

Cloud, Crown, Sickle • Revelation 14:14-16

INTRO • Read vs.

Glasses

1. As many of us age, our eyes don't work so well. We need to get glasses, contacts, or have lasic.
2. I had 20/20 vision for years. Then about 40 my near vision got blurry.
 - a. Had to hold pages further away, until it was passed my reach and got glasses.
 - b. Over the last few years, my **distance** vision's also blurred.
3. So now I need glasses most of the time. Without them, things are fuzzy.
4. The passage today is a spiritual set of glasses.
5. John sets before us a vision of Jesus in glory & calls us to see it as he did.

V. 14

¹⁴ Then I looked, & behold, a white cloud, & on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, & in His hand a sharp sickle.

1. In vs. 14-16, John has a vision that's a kind of **summary overview** of the final judgment.
 - a. Later chs fill in the details.
 - b. Here the focus is on the **agent** of that judgment. It's Jesus.
2. John says something here at the beginning we could easily miss.

Then I looked, & behold . . .

 - a. John's had many visions so far.
 - b. But he's only used this phrase to introduce 1 other; 1st v of this ch.
 - c. When he says, "**Behold**," that's not just poetic. He means it **literally**.
- d. John wants us to imagine in our mind's eye what he saw. That's why he describes it.
3. We'll come back to this at the conclusion.
4. For now, use your imagination to "see" what John describes.

What John Saw

1. John saw ...

A white cloud, & on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, & in His hand a sharp sickle.

2. "**Son of Man**" was Jesus's favorite label for Himself. >> **83 times** He used this title.
3. He did so for a few reasons.
 - a. **First**, Jesus knew His followers were going to wrestle over Who & What He was in later years.
 - b. And indeed the biggest challenge the Early Church faced was over **how to understand** the Incarnation.
 - 1) Was Jesus God or man or both?
 - 2) And if both, how do you put those things together?
 - 3) It took the Church 400 yrs to come up w/just the right words to describe the Incarnation.
 - c. What helped in sorting it out was Jesus' use of this term for Himself.
 - d. He is indeed Human; fully man & fully God.
 - e. **Second**, it was well-known to 1st C Jews as a title **for the Messiah**.
 - 1) The prophet Daniel had a vision of the Messiah and in 7:13 says...
"I was watching in the night visions, & behold, 1 like the Son of Man, coming w/the clouds of heaven!"
 - 2) Note that John **virtually repeats this** here in v14.
 - 3) He **wants us** to connect Daniel's vision with what he saw.
 - f. **Third**; as you know, Jesus regularly said things that blew people's minds.
 - 1) 1 of those was in John 5:26-27 when He said ...
As the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, & has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man."
 - 2) What Jesus said there, John has a vision of here in Rev. 14.
4. But take careful note of the word "like."
 - a. He saw 1 **LIKE** the Son of Man.
 - b. John saw Jesus. It's the same person he'd followed for 3 years. But He's changed somehow.

5. John was accustomed to seeing Jesus, **the man**.
 - a. In the Incarnation His glory & power were **veiled, hidden**.
 - b. In Phil 2, the Apostle Paul says it most eloquently.
 - 1) Jesus **humbled himself**, laid aside His glory & wrapped Himself in frail flesh.
 - 2) He didn't take some lofty position & demand authority.
 - 2) He took the **lowest** place, & became a humble servant.
 - 3) To accomplish our salvation He even embraced the humiliation of the Cross.
 - 4) That's the Son of Man John knew, for he **stood** at the foot of Jesus' cross.
 - 5) John realized all of Jesus' life had been **aimed** at that. He **came** to die.
 - c. But the cross **wasn't the end** of Jesus' story. It goes on.
 - d. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back to Heaven from whence He came.
 - e. The glory He laid aside to become man, **He's retaken**.
 - f. Humanity has been enthroned in deity.
6. John sees here when Jesus, The Son of Man who is also God the Son, comes to write the last chs & close the book.
7. John marks 3 things that reveal Jesus' glory.

a. **First** is a **cloud** -

Then I looked, & behold, a white cloud, & on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man.

- 1) This isn't a stratus, cirrus or cumulous sky-cloud.
- 2) It's that *visible manifestation of glory* that attends God's presence.
- 3) Often in Scripture when God appears a thick cloud surrounds Him.
- 4) It's a cloud of light called the **Shekinah**.
- 5) It's like the light in the sky after the sun sinks below the horizon.
- 6) Give that light **substance**, & that's the Shekinah.
- 7) When Jesus ascended back to heaven, He went up into a cloud –
 - a) Not a white, wispy, collection of water molecules.
 - b) It was the glory of heaven.
- 8) Angels then appeared to the disciples telling them when Jesus came again, it would be in the same manner He'd left In Glory!
- 9) In Luke 21, Jesus spoke of His return >>

²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power & great glory.
- 10) John has a vision of that here.

b. **Second**, John sees Jesus wearing a **golden crown** -

- 1) This is the **victor's** crown, not a royal diadem.
 - a) Winning athletes & victorious generals were given a wreath of laurel leaves.
 - b) Not long after their victory lap & parade; the leaves wilted, faded & fell off.
 - c) It reminded the athlete youth & it's strength is fleeting.
 - d) The general's victory could be turned around by someone stronger.
- 2) But THIS victor's crown is **gold**; the metal of kings.
- 3) Jesus is both Victor & King.
- 4) He didn't gain His throne by **inheritance**; He **earned** it; He **WON** it.
- 5) And no one can take it from Him for He is the Conquering King.

c. **Third**, John sees a **sickle** in Jesus' hand.

- 1) It's a tool used to reap grain; like this.
- 2) It speaks of harvest, which is what vs15&16 are; the end times harvest of evil.

¹⁵ & another angel came out of the temple, crying w/a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle & reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, & the earth was reaped.

- 3) That sickle is the symbol of Jesus' **authority** to judge the Earth.

The Contrast

1. Go back now to the first words of v14 ...

Then I looked, & behold ...

2. What John sees here stands in **sharp contrast** to what he'd seen in the 3 yrs he'd spent w/Jesus.

3. The 1st time Jesus came, it was in **obscurity**. > When He comes again, it's in immense **glory**.
 1st time, He arrived by way of a teenager's womb.
 He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. > Next time, He arrives on a cloud of brilliant light.
 1st time, He wore a crown of thorns. > When He comes again, it's with a crown of gold.
 1st time, the shame of the cross caused all to wag their heads. > When He comes again, every knee will bow & every tongue confess that He is Lord.
4. John was used to thinking of Jesus as the **Good Shepherd**.
 - a. It's the 10th ch, of his Gospel where Jesus calls Himself that.
 - b. So John was accustomed to thinking of Jesus holding a **shepherd's staff**.
 - c. It's a symbol of **loving care**.
5. John has to **add** to that image of Jesus now; for He also holds a **sharp sickle**.
 - a. The One who saves, will **judge** those who reject salvation.
 - b. Who is Jesus to you today; Shepherd or Judge?
 - c. Those are the only options open to you.

CONCLUSION • We Need This Vision

1. Christian: We **need** this vision of Jesus John had. That's why he says, "Behold."
2. Things weren't going well for the people of God when John wrote Revelation.
 - a. Persecution by the Romans was heating up.
 - b. Jewish believers were expelled from the synagogue.
3. John was the last of the Apostles.
 - a. He knew the Church needed him but here he was confined to this island prison of Patmos.
 - b. Then he has this vision & is reminded the God of heaven is Lord over history.
4. The same Jesus he'd known & served would come again as Earth's Glorious King.
5. Think about **where this is**: ch14—**right after chs12&13** w/their visions of the consummation of evil in the career of the antichrist & false prophet.
 - a. God wanted John to know that was not the end of the story; far from it!
 - b. After seeing all that, John sees **this!** A vision of the **glory & victory & power** of Christ.
6. **We need this vision too.**
7. As things wind down to the last days & the world stage is set for all the evil we read about here, we need to be reminded the story doesn't close w/evil in charge. It ends w/Jesus coming in glory!
8. When I was just a youngster, late on Christmas Eve I got up to go to the bathroom and caught my dad putting presents under the tree.
 - a. From the top of the stairs, I could see down into the living room.
 - b. He didn't know I caught him because I kept quiet.
 - c. Dad never wrapped gifts. He waited till we'd gone to bed, then put our gifts out.
 - d. Because they were unwrapped, I could see what he'd got me. It's what I'd asked for.
 - e. But it was still Christmas Eve & I knew I had to wait till Christmas morning before I could have them.
 - f. I went back to my room & crawled into bed; excited for morning to come.
 - g. I saw the gifts at a distance & I knew they were mine; I just had to wait a few hours for them.
9. **Faith** is seeing what's ours **at a distance** & living in the confidence in God's timing He'll give it.
10. This vision of Jesus is for you! One day your eyes **will see this**.
11. Today, **see it by faith** & live confidently in the knowledge Jesus is coming again!