

Behold the Lamb!

Revelation 14:1

November 18, 2007

Introduction

Read Revelation 14:1 – Pray

What brings you hope? Prospect of a new job, pay increase, promotion, your kids getting into a good college so that they can get a good job; perhaps it is the right political party getting into office...Certainly the Lord can use any of these things to bring hope. But hope that comes from him always points us to something beyond what the world has to offer. If you hope rest only in these things you are a prime candidate for hopelessness.

What makes you hopeless? Losing your job; family problems – kids aren't turning out, parents don't understand; the utter immorality of the culture we live in... We all can identify with feeling hopeless at some points in our lives.

The book of Revelation is a book of hope for Christians who find themselves in seemingly hopeless situations. It is a call to persevere to the end no matter the circumstances you go through. It is a reminder that God is on the throne and is orchestrating all the world's events according to his will and purpose. It does this by giving a graphic picture of future events. Some absolutely horrific. Some absolutely breathtaking in their beauty and glory. While we may be spared the horrific events contained in this book, we have something to learn because Christians everywhere at all times in history have experienced persecution, suffering, trials, and at times hopelessness.

Revelation 14:1 gives the reader hope as our attention is drawn to the victorious Lamb of God. This morning I want to focus on the significance of the Lamb, the significance of Mount Zion, and the significance of the 144,000, especially as we contrast it with chapter 13.

Chapter 13

John describes the roles that the beast out of the sea (the beast) and the beast coming out of the earth (the false prophet) will play in leading people astray in the worship of the beast. Those refusing to worship the beast will be killed.

Read chapter 13

The Stark Contrast – the Lamb

In 14:1 John turns our attention to a new scene. This scene stands in stark contrast as we are invited to focus on the Lamb. We move from the ferocious beasts to a seemingly meek Lamb. At first glance you might think that this precious lamb has no power against these vicious beasts, but we should never judge a book by its cover. (Indiana Jones??)

John uses the metaphor of a lamb to describe Jesus all through the book of Revelation.

- o In chapter 5 the lamb is pictured as one who has been slain and was worthy not only to take the scroll, but to be worshiped as well.
- o In 6:16 we see that the Lamb will release wrath
- o In 7:14 and 12:11 we see that the Lamb has shed his blood for the salvation of mankind.

- o In 7:17 he is the Lamb who will become the shepherd. This brings to our mind John chapter 10 where Jesus says that he is the good shepherd and that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

This idea of Jesus as the Lamb of God is consistent with the wider NT understanding. In 1 Peter 1:18-20 we read, *And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.* Hebrews also speaks of the sacrifice that Christ made once and for all when he laid down his life. Because of his sacrifice there is no need for more sacrifices. He has completed God's salvation.

Of course the NT understanding of the Messiah taking the role of a sacrificial lamb springs from the OT. Isaiah 53:4-8 *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*

Also see this idea in Passover lamb.

John calls us to focus on the Lamb. But not just any lamb. The lamb who gave his life to redeem his people. The lamb who is worthy to be praised. The Lamb who is victorious because even though he died, he rose again. The Lamb who is none other than Jesus Christ, the son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the one who has created all things, who sustains all things, the one who is the supreme High God. While it may seem that this Lamb stands no chance in comparison to the beasts, according to God's plan, the Lamb has already won. Behold the Lamb!

The Stark Contrast – Mount Zion

The first beast came up out of the sea and the second from the earth. But the Lamb is standing on Mt. Zion. What is the significance of Mount Zion?

Most commentators see a link between this passage and Psalm 2 – read whole Psalm. Verse 6, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." The idea of the Psalm is one of the King judging the evil and setting up his kingdom. This fits the contrast between chapters 13 and 14 well. In chapter 13 the beast and the false prophet are ruling, punishing the believers for not worshiping the beast. In chapter 14, Christ stands as the one who will right the wrongs and bring justice to the earth. But there is more to the Biblical understanding of Mount Zion.

The Biblical understanding of Mount Zion starts with the capture of Zion by King David in 2 Samuel 5:7. Literally, it was a fortress (2 Samuel 5:7); the home for David (2 Samuel 5:9); called "The City of David" (2 Samuel 5: 9); the place where the Ark rested (2 Samuel 6:12). In the Psalms it is the dwelling place of the Lord (Psalm 132:13); endures forever (125:1); the throne of

the Messianic King (2:6). The prophets further develop the understanding of Mount Zion. Isaiah, in speaking of the end times, says that Mount Zion will be the highest mountain on the earth and a place where all the nations will stream to (Isaiah 2:2-3). He also says concerning the last days, that Mount Zion is the place where the Lord Almighty will reign (23:24). The prophets reveal that Mount Zion is the place of deliverance. The Lord says in Isaiah 59:20, "The Redeemer will come to Zion." And in Joel 2:32, "for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance."

While we wait for the return of Christ where he will set up his kingdom in the literal Mt. Zion, Jerusalem, we must not miss the fact that the NT pictures Jesus as already reigning from the heavenly Mt. Zion. Hebrews 12:18-24 elaborates upon the deliverance that comes from Zion. It does so by comparing Mount Zion with Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai represents the law God gave the Israelites by which no one can be saved. Paul in Galatians says that Mount Sinai represents a covenant of slavery (4:24-25). However, Mount Zion represents the grace of God as demonstrated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews is concerned that his readers not miss the grace that is offered through Christ. So the reign of the Messiah from Mount Zion has already begun. It has been inaugurated with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. From Zion comes deliverance as we wait for the final consummation of the kingdom of God. The Lamb standing on Mount Zion stands as a sign of hope for those undergoing the persecution of the false prophet, and he is not alone.

The Stark Contrast – 144,000

In chapter 13 we see that there are going to be those who will worship the beast and take his mark upon them. But in chapter 14 we see that there are a 144,000 who will stand strong until end. The 144,000 men that appear with the Lamb are the same ones we read about in chapter 7. There we learn that they represent 12,000 from each tribe of Israel that were sealed. This number does not include the whole number of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. It is a special group of Jewish believers (14:4-5).

There are two things in particular I want us to see about these 144,000. One is that they have the name of the Lamb and his father written on their foreheads. This stands in direct contrast to the mark of the beast in chapter 13. On the one hand the seal of God upon the 144,000 represents their allegiance to the Lamb.¹ Those who worshiped the beast blindly accepted his mark, while those who remained faithful to the Lamb valiantly refused (14:9-12). On the other hand the seal of God upon the 144,000 represents God's power to enable believers to remain faithful to him.² The sealing of these individuals actually takes place prior to the persecution of Christians by the beast and false prophet.

The second thing I want to point out about these 144,000 is that they alone can learn the new song (vs. 3). Previously in 5:9 the elders and four living creatures sang a new song. The song they sang praises the lamb for the victory he has brought through his shed blood. The idea of a new song can be traced throughout the Old Testament. In Psalm 33 a new song is to be sung on the basis of who God is (faithful, just, loving) and what he has done (creation, foiling the plans of the wicked, saving those who fear him). The emphasis of the Psalm is on the fact that God saves those who fear him. Psalm 98:1 is clear in the emphasis on victory, "Sing to the LORD a new

¹ Mounce, 268

² Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC Grand Rapids; Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 734.

song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him." After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they sang a new song to the Lord rejoicing in God's deliverance, praising him for who he is and what he had done. So in Revelation 14:1-3 the new song that is to be sung is probably a song of victory. It is the victory of the Lamb over the beast, his image and over the number of his name (15:2). It is a song of deliverance. But it is a song that only the 144,000 can learn to sing.

Conclusion

In chapter 13 we see the defeat and death of Christians as the beast rules. There is a sense of hopelessness that arises from such a dire picture. However, that is quickly replaced as John invites us to focus upon the Lamb. He brings victory, life, and hope.

While these events certainly speak of future reality to come, I believe there something for us to learn now.

1. We need to look to the Lamb because he is the only one who brings hope.
 - a. Not in worldly governments.
 - b. Not in the circumstances of your life.
 - c. Find hope in Christ by recounting his faithfulness in your life.
 - d. Sing a new song
2. We need to tell others to look to the Lamb because he is the only one who brings hope.