

## **A Study of the Book of Revelation**

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

Week 4: October 4, 2009

Chapters 2 and 3 address specific messages to the seven different churches. Each message is unique, but it follows a basic pattern, “which can be summarized as follows:

- Address to the angel/congregation (including identification of Christ)
- Words of rebuke, commendation and encouragement
- Call to listen and promise to the conquerors

Three additional things need to be pointed out about these messages. First, these messages are addressed to the “angel of the church.” . . . However, the message is clearly meant for the entire congregation. Second, at the end of each of the seven messages, John refers to the faithful as ‘conquerors.’ . . . As we will see as we read into the book, we conquer by being faithful to Christ, even to the point of dying for the faith. Third, these messages are from Jesus and are given through John.” (Braatan, pg. 25)

### **Read Revelation 2:1-11**

*What do you hear John saying to the church at Ephesus?*

- Commendations?
- Rebukes?
- Calling ?

*How would you respond to the following statement of Braaten concerning the message to the church in Ephesus?*

“The message to Ephesus raises an issue that is important for the church throughout the ages. Love must not be sacrificed for doctrinal correctness. Ancient congregations and modern congregations all too easily get caught up in theological disputes, and in the process lose sight of compassion. The church must strive to be both correct in doctrine and diligent in love.” (Braatan, pg. 27)

*How do you think the word to Ephesus compares to the word to Smyrna?*

*What message do you think John is trying to proclaim to the people of Smyrna?*

### **Read Revelation 2:12-29**

To this point, Jesus has been described as the one who holds the stars, the one who is first and last, and now the one who has the two-edged sword. *Why do you think John doesn't simply say these are the words of Jesus? Why do you think he uses the two-edged sword image (for a clue: re-read verse 13)?*

In verse 2:14, John addresses two issues with the church in Pergamum, eating meat sacrificed to idols and practicing fornication. Braaten believes that the reference to fornication is not simply a reference to sexuality, but a reference to emperor worship - being unfaithful to God. Braaten then offers the following, "These two issues of meat sacrificed to idols and emperor worship raised a basic question for the Christians, the question of accommodation. When does faith allow Christians to participate in society, and when does faith dictate that Christians must refuse to participate in society?"(Braatan, pg. 30) According to Braatan, this question of accommodation of culture and faithfulness to Jesus will become a central issue for Revelation.

*How do we as children of God live in the world without being of the world?*

\* *Helpful Note for understanding Revelation* : "Jezebel is accused of being a false prophetess. But there is no reference to her making inaccurate predictions about the future. What makes her a false prophetess is that she is incorrectly teaching people about the life of faith. As has been mentioned before, prophecy for John is about teaching and exhortation that leads people in faith."(Braaten, pg. 33)

### **Read Revelation 3:1-6**

*What do you think John's issue is with Sardis?*

### **Read Revelation 3:7-14**

*What is different about the word to Philadelphia?*

### **Read Revelation 3:14-22**

*Laodicea is being accused of having a lukewarm faith. If they are indeed too comfortable and shallow in their faith, how might they go about repenting as John calls them to do?*

### **Message Summary**

In reading Chapters 2 and 3, it becomes clear that Jesus, through John, is using the situations in these seven churches to address three main issues which were and continue to be problems for God's people.

1. Persecution                      Offers a message of hope to oppressed people assuring them that Christ is victorious
2. Cultural Accommodation              Message of warning to those who adopt unfaithful ways and a call to obedience even if it means standing up to the world around us
3. Complacency                      Call to those who are living comfortably to actively follow Jesus