

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Source Material: *Come, Lord Jesus* by Mark Braaten

Week 10: November 22, 2009

Read Revelation 14:1-5

Helpful Notes

“Who are these 144,000? They are identified as ‘first fruits for God and the Lamb,’ the first of the redeemed, perhaps the martyrs. It also seems to represent the entire people of God. These are the ones who have conquered, who now share in the victory and glory of God.

John points out in verse 4 that these people are virgins. This is a problematic verse. Don’t take this literally, as if John were making some sort of anti-sexuality statement. The 144,000 are better understood as an army, the army of God. In the Old Testament, soldiers were expected to refrain from sex before battles. These people are God’s army who have fought a holy war, and therefore identified as having refrained from sex.”(Braaten, pg. 103)

“Notice the contrast that John is setting up in chapters 13 and 14. On the one side are the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. On the other side are the Lamb and his followers. What John is not so subtly saying is, “Pick a side!” . . . No compromise is possible. We as modern readers do well to see that John’s words also raise the same challenge for us. We modern day Christians are often tempted to compromise our Christianity with the ways of our culture. . . . To be faithful to Jesus means putting Jesus first, no matter what.”(Braaten, pg. 104)

What does it mean to you to put Jesus first in your life?

Read Revelation 14:6-13

Angels

1. 1st Angel comes bringing good news,
 - Reminding us that focus of Revelation is to redeem God’s people
2. 2nd Angel comes to announce that Babylon (Rome) has fallen
 - Asks if we really want to stay with Rome knowing it will be destroyed
3. 3rd Angel announces that those who pick Rome over God will face punishment
 - Harsh language invites us to pick God’s side

John “and the people of his churches were confronted daily with the image of Rome’s flying Victory goddess on monuments and altars in their own cities. . . . Is it too far-fetched to imagine that the Revelations’ flying messenger might be intended as a deliberate challenge to Roman flying Victory goddesses announcing another military victory? The message or ‘eternal gospel’ that Revelation’s flying messenger proclaims is the opposite of Rome’s. it is the proclamation that the ultimate glory and Victory belong to God, not to Rome or to any empire.” (Rossing, pg. 107)

Have you ever encountered “angels” in your life bringing good news and how have they led you to follow God’s ways?

Braaten's Observation on Chapters 13 and 14

“Sometimes our culture conforms to Christian values, or at least is not in conflict with the teachings of Christ. But there will be times when being faithful to Jesus will put us at odds with the values of our culture, and we will need to decide where our ultimate allegiance lies. The challenge of the book of Revelation is to dare to be faithful to Jesus, no matter what.” (Braaten, pg. 107)

The constant challenge for us as thinking Christians, is to discern what it means to be “faithful to Jesus.” Can you give an example of how one of the resources God gives us has helped you to be faithful to Jesus?

Read Revelation 14:14-20

John has been pressing the people to make a choice and now is showing the results of our choice. The seriousness of the imagery involved reinforces the importance of the choice we are making. We are either choosing salvation or judgement.

The image of Jesus descending on cloud is reference to Daniel 7:13-14 and is meant to remind us of Jesus power and place in the world. As in other places, we do well to look past the literal interpretation and see the power of the imagery.

Daniel 7:13-14(NRSV)

As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.