

THEOLOGICAL FLESH ON THE SKELETON OF REVELATION

Jean Sheldon

Choir Room Sabbath School

January 5, 2019

- ▶ **Reader:** “You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power because You created everything because You wanted it all to exist and be created” (4:11)
- ▶ **ALL:** “You are worthy to receive the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain and with your blood you purchased some from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you made them a kingdom for our God and priests, and they shall reign on the earth” (5:9-10).
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SCRIPTURE READING

THE REVELATION HYMN - TRANSLATED BY JEAN SHELDON

- ▶ **Reader:** “We thank you, O Lord God, the Almighty One, who is and was, because you took up your great power and reigned. And the nations became wrathful and your wrath came and the time for the dead to be judged and to give the reward to your servants and prophets, to saints and those who reverence your name, the small and the great, to destroy those who destroy the earth” (11:17).
- ▶ **ALL:** “Great and wonderful are your works, Lord God, the One Almighty; righteous and true are your ways, O King of the nations. Who shall not reverence You, O Lord, and give glory to Your name? Because you alone are holy, because all the nations will hear and worship before you, because your righteous judgments are demonstrated” (15:3-4).

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- ▶ **Reader:** “You are righteous, who is and was, the Holy One, because you judged everything. Because they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, you have given them blood to drink. You are worthy!” (16:5-6)
- ▶ **ALL:** “Alleluja! The salvation and glory and power of our God, because his judgments are true and righteous, because he judged the great harlot who ruined the earth with her fornication and took vengeance from her hand for the blood of his servants. ... Alleluja! And her smoke ascends from age to age” (19:1-3)
- ▶ **ALL:** “Alleluja! Because the Lord our God, the Almighty One, reigned. Let us rejoice and celebrate, and let us give him glory. The bride has made herself ready” (19:6-7).

▶ **END**

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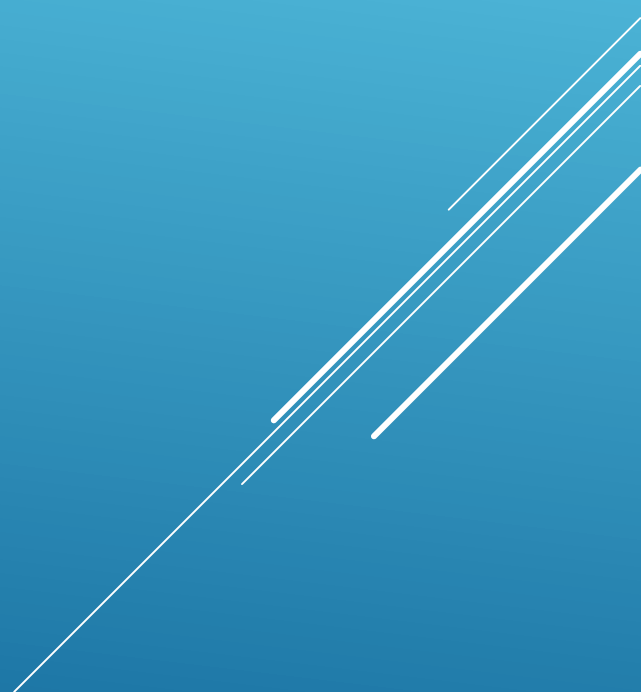
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- ▶ Originally, I'd planned to get a Ph.D. in the New Testament
- ▶ Revelation had been one of my interests.
- ▶ By misreading the GTU catalogue and finding the Joint Ph.D. program in Near Eastern Religions, I ended up doing my Ph.D. in the Old Testament and the ancient Near East.
- ▶ I had been dissatisfied with traditional Adventist preoccupation with identifying the skeleton of Revelation and failing to find its theology.
- ▶ In 1989 I decided to spend Sabbath afternoons studying Revelation, and put aside everything I'd been taught about it.

BACKSTORY BEHIND THIS PRESENTATION



- ▶ I chose to focus on Revelation 4:1-22:7.
- ▶ I also decided to do something unorthodox: count the words of this large section to find the center. I asked my dad, who had a minor in NT Greek from PUC to join me for the sake of accuracy.
- ▶ This is what we discovered as the center:
- ▶ Revelation 12:10, CEB: “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, ‘Now the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ have come. The accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them day and night before God, has been thrown down.’”

REVELATION 4:1-22:7—THE CENTER

- ▶ This positioned me at the core motif of the book: the war.
- ▶ It also pointed to the two opposite characters in the war: “the authority of his Christ” and “the accuser of our brothers and sisters.” (Note: in Hebrew, “the accuser” would be *hassatan*.)
- ▶ Obvious question: what is the most common element in a war?
- ▶ Answer: two sides.
- ▶ I then noticed that the this entire section of Revelation featured the symbolic elements of those two sides.

CENTRAL MOTIF OF REVELATION

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| ▶ The Side that Wins | The Side that Loses |
| ▶ Lamb | Beast |
| ▶ Seven horns | Ten horns and seven heads |
| ▶ Woman | Dragon |
| ▶ Lamb has been slain | Beast's wound is healed |
| ▶ Michael/Child | Dragon |
| ▶ Michael's angels | Dragon's angels |
| ▶ "Who is like God?" (<i>mi ki el</i>) | "Who is like the beast?" |
| ▶ "Who is worthy to take scroll?" | "Who can fight against it (beast)?" |

THE TWO SIDES, PART 1

- ▶ Lamb worthy because slain
- ▶ Saints follow Lamb wherever
- ▶ (God), Lamb, (Holy Spirit)
- ▶ Three messages
- ▶ Prophets prophesy
- ▶ Bride
- ▶ New Jerusalem
- ▶ River of Life
- ▶ Uniting of God's people
- ▶ Seven blessings/Alleluja!
- ▶ Names of 12 tribes/apostles
- ▶ Seal of God on forehead
- ▶ Father's name

Beast causes dissidents slain
Whole world wonders after beast
Dragon, beast, false prophet
Three unclean spirits
Beast kills
Whore
Babylon
Euphrates
Babylon splits apart
Seven woes/Woe! (8:13; 18:10, 16)
Blasphemous names of red beast
Mark of beast on forehead/hand
666 – number of human name

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ▶ Wrath of God unmixed | Wrath of Babylon's fornication |
| ▶ Patience | Wrath |
| ▶ Harvest of grain | Harvest of grapes |
| ▶ Lamb wins war by being slain | Beast slays dissenters |
| ▶ Jesus, faithful & true witness | Deceiver of the whole world |
| ▶ Follow the Lamb to the death | Babylon sheds the blood of saints |
| ▶ Wash robes in Lamb's blood | Woman drunk with saints' blood |
| ▶ Marriage supper of the Lamb | Great supper of God (birds eat) |
| ▶ Heaven | Abyss |
| ▶ Creation new heaven & earth | Old heaven and earth |
| ▶ All things have become new | Old things are passed away |

- ▶ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near (1:3).
- ▶ Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord (14:13).
- ▶ Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame (16:15).
- ▶ Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9)
- ▶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection (20:5).
- ▶ Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (22:7)
- ▶ Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14).

THE SEVEN BLESSINGS IN REVELATION

- ▶ The seven-stanza hymn in Revelation was constructed according to well-defined criteria: 1) Praise to God; 2) consistent reasons given for the praises (consistent use of the Greek *hoti*); 3) repetition of words, phrases, and ideas from stanza to stanza. Though there are other lines of poetry, even hymn-like in the Book of Revelation, none of them fit these criteria. By highlighting the repeated words in the Greek, one discerns a progression of ideas. When these words are written out, the synopsis of the hymn may be readily discerned.
- ▶ See handout (front and backside).

THE SEVEN-STANZA HYMN

- ▶ There are historical and historic reasons why John posed Babylon as the opposite of the New Jerusalem.
- ▶ The First Angel contains a message, that if understood properly is all anyone needs to know. That is, they should understand it— unless they have had their understanding very much affected by Babylonian thoughts and ways.
- ▶ If, because they are “Babylonian,” they reject the first angel’s message, then they need the second angel’s message to announce Babylon’s fall. If they reject that message then they need the fearsome third angel’s message that speaks their language.

THE THREE ANGELS’ MESSAGES: ASSUMPTIONS

- ▶ Contains the everlasting gospel—is that the good news Jesus taught or the good news of Revelation? And are those two mutually exclusive?
- ▶ Fear (Reverence God and give him glory Because the hour of his judgment has come. Four Judgments
 - ▶ God is judged (12:10 – the accuser cast down; cf. Rom. 3:4; Job)
 - ▶ Judgment of the little horn (Daniel 7:9-11)
 - ▶ Investigative judgment (Daniel 8:14)
 - ▶ The final judgment of the wicked (Revelation 20:11-15)
- ▶ And worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.

THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE

- ▶ Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
 - ▶ “At their most flourishing, the most important Mesopotamian cities dwarfed their contemporaries in the rest of the ancient world, to the amazement of the Greeks, such as Aristotle, who could not consider Babylon to be a city, but only as the equivalent of a nation because of its enormous dimensions” (Mieroop)
- ▶ She has made all nations
 - ▶ All nations in the surrounding regions, including Greece, Rome, Persia, India, and western China (of course, Assyria was a historical partner in this influence.
- ▶ Drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication
 - ▶ This is genitive chain that, in my opinion is a cryptic statement.
 - ▶ In terms of the NT, wine represents the death of Jesus.
 - ▶ In terms of the Old Testament, fornication represents idolatry.

THE SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE

- ▶ Those who worship the beast and its image will receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands. These will [also] drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger.
- ▶ And they will be tormented in fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.
 - ▶ Cf. Ex 33:18-23; 34:5-7, 29-35; Isa 6:3-5; Heb 12:29; John 1:14. Ezek 14:14-18; Gen 19:24
- ▶ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.
 - ▶ Cf. Jude 7; Daniel 2:4; Elephantine papyrus (marriage contract)
- ▶ Those who worship the beast and its image and receive the mark of its name will have no rest day and night.

THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE

Babylon's Wine/Wrath

Wine – blood of slain (Rev 18:24)

Used as a choice gift to soothe gods

Wrath – angry gods need soothing

Fornication with kings – Rev 18:3b

Mesopotamians modeled divine anger after royal anger (CAD)

Babylon *made* all nations drink it
whereas people simply shall drink
God's wrath.

God's Wine/Wrath

Wine – Jesus' blood; cup for holding

cf. Rev 7:1-3: hold back four winds

Wrath – Rom 1:18-28: “giving up”

Unmixed – undiluted or no illicit union

God who can't be appeased.
His wrath not an aspect of character

God's wrath is pure, unmixed with
kingly power.

TWO KINDS OF WINE/WRATH

- ▶ 15:7 7 bowls of God's wrath Jesus drank the cup Matt 26:39, 42
- ▶ Foul and evil sores They struck him and hit him 26:67
- ▶ Sea becomes blood They scourged him 27:26; 27:25
- ▶ Rivers & fountains to blood Nails in hands & feet; side pierced
- ▶ Deserve blood to drink Jesus given wine-gall to drink
- ▶ Sun scorches people w/ fire Jesus says, "I am thirsty"
- ▶ Kingdom of beast thrown into darkness Darkness envelops the cross

.THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES – PART 1

- ▶ Euphrates River dries up preparing the way for kings
- ▶ Frogs from dragon, beast, and false prophet
- ▶ Battle of Harmagedon
- ▶ Loud voice from temple: "It is finished!"
- ▶ Lightning, voices, thunder, great earthquake
- ▶ City split into 3 parts
- ▶ No mountains or islands

Jesus' side is pierced so that water and blood come out

Three persons led to Jesus' death: Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate

Jesus decides to trust his Father

Jesus cried with a loud voice: "It is finished!"

Lightning, earthquake

Temple image: veil rent; Jerusalem comprised 3 factions

No kingly power; no exclusion

SEVEN LAST PLAGUES – PART 2

- ▶ 19:1-2: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgments are true and just—what are the false judgments? What are the unjust judgments?
- ▶ He has judged the great whore [Babylon] who corrupted the earth with her fornication [with kings], and he has avenged on her [speaking Babylonian!] the blood of his servants. (Cf. 16:4-6)
- ▶ The marriage supper of the Lamb (v 7) versus the great supper of God (vv 17-18) in which the birds eat the flesh of kings, captains, the mighty, horses and their riders, all both free and slave, small and great.
- ▶ The Rider on the White Horse – called “Trustworthy and True.” Clothed in a robe dipped in blood—His own or others? Name: The Word of God (John 1:1-3). Weapon: sharp sword coming from his mouth (cf. Phil 2:8).

THOUGHTS ON REVELATION 19

- ▶ Rev 21:1-4 (NRSV) – “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; and they will be his peoples, and God Himself will be with them; he will wipe away 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.’”

THE ULTIMATE GOAL