

Introduction to Revelation – part 4

The Old Testament in the book of Revelation

Introduction

As we begin let's **pray** – and then listen to God's Word in **Daniel 7:9-18** (an important OT passage which we'll consider later on). What follows is taken largely – and sometimes verbatim – from G.K. Beale's highly recommended *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*.

Revelation is the most "Biblical" book in the Bible! It contains more allusions to the OT than all other books of the NT put together. These are *allusions* rather than direct quotations. But most are clear with wording almost identical to an OT text. Or else they are probable, where the wording is not quite the same, but the idea is still directly and uniquely traceable to a text in the OT.

1. Revelation sometimes has large O.T. passages in mind

There are a few larger OT passages which seem to serve as a pattern for similarly large portions of Revelation. Some examples:

(a) Daniel 2 and 7 → Rev. 1, 4, 5

Patterns from Daniel 2 and 7 are found repeatedly in Revelation 1, 4 and 5.

(b) The Exodus plagues → Rev. 8:6-12, 16:1-14

The trumpet and bowl plagues (Rev. 8:6-12; 16:1-14) clearly follow the pattern of the Exodus plagues (Exodus 7–14).

(c) The "flow" of Ezekiel

There are MANY allusions and parallels between Ezekiel and Revelation. (The list here is drawn – largely – from David Chilton's commentary *Days of Vengeance*):

- The Throne-Vision (Rev. 4/Ezek. 1)
- The Book/Scroll (Rev. 5/Ezek. 2-3)
- The Four Plagues (Rev. 6:1-8/Ezek. 5)
- The Wrath of God (Rev. 6:12-17/Ezek. 7)
- The Seal on the Saint's Foreheads (Rev. 7/Ezek. 9)
- The Coals from the Altar (Rev. 8/Ezek. 10)
- No More Delay (Rev. 10:1-7 /Ezek. 12)
- The Eating of the Book (Rev. 10:8 -11/Ezek. 2)
- The Measuring of the Temple (Rev. 11:1-2/Ezek. 40-43)
- Jerusalem and Sodom (Rev. 11:8/Ezek. 16)
- The Cup of Wrath (Rev. 14/Ezek. 23)
- The Vine of the Land (Rev. 14:18-20/Ezek. 15)
- The Great Harlot (Rev. 17-18 /Ezek. 16, 23)
- The Lament over the City (Rev. 18/Ezek. 27)
- The Scavengers' Feast (Rev. 19/Ezek. 39)
- The First Resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6/Ezek. 37)
- The Battle with Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-9/Ezek. 38-39)
- The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21/Ezek. 40-48)
- The River of Life (Rev. 22/Ezek. 47)

It's not just that John makes allusions to Ezekiel. His fundamental structure is very, very similar. He records many of the same things, in roughly the same order. (So, it's likely there'll be a big similarity between the big message of Ezekiel and the big message of Revelation).

2. Revelation develops O.T. themes

Revelation also develops certain OT themes in a general way. For example (we'll state but not develop):

(a) end-time judgment and salvation

(b) Daniel's concept of the abomination of desolation

Daniel describes the abomination of desolation (in Dan. 9:26-27, 11:31-32 and 12:11; these specify the more vague references in Dan. 7:25, 8:11-13 and 12:7). The initial fulfilment occurred during Antiochus Epiphanes' oppression in 167-164BC. In Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 the fulfilment of Daniel 7:27 was seen as about to be fulfilled in the Roman siege of Jerusalem. He anticipated a tribulation for God's people which was focused in an attack on the temple.

Revelation doesn't explicitly talk about the abomination of desolation. But it does reference and develop this particular OT theme in several ways.

- It is possible that Rev. 11:2 refers directly to the siege of Jerusalem.
- Repeatedly John tells us that persecution will be focused on God's "tabernacle" (13:5-7) and on God's people for the same duration as the persecution described by Daniel (see Rev. 12:6, 12:14, 13:5 etc). In other words, what Daniel saw as specific John develops as part of the ongoing experience of the church before the return of Christ.

(c) the OT concept of earthquake as a sign of the end

3. Mainly, Revelation uses simple allusions

Beale writes: "By far the greater number of allusions are uses in Revelation of an idea or phrase referring to a person, place, or event from an OT text." Here are some examples, grouped according to common point:

(a) Judgment

- books of judgment (Ezekiel 2, Daniel 7 and 12/Rev. 5:1-5; Ezekiel 2/Revelation 10)
- the lion of Judah exercising judgment (Gen. 49:9/Rev. 5:5)
- horsemen as agents of judgment (Zechariah 1 and 6/Rev. 6:1-8)
- locusts as agents of judgment (Joel 1-2/Rev. 9:7-10)
- Exodus plagues inflicting judgment (Exod. 7:14-12:33/Rev. 8:6-12; 16:1-14)

(b) Tribulation

- ten days of tribulation (Dan. 1:12/Rev. 2:10)
- three and a half years of tribulation (Dan. 7:25; 12:7/Rev. 11:2; 12:14; 13:5)
- Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem as OT places where God's people are persecuted (Rev. 11:8)
- rulers who persecute pictured as beasts (Daniel 7/Revelation 11-13 and 17)
- Babylon the Great, who deceives and persecutes (Dan. 4:30/Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5-6; 18:2, 24; 19:2)

(c) Idolatrous Teaching

- Balaam (Numbers 25; 31:16/Rev. 2:14)
- Jezebel (1 Kgs. 16:31; 2 Kgs. 9:22/Rev. 2:20-23)

(d) Divine Protection

- the tree of life (Gen. 2:9/Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19)
- the "sealing" of the Israelites (Ezekiel 9/Rev. 7:2-8)
- the wings of eagles protecting in the wilderness (Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11/Rev. 12:14)

(e) The Victorious End-Time Battle

- Armageddon (Zech. 12:11/Rev. 16:16)

(f) Falling Away (Apostasy)

- the harlot (Ezek. 16:15/Revelation 17)

(g) The Spirit as the Empowering for God's People

- Zech. 4:1-6/Rev. 1:12-20; 11:4

4. HOW does John use the Old Testament?

We've seen THAT John uses the Old Testament – and that when God showed him these extraordinary visions he did so using dozens of pictures drawn from the Old Testament. But HOW does John use the OT? What is guiding him? Here are a couple of key principles for us to grasp:

(a) John's use of the O.T. is "similar-but-different":

When John "uses" an OT passage in Revelation he almost always carries over the main focus of the OT text – so that there is a clear *continuity* between the OT and Revelation. (We've just seen that in the examples above: there is a "common point" between the OT passage and Revelation). However, John applies those OT allusions usually to historical situations *different* to those described in the O.T. passage.

Our second principle is really a specific example of the first – but one which is so common and so significant that it's worth noting.

(b) What is specific in the OT is often universalised in Revelation

Some examples...

- What in the OT is applied to Israel is given a much wider sense by John. So, God gave Israel the title "kingdom of priests" (Exod. 19:6), but John applies this to the church (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).
- Where Zech. 12:10 states that the tribes will mourn over the Messiah, the reference is to Israel. But John widens it to all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).
- The concept of the Exodus plagues is extended by John from the land of Egypt to the whole earth (Rev. 8:6-12; 16:1-14).
- The three- and- a- half years of Israel's tribulation (Dan. 7:25; 12:7) are extended to the tribulation of the church.
- This tribulation is instigated not by Daniel's literal Babylon (Dan. 4:30), but by the end-time Babylon or world system (Rev. 17:1-6), which persecutes not just Daniel's Israelite fellow believers but the church throughout the world (Rev. 17:5-8; 18:24).
- When Babylon falls, the "cities of the nations" (Rev. 16:19) also fall.
- The benefits of the end-time temple of Ezekiel are no longer reserved for Jews only, but are for all believing peoples. The leaves which are for the healing of Israel (Ezek. 47:12) are now for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).
- The lampstands of the ark now represent the churches (1:12-13, 20), and the physical manna given to Israel becomes spiritual manna for all believers (2:17).
- Tyre as harlot (Ezek. 26:17–28:19) becomes the world system as represented by Babylon (Rev. 17:1–18:24).
- Physical Jerusalem becomes "new Jerusalem," which is equated with the entire new creation (21:2-27).

(c) John's use of the OT is based on fulfilment in Christ and the sovereignty of God

Beale writes: "The reason for such universalization is rooted in the NT understanding of the work of Christ and of how through Christ the promise given to Abraham has been extended to the nations. When these nations trust in Jesus, who is the true Israel, they identify with him and thus become part of true Israel, riding on the Israelite coattails of Jesus.

"John's use of the OT should not, therefore, be seen as abuse of its true meaning. John simply understands the OT as prophetically pointing forward to the events of the NT and to Christ, and he does so in the same way that Jesus Himself and all the other NT writers did.

“The true people of God are now seen to be those who trust in the Savior promised in the OT, and believers from every nation, Jew and Gentile alike, constitute God’s new covenant people, the continuation of true Israel. It was likewise prophesied in the OT that such people would be those upon whom God would in the latter days pour out His Spirit and upon whose hearts He would write His law.

“History is united by the plan of a sovereign God. In this history, the latter part (the work of Christ) interprets what has gone before, yet cannot be understood properly without it. The simple yet amazing fact is that God chose to convey these visions to John in the best way he could have understood them — by using the language of the Bible. Far from being a rejection of the OT, this is the strongest possible affirmation of its authority.

“Everything God has given in Christ can and must be understood against the backdrop of the OT revelation, which not only points to Christ but alone makes it possible for us to understand who He truly is.”

5. The main application of John’s use of the OT: study the OT!

Unfortunately, most Protestant readers of Revelation today take the book as a springboard for looking forward. They read it, and try to explain it with reference to contemporary history or today’s newspaper. Actually, our first instinct in reading Revelation must always be to look back to the Old Testament.

We need to know our OT better and better. Have a good ESV cross-reference Bible – because the cross-references are one way of noticing the OT passages which are being referenced.

And we then need to ask some simple questions of any given passage in Revelation:

- What OT texts are being alluded to? Read them... in their original context (i.e. read the wider OT section from which they come).
- What’s the *same*? (What’s the common feature)
- What’s *different*? (Is John using the OT allusion to say something different to the OT?)
- Why is John making this allusion? What point would John’s first readers have drawn? (Then... and only then... are we in a place where we can see what the passage is saying about the past, present or future).

6. Worked example – Revelation 1:1-20

In the table below you’ll see the text of Revelation 1:1-20 – printed in the centre column. In the columns to the left and to the right are just SOME of the OT texts to which John is here alluding. I’ve used colour to show the connections. Let’s READ it through.

What do we learn, having seen these OT connections?

When?

The vision in Daniel chapter 2 is crucial for understanding this chapter. For now, notice just one small difference: Dan 2:28 is looking forward to the “latter days”. Revelation 1:1 speaks of things that must soon take place. Here’s a clue that what Daniel looked forward to in the far off future had come near by the time of the apostle John. It’s one little clue that Revelation won’t largely be about the far-off future. (See the Appendix below on the same topic).

Where are we?

God is on his throne. And we’re in a kind-of Tabernacle. There are 7 golden lampstands (v12). There’s someone wearing high priestly clothes (v13). But this isn’t the earthly tabernacle of Exodus 25.

Michael Wilcock puts it like this: “John’s vision is going to take him into the heavenly sanctuary, of which the Jewish Tabernacle was a copy and shadow (Heb. 8:5); and perhaps the unusual order of the Trinity here

(Father, Spirit, Son) corresponds to the plan of the earthly sanctuary, where the ark in the Holy of Holies represents the throne of God, the seven-branched lampstand in the Holy Place before it represents the Spirit, and in the courtyard before that stands the altar, with its priest and sacrifice both representing, of course, the redeeming work of Christ." (Wilcock p34)

Here then is the very presence of God.

What do we learn about the Lord Jesus?

He is "the ruler of kings on earth" (v5). This is the anointed king of Psalm 2, who will smash all his foes.

He is "coming with the clouds." (v7). Like on Sinai in Exodus 19 he comes – in terrifying majesty and presence. Revelation will concern his "coming." (His enemies will wail on account of him. What Zech 12 said of Israel, John now says of Christ's foes from any land)

He is one "like a Son of Man" (v13). The one seen by Daniel in his vision – led into God's presence, receiving global dominion and power – that is our Lord Jesus Christ. He truly is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

What the Bible says of God the Father – Alpha and Omega, first and last – is true of Jesus Christ: v17: "I am the first and the last, and the living one." He is eternal. Fully God. There is no other god (cf. Isa 44:6). We see him here in all his glory. We behold our God. This is him: NOW.

But he is a God of grace: he loves us, has freed us from our sins, and made us a kingdom of priests. And He loves the church and dwells powerfully with her. He stands, v13, "in the midst of the lampstands." They are the "seven church" – not just the 7 churches of Asia but standing for the whole church of Jesus Christ. He holds those churches in his hand.

Ps 2:8-10, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and **the ends of the earth your possession.**"⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth."

Exodus 19:6 and you shall be to me a **kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**¹ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

Exodus 19:9 And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am **coming to you in a thick cloud**, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD,

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him **whom they have pierced**, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Isaiah 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "**I am the first and I am the last**; besides me there is no god.

Ex 25:31,37, You shall make a lampstand of pure gold... You shall make 7 lamps for it...

Zech 4:2-6, "And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it."³ And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."⁴ And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"⁵ Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."⁶ Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

Exodus 28:4 These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a **robe**, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a **sash**. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests.

Isaiah 11:4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall **strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.**

Revelation 1:1-20

The **revelation** of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, **for the time is near.**

⁴ "John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and **the ruler of kings on earth.** To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and **made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father**, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Behold, he is **coming with the clouds**, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.⁸ "**I am the Alpha and the Omega**," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

⁹ I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet¹¹ saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands **one like a son of man**, clothed with a **long robe and with a golden sash** around his chest.¹⁴ **The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,**¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, **from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

¹⁷ When I saw him, **I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me**, saying, "Fear not, **I am the first and the last**,"¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Daniel 2:28,29,45 ...a God in heaven who reveals... he has made known... What will be in the latter days... after this... made known/signified"

Daniel 7:9-18, "As I looked, **THRONES** were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and **the hair of his head like pure wool**; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire."¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.¹¹ "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire."¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, **with the clouds of heaven** there came **one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."¹⁵ As for me, Daniel, **my spirit within me was anxious**, and the visions of my head alarmed me.¹⁶ I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.¹⁷ "These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth."¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever."

Daniel 10:5-11, "I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist.⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, **his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.**⁷ And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves.⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and **no strength was left in me.** My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength.⁹ Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.¹⁰ And behold, **a hand touched me** and set me trembling on my hands and knees.¹¹ And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling."

Appendix: the Significance of Revelation 1:19 as a Key for the Interpretation of the Book

An extract from G.K. Beale's "Revelation: a shorter commentary" (pp28ff).

"As stated in an earlier section, 1:19 is a significant interpretative key in Revelation for a proper understanding of the futurist understanding of the book:

"Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things."

The approach we will take in the commentary below is that a different understanding of 1:19 comes from wrestling with a variety of issues in the immediate context and throughout the book.

Those understanding Revelation from a futurist perspective (i.e., all the events spoken of in the visions are yet to come and will unfold in chronological order) view 1:19 in the following way:

- the "things which you have seen" refer, on this view, to the initial vision of the past described in the immediately preceding verses.
- The "things which are" concern the present situation in the seven churches dealt with in the letters, and the "things which shall take place after these things" concern the events of the future, specifically the events immediately prior to the return of Christ and that return.

This view has deficiencies which need to be addressed. To begin with, the command to write "the things which you have seen" does not seem to be merely a reference to past time, or to what John has seen in the preceding verses. It seems rather to pick up on 1:11, where the angelic voice tells John to write "what you see." There is no reason to limit the scope of this to the first vision John has; it seems more naturally to refer to the contents of the entire book.

But what of "the things which are" and the things which are yet to come? It could very well be that "the things which are" alludes entirely to events occurring during the present time of the seven churches. Since these seven represent the church universal, this phrase would thus refer to the "present" of the entire church age. In other words, these are as relevant for us today as are Paul's instructions to any of the churches he wrote to.

Furthermore, the correct understanding of the last phrase in v. 19, "the things which shall take place after these things" is crucial. We will attempt to show that this last clause is not to be limited to events of the far off future, but rather encompasses all the events of the period between the resurrection and the return of Christ.

Critical to a proper understanding of this verse is the fact that God is communicating with John in the words He inspired Daniel to speak six centuries earlier. If God speaks prophetically in the OT, the fact that He fulfills these prophetic words in the NT should be no surprise to us. More surprising would be the thought that God communicated such significant visions to John without any reference to how He had spoken in earlier days to His servants the prophets.

This verse, along with three others (1:1; 4:1; 22:6), is heavily influenced by the words spoken through Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar in the interpretation of his first dream (Dan. 2:28, 29, 45). In section 6. above, we noted how John's statement in 1:1 ("The Revelation . . . which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place") is taken from Dan. 2:28, 29, 45, where God shows Daniel what must take place "in the latter days" or "after these things":

"He has made known . . . what will take place in the latter days" (Dan. 2:28) ". . . what would take place after this" (Dan. 2:29) ". . . what will take place after this" (Dan. 2:45)	"to show . . . the things which must shortly [or quickly] take place" (Rev. 1:1)
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If we compare Rev. 1:1 with the passages in Daniel, the thought is almost identical. The significant difference in what God speaks to John involves the replacement of “the latter days” or “after this” (years yet far off to Daniel) with “shortly” or “quickly,” thus implying that Daniel’s “latter days” (= “after this”) are on the brink of unfolding, in fact beginning to unfold.

What was far off to Daniel is staring John in the face. In 1:3, John says that the time is “near,” using a word similar to that spoken by Jesus in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God at hand.” It is likely that “the kingdom of God is at hand” is parallel with and a further explanation of “the time is fulfilled.” If so, the idea of “near” is a close synonym of “fulfilled.” The Greek verb for “nearness” has the sense of “about to arrive” or “beginning to arrive.” It will not be happening far off in the future: it is beginning to happen now, and much more is around the corner.

In Luke 20:18 Jesus equates the “stone” of His ministry with the endtime rock of Daniel’s last- days kingdom. To Jesus, the prophetic words of Daniel are on the verge of fulfillment. And John is no different from Jesus in his understanding.

Note the other parallels in Revelation 1 to Daniel. There are references to the kingdom (vv. 6 and 9), as in Dan. 7:14, which John sees being inaugurated in fulfillment. This kingdom belongs to a “Son of man” (1:13), just as in Dan. 7:13, and this Son of man is described in a heavenly vision (1:13-16), just as in Dan. 7:13-14. Jesus has begun in John’s own time to begin to fulfill Daniel 7’s Son of man prophecy. Out of this we draw the conclusion that Daniel 2 and Revelation 1 are describing the same reality, and that what is prophesied in Daniel is beginning to be fulfilled in Revelation. The events prophesied are actually occurring or beginning to occur.

The death and resurrection of Christ have brought about the inauguration or beginning of the kingdom of God prophesied in Daniel. Such an understanding will have profound importance for our interpretation of Revelation as a whole.

Now we look at 1:19, in the light of both 1:1 and the passages in Daniel:

“What will take place in the latter days/after this” (Dan. 2:28, 29, 45)	“The things which must shortly [or quickly] take place” (Rev. 1:1)	“The things which shall take place after these things” (Rev. 1:19)
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It is clear that Daniel’s phrases “in the latter days” (Dan. 2:28) and “after this” (in Theodotion’s translation, “after these things,” exactly as in Rev. 1:19) are identical in meaning. The phrase “after this” (in the Hebrew text) or “after these things” (Theodotion) refers in Dan. 2:29 to something lying far off in the future, to which the phrase “in the latter days” also refers. However, in Revelation they allude to something which is already beginning to happen: as we have already seen, Rev. 1:1 replaces “in the latter days” with “shortly,” and v. 3 adds the nuance “near,” meaning “at hand.” The phrase “after these things” in 1:19, therefore, is not a reference to events only of the future but to events that are already unfolding in these last days, since “after these things” is to be identified with the “latter days” in Dan. 2:28-29, which have been inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, each of the three phrases in Rev. 1:19 may very well refer to the same reality of the entire church age. The interpretation of Rev. 1:19 is complex, and there are a variety of interpretations; for that reason no overall view of Revelation should be based primarily on it, whether futurist or any other.

The other place where the phrase “after these things” appears is at 4:1 which, significantly, is the introduction to the vision section of the book. The angelic voice tells John, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” Again, this is an allusion to Dan. 2:29. If “these things” is synonymous with “the latter days,” as it is in Dan. 2:28-29, it refers to the events of the last days understood as being inaugurated by the cross and resurrection of Christ. This is clear from John’s understanding throughout Revelation 1 that the Daniel 2 and 7 prophecies have begun fulfillment in

Christ's first coming. Consequently, the visions unfolding in the rest of the book will tell us what is going to unfold throughout the time period of these last days — that is, throughout the entire history of the church between Christ's resurrection and His return. We should expect, therefore, that the visions will speak to the life and history of the church in every age, including that in which the recipients of the book lived, even though there may be aspects which speak specifically to the time period immediately before Christ's return.

It is important to remind ourselves that such an understanding runs completely contrary to much popular literature on Revelation, which takes the entire visionary portion of the book to refer only to the future events immediately surrounding the return of Christ. The understanding we have adopted, we are persuaded, provides a more satisfactory view of Revelation in another way, for otherwise the vast majority of the book would not have as much relevance either for those to whom it was written (the churches under John's apostolic authority) or to any believer who has ever lived since. This majority portion of the book would then refer primarily or only to one group of people living through the last tribulation and then later during the millennium. Though futurists protest that the book is still relevant in various ways for readers throughout the church age, we think our point still stands. As we proceed with our study, we will see our view supported by the text in a variety of other ways.

The final reference to Daniel occurs at 22:6, where the heavenly voice says to John, "The Lord . . . sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place." Thus the concluding verses of the book repeat the same words as occurred at the very beginning (1:1). The things which have been unfolded to John are the things that are about to unfold before his eyes and that have been unfolding ever since.

It is interesting to note that the four main sections of the book, the introduction (1:1-18), the letters (1:19–3:22), the visions (4:1–22:5), and the conclusion (22:6-21) are all introduced by allusions to Daniel 2:28-29, 45, which themselves form the introduction and conclusion of Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream. This is hardly an accident. Thus the content of the dream in Daniel 2 provides a framework by which to interpret Revelation as a portrayal of the end-time battle between good and evil and of the establishment of God's kingdom, all of which has begun with the death and resurrection of Christ and will be consummated at His final coming."