

RECLAIMING THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN THE FACE OF CURRENT EVENTS:

A CRITIQUE OF EMPIRE AND CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM RUN AMOK

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September 2025



THREE WEEK SERIES

Revelation as Misguided
Nexus: Christian
Nationalism, the Holy Land
War and Christian Zionism

14 Sep.

Critique on Empire in
Revelation:
The Rapture Exposed

21 Sep.

The Trajectory of
Revelation:
Toward a Theology of Hope
for the End Times

28 Sep.



PROPOSITIONS FOR THIS SERIES

THE BOOK OF REVELATION...

is a critique on Empire, not a justification for it...

HOPE ...

is what we have to offer each other and the world...

WEEK 2:

**CRITIQUE ON EMPIRE IN REVELATION:
THE RAPTURE EXPOSED**





THE VOCABULARY OF THE END TIMES

- **Apocalypse**—literally, “unveiling”—think: Toto in the Wizard of Oz
- **Rapture**—simultaneous transport of Christians into heaven—possibly mentioned in Matthew 24 and in 1 Thes 4:16-17 (but part of plea of hope from Paul to Thessalonians—hang in there...)
 - The word “rapture” is not found in the Book of Revelation
- **Tribulation**—seven years period before the Parousia
- **Parousia**—second coming of Christ (like royalty)—literally, Come and stay with...
- **Armageddon** (only reference: Rev. 16:16)—battle between Christ and the Beast

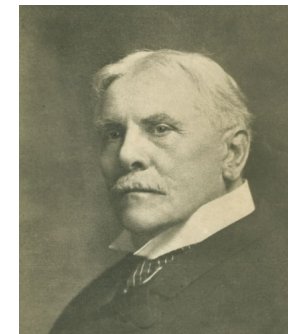
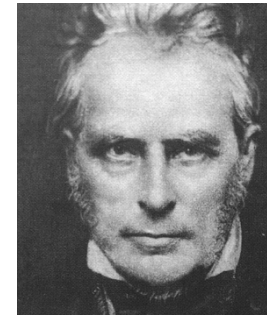


THE VOCABULARY OF THE END TIMES

- **Premillennialism**—Christ will reign on earth for 1000 years (after this current age and tribulation)—literally interprets Rev. 20:1-6
- **Post-millennialism**—Interprets Rev. 20—Christ will come after a 1000 year period (figurative time?)—and he will defeat the forces of evil
- **Dispensationalism**—one form of pre-millennialism
 - --successive dispensations (economies) (ages)
 - Innocence (before the Fall)
 - Conscience (Adam to Noah)
 - Government (Noah to Abraham)
 - Patriarchal (Abraham to Moses)
 - Mosaic Law (Moses to Christ)
 - Grace (Current age, via Christ)
 - **Millennial (Current age? Or future? Or figurative?)**

PROBLEM: DISPENSATION/RAPTURE IS NOT A LONG-LIVED THREAD OF BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP...

- **John Nelson Darby** (1800-1882)
 - Anglican priest from London
 - “Father of Dispensationalism”
 - In 1830s, developed notion of “secret rapture” in which faithful Christians are snatched away.
- **Scofield Reference Bible** (originally published in 1909)
 - re-released in 1917 at end of war—seemed prophetic at the time given the destruction and end of optimism and prosperity
 - first widely read version that offered a full commentary in notes
 - interpreted texts literally—e.g., calculated Creation at 4004BC
 - held a premillennialist view and focused on dispensationalism



HERE'S THE RUB...

Dominant Apocalyptic myth of violence

Vs.

Our Story

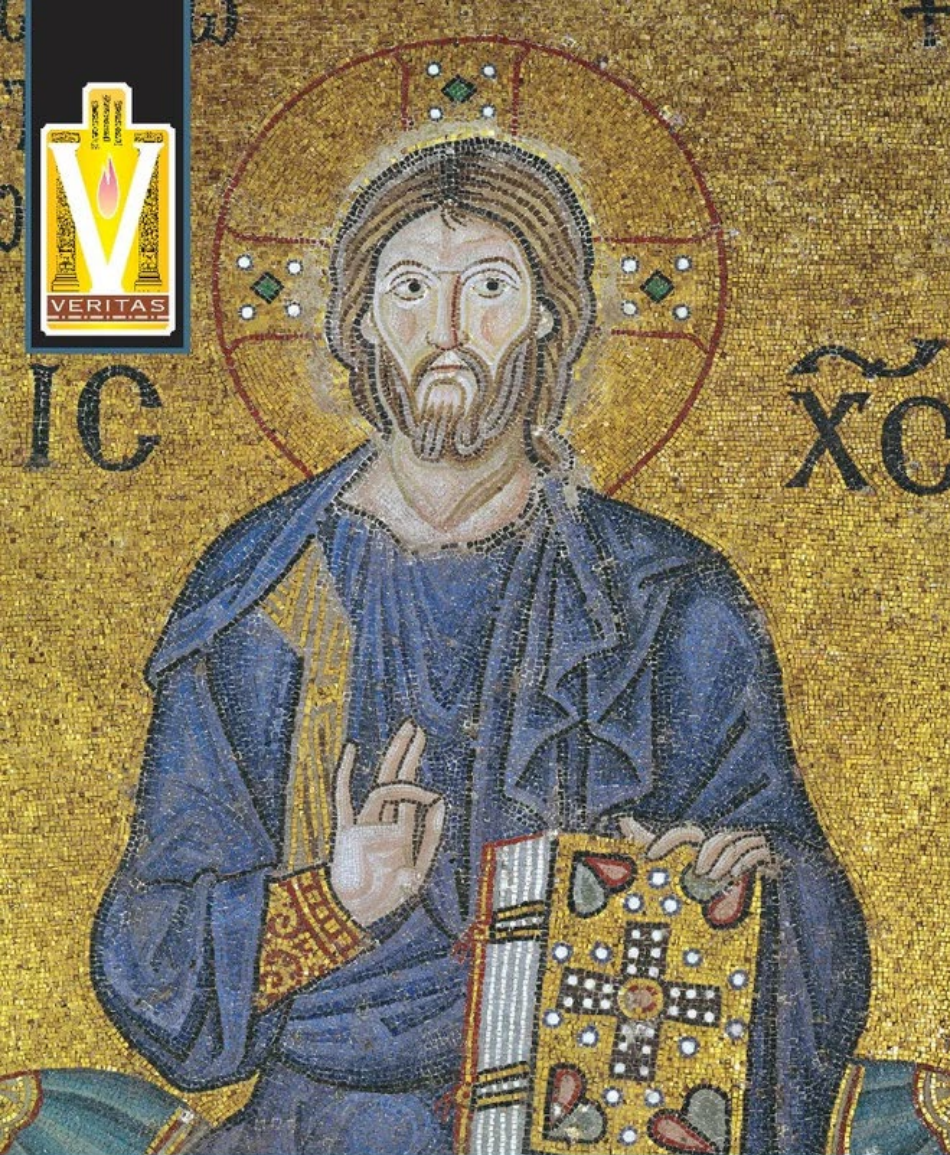
(a gospel of peace, redemption and reconciliation)

- Future is not a matter of speculation—it is connected to the present
- Our vision for the future is significant in informing our lives ***now***
- Kingdom of God is ***now and not yet.***
- The Book of Revelation holds this tension marvelously.
 - Primarily a book of worship!
 - Hope and healing are the final installment

THE RAPTURE EXPOSED



- Rev. 16:16 is the only mention of Armageddon, but it gets expanded into full story
- *Left Behind* notion makes for compelling story, but it is fiction
- Rapture is not even a word in the Book of Revelation
- There is no mention of a seven year period of Tribulation
- Rapture Theology is Escapism—John not interested in escaping but exhorting the faithful to persist amid persecution
- Slippery Slope: political implications of Rapture Theology



AT THE HEART OF REVELATION IS NOT RAPTURE OR ARMAGEDDON, BUT HOPE!

- Revelation is
 - written to beleaguered churches amid persecution
 - critique of empire
 - critique of imperial violence
 - offers alternative voice of hope and protest
 - not a direct prediction (prophecy not same as prediction)
 - not directly written for us in 21st Century
 - Prophetic call to wake up and take heed (so can be applicable for us)

Revelation:
A Divine Message of Hope
Father Bruce Vawter, C.M.

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CRITICISM: GO BACK TO 1ST CENTURY

- Core of book: call to faithfulness to Lamb (against imperial Rome, amid persecutions)
- Early Christians were pacifists (nonviolent)
- Three Greek words for “world” in the NT
 - Ge (earth)—I shall renew the face of the earth...
 - Kosmos (the whole ordered world)—John’s prologue
 - Oikumene (economy, empire)—created by humans
- What does Revelation say comes to an end?
 - not ge or kosmos but oikumene
- What does Revelation say will be renewed?
 - ge



GEMMA AUGUSTEA: **ROMAN IMPERIAL ESCHATOLOGY (ETERNAL DOMINATION)**







1 –Augustus (Octavius)
2 – Roma
3 – Oikumene (Economy)
4- Nike (Goddess Victoria)
5-Ocean (Neptune)

6- Gaia (Earth)
7- Tiberius
8-Charioteer??
9- Capricorn
10-Eagle of Jupiter





WHAT DOES REVELATION ACTUALLY SAY

- **“Ge”**—used six times, never is earth destroyed.
 - Rev. 11:18 ...the time has come...for destroying those who destroy the *earth*.’
- **Kosmos**—used three times, never destroyed
 - Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the *world* has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’
- **Oikumene**—used three times, never attributed to God’s creation
 - Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole *world* ...
 - Rev. 16:14 the kings of the whole *world* assembled for battle



IMPETUS OF REVELATION

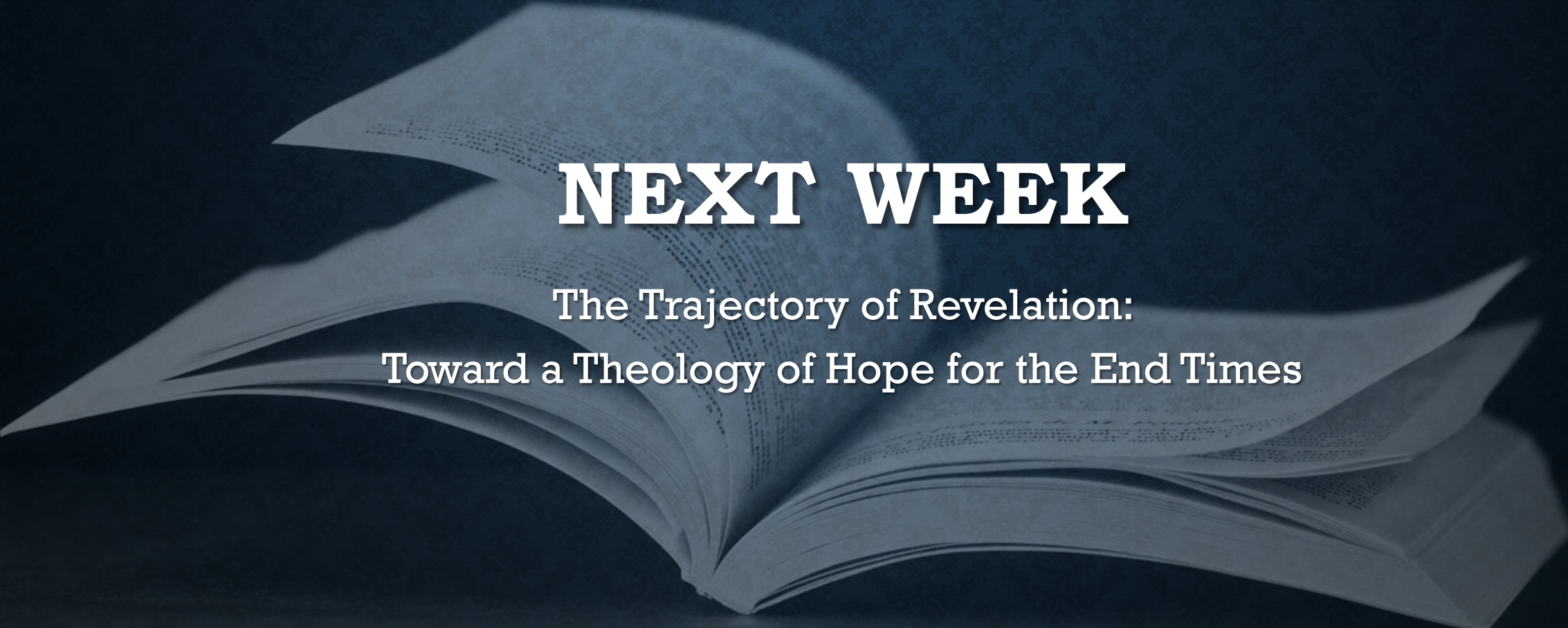
No mention of God
destroying the “earth”
(ge)...

The earth shall be renewed
(hearkens back to Isaiah)

Judgment upon all as new
age begins, but destruction
is directed at oikumene, not
gē or kosmos.

WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY

- Wake up!
 - Reclaim Revelation for a future vision of healing and hope—not just for humans, but for the entire planet...
- What is being unveiled in Revelation?
 - Jesus the Lamb who comes again to judge AND who leads us out of imperial economy into God's new economy (the Kingdom of God)
 - Future vision of hope and healing



NEXT WEEK

The Trajectory of Revelation:
Toward a Theology of Hope for the End Times