

## EVOKING TRUTH AND EMOTION

Never in Revelation does the author indicate that he is quoting the Old Testament. Instead the vision that he records is full of Old Testament realities expressed in Old Testament language. These allusions bring to the reader's mind the truth content of the OT passage as well as the emotional impact of the previous revelation. For instance, when Jesus is described as the Root of David (Rev 5:5), the reader is taken back to Isaiah 11 where the glorious future king is described. He not only recalls the character of the Messiah but also of his longing for this righteous age in the midst of corrupt kings. Similarly, when Jesus is introduced as a Lamb, the reader thinks of John's "Behold the Lamb" (John 1:29) which in turn goes back to the one "led like a lamb to the slaughter" with all of the raw emotional impact of a righteous servant who was crushed for our iniquities (Isa 53:7)

By speaking in the language of the Old Testament, the author is multiplying the cognitive and emotional power of his words. The effect is to fill the reader with great joy and hope as he awaits the fulfillment of all of God's promises in Jesus' judgment and return to the earth. The one who is ignorant of the Old Testament misses out.

## GOING FURTHER

A quick entry into this type of study can be gained from looking at cross-references and notes in a study Bible. But each allusion must be understood in its full context and that requires a commitment to learn the OT. The investment is worth it in a thousand ways.

## PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

How would you answer the question, What is the Bible all about? Think through the unfolding of God's plan in Scripture and identify his primary purposes, turning points, and fulfillments. How would you summarize the Bible if you had one hour?

## REVELATION IN LIGHT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read Revelation in light of the OT (especially Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zephaniah, Zechariah). What can you understand in Revelation from the OT that would otherwise be veiled?

### INTRODUCTION

Like many books of the Bible, Revelation is often studied today as an independent book. This can lead to many significant errors in interpretation because Revelation was God's capstone to his written Word. Just as a reader would be confused by reading only the last chapter of a book, so he will struggle to understand Revelation apart from God's previous revelation. The vision that God gave John is difficult to understand, but the difficulty is exacerbated by failing to read Revelation as the conclusion to a grand and glorious story written by a single Author. This study is an attempt to help the reader to see *a few* of the connections with the OT and earlier parts of the NT so that the reader will better understand Revelation and be provoked to dig deeper into God's Word.

### THE DESCRIPTION OF JESUS (REV 1)

Since the book identifies itself as "the revelation of Jesus Christ," it is not surprising that there are numerous ways in which Jesus is described. Many of these echo the Old Testament, not only identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophetic hopes, but also providing a richness of meaning for those familiar with those passages. As Psalm 89:27 expected of God's future Messiah, Jesus is the firstborn and ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5). Jesus is not only the powerful Messiah who comes on the clouds (Dan 7:13), he is the one who is pierced (Zech 12:10; Rev 1:7). In claiming that he is ("I am") the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8, 17; 22:13), Jesus identifies himself with Yahweh who is the first and the last (Isa 48:12). When the reader is introduced to one "like a son of man" (Rev 1:13), this immediately brings to me the one in Dan 7:13 given authority over all nations and peoples. He is the divine figure

described in Dan 10:5-6 whose eyes are flaming torches, arms and legs are burnished bronze, and who wears a golden belt (Rev 1:13-15). He is similar to the Ancient of Days whose hair is white like wool (Dan 7:9; Rev 1:14) and his voice is like God's in that it sounds like the roar of rushing waters (Ezek 43:2; Rev 1:15). He is the Servant of Isaiah whose mouth was like a sharpened sword (Isa 49:2; Rev 1:16). Many more echoes may be found in Revelation 2 and following. If you do not understand the terms and identities as developed in the OT, you will miss most of the meaning.

### **THE BEAST AND BABYLON (REV 12-19)**

Daniel's fourth beast is the final kingdom of rebellious man. This beast has 10 horns, as does the beast in Revelation. The last horn is himself also known as the beast and he rules a nation that is given authority over the entire world (Rev 13). Daniel 10 reveals that the conflict between earthly kingdoms is energized by a spiritual battle. In Revelation we see the dragon (the angelic being Satan) empowering a human figure known as the beast.

This beast is the final Babylon, in direct continuity with the original Babylon (Babel in Genesis 11 is the same word in Hebrew as Babylon) and the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar who exalts himself against God and persecutes the saints who do not bow down to the golden anti-God image (Dan 3-6). As prophesied in Isaiah, Babylon falls and the Israelites are delivered (Isa 13-14, 21, 48; Rev 17-18). The defeat of Babylon is the defeat of all of rebellious humanity's efforts against their Creator. The judgment at the tower of Babel (Gen 11) and the conquest of Babylon by Persia (Dan 5) only foreshadow the great and final destruction of the seed of the serpent in Rev 17-19.

### **THE JUDGMENTS OF THE BOWLS (REV 16)**

The final outpouring of God's wrath in the seven bowls is intended to recall God's judgment upon Egypt in order to deliver his people from oppression. In both cases, the plagues serve to reveal and harden the hearts of God's enemies in order to prepare them for the final judgment. The first bowl causes sores to break out on

those with the mark of the beast, just as the Egyptians (but not the Israelites) were afflicted with festering boils (Exod 9:10; Rev 16:2). The second and third bowls turn the sea and rivers into blood killing every living thing just as the Nile turned to blood and killed the fish (Exod 7:20-21; Rev 16:3-7). In the fourth bowl the chief deity that the Egyptians worshiped, the sun, sears the people with scorching heat (Rev 16:8). The fifth bowl recalls the ninth plague when the land of Egypt was plunged into darkness (Exod 10:21-23; Rev 16:10). The sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates River, a miracle reminiscent of the parting of the Red Sea (Exod 14; Rev 16:12). The seventh bowl causes lightning, thunder, and a severe earthquake, the same phenomena that preceded God's appearance to Israel on Mount Sinai. Altogether the progression in Revelation parallels that of the exodus beginning with the plagues and culminating with the divine presence on earth.

### **THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH (REV 21-22)**

The vision of the new heaven and new earth in chapters 21-22 is intended to stimulate comparison with God's creation of the present heaven and earth in Genesis 1-3. Just as the Garden of Eden was the place where God walked among his people, so God will live in the midst of his people in the new creation. Yet God's presence and glory is so much greater in the new Jerusalem that the city will not even need a sun or a moon. The old creation was marred by sin which led to pain, mourning, and death, but the new creation will not be tainted by sin or any of its effects. Evildoers will be excluded from the new Jerusalem not by the first death but by the second. (All die once, but it is those who die twice who are eternally separated from God.) The tree of life from which mankind was banned is now readily accessible and abundantly productive. The ones who were made in the image of God now have God's name written on their foreheads. Intended to rule over God's creation, man finally fulfills his divine purpose without a curse on the land to frustrate his efforts. This rule goes on for ever and ever, without the possibility of sin or evil ending the glorious harmony of man with his Creator and the new creation.