

Understanding the New Testament

Revelations
Revelation!

Crown Him with Many Crowns



Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

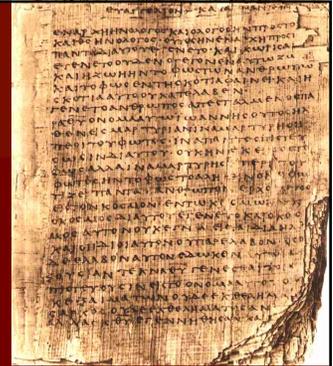
Crown Him the Lord of Heaven, enthroned in worlds above,
Crown Him the King to Whom is given the wondrous name of
Love. Crown Him with many crowns, as thrones before Him fall;
Crown Him, ye kings, with many crowns, for He is King of all.

Opening Prayer

- Day by day,
O dear Lord,
three things I pray:

- to see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly,
day by day. Amen.

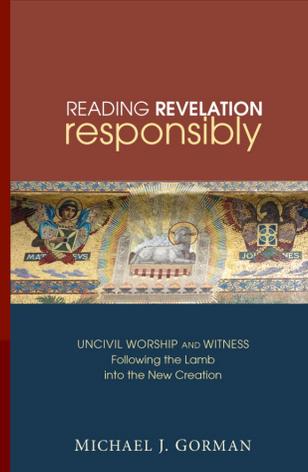
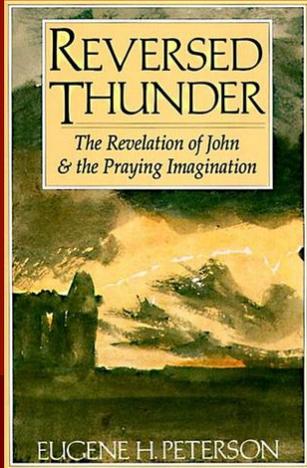
-Richard of Chichester, 13th c. / Godspell, 20th c.



November 122

***"Gratitude to
First Baptist"
night***

READING REVELATION *RESPONSIBLY*



Pat Marvenko Smith: Rev 1, 4



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Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty

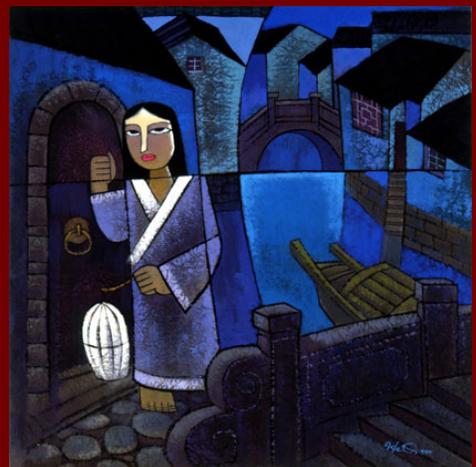
(Rev 4)

- Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

- Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

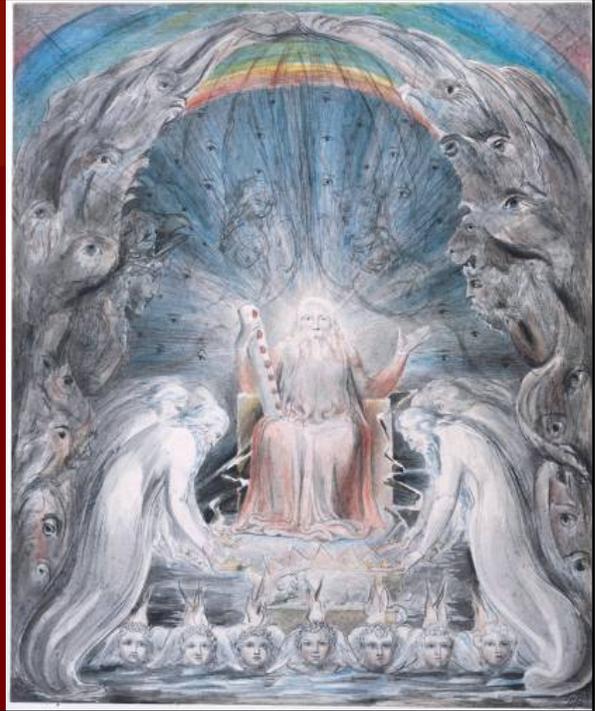


Holman
Hunt
and He
Qui,
Christ at
the Door
(Rev 3)



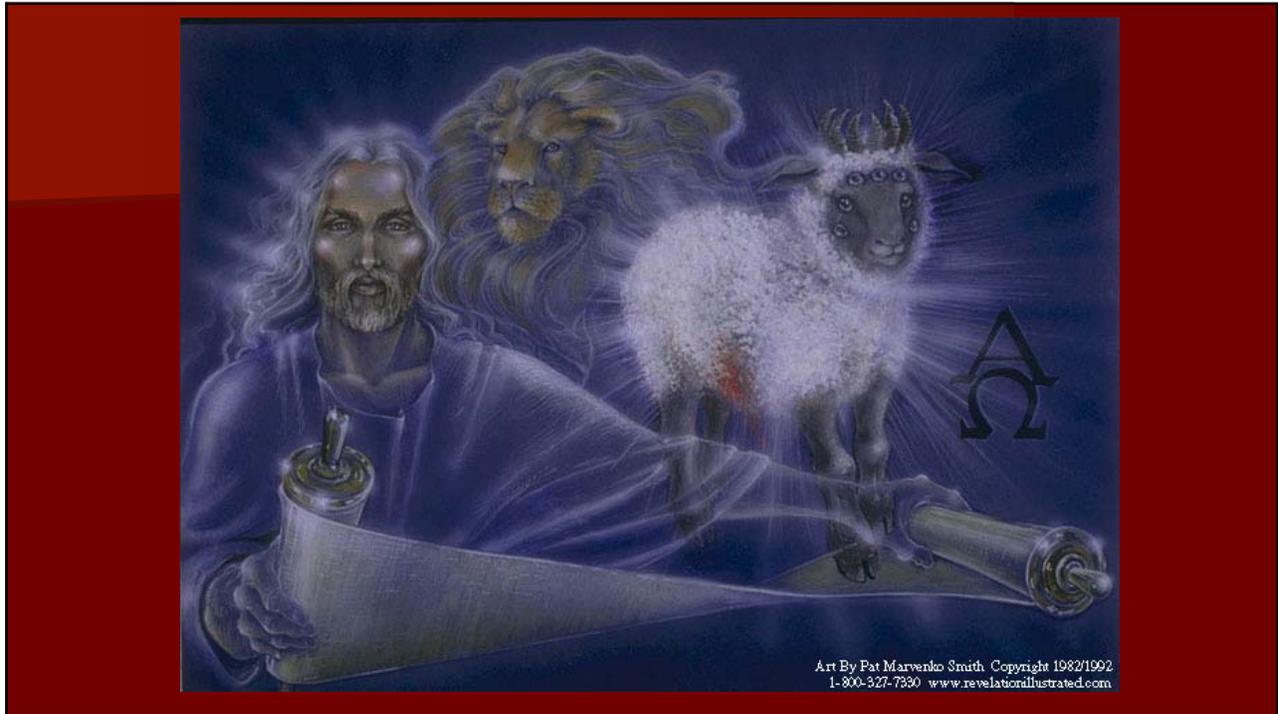


Albrecht
Dürer and
William
Blake on
Rev 4



Medieval
Triptych and
Dürer on Rev
4-5





Handel: Worthy is the Lamb that Was Slain and Amen
(Rev 5)



■ Conclusion of Messiah

–“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.” [Rev. 5:12-13]

- Bethany College: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riFjgptO1Mc>

Agnus Dei (Rev 4-5)



■ Michael W. Smith

Alleluia
 Alleluia, alleluia
 For the Lord God
 Almighty reigns
 Alleluia, Alleluia
 For the Lord God
 Almighty reigns

Alleluia, holy, holy
 Are You Lord God Almighty.
 Worthy is the Lamb, worthy is
 the Lamb
 You are holy, holy
 Are You Lord God Almighty?
 Worthy is the Lamb, worthy is
 the Lamb.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s33Yx31Cpi4&feature=rrelated>

Hallelujah Chorus (Rev 19:6 and 11:1)



■ End of Messiah, part 2

– “HALLELUJAH: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. [Rev. 19:6] The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. [Rev. 11:1]. King of kings, and Lord of lords. HALLELUJAH!” [Rev. 19:16]

- Bethany College Choir: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Abcgpn2UTV8>

For all the Saints

(see Rev. 14:13; plus 2:7, 10; 3:11; 4:4; 21:11, 21, 23; etc.)

by William W. How, 1823-1897

1. **For all the saints who from their labors rest,**

Who Thee by faith before the world confess,
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

2. Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress, and
their Might;

Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-
fought fight;

Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true
Light.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

3. Oh, may Thy soldiers, **faithful**, true and
bold,

Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old
And win with them **the victor's crown of
gold.**

Alleluia! Alleluia!

4. O blest communion, fellowship divine,

We feebly struggle, they in **glory shine;**

Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM>

5. And when the fight is fierce, the warfare
long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are
strong.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

6. But, lo, there breaks a yet more glorious
day;

The **saints triumphant rise in bright
array;**

The King of Glory passes on His way.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

7. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's
farthest coast,

Through **gates of pearl** streams in the
countless host,

Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

8. The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon, to faithful warriors cometh rest.

Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come (Rev 1, 21-22)

Paul Manz, words adapted from Rev 1:5 and 21-22 by Ruth Manz
 From youtube: A mother & father were holding vigil in the hospital over their gravely ill child. They took turns--alone in their grief--while one wrote the music & the other wrote the words. Long after the child miraculously recovered, they put the music and words together & realized how beautifully they meshed. The parents felt even more strongly that God's grace had shone upon them in their darkest hour and that the resulting beautiful music was proof.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNyLmy3ml5Q&feature=related>

- Peace be to you and grace from him
 Who freed us from our sins,
 Who loved us all and shed his blood
 That we might saved be.
- Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein,
 Rejoice on earth, ye saints below,
 For Christ is coming, is coming soon,
 For Christ is coming soon!
- Sing holy, holy to our Lord,
 The Lord, Almighty God,
 Who was and is and is to come;
 Sing holy, holy, Lord!
- E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,
 And night shall be no more;
 They need no light nor lamp nor sun,
 For Christ will be their All!

Rev 21-22 by Pat Smith



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However...

Concerns About Revelation



- “neither apostolic nor prophetic. . . . I can in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it. . . . Again, they are supposed to be blessed who keep what is written in this book; and yet no one knows what that is, to say nothing of keeping it. . . . Christ is neither taught nor known in it.” (Martin Luther, 1483–1546 [1522])
- “a book of riddles that requires a Revelation to explain it” (American pamphleteer Thomas Paine, 1737–1809)
- “the most rabid outburst of vindictiveness in all recorded history” (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844–1900)
- John the Divine’s “grandiose scheme for wiping out and annihilating everybody who wasn’t of the elect . . . and of climbing up himself right on the throne of God”; a book that “has in it none of the real Christ, none of the real Gospel” for “just as Jesus had to have a Judas . . . so did there have to be a Revelation in the New Testament” (D. H. Lawrence, 1885–1930)

Concerns About Revelation (cont'd.)



- the “curious record of the **visions of a drug addict**” (playwright George Bernard Shaw, 1856–1950)
- a “retreat from ethical responsibility” such that “its existence and its place in the canon are, in the fullest sense of the word, **evil**” (New Testament scholar Jack Sanders, 1975)
- a “**misogynist** male fantasy at the end of time” (feminist New Testament scholar Tina Pippin, 1992)
- a book that transforms the “nonviolent resistance of the slaughtered Jesus into the **violent warfare of the slaughtering Jesus**” (NT scholar John Dominic Crossan, 2007)

Common Misunderstandings about Revelation

- “Apocalypse” means end-of-the-world destruction.
- Revelation gives us an outline of history and/or the future; we can find current events predicted in Rev.
- The Bible (incl. Rev) is full of puzzle pieces to be assembled.
- Rev predicts the rapture.
- Rev predicts the coming of the antichrist.
- Wars and rumors of wars are good things because they may signal the imminent end.
- Rev says God will destroy the earth, possibly by nuclear war, so don’t be concerned about nuclear arms or the environment.
- The mission of the church is to get people ready for the rapture.
- When Jesus returns, he will destroy all his enemies (non-believers).

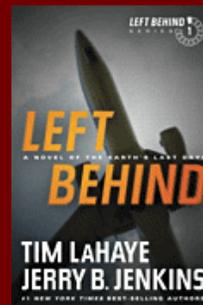
Popular Interpretations of Revelation

- The late Harold Camping: "we can know the date"
 - 1994
 - 2011 (twice)
- What about his followers?

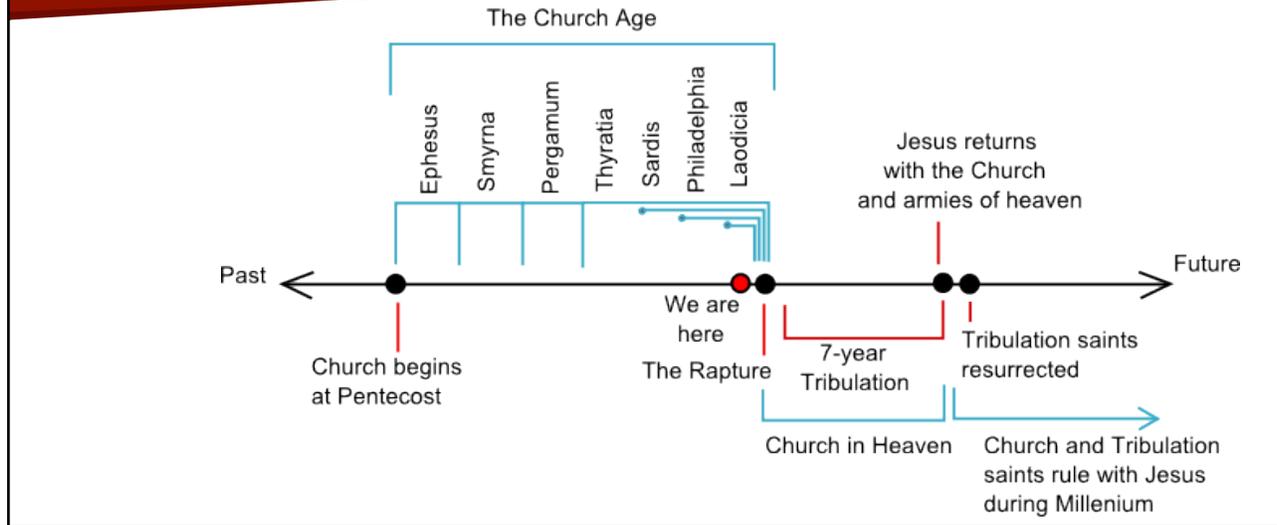


Popular Interpretations of Revelation

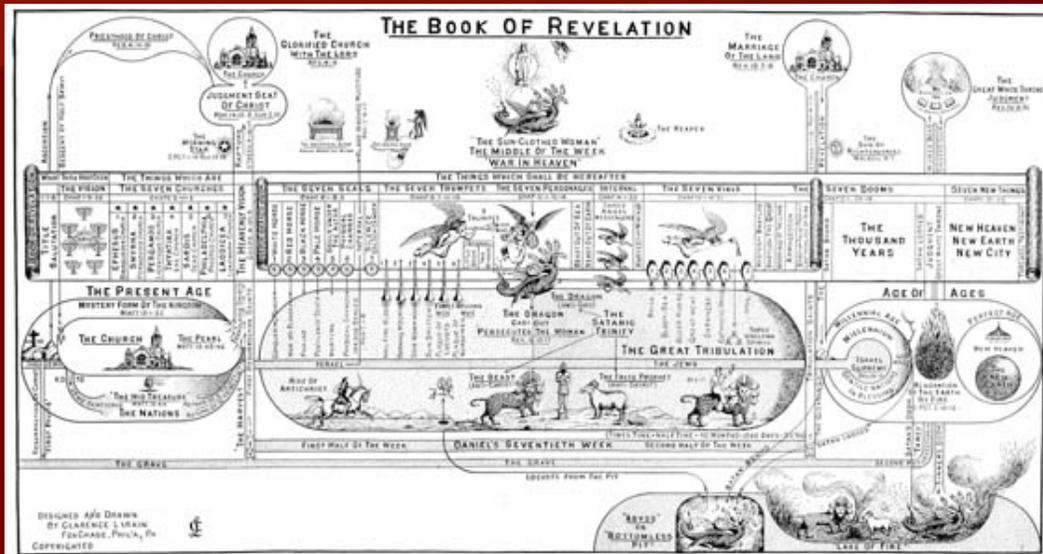
- Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins: "Left Behind Series": <http://www.leftbehind.com/>



The Basic Scheme of Dispensationalist Reading of Revelation

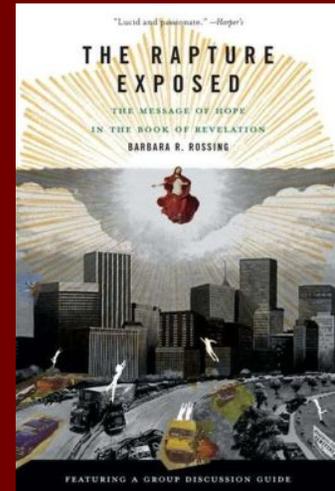
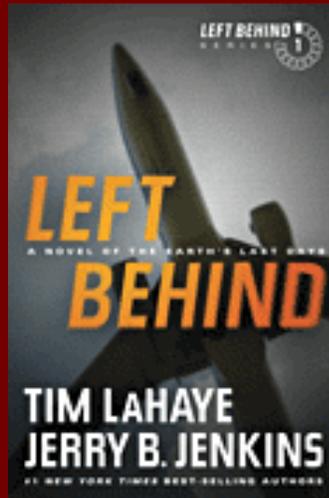


Clarence Larkin



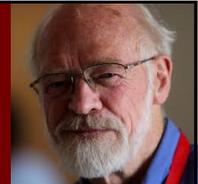
Problems with the “Left Behind” Approach (and similar ways of reading Revelation)

- Interpretive
- Theological & Spiritual
- Political



“The Bible warns against a neurotic interest in the future and escapist fantasy into the future.”

(Eugene Peterson,
Reversed Thunder, 21).



The Mixed ("Hybrid") Literary Character of Revelation (see Rev 1:1-8)



- **Apocalypse**: unveiling, dualism, symbolism, politics, hope
 - like a series of political cartoons*
 - prophecy in a new key
 - crisis literature, resistance literature
- **Prophecy**: judgment and salvation; the word of God for the people of God; see 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19
- **Letter**: a "word on target" for real people, real churches

* and not unlike both poetry and science fiction

Apocalypse

- The whore of Babylon

(= Rome and similar powers)



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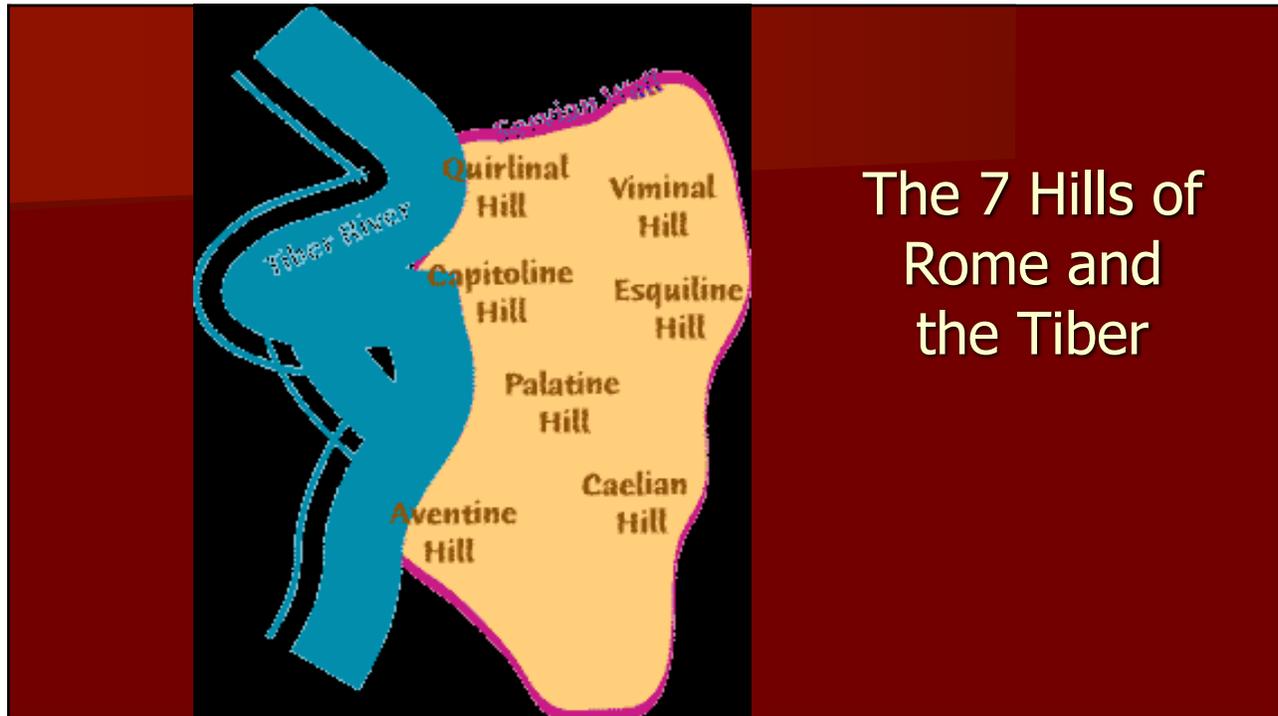
What and Where was Babylon?



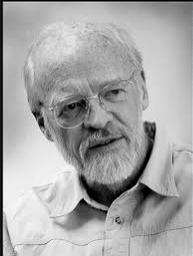
- Located in Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates (= present-day Iraq)



Dea Roma on 7 Hills, coin under Vespasian, ruled 69-79



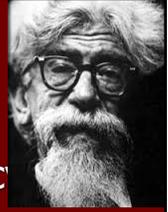
The 7 Hills of Rome and the Tiber



“The task of the apocalyptic imagination is to provide images that show us what is going on in our lives. “If there are mysterious powers around,” a character in a Saul Bellow novel says, “only exaggeration can help us see them. We all sense that there are powers that make the world—we see that when we look at it—and other powers that unmake it.” . . . Flannery O’Connor, in answer to a question about why she created such bizarre characters in her stories, replied that **for the near-blind you have to draw very large, simple caricatures.**”

Eugene Peterson

Prophecy



- “[T]he sort of crimes and even the amount of delinquenc that fill the prophets of Israel with dismay do not go beyond that which we regard as normal, as typical ingredients of social dynamics. To us a single act of injustice—cheating in business, exploitation of the poor—is slight; to the prophets, a disaster. To us injustice is injurious to the welfare of the people; to the prophets it is a deathblow to existence: to us, an episode; to them, a catastrophe, a threat to the world.”

— Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*

Letter



Ephesus: Aerial photo & reconstruction



Ephesus: Curetes Street & Library



Ephesus



Patmos



Patmos entrance to the traditional cave



Patmos:

at least he
had a good
view!



A Short Outline of Revelation

- Revelation 1–3 / Opening Vision of the Risen Lord and His Seven Pastoral-Prophetic Messages
- Revelation 4–5 / Central and Centering Vision of God and the Lamb
- Revelation 6–20 / Visions of the Judgment of God, with Interludes
- Revelation 21–22 / Final Vision of the New Creation

A Tale/Battle of Two Truth Claims

Rome's Myths (Fake News)

- Empire of Rome
- Emperor is Lord/God/Son of God/Savior/Father/King of Kings
- The Roman *Pax*
- *Victoria*
- Faith (= loyalty to Caesar/Rome)
- Eternity

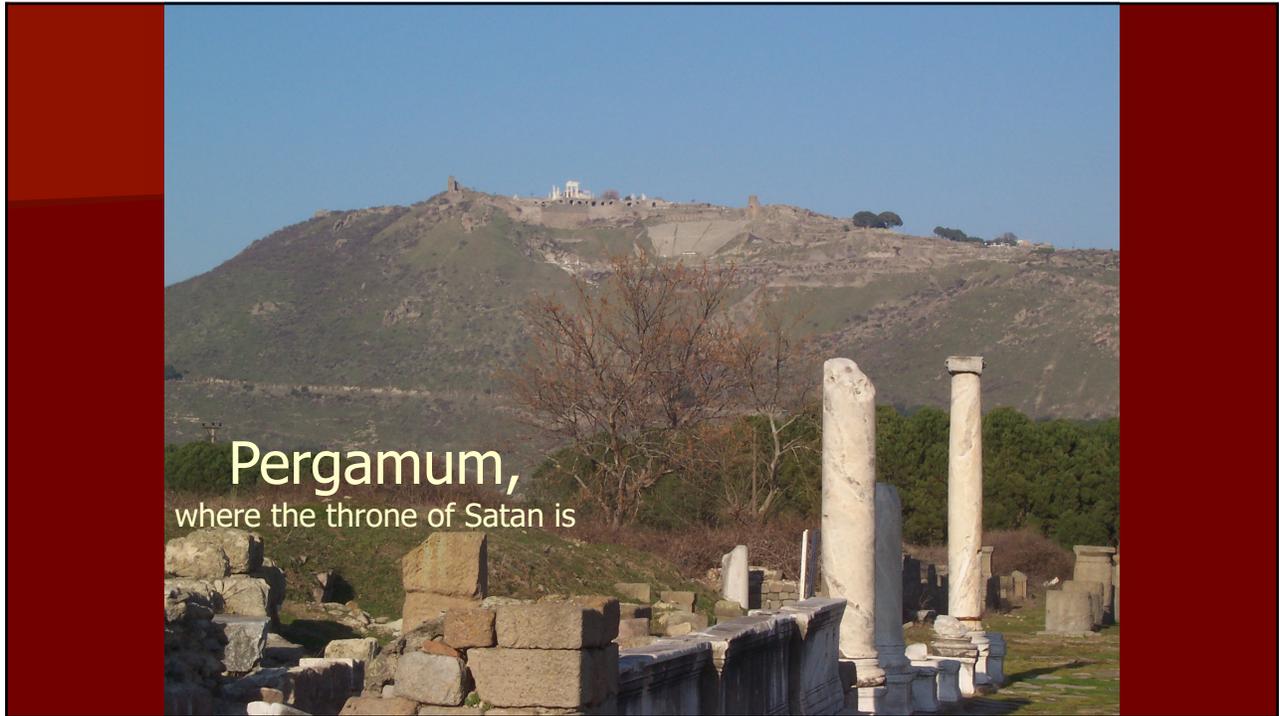
Revelation's Counter-Claims (Good News)

- Empire of God
- Jesus/God alone deserves and rightly has these titles
- "Babylon's" culture of death
- Victory of the Lamb & his followers
- Faithfulness of Jesus, and of his followers to him
- Eternal rule of God/Lamb/saints



Ephesus: Temple to Domitian





The Unholy Trinity of Revelation 12-13: Reading at Two Levels

■ Dragon

- Satan
- Power(s) of evil behind global political, economic, and military power

■ Beast from the Sea (mortal wound, 666)

- Roman imperial power/the emperor
- Global political, economic, and military power or system

■ Beast from the Land

- Priesthood of Roman imperial cult
- Religious support of and propaganda for global political, economic, and military power or system



William Blake

The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea

c. 1805



Robert Roberg
The Beast from the Sea with 7 Heads
 2004

666

1. The Greek for Nero Caesar, *nerōn kaisar*, transliterates into Hebrew as NRWN QSR (reading right to left) and, using Hebrew gematria, with the conventional number values as shown below, adds up to 666:

SUM	Resh (ר)	Samech (ס)	Qof (ק)	Nun (נ/ן)	Waw (ו)	Resh (ר)	Nun (נ/ן)
	R	S	Q	N	W	R	N
666	200	60	100	50	6	200	50

2. The same two words can also be transliterated without the final “n” in *nerōn* into Hebrew as NRW QSR:

SUM	Resh (ר)	Samech (ס)	Qof (ק)	Waw (ו)	Resh (ר)	Nun (נ/ן)
	R	S	Q	W	R	N
616	200	60	100	6	200	50

So, what are we to do with Revelation?...

Theological Features of Revelation

- A Call to First-Commandment **Faithfulness**
 - Not widespread persecution but **widespread accommodation**
- Therefore, a **Liturgical** Text (worship)
 - Full of hymns; 7 beatitudes
- Therefore, a **Political** Text (idolatry as a political act)
 - a manifesto against **civil religion**, specifically the imperial cult, and associated or and similar practices
 - a manifesto against **any "-ism" that claims to offer that which God alone can provide** (peace, security, life, etc.)
 - a manifesto against any **power that does evil in the name of good or God**

Lamb-Centered

- Worthy is the Lamb!
- The Lamb appears 28 times (7= fullness x 4 = universality).
- The Lamb reconfigures God: God crucified, God cross-shaped
- Lamb power
- Jesus as faithful witness (1:5), the church as faithful witness
 - Revelation 12:11—But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.

Reading Revelation Responsibly

“looking for parallels rather than predictions”

“performing the text rather than decoding it”

~

The intent of Revelation is “to purge and to refurbish the Christian imagination.” (Richard Bauckham)

What is Revelation saying today? a call to...

- Lamb power
- Resistance
- Faithful witness
- "Uncivil" worship

Some
American
Idol(s)

Sports

Health

Sex

Success

Money

Power

- Note the term "Prosperity Gospel"
- And...

Some More American Idol(s)

- Consumerism
- Individualism
- Militarism
- Americanism*

• The term is from Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* and Peter Leithart, *Between Babel and Beast: America and Empires in Biblical Perspective*

• * or Civil Religion

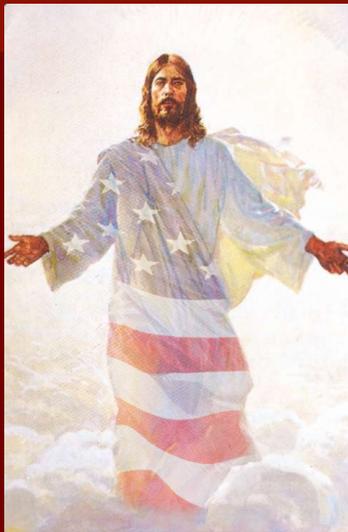
Civil Religion/Religious Nationalism

- The **attribution of sacred status to secular power** (normally the state and/or its head) as the source of divine blessing, requiring **devotion and allegiance of heart, mind, and body to the sacred-secular power and its values**, all expressed in various narratives, other texts, rituals, and media that reinforce both the secular power's sacred status and the beneficiaries' sacred duty of devotion and allegiance, even to the point of death.
 - The God of civil religion is **generic** (little reference to Jesus) but tribal (lots of references to national heroes).
 - Civil religion occurs **both inside and outside houses of worship**.

Elements of American Civil Religion: Americanism/American Exceptionalism

- America as a nation chosen by God
- America as a messianic figure (world savior)
- America as greatest nation on earth
- American military, economic, and political power as God's blessing and power
- Allegiance, duty to country as a sacred obligation to God
- American wars as sacred, redemptive violence

Some Symbols of Distorted Civil Religion



- When distortion becomes blasphemy



The Total Claims of the Modern State

- [The modern, industrialized state] claims to be the basis of not only the freedom but the very life of its citizens, or in the case of the messianic exceptionalism of the US, the life of the whole world. What constitutes the established justification of mass organized killing and accelerated death is thus a threat to the modern state particularly *as the guarantor of freedom and life*. So totalized is the modern, industrialized state that we supposedly cannot expect any of the benefits associated with it, say, the collective alleviation of poverty or the provision of medical care or relief from natural disaster or economic regulation, without accepting the massive costs it exacts by violence.
 - Tommy Givens, "The Subtlety of Peace: A New Testament Challenge to Modern State Violence"

The Church: All Peoples & Tongues (Rev 7)

- ⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel.... ⁹After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Hope for the New Creation (Isaiah 25)

- ⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. ⁸Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

Hope for the New Creation (Isaiah 60)

- ¹⁸Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. ¹⁹The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. ²⁰Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Rev 21-22 by Pat Smith



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The NT's Conclusion

- 6⁶It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." 17The 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.... 20The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**
- 21The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrnvSf2dX18>