

A Study of the Book of Revelation

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

Week 6: October 25, 2009

Read Revelation 6:1-8 - What do the four horsemen mean to you?

Braaten offers this explanation of the four horsemen:

Horseman 1 - Questions our safety and security: Outside invaders / national security

Horseman 2 - Questions our safety and security: Individuals who would do us harm

Horseman 3 - Questions our safety and security: Economic hardships

Horseman 4 - Questions our safety and security: Individual Mortality

“Try and imagine how this message would sound in the first century Laodicea. Laodicea was the rich, self-sufficient congregation. They have most likely made their peace with Roman ways; they are content in their own security. This is the Pax Romana in ancient history, a time to depend on Rome for growth and protection. The Christians in Laodicea are content and secure. But now John says, ‘Wait a minute. Are you really as secure as you think?’ With each horseman John systematically pricks the Christians’ sense of security. . . . The Christians thought they could be secure without a deep devotion to God. So, John says, let’s see how secure you are. The horsemen are meant to remind people of how tenuous life really is.” (pg. 54-55)

Braaten goes on to raise this question for us as Americans. “Our day is sometimes called the Pax Americana. We think we are safe and secure. Too often we don’t concern ourselves with directing our lives to God, for we see ourselves as self-sufficient. But John’s words challenge us.” (pg. 55) *What do you think the four horsemen say to us today?*

Read Revelation 6:9-17

Have you ever experience persecution for your faith?

The fifth and sixth seals speak of persecution and judgement upon those who refuse to obey God’s word. “ All of this language of judgement raises a question for twenty-first century Christians. Does God indeed judge? We live in an age that tends to say no. . . . As God reclaims his world, he will judge all that will not return to him. It needs to be stressed that God’s deepest desire is that all people return to him. All through the book of Revelation, even in scenes of judgement, there will be many, many opportunities for repentance. . . . But the book is also clear that if evil will not repent, it will be destroyed as God brings about the new heaven and new earth?” (pg. 58-59) *Why do you think people today tend to avoid the concept of judgement?*

Do you think the issue of judgement overshadows the opportunities for repentance?

Read Revelation 7:4-17

Based on 7:4, how many people are sealed/saved?

Based on 7:9, how many people are sealed/saved?

“How do we reconcile these two visions . . . ? Richard Bauckham has a helpful insight here. That is, these two visions point to the same reality. John is doing the same thing here that he did in chapters 4 and 5. In chapters 4 and 5 John heard a lion (Old Testament promise), and he saw a Lamb (the fulfillment in Christ). John lifted up the Old Testament promise, but pointed to an even greater fulfillment in Christ. Now in this chapter, John does the same thing. John hears 144,000 from Israel (the Old Testament promise), and he sees a great multitude (the fulfillment in Christ). John is once again saying that God is faithful to all his Old Testament promises. But the fulfillment of the promises in Christ will be even greater than Israel expected, as multitudes of people are saved.” (pg. 60-61)

Read Revelation 8:1-2

If after the sixth seal was opened, the earth was judged and after the seventh seal was opened, there is silence (calling to mind the Lord resting on the seventh day), what would you expect to happen next?

“This is a good place to reassert a key concept in approaching Revelation. That is, the book does not proceed in chronological fashion. There is rather a repetition in the book as John returns to and redevelops ideas that have previously been presented. . . . There is a repetition, an intensifying of the message. Perhaps we ought to think of Revelation in terms of a hymn, with a repetition of verses and refrains as the message is sounded again and again.”(pg. 63)

Can you think of an example of a hymn that repeats a message in multiple ways during the course of the hymn?