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Re-imagining the warrior : divine warrior imagery in the book of Revelation.

ABSTRACT

Re-imagining the Warrior: Divine Warrior Imagery
in the Book of Revelation


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The focus of this dissertation is to investigate whether the ancient world of Divine Warrior imagery can aid in understanding the violent imagery in the book of Revelation. The specific strategy is to examine how John's intended readers would perceive the violent imagery in light of the horizon of expectations regarding Divine Warriors and how the text challenges those expectations.

In order to get a sense for how John's late first century C.E. intended readers would hear the imagery of Divine War, a diachronic investigation of Divine Warrior imagery is a major portion of the study. This is necessary in order to discuss how Divine Warrior imagery has been adapted into these contexts. The study begins by investigating the way gods fight in literature from the ancient Near East. A significant part of this discussion focuses on the *Iliad* Epic from Ugarit. The next phase of the study discusses the various ways the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures adapt the ancient Near Eastern imagery into the context of ancient Israel. The literature of early Judaism then appropriates the same imagery primarily through the foundation of authoritative

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Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is to investigate whether the ancient motif of Divine Warrior imagery can aid in understanding the violent imagery in the book of Revelation. The specific strategy is to examine how John's intended readers would perceive the violent imagery in light of the horizon of expectations regarding Divine Warfare and how the text challenges those expectations. In order to get a sense for how John's late first century C.E. intended readers would hear the imagery of Divine War, a diachronic investigation of Divine Warrior imagery is a major portion of the study. This is necessary in order to discern how Divine Warrior imagery has been adapted into these contexts. The study begins by investigating the way gods fight in literature from the ancient Near East. A significant part of this discussion focuses on the Baal Epic from Ugarit. The next phase of the study discusses the various ways the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures adapt the ancient Near Eastern imagery into the context of ancient Israel. The literature of early Judaism then appropriates the same imagery, primarily through the foundation of authoritative scriptural texts. A number of developments are apparent in early Jewish usage of the imagery now put into still different contexts. Finally, the book of Revelation appropriates Divine Warrior imagery from a context that understands the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative, is steeped in the general mindset of early Judaism, and lives in the provinces of the Roman Empire. The conclusion of the dissertation is that Divine Warrior imagery, as primarily the imagery of power, shows considerable flexibility. Using the imagery of conquering and war, John's visions redefine victory from a divine perspective: true power conquers by dying, not by killing. The violent imagery of God and Jesus Christ at war must be read in light of this understanding of what it means to conquer.

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