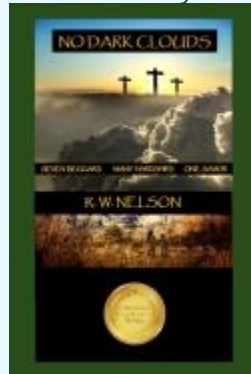


Review by tripplemom -- No Dark Clouds by R W Nelson

[Following is a volunteer review of "No Dark Clouds" by R W Nelson.]



4 out of 4 stars

In his novel, *No Dark Clouds*, R.W. Nelson weaves a very heartfelt tale about seven beggar children into the Greatest Story Ever Told. While this work is bursting with originality and enticing dramatic themes, the author manages to maintain the integrity of the Gospel throughout.

Shortly after the story unfolds, Nelson wins the hearts of his readers by introducing them to a young man only known as Beggar Boy. While the details are not revealed right away, one can assume that Beggar Boy's day to day struggles are ones that would not be wished upon any child. Although he is certainly rough around the edges, Beggar Boy possesses characteristics found in the most successful leaders. This includes the innate ability to serve and protect others.

We learn later that Beggar Boy's pain and deformities were caused by a cruel and heartless slave owner, or task master. The reader has no choice but to feel similar disdain for such people. The story opens, in fact, with one such taskmaster brutally enforcing his expectations on the orphan children in his keep. The children, all of which have some form of disability, are made to beg everyday on the streets of Jerusalem. Not only are they deprived of love and a sense of family, but they also lack the most basic necessities.

Unlike the other children, Beggar Boy has freed himself from a previous task master, and survives by his own sheer will and independence. On a fateful day, when Beggar Boy was begging and

stealing in the streets of Jerusalem, he witnesses a sneak attack by some Jewish zealots on a handful of Roman soldiers. During the attack, Beggar Boy warns a centurion, Leonidas, of an impending deadly blow from one notorious Jewish zealot, Barabbas. This selfless act saves Leonidas' life.

In this case, Beggar Boy's bravery earns him a warm bed, steady work, and plenty of food to fill his belly. Beggar Boy becomes an employee of Rome's government with the task of giving crucified criminals wine and myrrh to drink while hanging on the cross. This opportunity leads Beggar Boy to meeting some loving and God fearing people, and ultimately allows him the opportunity to meet Jesus.

One of the most fascinating feats of this work is how the author gives his reader very believable back stories for some of the well known characters in the Gospels. The scenarios he paints are not explicitly noted in the Bible, however, because he keeps the truth of the book in tact, we can imagine that these stories could really be the actual events. For example, the plot to attack the Centurions by Barabbas and his gang is not specifically talked about in the Gospel text, however, we do know that Barabbas was a criminal of Rome, and would have been crucified if Jesus had not taken his place.

Another brilliant example of the author's thematic representation of the Passion Week comes through the character of Caiaphas, the High Priest at the time of Jesus' trial and execution. Nelson's depiction of the priest is harrowing, but his words make this pivotal character extremely tangible. There is a chilling scene in the book where Caiaphas lays claim to the temple in Jerusalem, as well as all that it contains. For those in the Christian faith, this is a most obscene blasphemy of what we know about God's temple. Nelson's imagination here brings out the blatant hypocrisy surrounding the crucifixion of Christ.

Possibly my favorite element of No Dark Clouds is the tender moments the author so carefully created between the beggar children and Jesus. Every one of these moments were so sincere, and they felt so real, that I could literally see them happening in the forefront of my mind. In particular, the moment that BaFoo (one of the beggar children) shares with Jesus. These instances are crucial to this narrative and they truly bring this work to life.

This is a book that I sincerely enjoyed. If I had to point out one element that was not my favorite, it would be the prologue. While, overall, the insight it offers gives the reader a glimpse into the future lives of the book's beloved main character, parts of this particular writing, especially the main character's thoughts, are confusing and had to be read multiple times in order to grasp what was being conveyed.

Despite this one minor set back, I think this is a novel worth any critic's praise. I thoroughly enjoyed the ebbs and flow of the drama. This story brought tears to my eyes, both happy and sad, but I also found myself giggling at the silliness of the seven children throughout. Overall, I feel this book earns a strong four out of four stars. It is a well polished piece that deserves the time of any reader.

This work is heavy in religious content, specifically the Christian religion. This is who would benefit the most from reading the book, and in turn, this is the most suitable audience. In addition to a wonderful story, the novel includes Biblical insight and would be a great source for Bible teachers, discussion groups, and the like.