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Revelation

Chapter 14 - Revealing the Consequence of Choice Declared Ready for Harvest (vs. 14-16)

Revelation 14:14-16: Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

We're going through the Book of Revelation, and certain passages just take a little bit more time, don't they? You notice that? As when the Lord begins to speak to you, sometimes just right off the bat and other times it's just right before I get up [to speak]. But what we do realize in

this Book of Revelation is that God is unveiling to us wonderful things. And He is revealing to us how He sees things as well as the way that the world does, the things that they do, and the tremendous contrast that there is between the God of the heavens and the rulers of the earth. The rulers of the earth are oftentimes described in, as we see, beasts that devour and tear and destroy. God of heaven is described as the Lamb as if had been slain. And when we come to Chapter 14, we begin to see the choices that men are making, it's at really the height of the tribulation. And as we see at the height of the tribulation, the beast or the powers of the world have begun to take rule and they've begun to oppress and demand of people that they couldn't buy or sell without their mark, that they're controlling everything that they do. Jesus will come on the earth and say, "Whosoever will may come." Nevertheless, man chooses the intimidation of the world and will oftentimes follow suit with the things that the world demands upon him. When you look at it from the light of Revelation, it's really inexplicable why we would do something like that. Nevertheless, we

see that the majority of mankind will take the mark of the beast. A choice.

At the beginning of Chapter 14, you see the 144,000 standing with the Lamb. They've made a choice. And it really is in Chapter 14 the emphasis of what this chapter is all about, the consequences of choice; the thing that happens when you make a choice. That choice really, as we looked at the very beginning of this, accentuates your position. Once you make a choice, then we know where you stand. And those 144,000 standing with the Lamb, have made a clear, definitive choice. And they're standing out as they're standing on the Mount of Olives. They're standing out very unique and very different because all the world has chosen to follow the beast. And here these 144,000 are on this mound and have painted a target on themselves as they begin to sing praises to God. Nevertheless, they've made their choice.

Deuteronomy says this in Deuteronomy 30:19,

“... So choose life in order that you may live...”

That's pretty simple, isn't it? A simple choice that God has given us, one of the great gifts that the Lord has given us.

We oftentimes read in Joshua, where Joshua 24:15 reads, “...choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...”

You need to make a choice. And that choice separates us.

In 2 Corinthians 6:17, God tells His church, “Come out from among them and be separate. Make a choice. Be distinct.” And almost every day you find yourself having to make choices. Am I going to do the right thing, or am I going to do the thing that the world is wanting me to do? Am I going to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, or am I going to boldly proclaim that wonderful message? Do I believe that God is the source of my protection, or do I believe the world is the source of my protection? We make decisions on almost everything throughout our lives.

Jesus will put it this way in Matthew 12:30,

“He who is not with Me is against Me...”

That makes it pretty clear, doesn't it? They say, “Well, Jesus, You're not going to make sides.” The world's going to force you into making sides, but nevertheless, you have chosen when you haven't chosen Him.

And Jesus will make the statement in John 15:19,

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”

The world knows you've made a decision when you follow Christ. It'll make you very unpopular.

1 Peter 4:4 reads this way,

“In all this, they (the world) are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation...”

In other words, they're surprised that you're not wasting your life like they are. They're going, “Why don't you do the same things that we do?” The very fact that you're not doing what they're doing is you making a choice.

And in making a choice, as he goes on to say in 1 Peter 4:4,

“... and they malign you.”

I mean, it's one thing that I choose not to do what they want me to do, but they're not happy with me just not choosing; they want to criticize me for not doing what they do, for not thinking like they think. And it shows the

hostility of the world. When you make a choice, when I make a choice, it accentuates our position. It shows us where we are. And it also affects those around us. It beckons others.

Jesus will talk about in John 13:35, “They’ll know that you're My disciples when you love one another.” And that distinction of loving one another begins to reveal to the rest of the world that there's something here that we have that they don't. That choice begins to influence them.

Jesus will say of Himself, in John 12:32, when the Son of Man is lifted up, He will draw all men to Him. The sacrifice of Christ, the decision that He made to die for us, was something that began to affect the lives of others and has affected the lives of others down through the centuries. Not only when we make a choice do we accentuate our position, but we affect those around us, and it begins to beckon others by the virtue of the choice that we make. But as we come towards these verses, and we were looking at last week specifically in verse 13, and now as we look at verses 14 through 16, we understand that a

choice demands a day of reckoning, that there is a fruition, there is a coming to completion. You make a choice, and the ultimate consequence will bear itself out. There's a passage in Hosea, if you look with me in Hosea 10, that kind of shows the two choices in the sphere of, well, oftentimes put, agriculture. And if you look with me in Hosea 10, you'll see this analogy begin to speak and will parallel the passage that we'll look at today.

But it says this,

(Hosea 10:12) “Sow with a view to righteousness...”

Now, I want to stop here just a second and say basically this, that choice in a way is as it were a seed planted. And it has a breaking forth and it has a bringing forth. So, when you make a choice, you plant a seed. Now, we're going to find out what comes up from that. You make the choice. What are the consequences of that choice? What are the results of that choice? You have results from the choices that you make.

And so, if you look within the passage, it says this, and this is why Scripture oftentimes refers to the decision that

you make to follow Christ. Remember the parable of the soils. The parable of the soils, the seed is the broadcasting of the word of God. And you have a choice to receive the word or to reject it. It depends.

This particular passage reads this way in Hosea 10:12,

“Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness;

Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD

Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.”

Now, an interesting text that kind of blends ideas and what it really conveys in this whole metaphor of growing things is that you make a choice, make the right choice, and then God will bless it by His blessings from above.

Then the next verse reads this way,

(Hosea 10:13) “You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies.

Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors.”

When you trust in man and not in God, there's a consequence. And the time is coming when it's going to get ripe and God is going to reveal what's the result of the choice that you've made.

It is that we look at in verses 14 through 16. And as we looked at last week, specifically verse 13, we understand that the choice that we make as believers is that we're going to embrace God above even our own life.

The text reads,

(Revelation 14:13) “... ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...’”

Well, this is not a new concept because the believers that follow God, their goal has never been self-preservation. The goal of the believer is never to live longer. Surprise. That's not your goal. The goal of the believer is to glorify God, whether by life or by death, to glorify God. The worst thing that a believer could do is compromise the integrity of the gospel and his faith. That's the worst in his mind. So, in this particular text, he's willing to not take the mark of the beast and die. But blessings are reserved for him. He's going to reap the blessings that are eternal

rewards. And it really is one of the great themes of Scripture throughout.

The choice is, according to John 12:43, you either love the approval of men, or you love the approval of God. Well, you make a choice in that.

And in Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, Luke 17:33, did you get all those? Because every one of those verses is basically the same thing. Every one of those verses is saying, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And whosoever shall lose his life for My sake will save it."

What it's telling us is that the believer knows that self-preservation cannot be his focus. Because when the day comes, when the world says, "You either receive our mark and bow down to our god or we're going to kill you and we're not going to let you buy or sell. We're not going to let you do anything. We're not going to let you survive." If self-preservation is your number one goal, guess what you're going to do? You're going to take the mark of the beast. If glorifying God is your number one goal, you'll go, "I cannot disobey God." Not unlike Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, not unlike Daniel, not unlike Paul, not

unlike any of those that followed God because our goal is to please Him. Ephesians 5 says that we actually try to learn what is pleasing to God.

I like the way that it's put specifically in Luke 17:33.

It reads this way,

(Luke 17:33) “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it...”

It's an interesting way to put it, isn't it? It has that emphasis of this is what he lives for. He lives for the longevity of the flesh rather than that which he knows is eternal. And it is an interesting trade-off when you consider it, because if in fact, you're concerned about the physical, then compromise of integrity and faith will rapidly, rapidly move away. And self-preservation and longevity of life will become the priority one, as you begin to compromise everything else.

“But blessed are those who have been persecuted,” Matthew 5 says, “for My name's sake, for the sake of righteousness. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you; speak all kinds of evil on account of Me. You're blessed.”

So, last week specifically, the emphasis was that those that will make the decision to follow God, to believe in Him, to trust in Him, and to not compromise their faith, they're going to reap blessings forevermore. Now, the paragraph to follow is giving kind of that picture of that day of reaping. And in many respects, if you go back to Revelation 11, you kind of see a precursor of this. If you look with me, as heavens begin to rejoice, and remember, the two witnesses were there on the street, they were murdered, and then they lie in the street for three days, and then all of a sudden, after three days, they're taken up in a heaven in the cloud. And then the world goes, "Whoa, I guess we're in trouble." And then all of heaven begins to say, "You're in trouble."

So, if you look in Chapter 11, it says,

(Revelation 11:15) "... "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

(Revelation 11:16) And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

(Revelation 11:17) saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”

Now, watch verse 18. How do the nations respond to this? Well, they're not real happy.

(Revelation 11:18) “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

So, in many respects, he's kind of given like that precursor of God bringing forth that judgment of the earth. In other words, who did you choose to follow? And we're going to see that picture unfold in that very unique way of reaping.

(Galatians 6:7) “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

And so, this whole concept of reaping and sowing has been throughout. Paul makes mention of even the church

and how some water and some plow, but God is the one that brings the increase. So, this analogy is used.

But if you look in Revelation 14:14, we're going to see, and the question is, who exactly is this, and why are they doing what they're doing in the way they're doing it?

Now, what I want you to notice is this, that verses 14 through 16 is one kind of judgment, and verses 17 through 20 is another kind. So, when you look at verses 17 through 20, which we're not going to go into today, but when you look at those verses, what you're going to see is an angel from heaven has a sickle. And he's reaping, and he's reaping the grapes, and specifically we even have it in one of our songs, the grapes of wrath are stored. So, it's a picture of the wrath and the judgment, and we know that's true because if you look at the very end, in verse 20,

(Revelation 14:20) “And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.”

That's a severe judgment. We'll be talking about that next week.

But if you look at verses 14 through 16, it's a judgment that really separates and distinguishes between those who are God's, more specifically, those who have bore fruit and those who have not. And the picture is not one of an angel bearing a sickle, but one like the Son of Man bearing the sickle.

So, if you read with me, it reads this way,

(Revelation 14:14) "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand."

"Stephanos," the golden crown, making reference to not only a kingly, but victorious. Now, the picture and the title itself is really only given to one person, and that's Jesus Christ alone. So, one like the Son of Man, one of the great themes of the Book of Ezekiel as you go through this.

But another place that it's found specifically, if you look with me in Daniel 7, you'll see it as well. But you have this

picture of the Ancient of Days and the one He's assigned to rule over the dominion of the world.

It's interesting the way it's put in Daniel 7:12,

“As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

(Daniel 7:13) I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven...”

Well, that sounds familiar, doesn't it? Because He was on the clouds in Revelation 14:14.

“... One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days

And was presented before Him.

(Daniel 7:14) And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom,

That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion...”

So, who are we talking about? Obviously, the Messiah.

There's a tendency to kind of skip over certain words

because we go, “Well, I'm not sure there's really any kind of meaning or any kind of purpose in this.” Don't do that.

But if you look with me in Revelation 14:14,

“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud...”

Now, “cloud” will be mentioned again, and then in verse 15, “Him who sat on the cloud,” will be seen again. And then in verse 16, “Then He who sat on the cloud”. Now, why would you repeat a word so many times? I mean why is it even necessary that I even know anything about clouds? And it's the graciousness of God as we've oftentimes talked about the fact that in creation God has given us physical pictures of what someday is going to be completely fulfilled. So, as we've talked about the fact that we actually have water on the earth, but one day we're going to see real water. That's going to be cool, isn't it? Real water, coming from the throne of God. Real water. And someday, we're going to see real trees. We're going to be in real paradise, which actually means manicured forest. We're going to be in a real forest. The beauty of all of that. You're going to see a real horse. Revelation 19, saints are coming on the white horses that

are flying through the air. Amazing. You're going to see a real one. So, there's so many things, and the same thing is true with, as Scripture reveals in, whether it's Psalm 19 or Lamentations; the sun is an interesting picture of the faithfulness of God; the steadfast love of the Lord and the lovingkindness of the Lord. Well, I mean, His grace is new every morning. Great is His faithfulness. And as Malachi will even say, the S-U-N of righteousness will rise. And Peter will emphasize the “day star” will arise in your heart. Well, what God has given us is this interesting thing of life that gives to the earth; it's this wonderful picture of light and warmth and life that is bestowed upon us. And every single morning, you can set your watch to it. You can plan on when it's going to happen. It's going to come out. And in Psalm 19, it says, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament show forth His handiwork. So, what do you think, that clouds don't have a purpose? The sun is pointing to something. The clouds are pointing to something.

Let me give you a couple of verses and passages that deal with the cloud. First of all, you go all the way back to

Exodus, and you don't need to turn there, but if you were to go all the way back to Exodus 13:21-22 in particular, it talks about the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites by day. Pillar of cloud. What's also interesting is that in 1 Timothy 3:15, it tells the church that it's the pillar and support of the truth. When you think of the pillar of the cloud, what was it doing? It was leading the Israelites to go where they needed to go. And in many respects, that's exactly what the church is doing as we're a pillar and support of the truth. We're leading and directing people in a way that they should go according to the Word of God. We're supporting the truth. We're proclaiming the truth. We're directing and leading people in the truth so that we become a pillar of sorts and a venue in which people are directed. So, oftentimes clouds will do that.

Matthew 17:5 reads this way, as Jesus was standing before the people,

(Matthew 17:5) “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!””

Now, once again, that's what the church does. The church proclaims, "This is the Son of God. He's the One that we should listen to." It's not a mistake that the voice came out of a bright cloud. I mean, God didn't have to come out of a bright cloud. But He chose to come out of a bright cloud because He's painting a picture for us.

Now, here's an interesting way of putting it,

(Matthew 24:30) "... the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory."

There's another passage; Matthew 26:64 almost verbatim repeats that declaration.

Acts 1:9 declares Christ was received up in a cloud.

Remember reading that?

And one of our favorites, 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Remember what it says? We shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. Oh, he put a "them" in the clouds. That's very interesting, isn't it? We're going to be caught up together with them in the clouds.

Revelation 1:7 will read this way,

"BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS..."

It almost sounds like the clouds are animate objects.

There may be people there.

“... and every eye will see Him...”

Paul will write in Hebrews 12:1,

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses...”

Oh, what is this cloud, this white, bright cloud? Well, read with me in Revelation 19.

It reads this way, if you'll look with me, as we see in verse 11,

(Revelation 19:11) “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True...”

What a grand picture this is. Is He alone? I say no, because if you drop down to verse 14, what does it read?

(Revelation 19:14) “And the armies which are in heaven...”

Let's see. Purple? Green? White.

“And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.”

What is this? It's a cloud of witnesses. And God and Christ, when He comes, He'll judge the world with His saints. It's an interesting picture as He brings them with Him and as He reaps from the earth at this particular time.

So, there's no mistake when we come to Revelation 14:14 that we're dealing with Christ and that He's the One with the sickle. I just want to establish that.

Now, if you look with me in verse 14 as well, in case you think that it's still not Him, He's wearing a crown. So, it's pretty clear who's in charge.

Now, as you go to verse 15, by the way, the emphasis is going to be that the declaration to reap is coming out of the temple. And the temple, of course, is a place where not only God abides, but it's where He abides with His saints. Go all the way back to Revelation 11 at the very beginning as He begins to distinguish those that are His.

And it says,

(Revelation 11:1) “Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.””

So, the cloud begins to come out of the temple, and the announcement comes, “It's time to reap.”

Read the passage with me.

(Revelation 14:15) “And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour...””

It's really an announcement of time. It's not the angel telling the Son of Man what to do. It's an announcement, “It's time. It's time.” How do we know it's time? Because the harvest is ready.

If you look, the passage reads this way,

“... “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come...””

How do we know that?

“... because the harvest of the earth is ripe.””

That's how we know it.

(Revelation 14:16) “Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.”

Now, the tendency is to perceive this as a harsh judgment because you have the sickle. You're going to see a sickle with the grapes. But this particular text is God reaping the deeds of the earth, and more specifically, those that are His.

If you look with me in Matthew 9, you don't see the harvesting in a negative light.

If you look with me in Matthew 9:37,

“Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”

(Matthew 9:38) Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

Now, you're not seeing a harvest in a harsh judgmental setting in this text. It's harvesting those that are His. It's a great picture if you understand what's happening in the passage.

So that John 4:35 will say something similar, “The fields are white for harvest,” and then he says in verse 36, “Reap for eternal life.”

So, Christ is involved in the reaping of His own. He's gathering together His saints with the clouds. So, He's gathering together His people. And that's the picture of this. It's not a harsh judgment. It's God calling out His through Christ Jesus. Remember, Christ is the Savior. Now, when the grapes of wrath are displayed, the angels are doing that. Why? Because they're the judges of the law. but Christ is going to be reaping as unto Himself.

There's a passage in Mark 4, if you'll look with me. Go all the way down to verse 26. It puts it in this same kind of context. You have to remember, Jesus is the one doing the reaping, right? Okay, so who's telling the parables? So, He's setting up for the end days with His parables. In other words, He's explaining what Revelation is about in the Gospels.

If you read with me in Mark 4:26,

“And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil;”

The earth is ripe. He's harvesting the earth.

(Mark 4:27) “and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know.

(Mark 4:28) The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.

(Mark 4:29) But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.””

It's time.

So, what you're going to see is that Christ is harvesting those that are His. Now, no place is this better explained than in Matthew 13.

So, if you turn there in Matthew 13. And just by way of reminder, that it's going to be Christ and He's going to be the One that's discerning those that are His. That's really the picture of the passage. There's a great passage in Romans 2:16.

It says,

(Romans 2:16) “on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

Who is it that's going to judge the things that can't be fully understood? Well, Christ is. And everything's going to be judged through the gospel. Somebody says, "I'm a pretty nice guy." "Well, did you receive the gospel?" "No." Then you're not a pretty nice guy. Through Christ you'll be judged. And the evidence of whether or not you are or aren't, is based on your receptivity to the gospel.

Acts 17:31 reads,

"because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Who's the one judging? The guy that defeated death. That's the guy.

So, as you look in Matthew 13, it should not surprise you that basically this whole chapter is parables of soils and of reaping. It starts off with a parable of the soils, and it goes from the soil of the roadside and the rocks and the thorns and the thistles and the good soil. And He begins to display who receives the word of God. Well, what's the evidence that it was good soil? The evidence is that the

good soil produced fruit. That's the evidence. How do we know if it was good soil? It produced fruit. Not thorns and thistles to choke it out, or the rocks. But fruit was born. It is in that setting that He gives you another parable, and this is the parable of the tares. This is the one I want to focus on.

Read with me in Matthew 13:24.

(Matthew 13:24) “Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

(Matthew 13:25) But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

(Matthew 13:26) But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.”

From what I understand, in some regions, because tares are so much like wheat, they literally call it false wheat. And what's interesting is that in the Latin, the word that is given for “darnel,” or the tears is literally a word describing intoxication. Now, the reason why that's given

is this, that one of the great problems with tares is that they produce a fungus that's toxic. And it's not only toxic, but it can become fatal. So that it's not as much the tare itself, but by virtue of the makeup of the tare, it produces a fungus that is not only intoxicating in the sense that it makes you woozy and dizzy, but it will kill you.

When you read in this particular passage, He's going to say, "They're going to come, and they're going to harvest the tares and they're going to throw them in the fire."

Why do you think they're throwing the tares in the fire? They're toxic. They're going to kill. The sinister thing about them is that they look just like wheat when they're growing up. The only way you can tell them apart is when they come to fruition. And when they come to fruition, that is to say they begin to produce fruit, or the wheat does, then you know that the other that's not producing fruit is the tare. That's the only way you could tell them apart.

This particular passage reads this way,

"But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

(Matthew 13:27) The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

(Matthew 13:28) And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'

(Matthew 13:29) But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.'

Jude talks about false prophets. Jesus talks about false prophets coming in Matthew 24. Peter will talk about false prophets, in 2 Peter, coming into the body of Christ. So good are they at doing what they do and deceiving; you can't tell them apart. One thing that you can say, I remember old Dr. Alwine says, "We're not judges, but we are fruit inspectors." And the one thing that you can say is, "But I don't see the fruit." And Jesus will say in Matthew, "You know how you can tell the false prophets from the true prophets? Their fruit." Look at the kind of fruit. Are they producing the love of Christ? Are you seeing the unselfishness of the gospel? Are you seeing the

peace that passes all understanding? Are you seeing the evidence of the Spirit of God? Because if you're not seeing the fruit of the Spirit, it's not real. But we are so deceived, and so deceived were the disciples, that they couldn't tell the difference between Judas and themselves. They thought he was one of them. "We entrusted him with the money box." The Scripture says he was a thief from day one. He'd been stealing from all of them. You can't tell the difference. And you can imagine if God went in and started pulling them out, they'd go, "Wait a minute, that's my leader." People get attached to people. God says, "Let it happen, I'll take care of it in the end."

The picture reads this way,

(Matthew 13:28) "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'"

(Matthew 13:29) But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.'

(Matthew 13:30) 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the

reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.""

Now, there are a couple of interesting things that you need to know about the difference between wheat and tare at the time of reaping and harvest. One obviously is that one bears fruit and the other doesn't. But how they respond in the bearing of fruit is very unique. Because when wheat is full and it bears its grain, guess what it does? It bows its head. And the tares shoot straight up. So, the tares are very easy to get first. It's the arrogance of man, the pride of man, and God says, "I'm going to get that out of the way so that I can reap." And really, when you think about it, when you and I begin to serve the Lord and we begin to produce the fruit of God, we really can only produce any kind of fruit if we're walking in humility. God is opposed to the proud; He gives grace to the humble. And we believe that it's the Spirit of God that produces any kind of fruit. Look, strive according to the flesh, of the flesh, you reap corruption, but you strive according to the Spirit, of the Spirit, you reap life. We

believe that if God doesn't do the work, there is no work. There is no blessing. There is no fruit. But that's what makes us profitable. That's what makes us productive, is we walk in that kind of faith. And the day is coming where Christ is going to reveal the works of man. And you're going to see it in terms of not man boasting of his glory, but of bowing his head and giving all to God. And God goes, "That's Mine." And He's going to bring us home. It's a great picture within the passage because you can see how the two are coming in together, but God and only the Spirit of God, well, the way it's put in Hebrews is this, "The sword of God, the word of God, is sharper than any two-edged sword." It goes in, and it cuts into the bone and the marrow, and it divides, and it separates, and it reveals the intent of the heart. So, Christ is coming.

The question that is given in the Gospel of Luke is, when He comes, will He find faith on the earth? Will He find you putting all of your trust in Him? God's looking. God knows what real is. He'll pick it up. And the safest that you'll be is if you'll get real with God. You'll know them by their fruits. So, what is your life like? Are you bearing fruit for

the kingdom of heaven? Real, genuine change in your life? Is it happening? If it is, you have a lot to look forward to.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we just ask that You will prepare our hearts to be real today as we come before You and we ask Your Spirit to move within us and to bring about productivity in our lives. We know it's not us. That You would use us is an amazing, miraculous thing. But we believe that if we do not grow weary, that in due season we'll reap. And we look forward to the day that You come as we bow our heads before You and say, "It's all Yours. You did this." You'll recognize us a million miles away, and we'll come home. We're looking forward to the day that we meet You in the clouds we'll be joined together with the saints that have gone before us.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. In a way the passage is saying, have you made a choice? In a way it's asking you, are you ready? Because whatever choice you've made, it does have a fruition; it does have an end;

it does have a ripening. And the day will come when it will be shown. Your choice.