A MESSAGE OF DESTINY

God has always spoken to His people, giving them whatever relevant truths they need to hear at the time. From the warning about the Flood (Gen. 6:7) to the first coming of Jesus (Dan. 9:24–27) to the pre-Advent judgment (Dan. 7:9, 10; 8:14) to final events before Christ’s return (Revelation 12–14), God has spoken to us many times throughout history. In these last days of humanity He has sent a special message to the world and to His people, designed to meet the need of the hour. In Revelation He depicts this message as being carried by three angels flying in midheaven with their urgent, end-time message to all the world.

The three angels’ message is Jesus’ final message of mercy, a call that leads us from trusting in our own righteousness to trusting Jesus’ righteousness to justify, sanctify, and, at the end of time, glorify us.

As always, though, we must choose Christ, choose to surrender to Him and to obey Him, and the choices we make now will indeed impact the choices we make in the final crisis ahead of us. Now is the time to prepare.
Write out Revelation 14:14–20 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out Revelation 14:14, 15. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
A HARVEST OF DESTINY

Revelation 14 is Jesus’ final message of mercy to a fallen and rebellious world that has, for about 6,000 years, been steeped in sin and evil. Revelation’s message of Christ’s righteousness, which delivers us from the condemnation of sin as well as from the grip of sin in our lives, will echo and reecho throughout the earth.

Jesus’ promise that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world” given in Matthew 24:14, finds its final fulfillment in Christ’s last-day message, in Revelation 14:6, which says the gospel is proclaimed to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”

Three times in Revelation 22 Jesus says that He is coming quickly (verses 7, 12, 20). In the context of His soon return our Lord adds, “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (verse 11). Revelation moves to one glorious climax where every person is led to decide for or against Christ.

Of course, every day, by our choices in even the so-called little things, we are choosing either for or against Jesus. It’s not likely that someone who constantly makes the wrong choices in their life now will suddenly at the final crisis come down on Jesus’ side, especially when the force of the whole evil world is against them. Now, today, and every day we must choose to be faithful to Christ and to His commandments. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3, NKJV). As Ellen G. White has said: “Jesus does not change the character at His coming. The work of transformation must be done now. Our daily lives are determining our destiny” (Last Day Events [Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992], p. 295).

In Revelation 14 there are two harvests. The harvest of golden grain represents the righteous, and the harvest of gory grapes represents the unrighteous or the lost. Both harvests are fully ripe. Every seed that was sown is fully mature.

“Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire” (Rev. 14:18). Here is the angel who commands the fires of God’s final judgment. The harvest is ripe. Sin has reached its limits. Rebellion has crossed the line of God’s mercy. As evil and bad as things have been, it’s going to get even worse before it’s all over. Our loving God has done everything He can for us, which includes offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for our sin. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21; see also Gal. 3:13).

What more could God have done beyond that cross? There is nothing more grace can do to redeem those who have repeatedly rejected the Holy Spirit.

Here is the urgent prophetic message of Revelation 14: Every seed has gone to harvest. The grain is fully ripe, and the grapes are fully ripe. The people of God reveal His image of grace, compassion, mercy, and love before the universe. The followers of the evil one reveal greed, lust, jealousy, and hate. The character of Jesus is revealed in one group and the character of Satan in the other.

The universe will see in the people of God a revelation of righteousness that, perhaps, no generation before it has ever witnessed. In contrast to the righteousness of Christ revealed in His people, the universe will see the full results of rebellion against God. Wickedness, evil, sin, and lawlessness will be on full display before human beings and angels. The contrast between good and evil, right and wrong, obedience and disobedience, will be apparent to all the universe, to both humans and angels.
THE SON OF MAN

Revelation 14 contains the key texts regarding the Lord’s last-day message to His people and to the world. Central to it all is the return of Jesus, the fulfillment of His promise that “you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62).

Jesus used the term “Son of Man” to refer to Himself 82 times in the Gospels. It was one of His favorite titles. He used it as an expression of endearment to identify with us. He is a Savior who understands us, has experienced our temptations, and has passed through our trials. He is the “Son of Man” who is returning to take us home. The Jesus who comes for us is the same Jesus who lived among us. He is qualified to redeem us because He became one of us, and as one of us, He met the full fury of Satan’s temptations and was victorious.

In Matthew 16:27; 24:27, 30; and 25:31, 32, notice the following elements: (1) Jesus, the Son of Man, is coming in glory with His angels; (2) He will divide the sheep from the goats (judgment); (3) the destiny of the nations and of all humanity will be decided for eternity.

Think about the term “Son of Man” and what it says of Christ’s humanity. Though God, He became just like us, but unlike us, He never sinned. What amazing hope does this offer you in terms of knowing God’s love for us and knowing that He can relate to your struggles and give you victory over them?

John states that “I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man” (Rev. 14:14). When Jesus ascended to heaven, Luke records in Acts 1:9 that as the disciples stood gazing up at the sky, “He [Jesus] was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” The angels then declared to the amazed disciples in Acts 1:11: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Jesus ascended in a cloud of angels and will return in a cloud of angels. Furthermore, there is a divine truth embedded in this passage that may not be apparent: this “same Jesus,” the “Son of Man,” the one who walked the dusty streets of Nazareth, ministered in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, healed the sick in the villages of Israel, and preached on the grassy hillsides of Galilee is coming again.

The Son of Man is also mentioned in light of the judgment in Daniel 7. Daniel views the seating of the heavenly court with ten thousand times ten thousand angelic, heavenly beings gathered around the throne. The judgment is set and the books—the celestial records of our lives—are opened before the universe. In Daniel 7:13, 14, the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days, the Father, and receives His eternal kingdom. The judgment reveals before the entire universe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have done everything possible to save all humanity. This judgment vindicates not only the saints but God’s own character against the false charges of Satan (see Job 1; 2; Ps. 51:1–4).

(Cont. from inSight, p. 23.):

If you have become estranged and have failed to be Bible Christians, be converted; for the character you bear in probationary time will be the character you will have at the coming of Christ. If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth. The traits of character you cherish in life will not be changed by death or by the resurrection. You will come up from the grave with the same disposition you manifested in your home and in society. Jesus does not change the character at His coming. The work of transformation must be done now. Our daily lives are determining our destiny. (Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home [Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1952], 16.)
THE EXPERIENCE OF VICTORY

John describes Jesus as the “Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle” (Rev. 14:14). The word for “crown” is stephanos, a victor’s crown. When an athlete won an important contest, he was given a stephanos, a crown of honor, of glory, of victory.

Jesus once wore a crown of thorns, symbolizing shame and mockery. He was once despised and rejected by men. He was reviled, ridiculed, spat upon, beaten, and whipped. But now He wears a crown of glory and comes again, this time as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In Revelation 14:15 the angel comes from the presence of God in the glory of the temple and says, “It’s time. The harvest is fully ripe.” In other words, “Go, get Your children and bring them home.”

Jesus repeatedly uses illustrations from agriculture in the New Testament. On more than one occasion He uses the symbolism of a ripening harvest to illustrate the growth of the seed of the gospel in the lives of His people.

“The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase” (Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900, 1941], pp. 65, 66).

Subtly, almost unnoticed at first, our characters and our personalities change based on the seeds that we are sowing in our minds. Sow good seeds, and you will produce good fruit. Sow the evil seeds of this world, and you will produce the fruit of this world in your character. If we sow indifference to God and His spiritual values and priorities, we reap the fruit of indifference: apathy, spiritual complacency, and frustration in our spiritual lives. This is why those who think, Well, I know that one day final persecution will come—the “mark of the beast” and so forth, but I will get it together when it does, are choosing a very dangerous path. God calls us now, at this moment, to surrender our lives to Him. The longer one delays responding to the Holy Spirit, the harder one’s soul becomes to the promptings of God, and the more susceptible to falling for and believing in the lies of the evil one it becomes.

The ripening of the golden grain represents all those who are transformed by grace, motivated by love, and living obedient lives to the glory of Christ’s name. Their hearts are one with Jesus’ heart, and all they want is what He wants.
THE DESTINY OF CHARACTER

By the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unvarying certainty. The reaping testifies to the sowing. Here no pretense is tolerated. Men may deceive their fellow men and may receive praise and compensation for service which they have not rendered. But in nature there can be no deception. On the unfaithful husbandman the harvest passes sentence of condemnation. And in the highest sense this is true also in the spiritual realm. It is in appearance, not in reality, that evil succeeds. The child who plays truant from school, the youth who is slothful in his studies, the clerk or apprentice who fails of serving the interests of his employer, the man in any business or profession who is untrue to his highest responsibilities, may flatter himself that, so long as the wrong is concealed, he is gaining an advantage. But not so; he is cheating himself. The harvest of life is character, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come.

The harvest is a reproduction of the seed sown. Every seed yields fruit after its kind. So it is with the traits of character we cherish. Selfishness, self-love, self-esteem, self-indulgence, reproduce themselves, and the end is wretchedness and ruin. “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Galatians 6:8. Love, sympathy, and kindness yield fruitage of blessing, a harvest that is imperishable.

In the harvest the seed is multiplied. A single grain of wheat, increased by repeated sowings, would cover a whole land with golden sheaves. So widespread may be the influence of a single life, of even a single act. (Ellen G. White, Education [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903], 108, 109.)

In the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. The reaping will testify as to what the sowing has been. The slothful worker is condemned by his work. The harvest bears witness against him. So in spiritual things: the faithfulness of every worker is measured by the results of his work. The character of his work, whether diligent or slothful, is revealed by the harvest. It is thus that his destiny for eternity is decided.

Every seed sown produces a harvest of its kind. So it is in human life. We all need to sow the seeds of compassion, sympathy, and love; for we shall reap what we sow. Every characteristic of selfishness, self-love, self-esteem, every act of self-indulgence, will bring forth a like harvest. He who lives for self is sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh he will reap corruption. (White, Christ's Object Lessons, 84.)

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911], 555.)

(Cont. on p. 21.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How do you understand that “at every stage of development our life may be perfect”? What does that mean, especially when we can see our faults and defective characters now?

What is the relationship between being saved by grace and growing in grace in the context of Revelation 14:14–20 and the harvest principle?

Discuss the elements necessary for the growth of plants and compare that to our spiritual growth. What are the similarities? What can we learn that we can apply to our own lives?

Why is the title “Son of Man” an encouragement in the judgment hour as we anticipate the second coming of Christ?

Why is it comforting to realize that a Man, a Human Being, is up there representing us in the judgment?