

Coping with the serious notions in the book of revelation through parody

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The Book of Revelation is an important book in the Bible. When read in the literal sense, it can also be extremely dangerous. This is why it is necessary to close read and tease out what the book is actually telling us. It may also be possible to find that the Book of Revelation as a parody or an exaggerated imitation “making fun” of what is occurring in the book. This can be seen when looking at the visions of the beast and the lamb; also, the idea of the Holy Trinity and its evil twin which I like to call the Unholy Trinity. Below is a visual of the Holy Trinity (the characters of the Unholy Trinity will be shown later in the essay).

First, the image of the lamb is very prevalent throughout the Book of Revelation. The lamb itself is a very frightening being; it has 7 horns and 7 eyes. I have never seen a lamb like this. Even with its frightening appearance, lambs are not typically wrathful. Lambs that I have experienced are docile and frankly kind of helpless. This is the complete opposite of what is described in the book.

John is also told that “The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the scroll sealed with seven seals” (5: 1-5), but as John looked for a lion, he saw a lamb instead. In my world religions class, we talked about how people did not want to accept Jesus because he associated with the Romans and the prostitutes and he was not a huge powerful leader that would bring salvation in life instead of spiritual salvation. This is probably what John felt when he saw not a fierce warrior lion but a wounded lamb. In being killed like a lamb and sacrificing itself, it triumphs like a lion over its enemies. Jesus’s sacrifice allows him to rule like a lion.

Along with the parodies found with the use of a lamb instead of something more fierce, the opposite or “evil twin” of the lamb is the beast. Although, the beast shares many traits with the lamb. Some of these traits include the injury that has healed, the number of heads/horns and eyes, their followers have their mark whether it be the mark of the beast or the mark of the lamb, etc. Also, they can both perform great miracles which Jesus uses for good and the beast uses to mystify people and to make himself seem worthy of following.

One of the most striking resemblances I found was the idea that the head which was slain with its wound healed represents the fallen emperor, Nero, who was expected to come back. This parallels the slit throat of the lamb and the resurrection of Jesus. Nero was supposed to come back to rule the Roman Empire. Jesus was going to come back and be in the New Jerusalem. This makes it parody because it is like John is saying “Look, the beast and the lamb are very alike but make sure you are on the right side; my side.”

Taking the beast and the lamb a step further is the idea of the Holy Trinity and the Unholy Trinity. The Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a familiar concept to people in the Christian faith. It is in simple terms the belief that God is the father of Jesus and both are part of this Holy Spirit yet they are all the same being. This concept is completely bizarre to other religious backgrounds; In Islam there is one God and only he can be called God. Jesus was sent as a prophet of God but that is all he was.

In the Book of Revelation, there is also a trinity made with the Satan, the beast and the False Prophet. I like to call it the Unholy Trinity to show the parody between them and their holy counterparts. The Holy Trinity is infinite truth, love, and goodness, while the Unholy Trinity portrays opposite traits of deception, hatred, and sin/evil. Satan is described as a red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. The beast also has seven heads and ten horns, indicating his connection to Satan. As said before, one of the heads has a wound that looks to be healed. The false prophet presents himself as a meek, mild, and benevolent person but he still has horns which tie him to Satan also. The first image to the left is a representation of Satan in his dragon form. The middle image is of the beast and the last image on the right shows all both Satan and the beast with the false prophet in the lower corner.

All of these images show a pretty frightening scene. It is not hard to understand why in the Book of Revelation the people chose to follow the Unholy Trinity and receive the mark that would label them as damned (14: 10). The beast also has a number which by most people is understood to be 666 and in many paintings is shown on the forehead of the beasts followers representing its mark.

Having the correct mark seems to be a giant deal yet when the New Jerusalem descends the nations who have the mark of the beast are there. I think God was making fun of the idea that you needed to be a certain person to get into the New Jerusalem. All that is needed is repentance and you will get that chance to get in the pearly gates.

Shaun of the Dead is a zombie movie while not really being a zombie movie; it has the characteristics of classical zombie films while using over exaggeration to make hard situations easier to deal with. This is shown often in the Book of Revelation. The war scenes where it describes Jesus cutting down his enemies with his sword tongue is quite comical when you think about what that would look like. John could have just said that by preaching the word of God, the enemies were converted.

In chapters 20 and 21, the people who are not in the Book of Life are thrown into the lake of fire, but then return again outside the gates of the New Jerusalem. This is parodied in Shaun of the Dead when in the ending scenes within the pub the military had been called and they slaughtered all of the zombies. Then when they show how life has went back to normal for Shaun, he actually saved his best friend who is now a zombie and is keeping him in the shed in his backyard. All of the zombies are not really gone but are being put to use in everyday life doing manual labor; not human but not considered a threat anymore either. This is also a social comment of how people who act like zombies just trudging through life ignoring everything but the need to eat and make money are usually the ones doing the manual labor and lower level jobs.

Also, Shaun can be considered the lamb in the movie. He seems innocent and is the loser type yet in the end he comes out a hero. The other guy that wanted to date Shaun's girlfriend was the beast that was trying to make everyone follow him, but in the end gets killed (good riddance). During one part of the movie Shaun's mother points out that he " has a bit of red" on

him. This is of course blood. Shaun is wearing a white shirt stained with blood. This sounds a lot like the warrior Jesus. Shaun is the British Jesus character. Not to mention he has a cricket paddle instead of a sword tongue...

Next on the list is that they end up back in the Winchester which can be compared to the New Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem is described in 21: 18-21,

“ The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.”

This is a parody in the fact that everything we thought was precious such as gold, pearls and gemstones is now used like asphalt and other everyday materials. The Winchester, which was once just a bar, became a sanctuary for the group during the zombie outbreak and is still somewhere that they go often. It is as if God was trying to get us to realize that material things do not matter and the only thing we should worry about is repentance and being able to reside in his Kingdom.

Overall, I think that the Book of Revelation was written as a social critique of events during John's time. If this really was a Revelation from God, He was using it to make fun of the things that were believed falsely by using mirrored things like the Holy and Unholy Trinities and the parallels found within. Shaun of the Dead reflects this parody nicely by using things from the Book of Revelation as well as its comedy and over exaggeration. Instead of the Revelation being taken literally, it is a good practice to take it as a parody and sift past the gobbledygook to get to what it is really saying: get your crap together.