



# The Theology of the Book of Revelation

*Richard Bauckham*

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## **The Theology of the Book of Revelation** Richard Bauckham

Richard Bauckham expounds the theology of the Book of Revelation: its understanding of God, Christ and the Spirit, the role of the Church in the world, and the hope of the coming of God's universal kingdom. Close attention is paid both to the literary form in which the theology is expressed and to the original context to which the book was addressed. Contrary to many misunderstandings of Revelation, it is shown to be one of the masterpieces of early Christian literature, with much to say to the Church today. This study offers a unique account of the theology and message of Revelation.

## **The Theology of the Book of Revelation Details**

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Author : Richard Bauckham

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## **From Reader Review The Theology of the Book of Revelation for online ebook**

### **Curtis says**

This book completely changed my perspective on Revelation. Having grown up with a more Dispensationalist view on the end times where the sequence of events is drawn from imagery within Revelation, I was thrilled to discover how much depth was to be found in John's writing! I would highly recommend everyone take the time to work through this book and be challenged by the call to faithful witness that Revelation has for all followers of Christ in every age.

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### **Brooke Scott says**

Really, really great. Definitely more of an academic read, but it takes readers through major themes that have lots of contemporary implications, especially in terms of our social and political world. I loved all that it had to say about Revelation's critique of oppressive empires and the "already but not yet" nature of the Christian life. However, I wish it would have specified things like spiritual disciplines, social justice, and political engagement as ways that we usher in the reign of God. Similarly, I was a little disappointed that the writer didn't give practical connections to the presence of evil today. Contemporary Issues like racism would have been super appropriate to add in here! In light of that, I also am still processing how I feel about the use of the word 'sovereign' as a descriptor for God because of its imperialist undertones. Lastly, the writer seemed to flirt with the idea of universalism in Revelation but in the end, didn't seem to want to advocate for the idea fully. I wish he would have expanded more on that! But overall, this was a beautiful overview and refreshing read, given that most of what we hear about revelation is a bunch of right wing hogwash ;)

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### **James Criswell says**

Really enjoyed this book. I've long been intimidated by the Book of Revelation, and most teachings I've heard on the book never seemed to draw out the depths of the scenes that I knew were lurking there, particularly regarding the numerous Old Testament allusions. This book, however, was excellent.

Other reviewers do a good job summarizing Bauckham's arguments, so I'll just say that I really enjoyed his focus on themes (messianic war, eschatological exodus, and witness) and the hosts of images in Revelation, particularly noting how John uses comparisons and contrasts that, if you don't notice them, can lead you astray in your understanding of where John is trying to take you. This is the Revelation book I've waited years to read without knowing it.

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### **Drake says**

In this short but packed book, Richard Bauckham seeks to outline the main theological themes that are woven throughout the book of Revelation, showing how Revelation presents the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the world, sin and evil, the nature and mission of the Church, and the Coming of Christ. By

doing so, he shows how Revelation presents a God-centered view of reality that should continue to inspire and shape the church's efforts at evangelism and missions today. One thing I greatly appreciated about Bauckham's book is that he seeks to place Revelation in its historical and literary context, and he does so to a greater extent than any other author I've come across. He strives to put his readers into the mindset of Revelation's original audience, and by doing so, he shows how the book becomes more alive and relevant to the church today than it would be when interpreted apart from its historical setting. While I'm far from agreeing with everything Bauckham argues for in his book, his insights have proven immensely valuable to my own understanding of Revelation and have helped me see the divine wisdom and glory that are displayed throughout John's apocalypse. This is easily the most fascinating book about Revelation that I've read to date.

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### **Raphael Haeuser says**

As part of New Testament Theology series, this seeks to explore and engage the theological themes of Revelation, and take note of its canonical context and impact on Christian faith and life. It sheds light on the book's imagery, structure and composition, demonstrating how God's coming kingdom opposes and confronts Roman power and ideology, despite its hostilities toward Christians. It is precisely due to this grounding in historical reality, that Revelation is able to transcend that context and speak to the contemporary church.

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### **Matthew Codd says**

After a lovely Garden Party in which Richard Bauckham and I discussed politics and Parsonages (this really did happen haha) , I felt inspired to reread his wonderful book on Revelation, also I am going to be preaching a series on this book soon and needed a refresher

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### **Matthew Colvin says**

Many insightful nuggets, but vitiated somewhat by a focus on Rome rather than Jerusalem. At its best when Bauckham identifies the OT and intertestamental antecedents of the phraseology, imagery, and diction of the Apocalypse.

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### **Ryan Linkous says**

This little book is one of the most helpful resources I have ever used as far as understanding the bigger picture of Revelation. It's expensive for being such a short book, but I would recommend this be the first thing anyone reads who wants a resource on the book of Revelation. It's very clear and concise and theologically deep. I read this on my Kindle and highlighted nearly the entire book.

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## Wyatt Graham says

Excellent. A short work on the theology of the book of Revelation that equips you to understand the book as a whole (even if you disagree on the particulars).

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## Chris Wood says

Baukham's *Theology of the Book of Revelation* offers an insightful and non-traditional approach to a difficult book in our canon, primarily due to the complexity of the stylism and imagery involved and the eschatological vision. For one, Baukham avoids the more common verse-by-verse approach commentary style that is helpful for understanding the part although often at expense to the sum whole. Instead, he approaches the book thematically, demonstrating John's concern to communicate Christ's Messianic triumph and reign over the competing powers of the earth (namely, Rome). At the same time, he shows how John both adopts and brings to its culmination the Jewish prophetic tradition in such a way that evidences John's concern for his contemporary Christian audience in a struggle against Roman Imperialism without, at the same time, relegating his Revelation only to the early Christian church. In other words, he bridges the gap between interpretation to application in a thoroughly consistent prophetic manner.

For those looking for an explanation of the book of Revelation that transcends modern millenarian discussions of the book that distort John's primary impetus behind his prophetic message while remaining exegetically sensitive to the text, I highly recommend this work.

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## Tsun Lu says

REVIEW AND CRITIQUE Baukham, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

In *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* Baukham explicates how the sound interpretation of the theology of Revelation must be based on the proper understanding of the imageries in its original context.

Revelation in Baukham's analysis provides a theocentric vision of the coming of God's kingdom, to purge and to refurbish the Christian imagination through a highly visualized symbolic world. Revelation as a part of the prophetic tradition of the OT must be understood in our general understanding of prophecy in the OT. The central message of Revelation was designed to confront the late first-century Roman Empire and imperial idolatries, and to call Christians to engage the spiritual warfare with witness and overcome the political pressure and seduction. The Millennium is solely to demonstrate the victory of the martyrs. The New Jerusalem represents a theocentric rule of God among the all nations God gathers into His kingdom.

Critiques:

Baukham's contextual approach to Revelation has important implications. First, he reverts the common understanding of the churches that the book is a prophecy predicting primarily the future events before the second coming. His contextual approach itself favors a more historical and situational interpretation and not surprisingly he gets what he wants. It would be somewhat inconsiderate in his contextual approach that he rarely connects and correlates the theocentric vision and the Prousia with other places in the NT. Instead he

interacts more intensively with the OT and some second-temple Judaism, yet he did not explicate how and why in John's thought these sources demonstrate the more imminent present reality of the time of Revelation.

Second, Bauckham's connection of the symbolic function of imageries with historical context is very significant. But this raises the question whether he has reduced the biblical symbolism into political allegory. The intention of the profusion of OT imageries in Revelation is a very debatable subject. While the historical context of Roman power must be in view, it is a bias to say the Roman power as the exclusive context. As Bauckham has admitted, Revelation communicates more about the truth of God than the future events. Since Revelation provides a theocentric vision of the historical situation before the Second Coming, why would we not see Revelation as a symbolic representation of the history itself? After all, symbolism can convey the deep structure of human consciousness.

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### **Ben Fien says**

Even though I don't necessarily agree with every little detail, I gave this book five stars for the way it enabled me to understand the book of Revelation. Bauckham's literary genius gave me a fresh understanding of the Apocalypse. He was able to masterfully pull different strands of the book together to summarise its different theological themes. Definitely worth a read for anyone who wants to get into the book.

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### **Walter Marques says**

Many of us theologians recognize, and most of the students of Scripture agree that the Book of Revelation is not easy to interpret. In spite of the challenges about the inspiration of the Book of Revelation, Bauckham turns around this controversial apocalyptic literature which was very common just before and during the apostolic era.

In the *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Bauckham gives a different perspective on the end times. He shows clearly that John received his prophetic visions directly from Christ as well as the unlikeness to the apocalyptic writers of that era who hid behind deceptive pseudonyms.

In *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* Bauckham explicates how the sound interpretation of the theology of Revelation must be based on the proper understanding of the imageries in its original context. It is highly recommendable, concise and theologically sound to be used as a source for the understanding of the bigger picture of the Book of Revelation.

The message is clear, the Book of Revelation is a book about the future and about the present. Bauckham's interpretation, promises the universal peace, prosperity, and cooperation that God will institute on earth after the return of Christ.

Bauckham is in complete control with his insight into the prophetic symbolism and the close connection with Old Testament prophecy.

Bauckham's insightful comments in a persuasive manner, discredits many religious fanatics, who have preyed on the weak and ill informed to promote their wild and fanciful speculations and theories.

With a dramatic sense of interpretation, Bauckham also shows how the ancient prophecies of the Book of Revelation could unfold in our modern world.

Without pinpointing in many details, Bauckham gives a satisfactory overview of the Book of Revelation by exposing the different liturgical and theological aspects so many times ignored in the dispensational and futuristic views.

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## **Jon Sedlak says**

I was fortunate (?) enough to read this in less than 24 hours as I rested sick in bed (but could not sleep). So not much of the Bauckham's theological nuances slipped past me.

It's most noteworthy aspects are its 1) speculation about first-century interpretation 2) trinitarian threads of emphasis and 3) balanced theonomic (but non-reconstructionist) motifs in relation to holy warfare and Christocentric "witness" (i.e. martyrdom).

The only major disagreement I had with Bauckham is his repeated insistence that John's Apocalypse has absolutely nothing to do with the tumultuous Jewish wars (causing strife among christian Jews as well), the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the end of the old covenant "creation." He places a lot of emphasis on the new covenant kingdom already being inaugurated, but he insists that the first century audience of John's Apocalypse would not have considered Jerusalem and Herod's Temple as a center of power or idolatry (and hence, could not have been mistaken for any "beastly" figure in Revelation). To Bauckham, all of the beastly images have to do with powers and idols of the early/ancient Roman Empire.

Even though that is a significant disagreement i have with the book, I would still highly recommend it for its clarity and exegetical balance. I think it steers much of contemporary speculation about John's Apocalypse in a healthier direction than all "futurist" (pre-millennial) views offered today. It also steers clear of the unhealthy "dominionist" abuses far too often emphasized among postmillennialists, as well as the cerebral pietism highlighted among amillenialists. I suspect that if Bauckham were asked what his own personal "millennial" position was, he would respond by pointing out how insignificant the theological implications of the millennium are when compared to the rest of the book's much clearer theological implications

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## **Tyler says**

A couple nit-picky things, but an excellent summary of the major themes of revelation! Very helpful for systematizing it's emphases— particularly appreciated the focus on John Trinitarian theology and the section on Revelation's applicability today.

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