



Our Life with the Bible:

# The Book of Revelation Confuses Us

Cover Image from Herald Press' *The Peace Table: A Storybook Bible*





Ways people are used to thinking of Revelation:

- A book of predictions about the end of the world
- A script for the 'end-times' (destruction and escape for some)





## ‘Surprising’ Omissions from Revelation:

- No mention of so-called ‘rapture’ in Revelation (a misreading of Matt 24:36-42 & 1 Thess 4:17)
- No explicit mention of a singular figure known as the “anti-Christ” – “beast” instead





## Original Context of Revelation:

- Likely written somewhere between 81-96CE by “servant John”
- Written while Emperor Domitian was in power
- Some Jews & Christians faced intense persecution; others lived in relative comfort





“How does a book about a red dragon, a lamb covered with blood, and a beast with seven horns and ten crowns speak to the divine love we see so clearly in Jesus?”

Jeremy Duncan, *Upside Down Apocalypse*, p.30





## Key Sources for Revelation

### 1. Prophetic Literature (forth-telling, not prediction)

- Prophetic books like Isaiah talk of redemptive history: “God will wipe away all tears.”
- Ezekiel - Four Living Creatures are angelic beings, in Revelation they are representatives of created order
- Daniel – Beasts that are symbols for nations\empires

Zechariah - Four Horsemen – God’s actions against Persian Empire in 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.





## Key Sources for Revelation

### 2. Roman Imperialism

- Emperors Nero & Domitian
- Babylon (code for Rome)
- Beast (Code for Roman Emperors) & 666 (Nero)
- The scroll (outcome of history), depicted on Emperor Statues



Statue of Emperor Domitian depicted as Augustus, most likely recut from Nero. From the Vatican Museums, Rome.

Courtesy of Jackknife Barlow / Wikimedia Commons.

Accessed at <https://partialhistorians.com/2014/06/08/episode-29-domitian/>





## Central Image:

### The LAMB that was Slain

- The lamb is first called “Lion of Judah” (a common OT symbol) and “Root of David”(5:5)
- The Lion conquers *as* the “slaughtered Lamb” (5:6, 9)
- The Lamb is worthy to open the scroll (5:9)
- The Lamb has ransomed people from every tribe and nation to serve God (5:9-10)

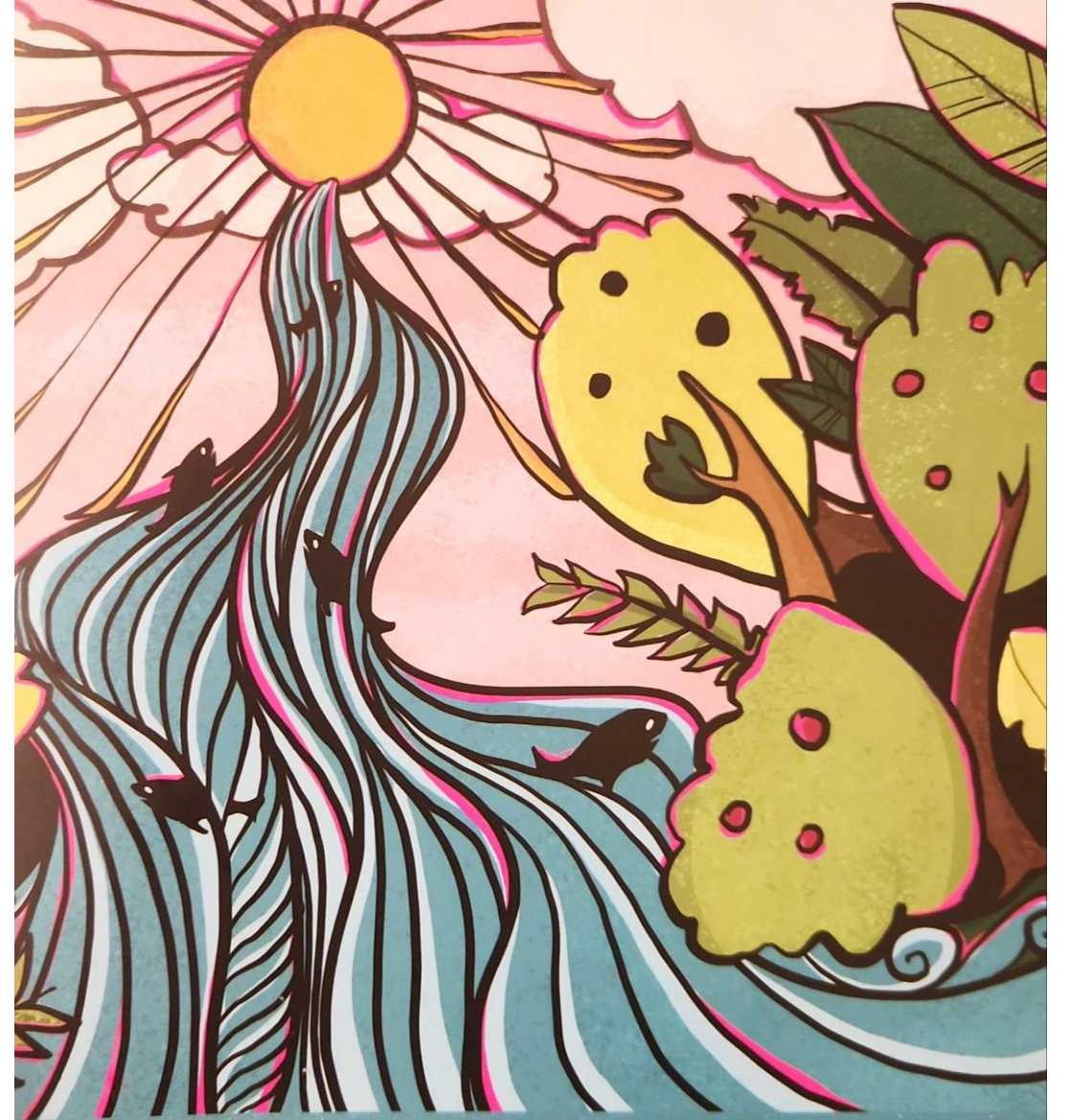




## Better Ways to think about Revelation:

- A prophetic ridiculing of Imperial power (protest and truth-telling, not prediction). Worthy is the slain lamb, not the Emperor
- An alternative vision of redemptive power rooted in Divine Suffering Love
- An alternative script for history's outcome (restoration)





Images from Herald Press' *The Peace Table: A Storybook Bible*



