

The Churches and the Throne Scene

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Foreward

The septets of Revelation have the same function and purpose as the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel. The first of these is the seven churches of Rev 2-3. The churches lead gradually from the prophet's lifetime to the end time, which is the point at which we encounter the throne scene.

I grant that there is a clear syntactic break at Rev 4:1, showing that a new section begins there. But the contrast between earth and heaven involves space; it does not involve time. Nothing prevents us from seeing a close relationship between the two distinct sections. They are closely related even though they take place in different places. John has been looking on earth at events that affect the history of the seven churches and then – without changing to a different timeframe – looks up and sees a door standing open in heaven and, in the center, a throne.

The septets and the throne scene should be studied together. The septets are part of a set of seven overviews of history that span Daniel and Revelation and extend from the prophet's day to the end time. The seven churches are the first of these septets. The throne scene has its own parallels. There are as many as six parallels to the throne scene in Revelation and these are consistently associated with the end time.

Let me make two seemingly unrelated points before going on. The first point is that the relationship between the seven churches and seven seals is not sequential. All seven overview prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are roughly parallel to each other. If so, each of them begins in the lifetime of the two respective prophets and extends to some aspect of last events.

The second point is that in Daniel chaps. 8 and 9 function as a single unit. The angel tells Daniel that no information about the time element of his prophecy will be given in Dan 8. It was not until ten years later that the same angel returns and clarifies that the 2300 days of 8:13-14 would begin with a decree authorizing the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem. Starting at the same moment of history there would be seventy weeks and then Messiah would die in the middle of the seventieth week.

A corollary of this second point is that in Revelation the trumpets and plagues also form a single unit. The two series are described almost identically and the plagues cannot begin until the trumpets end. Thus, in Daniel one prophecy ends earlier than expected (Dan 9), and in Revelation one septet begins later than expected (plagues). We here see Dan 8-9 as one prophecy in two parts, and the trumpets and plagues as one septet sequence in two parts.

The major apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel are Dan 2, 7, 8-9 (together), 10-12; and the major septet sequences of Revelation are the churches, seals, and trumpets/plagues (together). The prophecies and septets are comparable to each other and parallel to each other. Another way of saying this is that Dan 10-12 is preceded by three prophecy sequences and followed by three septets sequences.

This places Dan 10-12 at the center of the entire system of prophecies. The chapter at the center of Dan 10-12 is Dan 11. The section at the center of Dan 11 is 11:16-28. The verse at the center of this center section is vs. 22. And in vs. 22 we find a reference to Christ's death on the cross.

We here study the churches and throne scene in the context of Daniel and Zechariah; interpret all seven overviews using consistently historicist principles of interpretation; study the throne scene in the context of the six throne scene parallels scattered through Revelation; and in this way view the churches and throne scene together. It is not just that the two follow each other in some narrative sense. Thematically also, Rev 2-3 leads to Rev 4-5.

Dan 7 and Zech 1-6 are both oriented toward the end time. The churches lead step by step to the end time. The throne scene and its parallels describe last events. Thus, the churches and throne scene fit together as parts of a cohesive end time application based on historicist principles of interpretation.

Given these assumptions, Christ emerges as the Center and Fulcrum of all our whole prophetic belief system. Set aside any of the above assumptions and the point based on them simply disappears.

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Chapter 1

Daniel as a Starting Point

The present volume builds on the premise that any model for the book of Revelation based on the idea that it forms one continuous narrative from beginning to end is misconceived. Rather than seeing the book as a narrative running from the first century in chap. 1 to a point after the millennium in chap. 22, it suggests that the story of Revelation is systematically punctuated by its septets. There are four septets that we will consider: seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven plagues. I hope to show in what follows that the trumpets and plagues form a continuous sequence. Where the one series ends, the other begins. I conclude that there are three major septet sequences in Revelation.

Within Revelation the function of the septets is the same as that of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel. Both series consist of historical overviews summarizing actual events. Starting from the prophet's lifetime and extending to the end time, these septets are self-contained in the sense of providing cohesive overviews of prophetic history. The book as a whole also contains a cohesive overview of prophetic history. To assert the one fact is not to deny the other. There is an overall narrative in the book of Revelation, but it flows around this series of repeated and parallel historical overviews. It is the parallel nature of these septets that I would like to emphasize below.

Before proceeding, let me make clear the prophecies of Daniel and the septets of Revelation are all parallel and are all to be interpreted from a historicist point of view. Scholars have devised various ways of seeing prophecy, but this is what we will do here.

Daniel 2

The prophecy of Dan 2 surveys all of human history from Daniel's day to the second coming. The four powers mentioned there are not kings but kingdoms, and these follow each other in history. People who assume that the image of Dan 2 is concerned only with things in Daniel's day are making the same type of error as Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 3, where the image he made – imitating that of the previous chapter – was all of gold and concerned only himself. The series of four empires begins with Babylon, but continues with Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. I should point out that the fourth empire always assumes two forms. There is iron in Dan 2, but also iron mixed with clay. The two-fold nature of the fourth empire is evident in each of Daniel's apocalyptic prophecies.

The great object of the series of empires in Dan 2 is the second coming of Christ, not His first. When He came the first time the prevailing world empire, as it were,

destroyed Him, whereas at the end of the prophecy Christ will simultaneously destroy all four empires and establish his own.

Daniel 7

The goal of all history is the second coming, but there is something that must happen first. Prior to the second coming there must be a judgment in which people's lives come in review before God, and where God's dealings with all mankind come in review before the universe. Again, in Dan 7 there is a succession of empires, but this time the series does not end with the second coming. It brings to the time in history when "the court sat in judgment and the books were opened" (7:10). This is the beginning of the judgment. As a result of its deliberations "one like a son of man" receives a kingdom and then confers it on His saints. This is the major outcome of the judgment and the point at which it ends.

Daniel 8

Dan 8 brings us only so far as beginning of the judgment. "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state" (8:14). Other things happen and then the judgment begins after 2300 "evening-mornings," or prophetic days, or literal years. An inspired explanation of the rest of the prophecy (8:2-12) is given in 8:20-25, but the part about time (8:13-14) is not explained in Dan 8. For that we wait until Dan 9.

Daniel 9

The starting point that the angel provides for the seventy weeks is such that it also provides information on when Messiah would come. "Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks" (9:25), and then there would be sixty-two more weeks, and one more making a total of seventy. Messiah would be cut off in the middle of the seventieth week.

But the Daniel had been waiting to learn when the 2300 days would begin. The beginning point for the seventy weeks is the same as that for the 2300 days: "from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem . . ." Both periods begin with the above decree, given in 457 BC.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Gal 4:4-5)

Summary

Dan 2 brings us through history to the end of all things, or we could say the beginning of all things – the second coming of Christ. Dan 7 brings us through substantially the same history to a judgment that must happen immediately prior to the second coming. Dan 8 brings us to the beginning of the judgment at the end of 2300 days, and Dan 9 shows us when that period would begin. Dan 9 shows us when Messiah would come into our world, live, and die. Dan 10-12 focuses on this time down to the moment of His death (where Messiah is called “the prince of the covenant” [11:22]), and then brings us back full circle to the book’s first prophecy by showing that all of history leads to the second coming of Christ (where Christ is called “Michael” [12:1]).

Viewed together, the symbols used in Dan 2, 7, 8, and 11 form a series, which consists first of metals, then wild beasts, then tame beasts (capable of being offered in worship), and finally people (capable of offering worship). This animacy hierarchy, reflects a progressively clearer knowledge of God.

There is much to say about Daniel, but for our purposes the chapter of special importance will be Dan 7, because that is what deals especially with the events that transpire in the judgment. Next we consider how Zechariah contributes to this understanding, and then how Ballenger missed the whole point of a judgment, seeing everything Daniel says on the topic as radically impossible at any time after the cross. With this much as background we discuss the connection between the prophecies of Daniel and the septets of Revelation, and how all of this provides perspective for our understanding of the churches and the throne scene.

Chapter 2

The Parallel Structure of Daniel 7

Above I argue that the place to start understanding Revelation is Daniel. And the part of Daniel that provides the best orientation to the throne scene is Dan 7.

Dan 7 is not primarily a connected narrative, but after an initial prophecy a series of questions based on that. We base this conclusion on parallels and shared vocabulary. To outline the chapter requires five parallel columns. We will benefit from seeing how this works at the outset, otherwise there will be no basis for understanding what follows.

Some Representative Samples of the Parallels in Daniel 7

The chapter begins with a description of four great beasts.

Dan 7:3 And **four great beasts** came up out of the sea, different from one another.

Dan 7:17 'These **four great beasts** are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.

The fourth member of this series captures Daniel's attention more than the other three.

Dan 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, **a fourth beast**, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

Dan 7:19 "Then I desired to know the truth about **the fourth beast**, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet,

One of the horns growing out of the fourth beast is called "another horn, a little one," not because it stays small but because it starts small. This little horn makes boastful claims, described as "great things."

Dan 7:8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them **another horn, a little one**, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking **great things**.

20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and **the other horn** that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke **great**

things, and that seemed greater than its companions. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,

As Daniel reflects on what he has seen, there is a little horn making bold claims and an enormous judgment hall which the Ancient of Days enters, and also “one like a son of man.”

Dan. 7:9 “As I looked, thrones were placed, and **the Ancient of Days** took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.

Dan. 7:13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to **the Ancient of Days** and was presented before him.

As a major outcome of the judgment the One like a Son of man receives a kingdom. This fact is referred to on four later verses, but with reference to the fact that the kingdom He receives is shared with the saints.

Dan 7:14 And to him [*One like a Son of man*] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and **his kingdom** one that shall not be destroyed.

Dan 7:18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive **the kingdom** and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’

At this point Daniel inquires about what he has just seen. The angel tells him that the fourth beast would be different from the others.

Dan. 7:19 “Then I desired to know the truth about **the fourth beast**, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet,

Dan. 7:23 “Thus he said: ‘As for **the fourth beast**, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

He asks for further clarification and is told that its little horn would be characterizing by opposing the saints.

Dan 7:21 As I looked, this horn made war with the **saints** and prevailed over them,

Dan 7:25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the **saints** of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

It is in the judgment that the saints are shown to be in the right, because they have committed their lives to God.

Dan 7:22a until the Ancient of Days came, and **judgment** was given for the saints of the Dan Most High,

Dan 7:26 But the court shall sit in **judgment**,

Then the angel repeats the point with emphasis that the saints will receive the kingdom, because the One like a Son of man has received it and that His success is also theirs.

Dan 7:22b and the time came when the **saints** possessed **the kingdom**.

Dan 7:27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of **the saints of the Most High**; **his** [One like a Son a man] **kingdom** shall be an everlasting

This is where the chapter ends, but we have not seen all the parallels contained in Dan 7.

The Five Parallels Columns in Daniel 7

The parallels in Dan 7 are actually scattered through the chapter in a series of five columns. These columns contain parallel references to the same key terms. Verses 1 and 28 are here considered extrametrical, forming a frame around the chapter. If we confine our attention to vss. 2-27, the five columns referred to above can be separated into six rows, as follows.

	1	2	3	4	5
Row A	X		X		
Row B	X			X	X
Row C	X	X		X	X
Row B'	X				X
Row A'	X				
Final row		X	X	X	X

If we count only parallels represented in the ABCB'A' portion of this arrangement they form a pattern based on the number of verses contained in each column: 2 3 4 2 1. Here now is the whole chapter distributed across the five parallel columns with its verbal parallels bolded.

Table 2
Text of Daniel 7

Sequence 1	Sequence 2	Sequence 3	Sequence 4	Sequence 5
Row A: Four Beasts				
Dan. 7:2 Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' 6 After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.		Dan. 7:15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.		

Row B: Fourth Beast

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, **a fourth beast**, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them **another horn, a little one**, before which **three** of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking **great things**.

Dan. 7:19 "Then I desired to know the truth about **the fourth beast**, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, 20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and **the other horn** that came up and before which **three** of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke **great things**, and that seemed greater than its companions. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the **saints** and prevailed over them,

Dan. 7:23 "Thus he said: 'As for **the fourth beast**, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and **another** shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down **three** kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the **saints** of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Row C: Judgment				
Dan. 7:9 "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment , and the books were opened.	Dan. 7:13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.		22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High,	26 But the court shall sit in judgment ,

Row B': Fourth Beast				
Dan. 7:11 "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.				and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.
Row A': Four Beasts				
12 As for the rest of the beasts , their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.				
Final Row: Kingdom of God				
	14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.	18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'	and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom .	27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him .'

NOTE: The material in table 2 is quoted from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016).

1. "Thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took his seat" (vs. 9); "there came one like a son of man" (vs. 13). From where? It would have to be from the first apartment if He got to the second.

This arrangement reflects recapitulation. Daniel sees certain things and then asks questions about what he has seen. Answering the question means back over previous material.

Notice especially one point. In Row C, the center of the structure, both the Ancient of Days and the One like a Son of man are said to enter the heavenly judgment hall. We know the Ancient of Days enters first, because the text says the One like a son of man “was presented before him” (vs. 13). This shows that a sequence exists but stops there. It doesn’t say how much later the One like a son of man enters.

Some have made a point of saying that the two enter at different times at different times in Dan 7 but not in Rev 5. However, this does not follow. The fact is we don’t know how much time is involved, except that the order of narration is different in the two sources. But Dan 7 places vss. 9 and 13 in parallel, making them broadly equivalent. So the order of narration is not different in the two sources.

This is one example of a passage that could be taken to mean that Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 are not in substantial agreement.

Conclusion

Below, for the reader’s convenience, is a verse-by-verse overview of the table under discussion here.

Table 1
Overview of Daniel 7

		Sequence 1	Sequence 2	Sequence 3	Sequence 4	Sequence 5	
A	Four beasts	2-6		15-17			2
B	Fourth beast	7-8			19-21	23-25	3
C	Judgment	9-10	13		22a	26a	4
B'	Fourth beast	11*				26b	2
A'	Four beasts	12					1
	Son of Man/Saints		14	18	22b	27	

Chapter 3

Parallels Between Zechariah 1:7-6:15 and Revelation 4:1-6:8

Introduction¹

One part of the Old Testament background for what John writes in Rev 4-6a is in Zech 1-6. Notice that chaps. 1-6 of Zechariah constitutes about 40% (39.8%) of the book. Thus, John is drawing heavily on this prophecy when describing both the throne scene and the first four of the seals (Rev 4-6a). Here we first discuss the influence of Zech 3-6 on Rev 4-5, then that of Zech 1-2 on Rev 6a.

Zechariah 3-6 and Revelation 4-5

John borrows at least two themes from Zech 3-6 in writing Rev 4-5. These are (1) the seven eyes of the LORD going into all the earth (Zech 3:9; 4:2, 10; Rev 5:6), and (2) the flying scroll with writing on both sides (Zech 5:1-4; Rev 5:1-5, 7-8). Another possible theme that he borrows from Zechariah is (3) the reference to Joshua as high priest (Zech 3:1-5/Rev 5:6-14; see Rev 1:12-16). But we only see this third theme as being parallel to the others if Rev 4-5 is a judgment, as I suggest. There are references to variously colored horses in both Zech 1-2 and 3-6, but these are discussed in a later section.

Seven eyes or seven spirits (Josh 3:9; 4:10; Rev 5:6)?

Eyes. In Zech 3-4 and again in Rev 5 there is a reference to “eyes.”

For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with **seven eyes**, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. (Zech 3:9)

For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. **‘These seven are the eyes of the LORD**, which range through the whole earth.’ (Zech 4:10)

¹ Unless noted otherwise, Scripture quotations in English are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* ©2001, 2011, 2016 Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Version 3.7. I would like to thank Alberto Treiyr for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with **seven eyes**, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. (Rev 5:6)

This raises a question whether John's prior emphasis is on "eyes" or on "spirits." If we assume that context places this passage in the first century, speaking of "seven spirits" invites an application to Pentecost.² Both "eyes" and "spirits" occur in Rev 5:6 so the question is which one receives the prior emphasis. Notice that the word "spirits" occurs in a relative clause, while the word "eyes" is found in the accompanying main clause. I conclude that "eyes" is the main word that the other modifies. Zechariah mentions only "eyes."

The text is not talking about a time when people discern something about God, but a time when God discerns something about people. God is constantly discerning things about people, but this is an occasion on which this fact is especially worthy of comment. I suggest this is consistent with seeing the throne scene as a judgment. That is the time, above all others, when His eyes will "range through the whole earth" (Zech 4:10), or go "into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). When this happens He adds, "I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day" (Zech 3:9). Assigning or removing guilt is a judicial process, making this passage doubly open to seeing the passage about Joshua in Zech 3:1-5 against a legal backdrop.

Scroll with writing on both sides (Zech 5:1-4; Rev 5:1)

The flying scroll of Zech 5 is written on both sides, like that of Rev 5-6. But John's scroll is sealed and Zechariah's is not. One could use this fact to argue that the two passages are saying different things and should not be compared. But in my view we cannot understand what John says in Rev 5 without first understanding the use he makes of Zechariah. Zech 5 and Rev 5 are parallel enough that we must compare them.

Perhaps the precedent for John's scroll imagery does not have anything to do with Zechariah but is merely based on what the Bible says about inaugurations. Let us explore this possibility: (1) In Deuteronomy Moses commanded that each new king, at a time when there would be kings, must write out a copy of the law (Deut 17:18-20; 31:19, 24-26); (2) Josiah received a scroll at his coronation (2 Kgs 11:12); and (3) Samuel wrote out a scroll for the coronation of Saul (1 Sam 10:24-25). There is a question whether any of these narratives might provide a background for Rev 5. We now discuss a selection of these passages, starting with Deut 17.

² Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary of the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 34, 167, 170, 214.

Deut 17:18-20. Moses enjoins every future king of Israel to write out a copy of the law (Deuteronomy) and "read it all the days of his life."

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom [*w^ehāyâ k^ešibtô 'al kissē' mamlaktô*], he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. ^[19] And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ^[20] that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. (Deut 17:18-20)³

Notice the sequence: "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write" (vs. 18). According to this statement, the new ruler is already king by the time he becomes responsible for writing out a copy of whatever scroll this might be, presumably Deuteronomy. Copying the scroll was to be his first task as king, rather than his last task before assuming office. Deut 17 does not mandate that a new king should write out a copy of the scroll to be used in his inauguration.

2 Kgs 11:12. This passage has to do with the coronation of Joash. Recall that the scroll Joash received was given to instruct him, while the scroll the Lamb receives in Rev 5 is something He uses to instruct others. When John writes, "no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it," that cannot mean that it was physically hard to open the scroll and only Christ had the strength to do so. Instead, only He had the wisdom and experience to make its meaning clear. The information in the scroll was flowing out from Him. Not so in the case of Joash, who was still a child.

Another point has to do with the special place associated with the new king in the temple. This place was one from which he came out so as to be presented to the people (he had been hiding there), not one into which he was led. The coronation was performed outside in the court (2 Kgs 11:12).

Still, it remains the case that Joash was given a scroll at the time of his coronation (2 Kgs 11:12; see also 2 Chr 23:11). Commenting on this fact, Ranko Stefanovic states,

³ In a different context see also Christ's words, "'But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers'" (Matt 23:8). Having the same Master puts people on the same level, whether a Rabbi and his congregants or a king and his subjects.

At his enthronement, according to 2 Kings 11:12, the Judean king Joash was brought to a special place reserved for the king in "the house of the Lord" where he was invested with the royal emblems of "the crown and the testimony." Both the crown and "the testimony" are seen as tokens of kingship. They signified the right to rule.⁴

I suggest that the scroll Joash received had a meaning opposite to this. It showed his lack of fitness to rule. The only fitness he had was his willingness to humble himself by studying the scroll and continually receiving instruction from God. Giving the new king a crown might have been a token of his acceptance by the people, but their acceptance is something different from have a fitness to rule before God. 2 Kgs 11 cannot be the basis for what John says about the scroll in the throne scene of Rev 4-5.

1 Sam 10:24-25. When Saul became king, Samuel wrote "the ordinances of the kingdom" in a book and placed it "before the LORD."

And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

^[25] Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. (1 Sam 10:24-25)

On this occasion Saul became king (vs. 24), but Samuel wrote "the ordinances of the kingdom" (vs. 25). The ordinances that Samuel first proclaims and then writes probably did not contain an entire book of Scripture. There would not have been time enough to copy an entire document. There is a similarity between Deut 17:18-20 and 2 Kgs 11:12, but there are also differences.

We now considered the possibility that what John says about the scroll with seven seals does not have a background based on inaugurations, but rather one based on legal matters associated with a courtroom.

Exod 20:2-17; Zech 5:3. Two of the ten commandments are mentioned in connection with Zechariah's flying scroll (stealing, swearing falsely [Zech 5:3]). These references are possibly intended to indicate the type of thing that was written in the scroll. According to Shea,

If the ten commandments were written on the two sides of the flying scroll in Zechariah, then one can think of them as being written on the two sides of the scroll that is unsealed in

⁴ Idem, p. 171.

Rev 8:1, for by context and content this provides the best parallel in the Old Testament to explain the symbol for the content of the scroll in Revelation.⁵

In many Old Testament passages we find expressions such as "throne of Israel" (1 Kgs 2:4; 8:20, 25; 9:5; 10:9; 2 Kgs 10:30; 15:12; 2 Chr 6:10, 16; Jer 33:17), "throne of David" (Jer 22:30; 36:30); "David's throne" (2 Sam 3:10; 1 Kgs 2:45; Isa 9:7; Jer 13:13; 17:25; 22:2, 4; 29:16), or such. But there are other similar passages that speak of the throne of Israel pertaining to God.

David praises God that "he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1 Chr 28:5). We also have the statement, "So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David" (1 Chr 29:23). Ultimately the throne of Israel was neither David's, nor Solomon's, but the Lord's. God sought constantly to qualify those who ruled, but all of them made horrible mistakes. This is why God wanted them to write out a scroll and constantly spend time learning from it. If they themselves did the writing, they would know what the scroll said and could benefit more fully from its instruction. His willingness to submit to God by receiving that instruction was the king's only fitness to rule.

Joshua the high priest (Zech 3:1-5; Rev 5:6-14)

If the "eyes" of the Lord do not have to do with people discerning something about Him (as on the day of Pentecost), but about God discerning something about them, we might ask what this has to do with Rev 4-5. Zech 3:1-5 helps us understand this connection more clearly.

Joshua. In Zech 3:3 Joshua is "standing before the Lord, clothed with filthy garments." Ellen White applies this figure to us, with filthy clothing representing the guilt of our sin. She compares the changing of Joshua's clothes to us putting on the garments of salvation.

Your heavenly Father will take from you the garments defiled by sin. In the beautiful parabolic prophecy of Zechariah, the high priest Joshua, standing clothed in filthy garments before the angel of the Lord, represents the sinner. And the word is spoken by the Lord, "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. . . . So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments." Zechariah 3:4, 5. Even so God will clothe you with "the garments of salvation," and cover you with "the robe of

⁵ Ibid.

righteousness." Isaiah 61:10. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Psalm 68:13.6

It is true that Joshua's guilt is removed on this occasion and he receives fresh garments. But a question that remains is whether the guilt removed from him was his own. Joshua was a high priest and therefore represented the entire nation before God. The interpretation we have been considering is correct, but I suggest it is also appropriate to apply it to Christ as our great High Priest. In Rev 5:6 John reports seeing "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain." Why was He sacrificed? For something He Himself had done? Or perhaps for something we had done?

The idea of one creature giving its life for another is substitution. Every animal sacrifice offered in the sanctuary illustrates this concept. When a person sinned, an animal died. If Joshua bearing the people's guilt as their high priest had to do with substitution, the scene we are studying has its broader context in the sanctuary, and more specifically the Day of Atonement.

Satan. In Zech 3:1-5 if Satan is standing before the Lord saying one thing and the Angel of the Lord is saying something else, if they disagree. Presumably their disagreement concerns Joshua, with the one accusing and the other defending him. Finally, after the prosecution and the defense have both finished, God declares: "'The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!'" (vs. 2; see Dan 7:18, 22, 26).

Notice that the Lord's condemnation is not for the one Satan accuses, but for Satan himself. What God says is "The LORD rebuke *you*" (emphasis added; see Jude 9). Issuing a decision involving human guilt or innocence in the context of a legal dispute places God in the role of Judge (see Gen 18:25).

Others "were standing before him [Joshua]" (Zech vs. 4). The text does not tell us who these others are, but a few verses later there is another reference to "those who are standing here" (vs. 7). In Rev 5 these could be compared with the twenty-four elders and four living creatures. More broadly it could be compared with the innumerable multitude in the gallery. "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" (Rev 5:11). An accusation, a defense, the Lord rendering a judgment, a multitude witnessing the proceedings – this sounds very much like a courtroom. And in a sanctuary context it sounds like the Day of Atonement.

Discussion. At His birth the angel announces to Mary that the Baby she would bear was destined to receive a throne. This throne would not be received immediately.

⁶ *Christ's Object Lessons*, 2.

“Not until His work as a mediator shall be ended will God ‘give unto Him the throne of His father David,’ a kingdom of which ‘there shall be no end’” Luke 1:32, 33.” Satan offered Christ a kingdom in the wilderness (Matt 4:8-10), but receiving it under such circumstances would have been tantamount to forfeiting it. Christ would first have to die in order to defeat this usurper and would then have to come again in glory in order to dispossess him.

The idea that Christ occupies two thrones at different times in history is essential to understanding what Ellen White is saying here. Christ receives the right to share the throne of His heavenly Father as soon as He ascends to heaven, but only as a result of the judgment will He receive “the throne of his father David.” Just as these are two different fathers, there are two different thrones. The first throne pertains to heaven, the other to earth. In Dan 7 He shares this second throne with the saints as soon as He receives it (Dan 7:14, 18, 22, 27). This is the kind of God we worship.

Jesus also comments on the contrast between two thrones: “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne [*en tō thronō mou*], as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne [*en tō thronō autou*]” (Rev 3:21). His throne, my throne. Again these are different thrones. One is a present reality; the other still remains future as of this writing.

One function of the second coming is to rescue the saints from this world, but another is to take the world away from the usurper. Satan has held the world as his kingdom ever since Adam and does not want to give it up (Luke 4:6). If it is to be shared with the saints, it must first be taken away from Satan. All the holy angels come with Jesus to the earth after the judgment to see Him do this.

Summary

The matter of Joshua receiving a "clean turban" fits an inauguration model. The reference to "the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" could also be accommodated to this understanding. But some things don't fit well. My sense is that it would be better to take what John says about a scroll, not in the earlier context of Moses or Samuel, but in the later context of Zechariah as the Jewish people were coming back home from exile in Babylon and being restored to the homes they had lost previously.

Transitions

Zechariah 1-2 and 3-6

In this section and the next I point out three thematic parallels which establish links between Zech 1-2 and 3-6, and between both of these and Rev 4-6a. We start with Zech 1-2/3-6, then consider Zech 1-6/Rev 4-6a.

Different colored horses (Zech 1:8-10; 6:1-5). In Zech 1:8-10 the prophet mentions four horses (red, red, brown, white), only one of which has a rider.⁷ In Zech 6:1-5 there are four teams of two horses, hitched to chariots (red, white, black, dappled). In Rev 6:1-8 John speaks of four horses (white, red, black, pale), all of which have riders. When we compare Zechariah's lists no two of them are the same, but there is a common motif of different colored horses. Zech 1 and 6 are the only places in Scripture that could have provided a basis for such imagery, and to Zechariah their sequence is not important.

When John incorporates the above motif in Rev 6a, however, the relative sequence of the horses becomes important, because it captures the idea that the church would experience a gradual process of decline, parallel to what history tells us about the churches.

Measuring devices (Zech 1:16; 2:1-2; 4:10; 5:5-6).

Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line [*qāwh*] shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. (Zech 1:16)

And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line [*hebel middāh*] in his hand! ^[2] Then I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length." (Zech 2:1-2)

For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line [*'eben habdīl*] in the hand of Zerubbabel. (Zech 4:10)

Then the angel who talked with me came forward and said to me, "Lift your eyes and see what this is that is going out." ^[6] And I said, "What is it?" He said, "This is the basket [*'êpāh*] that is going out." And he said, "This is their iniquity in all the land." (Zech 5:5-6)

⁷ Shea argues that all four horses in Zech 1:8-10 should be assumed to have riders ("Literary Structure," 87).

A measuring line determines how long an object is. A plumb line ensures that surfaces are vertical. A measuring basket measures weight or volume.⁸ These are not the same measures, but in each case an objective standard is being used as a means of obtaining accurate knowledge.

The people have returned home and so, in the parallel book of Haggai, now is the time to rebuild not only one's own house but God's temple (Hag 1:7; Dan 9:25). The measuring line and plumb line mentioned above are consistent with this idea. In Zech 5:6, however, the author is not primarily concerned with construction but with guilt ("I asked, 'What is it?' He replied, 'It is a measuring basket.' And he added, 'This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land'" [5:6]).

In a later verse this basket is taken to Babylon. Previously Israel had been exiled to Babylon, and now God says He will send, not them, but their guilt into exile (i.e., far away). In the sanctuary guilt was removed from the camp on the Day of Atonement, when the scape goat was led out into the wilderness (i.e., far away). Here both narratives have to do with the people being restored to favor.

The idea of applying an objective standard of measurement occurs twice in Zech 1-2 (1:16; 2:1) and twice in Zech 3-6 (4:10; 5:5-6), with different emphases. On the one hand Jerusalem is to be rebuilt (1:16; 4:10); on the other the people's guilt is to be removed.

Zechariah 1-2 and Revelation 4-6a

If Rev 4-6a is related to Zech 3-6, and Zech 3-6 is related to Zech 1-2, it follows that Zech 1-2 should also be related in some way to Rev 4-6a. From Zech 1-2 three themes emerge. These do not map directly onto Rev 4-6a, but lie behind it. The three themes are: (1) a period of fixed duration which ends shortly before the prophet's activity (in the case of Zechariah this was the seventy years of Jeremiah); (2) the people's recent return from Babylon and their former guilt being sent to Babylon instead of them; and (3) the corollary of God's willingness to accept His people back to their homes (Zech 2:9-10; see Ezek 36-37).

⁸ "The basket was called the ephah, which was a measure of dry weight that could be contained in it" (Shea, "Literary Structure," p. 91). But an ephah of gravel would weight more than an ephah of barley. A basket can be filled with anything. It's a measure of volume.

Jeremiah's seventy years

Just before the events described in Zechariah (roughly 520-518 BC), a prophetic period comes to an end. Jeremiah wrote, "these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer 25:11). If Babylon's fall to Medo-Persia in 539 BC marks the end of the period, then counting back seventy years would bring us to 609 BC as the year when it starts. In 609 Babylon defeated Assyria at Carchemish, and in 539 Persia defeated Babylon. The prophecy does not speak of "this nation," i.e., Judea. It says "these nations." All alike would serve the king of Babylon during the seventy years of Jeremiah's prophecy. Babylon did not take the Jews into captivity in 609, but that is when Babylon rose to power over Assyria.⁹

When Zechariah writes in 520 BC that God had been angry with His people "these seventy years," there is a question what he meant. The temple was still in ruins when Zechariah was written, so it may be that from his perspective Jeremiah's seventy years had not yet ended, although everyone was already back living in Judea living in their homes by that time. This could explain why some have understood the seventy years in different ways. Shea remarks that

... for Zechariah the seventy years extended from 586, the year of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kgs 25:8), until its construction was completed in 516 (Ezra 6:15). . . . Thus one can reckon these 70 years from 605 to 536 in terms of the people, while in terms of the temple they can be dated from 586 to 516.¹⁰

The author of this statement was a revered former teacher and mentor of mine, but I submit that there is no way to reinterpret what Jeremiah wrote. There is only one interpretation of the seventy years (609-539 BC). In 520 BC the people were waiting for something that had happened nineteen years earlier. Babylon's power ended in 539.

Other applications

Jeremiah's seventy years were a set time of punishment and these were followed by a period of renewed acceptance. For this reason efforts to find a period that would provide the basis for a first century application must be considered unsuccessful. We have the seventy weeks which ended in the first century, but they represented a time of favor, not of punishment. In the end time, however, there is a predetermined time period

⁹ See Ross E. Winkle, "Jeremiah's Seventy Years For Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part I: The Scriptural Data," *AUSS* 25/2 (1987), pp. 201-14; "Jeremiah's Seventy Years For Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part I: The Historical Data," *AUSS* 25/3 (1987), pp. 289-300.

¹⁰ Shea, "Literary Structure," p. 91.

that has a meaning comparable to that of Jeremiah's seventy years. This is the 1260 days/years (538-1798) of the Middle Ages.

The 1260 days/years represented a period of hardship, just like Jeremiah's seventy years. They ended in 1798, shortly before the judgment would begin in 1844. As a result of the judgment God gathers people from all over the earth into His kingdom and welcomes them back home again. The theme of restoration, to which we now turn, develops well against this backdrop. The fact that the two periods (seventy years, 1260 days/years) are of different lengths is not significant. What is significant is the fact that both represent a time of hardship leading up to a time of restoration.

Conclusion

John draws on Zech 1-6 when writing Rev 4-6a. The variously colored horses in Zech 1-2 and 6 provide a basis for what John was saying in Rev 6a. The scroll with writing on both sides in Zech 3-6 offers a basis for what John says in Rev 5. The courtroom scene replete with accusation, defense, a high priest representing those accused, a multitude of onlookers, and God as judge is an appropriate background for what John says in Rev 4.

This is consistent with John's point about the "eyes" of the Lord ranging through the whole earth (Zech 3:9; 4:10; Rev 5:6). John is describing a time when God will in a special way discern and evaluate the thoughts of our hearts. Seventh-day Adventists have long taught about a final judgment just before Christ's return. If we interpret in a historicist manner, this is the timeframe of Laodicea – the period to which the churches have lead us, when a "people" are "judged" (*laos+dikē* = "Laodicea").

I suggest that when writing about the throne scene and also in the first four seals John is drawing on Zech 1-6. In a later section we discuss how he also uses Dan 7.

Chapter 4

The Case for Metaphor in Hebrews 6:19-20

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through **the heavens**, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (Heb 4:14)

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into **the inner place behind the curtain**,^[20] where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:19-20)

Introduction

I have emphasized the connection between Zech 1-6 and Rev 4-6a, showing that this connection comes together convincingly in the context of a judgment. Others have attacked the Seventh-day Adventist concept of the judgment by insisting that we are judged only at the cross and that nothing beyond this happens in 1844, setting aside the church's historical experience.

In 1909 Albion F. Ballenger (1861-1921) published a book, *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ*,¹¹ in which he developed a theory about the heavenly sanctuary based on Heb 6:19-20. Ellen White warned repeatedly about the dangers of Ballenger's theory,¹² and from time to time there have been attempts to answer it. Some good scholarly literature has been generated in the process, and we review some of that here. But the flaw in Ballenger's reasoning has eluded us.

Below I argue that if we want to understand Heb 6:19-20 we must study all of it, including all four of its major terms "anchor," "veil" (or "curtain"), "forerunner," and "Melchizedek." Separately, the passage has parallels especially in the gospel of John, which it will be useful to identify. There is nothing to be gained by setting aside parts of the passage, or by isolating it from related material.

¹¹ Tropico, CA: Ballenger, 1909.

<https://www.friendsofsabbath.org/ABC/CG7/AF%20Ballenger%20&%20The%20Gathering%20Call/Books%20&%20booklets/BallengerA.F.CastOutForTheCrossOfChrist1909.pdf>.

¹² Ellen White's eleven statements about Ballenger, having to do with the sanctuary, were published as *Manuscript Release No. 760: The Integrity of the Sanctuary Truth* (Takoma Park, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981).

Here I suggest that Heb 6:19-20 is simply asserting that Christ went to heaven (“passed through the heavens”). In going there it is as though He passed beyond a veil (“the inner place behind the curtain”), leaving us on the other side. But our hope follows Him and by faith we know that He will return and take us to be with Him one day. In saying this the author of Hebrews was developing an illustration; he was borrowing language from the sanctuary but using it to make spiritual point.

The Problem

Albion F. Ballenger

Albion F. Ballenger liked to emphasize the passage we are studying: “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:19-20).

In evaluating Ballenger’s work, scholars have focused almost exclusively, as he did, on the word *katapetasma* (“curtain,” “veil”). This is an important term, but not the only one in the passage. Unfortunately, Ballenger allowed it to dominate his understanding of Heb 6:19-20. All agree that the term must be applied in a literal sense. It is true that there is a literal antitypical sanctuary in heaven, but in the author’s argument that is introduced in Heb 8. It is a mistake to assume that the language must be interpreted with no figurative or illustrative intent.

Ballenger taught that Melchizedek and the angels had an antitypical first apartment ministry from Adam to the cross.¹³ After His resurrection and ascension, Christ then went to heaven and performed His own ministry in the second apartment. What this implies is that He has only ever served in “the inner place behind the curtain.” He has never ministered in the first apartment.¹⁴

There are many implications that follow from Ballenger’s teachings, but one is especially damaging. This is the idea that there is no need for an end time judgment, and that none occurs. People are judged only by the cross.¹⁵ We are judged by the cross, but saying all subsequent generations are judged only at the cross implies that their fates are sealed at that point. This is predestination. There are passages in the

¹³ “[Q] Then you place the first apartment ministry of the heavenly sanctuary, or the ministry ‘before the veil,’ from creation to the cross? [A] Yes, a hundred times, Yes! and here is where a flood of light from the sanctuary falls on the path of the searching, praying pilgrim” (Ballenger, *Cast Out*, 23).

¹⁴ Ballenger, *Cast Out*, chaps. 4 and 8.

¹⁵ This reverses the functions of cross and judgment. At the cross universal provision is provided; individual human responses to that provision are evaluated in the judgment.

New Testament like 2 Cor 5:10 (“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”),¹⁶ placing the judgment in the future from Paul’s day, but to Ballenger Paul was not describing a judgment of the sort Adventists have in mind.

Some have tried to oppose Ballenger. Others have simply ignored him hoping his arguments would go away. But the issues he raised keep resurfacing and have never been resolved.¹⁷ On preliminary inspection his argument gives every appearance of being irrefutable.

Subsequent influence

In his 1980 doctoral dissertation Roy Adams states, “Ballenger’s assessment of the scriptural meaning of the phrase ‘within the veil’ does not give evidence of any significant flaw.”¹⁸ E.E. Andross, who was the first to write against Ballenger, tacitly acknowledges the force of Ballenger’s argument by his delicate handling of it.¹⁹ M.L. Andreasen avoids all reference to Ballenger.²⁰

I think Ballenger was wrong, but suggest that to understand where he was wrong we must first understand where he was right. Ellen White, who strongly opposed Ballenger’s views, says, “The words are right but misapplied to vindicate error. We must not give countenance to his reasoning.”²¹ This raises two questions: How were his

¹⁶ “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5:10).

¹⁷ See Robert Haddock, “A History of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the Advent Movement, 1800-1905” (BD thesis, Andrews University, 1970). I will not attempt to review Haddock’s work here. The issues are mentioned at the beginning of Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, no. 4 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Committee, 1989), xi-xiii, but deals with them weakly.

¹⁸ Adams, “Doctrine of the Sanctuary” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1980), 144.

¹⁹ E.E. Andross, *A More Excellent Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1912).

²⁰ In *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1947), Andreasen mentions inauguration along with the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary (225-226), which may have been a tacit affirmation of the earlier efforts of E.E. Andross. In *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1948), his comments on Heb 6:19-20 do not mention the word “veil” (238-239). In his Additional Notes to this passage the “veil” is mentioned, but only by way of suggesting that, because it is not identified in the text, its identity is not important (242).

²¹ Originally from MR760, 4. Quoted in William G. Johnsson, “The Significance of the Day of Atonement Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 393. Similar statements occur throughout MR760: “God forbids your course of action—making the blessed Scriptures, by grouping them in your way, to testify to build up a falsehood” (p. 4). “Elder Ballenger thinks that he has new light and is burdened to give it to the people, but the Lord has instructed me that he has misapplied texts of Scripture and given them a wrong application. The Word of God is always the truth, but the doctrines that Elder Ballenger advances, if received, would unsettle our faith in the sanctuary question. Already Elder Ballenger has mystified minds

words right? And how his reasoning wrong? According to Adams, Ballenger's words were right in the sense that *katapetasma* ("veil") has to do with the second apartment, but he finds Ballenger's views too divergent to integrate into a cohesive Adventist theology of the sanctuary.

In honestly acknowledging the fact that Heb 6:19-20 draws on second apartment imagery Adams does not contradict Ellen White. He is speaking of Ballenger's words, which she says are right. At this point Adams and White are in essential agreement.

After the publication of Adams' dissertation, a number of papers on Heb 6:19-20 appeared in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. The first of these was by George Rice (1987), who argues, in effect, that Ballenger's words and reasoning were both wrong, which goes beyond the position taken by Ellen White.²² According to Rice, the veil in Heb 6:19 can be either the first or the second; it is not possible to tell from the text which is intended. He suggests that the passage refers to the heavenly sanctuary in general, rather than to either of its apartments in isolation.²³

Rice was answered by Roy Gane (2000),²⁴ who shows that the Greek phrase *to esōteron tou katapetasmatos* ("within the veil") does indeed make specific reference to the second apartment. The Hebrew behind it is *mibbēt lappārōket* (Exod 26:33; Lev 16:2, 12, 15; Num 18:7), where the operative word is based on Akkadian *parakku*, which goes back to Sumerian *bará*. The root meaning of the Sumerian word is "dais," which indicates the innermost part of a shrine. So if Sumerian *bará* means "dais," and if Akkadian *parakku* is based on this word, and if the corresponding Hebrew expression translates as "cultic base/pedestal, high seat; shrine/apartment (of deity),"²⁵ the phrase *mibbēt lappārōket* does refer to the innermost part of a shrine.

After Gane there were two pairs of papers by Norman Young (2001a, 2002a), both answered by Richard Davidson (2001b, 2002b).²⁶ Young supported and expanded

by his large array of texts. These texts are true, but he has placed them where they do not belong" (p. 15). "So you see that it is impossible for us to have any agreement with the positions taken by Brother A. F. Ballenger, for no lie is of the truth. His proofs do not belong where he places them, and although he may lead minds to believe his theory in regard to the sanctuary, this is no evidence that his theory is true" (p. 23).

²² George Rice, "Analysis of Some Assumptions Concerning Καταπέτασμα," *AUSS* 25/1 (1987), 65-71.

²³ Idem, 69, 71.

²⁴ Roy Gane, "Re-Opening Καταπέτασμα ('Veil') in Hebrews 6:19," *AUSS* 38/1 (2000), 5-8.

²⁵ R. Gane and J. Milgrom, "פֶּרֶךְ," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (TWAT), 6:755.

²⁶ Norman Young, "Where Jesus Has Gone as a Forerunner on Our Behalf," *AUSS* 39/2 (2001), 165-173; "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20," *AUSS* 40/1 (2002), 61-68; Richard Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background," *AUSS* 39/2 (2001), 175-190; "Inauguration or Day of Atonement? A Response to Norman Young's 'Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited,'" *AUSS* 40/1 (2002), 69-

on Gane's argument, while Davidson, in answering him, approached the problem more like Andross. He argued that Christ entered the second apartment immediately after His ascension but only to inaugurate it, placing the emphasis on inauguration. Then, once the second apartment was dedicated, He performed the rest of His ministry in the first apartment. Davidson criticizes Andross for "not ground[ing] his conclusions in an examination of the intertextual use of key LXX terms by the author of Hebrews."²⁷

The above dialogue adds sophistication and depth to the topic and is a credit to the scholars who contributed to it. But as far as settling the issue, the fundamental question of where Christ went remains now approximately where Ballenger left it at his death in 1921. In my view it is time to take an entirely different approach.

The Passage

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ^[20] where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

There are four key terms in Heb 6:19-20 (*agkuran* = "anchor", *katapetasma* = "curtain" or "veil," *prodromos* = "forerunner," and "Melchizedek"). For over a century all attention has been focused on one of these words (*katapetasma*) to the exclusion of the others, but if we want to understand what the author of Hebrews was saying we must take all of what he says. We now consider each term individually.

#1 Agkuran ("anchor")

In the clause, "which we have as an anchor of the soul" (*hēn agkuran echomen tēs puxēs*), the Greek word *hēn* ("which") is a relative pronoun whose function is to point back to something earlier. The word it points back to is *elipidos* ("hope") in the previous verse. So grammatically it is our hope that enters with Christ where He goes. By using Greek *hōs* ("like," "as") the author shows that he is drawing a comparison. Literal anchors extend down, whereas this one extends up. Literal anchors enter water, not buildings. This is an anchor "of the soul" or spiritual anchor. The author speaks of our hope as being in some ways "like" an anchor. It functions in a manner reminiscent of an anchor.

88. See also Carl P. Cosaert, "The Use of ἄγιος for the Sanctuary in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus," *AUSS* 42/1 (2004), 91-103.

²⁷ Davidson 2002b, 69

#2 Katapetasma (“curtain”).

The text says, “entering into the inner [place] of the curtain or veil” (*eiserchomenēn eis to esōteron tou katapetasmatos*), i.e., “behind the veil.” I here use the words “curtain” and “veil” interchangeably. There is a question what kind of building a spiritual or nonliteral anchor might enter. Probably a spiritual or nonliteral building. If the building is figurative, we must ask what it would mean to insist that the “veil” inside it is literal. I suggest that the “anchor” is not literal, and neither is the “veil.”

It is important to clarify that there is an actual sanctuary in heaven, a literal building, “the true tent that the Lord set up, not man” (Heb 8:2). But that is only introduced in chap. 8, not chap. 6. The author builds his argument gradually. He first makes the point that the Son’s High Priestly ministry is greater than angels, Moses, and Joshua (1:1-5:10); that He is greater than Melchizedek (7:1-28); and finally that He serves in an actual sanctuary (8:1-7). But the tangible reality of this sanctuary is not mentioned until Heb 8, and the earthly type of it not until Heb 9. Christ serves in a better sanctuary, governed by a better covenant (8:8-13). The “true tent” that Jesus serves in is not a figure of speech. It is real, but “better.”

In Heb 8 Christ enters a sanctuary that is as real as the High Priest who serves in it. By contrast, in Heb 6 He enters a sanctuary that is as tangible and real as “the anchor of our souls” or our “hope,” whichever we may choose to emphasize. This is clearly metaphorical language. Christ is as real as the cross He died on. The “anchor” we are reading about, however, is not an object anyone could touch. Nor is the “veil.” On this point Ballenger and the author of Hebrews were talking past each other.

#3 Prodomos (“forerunner”)

The term translated “forerunner” indicates that one person goes before, and that someone else follows after with both parties going to the same place. The only difference is the time when they arrive.

The question of where Christ went when He ascended (heaven, or the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven), and about where we are now (earth, or the first apartment which William Miller thought of as the earth), is the issue we are discussing here. If Jesus ascended to a literal second apartment, there is an implication is that He went there by leaving a literal first apartment. But He had no access to any literal first apartment here on earth. By definition the second apartment is not the first part of the

sanctuary one encounters when entering. One does not just enter the second apartment.²⁸ There was no way to get there except by going through the first apartment.

Christ can be ever so literal, and the sanctuary can be ever so real, but it is a misuse of words to say that He is our “forerunner” if the place He takes us is somewhere we cannot go.²⁹ If He is our “forerunner,” He goes first to a place and we follow Him later to the same place. I am not criticizing the author of Hebrews, but suggesting we have misunderstood him.

In a spiritual sense we are common priests. Our High Priest is in heaven, but we remain on earth. John says that God “has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:5-6; see 5:10; 20:6). And Paul writes that, as an apostle, he was appointed “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service [*hierourgounta*] of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16). Our ministry here on earth is not localized to serving in one place only, as though there were still an earthly distinction between apartments (Matt 28:18-20).³⁰ We serve where needed.

The idea that we serve as Christ’s assistants with a spiritual ministry to mankind while we wait for our Lord to return is biblical. We feed on His Word at the table, we offer our prayers at the altar, and we witness to others at the candlesticks. This is a first apartment type of ministry, and yet there is nothing literal about it. These are spiritual analogies. We are not priests, but we serve as though we were. This idea is confirmed in the opening paragraphs of *Acts of the Apostles*. The first chapter of that book is called, “God’s Purpose for His Church,” and its first two sentences say, “The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.”³¹

The ways in which the church ministers are endlessly varied (1 Cor 12:15), but it ministers. On earth it is as though we were Jesus’ hands and feet. We are not a congregation of people served by its pastors. We are a body of people organized for

²⁸ The term *naos* is used in 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:17, and this term usually denotes the innermost shrine or second apartment, but sanctuary symbolism can be used in multiple ways. These texts do not imply that the church is a body of high priests (there is one High Priest), or that we are the second apartment, or that there is no sanctuary in heaven. God dwells in us by His Spirit. Nothing more is implied about where we are.

²⁹ In Rev 7:9-12 and again in 14:2-3 the saints are portrayed as being in the same place where the judgment had been held previously, but that is after the judgment had come to an end.

³⁰ Literally the word *poreuthentes* does not mean “go”; it means “having gone.” Christ is telling us to make disciples wherever circumstances might have placed us.

³¹ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 9.

service and we reach out to others in whatever way we can. The church's great High Priest ministers on our behalf, and we minister on His behalf.

Saying on the basis of Heb 6:19-20 that Jesus precedes us and then literalizing the idea that our destination so that we do not ascend to heaven but to the second apartment is not exegesis, but a caricature. The only way to make sense of the *prodromos* figure is to understand it spiritually. Christ goes now where we will go later. When we understand the figure in this way all difficulty vanishes. There is a real sanctuary in heaven, which has two apartments. He serves in both of them at different times. The sanctuary in which Christ serves is as real as He is. At His ascension Christ entered heaven,³² just as we will one day. The author borrows language from the sanctuary to make these points, but his intent is illustrative.

#4 Melchizedek

The author offers an extended comparison between Christ and Melchizedek (5:6 [=Ps 110:4], 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17 [=Ps 110:4]). This comparison is based on the idea that Melchizedek was "priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18), or "priest of the Most High God" (Heb 7:1). This is an extended use of the term "priest." Melchizedek never served in a sanctuary. Indeed, during his lifetime there was no sanctuary to serve in.

In Ballenger's model, "The veil in the earthly sanctuary was decorated with figures of angels, representing the actual angels which guarded the approach to the throne of God, and it is before this cordon of living angels that Melchisedek ministered from creation to the cross."³³ On earth, or in heaven? Exactly how long did he live? When did he die, or did he die? Where is he now? One could over literalize what we know about Melchizedek. Was he in the garden, on the ark, in the wilderness with Israel, exiled to Babylon? Did he meet with Abraham by descending from heaven? I would rather say that the author does not impose such contradictions on us. He was speaking homiletically, which is not to deny that anciently there was a real person named Melchizedek.

Ballenger had an ability to mix metaphors, to combine things that don't belong together. In his model one part of the antitype (Melchizedek, whose sacrifices could not cleanse the conscience) was itself a type representing another part of the antitype (Christ, whose sacrifice could cleanse the conscience). If the sanctuary where Melchizedek served was on earth, in what literal sense was it antitypical? And where was it? if his ministry was in heaven, in what literal sense did he, while presumably

³² William G. Johnson cautions against a metaphorical concept of the sanctuary in heaven. See "The Heavenly Sanctuary – Figurative or Real?" in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews, Daniel and Revelation Series*, vol. 4 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 35-51.

³³ Ballenger, *Cast Out*, 28.

living on earth, serve in a heavenly sanctuary? Ballenger has confronted us here with an odd amalgam of typical and antitypical imagery, which is a problem whenever we try to interpret it in a consistently literal sense.

I suggest that throughout Heb 6:19-20 the author is not speaking of an antitypical inauguration of the sanctuary, or an antitypical day of atonement, or to any part of the antitypical sanctuary. The language is explicitly sanctuary language. It is drawn from the sanctuary, but does not refer back to the sanctuary in any literal sense. The author is describing the distance between heaven and earth. Below I offer some examples to illustrate this point.

Factors External to Hebrews

Reinterpreting Old Testament Passages

There is a precedent for later inspired writers to add sanctuary significance to earlier inspired passages. In both the Old and New Testaments certain passages have an earlier meaning not related to the sanctuary, yet sanctuary associations are added to it by later writers.

Jeremiah/Hebrews. When Jeremiah speaks of a “new covenant” (Jer 31:31-34), he does not invest the term with any cultic associations, but the author of Hebrews appropriates the language of Jeremiah and makes it the basis for Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:8-12; 10:16-17). This is reinterpretation. Sanctuary significance is being added to an earlier passage which did not originally have it.

Daniel/Revelation. Similarly, Daniel sees “a man clothed in linen” (Dan 10:5-6) and although he realizes that the Man is more than human, says nothing about Him being a High Priest. But when John is on Patmos and sees this same holy Being, He is described as wearing garments that have specific High Priestly associations (Rev 1:12-16).³⁴ In Daniel the imagery has no sanctuary or High Priestly association; in Revelation it does. Also we note that when John sees Him on the island of Patmos in the first century, the glorified Christ is portrayed as being in the first apartment among the candlesticks.³⁵ It is important to understand that Christ’s ministry in the literal antitypical sanctuary took place in both apartments.

³⁴ Ross Winkle, “Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man: Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2012), 288-293. Winkle’s preferred source for the high priestly terminology in Rev 1 is Exod 27:20-28:5.

³⁵ Idem, 263, 268, 270. Some challenge this identification (idem, 277).

Reinterpreting New Testament passages

Jesus. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19; see also Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58). Jesus’ crucifixion and subsequent resurrection were real. If these things were not real, nothing is real. But by applying His words literally to the Jerusalem temple, the Jewish leaders were deliberately misunderstanding Him (John 2:20). If with hindsight we correctly interpret Jesus as referring to His death and resurrection, and then use this fact to conclude that there is no literal sanctuary in heaven, that also would be a deliberate misunderstanding of His words. There is a real sanctuary in heaven. The author says so in Heb 8:2. Jesus is not negating the existence of a sanctuary in heaven when He speaks of His body as a house of God or of His resurrection as the rebuilding of a temple.³⁶

Matthew/1 Peter. In Matt 16:18 Jesus says, “you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” In 1 Pet 2:4-5 Peter recalls these words and applies them to the membership of the church saying, “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” In the first passage there is no implication of priestly ministry; in the later one such associations have been added.

Paul. “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you [pl] are that temple” (1 Cor 3:16-17). Here, the temple is no longer said to be Christ’s physical body but His spiritual body, His church on earth.

In another place Paul says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple [naos] of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20). Here Paul borrows language from the sanctuary to make the point that people are not to abuse their physical bodies, but care for them, because those bodies belong to God. Paul also says the church is “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). His intent in saying this is similar to what Jesus said about his resurrection. Christ’s body was a temple; our bodies are a temple. These are metaphors.

Note that using sanctuary symbolism to say where we serve is not the same as using it to say where the Holy Spirit dwells. The three passages I have just quoted use the term *naos* with a verb of dwelling. They show that God’s Spirit dwells within us while

³⁶ Joseph R. Greene, “Jesus as the Heavenly Temple in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 28/3 (2018), 430-431, 436, 438-439. Greene quotes Edmund Clowney, “The Final Temple,” *WTJ* 35 (1972), 156-89, as stating that, “In Christ is realization. It is not so much that Christ fulfills what the temple means; rather Christ is the meaning for which the temple existed.”

we serve wherever He has led us.³⁷ But just as Jesus does not negate the reality of the temple in heaven by describing His resurrection as He does, Paul does imply that the earth is the second apartment by using the term *naos*, nor does he imply we are high priests. Christ is our great antitypical High Priest and He is in heaven.

In these verses sanctuary language is being variously used to describe Christ's physical body, His spiritual body, and our physical bodies. None of this weakens, or has any bearing on, the Seventh-day Adventist theology of the sanctuary. Our sanctuary doctrine deals with heavenly realities, not with the figures of speech sometimes used here to describe our situation and our work. Human language can be used in more than one way.

One example in particular

Paraphrasing for ease of exposition, Jesus says, I am going away (John 8:14). Twice He says (to His enemies), I am going away and where I am going you cannot come (John 8:21; 13:33). Once He says (to His friends), I am going away and where I am going you cannot come now, but you will come later (John 13:36). Jesus words draw implicitly on the figures of a veil (He goes to a place we cannot come), anchor (our hope follows Him), and the concept of a forerunner (where He has gone we will one day follow). Only Melchizedek is not mentioned. The author of Hebrews adds his references to Melchizedek from what was said earlier in chap. 5 and 6.

I suggest that the author of Hebrews was making at the end of Heb 6 the same statement he was making earlier in Heb 4. "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Heb 4:14). The only difference between the two statements is the ways in which they are stated. There is no difference in their propositional content. In the first example he does not use sanctuary language to make his point; In the second case he does.

In saying I am not making the same claim as Rice. He said we can't tell from the text which apartment is intended. That statement is incorrect. We can tell from the text which apartment the words refer to, as Gane has capably demonstrated. What I am saying is that the author in Heb 6 is not referring to the sanctuary. He is using sanctuary language to make a statement that is unrelated to the sanctuary. He is saying that Jesus went from this place to that place, from earth to heaven. In doing this He "passed through the heavens." This is what we will also do when Jesus comes.

³⁷ See 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:17. There is an extension of this same idea in Eph 2:21; 2 Thess 2:4.

Discussion

It was a mistake on Ballenger's part to focus on only one author (Hebrews), only one passage (Heb 6:19-20), and only one word ("veil"). By not directly attention to the rest of the passage he was able to avoid coming to grips with the figurative nature of the author's language and give his words strongly literal meaning. He then built an interpretation around that misapplication.

The author of Hebrews starts his epistle by arguing that Christ is greater than angels (chaps. 1-2),³⁸ greater than Moses (chap. 3), and greater than Joshua (chap. 4). In regard to Melchizedek, the author stresses that there are some things the two have in common. Melchizedek was also called by God (chap. 5), like Christ he was also greater than both Abraham and Aaron (chap. 7).

The idea that the heavenly sanctuary is based on better promises, a better covenant, shapes the narrative of throughout chaps. 8-10.³⁹ From this it follows that the emphasis in these later chapters is not on apartments, as important as the distinction between apartments might be. His emphasis is on sanctuaries. Both the first and second apartments of the earthly sanctuary were governed by the first covenant; both the first and second apartments of the heavenly sanctuary are governed by the new covenant.

But Ballenger's point did not have this emphasis. For him the focus was on apartments, which at this point in the development of the narrative was out of place. His point was that Christ entered a literal second apartment at His ascension. This misplaces the author's emphasis and misinterprets the authors words.

Summary

Ballenger made a seemingly irrefutable case for his position. More than this, his position approaches being truly irrefutable so long as we agree with him that the language of Heb 6:19-20 clause #2 is literal and applies to the second apartment of the actual sanctuary in heaven. If it is true that in a literal physical sense Jesus ascended from this earth, as the entire church has always taught (Acts 1:9). So Ballenger

³⁸ My characterization of the outline of Hebrews is offered tentatively. "There is at the present time no consensus regarding the literary structure of Hebrews" (William L. Lane, *Word Bible Commentary*, vol. 47a: *Hebrews 1-8* [Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991], lxxxviii).

³⁹ These two blocs of chapters are the ones that George Rice places at the center of his proposed outline of the book of Hebrews (5:11-10:39) in, "The Chiastic Structure of the Central Section of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *AUSS* 19/3 (1981), 243-246.

reasoned that “the inner place behind the curtain” must also be equally literal. Such was the logic of his argument.

However, Jesus speaks of His ascension on a number of occasions and nowhere describes it in terms of sanctuaries or apartments within sanctuaries. Instead, He says He would go “to the Father” (John 14:12, 28; 16:10, 17, 28). It is appropriate that the author of Hebrews should use sanctuary language when describing this event, because he was writing after the cross, but describing something in more than one way does not make it a different event.

Christ does literally minister in the sanctuary, but it is important to realize that He ministers in both apartments – not in the second apartment only. Daniel says, “And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown” (Dan 8:11). It was the daily ministry of the first apartment that the little horn took from the “Prince of the host” in Dan 8:11, not the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. His second apartment ministry would come later. We note that the little horn was on earth, not in heaven, so the little horn would not be able to take away the Prince’s first apartment ministry in any physical sense. The horn did not prevent the Prince from doing what He did in heaven. He prevented people on earth from benefitting from it. All attention was focused on human priests, and away from the Prince.

A ministry cannot be taken away before it is received, and the author of Hebrews says, “it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer” (Heb 8:13). I conclude that the little horn would not have been able to divert attention away from Jesus’ sanctuary ministry only after it began, i.e., after the cross. This fact focuses our attention on the period between the cross (Heb 8:13) and 1844 (Dan 8:11).

What Ellen White says about Ballenger’s theories was right. The words were right, but the reasoning was wrong. The author of Hebrews was clearly describing Jesus’ ascension using second apartment language, but metaphor is a legitimate way to use language and that is what is happening in Heb 6:19-20. If we assume, with Ballenger, that the author was describing an antitypical object when he referred to a “curtain” in v. 19 clause #2, we could be forgiven for assuming that he was also referring to a literal “anchor” extending from earth upward into heaven.

We must interpret all of what he said, just as Ballenger should have interpreted all of the what the author of Hebrews said. Context applies to entire passages, not to individual vocabulary items. I challenge Ballenger’s reasoning on a number of levels:

#1. Ballenger’s first mistake was to assume that the author of Hebrews intended to be understood as referring to physical objects when He referred to the “curtain” or “veil.” The flaws that characterize the rest of his model all flow from this starting point.

#2. A second error was to interpret Heb 6:19-20 by focusing especially on one of its four main terms (*katapetasma*, #2). He did not give equal emphasis to the rest of the passage.

#3. A third error was that he applied the themes introduced in Heb 6 as though Heb 8 had already introduced them. But the book was carefully written and its argument unfolds gradually. In chap. 6 the literal sanctuary had not yet been introduced. That would be later in chap. 8. The remark about Jesus going beyond the veil was an isolated remark in terms of the author's development of his argument across chapters, as well as within vs. 19.

#4. A fourth error was that he did not take into account any parallels in the New Testament, for example Christ saying He would ascend "to the Father."

#5. A fifth and particularly bad error was to assume that there could be any basis for antitypical sanctuary ministry before the cross. "For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer" (Heb 8:3). What could Melchizedek and the angels possibly have offered? Bear in mind that in Ballenger's thinking whatever this was did not have the ability to cleanse the conscience; only what Jesus offered later could do that. So there is a question what Melchizedek (who was not a Levitical priest) or the angels (who were not on earth) could have offered. If they offered the same sacrifices as later Levitical priests, how were the two forms of ministry different, and why were both needed? On the other hand, if they did not offer the same sacrifices, what did they offer? To be meaningful any offering would have to point forward to Christ's death on the cross, and Levitical sacrifices did that.

Conclusion

Just as a cascade of errors informed Ballenger's model, so a cascade of errors followed from it. Prominent among these is the idea that no judgment is necessary, that nothing happened in 1844, that Adventism is fundamentally misconceived.

Ballenger's problem with the judgment was influenced by his belief that any such event would have to deal primarily with us. His was an anthropocentric concept of judgment and so the idea of any kind of judgment after the cross violated his soteriology. But I suggest that establishing our guilt or innocence is not the main issue in the judgment. We are guilty and the universe knows this. More than this, God well knows who can be saved and who can't. By reviewing our sins before the universe God is showing how a God like Him deals with sins like ours.

This fact does not remove the need for a judgment, but places in in context. The cross and the judgment are related inversely. The gospel looks outward from the cross over all of humanity. It provides one antidote for every conceivable sin. The judgment is the inverse of this. It starts from individuals who have lived their lives under an infinite array of different circumstances, and looks back to the cross. The question concerning us is how we have responded to what Christ has done for us.⁴⁰ It is impossible to separate these two opposite perspectives as though they disagreed. Rather, they resemble the two sides of one coin. One perspective looks out to the many, the other looks back to the One. They are reciprocals or mirror images of each other.

Satan has claimed that it is unfair of God to condemn him and yet save anyone else. It is clear that Satan deserves to be condemned, but so do they. All are equally guilty of rebellion. If Satan is condemned, they should be also. Conversely, if God is willing to save some of His human children, on what basis should Satan not also be restored to favor?

God's one answer to all such challenges is Christ. By taking on Himself the guilt of all human sin, He claims the right to forgive whoever believes in Him, confides in Him, responds to Him in genuine love and gratitude. Satan is unwilling to do this.

Dan 8:14 says, "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (KJV). It does not say, then shall the sinner be cleansed. Sinners benefit from what takes place in the judgment, but it is not primarily about them. It is ultimately about the fairness of the government of God.

⁴⁰ This leaves open the question of how people are judged who lived their lives before Christ or before the flood, taking this as two examples.

Chapter 5

Reading Revelation 4-5 as a Judgment Scene

Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued contra Ballenger that the concept of a judgment after the cross is reasonable, biblical, and necessary. The next question is whether an end time judgment is described in the New Testament. I suggest it is and that one place we find it is Rev 4-5.

Ballenger dealt with the idea of a judgment by suggesting that such an event after the cross is unbiblical. Others allow for the possibility of such an event, but see it primarily in the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, and the plagues.⁴¹ Thus, in this understanding there is still no convincing portrayal in the New Testament of what happened in 1844. If the judgment is as important as Seventh-day Adventists claim, it is reasonable that we should find more evidences of it than in Zech 3 and Dan 7.

Preliminary Questions

At the very beginning of the book of Revelation John says, “I saw seven golden lampstands, ^[13] and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest” (Rev 1:12-13). It is from this chronological perspective in the first century that Jesus begins dictating the letters for the seven churches. After John finishes writing them down, his attention is drawn from earth to heaven – without any change of timeframe. There he sees Jesus, no longer among the candlesticks, but by the throne (Rev 4:1-2; 5:6-7). This is not a time or place that we should expect an inauguration. It is a different part of the sanctuary, and associated with a different part of the ceremonial year. I conclude that the churches begin when Christ was ministering in the first apartment (Rev 1) and end when He ministers in the second apartment (Rev 5).

Some have gone to great lengths to show that the throne scene does not take place in the end time or that it does not take place in the second apartment. But there is

⁴¹ Desmond Ford, “Daniel 8:14, “The Atonement, And The Investigative Judgment” (unpublished manuscript), 291. See <https://www.desford.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Dr-Desmond-Ford-Daniel.8.14.pdf>.

no doubt that the throne is at the center of the room. In the first apartment all furniture was pushed outward to the walls. In the second apartment there was only one article of furniture and it was placed at the center of the room. What we see in Rev 4-5 is the second apartment, and chronologically this means that any events occurring there must be happening during the end time. We would expect something like this to be the case, since the history of the churches has brought step by step to the timeframe of Laodicea.

The door to the second apartment is opened twice in the book of Revelation – once at the beginning of the judgment in Rev 4-5, and again at the end of the judgment in Rev 11b. We encounter a flow of time leading to the end time first in the churches, then in the seals, then in the trumpets.

The Time of the Throne Scene

Seventh-day Adventists have always applied the message of Laodicea to themselves, which places the events in the timeframe of 1844. Preterism doesn't get that far in history, and futurism skips over it. This is a historicist position.

Preterism limits events to the lifetime of the prophet, and therefore limits the letters to the seven churches to the seven literal churches of Asia Minor in the first century.

There is a problem with saying this. Jesus does not tell John to circulate seven letters. He commands John to write seven messages in a book. He says, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea" (Rev 1:11). The command in ESV's English is to circulate "it," not "them."⁴² Each church was to receive the entire book. There is nothing here about circulating the messages independently.

Letter to Ephesus

The first church was Ephesus. For all interpreters the time of Ephesus represented a time of expansion for the church. The problem does not arise until we come to Smyrna. For a preterist Smyrna would represent the same time as Ephesus, because he cannot go beyond the lifetime of the prophet, whereas a historicist would assign the second church to a second age of history. This would be appropriate, since

⁴² In ESV He says "it." In Greek He merely says *grapson* "write" and then *pempson* "send." The clear implication is that John is to send the book he is now writing.

historically the second and third centuries were a time of persecution.⁴³ So the church's experience during Smyrna would not be the same as during Ephesus.⁴⁴ A test case is supplied in Rev 2:10 enables us to compare the two applications, because the letter to Smyrna speaks of persecution.

Rome persecuted the church on a number of occasions. Some of its persecutions were local, some more widespread. They lasted different lengths of time and we don't have specific dates for all of them. But below I offer a list of Roman emperors who are known to have persecuted Christianity at whatever time and on whatever scale. See Table 3.

Table 3.
Persecuting Emperors

Emperor	Place	Time
Nero (37-68)	Local	64/67
Vespasian (69-79)		95
Domitian (81-96)		
Trajan (98-117)		
Hadrian (117-135)		
Marcus Aurelius (161-180)	Dispersed, sporadic	
Maximinus (235-238)		235
Decius (249-251)	Widespread	250
Valerian (253-260)		
Diocletian (284-305)	Universal	303-313
Constantius/Galerius (early IV)		

One date on the above list for which we do have definite information is for the Great Persecution of Diocletian and his associates, which lasted for ten years at the beginning of the fourth century (AD 303-313). This is consistent with what Christ says to Smyrna: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). Ten days, ten years. This is an example of the historicist year-day principle by which a day stands for a year. Again, this is a historicist interpretation. Preterists would not be able to invoke events in the fourth century.

⁴³ Michael Grant, *The Roman Emperors: A Biographical Guide to the Rulers of Imperial Rome 31 BC-AD 476* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), passim. The book is arranged as an encyclopedia.

⁴⁴ Maxwell, *God Cares* 2:98.

I have a list of over fifty commentaries which try in various ways to account for this passage. They are written by a variety of scholars, mostly preterists, futurists, and idealists. The explanations are uniformly weak, except for the two that are given by historicists. The other authors apply the passage as though there were no history to support what they say. And indeed, the needed historical confirmation is missing, not because it didn't happen but because it had not happened yet in the first century. Most commentators cannot come to grips with fourth-century history, because their models don't provide for applications that far in the future.

I conclude that preterism is not an adequate model for explaining the churches. The churches require an interpretation that takes in, not only the fourth century, but the entire span of time from where we see Jesus first (Rev 1:12-16) to where we see Him next (Rev 4:1-2; 5:6-7). In an appendix I list each of the above sources. See Appendix 1: Fifty-Five Commentaries on Revelation 2:10. Only historicism can explain Rev 2:10 well.

The first church and first seal are parallel to each other, and in both cases we are dealing with actual historical events. In the one case we read, "you have not grown weary" (Rev 2:3), and in the other, "he came out conquering, and to conquer" (Rev 6:2). This is the same propositional content, stated in alternative ways. We discuss this relationship further in a later chapter. Now it will be necessary to skip forward to a point toward the end of the series of churches.

Letter to Philadelphia

Philadelphia is the sixth of the churches. To Philadelphia Jesus says, "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut" (Rev 3:8). Here the Greek word translated "before" is *enōpion*, which would normally refer to spatial relationships. In this passage, however, contextually it must refer to time.

One thing that can help explain the figure of an open door in this passage is the difference between the preaching of William Miller and that of early adventists in regard to Christ's High Priestly ministry in heaven. Millerites believed that Jesus would come to the earth in 1844, whereas what He said through the prophet Malachi was, "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts" (Mal 3:1). The church came a new understanding of this and other passages at a particular time in its history. Going through the "open door" of 3:8 meant going through the process of understanding Jesus' high priestly ministry in the second apartment of the heaven sanctuary. Millerite beliefs characterized the period of Philadelphia; Adventist beliefs characterize the period of Laodicea.

By contrast, when John writes, "After this I looked and saw a door standing open in heaven" (Rev 4:1), the wording is the same but the reference in this second case is to space. John described the history of the church during a series of different periods, all of them on earth. Then – without changing timeframes – his attention is drawn to heaven. "After this I looked . . ." (Rev 4:1). This does not imply a change of time. Instead, his attention turns to what he will see next rather than what he has been thinking about previously. Moving from Philadelphia to Laodicea involves a change in time, but the subsequent change from seeing things on earth as opposed to seeing things in heaven involves a change of location.

Discussion

The opposite counterpart of this happens at the beginning of Rev 6a. Now the process is reversed. The timeframe shifts back to both an earlier time and an earlier place, so that the seals can begin at the same time and in the same location as the churches did.

Opening a book (or scroll) does not bring its contents into existence, but allows us to see what was already written there. Our attention, with John's, was fixed on earthly events dealing with the churches, then on heavenly events that would take place in the same timeframe to which the church have brought us and moving forward from there. Now at the beginning of Rev 6 our attention switches back to earth during the first century, where we were before.

This movement through time and space enables John to portray the seals as parallel to the churches, unfolding gradually through history from that starting point. The two perspectives are not identical, but the accounts are comparable and run parallel with each other. Let me offer an example of the seals looking back to the first century. Ellen White writes in one place,

The angels of God faithfully recorded every insulting look, word, and act against their beloved Commander. One day the base men who scorned and spat upon the calm, pale face of Christ will look upon it in its glory, shining brighter than the sun.⁴⁵

This statement says that angels recorded in detail the ill treatment Jesus received at His trial. Later other similar trials will have taken place, and other persecutions, giving a faithful record of different aspects of church history. It is this record that is unfolded by a process spoken of as breaking the seven seals that bind a scroll written on both sides.

⁴⁵ *Desire of Ages*, 715; see *Present Truth*, January 7, 1886.

The Location of the Throne Scene

There are a number of clues in the text which can help us know where the throne scene takes place.

Furniture inside the apartments

One reason for viewing the throne scene as taking place in the second apartment has to do with the concept of centrality. Verses 4 and 5 speak of things “surrounding,” or being “in the center, around,” or “encircling” the throne.

"Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders" (4:4).

"In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back" (4:6).

"They [numberless angels] **encircled** the throne and the living creatures and the elders" (5:11).

There is also a rainbow around the throne (4:3). Circles. My point is that in the throne room everything is oriented toward the center.⁴⁶ See fig. 1.

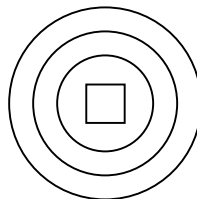


Fig. 1. The place of the throne of God at the center in Rev 4-5.

⁴⁶ Laszlo Gallusz, "Thrones in the Book of Revelation, Part 1: Throne of God," *JATS*, 23/2 (2012), 33-34. "The idea that the heaven is arranged in concentric circles with the divine throne at the center is not unique to Revelation, since it is attested in 1En. 71:6-8 and in a more elaborate form in 3En. 33:1-34:2" (34).

In the first apartment we find the inverse of centrality. Nothing was located at the center. The organizing principle for furniture in the first apartment was outward, toward the walls.

North side: "Moses placed the **table** in the Tent of Meeting on the north side of the tabernacle outside the curtain and set out the bread on it before the Lord, as the Lord commanded him" (Exod 40:22-23).

West side: "Moses placed the **golden altar** in the Tent of Meeting in front of the curtain and burned fragrant incense on it, as the Lord commanded him" (Exod 40:26-27).

South side: "He placed the **lampstand** in the Tent of Meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle and set up the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord commanded him" (Exod 40:24-25).

These two organizing principles are not just different. They are opposite counterparts of each other. In Rev 4-5 we are definitely dealing with the second of the two apartments.

Objects “before the throne”

Not everything was located in a room. At least one object mentioned in the text is outside in the court.

The lampstands are in the first apartment, so vs. 5 speaks of seven lamps blazing “before” the throne. Some have taken this to mean that the throne is the table of consecrated bread, because the candlesticks were located on the opposite side of the room from the table.⁴⁷ But such reasoning does not bear scrutiny, because the same word is used again in vs. 6. There it is used to describe the location of the “sea of glass.” That also is said to be “before” the throne. Now we have a problem. If the “seven lamps” are compared with the golden candlesticks, and if the “sea of glass” is compared with the laver, the two objects have different orientations to each other and yet the same word is used to describe them. We can’t use the same word in the same sense and say that both objects are “before” the throne. Or can we?

"Before [*enopion*] the throne, **seven lamps** were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God" (4:5).

⁴⁷ Mervin Maxwell, *God Cares*, 2:170-173.

"Also before [*enopion*] the throne there was what looked like a **sea of glass**, clear as crystal" (4:6).

If the above facts leave us wondering what "before" means in vss. 5 and 6, the text has already told us. Both objects are being seen as though by a person standing "before the throne." Everything is being seen from the perspective of the throne. Thus, the seven lampstands are "before the throne" – if that is where a person stands when viewing them. See fig. 2. The laver is also before the throne – if seen by someone standing by the throne. This of course assumes that the door is open, which Rev 4:1 says it was.⁴⁸ When we adopt this orientation, all difficulty vanishes. Both objects are "before the throne" when that is our orientation. See fig. 2 and 3.

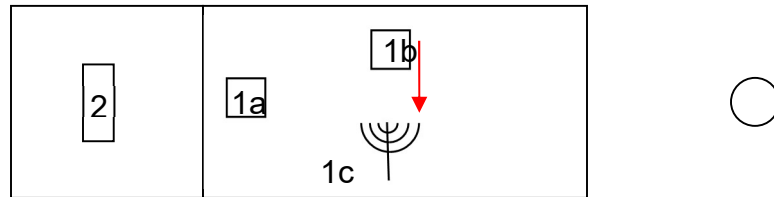


Fig. 2. Diagram of the sanctuary, in which the table of consecrated bread (1b) functions as the throne and the lampstand (1c) is "before" it.

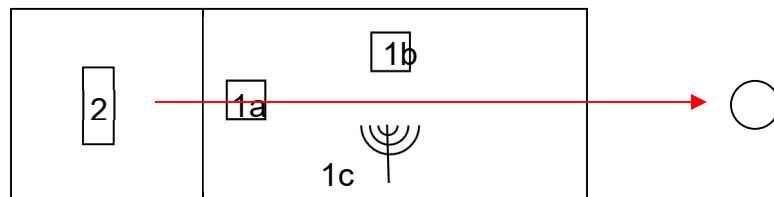


Fig. 3. Diagram of the sanctuary, where the throne is in the second apartment with everything in the first apartment "before" it, and the laver also "before" the throne.

⁴⁸ The laver of Solomon is repeatedly called a "sea" in 1 Kgs 7:23, 24, 25, 25, 39, and 44. See Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 33/2 (1995), 250.

The problem in fig. 2 is caused by assuming we are in the first apartment; it is solved in fig. 3 by making the contrasting assumptions that we are in the second apartment – standing in close proximity to the throne.

From the fact that the door is open (Rev 4:1) we gather that the events portrayed are just beginning. The door, or veil, would normally be closed after all participants are present. In a similar way it is thrown open again when the proceedings are over in Rev 11:19 and the participants need to leave. Anciently on the day of atonement the second apartment was not open to public view. The high priest brought his incense “inside the veil” (Lev 16:12, 15). The door to the throne room would normally be closed.

Activity of Those Present in the Throne Scene

We still need to ask what events take place in the throne scene. Answering the first two questions (time, space) also answers the third (activity). If the throne scene occurs in the end time, and if it takes place in the second apartment, it's a judgment. I conclude that Rev 4-5 is a depiction of the antitypical Day of Atonement, described as a final judgment in Dan 7 or a cleansing of the sanctuary in Dan 8.

If in Rev 4-5 we were seeing an enthronement, we would expect the events to take a relatively short time and to take place once. On the other hand, if what we are seeing is a judgment we would have different expectations. The proceedings would occupy a large amount of time and involve much repetition.

The text confirms the latter assumption. It says that the events take a seemingly endless amount of time: “Day and night they [the four living creatures] never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'" (Rev 4:8). There is an unlimited amount of repetition:

"Whenever [Greek *hotan*] the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: . . ." (Rev 4:9-10).

The elders could not assume a prostrate position once, remain there indefinitely, and be characterized as being “seated on the[ir] thrones” (4:4). To repeat this action endlessly they would have to fall down, get up time after time, put their crowns back on their heads, and sit down on their thrones again. We know this because of the word

hotan (“whenever”). What they do is repeated each time the four living creatures praise God, and that happens over and over. The actions described here are not done once, nor are they done continuously. What we are seeing is a repeating cycle of events.⁴⁹

A cycle of events is a sequence of actions characterized together. Here we have something similar to saying that someone “eats.” Eating involves many different actions but these are all described with one term. The events are seen from the point of view of separate actions. Here it is the separate actions that are listed and when viewed together we are left to deduce that they form a connected cycle. See Appendix 2: “More on the Word *hotan*.”

The first and most important part of this cycle is the voice of God. “From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, . . .” (Rev 4:5a). Something similar to this happened in the gospels when God addressed Jesus: “The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to him’” (John 2:27). The crowd didn’t understand what God said in John 2, but in Rev 4 we may assume that all present understand, because of their responses.

The elders fall prostrate before Him and put their crowns on the floor. After they have done this they get back up, resume their seats, and put their crowns back on their heads. The cycle repeats after God says something else. Those in attendance listen, then respond; listen again, and respond again. John is not describing a tumult of confusion in Rev 4-5. He is describing a systematic and orderly process.⁵⁰

Discussion

In Daniel there are four main apocalyptic prophecies (Dan 2, 7, 8-9, 10-12), which in my view comprise overviews of history, when described from a historicist point of view. They describe actual events in advance, leading gradually to the end time. Two of them form a pair (Dan 8-9). One part of this pair (Dan 9) begins with the others but ends early, extending only so far as the first coming. The rest focus on some aspect of the second coming or events just before it.

In Revelation there are three more overview prophecies, that we call septets. Again, two of them form a pair (trumpets, plagues). One of these (plagues) starts late

⁴⁹ In the matter of cycles we come close to my dissertation topic, which had to do with the grammatical category of aspect in Navajo, an America Indian language. Navajo is preoccupied with aspectual distinctions. Repetition is an aspectual distinction. See Frank Hardy, “Navajo Aspectual Verb Stem Variation” (PhD, University of New Mexico, 1979).

⁵⁰ Contra Norman R. Gulley, “Revelation’s Throne Scenes,” *JATS* 8/1-2 (1997), 28-39; “Revelation 4 and 5: Judgment or Inauguration,” *JATS* 8/1-2 (1997), 59-81.

and ends with the others. The relationship between the trumpets and plagues is similar to that between Dan 8 and 9. In both cases two prophecies form a natural pair. Apart from these two exceptions Daniel's apocalyptic prophecies begin when Daniel was alive and go gradually from there to the end time, and in the same way the septets begin when John was alive and go gradually to the end time. See Table 4.

Table 4
Historical Events Leading To

Dan 2	Second coming
Dan 7	Judgment
Dan 8-9	Cleansing of the sanctuary
Dan 10-12	Second coming
Churches	-
Seals	Second coming
Trumpets & Plagues	End of the judgment

There is a question whether the churches are in every way consistent with this pattern. I suggest they are and that all four of Daniel's overview prophecies and all three of John's septets constitute overview prophecies that should be interpreted comparably. Two prophecies form a pair and two septets form a pair.

Conclusion

As each case is brought before the judgment, the full extent of God's efforts to save and redeem are revealed. This speaks to the nature of His government. At issue is whether He has been fair to all His creatures, and whether He has done all He could have to bring salvation to anyone who will show an interest and respond to His invitations. In case after case He goes through the records and shows how He has led in that individual's life. The response of those who hear these explanations is warmly positive after each case.

This last point is an important one. Whether a person is saved or lost the response of the creatures and elders is the same. This tells me that the praise is not reserved for positive decisions, but is poured out to God regardless what the decision might be. Even when lost an individual has been wooed by the Holy Spirit in countless ways, and for this the elders and creatures praise God.

The Hebrew word used in Dan 8:14 is *nišdaq*, which is a Niphal verb based on the Hebrew root *šdq* “be righteous.”⁵¹ Unfortunately this exact form only occurs once in the Old Testament, which makes it difficult to translate with confidence. Below are a number of ways that translators have tried to convey the meaning of this word. See Table 5.

Some Translations of *nišdaq*

“cleansed”	ASV, GC, KJV, NKJV, WEB
“declared right”	YLT
“justified”	JUB
“made right”	NLT
“purified”	NCB
“put right”	NET
“restored”	ESV, GNT, HCSB, LEB, NASV, RSV
“set right”	MSG
“vindicated”	DARBY, TLV

Five translations in the sample suggest “cleansed,” and this is probably close. But if we can’t know what the word means, we can know with certainty what the verse around it is or is not trying to tell us.

God’s government has been accused of unfairness, so among the questions to be settled by the court is whether the charges brought against Him by Satan been adequately falsified and what exactly constitutes the nature of His government. Revealing such things is one of the primary objectives of the judgment. The judgment is not primarily about us, but about God.

⁵¹ *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, s.v. *šdq*.

Chapter 6

When Do the Seals Begin?

Introduction

I have argued that the churches bring us gradually through history to the end time, including the judgment. If the seals are parallel to the churches, that does not mean they must give another description of the judgment in session, but it would be reasonable to expect them to cover a similar expanse of time. We begin with some preliminary questions.

The seals run parallel to the churches and the two series cover many similar events, but from a different point of view. Moving forward from Philadelphia to Laodicea involves a learning process with regard to Christ's ministry in the sanctuary. The change is in time. Philadelphia had one level of understanding, Laodicea developed another.

Moving from a consideration of the churches to what John sees next in the throne room is a change of space. He looks here and sees churches; he looks there and sees the throne.

The transition from Philadelphia to Laodicea takes place in 1844. But what bloc of time does Laodicea itself occupy? The answer is that it occupies the same bloc of time as the throne scene. Philadelphia brings us to 1844 and Laodicea takes us beyond it. Laodicea describes the church as it appears when the throne scene starts.

Why could only Jesus open the scroll?

There is a question why the contents of the scroll of Rev 5 can be opened, or understood, by only one Person. The answer is because it contains information to which only one Person could have access.

If those in attendance were only expecting to hear about events, historical information is on public record. Anyone can have access to it given sufficient interest. But if only Jesus could reveal the contents of the scroll, it follows that this scroll contains more than things on public record. On the contrary, it must have to do with hidden things such as the secrets of human hearts and their relationship with God.

"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7).

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

In the judgment God reveals our most hidden secrets, but not to embarrass us. Rather His focus is to show how to show the universe how He has led and struggled with each individual by His Spirit. From the beginning God has revealed Himself through His Son – in the creation of the world (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2), in the gospel (Matt 11:25), even on the cross (John 17:5). We might say especially on the cross, because there He displays a level of love so strong that if that were possible He would rather die Himself than see us lost.

Why are the seals opened progressively?

The progressive manner in which the scroll is opened is puzzling. Why is it not possible to open the scroll all at once? Why should it be necessary to open it in seven stages? Doing so only makes sense if it portrays the church at different times, in widely different situations. It would be unfair of God to judge a modern church by ancient standards, or an ancient church by modern standards. So He takes into account when and where each part of His body on earth lived its life and the unique challenges each has faced. Showing that the church of the first century was predominantly aggressive in its witness and that in the second and third centuries it would be subjected to persecution begins to reveal a trend. Eventually the church itself would become a persecuting power. The specifics that contribute to this trend deal with individual churches and ultimately with individual persons.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). But in the judgment the Father shows how the sacrifice of His Son has influenced different lives in different ages. Through all of this He shows the intensity of His desire to save.

The First Four Seals

In Zech 1-2 and 6 the sequence of variously colored horses does not appear to have any significance: Zech 1:8 (red, red, sorrel, white), 6:2-3 (red, black, white, dappled), and 6:6 (black, white, dappled, strong). The fact that the sequence differs from passage to passage is a clue that the order of colors is not important to Zechariah.

But it is important to John. The sequence white (Rev 6:2), red (6:4), black (6:6), and pale (6:8) illustrate graphically that over time the church would experience a

process of decline. In every age some would remain true, but the seals show a pervasive tendency toward decline. The church would start out pure and aggressive (“its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer” [6:2, white]). Next it would be confronted by persecution (“Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword” [6:4, red]). Then it would be faced by doctrinal controversy (“A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!” [6:6, black]). And finally, a deathly pall would settle over the church (“And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him” [6:8a, pale]), and it would turn on dissenters with the result that the lives lost in this way could be described as souls “under the altar” crying out for justice (Rev 6:9-11).

The first two horses form a series, in that the church’s purity is something that provokes persecution. The last two horses also form a series, in that doctrinal controversy would lead to heresy for those who lose their faith, and difficulty for those who refuse to compromise.⁵²

The Last Three Seals

The fifth seal

I have mentioned Ellen White’s remark that the events of Christ’s trial were “faithfully recorded” by holy angels and in due course will be publicly scrutinized as the onlooking universe pores over the books of record. We are left to assume that a similar record was made at Steven’s trial, and in that of subsequent martyrs. Hence, the fifth seal and its reference to “the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne” (Rev 6:9). This brings back memories of Christ’s own trial.

During the Crusades the church absorbed the point that force was a useful tool that could be used to enforce its dictates, and the military zeal it had taken with it into foreign lands eventually served as a template for the inquisitions. There were inquisitions against pagans in Finland and the Baltics, against Muslims in the Levant, and against other Christians in southern Europe.⁵³

⁵² In Dan 11:30 the king of the North will first “be enraged and take action against the holy covenant,” then “turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.” He opposes those who support the covenant, and supports those who oppose the covenant. Turning against the truth, produces hatred for those who cling to it.

⁵³ Hardy, “Historical Overview of Dan 11:29-35,” *Historicism* No. 18/Apr 89, 17. Online at, <http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Jrnl/Dan1129-35.pdf>.

The souls under the altar, “cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’” (Rev 6:10). There would be a judgment, but this verse tells us it had not yet begun during the time of the fifth seal. That would be later, but nothing more is said about judgment in the seals.

The sixth seal

The sixth seal comes after most of the persecution that took place during the Middle Ages had already taken place. Persecution is not mentioned there. Instead, what we find is signs of the second coming.

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. (Rev 6:12-13).

As Seventh-day Adventists have long taught, the “great earthquake” was the Lisbon Earthquake (1755), the sun becoming “black as sackcloth” was the Dark Day and this was followed that same evening by the moon turning to blood (1780). Shortly afterward people would experience the Falling of the Stars (1833). These signs gave impetus to the message of Christ’s return in the years leading up to 1844.

In vs. 14 we pass from signs that have occurred and can be easily documented to ones that have not taken place. The events of the next verses have not yet happened. “The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place” (Rev 6:14).

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ (Rev 6:15-17)

When Christ comes to the earth with all His holy angels, that event brings us to the end of Rev 6. But there is still one more seal.

The seventh seal

Thematically Rev 7 intervenes between the sixth and seventh seals. When the seventh seal is finally opened, nothing more is said about events on earth and the

scene shifts to events in heaven, where “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (Rev 8:1). Something similar to this happens in the case of the seventh church (Rev 4:1) and the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15b). When the seventh seal is opened there is silence in heaven and we are left asking why.

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (Rev 8:1)

In Rev 8:1 the reason for the above silence is that everyone who had been in heaven on the occasion of the judgment has come to earth with Christ at His second coming, leaving heaven temporarily empty. But the question is not what happens in connection with the seventh seal; it is when the series of seals begins. We now return to this earlier question.

What Is the Beginning Point?

Consider for a moment any book you might happen to have on your shelf – the one you are reading now for example. When you opened this book something was already written there. In the same way, when Christ opens the first seal, those present are invited to consider a series of events that have already happened. The earliest church was an aggressive and expansive church. The first seal talks about that. In this way the seals follow the throne scene thematically, but not chronologically.

The events recorded in the scroll do not start happening when the scroll is opened. If they did, the churches would have to be confined to the first century, or the series of seals would have to start being opened in connection with the throne scene and extend into the future from that point onward. As it is, they begin at roughly the same time as the church. The churches begin in the first century and so do the seals. Both series invite a historicist interpretation. The two series run parallel to each other.

Chapter 7

When Do the Trumpets End?

Introduction

Just as we wondered when the seals begin, there is a question when the trumpets end. Aune confines the seventh trumpet to Rev 11:15-18 and separates those verses from 11:19, assigning the last verse to the next section.⁵⁴ This has become a popular interpretation, since major sections of Revelation such as Rev 12 generally have sanctuary introductions and the thought is that 11:19 introduces chap. 12. But if a sanctuary introduction is needed for chap. 12, it would seem reasonable to keep the previous section together and let Rev 15-18 and 19 jointly serve as a sanctuary introduction. In my view there is no justification for separating Rev 11:19 from the rest of its section.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet marks the beginning of the judgment. Then our attention is directed to a summary of events that occur there. After some summary statements, the last verse of the section says, “God’s temple in heaven was opened” (11:19). The reason for its being opened at this time is to allow those who have participated in the judgment to exit. At this point the judgment is over.

The text is silent on what happens under the seventh trumpet, just as it is silent on what happens during the seventh seal. But some informed speculation should be possible. If the seventh trumpet does not sound until the end time begins, and if a detailed series of messages are given in the end time and characterize that period (the three angels messages), it seems reasonable to bring these data points together. The substance of the warning that is given during the end time, i.e., during the time of the seventh trumpet, is the three angels messages.

The Events of Revelation 11b

We now consider each clause or group of clauses in Rev 11:15-19, arguing that vs. 19 is an integral part of the seventh trumpet.

⁵⁴ David E. Aune, *Word Bible Commentary*, vol. 52B: *Revelation 6-16* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1998) 2:632, 647.

Rev 11:15a

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet,

All of the earlier trumpets have given their warnings here on the earth. In heaven there is no need for warnings. Therefore the presumption in this case also should be that when the seventh trumpet sounds, it sounds on earth.

Rev 11:15b

... and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.' ^[16] (Rev 11:15b)

Then in Rev 15b there is a change of location, much like the transition between chaps. 3 and 4 at the beginning of the throne scene. John sees the churches on earth first and then when he looks up a door is standing open in heaven (see 4:1). And in connection with the seventh trumpet he also sees this door opened. It is the same door. The first time it is opened participants enter, the next time they exit.

In Dan 7:13-14 it says, "one like a son of man . . . [receives] glory and a kingdom." Here in Rev 11:15b it says, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." If the "one like a son of man" is Christ, and if the reference to "a kingdom" is the same as "the kingdom of the world," these are two descriptions of one thing. In Rev 11:15b the statement is not a prediction. John is saying Christ has already received the kingdom.

This fact has important chronological implications which will require a certain amount of discussion. Consider that in Dan 7:14 "glory and a kingdom" is received by Christ. Then in Dan 7:18, 22, and 27 the One like a son of man shares the kingdom He has just received with His saints. This transference of the kingdom is a primary result of the judgment, not just a part of the earlier process.

In Rev 3:21 Jesus says, "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne [*tō thronō mou*], as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne [*tō thronō autou*]." These are different thrones, and they are received at different times – the one at His ascension, the other as a primary outcome of the judgment.

I conclude that the reference to Christ receiving a kingdom in vs. 15b is to events that would only occur at the end of the judgment. Rev 11:15a marks the beginning of the judgment and 11:15b marks its end. At this point the judgment is over. The remaining clauses given an overview of what has happened during its course.

Verse 16-17

And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ^[17] saying, 'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.' (Rev 11:15b-17)

The reference in vs. 16 to the same twenty-four elders introduced in the throne scene of Rev 4-5. In the earlier passage the elders predominantly are seated on thrones, but periodically "fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever" (Rev 4:10). Here in Rev 11:16 they "fell on their faces and worshiped God" (Rev 11:16). There is a subtle difference between "fall" and "fell." The one word would be consistent with reporting a series of ongoing actions; the other would be consistent with reporting the last action in a series.

In vs. 17 the substance of what the elders is summarized as follows: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign." Ever since Adam God has allowed Satan to assume that the world is his. In Matt 4:9 he offers it to Jesus: "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Now the illusion ends. The judgment is over and the kingdom is Christ's, not as a gift from Satan, but by right of conquest.

Rev 11:18

"The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." (Rev 11:18)

The seventh trumpet contains a series of summary statements. These have different events in view and apply at different times.

Before the judgment. Saying, "The nations raged," has always been true. Jesus warned that there would always be "wars and rumors of war" and made a point of saying that whenever we see them that is not a sign of the end (Matt 24:6; Mark 13:7). Nations have been raging at each other throughout history.

When the judgment begins. The next two clauses say, "but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged." Here "wrath" is synonymous with judgment and the words "to be judged" are a reference to 1844 when the judgment begins.

When the judgment ends. The next clause says, “and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great.” The saints are rewarded with a kingdom as soon as Christ has a kingdom to give them. To claim it He must take it away from Satan. The throne of this kingdom is what the angel announcing His birth calls “the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32; see Rev 3:21). This is not the throne of the universe but the throne of this world.

After the millennium. The next line says, “and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.” Destroying the wicked is a far different matter from rewarding the righteous. The righteous are rewarded after the judgment; the wicked are punished after the millennium (Rev 20:2, 5, 7). The reference to destroying the wicked is proleptic. It looks forward to the ultimate result of the judgment.

Summary. In vss. 15b-18 there are wars, God judges His people, He rewards His saints, and then after the millennium the wicked. These events follow each and occur at different times. Apart from a proleptic glance forward to the destruction of the wicked, the seventh trumpet is not primarily a prophecy of future events. It is an affirmation that certain events have already taken place.

Nothing is said in vs. 15b about the warnings normally associated with trumpets. Instead, it is specified in Rev 14 and repeated in Rev 18. The text allows us to wonder what the warnings might be. Nothing is said about them here. But in Rev 14 a focused series of messages is given that sounds throughout the end time from the time when they first announce “the time of his judgment” (14:7) to the time when Christ finally receives and shares “the kingdom of the world” (11:15b). The warning given under the seventh trumpet is described as three angels messages, which sound continuously from Rev 14 until the judgment as over and further warnings would not benefit anyone.

Rev 11:19

Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. (Rev 11:19)

When the work of the judgment has been accomplished the door is opened. The reason why is to allow those accompanying Christ to the earth to leave. They want to watch as He reclaims the throne He has just been given. Heaven is silent during the short time that Christ and the others are absent. It is silent because it is empty.

The reference to thunder in vs. 19 corresponds to an earlier mention of thunder in Rev 4:5a. The two facts, that on both occasions there is thunder from the throne and that on both occasions also the second apartment is opened, leads to the conclusion

that the scenes are parallel. This is not to say they are identical. In the one case the judgment is just starting (Rev 4-5); in the other it is just ending (Rev 11).

The Cast of Characters in Revelation 11b

Saying “loud voices in heaven” (vs. 15) gives no indication about where this sound comes from, although a reasonable hypothesis would be that it comes from the innumerable multitude (see Dan 7:10; 5:11). In vs. 15b, “there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever’” (Rev 11:15b). In Rev 19a the text is quite similar, “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns’” (Rev 19:6). This is a comparison of Rev 11 and 19.

With respect to elders, it is also possible to compare Rev 11 and 4. What we see the elders do at the end of Rev 11 is the same thing they were doing earlier in Rev 4. In chap. 4 they “fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever” (4:10). In Rev 11 they “fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, . . .” (11:16). In both places they fall down before God in worship. This is not the same moment in time, but it is two glimpses of the same occasion.

The creatures are not mentioned in Rev 11b.

The “ark of his covenant” could be identified with the throne, although saying so might be considered speculative. There is a clear association between the two objects, but Ellen White never identifies them as being the same. Instead, she speaks of the throne as being “above the ark.”⁵⁵ If the ark and the throne are not identical, they are closely associated in this passage.

In Rev 4-5 and 11b we have references to the throne (4:2; 11:19), the twenty-four elders (4:4; 11:16), and an implied reference to the multitude (5:11; 11:15a). In Rev 11b and 19a we have an implied reference to the multitude (11:15a; 19:1), the elders (11:16;

⁵⁵ “In the Holiest I saw an ark; on the top and sides of it was purest gold. On each end of the ark was a lovely cherub, with their wings spread out over it. Their faces were turned towards each other, and they looked downwards. Between the angels was a golden censor. Above the ark, where the angels stood, was an exceeding bright glory, that appeared like a throne where God dwelt” (*Broadside* 3 April 7, 1847, par. 3). “Above the ark, where the angels stood, was an exceeding bright glory, that appeared like a throne where God dwelt” (*Early Writings*, 32).

19:4), and the throne (11:19; 19:5). The creatures are mentioned in Rev 4:6 and in 19:4, but not in Rev 11b.

Remaining Questions

What follows the seventh trumpet?

A question some ask is whether Rev 11:19 goes more naturally with the verses that precede it, or with those that follow. Thematically the division of the text of 11:15-19 is 11:15a/15b-19, where the contrast is between earth (15a) and heaven (15b-19). This is all part of one passage, so I would agree with those who place vs. 19 with what precedes.

After the seventh trumpet, Rev 12 speaks of Lucifer's rebellion in heaven, then the creation of the world, then the first coming, then the church in the wilderness, then the wrath of God, and finally God judging the dead. This is another series of summaries. But in Rev 11 we are brought to the end of the judgment, while in Rev 12 to the beginning of time. That is where the trouble started that would eventually need to be settled in a judgment. One might say that in the one case we are shown how the sin problem ends (Rev 11b), and in the other how it begins (Rev 12).

If I have characterized the relationship between Rev 11 and 12 correctly, there are eleven chapters before the summary of how the sin problem began (1-11) and eleven chapters after the summary of how the sin problem would end (12-22). The division between Rev 11 and 12 is as clean a section break as one will find in the book of Revelation.

Is the seventh trumpet a unit of text?

The seventh trumpet divides cleanly between sounding initially on earth (vs. 15a), and a series of statements summarizing what has been happening in heaven (vss. 15b-19). In vs. 19 the judgment is over. So I would argue that vs. 19 is as much a part of the seventh trumpet as the preceding verses.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. (Rev 11:19)

If a sanctuary introduction is needed for the following section, it would seem reasonable to let all of Rev 11:15-19 serve as that introduction.

Chapter 8

The Relationship Between the Trumpets & Plagues

Introduction

If the trumpets are warnings, the plagues are punishments. This is a distinction that should be made, and yet thematically the two elements come together to form one composite series. The difference between trumpets and plagues has to do with their respective functions.⁵⁶

The Trumpets

Satan does not give warnings. By this I do not mean there are no warning signs that follow from things he does. I mean he does not tell us that if you do this and that, evil consequences will follow. God does frequently give warnings, because He wants us not to fall victim to Satan's deceptions. The trumpets are an example of His warnings. They are given primarily to the fallen world, rather than to His saints.

God continues giving warnings so long as warnings can have any beneficial effect. The point past which they can no longer benefit anyone is the end of the judgment. When the judgment ends, the reason why it ends is that all decisions have been made. Heaven has done all it can do.

As soon as the judgment is over Jesus comes here. The time during which He is in transit from there to here is the only window of opportunity for the plagues to fall. They can only fall after the judgment is over and as soon as He comes to the earth there will be no one left for 1000 years. Ellen White suggests that the time between the end of the judgment and the second coming is not long, only "a number of days."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ In his published dissertation Paulien uses the terms "trumpet plagues" and "bowl plagues," which is an attractive naming convention because it simultaneously captures and collapses the distinction between the two categories. The words "trumpet" and "bowl" capture the contrast, and the words "plague" and "plague" collapse it (*Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12*, Andrews University Doctoral Dissertation Series XI (Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 228.

⁵⁷ "Then Jesus laid off his priestly garment and put on his kingly robe, and took his place on the cloud which carried him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth—a small black cloud which was the sign of the Son of Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the East, which took a

During this time God’s protection is removed and Satan has entire control over human beings.

The relationship between trumpets and plagues has been discussed, but no scholar that I know of would claim that the plagues have been falling for as long as the trumpets.⁵⁸ I suggest they do not. The one series runs its course and is followed by the other. Warnings precede the end of the judgment; punishments follow it. The trumpets continue to give their warnings as long as the judgment is in session, but not afterwards.

The Plagues

Here instead of considering the plagues in isolation, we consider them in relation to the trumpets.

The contents of the trumpets and plagues

The trumpets (warnings) and plagues (punishments) serve different purposes but are virtually identical in scope. The two series meet end to end and form a single historical series. See table 6.

Table 6
Trumpets and Plagues

1	Earth, trees, and grass	1	Harmful and painful sores
2	Sea	2	Sea
3	Rivers and springs	3	Rivers and springs
4	Sun, moon, and stars	4	Sun
5	Woe 1: Bottomless pit	5	Throne of the beast
6	Woe 2: Euphrates	6	Euphrates
7	Woe 3: Voices in heaven	7	Voice in heaven

The first trumpet and first plague are both oriented toward the earth. The other items in both lists are closely similar or identical.

number of days, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint’s feet” (quoted in Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: And Answer to the Major Charges that Critics Have Brought Against Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Takoma Park, MD: Review & Herald, 1951), 625.

⁵⁸ Paulien speaks of “

If the plagues follow the trumpets, and if the trumpets sound as long as warnings can be of benefit, then the plagues do not begin to fall until after the judgment is over. After the judgment a door is thrown open and Christ leads all His angel armies to the earth. This leaves only a short time for the plagues to fall. This is when we can expect fulfillment of the last part of the sixth seal (Rev 6:14-17; see 15:8).

The chronology of the plagues

We are dealing here with unfulfilled prophecy, so looking back on past fulfillments will not be possible, but there are four categories of statements in the Spirit of Prophecy which deal with the timing of the plagues. Three of these are stated positively (when/then; will/after; would/then); only one is stated negatively (would not/until). All four examples convey the same idea. These are now listed for the reader's convenience.

Positive Examples

When/then

- The nations are now getting angry, but **when** our High Priest has finished his work in the Sanctuary, he will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and **then** the seven last plagues will be poured out.⁵⁹

Will/after

- Then I was shown that the seven last plagues **will** be poured out, **after** Jesus leaves the Sanctuary.⁶⁰

Would/then

- I saw that the four angels **would** hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done in the sanctuary, **then** the seven last plagues will be poured out.⁶¹
- The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished his work in the Sanctuary, he will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the seven last plagues will be poured out. I saw that the four angels **would** hold the four winds until Jesus work was done in the Sanctuary, and **then** will come the seven last plagues.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Present Truth*, August 1, 1849, par. 14; *Broadside* 2, January 31, 1849; *Early Writings*, 36.1; *Life Sketches*, 116.1; 1LtMs, Ms 2, 1849; *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, 100.2.

⁶⁰ *Present Truth*, November 1, 1850; *Early Writings*, 52.1; ExV 33.1.

⁶¹ 1 *Letters and Manuscripts*, Ms 2, 1849, par. 2; 1 *Letters and Manuscripts*, 140.4; 141.1; *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, 100.2; *Maranatha*, 258.2.

⁶² 1 *Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts*, 147, 247. See also *Present Truth*, August 1, 1849.

Negative Example

Would not/until

- Then I saw that Jesus **would not** leave the Most Holy Place, **until** every case was decided either for salvation or destruction: and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had finished his work in the Most Holy Place—laid off his priestly attire and clothed himself with the garments of vengeance.⁶³

From the above statements I gather that the trumpets sound only before the end of the judgment, and that the plagues fall only after that. The two series merge to form one unbroken historical sequence. In this volume I treat them together as the equivalent of one septet.

If someone wanted to claim that the trumpets and plagues are not two parts of one series, but the same series repeated twice, that would be another way of capturing the idea that they cannot be separated but must be treated together. This is the essential point.

⁶³ 1 *Letters and Manuscripts*, 140, Ms 2, 1849; *Maranatha*, 258.

Chapter 9

Six Throne Scene Parallels

Introduction

The throne scene immediately follows the churches in Rev 4-5. It is not alluded to in the seals, and we see it only briefly in connection with the trumpets. The clearest glimpse of the throne scene outside Rev 4-5 is not in any of the septets, but rather in Rev 19a.

Throne scene parallels are characterized by one or more of the following terms: “throne,” “elders,” “creatures,” and “multitude.” The first of these is ubiquitous in Revelation.⁶⁴ The three remaining terms, however, are uniquely characteristic of the throne scene. A distinction will be made between primary and second⁶⁵ throne scene parallels. Primary parallels contain all four of the above characteristic terms. Secondary parallels have only one of them (“elders” [Rev 11:16]; “creatures” [Rev 15:7]).

Together Rev 4-5 and 19a together with their primary and secondary parallels yield a total of six glimpses of the throne scene in the book of Revelation. We begin by connecting what we have seen in Rev 4-5 with the prophecy of Dan 7. Doing this will provide a contextual basis for the materials discussed in this chapter.

Parallels With Daniel

Not all throne scene parallels are in the New Testament. We have already mentioned the Old Testament book of Zechariah, but there is also a link with Dan 7. Parallels with Dan 7 are not confined to the list of terms presented above. We first discuss three preliminary passages and then summarize the work of Beale & Carson, who offer a list of fourteen parallels linking Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 in the same narrative order.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ See Laszlo Gallusz: “Thrones in the Book of Revelation, Part 1: Throne of God,” *JATS* 23/2 (2012), 30-71; “Part 2: The Lamb on the Throne,” *JATS* 24/2 (2013), 153-182; “Part 3: Thrones of God’s Allies,” *JATS* 25/1 (2014), 88-115; “Part 4: Thrones of God’s Allies,” *JATS* 25/1 (2014), 89-115.

⁶⁵ See Laszlo Gallusz: “Thrones in the Book of Revelation, Part 1: Throne of God,” *JATS* 23/2 (2012), 30-71; “Part 2: The Lamb on the Throne,” *JATS* 24/2 (2013), 153-182; “Part 3: Thrones of God’s Allies,” *JATS* 25/1 (2014), 88-115; “Part 4: Thrones of God’s Allies,” *JATS* 25/1 (2014), 89-115.

⁶⁶ See G.K. Beale & D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1081-1088, 1098-1102.

Three passages

The number of attendees. In Dan 7 when Daniel says, "a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him," LXX translates that as *chiliai chiliades . . . kai muriai muriades* (Dan 7:10). In Rev 5 when John says, "I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands," the Greek is *murides muriadōn kai chiliades chiliadōn* (Rev 5:11). Thus, the Greek in both passages is equivalent.

It is potentially confusing that Greek *urias* comes into English as "myriads" or "tens of thousands." Taking the LXX Greek translation for ease of comparison, when the two passages are placed side by side, Daniel says *muriai muriades* and John says *murides muriadōn*. The meaning in both cases is an uncountably large number. What both authors are saying is that the number in attendance is an infinity of infinities. The only difference is that Daniel has "thousands" first, then "tens of thousands" (AB), while John has "tens of thousands" first, then "thousands" (B'A'). The sequence is chiasmic (AB:B'A').

Entrance of the "one like a son of man." In Daniel the impression is that Father and Son enter the judgment hall at significantly different times, while in Revelation they seem to enter at the same time. Both chapters mention the Father entering first, but neither clarifies how much time goes by before the Son follows.

If we outline Dan 7 based on the distribution of lexical parallels, doing that requires five parallel columns (7:2-12, 13-14, 15-18, 19-22, 23-27). The columns convey a series of partial parallels cycling through the same material from different points of view. Verses 1 and 28 give an introduction and conclusion not included in this summary. Of special interest is the fact that the "Ancient of Days" enters in vs. 9 and the "one like a son of man" in vs. 13. These verses are found in different columns and constitute parallels. The question is when vss. 9 and 13 occur with respect to each other. See Table 7.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ For the textual parallels behind these columns see Hardy, http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Dan07_Parallels.pdf.

Table 7
Overview of Daniel 7

		Sequence 1	Sequence 2	Sequence 3	Sequence 4	Sequence 5
A	Four beasts	2-6		15-17		
B	Fourth beast	7-8			19-21	23-25
C	Judgment	9-10	13		22a	26a
B'	Fourth beast	11*				26b
A'	Four beasts	12				
	Son of Man/Saints		14	18	22b	27

If the Son “came to the Ancient of Days” in the second apartment, the Father was there first, but what this fact does not tell us is how much earlier He was there. Dan 7 and Rev 5 are virtually equivalent but consider that in Dan 7 vss. 9 and 13 are not sequential, but parallel. What this means is that the clauses of vs. 9 happen at substantially the same time as the clauses of vs. 13. And if so, the only pieces of chronologically relevant information we can glean from either passage is that in Daniel the Son “came to the Ancient of Days” (7:9), whereas in Revelation the Lamb “went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne” (5:7). So in both passages the Father was there first. I conclude that the two are in substantial agreement.

Opening the “books.” There is one point on which Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 disagree. The word “books” in Dan 7 is plural, whereas the corresponding word “scroll” in Rev 4-5 is singular. Apart from this, in Greek translation the words “books” (*bibloi*) and “scroll” (*biblos*) are the same. They differ only in number. The one is plural and the other singular.

If this scene depicts a courtroom, as in Zech 3, and if one scroll deals with people living after the first century, as it must in Rev 5, that does not prevent another scroll from dealing with people living before that, or long before that. Contrasting Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 on the basis of how many books are present is not a substantial argument. But it is true that saying the number of books or scrolls is different is a possible interpretation.

G.K. Beale & D.A. Carson

We now consider the work of G.K. Beale & D.A. Carson. Their *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* tries to establish how the New Testament uses the Old. In a section on the relationship between Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 the authors conclude that,

If we begin with Dan. 7:9-28 and observe the elements and order of their presentation in common with Rev. 4-5, a striking resemblance is discernable. . . . From the comparison it can be seen that Rev. 4-5 repeats the same fourteen elements from Dan. 7:9-28 in the same basic order, but with small variations that result from the explanation of images.⁶⁸

What follows is a list of Beale & Carson's fourteen proposed parallels between Dan 7 and Rev 4-5. I have modified the authors' original format for ease of presentation. See table 8.⁶⁹

Table 8
Beale & Carson on Dan 7/Rev 4-5

#	Parallel	Daniel	Revelation
1	Introductory vision phraseology	Dan 7:9 (cf. 7:2, 6-7)	Rev 4:1
2	The setting of a throne(s) in heaven	Dan 7:9a	Rev 4:2b
3	God sitting on a throne	Dan 7:9b	Rev 4:2b
4	The description of God's appearance on the throne	Dan 7:9c	Rev 4:3a
5	Fire before the throne	Dan 7:9d-10a	Rev 4:5
6	Heavenly servants surrounding the throne	Dan 7:10b	Rev 4:4b, 6b-10; 5:8, 11, 14
7	Book(s) before the throne	Dan 7:10c	Rev 5:1-7
8	The "opening" of the book(s)	Dan 7:10d	Rev 5:2-5, 9
9	A divine (messianic) figure approaches God's throne in order to receive authority to reign forever over a "kingdom"	Dan 7:13-14a	Rev 5:
10	This "kingdom" includes "all peoples, nations, and tongues"	Dan 7:7:14a MT	Rev 5:9b
11	The seer's emotional distress on account of the vision	Dan 7:15	Rev 5:4
12	The seer's reception of heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one among the heavenly throne servants	Dan 7:16	Rev 5:5a
13	The saints are also given divine authority to reign over a kingdom	Dan 7:18, 22, 27a	Rev 5:10
14	A concluding mention of God's eternal reign	Dan 7:27b	Rev 5:13-14

Beale & Carson list their items in narrative order, whereas I have claimed that different verses appearing in different columns are parallel to each other and therefore not inherently sequential. Notice that my column 1 is consistent with Beale & Carson's items 1-8; my column 2 is consistent with Beale & Carson's items 9-10; my column 3 is consistent with their items 11-13a; and my columns 4-5 with their items 13b-14. The only potential conflict is the interface between my columns 1-2 and the corresponding interface between their items 1-8 and 9-10. I have already commented on this above.

⁶⁸ *Commentary*, 1098.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Their focus on narrative sequence does not conflict with my emphasis on parallel columns. Dan 7:2-12 and 13-14 are narrated in sequence, but apply in parallel.

It is interesting that in what Beale & Carson say about the terms “books” or “scroll” the authors do not speak of this as a point of difference. Instead, they treat the reference to “books” or a “scroll” in both passages as evidence for a parallel.⁷⁰

Parallels Within Revelation

We turn now to parallels with the throne scene that occur within the book of Revelation. The first is between Rev 4-5 and 19a, which provides a baseline for the remaining parallels.

Revelation 4-5 and 19a

Strand considered Rev 4-5 and 19a to be counterparts of each other. Only Maxwell did not. In his book, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, Strand places Rev 4-5 and 19a in corresponding sections of his outline (B:B').⁷¹ See fig. 1.

Rev 4		
Throne		A
Twenty-four elders		B
Four living creatures		C
Innumerable angels		D
Rev 19a		
Innumerable angels		D'
Twenty-four elders		B'
Four living creatures		C'
Throne		A'

Fig. 1. The references to the central throne of God and to the gallery with its innumerable angels are introduced in the order of a mixed chiasm in Rev 4-5 and 19a.

⁷⁰ Idem, 1098-1102. See also 1081-1088.

⁷¹ Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979, p. 52. This book was preceded by idem, *Perspectives in the Book of Revelation: Essays on Apocalyptic Interpretation* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1975).

He does not mention the following chiastic relationships. In Rev 4-5 the throne is introduced in 4:2 (A), the twenty-four elders in 4:4 (B), the four living creatures in 4:6 (C), and the innumerable multitude in 5:11 (D). In Rev 19 the sequence is reversed except that the elders and creatures retain the same relative sequence in both chapters. Thus, in Rev 19a we have first angels 19:1 (D'), then creatures and elders together in 19:4 (B', C'), then the throne in 19:5 (A'). The resulting structure (ABCD:D'B'C'A') is chiastic, but we would call this a mixed chiasm because it maintains the sequence between creatures and elders. Only the AD:D'A' part of this structure is chiastic; the BC:B'C' part is not.

The fact that the chiasm linking Rev 4-5 and 19a is mixed does not reduce its value, but increases it. Both Strand and Maxwell propose an outline for Revelation that resembles this one (ABCD:C'D'B'A'). In this case, however, the AB:B'A' part of the outline is chiastic and the CD:C'D' part is not. Thus, in both cases the form of the chiasm is similar. The chiasm linking Rev 4-5 and 19a resembles that of the book of Revelation as a whole.

Shea discusses the above relationships, but his analysis assumes that Rev 5 is the only throne scene material that contributes to the parallel with Rev 19a. He does not take Rev 4 into account,⁷² which is unfortunate because only when we keep Rev 4-5 together all four of our diagnostic terms present in the parallel.

Primary parallels

There are two other passages where all four terms appear (Rev 7 and 14), or four minus one. I here call these primary throne scene parallels. See Table 9.

Table 9
Four Throne Scene Parallels

	Rev 4-5	Rev 7	Rev 14	Rev 19
Throne	4:2[x2], 3, 4, 5[x2], 6[x3], 9, 10[x2], 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13	7:10, 15[x2], 17	14:3	19:5
Elders	4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14	7:11	14:3	19:4a
Creatures	4:6, 8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14	7:11	14:3	19:4b
Angels	5:11	7:9	(14:2)	19:1

⁷² William H. Shea, "Revelation 5 and 19 as Literary Reciprocals," *AUSS* 22/2 (1984), 249-257.

Revelation 7. In Rev 7:1-4 four angels are told they must not release “the winds of the earth . . . until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (7:1, 3). This sealing must take place before the second coming. In Rev 7:5-8 the twelve tribes of Israel are also said to require sealing, and again, this is something that must occur before the second coming. I conclude that the timeframe for both Rev 7:1-4 and 5-8 is prior to the second coming.

There is a question, though, whether Rev 7:9-12 occurs within the same timeframe as 7:1-4 and 5-8. These verses say,

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ^[10] and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ^[11] And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ^[12] saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” (Rev 7:9-12)

In these verses the saints have palm branches. They have already been saved from the earth when we see them in the throne room. Their salvation is an accomplished fact, so we are seeing them at a time later than the second coming. And yet all of the same elements are present as in Rev 4-5. The fact that terms such as “multitude” (7:9), “throne” (7:10), “elders” and “creatures” (7:11) all occur together in one passage strongly argue that Rev 7:9-12 is a primary throne scene parallel. But the question is how to explain the difference between the two timeframes.

The two scenes are not chronologically parallel, which is problematic, but I suggest that even though the time is different the place is the same. In Rev 7:9-12 we are not seeing the judgment in session again, but it is parallel with the throne scene in the sense that the scenes have the same setting and list of characters. John appears to looking forward proleptically to results that would follow from the judgment (see 11:18), with the saints being accepted into heaven by all the same ones who had earlier applauded God’s decision to bring them there.

Revelation 14. Three of the expected elements occur in Rev 14:3 (“throne,” “creatures,” “elders”), and vs. 2 contains an allusion to great multitude “like the sound of loud thunder.” This is similar to the seventh trumpet, where no direct reference to the “multitude” is found. This appears to be a reference to the redeemed. In this case, no reference to the previous multitude is found.

Rev 14:2-3 is clearly parallel with Rev 7:9-12, but one would have to proceed carefully when saying that the timeframe for what we see there is the same as in Rev 4-5 and 19a. Both Rev 7:9-12 and Rev 14:2-3 are seen from the perspective of how things will eventually turn out. The net effect of the judgment is that a great multitude of people from the earth are saved into heaven. The references to them are made proleptically.

Discussion. As I write about these things now, the heavenly court has spent a couple of centuries reviewing the records of those who have ever claimed to have a relationship with God. Now those who are saved are welcomed into heaven.

So yes, Rev 7:9-12 and 14:3 are parallel to the throne scene. And yes, Rev 4-5 is a judgment. But no, the event portrayed in Rev 7:9-12 and 14:3 is not the same as the event we have seen before. The judgment is over by the time the saints are welcomed into heaven.

Secondary parallels

There are also two passages that we might call secondary parallels to Rev 4-5 and 19a. I say “secondary” because the reference is only to “elders” in Rev 11:16, and only to “creatures” in Rev 15:7 See Table 10.

Table 10
Six Throne Scene Parallels

	Rev 4-5	Rev 7	Rev 11 (Secondary)	Rev 14	Rev 15 (Secondary)	Rev 19
Primary Parallels						
Throne	4:2[x2], 3, 4, 5[x2], 6[x3], 9, 10[x2], 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13	7:10, 15[x2], 17		14:3		19:5
Elders	4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14	7:11	11:16	14:3		19:4a
Creatures	4:6, 8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14	7:11		14:3	15:7	19:4b
Angels	5:11	7:9		(14:2)		19:1

In Rev 4-5 and 19a, and again in 7 and 14, the columns are shaded, whereas in Rev 11 and 15 they are not. The first group of passages have all or most of the key diagnostic terms, while in the remaining two the list is only partially populated. After Rev 4-5 and 19a, Rev 7 and 14 are primary parallels, while Rev 11 and 15 are secondary.

Revelation 11:16. This passage says, “And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,^[17] saying . . .” (Rev 11:16-17). These are the same elders we have seen before, doing the same things we have seen them do before. Their praise is described elsewhere in Rev 4-5 and 19a, in Rev 4 and 7, and now here in 11:16.

Revelation 15:7. In our last passage there is a reference to “one of the four living creatures.” Notice that at this point the plagues have not yet begun to fall, which places this reference to “creatures” to a point after the judgment has finished and before Christ leads all His angels to the earth.

Discussion. One reason why it is important in the present context to include Rev 11:16 and 15:7 is that they use terms which make specific reference to judgment, such as such *krinō/krisis*, *dikeō* (“decide, adjudge,” “make or render right or just”), or with the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, such as *naos*, *kibōtos* (“inmost part of a temple, shrine”; “box, chest, coffer”). See Table 11.

Table 11
Six Parallels Plus Associated Terminology

	Rev 4-5	Rev 7	Rev 11 (Secondary)	Rev 14	Rev 15 (Secondary)	Rev 19
Primary Parallels						
Throne	4:2[x2], 3, 4, 5[x2], 6[x3], 9, 10[x2], 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13	7:10, 15[x2], 17		14:3		19:5
Elders	4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14	7:11	11:16	14:3		19:4a
Creatures	4:6, 8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14	7:11		14:3	15:7	19:4b
Angels	5:11	7:9		(14:2)		19:1
Secondary Parallels						
<i>naos</i>		7:15	11:19[x2]	14:15, 17	15:5-6, 8[x2]	
<i>krinō, krisis</i>			11:18	14:7		19:2[x2]
<i>kibōtos</i>			11:19			
<i>dikeō</i>						19:2

In Rev 11 and 15 we have fewer terms than we might wish (only “elders” in Rev 11, only “creatures” in Rev 15), but such terms provide with a link with more amply established examples.

One more word that should be mentioned which has been hiding in plain sight so far and might be easily overlooked because of our reticence to see any connection between the churches and the throne scene is “Laodicea.” This word contains within it the two Greek words *laos* (“people”) and *dikē* (“judgment”), which supplies a link between Rev 2-3 and 4-5 despite the clean syntactic break that Müller has documented.⁷³ Moreover, this link has chronological implications because the time when these “people” are “judged” is in the timeframe to which Laodicea has brought us.

Revelation 19a

In my view Rev 4-5 depicts the judgment as it begins, while both Rev 11b and 19a depict the judgment as it ends.⁷⁴ The throne scene is something to which John returns from time to times. The book of Revelation is not written in strict chronological order.

In Rev 19a the text does not speak of anyone opening the door, as in 11:19, but the next thing to occur in 19a is that Christ leads all the angel armies out of heaven. If this is what happens, we assume that an appropriate means of exit was made available.

Notice that the sequence ABCD:D'B'C'A' linking Rev 4-5/19a begins and ends with references to the throne (A:A'). Now John gives the above question a larger context. The question God now posed is, In retrospect, have all My dealings with the human family been fair in all its aspects? Have Satan's accusations been adequately falsified? The first to respond to this larger question is the innumerable multitude in the gallery (vss. 1-3). They answer, yes. The next are the four and the twenty-four (vs. 4). They also answer, yes.

Now all eyes turn to the throne. We know Christ is the next to speak because the voice comes “from the throne” and calls God “our God” (vs. 5). In all the universe there is only One of whom both statements count be true. The question does not receive a simply yes or no answer. Christ died a horrible death for the sins of a planet of rebels,

⁷³ Ekehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4-11*. Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 21. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1994: “There is also a clear-cut end of this first septet at Rev 3:22 and the beginning of a new section with Rev 4:1” (idem, 200). A corresponding statement is, “The reason for this twofold use of the vision formula in the first seal seems to be to clearly separate the seals from the introductory vision in Rev 4-5” (idem, 273). Thus, Rev 2-3, 4-5, and 6a are all distinct. I agree. However, this is not the same as saying they have no connection with each other, and Müller does not make such a claim.

⁷⁴ Rev 4-5 and Rev 11b both come at the end of a septet. Rev 19a does not.

almost all of whom either hated Him or just didn't care (John 1:10-11). The sins He died for were ones He never committed (Luke 23:41).

The nature of the sacrificial system anciently is that when a human sins, an animal dies. When this happens the animal is not treated fairly. Christ was sinless and yet He died for the sins of the whole world. So how could He say, yes, I was treated fairly. But how could He say, no, I was not? Doing so would have the effect of reviving Satan's charges which had just been considered in the judgment and starting the whole process again. So instead of answering with a simple yes or no, He issues the ringing command: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great" (Rev 19:5).

Until now those present have maintained a sense of decorum. But when this command is heard those present descend – not into chaos – but into a paean of praise that must surely have lingered in John's memory until the day he died. In describing the level of sound that followed, John uses the expressions *ochlou pollou* "great multitude," *hudatōn pollōn* "many waters," and *brontōn ischurōn* "mighty thunder" (my glosses). The sense of the passage has been rendered as, "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: . . ." (Rev 19:6 NIV; see Rev 11:15a).

God's efforts to save have been resounding successful and the result is a universal and unrestrained acknowledgement of His wisdom and love. Those closest to the event respond to it with the most joy. See Appendix 3: "Spirit of Prophecy."

Discussion

The judgment and the gospel are not inimical to each other, as Ballenger supposed, but instead are like the two sides of one coin. God goes through every line and paragraph on every page of the heavenly books of record, but He does not do this to inform Himself. Instead, in the judgment He is putting His efforts on our behalf on full display. Our sins are what we are being saved from and now He reveals the lengths He has gone to save us, on the level of His Spirit's work on individual consciences. The question the judgment wrestles with is not how we have sinned – the universe knows that already – but how God deals with people who have sinned like that, and who turn from allowed God to change them. Those in attendance cannot know how the Holy Spirit has touched the lives spiritually. Nothing He reveals is for the purpose of embarrassing us, but rather to make fully clear what kind of God He is.

Rev 4-5, 11, 15, and 19 offer glimpses of the judgment, and the events of Rev 7 and 14 bring us back to great judgment hall after the saints have been brought from

earth to heaven. While the word “throne” is ubiquitous in the book of Revelation, I suggest that the terms “elder,” “creatures,” and “multitude” only occur in throne scene parallels.

In other cases the place is the judgment hall and the event is a judgment scene, but we find only a partial list of the terms we might have expected (Rev 11, 15). In two cases, however, the terms are right, the venue is right, and the terms are introduced in chiastically corresponding order (Rev 4-5, 19). There is no missing the closeness of this parallel.

So there are parallels involving the throne scene and there are parallels involving the septets. The six throne scene parallels link certain passages together with each other and also with Dan 7. The three major septet sequences are linked to each other and to the three major apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel. Both sets of parallels involve a connection with Daniel. Throughout both sets of interconnecting textual relationships there is a focus on the judgment just before Jesus returns.

Conclusion

Asking whether a preadvent or investigative judgment can be found in the New Testament is like asking whether the book of Revelation can be found in the New Testament. The judgment is one of John’s major themes in the book of Revelation. It runs like a thread through much of the narrative and can be seen on a number of occasions from slightly different perspectives.

Having made the above point, it might seem like our discussion has come to an end, but it has not. The set of relationships I have just been describing must be brought into still sharper focus. The relationship between Daniel and Revelation is closer than I have implied.

Chapter 10

Revelation in Relation to Daniel

Introduction

I have pointed out the relationship between the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and the septets of Revelation. Daniel is not apocalyptic in every chapter, and neither is Revelation. But Dan 2, 7, 8-9 (together), and 10-12 are apocalyptic, and the churches, seals, and trumpets/plagues (together) are apocalyptic. In each case an historicist interpretation is appropriate. Other examples of apocalyptic would include Zechariah and parts of Isaiah, as well as the “little apocalypse” of Matt 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Elsewhere finding apocalyptic content is the exception; in Revelation it is the rule.

The book of Revelation was regarded as fanciful and devoid of practical instruction by some during the church’s earliest history,⁷⁵ but that was because much of it remained unfulfilled. The factor that unlocks any prophecy’s meaning is fulfillment. For example, in Daniel the seventy weeks were understood after the first coming of Christ. Once fulfilled they gave a powerful impetus to the idea that Jesus was the Christ and that He came at the right time in history. The meaning of the 2300 days was understood only shortly after 1844.

In Revelation the meaning of the sixth trumpet preceded its time of fulfillment, but only shortly. Ellen White endorses the accuracy of Litch’s prediction, and doubles down on this point in the 1911 printing of *The Great Controversy*.⁷⁶ In its day this interpretation gave considerable force to the preaching of William Miller and others that Christ’s coming would be soon.

Fulfillment as a Necessary Element in Understanding Apocalyptic

In any other body of prophetic literature the first question would be, How did the first readers understand the material? Their opinions would be central in arriving at our own. But not here. What makes Daniel’s prophecies apocalyptic also makes them

⁷⁵ In some traditions it can’t be. The book was largely rejected in the East. See Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2007), 398-399.

⁷⁶ See *Great Controversy*, 691.***

impenetrable for early interpreters. The reason for this is that the outlines of a correct fulfillment were not understood until later.

Classical prophecy usually deals with the near future from the perspective of the prophet. It rarely deals with long periods of time. One example of this fact is Jesus' prediction that He would rise again after three days (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46). When the resurrection occurred His meaning became clear. He was not speaking in literal terms, but figuratively. His intent was spiritual in nature, but was based on a literal event. He was not speaking of rebuilding the temple physically. He was speaking of His own body as a dwelling place for God. This prophecy was understood in His day because it was fulfilled in His day. An exceptionally long classical prophecy in the Old Testament is Jeremiah's seventy years (Jer 25:11; 29:10). This example is not typical.

Apocalyptic prophecy shows God's inspired perspective on history and contains many things that would not be fulfilled until a time in the distant future. Examples are Dan 7:25; 8:14; 9:24; 12:7, 11, 12; Rev 13:5; 11:3, 12; 12:6, 14; 13:3, 5. It is generally not useful to ask what the first readers of an apocalyptic prophecy understood by what the prophet wrote in their day. Frequently the prophet himself did not know the meaning of his own words (Dan 8:15-17, 27; 12:8).

The same principle applies to Revelation. The predictions of the septets in the book of Revelation involve long periods of time and have been understood only as they were fulfilled.

Froom suggests that in every age people have correctly understood those parts of apocalyptic prophecy that pertained to them.⁷⁷ But the same students of Scripture had no special insight into later material. It is most useful, and here I especially emphasize the septets, by focusing on how history has unfolded once it unfolds. Confining the discussion to the first century will generally not produce useful insights.

Applying Historicist Principles of Interpretation

Some of the following material will be a review, because it has been alluded to above. But such a review makes an important point.

⁷⁷ LeRoy E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 1:15.

Daniel

When I speak of apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel, what I have in mind is Dan 2, 7, 8-9, and 10-12. Dan 8 extends to the beginning of the judgment in the end time, but Dan 9 ends in the first century. Dan 8-9 should be combined as one prophecy in two parts.

One purpose for Dan 9:24-27 is to explain the references to time that were not explained in Dan 8. The interpreting angel explicitly states that no further information on time would be forthcoming in Dan 8: "The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now" (vs. 26).

Just as Dan 8:3-12 is explained in 8:20-25, so Dan 8:13-14 is explained in 9:24-27. The first portion deals with events, the second with time as well as events. For this reason, it would be a mistake to separate the two chapters. They must be studied together and when we do this they form what I have referred to here as one bipartite prophecy.

If Dan 8-9 is one prophecy in two parts, Dan 10-12 is one prophecy in three parts. It contains an introduction (10), the main prophecy (11), and a conclusion (12).

Revelation

In Revelation the churches, seals, and trumpets/plagues are parallel to each other in the same way that the prophecies of Daniel are parallel to each other. However, just as chap. 9 must be treated separately in Daniel by joining it to an earlier prophecy because to all appearances it ends too early, so also the plagues must be joined in Revelation to an earlier septet because to all appearances they begin too late.

So just as Dan 8-9 should be studied together, so also the trumpets and plagues should be studied together. Thematically they are virtually identical, but the trumpets consist of warnings while the plagues consists of punishments. The trumpets extend through to the end of the judgment, for as long a time as warnings could serve any useful purpose, and the plagues fall after that.

Seeing the Unity Between Daniel and Revelation

What the prophecies do in Daniel, the septets do in Revelation. All seven historical overviews occupy a similar role. They are parallel to each other and require a consistently historicist interpretation. The same hermeneutical principles must be applied in each case. See table 14.

Table 14
Apocalyptic Prophecies of Daniel
and Septets of Revelation

Dan 2	Dan 7	Dan 8-9	Dan 10-12	Churches	Seals	Trumpets/ Plagues
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In Dan 10-12 we take the middle chapter (Dan 11); of this the middle section (vss. 16-28); and of this the middle verse. This verse is Dan 11:22, which has two clauses. The first clause speaks of an army of others who die under unspecified circumstances. Then the second clause says, “and also [*w^egam*] the prince of the covenant.”

The word *w^egam* (“and also”) requires us to understand that a comparison is being made. In vs. 22 death is an experience common to everyone that is mentioned. Tiberius Caesar suspected the most prominent members of Roman society of disloyalty and presided over a reign of terror in Rome during the second part of his reign. The deaths in the first clause were the result of a charge of treason.

Christ ‘s death in the second clause was also the result of a charge of treason. Because He claimed to be a King He was under suspicion of disloyalty to the state, which meant disloyalty to Caesar. “From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar’” (John 19:12). Pilate understood the nature of this threat and, fearing for his own life, allowed Christ to be crucified.

Jesus suffered on the cross for about six hours, but the moment of His death did not involve any appreciable amount of time. The moment at which He passed from life to death is the fulcrum of this verse, because that is when the word “also” becomes meaningful. They died, “and also” He died.

There is a paper in the literature on the philosophy of time that I copied once as a graduate student and which demands a rethinking of what we mean by the word “moment.” It was written by C.L. Hamblin and is entitled, “Starting and Stopping.”⁷⁸ In this paper the author argues that there is no single moment at which a process can be said to start or stop. Instead, it is more correct to say that stopping means going from [+motion] to [-motion]. Starting is the opposite counterpart of this.

So how long did it take to pass from [+living] to [-living]? If Hamblin is right, it only took however much time elapses between two moments. In other words, it took no time at all. My point is that it took Jesus six hours to suffer, but no time to die.

This infinitely small amount of time is the focus of all apocalyptic prophecy and of all history. The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation show us a comparable amount of history from seven different points of view. To see what binds these overview narratives together we must interpret them from an historicist point of view. My point is that the whole system of seven prophecies collectively revolves around Christ at the moment of His death on the cross.

Summary

The message of Dan 2 is that history consists of a series of human empires which are then followed by the kingdom of God. But something must happen first. Before the second coming there must be a judgment.

In the ancient sanctuary the priest’s ministry in the first apartment was followed at the end of the year by a high priestly ministry in the second apartment. Both ministries have a counterpart in human history and Daniel explicitly asserts that this is the case. Dan 7 says, “the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:10). This marks a beginning point. As a result of what happens in the judgment Christ receives a kingdom (7:14), which He immediately shares with His saints (7:18, 22, 27). This marks an ending point.

In announcing Jesus’ birth an angel said, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32). Once the court awards this kingdom the judgment is over and Jesus comes here to claim what is His. Satan has claimed this earth ever since Eden (Matt 4:9). The heavenly court asserts this claim is incorrect.

⁷⁸ *The Monist* 53/3 (1969), 410-425.

In Dan 8 it says, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state” (Dan 8:14). Saying the sanctuary would be cleansed is the same as saying there would be judgment, but Dan 8 does not tell us when the 2300 evening-mornings, or days, or literal years, would begin.

In Dan 9 this period is said to begin with “the word to restore and build Jerusalem” (9:25). Horn & Wood demonstrate that this decree would be issued in 457 BC.⁷⁹ The starting point for the 2300 days is the same as that for the seventy weeks.

The next prophecy is Dan 10-12. If we focus on the middle chapter of this prophecy (Dan 11), and then the middle section, and the middle verse, that brings us to the death of the Prince of the covenant. The first clause of this verse says an army of others would die “and also the Prince of the covenant” (11:22). Saying “and also” directs our attention to the moment of Christ’s death, because that is the moment at which His experience becomes comparable with theirs.

The Prince of the covenant dies in 11:22 and Michael stands up at the close of the judgment in 12:1. The one event pertains to the first coming and the other to His second. Having come, He resurrects the saints so they can receive the kingdom He is given in Dan 7.

Establishing the kingdom takes us back to Dan 2; in Dan 7 Christ receives the kingdom He established in the earlier prophecy; in Dan 8 it is said to be 2300 days before this judgment can begin, in Dan 9 a beginning point is given for the 2300 days. We have references to Jesus’ first coming and His second in Dan 10-12. This final mention of the second coming brings us back full circle to the events mentioned initially in Dan 2.

In Revelation the churches extend from John’s day (roughly the end of the seventieth week) to the beginning of the judgment. The seals have the same starting point but extend to the second coming. The trumpets continue sounding until the end of the judgment when the plagues begin to fall. The fact that the trumpets and plagues are thematically identical and form one sequence means that they also, like Dan 8-9, must be studied together. They cannot be separated.

The prophecies of Daniel and septets of Revelation form a matched set of parallel prophetic narratives. The similarities between them can only be seen when each is interpreted from an historicist point of view. There are three major prophecies before Dan 10-12 and three major septet sequences after it.

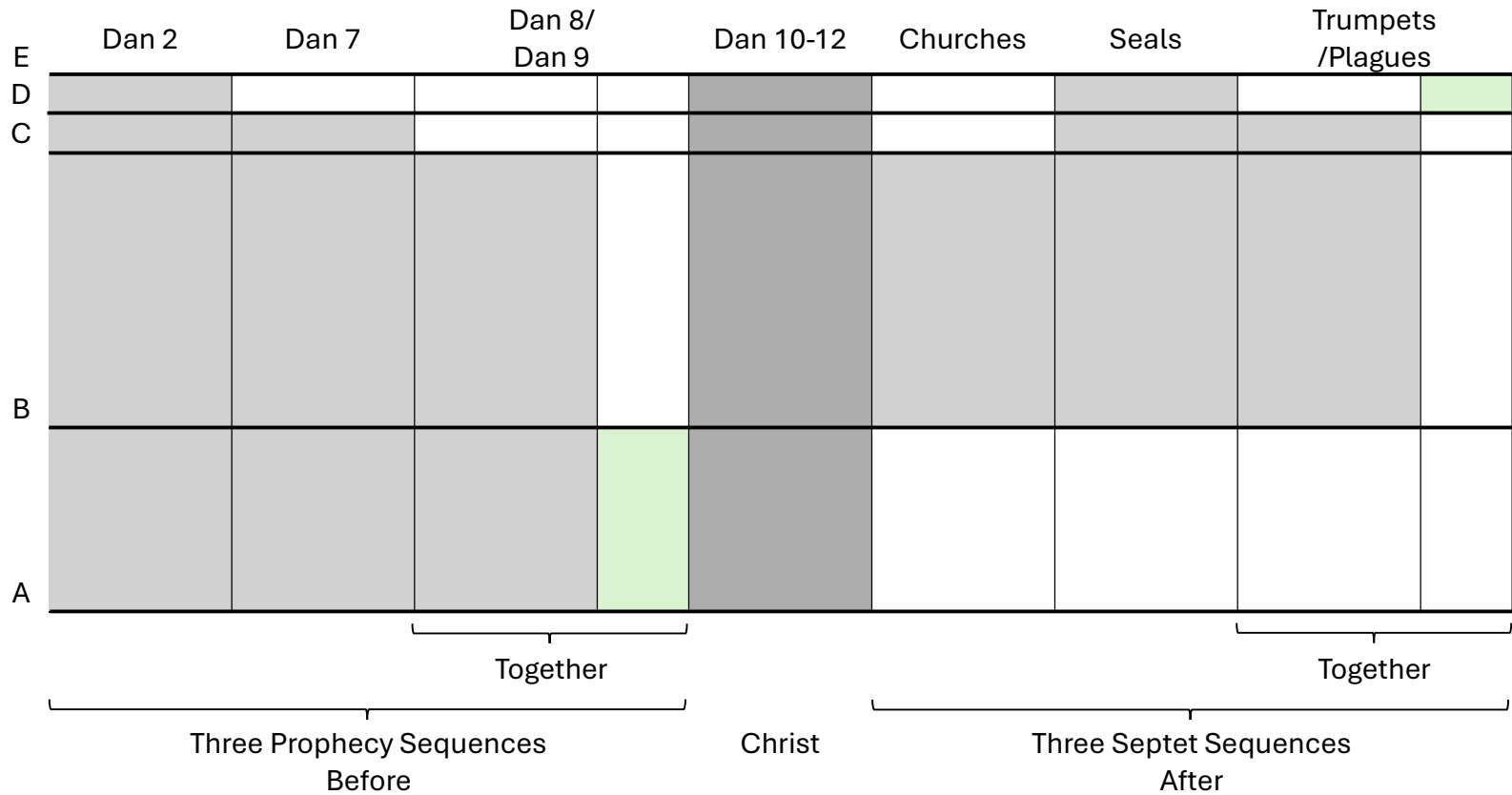
⁷⁹ Siegfried H. Horn & Lynn H. Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1953).

Conclusion

We might sometimes wish we could present our message to the world in a more Christ centered way, but there is nothing more Christ centered than what the Holy Spirit has already given us in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The glorified Christ once said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev 21:6; 22:13). He is also the great Center of all.⁸⁰ See graphic below.

⁸⁰ “Christ, His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth. He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In Him is found the complete system of truth.” Ellen White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 8 (1993), Lt 63, par. 19. See also Rev 1:8:

Conceptual Overview of Prophecies and Septets in Daniel and Revelation



E = Second Coming
 D = Judgment Ends
 C = Judgment Begins
 B = John
 A = Daniel

Christ
 +
 Middle Chapter
 Middle Section
 Middle Verse

Reference
Appendix 1
 Fifty-Five Commentaries on
 Revelation 2:10

Author	Date	Comment
Figurative or Unclear		
Barclay	1970	There is imprisonment. John forecasts an imprisonment of ten days. That is not to be taken literally. Ten days was an expression for a short time which was soon to come to an end. . . . First, this is exactly the way in which persecution came. To be a Christian was against the law, but persecution was not continuous. The Christians might be left in peace for a long time, but at any moment a governor might acquire a fit of administrative energy or the mob might set up a shout to find the Christians – and the storm burst. The terror of being a Christian was the uncertainty.
Beasley-Murray	1978	This tribulation will last for ten days, i.e., an indefinite but short time (cf. Gen. 24:55, Dan. 1:12ff.), yet long enough to entail the ultimate sacrifice for some.
Beckwith	1919	hexete . . . deka, ye shall have tribulation ten days: in the circumstances known to the writer the imprisonment appears inevitable (mellei ballein), but it is to continue for a fixed time of not great length.
Blaney	1966	Ten days doubtless refers to more than a certain restricted span of time. The term assures the church that the persecution will cover an extended period of time – long enough to make the test a real one – long enough, according to the estimates of the Jews and pagans, to cause the average man to break under the strai
Boring	1989	John sees the conflict between the church and the synagogue, and between the church and the established, respected cultural religions, as the this-worldly reality of a deeper conflict being waged in the transcendent sphere.
Boring & Craddock	2004	Ten days: Not literal, but another reference to the shortness of the time before the final deliverance (see on 1:3).
Brighton	1999	He is aware that his people will suffer, even intensely ("ten days," 2:10). But they are not to be afraid, for the time of their suffering is set by God ("ten days").
Brown	1968	The brevity of the time of tribulation is contrasted with the eternity of the reward (2 Cor 4:17).
Caird	1966	John expects that before long Satan will for a short limited period (ten days) intensify his campaign against the church and, presumably using the same agents, will lay before the authorities information leading to criminal charges against some Christians.
Charles	1920	The round number here points to a short period: cf. Dan. i. 12, 14.

Farmer	2005	Christ called on the church in Smyrna to be steadfast amid affliction. A realist, John expected their situation to worsen: they "are about to" be severely tested. Some would even be thrown into prison to await trial. Yes, for "ten days" (a symbol that denotes a complete period of time) they would experience great affliction.
Franzmann	1968	Also, she is not being merely abandoned to the freaks of satanic malice; her Lord has set limits ("ten days") to her tribulation. In the power of the Lord's word she can find strength to "be faithful unto death"; His blessing on those who endure persecution for His sake (Matt. 5:10-12) will follow her into imprisonment and dying.
Gaebelein	1981	The "ten days" may be ten actual days. Or it may be a Semitism for an indeterminate but comparatively short period of time (cf. Neh 4:12; Dan 1:12).
Giblin	1991	The ten-day tribulation (cf. Gen 24:55; Dan 1:12) which John has in mind stands for an indeterminate but relatively short period. Some aspects of the persecution must have included imprisonment and, for some, even death (v. 10). On the other hand, its general aspect (as the clarification of "tribulation" by the word "poverty" shows, v. 9) may have been economic repression.
Graves	2009	In support of the short-term theory of ten days, Krodel states that the Roman never used incarceration for an extended period as punishment.
Gregg	1997	In the case of the Smyrnians, the duration of testing is limited to ten days (v. 10). History has not recorded any period of ten days that was endured by these Christians, though surviving records are very limited. Those who tend toward a literal interpretation often consider the ten days to refer to ten actual waves of persecution, or to the ten emperors who allegedly persecuted the churches throughout the first three centuries. Other interpreters think that the "ten days" is in contrast to the much longer time designations in the book, and simply suggest that the tribulation for this church will be of relatively short duration.
Harrington	1993	Suggests a limited period, but a testing-time for all that.
Heil	2014	This tribulation they will have from imprisonment will be for a significant but limited period of ten days (2:10c).
Hemer	1989	Swete argues that it was part of Satan's purpose to prolong the suffering of the church to 'ten days', whereas many commentators interpret this period as denoting a short or limited time. The 'ten days' have in fact lent themselves to much debate. The echo of Dan. 1 seems to me insufficient as an explanation. John constantly appeals to a background which his readers knew. It is important to ask what this phrase was intended to convey to them. It is not clear that we have a satisfactory answer. . . . The 'ten days' should probably be seen as a limited, intermediate period of suffering, expected to terminate in judgment and death, but this for the Christian was victory and life, assured by the precedent of Christ's resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20).
Hughes	1990	The ten days here symbolize a limited and comparatively brief duration of persecution. However long and intense affliction may seem to be, it shrinks into insignificance when viewed in the light of eternity.
Kealy	1987	The imprisonment will only last ten days, a semitism for a brief period (Neh 4:12; Dn 1:2).

Koester	2014	"Ten days" seems to be a round number to indicate a limited period (Gen 24:55; Num 11:19).
Laymon	1971	The seer predicts that the church is about to suffer a brief but still more violent affliction and anticipates that it may lead to martyrdom for many.
MacArthur	1999	Though some see the ten days as symbolically representing everything from ten periods of persecution under the Romans, to an undetermined period of time, to a time of ten years, there is no 'exegetical reason to interpret them as anything other than ten actual days. Satan's major assault on that local church would be intense, but brief. "No exegetical reason." If no period of "ten actual days" is available from history (see Gregg), that provides a very good exegetical reason to avoid making an application along these lines.
Mounce	1977	Believers at Smyrna (or at least some of them) are to have tribulation ten days (or "within ten days," Robertson, p. 302). Opinions vary about the time intended. Most view the ten days as a round number indicating a short period of time (Charles, I, p. 58; Kiddle remarks, "As we should say, 'a week or so,'" p. 28), but others hold it to be a prolonged but definitely limited period (Summers defines it as "a number symbolizing extreme, complete tribulation," p. 113). The latter interpretation is more in keeping with the seriousness of the impending crisis.
Osborne	2002	Thus they "will experience affliction" (see 1:9 on "tribulation, affliction") but it will last only "ten days." In others words, God will ensure them a manageable time, similar to the promise of 1 Cor. 10:13, . . . Due to ambiguity caused by the limitation of the "tribulation" to hemeron deka (hemeron deka, for ten days), several theories have been proposed: . . . The main aspect is the limited yet quite severe duration of time symbolized in "for ten days." God is in control and will make certain the period is not too great, but it will be a terrible time nevertheless.
Prigent	2004	This number is surprising. It is generally explained as an assertion that the persecution was limited by God. Ten would thus be a round number that is fitting for this intention.
Ramsay	1994	The "ten days" means simply a period which can be measured, that is, which comes to an end. The persecution will rage for a time, but it will not be permanent. The church will live through it and survive it, and has therefore no reason to be afraid of it.
Roloff	1993	A relatively short, manageable time span is meant by ten days, an allusion to the ten-day test of faith of the young Israelites in the Babylonian court (Dan. 1:12, 14).
Seiss	1964	From two sources did these troubles spring: from blaspheming Jews, and from intolerant Pagans; both actuated by the devil.
Thomas & Macchia	2016	Mention of the church being tested for ten days may well remind the hearers of Dan 1:12, 14, . . .
Tonstad	2019	The "ten days" of affliction are meant to show that the ability of the opposing side to inflict harm is limited.
Wall	1991	The agents of the Evil One in this case are Jews who lay claim to God's Israel but who belong to a synagogue of Satan which actively opposes the church's witness in Smyrna.

Walvoord	1983	Some have taken these words “for 10 days” as a symbolic representation of the entire persecution of the church; others think it refers to 10 persecutions under Roman rulers. The most probable meaning is that it anticipated a limited period of time for suffering (cf. Walvoord, Revelation, p. 61-2). Scott finds precedence in Scripture that 10 days means a limited period of time (Walter Scott, Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 69).
Literal or Unknown		
Collins	2007	In this context of a literal epistle, the preferred interpretation is ten literal days, or understanding 'ten' as a round number, a period of approximately that length.
Leithart	2018	When the devilish Jews conspire to throw Christians into prison, the imprisonment will last only ten days, and then they will rise again to receive crowns.
Thomas	1992	The ten days are literal and refer to an unknown persecution within a definite period of time during the generation to which this message was addressed.
No Historical Fulfillment		
Cory	2005	The commentary follows a conventional approach in its pursuit of these aims. It interprets Revelation historically by reading it in terms of a first-century author, context, and place. . . All these works share the common feature that they cannot be used to speculate about the future. Revelation thus has a threefold function: to console amidst persecution, to interpret history in terms of God's justice and sovereignty, and to persuade readers to remain faithful.
Kistemaker	2001	In Revelation, the number ten conveys the meaning of fullness in the decimal system. It is a symbolical number to express the completeness of the period of suffering, which is neither long nor short but full, for its termination is sure.
Swete	1908	Deka has perhaps been suggested by Dan. i. 14 epeirasen autous deka hemeras; cf. Gen. xxiv. 55, Num. xi. 19, xiv. 22, Job xix. 3. Beatus thinks of the 'ten persecutions,' but it is unnecessary to seek for any historical fulfilment.
Polycarp		
Metzger	1993	Opposition to the gospel was so fierce that martyrdom appeared to be a real possibility. Indeed, one of the best known Christian martyrs of all ages was a native of Smyrna.
Prophetic Time		
Clarke	1810	Ten days] As the days in this book are what is commonly called prophetic days, each answering to a year, the ten days of tribulation may denote ten years of persecution; and this was precisely the duration of the persecution under Diocletian, during which all the Asiatic Churches were grievously afflicted.

Doukhan	2002	The persecution reached alarming proportions under the reign of Diocletian, the historical era of martyrdom. In an edict (303 C.E.) the emperor ordered the Christian communities dissolved, their churches demolished, and their books burned. . . . The last wave of persecutions lasted until 311. In 313 the emperor Constantine released an edict that established Christianity as an official religion. Interestingly, the time of persecution lasted a total of 10 years, as predicted by the letter (one day equals one year, according to prophetic calculations). But the language is also symbolic. . . .
Joreteg	2001	Persecution and suffering were forecasted by God and continued for many years. The last and most severe persecution lasted for 10 years, from A.D. 303 till A.D. 313. This would be a possible explanation for "ten days" of persecution if taken prophetically.
Reference to Daniel, or Short		
Beale	1999	That they "will have ten days of tribulation" is an allusion to Dan. 1:12-15, where the "testng" of Daniel and his three friends "for ten days" is repeated twice. . . . This temporary yet severe trial is but part of the inaugurated latter-day tribulation that is characteristic of Christian existence, not only in the Apocalypse (so 1:9; 2:22; see further on 3:10, but throughout the NT (note use of thlipsis ["tribulation"], especially in Paul).
Brake	2019	Ten days could be an allusion to Daniel 1:12-15 and the ten days of testing of Daniel and his friends. Or it could be a symbolic time period indicating a limited period of suffering.
Fanning	2020	The reference to "ten days" is probably not literal but is perhaps an allusion to Daniel 1:12, 14–15, where the Hebrew young men were tested (LXX περιάζω) for a limited period and in that case achieved a favorable outcome.
Ford	2008	The imprisonment is to last for ten days. This may simply imply "a short period," but it may have an indirect reference to such texts as Dan 1:12–14 where Daniel and his companions are "tested" with a vegetarian diet for ten days and Gen 24:55 where Rebekah's family ask that she remain with them ten days.
Morris	1987	Ten days (the time of Daniel's testing, Dn. 1:12-15) may well point to the completion of their suffering: 'It is only for a limited time that you will have to endure, even though endurance will be tested to the limit' (Niles). It certainly points to something more than three and a half days, which is John's usual expression for a trial of limited duration. Yet even ten has its limit.
Murphy	1998	"Ten days" is not to be taken literally. It recalls the ten days during which Daniel and his companions were allowed to live the Jewish way of life to see if it hindered them in their service to the Babylonian court (Dan 1:12-13). Ten days is a substantial amount of time, but it is not lengthy. . . . The time of testing is limited, recalling the synoptic apocalyptic discourse where Christ says concerning the final afflictions, "If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days" (Mark 13:20).

Osborne	2016	The “ten days” is not meant literally but alludes to the 10-day testing of Daniel in Daniel 1:12–14. It refers to a limited period in which the saints will triumph through endurance. It will be a terrible time of severe suffering, but God will get them through it.
Phillips	2017	It is likely that 'ten days' is a symbolic number indicating a limited and relatively brief period of suffering. . . . The duration of 'ten days' may also be intended to link back to the book of Daniel,
Smalley	2005	The number 'ten' is possibly a reflection of Dan. 1.14 (Daniel and his companions, on a special diet, are 'tested for ten days'); cf. Gen. 24.55; Num. 14.22; Job 19.3. However, it is more likely that the numeral is chosen because it represents a period which includes real suffering, but is itself restricted; and the limit is known to God (cf. 2 Cor. 4.17-18).
Ten "Days" < Ten Fingers		
Aune	1997	The phrase “ten days” is used for an undefined but relatively short period of time, perhaps because it is the sum of the fingers of both hands (Gen 24:55; Num 11:19; Neh 5:18; Jer 42:7; Dan 1:12-15); m. 'Abot 5:1-6 contains a list of ten things of various kinds. Ten can also function as a number signifying completeness; see Brongers, “Zehnzahl,” 30-45.
Stefanovic	2002	"Ten days." Most scholars hold that "ten days" was the normal ancient expression for a relatively short period of time (cf. Gen. 24:55; 1 Sam 25:38; Dan 1:12-15; Acts 25:6). David Aune maintains that is probably related to the fact that the sum of all fingers is ten. These "ten days" represent a period of testing the faithfulness and endurance of the community in Smyrna, like the ten days of testing for Daniel and his friends in Babylon (Dan. 1:12-15).

The above authors generally take “ten” figuratively and “days” literally. I suggest taking “ten” literally and “days” figuratively. Ten “days” are ten “years,” in the normal historicist manner.

Appendix 2

More on the Word *hotan*

Leithart challenges the idea that the meaning of *hotan* in Rev 4:9 should be “whenever.” He argues that the action of this scene only happens once.

“Most translations make it sound as if John sees that happen before the Lamb comes; some translations take it as a repeated action (ὅταν translated as ‘whenever’). That is incorrect. 4:9–10 is a prediction. ὅταν can mean simply “when,” as it does elsewhere in Revelation (8:1; 10:7; 11:7; 12:4; cf. Aune 1997: 307), and all the verbs describing the actions of the πρεσβύτεροι are futures (πρесоῦνται ... προσκυνήσουσιν ... βαλοῦσιν). Verses 9–10 thus mean: ‘When the living things give glory and honor and thanks ... the twenty-four elders will fall down ... and will worship ... and will cast their crowns.’ It is an event, not a continuous ceremony, and it will happen when the living creatures give thanks and glory. John does witness that event, later, when the Lamb appears. Then, the living creatures prostrate themselves for the first time (5:8), and at that point the elders cast their crowns before the throne—once for all.⁸¹

The above position is well argued, but I disagree. One problem is that, once the elders fall before the throne, the implication is that they must remain there “day and night” for however long the throne scenes lasts. There does not appear to be any question that the living creatures continue endlessly saying what they say. Only that the elders respond once.

Force of syntax

Leithart is right in pointing out that the verb forms in vs. 9 are futures, but in vs. 8 the verbs are present in tense or aspect, whatever concept of Greek verb forms one might have. Contextually this implies that the creatures have already begun their endless praise by the time we get to the following verse (*kai anapausin ouk echousin hēmeras kai nuktos legontes* “day and night they never cease to say”). Day and night they never cease to do something once? This is not what the syntax would naturally imply.

Assuming that in vs. 8 the creatures have already begun praising God, the use of future tense forms in vss. 9–10 do not make sense. If the creatures have not already

⁸¹ Peter J. Leithart, Revelation, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, vol. 1, *The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments* (London; Oxford; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury; Bloomsbury T&T Clark: An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 230–231.

begun praising God, the use of present tense forms in vs. 8 do not make sense. These would seem to be the only alternatives. There might be another approach.

W. Bousset characterized the shifting tenses in the Apocalypse as 'das regellose Schwanken.' S. Thompson also observed the 'sudden and seemingly inexplicable shifts among aorist/present/future tenses of verbs... without a corresponding shift in the time during which the action being described actually takes place.'⁸²

According to Matthewson some have pointed out a sequence of tenses, starting with aorist, leading to present, and ending with future. He argues against this alternative. Others have tried to see a Semitic substratum in John's thinking.⁸³ He rejects this also and suggests rather that:

. . . Greek verb endings do not so much signify when the action occurred (time), or the way the action actually occurred (Aktionsart), the main focus of traditional grammatical discussion, but rather how the author chooses to represent, view, or conceive of the process (aspect).⁸⁴

The above evaluation might appear overly subjective and takes us back to our starting point as exegetes, which is context. I grant that John's syntax in vss. 9-10 is unusual, but the obvious sense of the passage is as many English translations have represented it, i.e., as a recurring cycle.⁸⁵ Versions have found equivalent ways to convey this cyclic idea: "As often as" (NEB), "Every time" (JB, NJB). Syntactically Leithart has not made his case.

Force of context

Context lends support to ESV's rendering. Notice the difference between the following two statements:

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones [*epi tous thronous*] were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. (Rev 4:4)

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ^[10] the twenty-four elders fall down [*pesountai*]

⁸² David Mathewson, "Verbal Aspect in the Apocalypse of John: An Analysis of Revelation," *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008), 59.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Idem, 61.

⁸⁵ See CSB, ESV, HCSB, ML, NAB, NET, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV, REB, RSV.

before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, . . . (Rev 4:9-10)

In the one statement the elders are seated, in the other they are prostrate. Perhaps this only happens once, as Leithart suggests.

There is a parallel in Rev 7. In Rev 7:11-12 the text says,

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell [*epesan*] on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ^[12] saying, . . . (Rev 7:11-12)

Falling is a motion that involves a change of location. From where? It is one thing to say “they fell,” but this assume they were seated before fallings. Is this with split second timing the same moment as we saw earlier in Rev 4:10 when the elders prostrate themselves once? Or is it generally the case that the elders prostrate themselves regularly?

And another in Rev 11. In Rev 11:16-17 the elders again transition from a seated posture to a prostrate one:

And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ^[17] saying, . . . (Rev 11:16-17)

Here there is in the same verse an explicit mention of the elders sitting (*kathēmenoi*) and then falling (*epesan*). They are changing location. The idea that these three scenes would capture precisely the same moment goes beyond context.

Leithart’s syntactic argument might be correct, but it leads to a sea of subjectivity. Context is also subjective. The more we argue from parallels the stronger our case will be. My sense is that ESV has captured the right sense in Rev 4:9 by translating *hotan* as “whenever.”

Appendix 3

Spirit of Prophecy

Some of the statements Ellen White makes about Rev 4-5 seem to emphasize the first apartment. Others emphasize the second apartment. In studying these statements we must bear in mind that one person wrote all of them. We must not separate them from each other as though they disagreed.

First apartment emphasis

The holy places of the sanctuary in heaven are represented by the two apartments in the sanctuary on earth. As in vision the apostle John was granted a view of the temple of God in heaven, he beheld there "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne." Revelation 4:5. He saw an angel "having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." Revelation 8:3. Here the prophet was permitted to behold the first apartment [415] of the sanctuary in heaven; and he saw there the "seven lamps of fire" and "the golden altar," represented by the golden candlestick and the altar of incense in the sanctuary on earth. Again, "the temple of God was opened" (Revelation 11:19), and he looked within the inner veil, upon the holy of holies. Here he beheld "the ark of His testament," represented by the sacred chest constructed by Moses to contain the law of God.⁸⁶

When John sees the lampstands in Rev 4:5 clearly he is beholding the first apartment. But where is the sea of glass? Ellen White says nothing about this in the above statement. And where is the throne? She doesn't mention that either. So, whereas we should be careful to let Ellen White say what she says, we should be careful not to make her say what she does not say. I have argued that the throne is in the second apartment. In the above statement she says nothing to contradict this.

Second apartment emphasis

In the holiest I saw an ark; on the top and sides of it was purest gold. On each end of the ark was a lovely cherub, with its wings spread out over it. Their faces were turned toward each other, and they looked downward. Between the angels was a golden censer. Above the ark, where the angels stood, was an exceeding bright glory, that appeared like a throne

⁸⁶ *Great Controversy*, 414. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 356.

where God dwelt. Jesus stood by the ark, and as the saints' prayers came up to Him, the incense in the censer would smoke, and He would offer up their prayers with the smoke of the incense to His Father. In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and I saw the ten commandments written on them with the finger of God. On one table were four, and on the other six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six. But the fourth, the [33] Sabbath commandment, shone above them all; for the Sabbath was set apart to be kept in honor of God's holy name. The holy Sabbath looked glorious--a halo of glory was all around it. I saw that the Sabbath commandment was not nailed to the cross. If it was, the other nine commandments were; and we are at liberty to break them all, as well as to break the fourth. I saw that God had not changed the Sabbath, for He never changes. But the pope had changed it from the seventh to the first day of the week; for he was to change times and laws.⁸⁷

In this vision, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne in the most holy place, above the ark containing His commandments, and surrounded by the cherubim and His appointed attendants – His ministers. From this holy place the glory shone forth. Those who are now engaged in carrying forward the Lord's work in the earth, should keep their eyes fixed on the place where the Lord God of heaven is enthroned. From Him they should obtain their orders.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ *Early Writings*, 32. See *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 394; *Special Testimonies on Education*, 19; *Review & Herald*, February 25, 1896 par. 5; 1 *Biography*, 120.4; *Broadside* 3, April 7, 1847; *Review & Herald*, July 21, 1851 par. 10; *Word to the Little Flock*, 18; 1 *Spiritual Gifts*, 158; *Experience and Views*, 16.1; *Life Sketches*, 100; *God's Amazing Grace*, 71; *Early Writings*, 32; 2521; *Christian Experience and Teachings*, 91.

⁸⁸ *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 17, 1902 par. 9. This quotation does not identify the throne with the ark. It associates them, but does not identify them.

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Crossway, 2001, 2016..
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- KJV* King James Version
Issued by many publishers at many times.
- MLB* Modern Language Bible: The New Berkeley Version in Modern English
Zondervan, 1969.
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Catholic, 1970.
- NET* New English Translation
Biblical Studies Press, 2005.
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