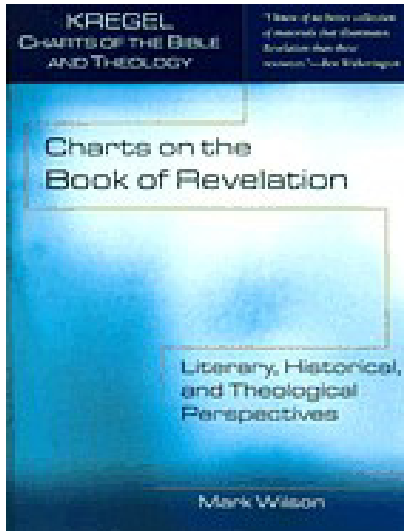


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**Wilson, Mark**

***Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives***

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This is a unique and interesting volume on the book of Revelation. It consists of over one hundred pages of charts dealing with different aspects of Revelation. In this way the reader gets an instant overview of an enormous amount of material dealing with different issues related to Revelation, including literary, historical, and theological issues.

It is not uncommon that charts are used, especially in the case of Revelation, to illustrate certain views regarding dispensationalism, how the chronology of Revelation develops, how the number seven is repeated through the book, and so forth. Wilson goes beyond these by charting many more aspects relating to Revelation. He argues that the new generation of students are primarily visual learners. For them, charts should be an important pragmatic learning tool. Except for a few pages at the end of the book that deal with commentary and the sources he consulted, the book as a whole consists just of charts of different forms and content. The “commentary” consists of references to other sources or sources where the information comes from or even where one can find additional information on the topic treated in that particular chart. These remarks are basic and not intended to be complete. This information is, however, important, since charts are very compact presentations of information: there is really no place for refinement or discussion of the information. It is therefore paramount that the information presented in the charts is as complete and accurate as possible, even though they are presented in such a compact way. The moment this is not the case, the charts lose their integrity.

The topics dealt with in the different charts are as follows. The first chart summarizes the different positions on the authorship and date of Revelation. This chart will be discussed briefly to illustrate what the reader may expect. Obviously, not every chart can be discussed in this manner in a review such as this, and it is also not necessary. John the Apostle and John the Elder are considered as possible authors. The information is divided into two columns: pro and con arguments. Under "John the Apostle," the first of ten blocks under "Pro" presents the following: "Patristic testimony: Justin, Papias, Melito, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, and Hippolytus affirm apostolic authorship of Rev." Under "Con" we read: "Marcion, Dionysius, and Alogoi testify against apostolic authorship." Let us briefly consider the above information. It is positive that one can see the different arguments on authorship in such a compact way. Usually one would have to work through many pages to gather this information. But here we also see the shortcoming of charts. (1) The debate about the authorship of Revelation is much more complex than the two possibilities mentioned here. I dare say that most current scholars will be hesitant to choose any of these two figures mentioned and rather opt for a more neutral description of who the author might have been. (2) Looking at the list of names that support or reject John the Apostle's authorship, it is a pity that there is no indication of when these different figures actually lived. Should one compare Dionysius with Justin or Papias? They lie hundreds of years apart. Let us take another example. Under "Pro" it is mentioned that Revelation and the Fourth Gospel share theological ideas, while under "Con" it is mentioned that they are too distinct when it comes to theological ideas. The only thing one can gather from this is that there are discussions about the theology: some emphasize the similarities, others the differences. But to really make this information worthwhile and to make some sort of judgment, one needs to know what the theological similarities or differences are in order to weigh them. For instance, are they structural or terminological? Judging from the first chart, these charts can be helpful, but they are also just a point of departure.

The second chart deals with the dating of Revelation, summarizing the different arguments for an early (ca. A.D. 69) or a later date (ca. A.D. 95). Again the brief summaries are very helpful, but they are very concise and in some cases need a little explanation to make sense. They are valuable if the reader realizes that they are points of departure, pointing to the different arguments that must be expanded. A very helpful chart is a summary of the Roman Empire in the late first century. Various important events (Jewish, Roman, and Christian) are listed chronologically. This is followed by a time line of the first-century church in Asia, starting with Pentecost. Where there is doubt, the date is listed but followed with a question mark. This is wise, since we know that dating events in ancient times is not always that easy or accurate.

The fifth chart lists Jewish and Christian apocalypses. How many times have teachers of Revelation heard the question: Which other Apocalypses are there? Now they can refer their students to this chart, which includes not only the title of the apocalypses but also the approximate dates of each (up to nearly the eleventh century). Attention is turned to the text of Revelation in the sixth chart. Evidence from the text of Revelation illustrates to the reader why Revelation may be called an apocalypse, prophecy, as well as an epistle. Poetic sections, *hapax legomena*, as well as allusions or verbal parallels in the Old Testament and extrabiblical literature are also listed. The tenth chart lists four possibilities for structuring Revelation. Again, this gives a handy overview of different possibilities. Obviously, they are not the only possibilities, and there are nuances in some cases (e.g., the chiasmic structure or even the sevenfold drama). No mention is made of scholars who proposed or support the different structures, but a reference in the commentary at the end of the book refers the reader to a book by Bauckham.

Theological issues are also addressed. Identifications of Christ with God, divine names in Revelation, names for believers, the theme of war and battles as well as victory, angels and demons, the demise of the evil three and the fall of Satan, and some apocalyptic themes are charted. A student who, for instance, wants to get information on the ecclesiology of Revelation will find the chart on names for believers a good starting point. The same applies to the other charts. However, in the case of the divine names, there is a section on the Holy Spirit. It is known that there is some doubt whether the Holy Spirit is really such a central theme in Revelation and whether expressions such as “seven spirits” really refer to the Holy Spirit. This discussion is left lacking because of the compactness of the charts. There is simply no possibility to reflect this debate or reflect on it.

There are also several charts listing thematic parallels between Revelation and several other books of the New Testament and even relevant books outside the canon. A number of interesting charts then follow, including minerals, gems, and other commodities in Revelation, lists of jewels in antiquity, different theories of interpretation of Revelation, symbols, and the use of numbers and colors in Revelation. Figures of speech, doublets, and metaphors are also listed. Several charts are also devoted to the seven letters, including their division and structure. It is difficult to find a structure in the presentation of the charts, although in some cases certain related charts are placed together. I hope that in a second edition the different charts will be presented in a more structured and clear order. The role of the Old Testament in Revelation is also well charted, including lists of the twelve tribes, Genesis, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah in their relation to Revelation. Then there are charts listing different ways of understanding the interrelationship between the seals, trumpets and bowls, time periods of persecution, calculating the number of the beast (gematria), the paired angelic revelations, the Messiah as eschatological judge, benedictions in Revelation, and many more.

The last pages of the book contain a number of very valuable maps, *inter alia*, of the Roman province of Asia, the imperial cult temples in Asia Minor, trade routes in the Roman Empire, and the city of Rome.

In spite of the shortcomings mentioned above, I am sure that this book will find its way into many classrooms and will fulfill a meaningful role in guiding students through the intricacies of Revelation.