

Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John the Divine

Lesson 3 of 3

Imagery in Revelation

Rev. 4:1ff

After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!

The remainder of the Revelation is St. John's struggle to put heavenly realities into earthly words. To accomplish this, he uses very figurative, symbolic, language **which he draws from the Old Testament.**

Imagery in Revelation

...**which he draws from the Old Testament.** (pt 1 of 2)

See especially

Genesis

especially 1-15, especially the Creation account and the calling of Abraham

Exodus

especially 7-13, concerning the Plagues and Passover

Isaiah

especially 6 and 53 concerning Isaiah's vision of heaven and his prophesy of the Lamb of God

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Imagery in Revelation

...which he draws from the Old Testament. (pt 2 of 2)

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Ezekiel

who received an extended vision of heaven

Daniel

who received “end time” visions and prophesy”

Psalms

which are filled with heavenly and richly symbolic language

Why this connection is important

To understand Revelation's imagery,

we DO NOT LOOK to CONTEMPORARY sources, such as the news organizations or “end times prophets” (such as Jack van Impy, Harold Camping, or others.)

We look to the Old Testament sources and ask

What does the Old Testament say about the imagery of Revelation – such as the Lamb, harlots, dragons, falling stars, shining jewels, white robes, thrones, trumpets, horns, eyes, hills, Babylon, giant locusts and numerical references such as seven, four, three, twelve and one thousand.

Side Note: Locusts and Helicopters

As a child we were taught to interpret the symbols through modern sources. For example, we were taught that the giant locusts (scorpions / grass hoppers, depending on translation) were actually attack helicopters.

We were shown pictures of locusts beside apache helicopters and told, "See! If John saw one of these helicopters he would have thought it was a giant locust!"

Therefore, we were always trying to find modern ways of interpreting Johns writing rather than looking to the Old Testament for our enlightenment.

Side Note: Locusts and Helicopters



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Get all that out of your head!

The Old Testament and Symbols

In the Old Testament, locusts and scorpions are symbols of sins destructive force in the life of a community.

When a nation embraces sin, the sin will “eat up” the nations resources and wealth like a swarm of locusts eat the resources of the people.

IE, the consequences of sins committed by a nation will have a nation-wide effect, such as a swarm of locusts obliterating a farm, a city, a nation.

A swarm of locusts symbolize God’s condemnation of national sin

Presuppositions of Revelation

1. Most of the prophecies recorded by John were concerning events which would soon occur. These events did occur in and around the events of 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.
2. The most reliable way to understand these prophecies is by comparing the imagery of Revelation to the imagery of the Old Testament
3. The term “Last Days” refers to the last days of the Old Covenant and not to a future time of the “end of the world”.
4. We should resist any effort to read the events of today into the book of Revelation’s prophecies.

Chapter 6-8: The Seven Seals

Imagery Meaning

Scroll The New Covenant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Seals wax seals prevented any unauthorized reading of documents and guaranteed their authenticity. As each seal is broken, a record of human history is displayed

Seven seals	White horse – conquest	Red horse – war
	Black horse – famine	Pale horse – death
	Martyrs – persecution	Earthquake – universal justice
	Silence – awe before holiness	

*Each of these seals represent the chaos and the destruction which came upon Jerusalem during the siege from AD 67-70

References you might like to consult

- A Case for Amillennialism – Understanding the End Times
by Kim Riddlebarger (*Lutheran pastor & theologian*)
- Revelation, Catholic Commentary on Scared Scripture
by Peter S. Williamson / Series Editor Mary Healy (*Roman Catholic*)
- Revelation for Everybody
by N.T. Wright (*Church of England Bishop*)
- The Lamb's Supper, the Mass as Heaven on Earth
by Scott Hahn (*Roman Catholic convert from Presbyterians*)
- The End is Near, or Maybe Not
Kenneth Myers (*Anglican Bishop, speaker at synod in July*)
(This book is especially helpful for those trying to leave
Dispensationalism.)