

Joel 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

Analysis

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe—God commands His angelic reapers to begin judgment. The Hebrew shilchu maggol (שְׁלַחוּ מַגָּל, "send forth the sickle") uses agricultural imagery for judgment. The maggol (מַגָּל) is a curved harvesting blade for cutting grain. "For the harvest is ripe" (ki vashel qatsir, קִיּוֹשׁלְקִצְיָר) uses bashel (בִּשְׁלָל), meaning fully ripe, mature, ready. When crops reach full maturity, delay means rot and waste—immediate harvest is mandatory. Applied to judgment, this means the nations' wickedness has reached full measure; God's patience is exhausted; the time for harvest-judgment has arrived.

Come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow—the imagery shifts from grain harvest to grape harvest. "The press" (gat, גַּת) is the winepress where grapes were trampled to extract juice. "The fats" (yeqavim, יְקָבִים) are vats receiving the grape juice. Both are "full" and "overflowing" (heshiqhu, הַשִּׁקְעָה)—imagery of abundance. But this isn't joyful vintage celebration; it's judgment. The winepress symbolizes God's wrath being poured out (Lamentations 1:15; Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 14:19-20, 19:15). Trampling grapes represents crushing enemies in judgment. The overflowing vats indicate the magnitude of judgment—vast numbers facing divine wrath.

For their wickedness is great (Hebrew ki rabbah ra'atam, קִיּוֹשׁלְקִצְיָר רַבָּה רָאַתָּם)—this phrase explains why judgment is necessary and unstoppable. The adjective rabbah (רַבָּה, "great/abundant") describes the wickedness (ra'ah, רָאַה) as extensive,

multiplied, overwhelming. The harvest and winepress imagery communicate that sin has reached full ripeness—delay is impossible. Genesis 15:16 uses similar language: "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." God waited 400 years until Canaanite wickedness reached the point demanding judgment. Joel declares that the nations' wickedness has now reached that tipping point. Revelation 14:14-20 employs identical imagery—an angel with a sharp sickle harvests earth's grain (verse 15-16), then another angel harvests the vine of the earth and throws it into "the great winepress of the wrath of God" where blood flows in staggering quantity (verses 18-20).

Historical Context

Harvest and winepress imagery would resonate powerfully with Joel's agricultural audience. Grain harvest (barley in spring, wheat in early summer) and grape harvest (late summer/early fall) were major annual events requiring intensive labor and communal effort. The winepress involved trampling grapes—physically stomping them with bare feet, crushing them to release juice that flowed into collection vats. Isaiah 63:1-6 depicts God returning from Edom with garments stained red like one who has trodden the winepress alone—judgment imagery. Joel applies this familiar imagery to eschatological judgment, creating vivid mental pictures of divine wrath executed on assembled nations.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does harvest imagery illustrate the principle that sin, when allowed to reach full maturity, inevitably brings judgment?
2. What does the winepress symbolism teach about the thoroughness and severity of God's wrath against unrepentant sin?

3. How should understanding judgment as the natural "harvest" of sown wickedness shape both evangelism and personal holiness?

Interlinear Text

רְדוּ בְּ אֹזֶן קָצֵר בְּשֵׁלֶחֶת מִתְּמָגֵל כִּי לְבָשָׁלֵחַ
 Put ye in the sickle is ripe for the harvest come get you down
 H7971 H4038 H3588 H1310 H7105 H935 H3381

כִּי מִלְאָה בְּתַת מִלְאָה בְּשֵׁלֶחֶת יְמִינָה פִּיקְבָּם
 is full for the press overflow the fats is great
 H3588 H4390 H1660 H7783 H3342 H3588 H7227

רְשָׁעָתָם:

for their wickedness
 H7451

Additional Cross-References

Mark 4:29 (Parallel theme): But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

Hosea 6:11 (Parallel theme): Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Isaiah 63:3 (Parallel theme): I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

Jeremiah 51:33 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

Matthew 13:39 (Evil): The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Genesis 18:20 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

Deuteronomy 16:9 (Parallel theme): Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn.

Lamentations 1:15 (Parallel theme): The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress.

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