγγελος, *another angel*. At first glance, this would seem to imply that the first figure was an angel. Most likely ἄλλος ἄγγελος here is the sense of 'another angel' rather than 'other angel'.<sup>26</sup>

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imagery is used of the Christian life and of the victory represented by the attainment of immortality, but not specifically in connection with martyrdom (Ign. Pol. 1:2; 2:3; 2 Clem 7:1–5). Ignatius of Antioch, who used sacrificial imagery, of his own impending death (Rom. 2, 4), never used the image of 'crown' or the conception of 'victory' when describing or anticipating his impending martyrdom (Stewart, "Greek Crowns," 121). Crown and prize imagery first appears in connection with martyrdom ca. A.D. 150, in Mart. Pol. 17–19, Sib. Or. 2.39–55, and Mart. Carpus (Greek Rec.) 35; (Lat. Rec.) 3.5 (Stewart, "Greek Crowns," 122). The equation of the martyr with the athletic champion pervades Martyrs of Lyons (1.11, 17, 36, 48, 41; 2.7)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 173–175.]

<sup>23</sup>"While a gold wreath-crown has a variety of connotations (see Excursus 2C: Ancient Wreath and Crown Imagery), here it appears to suggest the status and authority of the wearer. The metaphor is too varied to suggest, as many do, that it symbolizes victory. Gold wreaths are mentioned in Revelation only here and in 4:4, 10 (where they are worn by the twenty-four elders), 6:2 (where a gold wreath is worn by the rider on the white horse), and 9:7 (where they are worn by the demonic locust cavalry)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 842.]

<sup>24</sup>"A sharp sickle: a sickle is a blade, with a handle, that is usually curved and is used to cut grain plants or grass. In some cultures the appropriate term is 'a reaping knife' or 'a reaping hook,' or 'machete for reaping'." [Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 217–218.]

<sup>25</sup>"The one like a son of man came not to conquer but to reap. In Mark 13:26 the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds is the beginning of judgment. More significant is Rev 1:7: all the tribes of the earth lament in remorse at the coming, with the clouds, of the glorified Christ." [Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 16, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 154.]

<sup>26</sup>"In 14:8, 9 there is no difficulty. ἄλλος is used idiomatically

Also the references to the two sets of angels in the grape harvest are both ἄλλος ἄγγελος as well (vv. 17, 18). And they are referenced throughout as ἄγγελος, *angel*. But the first figure is never referred to as an angel. Instead every reference to him is *the One sitting upon the cloud*: ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην καθήμενον (v. 14); τῷ καθήμενῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης (v. 15); and ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης (v. 16). This way of referencing all four figures strongly argues for a distinct identity of the first figure that is different from the three angels named. The pattern developed is charted as follows:

ἐπὶ τὴν νεφέλην καθήμενον (v. 14) with δρέπανον ὀξύ  
ἄλλος ἄγγελος (v. 15), κράζων  
ἄλλος ἄγγελος (v. 17) with δρέπανον ὀξύ  
ἄλλος ἄγγελος (v. 18), ἐφώνησεν

All of this strongly suggests that only the second, third, and fourth individuals were angels. The **two action figures** are the One sitting on the cloud and the second angel, as symbolized with a δρέπανον ὀξύ, *sharp sickle*, in the hand of both. The **two speaking angels** are the first and third ones both of whom deliver a message to the action figure connected to them: κράζων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (v. 15a) / ἐφώνησεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (v. 18a). The origin of the first angel is ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ, *he came out of the temple* (v. 15a). And the third angel [ἐξῆλθεν] ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, *came out of the altar* (v. 18a). This points to their role of delivering a message from God sitting on the throne of heaven.

The other angel, ἄλλος ἄγγελος, in v. 15a emerges ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ, *out of the temple*, as does also the second angel in v. 17. The designation of ναός for heaven as the temple of God is very appropriate over ἱερόν which often designated the Jerusalem temple. This term ἱερόν was more inclusive and covered the outer court of Gentiles in its specification. But ναός refers only to the inner courts where God's presence existed and where only qualified individuals could come. Thus ἱερόν is never used in Revelation. The term used then for heaven<sup>27</sup> as temple is ὁ ναός and out of the 16 uses in Revelation as in classical Greek, and the phrase = 'another, the second angel,' etc. But in 14:15, 17, 18 there is this use and another. In 15, 17 we have the ordinary use, where the phrase = 'another angel'." [R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 21.]

<sup>27</sup>"Whereas the Israelites could speak of God as dwelling on Mount Sinai (Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17), in the temple (1 Kgs 8:12–13; Ps 68:17–18; Ezek 43:7), or in Zion (Ps 74:2; Isa 8:18; Joel 4:17, 21), the supreme abode of God was in heaven. In the heavenly palace or temple is God's throne, from which God reigns as king over heaven and earth (Isa 6:1; Ps 11:4). Heaven is God's throne and the earth God's footstool (Isa 66:1). From heaven, 'above the circle of the earth,' God looks down upon the earth, where the people appear as grasshoppers (Isa 40:22; Ps 102:19)." [Mitchell G. Reddish, "Heaven," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 90.]

is most clearly expressed in 11:19 as ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, *the temple of God in heaven*. Thus his coming out of the heavenly temple underscores his direct authorization by God to deliver his message.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore his κράζων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλη τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης, *crying in a loud voice to the One sitting upon the cloud*, in no way implies higher status or position for this messenger angel. Speaking loudly seems to be common in Revelation. The manner expression (ἐν) φωνῇ μεγάλη, *with a loud voice/sound*, shows up some 20 times in the document.<sup>29</sup> The participle κράζων from κράζω also denotes making a loud sound. The point of this emphasis of speaking in a very loud voice is not for the sake of the One sitting upon the cloud. Rather, it is so people on earth, who are watching the One sitting on the cloud, will hear the divine command out of heaven being given to Him. His subsequent harvesting action will then be understood as coming from none other than God Himself.

The message delivered by the angel is short and to the point: πέμψον τὸ δρέπανόν σου καὶ θέρισον, ὅτι ἤλθεν ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι, ὅτι ἐξηράνθη ὁ θερισμὸς τῆς γῆς. “Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” It is a twofold command with a twofold basis.

**Command:** πέμψον τὸ δρέπανόν σου καὶ θέρισον. With the heavy dependency of John on the imagery of Joel 3:13 (LXX; MT 4:13), ἐξαποστείλατε δρέπανα, *ἔλατῃ* (šilhû maggāl), *put in the sickle*, the command is to do the harvesting of the grain. The use of the second verb θέρισον specifies the grain harvest and stands in line with several statements of Jesus, especially Mk. 13:26-27 and its parallel in Mt. 24:30-31:

**Mk. 4:29** in the parable of the Growing Seed, ὅταν δὲ παραδοῖ ὁ καρπός, εὐθύς ἀποστέλλει τὸ δρέπανον, ὅτι παρέστηκεν ὁ θερισμός. *But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.*

**Mt. 13:30** in the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat, ἄφετε συναυξάνεσθαι ἀμφοτέρα ἕως τοῦ θερισμοῦ, καὶ ἐν καιρῷ τοῦ θερισμοῦ ἐρῶ τοῖς θερισταῖς· συλλέξατε πρῶτον τὰ ζιζάνια καὶ δήσατε αὐτὰ εἰς δέσμας πρὸς τὸ κατακαῦσαι αὐτά, τὸν δὲ σῖτον συναγάγετε εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην μου. *Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.*

<sup>28</sup>“That this angel emerges from the heavenly temple implies the divine authorization of his command to the “one sitting on the cloud” to begin the harvest.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 842.]

<sup>29</sup>Cf. 1:10; 5:2; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:2; 11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:2, 7; 9, 15, 18; 16:1, 17; 19:1, 17; 21:3. In 1:10 it is compared to the sound of a trumpet; in 14:2, to thunder; and in 10:3 to the roaring of a lion.

**Mt. 13:38-39** in the explanation of the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat, 38 ὁ δὲ ἀγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος, τὸ δὲ καλὸν σπέρμα οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας· τὰ δὲ ζιζάνια εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ, 39 ὁ δὲ ἐχθρὸς ὁ σπείρας αὐτά ἐστὶν ὁ διάβολος, ὁ δὲ θερισμὸς συντέλεια αἰῶνός ἐστιν, οἱ δὲ θερισταὶ ἄγγελοι εἰσιν. 38 *the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.*

**Mk. 13:26-27.** 26 καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης. 27 *καὶ τότε ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἐπισυνάξει τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς [αὐτοῦ] ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ’ ἄκρου γῆς ἕως ἄκρου οὐρανοῦ.* 26 *Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*

**Mt. 24:30-31.** 30 καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς· 31 καὶ ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης, καὶ ἐπισυνάξουσιν τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ’ ἄκρων οὐρανῶν ἕως [τῶν] ἄκρων αὐτῶν. 30 *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

These images in the teaching of Jesus affirm the role of angels in the eschatological harvesting of both the people of God and the wicked. The last two passages emphasize the gathering out of the world the people of God before final destruction occurs.

Although it is debated whether this grain harvest image in 14:14-16 is for the people of God, or whether it is but the first of two harvest images for the wicked, the language here points in the direct of the former while the grape harvest in vv. 17-20 is clearly for the wicked. This stands in closer alignment with the generally positive image for a grain harvest throughout the Bible.

**Basis:** ὅτι ἤλθεν ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι, ὅτι ἐξηράνθη ὁ θερισμὸς τῆς γῆς. The foundation (causal ὅτι clauses) for the twofold command is linked to the readiness of the grain for harvest. This is expressed in a twofold assertion.

First, ἤλθεν ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι, *the hour to harvest has come*. Out of the agricultural background comes the

understandable assertion that harvest day is not something determined by the reapers, nor even the farmer. Rather it is determined by the 'forces of nature' -- to use a modern image -- that lie beyond the power of the gatherers, even if angels. Rather, God and He alone, determines harvest day. The angelic message from God to the One sitting upon the cloud is that such a harvest day has arrived.

Second, ὅτι ἐξηράνθη ὁ θερισμὸς τῆς γῆς. This is normally translated correctly dynamically rather than literally, as 'the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.' The literal statement is 'the harvest of the earth has dried up.' The very picturesque expression captures the dying of the grain stalks and the full development of the seed now matured and in a dormant state. Thus it is 'fully ripe' and ready to be harvested.

The significance of the metaphor is that God's people have gone as far as they need to go underneath the crushing blows of opposition and persecution. They indeed are prepared and ready to be taken home to be with the Lord in eternity.<sup>30</sup>

**Harvest day** (v. 16): καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἔθερίσθη ἡ γῆ. So the one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. Again the Harvester is identified as ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης, the One setting upon the cloud. This goes back to the depiction in verse fourteen. In carrying out the heavenly command he ἔβαλεν...τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, casts his sickle upon the earth.<sup>31</sup> What is not stated is whether it was necessary for him to get off the cloud in order to throw the sickle across the earth. Again the flat earth concept is in the background here and makes the earth something of a gigantic field for harvesting purposes.

What is clear is that this didn't take long to happen. One swing across the field of the earth, and καὶ ἔθερίσθη ἡ γῆ, the earth was harvested. The gathering out of the elect of God in Mk. 13:27 and Mt. 24:31 is here depicted in the brief depiction of a completed harvest.

One side point that is very important to not overlook: *judgment day is not ever presented in the New Testament as two separate judgments.* Always it is a single event with two facets that focus on the separating out of the righteous and the wicked. Thus the two images of grain and grape harvest presented here

<sup>30</sup>As an aging 73 year old with slowly failing health, such an image particularly speaks to me.

<sup>31</sup> "Swung his sickle on the earth: this is a natural way in English to speak of working with a sickle. In some languages it may be more natural to say 'cut with his sickle,' or 'reaped with his sickle,' or 'worked with his sickle.'" [Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 219.]

should not be taken to imply two separate judgments. Instead, they underscore the two facts of the righteous and the wicked that are a part of the Day of Final Judgment.

## B. The grape harvest, vv. 17-20.

17 Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔχων καὶ αὐτὸς δρέπανον ὄξύ. 18 καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος [ἐξῆλθεν] ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου [ὁ] ἔχων ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρός, καὶ ἐφώνησεν φωνῇ μεγάλη τῷ ἔχοντι τὸ δρέπανον τὸ ὄξύ λέγων·

πέμψον σου τὸ δρέπανον τὸ ὄξύ καὶ τρύγησον τοὺς βότρυας τῆς ἀμπέλου τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἤκμασαν αἱ σταφυλαὶ αὐτῆς.

19 καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐτρύγησεν τὴν ἀμπελον τῆς γῆς καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν. 20 καὶ ἐπατήθη ἡ ληνὸς ἐξῶθεν τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα ἐκ τῆς ληνοῦ ἄχρι τῶν χαλινῶν τῶν ἵππων ἀπὸ σταδίων χιλίων ἑξακοσίων.

17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle,

"Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

19 So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.

The grape harvest image here focuses attention on the wicked and their fate. Two angels, each labeled ἄλλος ἄγγελος, will play the central role here in this harvest image. The first angel parallels the One sitting on the cloud in the grain harvest as an action figure, while the second angel is a speaking angel in parallel to the angel in the grain harvest.

**The action angel, part one, v. 17:** Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔχων καὶ αὐτὸς δρέπανον ὄξύ. Here the description is very brief. He is ἄλλος ἄγγελος, another angel. This phrase ἄλλος ἄγγελος is used ten times in Revelation: 7:2; 8:3; 10:1; 14:6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18; 18:1 with six of the ten times here in chapter fourteen. This compares to 67 separate references (23 in plural form) to angels in Revelation totally. But seldom are individualizing traits mentioned about any of them. Only one, Michael, is named in 12:7.

What is intriguing is the potential connection of the three angels in the two harvests to the three angels in the preceding messages of the three angels' text of

14:6-13. These three angels delivered to the earth the divine message of coming judgment, now three angels play strategic roles in the carrying out of that message of coming judgment in 14:14-20. No attempt seems to be present by John to link up the two sets of three angels, but their roles do have a connection to one another, whether they are the same three angels or two sets of different angels.

This angel in 14:17 *ἤλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*, went out of the temple, the one in heaven. This point of origin signals a divine commissioning to come to the earth in order to fulfill the task given him. Thirdly, he *ἔχων καὶ αὐτὸς δρέπανον ὄξύ*, himself has also a sharp sickle. The same instrument possessed by the One sitting on the cloud, a *δρέπανον ὄξύ*, sharp sickle, (v. 14) is mentioned. But this angel does not have a *στέφανον χρυσοῦν*, golden wreath, on his head, in contrast to the first figure.

The *δρέπανον* marks the angel as a harvester. Such an instrument was used in John's world in both the grain harvest and the grape harvest, just differently in the gathering of the grain or grapes.



**The messenger angel, v. 18:** *καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος [ἔξῆλθεν] ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου [ὁ] ἔχων ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρός, καὶ ἐφώνησεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τῷ ἔχοντι τὸ δρέπανον τὸ ὄξύ λέγων, Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, . . .*

The identity of this angel begins the same way as the action angel in v. 17: *καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος, and another angel*. But then they are distinguished from one another with other traits. Whereas the action angel in v. 17 *ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*, came out of the temple which is in heaven, this angel in v. 18 *[ἔξῆλθεν] ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου*, came out of the altar. The noun *θυσιαστήριον* shows up eight times in Revelation in regard to heaven: 6:9; 8:3; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7. Most of these allude to the altar of incense<sup>32</sup> just out-



side the holy of holies, and in particular the three uses in chapter eight. Here the prayers of God's people went up to heaven in the rising of the smoke from the incense burning from the hot coals taken from the altar. The heavenly equivalent to the Jerusalem temple copy signaled God's hearing and response to those prayers.<sup>33</sup> But the incense also symbolized the presence of God and was associated with cleansing power.

Then the angel is identified as *[ὁ] ἔχων ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρός*, the one having authority over the fire.<sup>34</sup>

“Incense,” ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 40.]

<sup>33</sup>Aune (WBC, v. 52b, 845) takes the reference as equivalent to *τοῦ ναοῦ* in v. 17, but offers no convincing evidence to establish such a link.

<sup>34</sup>The phrase ‘the one with authority over fire’ serves several literary functions. In general it conforms to the author's tendency to identify various figures with descriptive participial phrases (see Rev 11:7; 17:1, 7, 8, 11; 21:9), and more particularly it serves to distinguish this particular angel from the many other anonymous angels mentioned by the author. The phrase also identifies this angel as one of special importance, because as the angel with authority over fire, he is a divine agent for punishing the enemies of God. According to Jewish tradition, various angels had authority over various aspects of the world, including the four winds (Rev 7:1), the abyss (Rev 9:11), and the waters (Rev 16:5). Bib. Ant. 38.3 refers to ‘Nathaniel, the angel in charge of fire,’ while according to T. Abr. [Rec. A] 13:10, Πυροῦλ ὁ [ἀρχ]ἄγγελος ὁ ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ ἔχων τὴν ἐξουσίαν, ‘Puroel is the [arch]angel who has authority over fire’ (this angel is referred to earlier as ‘the fiery angel who held the fire’ in T. Abr. [Rec. A] 12:14) and whose task it is to test the works of people by fire. Similarly CD [MS A] 2:5–6 threatens torment ‘with fiery flames by all the angels of destruction [בִּי כָל מַלְאָכֵי הַבַּיַת שֶׁ אֵשׁ בְּלַחֲבֵי בְּלַחֲבֵי *bēlahābē ’eš by kol mal’ākē hebel*],’ i.e., angels whose task it is to torture the wicked. A curse text from Kidrama in Asia Minor includes the phrase *ὕπο τῶν πυρῶν ἀγγέλων*, ‘may you suffer at the hands of the angels of fire’ (J. and L. Robert, *La Carie* [Paris, 1954] 366, no. 191, frag. A). Similarly, an Aramaic incantation bowl from Tell Khafaje in Iraq (third to seventh centuries A.D.), describes an angelic being who is ‘the head of the kingdom of fire’ (E. M. Cook, “An Aramaic Incantation Bowl from Khafa-  
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<sup>32</sup>“The tabernacle cult was moved into the Temple (1 Kgs 7:48–8:6), and incense offerings were made there (2 Chr 13:11–12; 26:16–19). Incense was a vital part of the restoration and cleansing of the Temple (1 Macc 4:49–50; 2 Macc 10:1–3). The NT also refers to incense burned in the Temple and the holy presence associated with it (Luke 1:8–11; Heb 9:2–7).” [Frank H. Gorman,

Clearly the main allusion here is to the burning coals of fire that covered the top of the incense altar. The cleansing implications of the burning coals signaled the burning out of impurities. Consequently the idea of fire came to be associated with divine judgment and the getting rid of that which is offensive to a holy God. This idea here is affirmed by the later reference in 16:7 where the altar itself in personification says, *ναὶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαια αἱ κρίσεις σου*, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just!”

This angel has then the responsibility of enforcing divine judgment upon the wicked. This he does by instructing the first angel to gather out all the ‘grapes,’ the wicked of the earth, so they can face judgment (v. 18b): *καὶ ἐφώνησεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τῷ ἔχοντι τὸ δρέπανον τὸ ὀξύ λέγων*, and he spoke in a loud voice to the one having the sharp sickle saying.... Note the similarities and yet differences in the way the two messenger angels’ speeches are introduced:

14:15b. *κράζων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης*, crying out in a loud voice to the One sitting upon the cloud....

14:18b. *καὶ ἐφώνησεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τῷ ἔχοντι τὸ δρέπανον τὸ ὀξύ λέγων*, and he spoke in a loud voice to the one having the sharp sickle saying....

The differences here further emphasize that each messenger angel was speaking to a different kind of action figure, Christ in the first instance and an angel in the second.

One should not overlook the close linkage of this image of the third angel with control of the fire to the work of the angel with the golden censer in 8:3-5.

3 Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἦλθεν καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἔχων λιβανωτὸν χρυσοῦν, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ θυμιάματα πολλά, ἵνα δώσει ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν τὸ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. 4 καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ καπνὸς τῶν θυμιαμάτων ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. 5 καὶ εἴληφεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸν λιβανωτὸν καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ ἐγένοντο βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ σεισμός.

### 3 Another angel with a golden censer came and

je,” BASOR 285 [1992] 79–81). The notion that angels were created out of fire was widespread in early Judaism, based on Ps 104:4, quoted in Heb 1:7 (Jub. 2:2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 21:6; 48:8; 2 Enoch 39:5; Apoc. Abr. 19:6; Gen. Rab. 78:1; IQH 1:10–11; Hekalot Rabbati 15:8–16:2; Masseket Hekalot 4; Sepher ha-Razim 1.9–10 [tr. Morgan, 21]), and the phrase ‘angel(s) of fire’ occurs several times in the Sepher ha-Razim (3.23, 28, 57–58; 4.9). In 2 Enoch 29:2–3 there is a reference to the creation of angels from fire, and consequently both their weapons and their garments are fire.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 846.]

stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. 5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The theme of divine judgment upon the wicked comes as the outcome of the prayers of the saints as clearly portrayed in 8:3-4 and 6:6-11.<sup>35</sup>

The instructions of this angel to the one with the sickle are very similar to those of the previous angel in v. 15c. Note the comparison:

v. 15c	v. 18c
πέμψον τὸ δρέπανόν σου Put your sickle in	πέμψον σου τὸ δρέπανον τὸ ὀξύ Put your sharp sickle in
καὶ θέρισον, and harvest the grain,	καὶ τρύγησον τοὺς βότρυας τῆς ἀμπέλου τῆς γῆς, and gather the grape clusters of the vine of the earth
ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι, because has come the hour to harvest the grain	
ὅτι ἐξηράνθη ὁ θερισμὸς τῆς γῆς. because the grain harvest of the earth is dried out for harvesting.	ὅτι ἤκμασαν αἱ σταφυλαὶ αὐτῆς. because its grapes have become ripe

With the similarities of both commands comes also the distinctive terminology clearly signaling a grain harvest and a grape harvest for the two images. One should remember that the language used by John is a typical description of either a grain harvest or a grape harvest, especially in the middle east of the first century world.

What is powerfully distinct are the two harvesters. The messenger angels in both instances fulfill the role of a slave delivering a message from the land owner to the slave leader among the field slaves who would do

<sup>35</sup>“The picture of the ‘altar’ in conjunction with the ‘angel ... having authority over the fire’ has unique correspondence with 8:3–5, where an ‘angel’ near a ‘golden altar’ obtains ‘fire from the altar and throws it to the earth’ (in twenty-three of twenty-four Apocalypse occurrences ‘fire’ [πῦρ] depicts judgment; see on 14:10). Since 8:3–5 is a judgment scene introducing the punishments signaled by the trumpets, the same kind of scene is discernible here. Furthermore, the connection with 8:3–5 suggests that, here as there, the judgment is an answer to the prayers of the saints in 8:3–4 and 6:6–11.<sup>482</sup>” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 775.]

the actual gathering of the harvest. The fact that heavenly beings are fulfilling the different roles points to the symbolical significance of the harvests. Additionally, it is obvious that people are what are being harvested rather than wheat and grapes.

What distinguishes the descriptions of the two harvests with the grape harvest metaphor extending beyond the harvesting itself to the wine making process that quickly followed the gathering of the grapes. For a detailed discussion of this background see the above [Internal History](#) section.

In verses nineteen and twenty the harvesting and wine making processes are outlined. Here John's depiction moves more clearly from the literal harvesting action to the symbolic spiritual point of the metaphors.

**First the harvesting in v. 19a:** καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐτρύγησεν τὴν ἄμπελον τῆς γῆς, and the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth. The language here resembles that action by the One sitting on the cloud in v. 16: καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐθερίσθη ἡ γῆ, and the One sitting upon the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth and the earth was harvested. The slight differences in terminology -- ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν / εἰς τὴν γῆν and ἐθερίσθη ἡ γῆ / ἐτρύγησεν τὴν ἄμπελον τῆς γῆς -- are standard differences in the way a grain harvest would be described in contrast to a grape harvest.

One should note that the angel harvesting the grapes accomplishes the gathering of all of them in one swath of his sickle -- ἔβαλεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐτρύγησεν τὴν ἄμπελον τῆς γῆς -- just as the harvesting of the grain was accomplished in one swath of that sickle -- ἔβαλεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐθερίσθη ἡ γῆ. When God's agents do the harvesting, no time or effort is wasted!

**Second, wine making in vv. 19b-20:** καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν. καὶ ἐπατήθη ἡ ληνὸς ἕξωθεν τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα ἐκ τῆς ληνοῦ ἄχρι τῶν χαλινῶν τῶν ἵππων ἀπὸ σταδίων



χιλίῳν ἑξακοσίων. and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.

Here is where the symbolism takes over the symbol as the focus of description. The typical middle eastern wine press, ληνός, is referenced, and was something like the above picture of the remains of an ancient wine press found recently in Ashkelon, Israel.

But this is no usual wine press! John describes it here as τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν, the great wine press which is the wrath of God. A very similar depiction occurs in 19:15b: καὶ αὐτὸς πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος, he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. Both of these come out of a similar image in Isaiah 63:1-6, with the depiction of the Lord as the divine warrior coming from battle with garments stained with the blood of his enemies in contrast to one who treads wine in the wine press.<sup>36</sup>

One should also note that the almost identical images between 14:19 and 19:15 serve to link the two pictures of divine judgment together as depictions of the same event.<sup>37</sup> But more on that with the study in

<sup>36</sup>Isa. 63:1-6. Ἦ τίς οὗτος ὁ παραγινόμενος ἐξ Ἐδωμ, ἐρυθρῆμα ἱματίων ἐκ Βοσορ, οὕτως ὠραῖος ἐν στολῇ βία μετὰ ἰσχύος; ἐγὼ διαλέγομαι δικαιοσύνην καὶ κρίσιν σωτηρίου. † 2 διὰ τί σου ἐρυθρὰ τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ τὰ ἐνδύματά σου ὡς ἀπὸ πατητοῦ ληνοῦ; † 3 πλήρης καταπεπατημένης, καὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνὴρ μετ' ἐμοῦ, καὶ κατεπάτησα αὐτοὺς ἐν θυμῷ καὶ κατέθλασα αὐτοὺς ὡς γῆν καὶ κατήγαγον τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν εἰς γῆν. † 4 ἡμέρα γὰρ ἀνταποδόσεως ἐπῆλθεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐνιαυτὸς λυτρώσεως παρέστιν. † 5 καὶ ἐπέβλεψα, καὶ οὐδεὶς βοηθός; καὶ προσενόησα, καὶ οὐθεὶς ἀντελαμβάνετο· καὶ ἐρρύσατο αὐτοὺς ὁ βραχίον μου, καὶ ὁ θυμὸς μου ἐπέστη. † 6 καὶ κατεπάτησα αὐτοὺς τῇ ὀργῇ μου καὶ κατήγαγον τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν εἰς γῆν. †

"1 Who is this that comes from Edom, from Bozrah in garments stained crimson? Who is this so splendidly robed, marching in his great might?" "It is I, announcing vindication, mighty to save." 2 "Why are your robes red, and your garments like theirs who tread the wine press?" 3 "I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their juice spattered on my garments, and stained all my robes. 4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year for my redeeming work had come. 5 I looked, but there was no helper; I stared, but there was no one to sustain me; so my own arm brought me victory, and my wrath sustained me. 6 I trampled down peoples in my anger, I crushed them in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

37 "The links between the vintage harvest and the final eschatological battle (which become clear in v 20) appear in the Tg. Isa. 63:3-4 (tr. Chilton, Isaiah Targum; italics indicate additions to the MT):

*Behold, as grapes trodden in the press, so shall slaughter increase among the armies of the peoples, and their [sic] will be no strength for them before me; I will kill them in my anger and trample them in my wrath; I will break the strength*

chapter nineteen.

The location of ἡ ληνὸς, *the wine press*, was ἔξωθεν τῆς πόλεως, *outside the city*. Probably this is an allusion to Jerusalem and may hint at the location of the final eschatological battle near Jerusalem in 19:17-21 and 20:7-9.<sup>38</sup> But one must not overlook the typical location of a middle eastern wine press in the vineyard (cf. Mt. 21:33) which would have been ἔξωθεν τῆς πόλεως.

Who did the trampling of the 'grapes' in this vat? The aorist passive verb keeps this vague with ἐπατήθη, *was trodden*. Evidently it wasn't the first angel in this metaphor who did the harvesting. In the parallel image in 19:15, it is the warrior Christ on the white horse who tramples the 'grapes' in the wine press.

What is most astounding is the volume of 'wine' produced from this 'harvest'! καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα ἐκ τῆς ληνοῦ ἄχρι τῶν χαλινῶν τῶν ἵππων ἀπὸ σταδίων χιλίων ἑξακοσίων. *and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles*. Not wine but blood flows out of the vat where the grapes are being trampled. First, note that the blood of the wicked being judged is what flows out

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*of their strong ones before me, and I will annihilate all their wise ones. For the day of vengeance is before me, and the year of my people's salvation has come.*

A similar connection occurs in Tg. Neb. Joel 4:13-14 (tr. Cathcart-Gordon, Targum; italics indicate additions to the MT):

*Put the sword into them, for the time of their end has arrived; go down and tread their warrior dead like grapes that are trodden in the wine press; pour out their blood, for their wickedness is great. Army upon army in the valley of judicial decision; for near is the day which will come from the Lord in the valley of judicial decision.*

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 847.]

<sup>38</sup>"The identity of the city is not specified, though the presence of the definite article may indicate that the city is Jerusalem (Lohmeyer, 129), and the treading of the grapes may be a metaphor for a final eschatological battle in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Joel 3:2, 12; Zech 14:2-4; 4 Ezra 13:33-35; 2 Apoc. Bar. 40.1; cf. Rev 19:17-21; 20:7-9). The identity of the one who treads the wine press is also not made clear since the aorist passive verb ἐπατήθη, 'was trodden,' is extremely vague and may be the *passivum divinum*, i.e., the passive used as a circumlocution for the activity of God. However, in 19:15 it is the rider on the white horse (i.e., the exalted Christ returning with his heavenly armies in judgment) who treads the grapes in the wine press of God's wrath.

"It is possible that the reference to 'outside' the city may indicate that the principle of *ius talionis* is operative here in that according to Gospel tradition Jesus himself was executed outside of Jerusalem (Matt 27:33 = Mark 15:22 = Luke 23:33 = John 19:17; Heb 13:12-13), and thus this judgment constitutes a kind of poetic justice. Of course, winepresses were always found in vineyards of any size, and vineyards were usually located outside the walls of local urban centers, including Jerusalem. Bousset speculated that this passage was a reworked apocalyptic fragment ([1906] 390)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 847.]

of the vat.<sup>39</sup> How much blood comes out? It is the astounding amount of a horse's bridle deep blood that flows *one thousand six hundred stadia*, σταδίων χιλίων ἑξακοσίων, in all directions from the vat.<sup>40</sup> This excessive distance bothered copyists down through the centuries who supplied alternative distances in their copying process.<sup>41</sup> But the manuscript evidence for 1,600 stadia is far greater than for any other alternative reading.

That this is hyperbole is rather clear.<sup>42</sup> For example, modern Israel is 263 miles long north to south and

<sup>39</sup>"There is a widespread ancient association between blood and wine, for the juice of grapes is frequently referred to as the αἷμα σταφυλῆς, the 'blood of the grape,' and similar expressions (Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14; Sir 39:26; 50:15; 1 Macc 6:34; ANET, 133; Achilles Tattius 2.2.5 [αἷμα βότρυος]; Clement Alex. Paed. 2.19.3; 2.29.1; Strom. 5.8, 48.8), obviously because the juice of red grapes resembled blood (St ephanus, TGL 1:972)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 847.]

<sup>40</sup>A Roman *stadium* was 625 pedes which equals 607.14 feet or 185 meters. Thus 1,600 stadia is approximately 200 miles as is expressed in the NRSV translation. According to the standard formula for calculating the area of circles, the 200 miles in all directions -- actually 1 stadium = 185 meters -- would result in a circle with 275,253,781,936.92 square meters of area.

$$A = \pi \cdot \left(\frac{C}{2}\right)^2$$

<sup>41</sup>Variants: (1) χιλίων ἑξακοσίων, '1600 stadia'] <sup>nc</sup> A C 025 046 Andreas; TCGNT<sup>1</sup>, 753; TCGNT<sup>2</sup>, 679. (2) χιλίων διακοσίων, '1200 stadia'] <sup>nc\*</sup> syr<sup>ph</sup>. (3) χιλίων ἑξακοσίων ἑξ, '1606 stadia'] Andr<sup>i1876 2014 2036 2042 2043 2047 2074 2082</sup> m<sup>2037 2046</sup>.

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 791.]

<sup>42</sup>"Bauckham has shown that this hyperbole, consisting of an extraordinary amount of blood indicating a slaughter of exceptional proportions, is a topos frequently found in ancient literature ("Traditions," 40-48). The earliest occurrence of this topos is found in 1 Enoch 100:3 (tr. Knibb, Enoch), 'And the horse will walk up to its chest in the blood of sinners.' A parallel from perhaps the second century A.D. occurs in 4 Ezra (6 Ezra) 15:35b-36, 'and there shall be blood from the sword as high as a horse's belly and a man's thigh and a camel's hock.' Though there is no evidence of any literary borrowing among these sources, it is striking that they share a common hyperbole for the extent of slaughter, namely, that horses will be wading in three to four feet of blood. Other parallels include y. Ta'an. 4.8; Lam. Rab. 2.2.4; b. Git. 57a; see Bauckham, "Traditions," 40-43; Str-B, 3:817. Josephus historicizes this topos by referring to the many Jews killed by Romans when Jerusalem was captured in A.D. 70 (J. W. 6.406): the number of corpses 'deluged the whole city with blood to such an extent that many fires were extinguished by the gory stream.' The inclusion of the mention of the horses' bridles in this apocalyptic hyperbole indicates that the author is alluding to a decisive eschatological battle, perhaps that reflected in 19:11-21 (Charles, 2:26; Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 37). The mention of the bridles of horses appears to be an allusion to the presence of a victorious heavenly army, as in 19:14 (Charles, 2:26; Bornkamm, TDNT 4:256). Bornkamm argues that 14:20 is literarily dependent on 19:11-20 (TDNT 4:256)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 847-848.]

between 9 and 71 miles wide east to west. Land mass wise, it is about the size of the US state of Massachusetts. With approx. 8,000 square miles territory, modern Israel compares to Costa Rica with its 19,653 square miles / 51,100 square kilometers [km<sup>2</sup>] of territory (= 51,100,000,000 square meters [m<sup>2</sup>]).

What may be of importance is to notice the depth measurement of the blood: ἄχρι τῶν χαλινῶν τῶν ἵππων, up to the bridles of horses. Very possibly this hints at the eschatological battle described in 19:17-21 and 20:7-10. What is very clear is the picture of an overwhelming victory of God in crushing the forces of evil in a devastating manner.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

The two images of harvest day point to an event that lies ahead for humanity that will be unlike anything ever experienced previously. John seeks to prepare his readers for this with images not only taken out of everyday life experience, but also linked to parallel OT images of the wrath of God in judgment upon wickedness on the earth.

The grain harvest is reassuring in affirming that 'harvest day' for the saints of God will be a wholly different experience than for the wicked of the earth. The background use of the grape harvest for expressing God's wrath in judgment provided the backdrop to depict harvest day for the wicked. For those worshiping the beast rather than God it will be breath taking and worse than any nightmare could ever anticipate.

But this initial glimpse into judgment day here will be the first of several presentations yet to come in the final chapters of Revelation. Each will be presented under different images so that we readers gain a much broader perspective on what that event means.

The celebratory tone of the assembly on Mount Zion with Christ and the saints of God living on the earth in 14:1-5 reminds us of a major tone in the celebrations yet to be described in Revelation. They challenge our modern western understanding because in large part they are celebrating the destruction of the wicked. One must never overlook the setting of such

<sup>43</sup>“God’s destruction of the impious is as thoroughgoing as one mowing down the ripe harvest and crushing grapes in the wine press. This conclusion about the use of Isaiah 63 and Joel 4 is paralleled in later Judaism, where Midr. Pss. 8.1, 8.8 applies the wine press imagery of Isa. 63:2 (alluded to in Rev. 14:18–20, on which see below) to the judgment of the four kingdoms and further explains the judgment by appealing to Joel 4:13 (the midrash, at 8.8, also includes Gog and Magog in the judgment). The building up of sin throughout history reaches its zenith in the final generation of history and has made the impious ripe for wrath (cf. Gen. 15:16; 1 Thess. 2:16).” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 776.

celebrations is the vindication of the justice of a holy, righteous God mostly in regard to the abuse and violence done against His people on earth. It is not 'getting revenge' for this would require God surrendering His people to His people for inflicting judgment. Such never happens! God and His heavenly agents administer the divine punishment always. Why? Because it is a matter of divine vindication and never an issue of human revenge! The messages of the three angels in 14:6-13 stress this point clearly.

But the coming judgment of God is not to be taken lightly, as 14:14-20 makes abundantly clear. No individual will escape it. In this text the emphasis is upon those living at the time. In 19:17-21, the evil leader of this rebellion against God, the beast, will be totally defeated. In 20:7-10, Satan will be overwhelmed and doomed. In 20:11-15, all the dead will be raised and will stand before the great Judge of mankind. What a varied but graphic picture of judgment day! Every evil person will be held accountable and doomed for their way of living apart from God.