

INSPIRED

SLAYING GIANTS, WALKING ON WATER, AND LOVING THE BIBLE AGAIN

Rachel Held Evans

Resistance Stories

Our God, the God of the Oppressed, Will Have the Final Word

- ▶ Evans writes, *“With Scripture, we’ve not been invited to an academic fraternity; we’ve been invited to a wrestling match. We’ve been invited to a dynamic, centuries-long conversation with God and God’s people that has been unfolding since creation, one story at a time. If we’re lucky, it will leave us with a limp.”*



WWE Full Match: John Cena vs Seth Rollins

75th Anniversary of D-Day: June 6, 2019

“He will fight savagely....I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle.

“We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.”

General Dwight Eisenhower



“We all want to change the world...”



Peaceable Kingdom. Edward Hicks, ca 1833.

The Peaceful Kingdom - Isaiah 11:1-9

- 1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
- 2 The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge...
- 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
- 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...
- 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
- 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
- 7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
- 9 They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

Oppressive Empires

*They say the beast was driven out of heaven,
And like a leopard, prowls the earth for prey.
It has four heads, though some claim sight of seven.
It wears ten crowns engraved with blasphemy.
What creature past or present can compare
To one who boasts the teeth of lion kings,
But with the mighty haunches of a bear
Leaps, lupine to soar on eagle's wings?
No legion made of men can it beset,
So nations war and strive to win it favor.
Every Caesar wants it for a pet,
Every superpower for a savior.
All, save the sons and daughters of Abraham,
Who into its carnassial grin send a Lamb. Revelation 13:1*



Resistance to “Babylon”?

- ▶ *Babylon is a force that affects us externally through opposition to the will of God and it affects us internally with imitation and assimilation.*
- ▶ What does this mean?
- ▶ The writers of the Bible used stories, poems, prophecies, and admonitions to try and make sense of their lives as exiled people, to come to an understanding of their anger at forces that scattered and oppressed them, to comprehend God’s role in their exile and deliverance and to maintain hope that one day...
- ▶ *BABYLON, THE JEWEL OF KINGDOMS, THE PRIDE AND GLORY OF THE BABYLONIANS, WILL BE OVERTHROWN BY GOD. (Isaiah 13:19)*

Most Significant Leaders of the Biblical Resistance: The Prophets

- ▶ *“It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination; to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one.”* Walter Brueggemann
 - ▶ Jeremiah - wore an ox yoke around his neck to symbolize Israel’s impending oppression under the Babylonian Empire
 - ▶ Ezekiel - memorialized the fall of Jerusalem by building a model of the city and lying down beside it for 390 days on his left side and 40 days on his right...eating only bread cooked over a cow dung fire
 - ▶ Elisha - sent two female bears to maul a group of teenage boys for making fun of his bald head
 - ▶ Jonah - tried to avoid God’s call to preach to the dangerous Assyrian city of Nineveh and was swallowed by a giant fish
 - ▶ Hosea - married an unfaithful wife to make a point
 - ▶ John the Baptist - wandered in the wilderness eating only locusts and honey in order to urge the people to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Matthew 3:2
- ▶ THE PROPHETS ARE WEIRDOS...They remind us of the odd ducks who stand in the margins of society calling out to us to pay attention to the signs of trouble or destruction.

THE LAMENTATION

“Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain daughter of my people.” Jeremiah 9:1

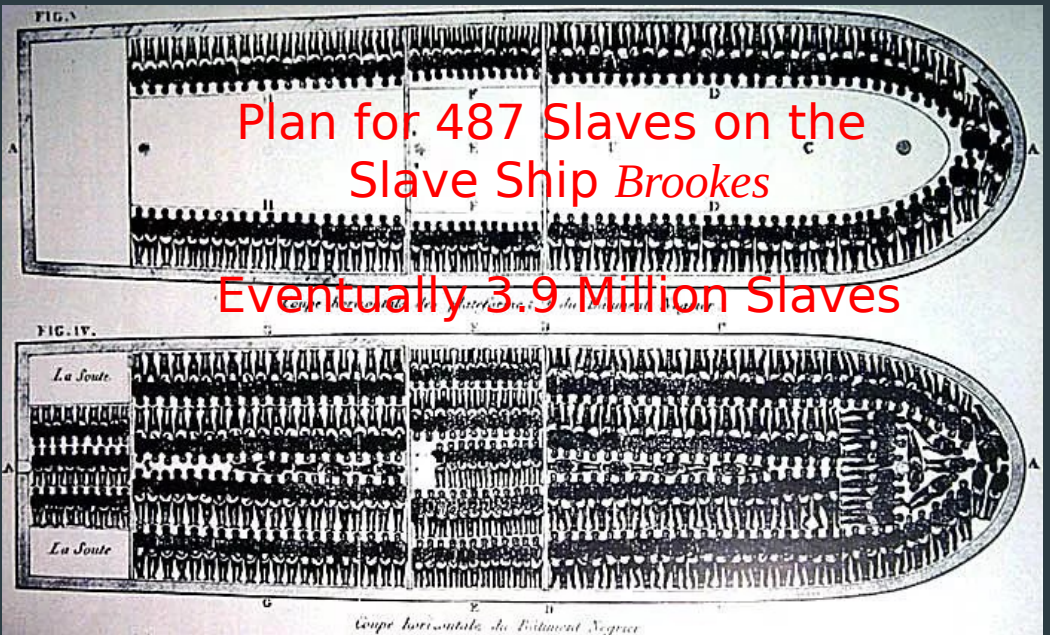
THE HOPE

*“See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty arm...
He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart.”* Isaiah 40:10-11



Again The Beast...

- ▶ Daniel and John the Baptist envision the empires as vicious beasts...
 - ▶ Beneath all the wealth, power, and excess of these dazzling empires lie grotesque monsters, trampling everyone and everything in their path...When they depict God as tolerating, then restraining, and finally destroying these monsters...
- ▶ Daniel and John are saying, “The story isn’t over; even the greatest empires are no match for goodness, righteousness, and justice.”
- ▶ Resistance is winning...
- ▶ “The point of the stories of the prophets is not to predict the future, it is to provide comfort for the present...[apocalyptic texts] proclaim that a guiding hand controls history, and assure that justice will be done.” Amy-Jill Levine



Jim Crow Era

In the name of...
 More land.
 More money.
 More power.
 More status.



Japanese Internment Camps



**Trail of Tears
 More than 5000
 Deaths**



**900 Jewish Refugees on *St. Louis*
 Returned to Europe to Die in
 Concentration Camps**

Not Ghosts of the Past...

- ▶ Poverty is rampant amongst African-American and indigenous communities.
 - ▶ These communities struggle for health care, secure housing, healthy food, quality education.
- ▶ 6xs the number of African Americans are imprisoned for drug use even though roughly the same rate of whites are users.
- ▶ The rate of wealth continues to increase for the already wealthy, while the poor and middle class are losing wealth...the number of “working poor” continues to increase.
- ▶ In some states a gay person can still be fired from his/her job, while a serial womanizer who brags about his success with married women is elected president with the support of “Christian” Americans.
- ▶ The sins the prophets of Israel condemned remain potent and prevalent in our culture today!

*“They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious.
‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”* Jeremiah 6:14

- ▶ Evans wrote: “What I love about the Bible is that the story isn’t over. There are still prophets in our midst. There are still dragons and beasts. It might not look like it, but the Resistance is winning. The light is breaking through.”

Jesus said, “Let those with ears, hear.”

“I am proud to be an American...”

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
Because he has anointed me
To proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
And recovery of sight for the blind,
To set the oppressed free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19