

The background is a complex, multi-layered painting. At the top left, a bright yellow sun with a face and a blue, multi-eyed creature are visible. The center features a large, pale green face with a single eye. Below this, a white bird-like figure is depicted. The bottom right corner shows a landscape with a red, rocky or volcanic terrain. The overall style is expressive and symbolic, with a rich color palette of yellows, greens, blues, and reds.

REVELATION (PT. 2)

***LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES* (1:4-3:22)**

Important to understanding rest of Revelation

Churches are all in western Asia Minor, facing different hardships:

- ***False teachings*** (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira)
- ***Persecution*** (Smyrna, Philadelphia)
- ***Complacency*** (Sardis, Laodicea)

Cities listen in an order that suggests a circular route for a letter carrier



***LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES* (1:4-3:22)**

**Most churches acknowledged for both good & bad things.
Nothing bad said about Smyrna & Philadelphia; nothing
good said about Sardis and Laodicea**

**Main message: churches are implored to stand firm & not
make concessions in face of the evil inherent in Roman
empire.**

SETTING THE STAGE (5:1-14)

Revelation begins with contrast of worldly power (represented by Roman empire) & God's power:

Vs. 5 – “conquered” – Gk. *nike*. Was Roman goddess of victory. Very important symbol in Roman empire

Vs. 6 – Expecting a Lion (David), a lamb appears! Throughout Revelation, “lamb” = Jesus. Greek word very diminutive: “Fluffy”

HUGE contrast of powers here & throughout:

NIKE MEETS FLUFFY!

THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-8:1)

Serves to reassure Christians that their deliverance is near & enemies will not persevere. The Lamb (Christ) opens all seals.

First four seals bring about four horsemen of the Apocalypse:

- ***White*** – represents conquest
- ***Red*** – represents bloody strife
- ***Black*** – represents famine
- ***Pale green (?)*** – represents pestilence

All are logical consequences of participation in empire.

THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-8:1)

Fifth seal depicts souls of Christian martyrs

Sixth seal describes cosmic disturbances that are part of God's punishment on wicked.

Chpt. 7 – An interlude before seventh seal is opened, depicting the angels holding back the four winds so servants of God can be marked on their foreheads

Seventh seal is opened & reveals angels blowing seven trumpets, each time causing additional plagues upon earth & cosmos

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:2-11:19)

Patterned after Egyptian plagues in Exodus – Christians are delivered from their “bondage”

***First trumpet* – Hail & fire w/blood**

***Second trumpet* – mountain falls into sea**

***Third trumpet* – Star fell from heaven**

***Fourth trumpet* – 1/3 of moon, stars, sun struck**

***Fifth trumpet* – Huge locusts**

***Sixth trumpet* – A cavalry of angels released**

Chpt. 10-11:14 – Another interlude before seventh trumpet

Seventh trumpet – Kingdom of world is now kingdom of Christ.

Suffering on earth ends.

THE DRAGON, THE BEAST, THE LAMB

(12:1-14:20)

Introduction of “characters” to play part in heavenly battle – heavy symbolism here:

- ***Pregnant woman*** – Israel, giving birth to Messiah
- ***Dragon*** - Satan
- ***Sea beast*** – Roman Empire
- ***Earth beast*** – parody of Christ/false prophets

13:18 – “666.” Hebrew *gematria*, where letters also act as numerals, transliterates to “Nero Caesar,” emperor who persecuted Christians.

SEVEN PLAGUES & SEVEN BOWLS

(15:1-16:21)

Seven plagues, poured out in bowls

Reminiscent of plagues in Egypt, but this time they are cast upon those affiliated w/empire.

16:16 – “Harmagedon,” commonly alliterated as “Armageddon,” place of the final battle.

Refers to Megiddo, site of several decisive battles in Egypt’s history. A “war zone”

“Har-Megiddo” = “mountain of Megiddo”

JUDGMENT ON BABYLON (17:1-19:10)

***Babylon* – foreign nation who destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE & took Hebrews into captivity for a generation.**

In Revelation, the “new Babylon” is Rome.

Chpt. 18 – Fall of Babylon/Rome accounted & celebrated

Chpt. 19:20-21 – Fall of Roman Empire & destruction of false prophets – thrown into “lake of sulfur”

CHRIST'S VICTORY & NEW JERUSALEM

Chpt. 20 – Final destruction of all evil:

- Satan thrown into bottomless pit**
- Christ's reign for 1000 years**
- Satan released again, then thrown into “lake of fire and sulfur” with false prophets**
- Death & Hades thrown into lake of fire**

CHRIST'S VICTORY & NEW JERUSALEM

CHPT. 21 – Vision of New Jerusalem

- Vss. 1-4 – famous verses**
- Specific measurements of new city**
- Vss. 18-20 – lots of gems listed. These are found on the breastplate of the high priest**

CHPT. 22 – CHRIST RULES

SUMMARY OF REVELATION:

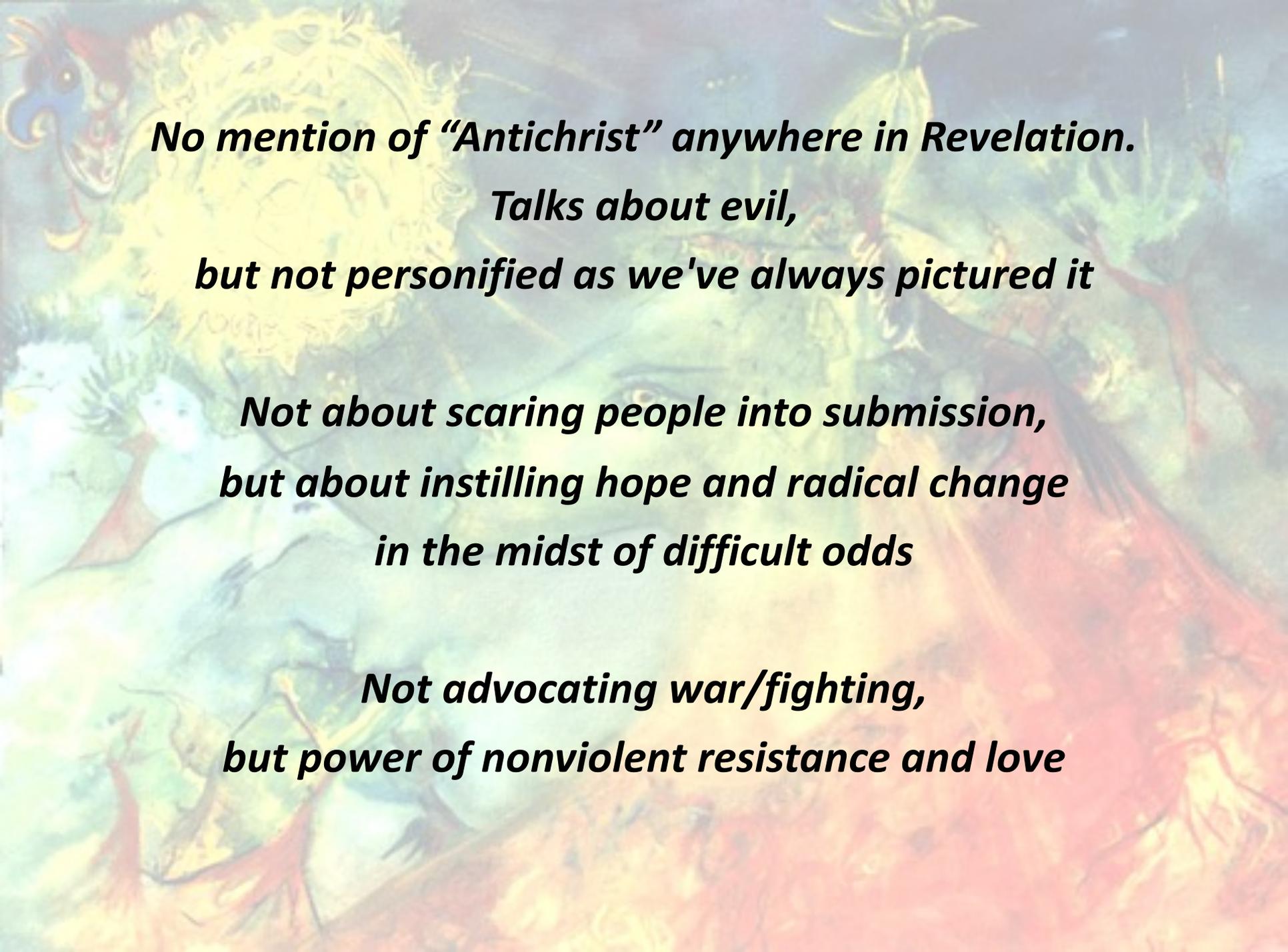
Apocalyptic writing – written to persecuted Christians to give them hope.

Writing is heavily symbolic in nature

NOT meant to be read as “code” for future end times in our time

Number “seven” is big – symbolizes perfection

Revelation, not “Revelations” !!!!!



No mention of “Antichrist” anywhere in Revelation.

***Talks about evil,
but not personified as we've always pictured it***

***Not about scaring people into submission,
but about instilling hope and radical change
in the midst of difficult odds***

***Not advocating war/fighting,
but power of nonviolent resistance and love***

The background is a vibrant, abstract painting. It features a central figure with a large, glowing yellow and white head, possibly representing a sun or a deity. The figure has a blue and red face. The background is filled with various colors, including green, blue, red, and yellow, with some darker, more complex shapes that could be interpreted as trees or other natural elements. The overall style is expressive and somewhat surreal.

***INTERPRETING
THE BIBLE IN A
CHANGING WORLD***

For most of first two centuries, Christianity continued to spread & grow, but for the most part remained low-key...

That all changed with Emperor Constantine of Rome:

- Ruled from 306-337 CE
- Supposedly had a vision from Jesus & began a slow process to conversion to Christianity
- In 313 CE, issued the Edict of Milan that embraced Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire

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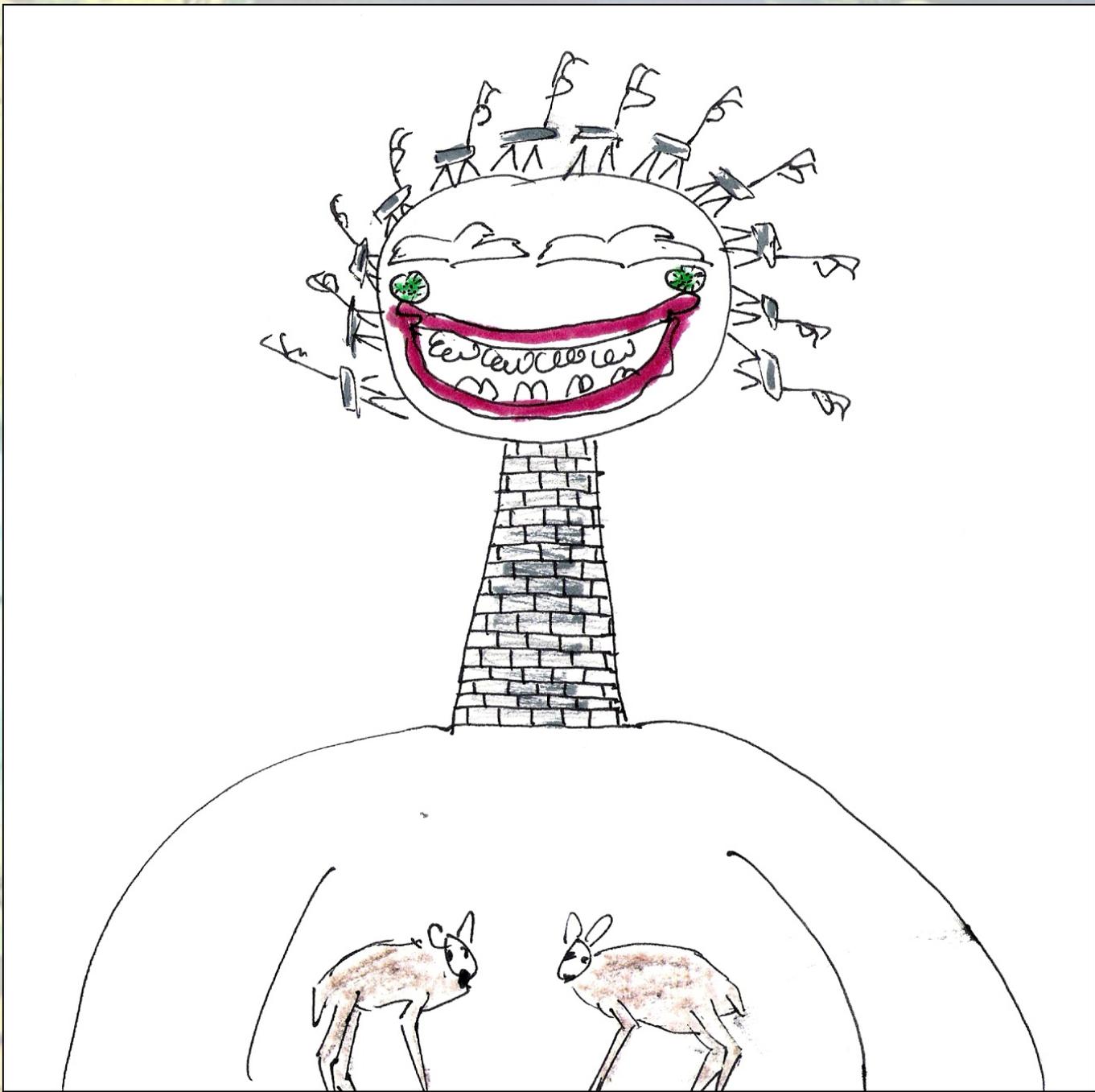
- Instantly, all Roman citizens became, by law, Christians
- Christianity was no more a secondary religion but an *institution*
- From then on, Christianity would “follow” world power as a de facto “state religion” (Rome, Europe, America....).

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

Interpreting the Bible is always a tricky thing

Read Song of Solomon/Songs 4:1-5

So is this what this scripture is talking about???



Obviously this is not what the writer meant -
it's poetry!

Have to be careful in how one understands
what a "literal" reading of the Bible is

Bible has all kinds of literature: narrative,
poetry, law, wisdom, etc. Have to read it
as such (ex: can't read poetry as narrative)

Bible uses all kinds of rhetorical devices:
metaphor, simile, allegory, parable, etc.

Bible can be truthful without being "literal"

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE IN ANY AGE:

Must take context into consideration - verses before and after. Must know history...

Exegesis ("pulling out" what's there),

not eisogesis ("pushing onto scripture your own ideas/agendas")

Must listen to others & accept the fact that there's always something we can learn



CONGRATULATIONS