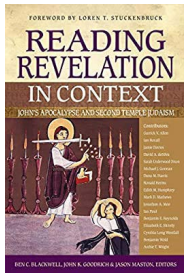




## RECENSIONES

Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston (eds.). *Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids (MI): Zondervan Academic, 2019, 204 pp.



*Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism* consists of twenty chapters and is written by recognized scholars on the topic. This book is the third volume of the Zondervan series, which began with *Reading Romans in Context: Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, and *Reading Mark in Context: Jesus and Second Temple Judaism*. In the words of the editor, every chapter in this book “(1) pairs a major unit of Revelation with one or more sections of a thematically related Jewish text, (2) introduces and explores the theological nuances of the comparator text, and (3) shows how the ideas in the comparator text illuminate those expressed in Revelation” (p. 28). The editors’ goal is that the readers gain a better understanding of Revelation by comparing it with contemporary literature.

Benjamin E. Reynolds juxtaposes the Son of Man figure in Revelation and Daniel, comparing them with the Parables of Enoch. After Reynolds finds several similarities and differences between the Son of Man in Revelation and the Enoch parables, he declares that this character in Revelation is “a more exalted figure than that of the Parables, perhaps even sharing in the divine identity” (p. 43). Mark D. Mathews compares the concepts of poverty and riches between Revelation 2:1–3:22 and 1Enoch 92:1–5; 93:11–105:2.

The point of contact between both books is that the rich are portrayed as evil, but the difference is that unlike 1Enoch, Revelation describes that the rich can repent of their sins. David A. de Silva studies Revelation 4:1–11, in light of the Testament of Levi. He demonstrates that unlike the typical symbolic Christian view of the holy throne in Revelation (living creatures, twenty-four elders, etc.) the Testament of Levi does not lend itself for such symbolic interpretations.

Dana M. Harris describes the messianic image of the Lion in 4 Ezra *vis-à-vis* Revelation 5:1–14. In her view, John uses this messianic symbol from 4Ezra in Revelation to redefine his expectations about future deliverance. Therefore, it is not by force and power (Lion) that the Messiah is going to rescue his people, but instead through the slaughter of the Lamb.

Ian Paul associates the martyrdom and resurrection concepts in 2Maccabees and Revelation 6:1–17. The author links both narratives with the notions of judgment/atonement, faithful witnesses, and patient endurance, concluding that Revelation offers a theological concept that is different than 2Maccabees. This concept means that Christians do not need to respond to oppression by taking up arms, but, rather, they must rest in God's judgment.

Ronald Herms studies the sealing of the servants of God in the Psalms of Solomon and Revelation 7:1–17. The major discrepancy between both narratives is that in the Psalms of Solomon, the mark has both positive and negative effects. In contrast, in Revelation, the mark has only negative consequences since it is related to the wicked.

Jason Maston analyses the heavenly silence in Revelation 8:1–13 and the Testament of Adam. The silence in this last book is related to the cessation of angelic activities in order to hear the prayers of God's people. In Revelation, the silence is due to the martyrs' prayers.

Ian Boxall examines the Animal Apocalypse (1Enoch) and Revelation 9:1–21 by exploring the great tribulation section (Rev 9:1–21). Boxall compares the symbols of fallen stars and warring creatures in both texts, concluding that in the Animal Apocalypse the victory of the ram (Judas Maccabeus) is not the final solution, while in Revelation the final solution is eminent since the new Exodus has already begun (Jesus the slaughtered Lamb).

John K. Goodrich investigates the heavenly beings and the books in Revelation 10:1–11 *vis-à-vis* the book of Jubilees. Despite the similarities in the two texts, Revelation describes that the angels fulfil additional actions (guidance, delivery of important messages, and the execution of judgment). Regarding the heavenly books, there are many resemblances; in both texts, a heavenly being imparts a message through a book, and the main characters (John and Moses) have the authority to declare salvation and judgment.

Garrick V. Allen juxtaposes 4Ezra and Revelation 11:1–19, focusing on the eschatological implications of the two witnesses and the Messiah in 4Ezra 13. Allen emphasizes that the connection between the witnesses and the eschatological figure in

4Ezra help us to understand this intricate text. However, there are marked differences between the two narratives (passive resistance and deferred judgment).

Archie T. Wright compares the fall of Satan in Revelation 12:1–17 with the life of Adam and Eve. The parallels Wright highlights between both accounts are: Satan is a deceiver and rebellious angel who makes war, destroys souls, and seeks to separate people from God. Nevertheless, the dissimilarity is that Revelation does not describe the reason why Satan fell, whereas the life of Adam and Eve can provide a background for the story of Satan's fall.

Jamie Davies associates the beast imagery in 4Ezra (the eagle and the lion) with the images in Revelation 13:1–18 (the sea and the land beasts). This comparison allows us to see that both books portray the Roman empire in bestial imagery, helping the reader avoid speculation.

Ben C. Blackwell relates Revelation 14:1–20 and the Damascus Document (DC) by considering the dualism (blessing and punishment) in both works. On the one hand, Blackwell appreciates the following resemblances: the portrayal of the followers of Christ and those who follow the beast, the critique of the synagogue, and the remnant concept. On the other hand, he recognizes the following differences: the DC focuses more on earthly realities, whereas Revelation focuses on heavenly ones. The DC describes a sectarian Jewish identity separate from the main Jewish community, whereas Revelation does not make this ethnic distinction.

Benjamin Wold explores the seven plagues narrative in Revelation 15:1–16:21 *vis-à-vis* the Words of the Luminaries. The author sees similarities in that both books employ Leviticus 26 and the Exodus motif. The relationship between Revelation and the Words of the Luminaries allow us to understand the faith community that is living in exile, and the deliverance of God's people.

Edith M. Humphrey compares the harlot in Revelation 17:1–18 with the heroine in Joseph and Aseneth 14–17. The books are similar in their portrayal of the female symbol as humility, purity, and corruption. Humphrey highlights the many differences between the two women (the harlot and the heroine Aseneth) “in order to stress the connection between the two books.” Revelation tells us about the arrogance and rebellion of the prostitute, whereas Aseneth is portrayed as a figure worth emulating.

Cynthia Long Westfall links the Epistle of Enoch and Revelation 18:1–24, exploring the economic critique of Rome present in both texts. The two narratives contain many similar topics (for example, the sinners are rich while the saints are poor, and the wicked are located in Babylon/Rome). However, Westfall acknowledges that

the primary contrast between Revelation 18 and Enoch is that “the author does not explicitly give the readers authority over Rome and its collaborators, nor the power to slay them at the time of its fall” (p. 152).

Michael J. Gorman analyses the conquest of God’s enemies through the Messiah in both Revelation 19:1–21 and the Psalms of Solomon. This last book depicts the Messiah as one who will conquer his enemies by words and warfare, but Revelation describes a Messiah who liberates his people using no violence.

Elizabeth E. Shively examines the exegetical tradition about the judgment upon fallen angels in Revelation 20:1–15 and the book of the Watchers. The resemblances in the description of the binding of fallen angels in both books are undeniable, reflecting a common tradition. The difference is that in the Watchers, the fallen angels receive their judgment immediately after their release. Nevertheless, in Revelation, Satan is released to deceive the nations, and then he and his followers receive judgment.

Jonathan A. Moo studies the New Jerusalem in 4Ezra *vis-à-vis* Revelation 21:1–22:5. In both visions, God dwells with his people, and the temple is not mentioned explicitly, but is understood as being part of the city. However, in Revelation, John fully develops various ideas present in 4Ezra, namely city/temple, universal hope, and the faithful resistance of God’s people. John’s ideas “contribute to the adornment of the bride of the Lamb (19:8) and the splendor of the New Jerusalem” (p. 173).

Finally, Sarah Underwood Dixon juxtaposes the Apocalypse of Zephaniah and Revelation 22:6–21 by studying the complex behavior of John worshipping the angel. Dixon stresses not only the similarities between the texts, but she also points out the theological themes in Revelation that reinforce monotheism.

*Revelation in Context* is a must-read for anyone interested in early Jewish literature and its interaction with early Christian literature. Students who are not familiar with the topic will benefit from this book since the editors provide a helpful glossary with some academic words and historical figures. Those who want to deepen their knowledge of the subject will find at the end of each chapter a series of readings recommended by the authors for further study. I would have liked to see more comparison between Revelation and the Qumran literature, “since few previous scholars have associated both corpora.”

*Revelation in Context* is an invitation to understand the Revelation of John in light of Second Temple literature. That may be why Loren T. Stuckenbruck—whose writings especially emphasize early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism—has contributed a foreword. When comparing Revelation and Second Temple Jewish

literature, the student needs to understand the similarities as well as the differences between both texts, appreciating John's creative use of apocalyptic traditions. Therefore, in the editors' words, "students must not ignore Second Temple Jewish literature, but engage it with frequency, precision, and a willingness to acknowledge theological continuity and discontinuity" (p. 27).

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