

The Book of Revelation

{ Revealing Power in the Apocalypse

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Where do you see the
power of evil at work?



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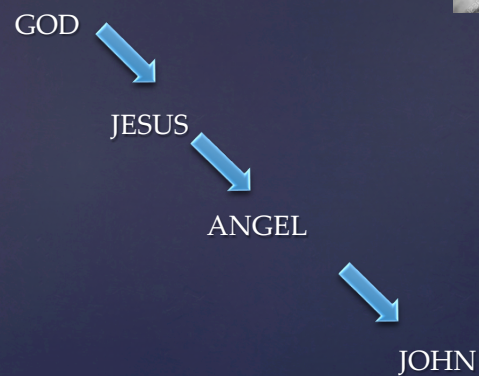


Revelation



- ⌘ Written by John of Patmos
 - ⌘ Receiver of the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1)
 - ⌘ Prophet (1:3)
 - ⌘ Sharer in persecution (1:9)
 - ⌘ Jew who believes in Jesus
- ⌘ Date - 90's CE (70 – 110 CE)
- ⌘ Written in Greek but with Hebrew influences
- ⌘ Only full length apocalypse in the New Testament

Revelation





Rev 1:4, 11

Genre:

An apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature within a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.

↳ John J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

Rev 4



Rev 4



But the senators, having gone up to the Capitol in a group, offered the regular sacrifices and did obeisance to the throne of Gaius that was in the temple; and furthermore, in accordance with the custom that prevailed in the time of Augustus, they offered money as though giving it to the emperor himself.

(Dio Cassius 59.24.4)

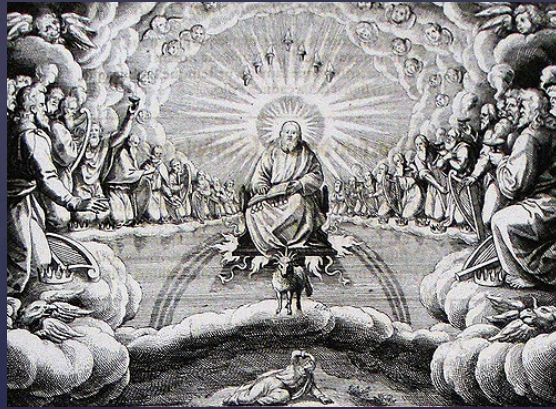
Rev 4



“since they did not love him nor wish that he should survive, they pretended both more fully as if to conceal their real sentiments”.

(Dio Cassius 59.24.6)

Rev 4



Ghent Altarpiece

God vs. the Emperor

Worship - in the form of bowing, throwing crowns, and singing acclamations – is given to God/Lamb instead of the Emperor.

Trinity of Evil: Dragon & 2 Beasts

DRAGON

"The great dragon ..., that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world"



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Dragon

Trinity of Evil: DRAGON & 2 beasts

DRAGON

13:3 Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born.



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Trinity of Evil: DRAGON & 2 beasts

DRAGON

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 **The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**



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Dragon

- ⌘ also has throne (13:2)
- ⌘ eternal / pre-existent
- ⌘ was in heavenly realm,
now on earth
- ⌘ powerful

God

- ⌘ enthroned
- ⌘ eternal
- ⌘ heavenly, but will
dwell on earth
- ⌘ powerful



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- ⌘ Greek, mythical creature
- ⌘ Non-biblical
- ⌘ Associated with chaos

Dragon



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- ⌘ Hebrew bible mythical creature:
 - ⌘ Serpent from garden of Eden (Gen 3)
 - ⌘ Leviathan (Isa 27:1, Job 3:8, Ps 74:13)
 - ⌘ Image for Pharaoh (Ezek 32:2)

Ancient Serpent



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- ⌘ Greek word/concept
- ⌘ Used in New Testament as dominant evil character
- ⌘ S/he prowls, plots, destroys, oppresses, tempts,

Devil - *diabolos*



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Biblical term:

- ⌘ Angelic being of the heavenly court & accuser of humans (Book of Job)
- ⌘ Fallen angel (Luke 10:18)
- ⌘ Tester of Jesus in the desert (Matt 4:10)
- ⌘ Evil angel who disguises himself with light (2 Cor 2:11)

Satan



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Sea Beast

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. **3 One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed.** In amazement the whole earth followed the beast. **4** They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"



Sea Beast



This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six. (Rev 13:18)



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Sea Beast



Letter	Value	Letter	Value	Letter	Value
α'	1	ι'	10	ρ'	100
β'	2	κ'	20	σ'	200
γ'	3	λ'	30	τ'	300
δ'	4	μ'	40	υ'	400
ε'	5	ν'	50	φ'	500
ϛ' or Ϛ' or στ'	6	ξ'	60	χ'	600
ζ'	7	ο'	70	ψ'	700
η'	8	π'	80	ω'	800
θ'	9	ϛ'	90	Ϟ'	900

$$666 = \chi\xi\varsigma$$

Nero – Emperor, 54-68 CE

“Neron Caesar”

N	e	r	o	n	C	a	e	s	a	r		
N	ε	ρ	ω	ν	Κ	α	ι	σ	α	ρ		
נ	ר	ו	נ	ק	ס	ר						
50	+	200	+	6	+	50	+	100	+	60	+	200

Land Beast



Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed

... it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived; and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

...it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. (rev 13:11-17)



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Lamb / Jesus

- ↳ 7 horns
- ↳ 7 eyes
- ↳ Mortal wound, but alive
- ↳ Shares throne of God
- ↳ Focus of worship
- ↳ Has power over life and death (eternal judge)
- ↳ Marks followers with a "seal"

Sea Beast

- ↳ 10 horns
- ↳ 7 heads
- ↳ mortal wound, miraculously healed
- ↳ shares throne of Dragon
- ↳ His statue is focus of worship
- ↳ Has power over life and death on earth

Land beast

- ↳ 2 horns like Lamb
- ↳ Marks followers with a "mark" that allows them to trade



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SUMMARY

- ↳ Dragon = cosmic evil
- ↳ Beast (666) = Emperor Nero
- ↳ Land beast = provincial ruler who erects statue of Nero and compels emperor cult practice and associated trade



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Evil imitates good



"it is one of the deep hypnotic mysteries of human history, that evil can become "incarnate" in human life in apparently Christian form."

Thomas F. Torrance, *The Apocalypse Today* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1961)
102.



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Case study: Apartheid

"The Principle of apartheid between races and peoples, also separate missions and churches, is well supported by Scripture"

Reformed church official statement.

"It is quite clear that no one can ever be a proponent of integration on the basis of the scriptures. It would be in a direct contradiction of the revealed will of God to plead for a commonality between whites, coloured, and Blacks"

F. Potgeiter, Theologian at Stellenbosch



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Evil in Revelation

- ⌘ Manifest in regimes / governments / organizations
- ⌘ Communal / corporate
- ⌘ Economically unjust : rich benefit at cost of poor
- ⌘ Oppressive (threatens personal freedom to worship differently)
- ⌘ Imitates the good it seeks to destroy/combat



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God's community

- ⌘ Voluntary, spontaneous worship
- ⌘ Eternal praise
- ⌘ Truth, Chastity, endurance
- ⌘ Peace
- ⌘ Healing
- ⌘ Shared reign (20:4)

Dragon's

- ⌘ Forced worship (13)
- ⌘ Fear
- ⌘ Murder, violence
- ⌘ Fornication
- ⌘ Greed
- ⌘ **Self-defeating violence**



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- ⌘ **Is this a helpful image of evil? Does it reflect anything about the reality we live in?**
- ⌘ **How / When have our church communities enabled or participated in evil?**
- ⌘ **How can our worship be a form of witness and resistance?**



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Christian response:

*"Come out of her my people, do not
take part in her sins so that you do
not share in her plagues..."*

"Worship God"

(Rev 18:4)



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