

Revelation 14 "The Lamb"

People need hope. Think about that statement. What are some evidences that you have seen this past week of the fact that people need hope?

Discuss: Share together...

Here's good news. We have what people need! We have a message of hope to share concerning the person and past work of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth, died in the place of sinners, and conquered the grave. There is hope for hopeless sinners because of what Jesus did.

But there's also hope because of what Jesus will do, His future work. And that's what we're learning about in our current walk through the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation contains a wonderful message of hope. The casual reader might miss the hope-message since the expressions of future judgments are so vividly portrayed.

But, yes, we have a message of hope. Man is having his day now. And it's going to get worse. *But...we know the end of the story!* It's found in the book of Revelation.

Tonight we'll be seeing an amazing, hope-giving account presented in chapter 14. To appreciate it fully, we must re-sketch the backdrop.

Discuss: What have we seen so far in the first chapters of Revelation, especially chapters 6-12? What's been happening?

The Setting:

*Chapters 6-11 present the Lord's future judgments upon the earth.

--Seven "seal" judgments

--Seven "trumpet" judgments

*Chapters 12-13 record how the enemy will respond to the Lord's judgments.

--Satan will energize two "beasts" (the first representing a powerful secular authority, and the second a deceiving religious authority).

--People will follow the deception of the beasts, and receive the mark of the beast.

--The second beast will attempt to kill all who refuse to worship the first beast.

There's the setting. It will be a bleak time on the planet for the people of God. And yet that's not the end of the story, is it? At this very point, John records four scenes in his vision of the end times that are a source of tremendous hope. We'll find them in Revelation 14.

Scan through chapter 14 and you'll notice John uses five observational phrases:

v 1 -- Then I looked

v 2 -- And I heard

v 6 -- Then I saw

v 13 -- Then I heard

v 14 -- I looked

These phrases act like "handrails" to guide us through the five movements of chapter 14.

I. John saw the Lamb (1).

A. Where was He? Standing on Mount Zion (either a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem or the earthly city; I prefer the former)

B. Who was with Him? 144,000

C. What was true of the ones with Him?

--they had *His* name on their foreheads (in contrast with the beast's mark in 13:16)

--they also had His *Father's* name

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II. John heard a sound from heaven (2-5).

John specifically says the sound came from *heaven*. As with other heavenly images earlier in the book, we once again see the repeated use of the term "like" (3 times in verse 2, NIV).

A. What did it sound like (2)?

1. *It was like the roar of rushing waters.*

2. *It was like a loud peal of thunder.*

3. *It was like harpists playing their harps.*

Discuss: What do those images signify about this sound?

B. What was true of the song (3)?

1. *It was a new song.*

See: 5:9--what's the content of the "new song"? It's about the blood of Christ, about redemption.

2. *It was sung before the throne.*

Q: Who listened according to verse 3?

3. *Only the 144,000 could learn it.*

Angels cannot sing this song. The unregenerate certainly cannot. But the 144,000 can. Why? What does verse 4 say is true of them? They have been *redeemed*.

This is key. The "new song" is about redemption. Only those who have been redeemed can sing it. Oh, others can mouth the words, but to sing it with meaning a person must first experience the undeserved wonder of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

C. What was true of the 144,000 (4-5)?

1. *They kept themselves pure.*

Literally. And perhaps figuratively--they didn't defile themselves by entering into compromising relationships with the pagan world system.

There is a doctrine of biblical separation. When the Lord saves us, He commands us to live a different life than the world lives.

2. *They follow the Lamb.*

Where?

3. *They were redeemed and offered to God.*

4. *Their mouths and lives were marked by truth.*

Application: This is a vivid portrait of a radical Christian, isn't it? But the "radical" Christian is the norm. Examine the list carefully. Are these characteristics true of your life?

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III. John saw three angels (6-12).

A. The first angel made a proclamation (6-7).

1. *He proclaimed the eternal gospel.*

That's an interesting phrase. What's the content of the eternal gospel? See verse 7...

2. *He commanded everyone to fear God and give Him glory.*

Q: According to the angel, why does God deserve glory?

B. The second angel made a proclamation (8).

***Fallen is Babylon the Great!*

Nebuchadnezzar referred to the "great Babylon" in Daniel 4:30.

Q: What does it refer to here? See options in *NIVsb* footnote...

C. The third angel made a proclamation (9-12).

1. *If anyone worships the beast, he will wish he hadn't (9-11).*

Q: Why? What will happen to those who do?

2. *The saints are encouraged to endure (12).*

Note: Similar words appeared in 13:10.

Q: What are two characteristics of genuine Christians given here?

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IV. John heard a voice from heaven (13).

A. What is true of those who die in the Lord?

They are blessed.

B. In what way are they blessed?

Two ways. One, they will rest from their labors. Two, their deeds will follow them.

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V. John saw two sickles (14-20).

The "harvest" theme in Scripture is often associated with judgment. So here...

A. The first sickle was held by one "like a son of man" (14-16).

Q: What's the description of Him? Verse 14

1. *He was told, "The time to reap has come (15)."*

2. *So he swung his sickle, and the earth was reaped (16).*

B. The second sickle was held by an angel (17-20).

Another angel gave him a message...

1. *He was told, "The grapes are ripe (18)."*

2. *So he swung his sickle and gathered the grapes (19).*

3. *Then he threw the grapes into the winepress of God's wrath (19b-20).*

Ladd comments (202), "The flow of blood is incredible, literally conceived; one thousand six hundred stadia is a distance of about a hundred and eighty-four miles--the entire length of Palestine. The entire land is pictured as being inundated in blood to a depth of about four feet. The thought is clear: a radical judgment that crushes every vestige of evil and hostility to the reign of God."

Lehman Strauss writes (275), "This is the end of man's glory and Satan's rule in the earth. It will be the worst slaughter of human life in all of history."

Ezekiel describes the awfulness of this event by saying that seven years will be required to rid the earth of the weapons of warfare amassed by the nations, and seven months to bury the dead (Strauss;

Ezek 39:8-16).

Josephus said that when Titus and his Roman army destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, the dead bodies made the whole city run down with blood (Strauss, 275). But that will pale compared to the coming slaughter.

Discussion:

1. If you are a believer, what kind of effect ought this study to have on you?
2. How about if you are a non-believer? A comment by Lehman Strauss is worth pondering carefully (275), "Let the unsaved who read these pages turn to Christ at once and thereby escape the unsparing wrath to come. Men ought to praise God that in this day of grace sinners can find refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ. Today God's mercy is extended to all. Oh, yield to the wooing of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ at once."