

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

A CRITIQUE OF EMPIRE AND CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM RUN AMOK

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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.



RECLAIMING RESURRECTION

- 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

HERE'S THE RUB...

Dominant Apocalyptic myth of violence

Vs.

Our Story

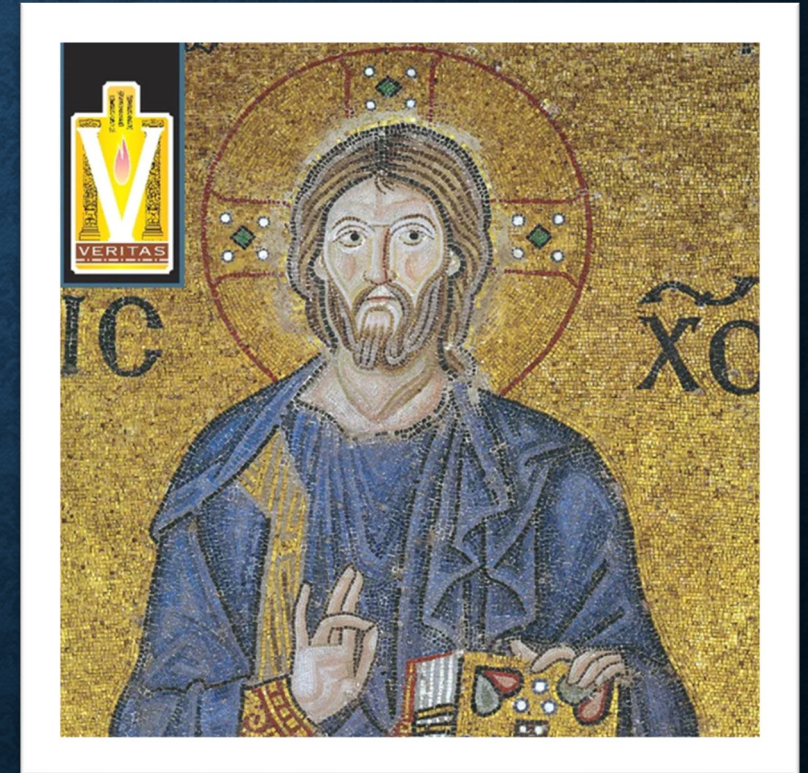
(a gospel of peace, redemption and reconciliation)

- 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 TRAJECTORY OF REVELATION

- Revelation written to **bring hope** for those who were suffering under the imperial oikumene of Rome (Ch. 2-3)
- **Christ the Lamb** is the one who is worthy to open the seals and set into motion the events of the end times (Ch. 4-5)
- Worship is sewn throughout... e. g., Rev. 11.15-19: **Throne Room scene**-- Declaration that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his messiah, and he will reign forever.
- **Tale of Two Cities**—Rome (Babylon) is destroyed along with the wicked in it; The New Jerusalem is the place to which *God comes to dwell among mortals* and wipe away every tear.



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)



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.

LEAD-UP TO REV. 20

Words of
Encouragement to the
faithful

Seals, Bowls, Plagues
(including fire)

The Fall of Babylon (Rev.
18)

Rejoicing in Heaven
(Rev. 19)

Rider on a White Horse
(Rev. 19) (King of kings,
Lord of lords) defeats
the beast and his forces
of evil

Satan bound for 1000
years and martyrs
experience First
Resurrection (Rev. 20)—
Millennial Kingdom

Satan released,
defeated, thrown into
Lake of Fire (i.e.,
incapable of corrupting
anymore!)

The Seven Seals In Revelation
Rev 6, 8, 9, 10, 11



The Book Of Truth Prophecies

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS IN REVELATION

- Scroll (in right hand of one on heavenly throne), sealed with 7 seals—only the Lamb is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. (Ch. 5)
- Seven Seals (Ch. 6, 8)
 - White horse and rider (warfare)
 - Red horse and rider (death in battle)
 - Black horse and rider (famine)
 - Green horse and rider (Death and Hades—i.e., world of the dead)
 - Martyrs (white robe and rest)
 - Cosmic signs (darkened sun and moon, falling stars)
 - Seven trumpets for seven angels (ch. 8)
- Ch. 7—digression on “seals”
 - Christians marked on foreheads
 - 144,000 sealed; later the martyrs (14.5)

666: NUMBER OF THE BEAST



Nero Caesar

נרוןקסר

ר = 200

ס = 60

ק = 100

נ = 50

ו = 6

ר = 200

נ = 50

Sum: 666

Depending on the way one counts, the seven emperors of Rome would be

1. Julius Caesar (101-44 BCE),
2. Augustus (31-14 BCE),
3. Claudius (41-54),
4. Nero** (54-68)—first large-scale Christian persecutions
5. Vespasian (69-79),
6. Titus (79-81),
7. Domitian (81-96),
8. Neronic AntiChrist.

**The Neronic Anti-Christ is a mythical, Nero-like adversary of God derived from legends about Nero's return from death (see the *Sybilline Oracles*)

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS IN REVELATION



- Seventh Seal is Seven Trumpets—eschatological divine judgments reminiscent of Egyptian plagues, but universal in effect
 - Hail and fire, mixed with blood
 - Fiery mountain hurled into the sea, 1/3 of which becomes blood, 1/3 sea creatures die, 1/3 ships destroyed
 - Star (wormwood)—fell on third of rivers
 - Third of sun, moon and stars darkened
 - Opening of bottomless pit
 - Release of four evil angels leading demonic armies—1/3 humankind killed
 - 7th Trumpet—throne room scene (worship)



WOMAN, DRAGON AND TWO BEASTS (CH. 12-13)

- Woman giving birth (to God's people)—adaptation of Apollo's birth myth but with messianic themes
- Dragon (Satan)—enemy of order of God's creation (Michael throws out of heaven)
- Served by two beasts
 - Leviathan (Rome and its emperors and colluding kings)
 - Behemoth (cultic priesthood)

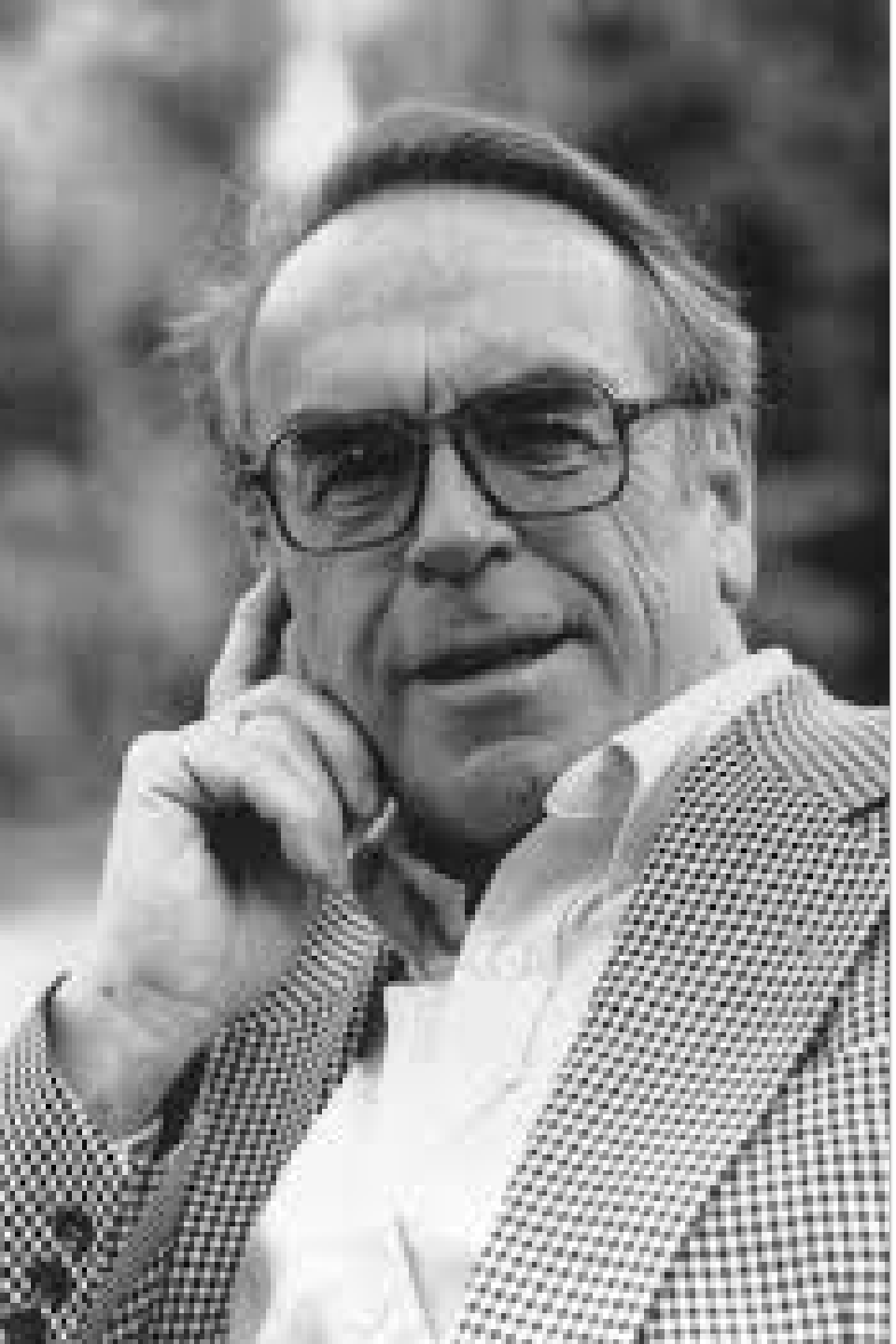
SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (CH. 15-16)



- Seven bowls (cultic utensils used for libations)—angels pour out:
 - Foul and painful sore upon the earth
 - Blood on the sea
 - Blood on the rivers
 - Scorching sun
 - Poured on throne of the beast (Roman cultic temple)
 - River Euphrates runs dry (Israel's rival)
 - Into the air (It is done!)

THE TURNING POINT (CH. 20)





THEOLOGY OF HOPE (BORN FROM WAR)

- If God acted in the past, is it reasonable to expect God can/will act in future?
- The Eschaton is not the end point, but the point from which all else flows...born in hope for a better way.
- Alternative to the imperial way.
- The Resurrection of Christ is not so much an historical event as it is THE event which finds its full meaning in the *future*.
- Future fulfillment is for all creation, not just humans (Behold, I make all things new)



TRAJECTORY OF REVELATION: AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

Jesus Christ holds the keys to death and hell (1.20)

All must appear before the judgment seat

The verb for judging in Revelation is always predicated on a plural subject

What if we appear together—a social/collective experience

“Son of Man” seeks what was lost (dignity, life, wholeness)

Fire becomes symbol of Consuming Love of God in Christ Jesus (not final wrath)

God’s victory is a consummate one—God’s **justice** heals what was broken.

MARANATHA: GOD'S CONTINUAL CREATION

Rev. 21:3-6



“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.’

“And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life...”

IN THE END IS A NEW BEGINNING...

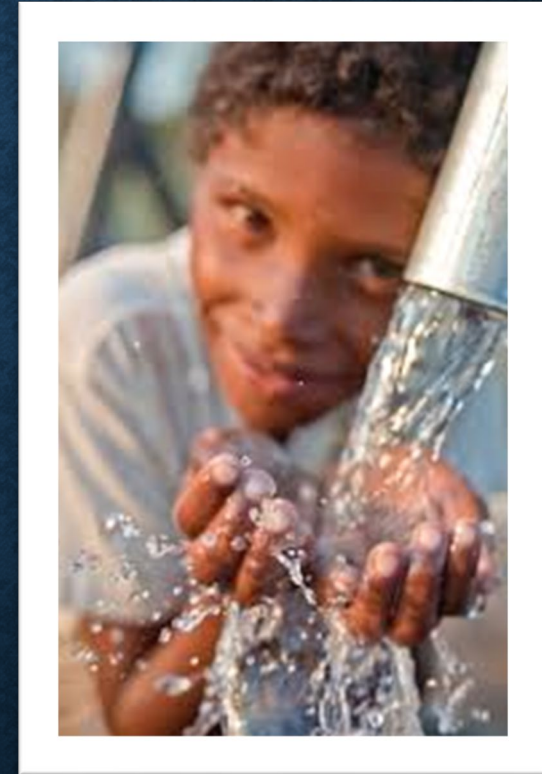
- Revelation 22: 1-5

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.”



EPILOGUE AND BENEDICTION

- “It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches...”
- The Spirit and the bride say: “Come, and let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.”
- The one who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.”
- Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
- The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.



The Alpha and the Omega...

WITH THE DRAWING OF THIS LOVE
AND THE VOICE OF THIS CALLING
WE SHALL NOT CEASE FROM
EXPLORATION
AND THE END OF ALL OUR EXPLORING
WILL BE TO ARRIVE WHERE WE
STARTED
AND KNOW THE PLACE FOR THE FIRST
TIME.

-T.S. *ELIOT*, LITTLE GIDDING