

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION (4): THE OLD TESTAMENT IN REVELATION

DANIEL 7:9-18

1. REVELATION SOMETIMES HAS LARGE O.T. PASSAGES IN MIND

- (a) Daniel 2 and 7 → Rev. 1, 4, 5
- (b) The Exodus plagues → Rev. 8:6-12, 16:1-14
- (c) The “flow” of Ezekiel

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)

2. REVELATION DEVELOPS O.T. THEMES

- (a) end-time judgment and salvation
- (b) Daniel’s concept of the abomination of desolation
- (c) the OT concept of earthquake as a sign of the end

3. MAINLY, REVELATION USES SIMPLE ALLUSIONS

Beale: "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."

(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?

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

Same main focus (i.e. continuity)... but applied to different historical situations

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

- 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: “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.

5. THE MAIN APPLICATION OF JOHN’S USE OF THE OT: STUDY THE OT!

Get a good ESV cross-reference Bible... and ask simple questions:

- 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

(See separate handout for Revelation 1 plus OT parallels)

Read passage... note connections... and consider...

(a) When?

Latter days is now soon

(b) Where are we?

Michael Wilcock: "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, *Revelation (BST)* p34)

(c) What do we learn about the Lord Jesus?

RESOURCES ON REVELATION

- *ESV Study Bible*: notes and introduction [NB. The introduction is available online at The Gospel Coalition website: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/revelation/#overview>]
- John Richardson, *Revelation Unwrapped* (82 page booklet)
- G.K.Beale, "Help me teach the Bible: Revelation" (1 hour interview with Nancy Guthrie – tips for Bibleteachers – at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/revelation/#teaching-preaching>)
- Leon Morris, *Revelation* (256 pages; Tyndale New Testament Commentary series)
- G.K. Beale, *The book of Revelation: a shorter exegetical commentary* (NB. Beale's "shorter" commentary is still 500 pages.... but it's smaller than his 1,300 page classic!)