

*Revelation 4-5  
and 19a*

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# Foreword

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The present volume is a discussion draft of work in progress. It is still rough in some ways but far enough along in the incubation process to invite comment from experienced readers.

Below I write for an informed Seventh-day Adventist lay readership. I do not go into a lot of history here, nor do I refer to the original languages often. The main background needed is a careful knowledge of the book of Revelation.

In these pages I have occasion to discuss the published work of Kenneth A. Strand and C. Mervyn Maxwell. These are certainly men I respect, but this does not keep me from disagreeing with them. Actually, it would be impossible not to disagree with at least one or the other, because on certain matters they disagree with each other. The most important example of such differences has to do with where to place Rev 19:1-10 in the overall outline of the book. Strand originally put in a section including Rev 19:1-21:4. Maxwell, on the other hand, put in a section including Rev 17:1-19:10. Here I side with Strand against Maxwell.

It's not just a matter of a few verses either way. In Strand's original framework Rev 19:1-10, with its references to a vast multitude, twenty-four elders, four living creatures, and so on stands in chiasmic parallel with Rev 4-5, which refers to these same things in a similar context. Thus, for Strand Rev 4-5 was in section B and Rev 19a was in section B'. This makes sense, since the parallels between the two sections are extensive.

For some reason, however, Maxwell breaks this relationship. For Maxwell Rev 4-5 are in section B, but Rev 19a is in section C(b)'. So his revised version of the outline shows no parallel between the (a) four living creatures, (b) twenty-four elders, and (c) vast multitude in Rev 4-5 and the (c') vast multitude, (b') twenty-four elders, and (a') four living creatures in Rev 19a, even though all the same elements appear and are introduced in chiasmically retrograde order (abc in Rev 4-5, c'b'a' in Rev 19a).

Another parallel Maxwell allows to pass with comment is that between Rev 5:11 ("Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand") and Dan 7:10 ("Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him").

Maxwell was a very astute scholar. I submit that what we are seeing here is not a lapse on his part, but something more systematic. In this book I would like to examine the nature of his model and offer a way of viewing the same material that differs in some respects from Maxwell but is resolutely consistent with all of our major historic beliefs.

I welcome any comments or criticisms ([webmail@historicism.org](mailto:webmail@historicism.org)). We cannot grow in our understanding if we do not wrestle with issues openly.

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# *Part 1*

## Introduction

# *Introduction*

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**B**elow I discuss the work of two men in particular - Kenneth A. Strand and C. Mervyn Maxwell. Both have had a large and beneficial influence on Seventh-day Adventists' understanding of the book of Revelation.

## Kenneth A. Strand

Kenneth A. Strand has distinguished himself in a number of areas of Biblical scholarship.<sup>1</sup> The area of interest here concerns only his research into the literary structure of the book of Revelation. Strand's theory of the structure of Revelation takes two forms. He claims first that the book is arranged chiastically, and second that the book divides in half with a different focus in each half. These two claims appear to overlap but must be considered separately. We do this below.

### **Positive features**

In his 1979 book entitled, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*,<sup>2</sup> Strand proposes the framework for an outline shown in fig. 1 below.

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<sup>1</sup> See Nancy J. Vyhmeister, "Change - The Unchanging Reality" (Andrews University Seminary Studies 32 (1994): 164-65. With this editorial Vyhmeister replaces Strand as editor of A USS and provides a brief review of her predecessor's career. It was an illustrious one. "The subjects on which he has written for AUSS - Revelation, Roman history. Early Church, Reformation, German Bibles, among others - show the breadth of his well-cultivated intellect and insatiable curiosity" (p. 164).

<sup>2</sup> Published privately by the author (Naples, FL: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979).

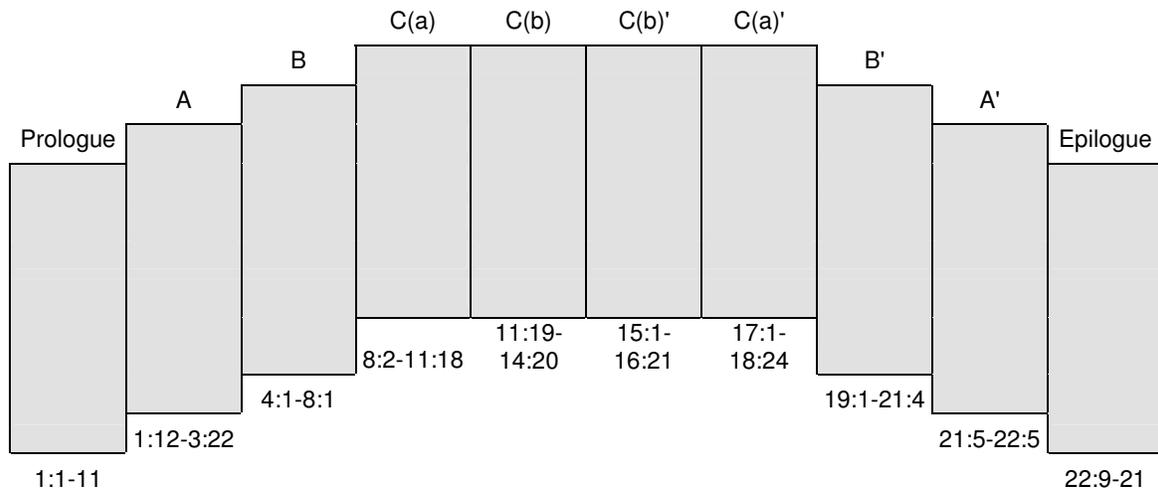


Fig. 1. "Chiastic Structure of the Book of Revelation," adapted from Strand's book, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 52.

In his 1979 book, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, Strand added a footnote to the figure from which the above is adapted. It read, "(Note: The divisions of the text are somewhat tentative)."<sup>3</sup> But the outline format Strand proposed at that time has been accepted with modifications by C. Mervyn Maxwell for the latter's commentary, *God Cares*, vol. 2: *The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family*.<sup>4</sup> We discuss Maxwell's modifications in a later section of the present chapter, but my point here is that Strand's work has been accepted by other scholars working in the same area of research. By now only certain details are subject to question. There is no going back to an earlier day. The chiastic analysis Strand proposed was an outstanding contribution and may be considered established if we judge by its acceptance among his peers.

### Negative features

One feature of Strand's model remains problematic. This has nothing to do with his chiasms. Rather it has to do with the concept of dividing the book of Revelation in two, with one half being "historical" and the other "eschatological." The proposed distinction between history and eschatology is always unnecessary, never defined, and sometimes contradictory.

If we augment the chiastic structure of Revelation with the additional, strengthening element that the two halves of the book contrast with each other and have truly different foci, we obscure the main point that the chiasms are designed to convey, i.e. that passages in the two halves are comparable. Thus the two parts of Strand's model are not only independent of each other but, when pressed, actually work at cross purposes.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985.

In general it is true that the book of Revelation starts with historical matters and moves gradually - although not in any straight line as Strand points out - toward those that are eschatological. I grant this much. But saying so has nothing to do with the chiasmic structure of the book. It is not a structural matter at all but has to do with content. So once more Strand has picked up something that others had missed, but in this case I believe he has misconstrued the nature of his discovery.

In every case where Strand applies his theory of two contrasting halves of the book of Revelation in order to exegete a specific passage the division into halves is unnecessary and requires disclaimers in order to maintain descriptive adequacy. This part of the model simply does not work.

This much could be allowed to pass without comment, but in fact it actively obscures a point of great significance that would otherwise be too obvious to miss.

*An example Strand gives.* Consider an example of the problem under review. Strand argues that in Rev 17 the "is not" phase of the seven-part sequence of powers in vs. 8 must be considered "eschatological."

In each of these chapters [12, 13, 17] the theme of struggle is prominent; but it is important to note that the first two chapters belong to a series or subdivision in Revelation which is historical, whereas chapter 17 is found in the eschatological part of the book. The context in each case reveals this very fact of history for chapters 12, 13, and eschatology for chapter 17; for the people of God are persecuted at the hands of the powers of evil in the first two chapters, whereas chapter 17 portrays judgment on the forces of evil. The presence or absence of crowns (the sign of regal power) in several of these chapters is significant too: in chapter 12, crowns are on the heads; in chapter 13, crowns are on the horns; and in chapter 17, no crowns are mentioned. For interpretational purposes, treatment of these various animals as within the scope of either the historical series or the eschatological series - whichever is appropriate - is vital. To seek a fulfillment in history, for example, for the "is not" phase of the beast of chapter 17, when that phase is obviously a view of judgment, is illogical. Or to treat the whole of chapter 17 as having historical, rather than eschatological, fulfillment is to miss the very point of the chapter and of the whole second part of the book of Revelation in which it occurs.<sup>5</sup>

What sort of fulfillment would qualify as being "historical" or "eschatological"? Strand never supplies a definition. We return to this matter below. For now notice merely that the sixth phase of power in Rev 17:8 and 10 is preceded by five others. Are they also eschatological? They are mentioned in the same verse and chapter - in the same half of the book. If the eschatological nature of phase 6 derives from its location in the book, as Strand argues, then the other phases, since they share that location, should be just as eschatological as the one he singles out.

What do the first five phases of world power refer to in Rev 17? They refer to the same things there that they do elsewhere. If Maxwell is right, these are the same powers

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<sup>5</sup> Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 54.

that we read about in Daniel. If so, phase 1 refers to Babylon, phase 2 to Medo-Persia, phase 3 to Greece, and phase 4 to the secular Roman state.<sup>6</sup>

I admit that I am judging Strand by Maxwell's standard here. In both his 1975 monograph entitled, *Perspectives in the Book of Revelation*, and in the second edition of his 1979 book, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, Strand includes a chart showing how he understands the relationship between the seven phases of Rev 17:8 and 10.<sup>7</sup> It is a complicated chart and the respective parts of the two verses do not refer to the same things. In my view Maxwell has introduced a vast improvement by showing how both verses relate to the series of world empires in Daniel.<sup>8</sup> So in Rev 17 I disagree with Strand on more than his use of terms and this part of the discussion reflects both aspects of that disagreement.

If it is true that Maxwell has offered a better alternative by interpreting Revelation in the context of Daniel, and if there are four world empires in Daniel, then how are there seven when we come to Revelation?

Actually there are five in Daniel. In chap. 2 the iron of the Roman state is followed by the iron and clay mixture of the medieval Roman church/state. In chap. 7 the beast is followed by the little horn and when the little horn appears in chap. 8 it is by itself, showing that it is distinct (though not separate) from the beast which supports it. The distinctness of the two is our point here. In chap. 11, where Greece stops at vs. 15, Rome is described first with secular terms (vss. 16-28) and then with religious terms (vss. 29-39). These include "the holy covenant" (vs. 30), "temple fortress," "daily sacrifice," and "abomination" (vs. 31), "covenant" and "God" (vs. 32) - terms not used in earlier verses. In Daniel the fourth world power is always subdivided.

When we come to Revelation the second phase of Roman power is divided again. The fifth empire is the one wounded in Rev 13:3, splitting it into three parts: before the wound, during the wound, and after the wound. The first four (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, secular Rome) plus these last three (religious Rome before, during, and after the wound) make seven in all. The two series correspond perfectly and in a way that offers great insight to the student of prophecy. First consider the Roman Empire (#4). Next the Roman church rises to power as heir to the Roman state (#5). Then the secular power of the Roman church is temporarily removed (#6, "is not"). And finally, for a short time before Christ returns, its secular power is restored (#7). Notice that its religious authority is not affected by any of this.<sup>9</sup> So when John says "now is not" in vs. 8

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<sup>6</sup> "There is another fairly simple interpretation, one which, however, views the puzzle from the end time rather than from John's day. It sees the five "fallen" heads as Babylon, Persia, Greece, Roman Empire, and Christian Rome. The sixth head (in the end time) "is" Christian Rome in its wounded state, to be followed soon by the seventh head that "has not yet come," Christian Rome in its revived condition. The "hour" when the ten kings reign with the beast is a brief period at the very end of time when with dictatorial intensity they aid the beast in reviving harsh persecution" (Maxwell, *God Cares* 2:471 -72).

<sup>7</sup> See *Perspectives*, p. 14 and *Interpreting*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> See *God Cares*, 2:471-79.1 find Maxwell's analysis of this passage entirely convincing.

<sup>9</sup> "Perhaps right here a misunderstanding needs to be cleared up. The wound is mentioned in chapter 13 in a symbol where the church and the state are not differentiated, the two being combined under the one symbol of the leopard beast; but in chapter 17, where a clear distinction is shown between the drunken woman and the beast upon which she rides, the woman is not

he is referring to the "fatal wound" of Rev 13:3. When he says "one is" in vs. 10 he is identifying his timeframe for saying what he does about it.

To seek a fulfillment in history, for example, for the "is not" phase of the beast of chapter 17, when that phase is obviously a view of judgment, is illogical. Or to treat the whole of chapter 17 as having historical, rather than eschatological, fulfillment is to miss the very point of the chapter and of the whole second part of the book of Revelation in which it occurs.<sup>10</sup>

According to Maxwell phase 6 refers to the hiatus in persecution that we now enjoy. If this interpretation is correct, and I believe it is,<sup>11</sup> then the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Mexican-American War, and both World Wars have all been fought within phase 6. Our grandparents and their grandparents were born during this same period. So why is it "illogical" to seek a fulfillment in history for a portion of the prophecy which deals with our own day and time? Here Maxwell has dramatically advanced our understanding of the passage.

Strand's conclusion does follow from his premise, but the premise is wrong.<sup>12</sup> The Civil War is history, whether or not it occurs during phase 6. So is the Second World War. And what shall we say about the development of our own church from the time of the Millerites onward, leading to the understanding of prophecy under debate here? If this is not history, what is history?

*The definition Strand fails to give.* Another problem I have with Strand's suggestion that we divide the book of Revelation into contrasting halves is that the crucial terms "history" and "eschatology" are never defined. He does give examples of how he would like us to use the above terms, but never any definitions.

So let me propose a definition. "Eschatology" corresponds to the "time of the end" and beyond, as described by Daniel. The "time of the end" is not the end of time but the end of religious persecution as the 1260 days (or forty-two months, or three and

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said to be wounded or out of action, the beast only is affected, and it is completely paralyzed - it 'is not.' (Verse 8.) In chapter 18, meaning a later period, the woman congratulates herself that she is no longer a widow; but it is plain that no part of the prophecy ever represents the Catholic Church as having been wounded or even hurt at all. Her paramour is the one who suffers the wound, and he is completely out of action" (George McCready Price, *The Time of the End* [Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1967], pp. 75-76).

<sup>10</sup> Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> "Price also believes it is. "The wound means much more than the temporary interruption of some of the functions of the Catholic Church. To revert to the symbols given in chapter 17, it was not the woman that received the wound, but the beast. Obviously the wound means the taking away of the beastly power to dominate the world and deal with 'heretics.' This deadly wound will not be healed until the old power of persecution is restored" (*Time of the End*, p. 74). (Emphases in original.)

<sup>12</sup> "All of the following three premises are wrong: (1) that Rev 17:8 and 10 are talking about different things, (2) that what vs. 10 has in view pertains mostly to the future, and (3) that one phase can be (must be) eschatological due to its position in the book while other phases in the same verse or verses need not be.

a half times/years)<sup>13</sup> of papal power during the Middle Ages run their course. The historical dividing line between the time of the end and what precedes it during the 1260 days is the spectacular close of Pope Pius VI's reign at the hands of the French in 1798.<sup>14</sup>

If Strand's distinction between "history" and "eschatology" is accepted in principle and if 1798 is the dividing line between the two, this fact raises two empirical problems for Strand's model. The first is that what we are now calling "eschatological" is also a very real period of history. More than this, it is the one we are living in now. So history and eschatology are need not be mutually exclusive. This is one point.

A second point is that, as Seventh-day Adventists understand the various parts of Revelation that Strand outlines, there is a constant crisscrossing of the 1798 threshold. In the first or "historical" half of the book (chaps. 1-14) the first five letters come before 1798, the last two are afterward. Again, the first five seals come before 1798, and the last two are afterward. And in the "eschatological" half (chaps. 15-22) the series of world powers given in Rev 17, according to Maxwell, begins with Babylon during the time of Jeremiah and Daniel. Strand acknowledges this difficulty:

It should be emphasized that although the book of Revelation falls into two main parts, we must not expect every individual item in the first part to be historical and every individual item in the last part to be eschatological, indeed, although the various scenes in the first main part of the book deal with the historical sphere, they generally move to an eschatological climax; and on the other hand, although the point of view in the last main part of the book is that of eschatology, certain items found therein involve prior history. For example, in the historical series, the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, and the harvest of Revelation 14 are eschatological. And in the eschatological series, the appeal to "watch" in chapter 16 and the cry to "come out" of

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<sup>13</sup> "This period is given no fewer than seven times in Daniel and Revelation. It is given as a number of days (1260 days) in Rev 11:3 and 12:6, a number of months (42 months) in Rev 11:2 and 13:5, and a number of years (three times and a half) in Dan 7:25; 12:7; and Rev 12:14. A clarification of Rev 12:14 is an order of magnitude shorter than the 1260 days. The three and a half "times" in Dan 7:25 and 12:7 are 360 prophetic days or 360 literal years. The three and a half "days" in Rev 12:14 are three and a half prophetic days or three and a half literal years, in any event, here is God's counterpart to the futurist gap. What our Evangelical friends would like us to skip over in silence as having no special importance the Holy Spirit insists on emphasizing seven times over.

<sup>14</sup> "During the French Revolution and under orders from the revolutionary French government. General Alexander Berthier issued a proclamation in Rome on February 15, 1798, informing Pope Pius VI and the people of Rome that the pope should no longer 'exercise any jurisdiction.' Richard Duppa, a British writer who was in Rome at the time, says that the pope was arrested in the Sistine Chapel while he was celebrating the twenty-third anniversary of his coronation. Citizen Haller, the French commissary-general, and Cervoni, who commanded the French troops in Rome under General Berthier, 'gratified themselves in a peculiar triumph over this unfortunate potentate. During that ceremony they both entered the chapel, and Haller announced to the sovereign Pontiff on his throne that his reign was at an end. The poor old man seemed shocked at the abruptness of his unexpected notice, but soon recovered himself with becoming fortitude.' The pope's Swiss guards were dismissed, and Republican soldiers were installed in their place" (Maxwell, *God Cares* 2:328). See also Cedric Ward, "Napoleon and the Pope - What Really Happened in 1798?" *Ministry*, June 1979, pp. 4-7.

Babylon in chapter 18, as well as certain explanations of the heads of the beast in chapter 17, and from the viewpoint of history even though the basic settings are eschatological.<sup>15</sup>

The above statement is certainly forthright and honest on Strand's part. I do not think, however, that granting latitude in this way is enough of a concession. The nature of the distinction has been misconceived. The gradual shift from history to eschatology in Revelation is real enough but it is not a fact about structure. Instead it is a fact about content. The terms "structure" and "content" will also require definition and after we have defined them they also will be subject to debate. But my point is that the shift from "history" to "eschatology" should not be dealt with in our outline. That is not where it belongs. Structure and content will fade into each other at some point but here the emphasis must be on content. Thus we can readily accept Strand's valid insights about a general shift from history to eschatology while rejecting his distinction in any structural sense.

Perhaps choosing a specific year to mark the beginning of eschatology in Revelation is too rigid. Gerhard Pfandl, in his published dissertation entitled, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*,<sup>16</sup> points out that expressions such as "the latter days" can have different meanings in different passages.

In Deut 4:30, "the latter days" refer to the days of the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles which for Moses were "in the future." They were the eschatological "latter days" for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, respectively, in the sense that these two nations ceased to exist as independent monarchies in history, . . .

Hosea 3:5 looks beyond the exile to "the latter days," i.e., the eschatological age of the Messiah, when Israel would wholeheartedly return to Yahweh and his Messiah. . . .

"The latter days" in Ezek 38:16 refer first of all to the time after the exile when this prophecy could have found a fulfillment. Rev 20 indicates that the prophecy of Ezekiel will find a complete fulfillment after the Millennium when the forces of evil are finally eradicated from this world. This gives Ezek 38:16 an eschatological, even apocalyptic, import since the complete fulfillment of this prophecy coincides with the end of history as we know it.<sup>17</sup>

If Pfandl is correct, we could say that an eschatological event is one in any age which marks a momentous turning point in human affairs that has not yet happened. By "turning point" I mean when an entire epoch or era comes to an end, and yet life goes on. Even in regard to the second coming and the end of the world, life goes on. Otherwise what does Paul mean when he says that "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). At the second coming life goes on forever. But the events surrounding it do clearly mark the end of an epoch. Just so in regard to any earlier events that prefigure these greater and more climactic ones. In the Old Testament passages Pfandl catalogues we may say that eschatology is defined by the magnitude of a set of events rather than by its date.

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<sup>15</sup> Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-79.

The exile of Israel and Judah, the return of Judah from exile, and the birth of Christ were all considered eschatological at one time. In passages such as Gen 49:1,10 and Hos 3:5 the first coming of Christ was to happen *b'eah'arît hayyamîm* "in days to come" or, more literally, "in the latter days." It was an eschatological event. Is it therefore not also a historical event? I would not want to make such a claim. The event was eschatological long ago because it was future and would have momentous significance, and it is historical now because it did come and because it had the level of significance the prophets foresaw. There is no conflict in this example between eschatology and history. We can distinguish between the two where it is useful but must not separate them as though they disagreed.

Although much is said about Christianity being a "historical religion," seldom is the full import of these words carried through consistently into every crevice and corner of the theological interpretation of faith. Moreover, the relationship between the *Heilsgeschichte* with which Christian faith is especially concerned and the ordinary, secular history in which all of us live every moment of our lives remains almost entirely unspecified. So despite its interest in "history" the Christian faith appears to many moderns to be in fact completely irrelevant to the only history which they know.<sup>18</sup>

If others work themselves into such corners, Seventh-day Adventists should not. Real events can have deep prophetic meaning and prophetic events in turn can be very real. Otherwise the prophecy was false. Let us do nothing that would remove God from history as we know it, putting God there and man here. Christ has united the two in His person so let us not take them apart. Here is the meaning of Jacob's mystic ladder, which pointed forward to Christ (see Gen 28:10-22; John 1:50-51). Let Him be our Source of instruction in this as in all other things.

## C. Mervyn Maxwell

I begin with the negative features of Maxwell's work so I can end with the positive features which outweigh them.

### Negative features

C. Mervyn Maxwell sets aside some excellent literature in the process of interpreting Rev 4-5 and 19a. The outline he chooses for Revelation is largely but not entirely based on Strand's earlier work. He changes it in three places. An abbreviated summary of Maxwell's altered outline is shown in fig. 2 below.

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<sup>18</sup> Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. xii.

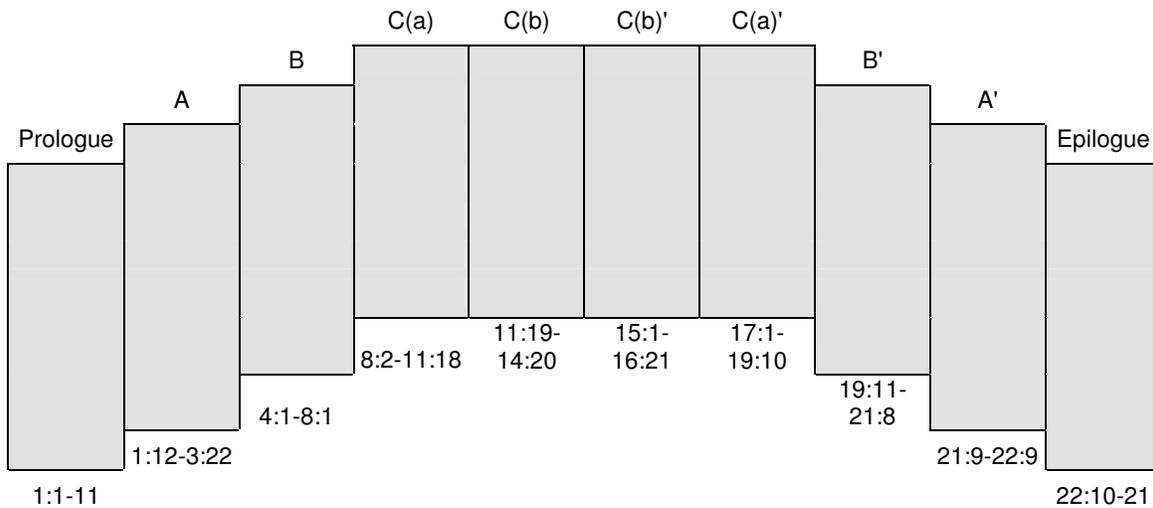


Fig. 2. "The Mirrorlike Organization of the Book of Revelation," adapted from Maxwell's book, *God Cares*, 2:60-61.

The changes Maxwell proposed to Strand's outline are all found in later sections, i.e., the sections that Strand called C(b)', B', A', and Epilogue. The terms are different for Maxwell, since he had a different readership in view, but the only changes of any substance are those shown in table 1 below.

Table 1  
Maxwell's Changes to Strand's Outline

	Strand	Maxwell
C(b)'	17:1-18:24	17:1-19:10
B'	19:1-21:4	19:11-21:8
A'	21:5-22:5	21:9-22:9
Epilogue	22:6-21	22:10-21

In my view Maxwell's change in section B' (ending with 21:8 rather than 21:4) is an improvement and should be kept. The change in section A' (ending with 22:9 rather than 22:5) is a mere quibble. NIV offers a section break at 22:8. The fact is no one is sure where this section ends, nor does it matter a lot.

The change in section C(b)', however, is crucially significant and I believe Strand had it right all along. By changing the end of section C(b)' from 18:24 to 19:10 Maxwell makes a major statement about the courtroom scene in Rev 4-5. What he is saying here is that Rev 4-5 does not stand in parallel with Rev 19a and the two passages should not be compared with each other. The obvious parallels that Strand had noticed between the two chapters are deemphasized if not wholly obscured.

It is fair to ask why this should be. I hesitate to speak for Maxwell but it is a fact that the parallels between Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 are also hidden from view. And these are

just as obvious as those between Rev 4-5 and 19a. It is impossible to conceive that so sharp an exegete as Maxwell simply missed the connections we are talking about. The only alternative is to assume that he did not miss them. Why? What do the above parallels say that he would wish to avoid?

They say that the throneroom scene of Rev 4-5 represents the judgment. This conclusion does not fit his model and so he sets the evidence aside. It is his book and he can write it in whatever way he pleases, but when all is said and done the parallels are still there and require just as much attention as they did before. Writing a book does not change what it was written about. What it does do is raise questions as to why one would not want to deal with certain issues. The issues Maxwell seeks to avoid concerning the close relationship between Dan 7, Rev 4-5, and Rev 19a are the subject of this book.

### **Positive features**

Maxwell has given us the benefit of a lifetime of study in church history and Scripture. The special genius of his book lies in controlling a vast array of factual information on the one hand and on the other the art of presenting it in a well digested manner that any interested reader can enjoy. Maxwell was uniquely qualified to do this task and we can all be glad that he did it so well. Placed in perspective my differences with Maxwell are significant but small. I think there are things he has missed and take issue with him in what follows, but in the end the results he brings us to are the right results. I can heartily recommend his book to any student of Revelation.

Another point about these volumes, with special reference to vol. 2, is the use of literary structure as an organizing principle. Other commentaries might deal with structure in some way but no commentary I have ever seen gives it the same level of emphasis that Maxwell does. This places his work in a category by itself. It is true that Strand pointed the way, but it is also true that Strand without Maxwell would not have taken things much farther than Maxwell would have without Strand. We can be grateful to both men.

A third point is Maxwell's decision to avoid the common verse-by-verse format of traditional commentaries. Instead he has offered us a series of essays on individual topics touching on interpretation. The didactic value of this approach is vastly greater than any alternative I know of. In my opinion focusing exclusively on verses is to theology what focusing on words without sentences would be to language. One does not learn a foreign language by memorizing vocabulary lists. There must also be communication. Something meaningful must be said. Language without syntax is just a word list (i.e., it is not language), and verses without the relationships that bind them together is not a meaningful text. So I think Maxwell is far in advance of other writers when it comes to capturing the broader themes in Revelation. This he has done in a truly masterful way.

## Other Writers

After giving all due credit to Strand and to Maxwell there are strengths and weaknesses in both men's work. Here I try to point these out honestly without being unfair. It is not my purpose to criticize another's work. It is my purpose to elucidate Rev 4-5 and 19a. This is something that Strand got right and on which others have agreed both before and after Maxwell.<sup>19</sup> It is something that will not just go away. We must deal with it.

### R. Alan Anderson

R. Alan Anderson wrote a brief commentary on Revelation for a lay readership some years ago. His book, *Unfolding the Revelation: Evangelistic Studies for Public Presentation*, was first published in 1953 and subsequently reissued in 1961 and 1974.

In his chapter entitled, "The Vision of the Throne; The Lamb and the Sealed Book," Anderson comments as follows on the setting for this vision:

The earthly sanctuary built by Moses contained two apartments. These were called the "holy place" and the "most holy place." No one entered the "most holy place" except the high priest, and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Throughout all their history the Hebrews have understood the Day of Atonement to prefigure the day of judgment when the cases of all will be decided. The earthly sanctuary was a type of the heavenly (see Hebrews 9), and in vision John saw "a door . . . opened in heaven;" not *into* heaven, but *in* heaven. It was the opening of an inner door in the heavenly sanctuary. He was taken in vision to behold the solemn scenes of the judgment when the High Priest performs His closing work of ministry.<sup>20</sup>

A few pages later Anderson returns to the matter of the prophecy's setting and quotes Daniel to support his position.

"We shall reign on the earth," sing the elders in triumph. Verse 10. They are not on the earth now, nor will they always be in heaven. The earth is their home, and if faithful, we with them shall reign on the earth made new. This is prefigured in the marvelous setting of this great assembly. What majesty! What glory is there! Daniel, describing this, says, "His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and then thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9, 10.

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<sup>19</sup> I have stated that Strand understood the parallels between Rev 4-5 and 19a correctly. I have also stated that his theory of dividing Revelation in half compromises a correct understanding of those parallels. This requires clarification, in my view Strand's theory provides a theoretical model for any who might wish to avoid synonymous parallelism between the two passages. He himself did not apply it that way, but someone else could. Granting the parallels Strand points out (which Maxwell denies) - the argument would be that similar imagery is used both places but the reference is not to the same events because they occur in different halves of the book. In my view this is a dangerous argument. They are the same events. The two passages are closely and synonymously parallel.

<sup>20</sup> *Unfolding the Revelation*, pp. 48-49.

But the prophet John, guided by the Spirit of God, describes the scene in greater detail. That old apostle is invited to join the company of the angelic host. He takes his place beside the living ones and the elders, and from that place of vantage he begins to watch as each event moves forward in a mighty panorama. This great scene is without parallel in all the Scriptures. It is the opening of the judgment, culminating in the second advent.<sup>21</sup>

In his next chapter Anderson goes on to describe how the seven seals were opened one after another as the prophet moves gradually forward from his own time in history to ours. There is no conflict in Anderson's mind between placing Rev 4-5 at the time of the judgment and moving back to an earlier time for the seals. After all, a judgment is by its nature a review of things that have happened before. There is nothing inherently illogical in saying that the judgment reviews past evidence. Andersen's method is entirely straightforward.

Toward the end of his book Anderson comments on Rev 19a (vss. 1-10). The two main parts of the chapter (vss. 1-10, 11-21) tell the story of two suppers.

When Jesus has finished His intercessory ministry, He then comes before "the Ancient of Days" to receive the kingdom and dominion for which He died. Daniel 7:13. This is actually the marriage of the Bridegroom - the Lamb - and occurs before He returns to earth for His saints. His waiting saints, those caught up to meet Him, are then taken to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" in the Father's house. Revelation 19:7-9. Jesus said: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding" Luke 12:34, 36. See *Early Writings*, pages 55, 251, 280; *The Great Controversy*, pages 426-428.<sup>22</sup>

When Christ comes to the earth we have the second supper, i.e., "the tragic supper of the birds of prey who come to feed on the flesh of kings and captains, those who, having rejected the invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb, are destroyed by the brightness of the appearing of our Lord."<sup>23</sup>

Anderson's historical writing does not sparkle like Maxwell's. His learning does not have the same depth. But in regard to Rev 4-5 and 19a he was right and we should not be too proud to learn from him when that is indicated.

It would be consistent with everything Anderson writes to suggest that Revelation begins and ends with a vision of Christ (see chaps. 1 and 19b). Within that chiastic frame there are several glimpses of the judgment but two stand out in particular (see chaps. 4-5 and 19a). The intervening material (see chaps. 6-18) consists of evidence brought before the court. Each person is judged within the historical context for his or her life choices and the result is that innumerable sinners are pardoned and given a free and abundant welcome into the New Earth.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

This says something about the book of Revelation and it also says something about the character of God. God is both "just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). These are not inconsequential themes, nor are they devoid of theological interest. Seeing the judgment in Rev 4-5 brings all of this into sharp focus. Missing it obscures the point, and if I am correct it is a major point indeed.

### William H. Shea

Shortly before Maxwell went to press with *God Cares*, vol. 2, William H. Shea published a paper in a scholarly journal that should have settled the question of how Rev 5 relates to Rev 19a. This paper was called, "Revelation 5 and 19 as Literary Reciprocals."<sup>24</sup> The paper is written in dialogue with Strand, i.e., Strand is the only authority cited in footnotes, but with both Maxwell and Shea teaching on the same faculty and with Maxwell's manuscript in the final stages of preparation, I would venture to speculate that the impetus for Shea's paper came from conversations he may have had with Maxwell about its subject matter. Shea's 1984 paper may be considered a review of one part of Maxwell's 1985 book.

Recall that Strand takes Rev 19:1-10 with what follows later in chap. 19. Maxwell takes Rev 19:1-10 with earlier material from the preceding chap. 18. Shea supports Strand and asks, "With the seven brief hymnic statements of Rev 18 constituting a discrete literary unit, how do the hymns which follow in Rev 19 relate to them and to the book of Revelation as a whole?"<sup>25</sup>

If these four hymns of Rev 19 were added to the seven in Rev 18, we would have a total of eleven hymnic statements to outline and organize by form and content. Do all eleven of these belong together, or should the latter four be separated off from the previous seven as a separate literary unit? Several considerations suggest that the four hymns of Rev 19 belong together as a separate literary unit.<sup>26</sup>

Summarizing Shea's argument, notice that just as Rev 5 ends with four hymns, Rev 19 begins with four hymns. The parties offering them are the same in both cases, but in reverse order. In Rev 5 we have (A) "the four living creatures and twenty-four elders" (5:8), then (B) "many angels numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (5:11), then (C) "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them" (5:13). In Rev 19 we have (B') "a great multitude" (19:1), (A') the "twenty-four elders and the four living creatures" (19:4), and finally (D) "a voice ... from the throne" (19:5).

In Rev 5 the first ones we hear from (the living creatures and elders) speak again at the end of the series and in Rev 19 also the first ones we hear from (the great multitude) speak again at the end of that series. In both cases there is one unique element. In Rev 5 it is "every creature in heaven and on earth" and in Rev 19 it is the "voice ... from the throne." The sequence here is A B X : B' A' X', where X/X' is used to

<sup>24</sup> *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 22 (1984): 249-57.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

represent Shea's C and D elements. This part of Revelation is truly elegant from a literary point of view.<sup>27</sup> And Shea has captured that elegance nicely.

### More on Strand's outline

In *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* Kenneth Strand used Rev 4-5 and 19a as one of his main examples illustrating the type of close chiasmic relationship that can be found between different sections of Revelation.

As the book of Revelation is read, it is virtually impossible to fail to note that there are many repetitions of symbolisms and apparently even of broader themes. For example, a "bottomless pit" is referred to in both chapters 9 and 20; the twenty-four elders and four living creatures in chapters 4 and 19; the declaration of Babylon's fall in chapters 14 and 18; the sea of glass in chapters 4 and 15; and the seven angels with the seven last plagues in chapters 15-16, 17, and 21.<sup>28</sup>

He goes on to provide a detailed list of parallels between Rev 4-5 and 19a. This appears on p. 46 of his 1979 book. See table 2 below.

Table 2  
Strands' Parallels between Rev 4-5 and 19a

Work Progressing		Work Completed
4:2	Throne	19:4; 20:11
4:4	24 elders	19:4
4:6	4 living creatures	19:4
4:9-11; 5:8-10	Praise given by 4 living creatures and 24 elders	19:4
5:13	Every creature (much people) giving praise	19:1, 6
5:6; 7:10, 17	The Lamb	19:7, 9

<sup>27</sup> "Please notice that within this context the "great multitude" of Rev 19:1 (B') is not the same as "every creature in heaven and on earth" (Shea's C, my X). Instead it corresponds to the B element of the earlier list, i.e., to the thousands upon thousands of angels. There is an important difference here. Angels can be in heaven without waiting for the second coming. In this event Rev 19a could happen prior to that event. If the "great multitude" are saints from earth Rev 19a would have to occur at a time in history when the saints are already in heaven. The literary relationships we have been discussing support the former view and coming as it does just before a description of the second coming in Rev 19b, for that reason also it would make good chronological sense to assume that Rev 19a describes the end of the judgment just before Christ returns. Maxwell does interpret Rev 19a in this manner and this is why he cannot allow himself to see any of that chapter's parallels with Rev 4-5. Other interpreters, for whom I have great respect, avoid the parallels by placing this scene at a time in history when the judgment is no longer available as an alternative. In my mind this whole business of turning away from obvious parallels is a very serious matter. Pressed to an extreme it could become a mechanism for not seeing what the Holy Spirit wants to show us. This is not safe ground and we should stay away from it.

<sup>28</sup> *Interpreting*, p. 44.

## Conclusion

In this book it is my purpose to show that Rev 4-5 and 19a depict identically the same set of events. Both show us the judgment. The only difference is that in Rev 4-5 the judgment is just beginning, while in Rev 19a it is coming to a close. Anything that obscures this close relationship obscures the meaning of both passages and causes us to lose an important fact about - not the structure - but the content of the book.

Revelation is a book about the judgment. It has virtually its entire setting in the judgment. Throughout it summarizes the evidence brought forward in the judgment. The relationship I propose between Rev 4-5 and 19a is not an isolated fact. It is an indication of what we can expect elsewhere as an organizing principle for the content of the book.

The focus here is Rev 4-5 as it relates to Rev 19a. In this relationship I believe we have insight into the nature of the subject matter that builds solidly on the legitimate insights of Strand's initial work while sweeping away one suggestion that has no lasting value. The history in Revelation is that presented in evidence to the heavenly court. The various courtroom scenes bind this historical material together in a cohesive manner, but if this is true anywhere it is especially true of chaps. 4-5 and 19a. These provide a beginning and ending envelope around all the chapters between them.

Saying that we cannot find the investigative or pre-advent judgment in Scripture is like saying we cannot find the book of Revelation in Scripture. It looms large before us.<sup>29</sup> This book, more than any other, vindicates the experience of Seventh-day Adventists in history. The great themes of our message and experience are not mentioned in a few verses of Rev 10 only. Nor is it special pleading to say so. The investigative judgment provides a thematic organizing principle for the content of Revelation just as its chiasmic features provide a structural organizing principle.

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<sup>29</sup> In the same way we might be inclined to think that Dan 11 is obscure and that not much is said about it in the Spirit of Prophecy. But six of the last eight chapters of Great Controversy discuss vss. 40-45 in detail. See Hardy, "Toward a Typological Interpretation of Dan 11:40-45," *Historicism* No. 22/Apr 90, pp. 2-97.

## *Part 2*

In Regard to Dan 7

# Chapter 1

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## Where Does the Vision of Rev 4-5 Take Place?

**I**n Rev 4 John sees the throne of God. He also sees seven lamps and a sea of glass (vss. 5, 6). Each of these things is associated in some way with the sanctuary.

Within the sanctuary, God's throne is normally associated with the second apartment.<sup>30</sup> The seven lamps have their counterpart on earth (see Rev 1:12-13, 20) but also occupy the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven. It is significant that the sea of glass is mentioned in the same context as the seven lamps. It is part of the same description. Not only the lamps but also the sea of glass are said to be "before the throne" (vss. 5, 6). The only water associated with the sanctuary was in the laver outside.

So where is John in this vision? Is he in the second apartment, or the first apartment, or the court? He sees things located in each of these places. That is the problem. There appears to be no distinction between apartments, or between what is inside and what is outside. Are there no apartments in the heavenly sanctuary (if we are speaking of the lamps)? Worse yet, is there no sanctuary (if we are speaking of the sea)?

In the book of Hebrews we read that there is indeed a sanctuary in heaven and that it is as real as the High Priest who ministers in it. "The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man" (Heb 8:1-2). How real is Christ? To answer this question is to answer the corresponding one about how real the sanctuary is. In Heb 8 the two issues are linked. We cannot separate them.

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<sup>30</sup> One sometimes hears Isa 14:13 quoted in this regard because that passage refers to Lucifer's desire to sit "on the sides of the north" (KJV). The table for the consecrated bread was on the north side of the sanctuary. Therefore the table for consecrated bread represents the throne of God in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. I question whether Lucifer would have settled for a throne in the first apartment if there had been anything more to want he would have wanted it. So I do not think that Isa 14:13 represents a strong argument. The second apartment was on the west side of the sanctuary. For Lucifer this would have been the ultimate. So I do not think the word "north" refers to the furniture of the first apartment in Isa 14:13. For background on what "north" might mean there see J. J. M. Roberts, "SAPON in Job 26,7," *Biblica* 56 (1975); 554-57.

It is one thing to say that the heavenly sanctuary is real, but after we have said that, what is it like? If the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries do not resemble each other, how would we ever know? The only way we will ever learn about the one is to study the other. In all of this the assumption must be that the type resembles what it typifies. If it does, then there are two apartments in the heavenly sanctuary. There were certainly two apartments in the earthly sanctuary.<sup>31</sup> The claim requiring explanation would be that these two corresponding structures are fundamentally dissimilar, as for example that the heavenly sanctuary has only one apartment and one phase of service while the earthly sanctuary had two.

With this much as background, if the throne of God is in the second apartment then it and the lamps are not in the same place. Or at least the lamps and the sea of glass are not in the same place. Incidentally, this latter point follows whether or not we interpret the sea in the context of the sanctuary. If the sea is part of the sanctuary it corresponds to the laver outside in the court.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, if it is not part of the sanctuary it certainly would not be in the first apartment. The sea is outside under either set of assumptions. The lamps are not.

This fact argues strongly against placing the whole scene in the first apartment. In vs. 5 if we say that the lamps are before the throne and that for this reason the throne must be where the lamps are, the same logic should be applied to vs. 6. The sea is also before the throne. Is it the case that because the sea is before the throne, the throne is where the sea is? This puts the throne in two places because the lamps are inside while the sea is outside. And yet John sees these all of things while standing in one place. So how can we resolve these problems?

The answer lies within the text of the passage. "After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven" (Rev 4:1). John is in the second apartment. From there he is able to see things in the second apartment (the throne) and the first (the seven lamps). The door at the entrance to the first apartment is open too because he is able to look beyond it as well (to the sea).

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<sup>31</sup> "Volkmar Fritz, in his paper, "Temple Architecture: What Can Archaeology Tell Us About Solomon's Temple?" (Biblical Archaeology Review, July/August 1987, pp. 38-49). suggests that the inner compartment of Solomon's temple was not really a separate room but was more on the order of a shrine, such as those found in contemporary Canaanite temples. I do not find his argument persuasive. The second apartment of Solomon's temple was walled off with cedar and covered with gold (see 1 Kgs 6:16-22). To a person standing inside the whole room would appear to end in a wall of solid metal at the far end of the first apartment. It was not solid, but that was the appearance. The second apartment of Solomon's temple was every bit much a room as any we have in our homes today. And the reason why it had two rooms is that the tabernacle it was copied from had two apartments. I grant that the pillars in front of the temple looked all very Canaanite, but once we go inside the building Fritz's parallels with Canaanite floor plans do not bear scrutiny.

<sup>32</sup> "The court represents the earth. The cross did not symbolize something else. It was itself the antitype of the altar. From this we could reason to the laver. The altar was in the court and the court is therefore the earth. The laver was also in the court and is also on me earth. What then does it represent? Just as there was a sense in which the seven lamps could be both in heaven and on earth (see Rev 1:12-13), so the laver, although it is in the court, can also be in heaven - if it has a counterpart on earth.

Having said this much about where things are located, I will be accused of literalism. This charge will have special reference to the idea that there is a door, and to what this fact implies about the rest of the sanctuary and its services. But if there is no door in the heavenly sanctuary, what does John mean when he says the door is open (see Rev 4:1)? There must be a door -or something that can be represented by the figure of a door - or John would not invoke that figure in telling us about it. It is not ours to object that John should not have seen what he saw.

Granting that there is some such object as a door, its function must be to separate areas as well as to grant entrance between them.<sup>33</sup> What areas does it separate? The two apartments God was trying to telling us about in the earthly type. We do not have to be able to draw a picture of these things in order to understand the biblical symbolism involved. It is the symbolism that I am interested in here. But before we discuss it further let me say a word about Dan 7, which is closely parallel to what we have been studying so far.

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<sup>33</sup> "Christ says, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:7-10). He lets His sheep in but keeps me robbers out. He both allows access and denies it. He is one Christ and yet serves these two functions because of me different relationships people sustain toward Him. In the same way the author of Hebrews states, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place [the word is plural, lit. holy places]by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,..." The syntax allows two interpretations. Christ's body is the "curtain" (this is the most natural sense in English) or it is the "new and living way" (this is the most natural sense in the Greek). But in the end it does not matter which we choose. The choices are a curtain, a gate, a door, a veil on the one hand (see John 10:7) or a way, a road on the other (see John 14:6). Both are means of access. "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt 7:14). And both prove to be a stumbling block to those who refuse the gift Christ offers. See also 1 Pet 2:7-8.

# Chapter 2

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## The Parallels with Dan 7

There are a number of similarities between Rev 4-5 and Dan 7. In pointing these out one must also show that the parallels have parallels. Dan 7 is parallel in turn with Dan 8 and so this whole web of borrowed language and similar themes is germane to us in this chapter.

### Dan 7 in Relation to Rev 4-5

Below we consider the thrones mentioned in both Dan 7 and Rev 4-5, the vast numbers of angels and other beings in attendance, the prominence of Christ under such figures as the "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13), "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5), and "a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain" (vs. 6), and the "books" or "scroll" (Dan 7:10; Rev 5:1) that are opened in both scenes.

#### **The thrones**

In Rev 4 John says, "At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders" (Rev 4:2-4).

Writing much earlier Daniel says "thrones were set in place" (Dan 7:9) - not one but many. In fact on this occasion some twenty-five thrones were set in place" the throne of God at the center of the great judgment hall and one for each of the twenty-four elders seated in a circle around it.

Pursuing this matter further, could it be that only the twenty-four additional thrones are set in place on this occasion? What I mean is, could it be that the throne of God in Dan 7 remained where it always was - in the second apartment - and that the others were the only ones brought in on this occasion? This possibility fails on the second clause of vs. 9 ("and the Ancient of Days took his seat"). One does not take a seat where he is already sitting. So it is not only the case that the twenty-four elders took their seats. The Ancient of Days also sat down. Or at least that is the language of the passage.

Nor is it the case that God was without a throne until this moment. As King of the universe He has always had a throne, but it was elsewhere immediately prior to what we read in Dan 7 - in the first apartment for example.

The throne of God was also set in place - a different place - in Dan 7, just as the twenty-four other thrones surrounding it were. Again there is no need to draw pictures, but Daniel's words indicate a change of location. This is the important thing to notice.

The judgment has not always been in session. More specifically, it has not been in session ever since the cross. From the sanctuary we know that what Daniel describes corresponds to the day of atonement at the end of the ceremonial year, i.e. at the end of the ceremonial year, i.e. at the end of the 2300 evening-mornings of Dan 8 in 1844. If what we are talking about is time, the timeframe for the events of Dan 7 is clear enough.

### **Numbers in attendance**

John says, "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders" (Rev 5:11).

The expression "thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (Rev 5:11) is a direct reference to the words already quoted, "'Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him'" (Dan 7:10). This is an important fact. What it tells us is that John was thinking of Dan 7 as he wrote down what he saw in Rev 4-5.

If John was quoting Daniel, that is the best evidence we could have for interpreting the two passages together. And if he was not quoting Daniel, how is it that the two writers state themselves so similarly? John was referencing the earlier prophet's work purposefully, directly, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We cannot have the same understanding of Rev 4-5 that John had if we do not also share his concept of Dan 7, as documented in quotations such as those above. To break the connection between Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 would be a reversal of the author's intent.

### **References to Christ**

There is a third point of similarity between the two passages under review. Daniel writes, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Dan 7:13-14)

In John's account of this same scene we do not see "'one like a son of man,'" but rather a "Lamb, looking as if it had been slain." "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). The Son of man and the Lamb are different in the sense that different words are used, but both figures transparently refer to the same divine Being.

## The "books" or "scroll"

The Lamb then takes the scroll mentioned in Rev 5:1 and opens its seven seals. When He does this He is praised by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Rev 5:8-10), by the myriad of angels also present (vss. 11-12), and by "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them" (vs. 13). This passage has the same intent as when Daniel said earlier, that "all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him" (Dan 7:14). The parallel is exact.

In Daniel there are "books" (7:10), in Revelation a "scroll" (5:1). In Daniel the books are opened, in Revelation the scroll is sealed. But why is it important to know this? The only reason for mentioning that the scroll is "sealed with seven seals" (Rev 5:1) is that Christ opens it, breaking each in turn and laying its contents open for the whole universe to see. This is one reason why the book that tells us these things is called a Revelation. So what insight do we gain by saying that the books are opened but the scroll is closed?<sup>34</sup> How long does the scroll stay closed? When are the books opened? Why do they need to be opened? How could they possibly be opened unless they were closed previously? Who opened them?<sup>35</sup>

## Summary

Granting that both men saw the things they describe, John is consciously modeling his description on that of Daniel. A number of literary links bind their accounts together.

It is one thing to show that both writers saw the same events. They did, but more is true. John writes in such a way as to link the accounts as well as the events. He was actively aware of Dan 7 as he wrote Rev 4-5. The later account draws from the earlier one, producing a number of very obvious literary and thematic correspondences.

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<sup>34</sup> "In Daniel 7:9-14 the books are already open before the Son of man makes his appearance. In striking contrast, a focal emphasis of Revelation 4 and 5 is that the little scroll is closed - it is thoroughly closed; it is sealed with seven seals - until the Lamb undertakes to open it. The remaining portion of the seven-seals division (Revelation 6:1 to 8:1) continues to describe the Lamb's activity as He continues to break open the seals" (Maxwell, *God Cares*, 2:170-71).

<sup>35</sup> "It would be possible to press the argument from sequence too far in Dan 7:8-14 (not 9-14). First the beast makes his loud and boastful claims (vs. 8). This corresponds to the "time, times and half a time" of vs. 25. Then "[t]he court was seated, and the books were opened" (vs. 10). This corresponds to the fact that "the court will sit" in vs. 26. The court will remain in session from 1844 until a time just before Christ returns. "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking" (vs. 11). This corresponds to the healing of the fatal wound in Rev 13:3. But the "one like a son of man" is not introduced until vs. 13. If we are arguing from sequence - the books are opened first and the Son of man comes only later - is the Son of man led into God's presence at the end of the judgment after the deadly wound has had time to heal? Maxwell would not want to make such a claim but it is consistent with his argument. Daniel writes with a repetitious style. In my view he develops one aspect of the story line in vss. 8-12 and then circles back to say more about the same things in vss. 13-14. Thus vs. 13 is in the same timeframe as vs. 9 after all and the argument from sequence fails to bear close scrutiny. Let me say this another way. Christ enters the second apartment at the beginning of the judgment. Verse 9 represents the beginning of the judgment. Therefore Christ enters the second apartment in the timeframe of vs. 9.

## Dan 7 in Relation to Dan 8

If Rev 4-5 is parallel to Dan 7 it is also parallel to Dan 8, by means of the latter two chapters many additional links to each other. By bringing Dan 8 into the discussion we add another dimension. This is the sanctuary. We consider the second apartment and then the first.

### **The second apartment**

A set of supporting parallels to Rev 4-5 is that between judgment scene in Dan 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Dan 8.

In Dan 7 we have the Babylonian lion, the Medo-Persian bear, the Greek leopard, and the Roman beast out of which grows the little horn. After the little horn comes the judgment. In chap. 8 there is no reference to Babylon or to imperial Rome. But we do find a Medo-Persian ram and a Greek goat. The little horn is also present, just as it was in chap. 7.

There is a question why Babylon should be left out of Dan 8. Surely an appropriate symbol could have been found for it. In my view one reason for leaving Babylon out is to emphasize its similarities with Rome. The secular first phase of Roman power is omitted also. This comparison becomes a major theme of New Testament eschatology.

The Roman beast does not appear in chap. 8 because it is wild, whereas rams and goats are domesticated animals used in the ancient sanctuary. The animals in Dan 8 are clean, those in Dan 7 unclean. So the prophet does not mix them. But the little horn itself is the same in both cases.

If the events themselves and the sequence in which they appear are the same in Dan 7 and 8, should not the timeframe for those events be the same as well? I submit that the two chapters are indeed parallel with respect to time. Their culminating events (the judgment, the cleansing of the sanctuary) occur at the end of an era. The timeframe for both chapters is established in Dan 8. What happens in that timeframe is clarified for both chapters in Dan 7. These facts about Daniel must be allowed to influence our understanding of Rev 4-5. They certainly influenced John's understanding as he wrote Rev 4-5.

### **The first apartment**

If the judgment or cleansing of the sanctuary occurs in the second apartment at the end of the 2300 evening-mornings of Dan 8, how does this relate to Christ's earlier ministry in the first apartment? This earlier phase of ministry is not directly referred to in Dan 7, but in my opinion chap. 8 does mention it.

In chap. 8 the prophet speaks of "the daily sacrifice" (Dan 8:11). Removing the word "sacrifice" (because it is supplied) does not change "daily" into "yearly." Whether we say "daily," or "daily sacrifice," or "daily service," the context for this term is not confined to vss. 8-12 but includes vss. 13-14 as well. If we take vss. 8-12 by themselves

we have only the little horn to help us understand the "daily." This is not the whole story and indeed this much, taken by itself, could be positively misleading. There is more in chap. 8 than a little horn.

By including vs. 13-14 we place the "daily" in the broader context of the sanctuary, which is where it belongs. If vs. 14 is the antitypical yearly service, that fact should give us insight into what the corresponding "daily" is in vs. 11. Both parts of the passage must be studied together. When they are, what we see is Christ ministering both before and during the judgment as our great High Priest in heaven.

Notice that, of the phases of ministry represented by the two apartments, it is the "daily" and not the yearly which is attacked by the little horn during the Middle Ages. In the timeframe of vs. 11 the ministry of Christ mentioned in vs. 14 had not yet begun. Verse 14 marks the beginning of something more. It marks the beginning of the judgment. During the Middle Ages the ministry of Christ that the little horn opposes is not the yearly but the "daily."

The cleansing of the sanctuary - i.e. the investigative judgment on the day of atonement - would begin immediately after this, at the end of the 2300 evening-mornings in 1844. First the one antitypical service, then the other. In this way every part of the sanctuary teaches us something about what Christ would be doing in different periods of history.

## Other Comments

If the yearly service or cleansing of the sanctuary in Dan 8 is the same as the judgment of Dan 7, and if Rev 4-5 is itself overtly parallel to Dan 7 as I claim, it follows that Rev 4-5 is parallel to Dan 8 as well as to Dan 7 and that what we see there occurs after 1844 in the second apartment. In Rev 4-5 we are not talking about first apartment events that take place during John's lifetime. They are second apartment events happening right now. Revelation is a book of prophecy. John sees these things prophetically.

The seven seals are not opened before the Judgment begins. The judgment sits in order to open them. So in Rev 4-5 the judicial proceedings are just beginning. In Rev 19a, on the other hand, we have the other end of the same process. There the judgment is just ending.

When all has been said that can be, when all the evidence has been presented that would benefit any saint or sinner and every case decided, the whole assembly offers its united and heartfelt verdict that God has been more than fair in all His dealings with mankind. The heavenly court stands completely vindicated, and with it the government of God administered from that center. The law which serves as the constitution of God's government is a transcript of His own character. This much has to do with Dan 7 and 8, Rev 4-5 and 19a.

In Rev 19b it only remains for Christ to liberate the saints He has acquitted. There is no more reason for the Bridegroom to wait. The tarrying time is over and Christ returns in glory, leading all the angel armies of heaven to bring home those who, at great

personal risk, have faithfully waited for Him (see Isa 25:9 KJV; Matt 25:10). The judgment ends in Rev 19a. Christ returns in Rev 19b. The millennium is next in chap. 20 when the righteous are in heaven and the wicked are dead. During this time Satan has no one to tempt. Then after the thousand years both he and all who have followed him are destroyed. This is the lake of fire, which, please notice, comes "down from heaven" (Rev 20:9) and not up from the lower parts of the earth. Finally John sees "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1).

My point here is that the events are laid out in sequence. Rev 19a is followed by Rev 19b-22, deriving its context from these later chapters. And Rev 19a, in turn, provides the context for Rev 4-5 earlier in the book. In Rev 19a the judgment ends, in Rev 4-5 it begins. All of these things are parallel to Dan 8 and to Dan 7.

# *Part 3*

## The Four Series of Seven

# Chapter 3

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## Rev 4-5 and the Seven Churches of Rev 2-3

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev 1:19-20).

### The Importance of Context

How shall we account for the discrepancy between the respective timeframes of Rev 1 and Rev 4? If Rev 1 takes place in John's day, as it obviously does, how can we argue that Rev 4 takes place in modern times almost 2000 years later? What happens to our regard for context in all of this?

Bear in mind that two other chapters come between Rev 1 and 4. They are also part of the context. The seven letters of Rev 2-3 do not confine themselves to first century events. John is commanded to write about "what is now and what will take place later" (Rev 1:19). The seven letters lead us by an entirely natural progression from the one period to the other. They form a bridge between John's day and our own.

The letter to the church at Ephesus applies to the entire church during the first Christian century. The letter to Smyrna applies to the church which endured persecution for "ten days" (Rev 2:10) throughout the Roman Empire in the time of Diocletian.<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>36</sup> "The accession of the Emperor Diocletian is the era from which the Coptic Churches of Egypt and Abyssinia still date, under the name of the 'Era of Martyrs.' All former persecutions of the faith were forgotten in the horror with which men looked back upon the last and greatest: the tenth wave (as men delighted to count it) of that great storm obliterated all the traces that had been left by others. The fiendish cruelty of Nero, the jealous fears of Domitian, the unimpassioned dislike of Marcus, the sweeping purpose of Decius, the clever devices of Valerian, fell into obscurity when compared with the concentrated terrors of that final grapple, which resulted in the destruction of the old Roman Empire and the establishment of the Cross as the symbol of the world's hope" (Arthur James Mason, quoted in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2: Ante-Nicene Christianity AD. 100-325 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910], pp. 64-65). Diocletian issued in A.D. 303 three edicts of persecution, followed by a fourth from his colleague Maximian in 304. Diocletian himself retired in 305. Before Diocletian's death in 313 by suicide Galerius in 311 issued an edict of toleration. But for two more years both Maximian and Maxentius (son of Maximian and son-in-law of Galerius) continued to harass the church in various ways. It was Constantine who defeated Maxentius in battle and forced Galerius, another colleague, to issue a new edict of toleration in 313 and forced Maximian to sign it that same year. The persecution had

third church (Pergamum) represents a third period later than the first two, and so on down to the seventh, which applies especially to people living now during the judgment. Having come to the last of the seven churches, or epochs of the church, it only remains for John's attention to be shifted from events on earth to events in heaven taking place at the same time (see Rev 4:1).

The transition between each two of the seven churches involves time primarily. Each represents a different era in the church's history.<sup>37</sup> The setting doesn't change because each of the seven churches is located on planet Earth. The transition between Rev 3 and 4, however involves space. The people being judged are on earth; the tribunal that judges them is in heaven.<sup>38</sup>

There is a corresponding transition back to the first century between Rev 5 and 6, discussed below. It is not the case once we come to the time of the judgment in Rev 4-5 that all of what follows in later chapters must take place then. Instead we have something similar to the book of Job, where there are two settings - one in heaven, the other on earth - with the story alternating between them. In the case of Revelation, however, there is the added element of time. The scene which takes place in heaven takes place in the second apartment of the sanctuary located in heaven and is therefore linked to a specific period of time as well as to a specific place.

Respect for context is precisely the issue in placing Rev 4-5 in the timeframe of Laodicea and the judgment. But how do we know that Laodicea represents a seventh era in the history of the church?

## Content of the Letters

At least three lines of evidence support the idea that the letters to the seven churches describe major eras or periods of church history which follow one another in time. First, there is the reference to "ten days" of persecution in the letter to Smyrna (Rev 2:10). Second, there is a series of passages from Thyatira to Laodicea that have to do with Christ's second coming and build to that climax in time. And third, there is the reference to an "open door" as we go from Philadelphia to Laodicea (Rev 3:8). We consider each line of evidence in turn.

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lasted from February 23,303 to early in the year 313 (see *ibid.*, pp. 64-72, *passim*) -ten years exactly, just as the prophet had foretold.

<sup>37</sup> Notice something about this series that is so obvious it would be easy to overlook, i.e. it ends. In the same way the series of metals in Nebuchadnezzar's image ends and in fact is quite short. Just as our Creator brought human history into existence initially, he also brings it to an end at the second coming of Christ. We have become accustomed of Christ's return as being interminably delayed and sometimes speculate that our model is misconceived because have waited so long. God does not see things in the same light that we do.

<sup>38</sup> The heavenly tribunal judges more than Laodicea, of course. From Rev 6 up to and including Rev 18 we have a catalogue of evidence to be presented in the judgment. This spans the time from Christ's first coming to His second. Beyond *ibis*. God's dealings with mankind from Adam to Christ is on record as our Old Testament. Everyone who has ever claimed a relationship with God will be brought before this judgment.

## The great persecution

I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev 2:10)

The prospect that the church would suffer persecution for ten days might not be all that frightening if what we are talking about is literal time. But in that case why does Jesus single out this particular persecution for attention. Many Roman emperors persecuted the church for periods longer than ten days. It would be more reasonable to assume that the "ten days" are in fact ten years and that what we have is yet another illustration of day-year symbolism. Only in this case does the enormity of the events fit the seriousness of the warning.

From history we know that the most intense persecution the church was to face during its early centuries did indeed last ten years (from A.D. 303 to 313). It extended throughout the Roman Empire during the last years of Diocletian, with special severity in the East. It was Diocletian's purpose to wipe Christianity from the face of the earth.<sup>39</sup> Other emperors had persecuted the church from time to time but none went about the task so systematically or persistently as Diocletian and his associates.

Other emperors who persecuted the church in one way or another include Claudius (42-54), Nero (64), Domitian (81-96), Trajan (98-117), Hadrian (117-38), Marcus Aurelius (161-80), Septimius Severus (193-211), Maximinus the Thracian (235-38), Decius (249-51), and Valerian (253-60).<sup>40</sup> Claudius, at the beginning of this list, expelled the Jews from Rome and since Christians in the first century were considered Jews he expelled Christians as well. This was a prelude to the first truly violent persecution under Nero. At the other end we could add Aurelian (270-75), who issued an edict of persecution before his death, though it was never implemented. From A.D. 260-303 the church again had a brief period of rest.

If the persecution of Diocletian is the one described in the letter to Smyrna, that fact establishes a framework for interpretation that we should be able to apply in other letters. If the second letter (Smyrna) represents the second major period of church history, it would be reasonable to assume that the third letter represents a third period, and so on down until we come to Laodicea, which deals with the church's condition during the time when the judgment is in session.

## The second coming passages

The above model finds support in the letter to Thyatira (#4) and following where Jesus says, "Only hold on to what you have until I come" (Rev 2:25). He does not say when that will be, but merely reminds Thyatira that at some future time He will come.

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<sup>39</sup> It is ironic that up until the persecution began, "His own wife Prisca, his daughter Valeria, and most of his eunuchs and court officers, besides many of the most prominent public functionaries, were Christians, or at least favorable to the Christian religion" (idem, p. 65).

<sup>40</sup> See idem, pp. 44-63.

In the letter to Sardis (#5) Jesus says, "Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you" (Rev 3:3). Again Christ does not give a time for the event, but He does raise the church's level of anticipation to a new level. They should begin to look for His coming. Otherwise they will be caught off guard when it happens.

In the letter to Philadelphia (#6) Jesus says, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Rev 3:11). And in the letter to Laodicea (#7) He says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev 3:20).

Notice two points. First, there is a clear progression in these passages. "Only hold on to what you have until I come" (Rev 2:25). "But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you" (Rev 3:3). "I am coming soon" (Rev 3:11). "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock" (Rev 3:20a). This progression occupies time, not space. It has nothing to do with where the seven churches are located. That is one point.

A second point is that, whereas there is timeless spiritual significance in passages such as, "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me" (3:20b), there is also a very clear eschatological focus. The marriage supper of the Lamb is that special time, more than any other, when Christ eats with us, and we with Him (see Rev 19:9; Matt 26:29). This marriage supper is in heaven. Christ must come in order to take us there, so His reference to sharing a meal with us must be understood in the context of the second coming. Again the focus is on time, not space.

## Other Comments

The central focus of the seven letters is the second coming. Ten "days" or years of persecution are of no importance when compared with future glory. Through the seven letters the church is brought down to the time of the second coming and those events which immediately precede it. We know this because of the way Christ speaks of His coming in the last four letters and because as the series nears its end the second apartment of the sanctuary thrown open in heaven and the judgment begins. It is the opening scenes of this judgment that we see in Rev 4.

# Chapter 4

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## More on the Letters to Philadelphia and Laodicea

There are three references to "doors" in Rev 3 and 4. The first is in the letter to Philadelphia, the next in the letter to Laodicea, and the last at the beginning of chap. 4. Of these, the "door" in Rev 3:20 (Laodicea) is spiritual in nature and on earth but those in Rev 3:8 and 4:1 are in heaven. They are spoken of as being real and refer to the same object within the same context.

### The "Door" in the Letter to Philadelphia

When Christ says, "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut" (Rev 3:8), why does He say this in the letter to Philadelphia? If the "door" in question is the door into the second apartment, as I claim, would it not make sense to speak of it in the letter to Laodicea?

The word "Laodicea" means a people judged (*laos* "a people," *dikē* "process of law, judicial hearing"). Philadelphia was the period of brotherly love just before this when the Millerites preached that Christ's return was immanent a Great Awakening followed. More specifically what they preached was that Christ would come out of the second apartment in 1843/44. It was only with hindsight that they learned He would go into the second apartment then. The one teaching brought a spirit of brotherly love, the other a great disappointment.

But all of this fits the text perfectly. The "door" of Rev 3:8 was something to which Philadelphia's steps would lead. The Millerites' preaching was the prelude to the event that so bitterly disappointed them (see Rev 10:8-11). Philadelphia's zeal and Laodicea's disappointment are two responses to one event. They are two halves of one whole, both predicated on an understanding of the second coming. Their different responses followed from their differences in understanding. The later group learned by bitter experience something about the second coming that the first group did not know. But this contrast has the effect of binding the two groups together. They can be contrasted, but not separated. To Philadelphia Christ says, "I have placed before you an open door" (Rev 3:8). It was before them in the sense that they would come to it as they moved forward by faith. This reference to a "door" is exactly where it should be.

Having said this, which door is Christ referring to? When is it opened? And what is the relationship between Rev 3:8 and 4:1? Let Scripture interpret Scripture. In chap. 3

Christ places before His people an open door. It is one that He leads them to. Immediately afterward, in chap. 4, John sees a "door standing open in heaven" (4:1). These are not two different objects. It is one door described twice.

In Rev 3:8 the Greek reads *thuran eneōgmenēn* "open door" (accusative case), in Rev 4:1 it is *thura eneōgmenē* "open door" (nominative case). Taking into account the rules of Greek syntax this difference is not a difference. The two expressions are fully identical. It is important to understand this fact because it links chap. 4 to chap. 3. Rev 4-5 is more than an introduction to the seals. It is that, but it is also the goal or climax to the series of churches.

Granting now that the door in Rev 3:8 is the same as the door in Rev 4:1, and that the symbolism we are dealing with derives from the sanctuary, which door is it? There are two to choose from. Is this the door to the first apartment or to the second? We have already come a long way toward answering this question. If this is the door to the first apartment, why does Christ wait until the letter to Philadelphia to call the church's attention to it? Would it not have been even more important for the church at Ephesus to know about Christ's first apartment ministry, since it began in their lifetime? But in that case He could not have held it open to them as a future prospect. Christ was already among the seven lampstands when John first saw Him in chap. 1.

No, the special message preached during the period of the church in Philadelphia had to do with the second coming, not the first. By now the issue was Christ's second apartment ministry. It was the special function of Philadelphia to call people's attention to the fact that His ministry would soon undergo a significant change. They did not know this yet. When they learned the full significance of what they had done they were disappointed. Their whole experience became bitter. But all of this was in the providence of God. The open door to which Philadelphia was moving, with or without knowing it, was the door into the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. What we are talking about here - what Christ was talking about in Rev 3:8 and what John witnesses in Rev 4:1 - is the beginning of the judgment in 1844.

## The "Door" in the Letter to Laodicea

There is one other "door" in Rev 3. This is the one Christ stands before in Rev 3:20 in the letter to Laodicea, mentioned above. He could unilaterally place an open door before the church in Philadelphia because it was in heaven, but the one He now stands before, calling and waiting, must be opened from inside. Here the issues are spiritual.

Opening the door referred to in the letter to Laodicea implies more than letting Jesus come into our hearts. It also implies accepting what He says upon entering. The judgment and the second coming are eschatological events. So here Christ describes the condition of the church just before His coming.

There are similarities here to the parable of the ten virgins. Opening the door to Christ implies accepting His description of us and benefiting from it so we will be ready to meet Him as a welcome Bridegroom when He comes to take us into the wedding

banquet. The five foolish bridesmaids waited for their Lord just like the wise did. And all slept while waiting without distinction. But the foolish bridesmaids did not prepare for the event they professed to look for until it was clear to them that the Bridegroom was already en route.

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

"Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'

"But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (Matt 25:10-13).

This is the condition of Laodicea. It is a church that sleeps fitfully, neither fully asleep nor fully awake - lukewarm. It is watching for the Lord to come back and yet not watching. As regards time, in Rev 3:20 the Bridegroom has not yet arrived. The door of Matt 25:10-11 (and of Rev 3:8 and 4:1) is still open. The figure appears to be one of Christ waiting at our door while we wait at His. We are, as it were, both waiting for each other. Let us not compound our difficulties by waiting at the wrong door. It is a serious mistake to confuse the ministry of Christ in the one apartment with His ministry in the other.<sup>41</sup>

## Other Comments

Consider the irony that the wealth Laodicea has found (see Rev 3:17a) is its knowledge of the law, and yet the law is what Christ uses to reveal the depth of Laodicea's poverty (see vs. 17b). The remnant's gain and its loss therefore both spring from the same source.

In all of this God wants nothing more nor less than loving obedience. He wants to be served "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) - completely, wholeheartedly, permanently. He is a jealous God (see Exod 20:5) and as such wants to be everything to His people. Balancing this He wants us to understand that we mean everything to Him.

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<sup>41</sup> See Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1945), pp. 54-56.

# Chapter 5

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## Rev 4-5 and the Seven Seals of Rev 6 and 8

**A**t this point let us examine what the scroll says which is sealed with seven seals. Yes, it says what is written down in Rev 6 and the first part of chap. 8. But this is not the end of the story.

### Issues Addressed by the Seals

Notice that the seven seals are attached to a scroll with writing on both sides (see also Ezek 3:1-11). Before going on, let me ask which comes first - the writing or the seals? The writing comes first and then the seals. If the scroll were sealed first, how could anything be written on it? Whatever the scroll has to say has already been written down by the time John describes it for us. We return to this point below.

### Content of the seals

What did the writing on the scroll say? One way to answer this question is to read Rev 6 and 8. But after we read the words, there is still a question what they say. What sorts of issues are addressed by the words recorded in the scroll? And do the seventeen verses of Rev 6 plus the first verse of chap. 8 exhaust their content? Is there more?

Dan 7 also speaks of written records. Can we learn more by studying these chapters together than by studying them separately? In the belief that we can, I now quote Dan 7:9-10.

"As I looked,  
    "thrones were set in place,  
        and the Ancient of Days took his seat.  
His clothing was as white as snow;  
    the hair of his head was white like wool.  
His throne was flaming with fire,  
    and its wheels were all ablaze.  
A river of fire was flowing,  
    coming out from before him.  
Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
    ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The court was seated,  
and the books were opened." (Dan 7:9-10)

So far we have only succeeded in transferring the problem to a different venue. We must now ask what the "books" in Dan 7 say. Do they say the same things as the "scroll" in Rev 5? We have always taught that the "books" of Dan 7 contain the record of people's lives and that when they are opened that is the investigative judgment - investigative because the contents of the books are examined by the heavenly court. In Revelation we have been less clear. Perhaps the scroll with seven seals is prophetic.

Is it the case that the "scroll" in Rev 5 tells about things that would happen in the future whereas the "books" in Dan 7 records past events? In this case the parallel between them breaks down. The book of Revelation is certainly prophetic. So is Daniel, and yet what Daniel prophesied in chap. 7 was that a record of past deeds would be opened to public view. I would like to explore the possibility here that the two documents in question are identically the same and that they are both historic in nature. Both record past events. Both are opened at the same time.

The scroll is sealed in Rev 5 because the events it describes have already happened. The related facts that this scroll is both filled with writing and sealed help to answer the question when its seals are broken. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the sealing of the document must follow its composition. In the same way, the books of Dan 7 were opened when the court was seated, not before.

Does this mean that the seals of Rev 6 and 8 describe events during and after the judgment? On the contrary. The fact that the books are opened in 1844 is our best evidence that what they describe happens before that time. Books must first be written before they can be read. Events must first happen before they can be reviewed. But are these documents prophetic? Those in Dan 7 are not.

### **Timeframe of the seals**

Rev 2-3 leads us step by step down through history to the time of Laodicea, i.e., to the time when God's people (*laos*) are judged (<*dikeō*). After describing the poverty of those whose wealth is their knowledge of the law, whose pride is condemned by the source of their pride, the scene shifts from earth, where the Laodiceans are, to heaven, where the judgment they love to teach about is in session. This much is prophecy. But as regards the substance of what is said in the judgment, that is a review of past events - of things which must already have taken place. This part is history.

The events we are talking about here are all those that have ever impacted the people of God. These include what happened on the day of Pentecost in the century A.D., when the church first went out into an unbelieving world as a conqueror winning souls for Christ (see Rev 6:2). It includes the "rebellion" Paul speaks of 2 Thess 2:3 which led the church from divine power to human coercion as its source of strength, and so on through the various seals.

This concept leaves some loose ends, not because what has been said is incorrect but because not everything has been said. First, if judgment begins with the family of God (see 1 Pet 4:17), not all of God's family have lived between A.D. 31 and

1844. What about all those saints of past ages mentioned in Heb 11 and in other similar passages? The Old Testament heroes of faith must not be forgotten. And what about Laodicea itself? I have argued that the judgment is a judicial review, that it deals with past events. So is Laodicea (the people judged) excluded from the judgment that gives that group its name, because their lives are lived too late to be recorded in the seven-part scroll? Not at all. Everyone who has ever claimed any relationship with God is included in the investigative judgment.<sup>42</sup>

What does it mean that no one could open the seven seals except the Lamb? What does this fact tell us? Recall that without a special revelation from the Holy Spirit the two disciples from Emaus in Luke 24 would not have known that Jesus was sitting in front them bodily at their own table. This fact should teach us humility. Without the Holy Spirit to teach us how each event affecting the church of Christ finds its context in Christ, the history of His body on earth will be misapplied and misunderstood. He is the One who gives events their meaning and without Him at their center we cannot interpret them correctly. Furthermore, without Him the judgment could not precede. He is the only link between heaven and earth (see Gen 32:22-32; John 1:51).

And so it is only the Lion of the "tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5), the "Lamb, looking as if it had been slain" (vs. 6), who could open the seven seals. He alone could lead His people through the vicissitudes of history. And only He could make the meaning of those events clear once they had happened.

Here we are talking about what would happen to the church in the centuries that follow Christ's first coming. These events are described in very broad outline in chaps. 6-18. The background for the church's experience in every subsequent age is described. The context in which every life has been lived is clarified. God does nothing in a superficial manner so when it comes to the final review of every person who has ever named the name of Christ, His work is thorough and complete.

## Other Comments

Notice a number of other facts. Daniel calls what is opened in the judgment "books" (plural) (Dan 7:10), John calls it a "scroll" (singular), and Ellen White calls it a "book" (singular). These are all one and the same object.

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<sup>42</sup> Let us not abandon the term "investigative judgment" as though it contained some error. It does not. At issue is not whether people's lives are investigated in the judgment. They are. At issue is the source and purpose of the information thus gained. It is not that the court must inform God as to what decisions He should make. Instead God informs the court as to what decisions He has always known would be necessary. Unfallen creatures investigate God's dealings with mankind and pronounce His judgments right and fair. People are judged, it is true, that is part of the judgment. But more importantly God is judged. His system of government comes under review as its implications are seen in the lives of all His professed people. "And he said unto me. Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan 8:14). The word "cleansed" means to set right or vindicate, in the judgment the records of all God's dealings with mankind are investigated and His system of government is set right or vindicated. The sanctuary, i.e., the seat of God's government, is vindicated. He is shown to "be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). Both factors are at work in the judgment. "Investigative judgment" is still a good term. Let us continue to use it.

As regards time, Ellen White says, "Their decision [that of the Jewish leaders] was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne."<sup>43</sup> The decision she is referring to was made in the first century A.D. in the timeframe of the crucifixion. But then she says, "In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah."<sup>44</sup> In the day when this book is unsealed? What day is that? Whichever one she has in mind, it is at least clear that she is not talking about the first century any more. She placing the unsealing of the "book" in her own day.

If, as Ellen White claims, the "book" contains a record of people's decisions - among other things " and if it is being unsealed now, in the judgment for example, then what we are talking about is a historical record (past decisions) which come under later review (it is still being unsealed now). I suggest that we expand our concept of what this book contains. Yes, it contains Rev 6:1-17 and 8:1, it contains the book of Daniel, it contains a record of the Jewish leaders' decision to crucify Christ. But when we say this much have we fully understood the book's contents? These are just glimpses.

What do men's decisions have in common with the prophetic (or historic) words of Scripture? One is man's will, the other God's will. But both document God's dealings with mankind. This is the issue in the judgment: not primarily men's dealings with each other, or even men's dealings with God, as important as these things are. At issue is not whether men have been good, and fair, and just. "There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Instead the issue is whether God has been good, and fair, and just.

As regards mankind the judgment is a forum in which God announces decisions whose outcome He has always known from the beginning. And yes, there is a work of cleansing on earth that accompanies those decisions in heaven. But as regards God the judgment is a very real tribunal. His government is at stake and with it the well being of the entire universe - not just a handful of people on earth, or even an innumerable multitude of people on earth.

Dan 8:14 does not say, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the worshipers in the sanctuary be cleansed, although it is true that they will be. But what the text says is, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan 8:14, KJV) – the sanctuary itself, the seat of God's government. This is what requires vindication in the great controversy.

And so if God is to be vindicated completely, His dealings with mankind must become known completely. The only way to do this is to lay open the record of His dealings with each person who has ever responded to Him. The result is that our record is reviewed in exhaustive detail, but more than this and more significantly that this, His record is being reviewed. He does not open our life record to the universe in order to embarrass us because of our faults but to vindicate His own perfect character.

Here is the context for breaking of the seven seals. Only Christ could break the seals because only He can reveal the Father - to us on earth and to the heavenly court as everyone sees what God has done in human lives for their eternal benefit. It is no

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<sup>43</sup> Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 294.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

wonder that the four living creatures, and twenty-four elders, and innumerable angels and other unfallen beings fall down and praise God as these scenes unfold.

# Chapter 6

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## More on the Seventh Seal

**U**nder the seventh seal there is silence in heaven "for about half an hour" (Rev 8:1). The reason for the silence is that no one is there. The seven angels with the plagues are already on earth. Christ, His Father, and the other angels are en route. Heaven is temporarily deserted and so there is silence for a short period.

How long a period are we talking about here? How long is half an hour? If we apply the well-established principle that a day represents a year in Bible prophecy and if an hour is the twenty-fourth part of a day, then an hour of prophetic time should represent the twenty-fourth part of a year. Since there are twelve months in a year, half a month, or about two weeks, would be consistent with what we are saying here. It is also consistent with the following spirit of prophecy statement published in Francis D. Nichol's book entitled, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*:

"About four months since I had a vision of events all in the future. I saw the time of trouble, such as never was. Jesus told me it was the time of Jacob's trouble, and that we should be delivered out of it by the voice of God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword as nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion. Then we cried to God day and night for deliverance, until we began to hear the bells on Jesus' garment. And I saw Jesus rise up in the Holiest, and as he came out we heard the tinkling of the bells and knew that our High Priest was coming out. Then we heard the voice of God which shook the heavens and the earth, and gave the 144,000 the day and hour of Jesus' coming. Then the saints were free, united, and full of the glory of God, for he has turned their captivity. And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood. Then Jesus Said 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 number of days, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint's feet."<sup>45</sup>

Jesus stays in the sanctuary so long as there is anything for Him to do there, i.e., He stays there until the judgment is over. Then He stands up (see Dan 12:1) and comes here (see Rev 19:11-21). From this, and from the above quotation, it follows that the time it takes for Jesus to come from heaven to earth at the second coming is "a number of days."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nichol, *Critics* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1951), p. 625.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

This is the time during which the plagues fall. They do fall during the judgment on those who still have an opportunity to repent, nor do they fall after the return of Christ on those who have been destroyed "by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thess 2:8). They fall during the interim, i.e., between the time when Jesus leaves heaven and the time when He arrives here. How long does it take Jesus to return to heaven once He has rescued His saints on earth?

Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven, and cried, "Awake! awake! awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise." Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, "Alleluia!" as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. . . .<sup>47</sup>

The time it takes for Jesus to return to heaven once He has gathered His saints from the earth is "seven days."<sup>48</sup> If Jesus spends a comparable amount of time coming to the earth and returning to heaven, then the total period during which He and the Father and all the angels are absent from heaven is about two weeks.

"When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (Rev 8:1), or the twenty-fourth part of a day. We do not need to look for a time after the saints have taken up their positions "before the throne of God [to] serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev 7:15) as a fulfillment of Rev 8:1. It is fulfilled at the second coming.

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<sup>47</sup> Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1945), p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

# Chapter 7

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## Rev 4-5 and the Seven Trumpets of Rev 8-9, 11

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. (Rev 11:19)

### Sequence of Events

**A**nciently the feast of trumpets had the function of announcing and leading up to the day of atonement (see Num 29:1-6 and 7-11 respectively). When that day began their work of announcing it was over. From this I draw that, if the parallel holds, we can expect the antitypical trumpets in Revelation (see Rev 11:15-19) to bring us to the beginning of the antitypical judgment in 1844 and no further.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, if the parallel does not hold then we are at sea without chart or compass. So I maintain that the trumpets stop when the judgment begins based on the Old Testament types. And if we cannot draw on these types for understanding, i.e., if we cannot allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, what shall we use in its place?

The plagues could hardly be poured out on those who have had no opportunity to decide on the issues that are raised in the judgment - as outlined in the three angels' messages of Rev 14 and 18 - so they fall afterward. The plagues begin when the judgment ends. The churches and the seals, on the other hand, cross the 1844 dividing line between the antitypical daily and yearly services in the heavenly sanctuary.

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<sup>49</sup> When the twenty-four elders say, "The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great - and for destroying those who destroy the earth" (Rev 11:18), this takes in the beginning of the judgment (judging the dead), the end of the judgment (rewarding the prophets and saints), and the end of the millennium (destroying those who destroy the earth). Since times are referred to no one timeframe is going to fit them all. But it should at least be clear that we cannot come to the end of the millennium before its beginning, or to the end of the judgment before it starts. The time brought to view is the beginning of the judgment, from which these later events would naturally follow.

There is a question whether the events of Rev 4-5 precede those of Rev 11.<sup>50</sup> It is true that chap. 4 comes before chap. 11 within the book, but what does that fact mean? Rev 11:19 says "God's temple in heaven was opened," while Rev 4:1 says "before me was a door standing open in heaven." Granting that the door in question is the same in both cases, which happens first? If a door has been closed in the past, does it stand open before someone opens it? When we answer this question we will have more insight into the relationship between these two chapters.

In chap. 4 we have a result (the door stands open), in chap. 11 the process that causes it (the door, which had been closed previously, is opened). So if one or the other set of events must come first, Rev 11:19 precedes Rev 4:1 and not the reverse. We do not have to wait until chap. 11 in order to read about second apartment events in the book of Revelation.

Actually I would not want to make a strong case for sequence here in either direction. My point is that Rev 4-5 does not describe a time significantly earlier than Rev 11, as some claim.<sup>51</sup> But in saying this I am not trying to establish the opposite position, i.e. that Rev 11 describes a time significantly earlier than Rev 4-5. That is not the case either. Instead both chapters describe the same events in the same timeframe, i.e. at the beginning of the judgment.

## Sequence of Clauses

Let us focus now on the text of the seventh trumpet more closely. The clause that says God's temple was opened comes last, after the description of what John sees within it. Why is this?

The clause about opening God's temple comes last because of literary considerations having to do with the structure of this section of the book and what it is designed to emphasize. The feast of trumpets anciently announced the day of atonement and led up to it. It was their function to make sure that the people were ready to participate in the day of atonement meaningfully and with the right attitude. That is

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<sup>50</sup> See Maxwell's discussion under the heading, "The Sanctuary Is a Friendly Place," in *God Cares* 2:162-67. Maxwell traces the association of the seven churches with the lampstands (see Rev 1:12-13), the seven seals with the table of consecrated bread (4:2 if.), the seven trumpets with the golden altar of incense (8:3), and the great controversy theme involving God's commandments with the ark of the covenant (11:19). In this model the throne of Rev 4:1 is the table for consecrated bread inside the first apartment. I discuss this concept at greater length in another chapter. For now it is enough to notice that if Rev 4-5 is identified with the first apartment and if Rev 11 is identified with the second apartment, then Rev 4-5 precede those of Rev 11 in its time of application as well its place within the book.

<sup>51</sup> See Maxwell, *God Cares* 2:167 and related discussion. In my view the Strand-Maxwell concept of the structure of Revelation is a breakthrough, but it could be used to limit as well as augment our understanding of individual chapters. Are we to argue that the churches do not extend to the end time, or that the seals or trumpets do not? They occur in the "historical" half of the book. How can they have an end-time application? But by whatever means they obviously do have precisely such an application. Each series begins in John's day when Christ was in the first apartment, but each extends to our own day when He is in the second apartment.

also the function of the seven trumpets in the book of Revelation. They direct people's attention to the judgment on the great antitypical day of atonement in and after 1844.

Notice that in NIV we find the word "Then" at the beginning of vs. 19 ("Then God's temple in heaven was opened"), as though everything else happened first and afterward the temple was opened. The Greek simply says *kai* "and" (i.e., "And God's temple in heaven was opened"). The literary focus is on the opening of the temple. This is what accounts for the placement of the clause. The trumpets end when the day of atonement begins. But in fact the entire scene depicted in Rev 11:15-19 takes place within the area opened in this way.

## Other Comments

Both Strand and Maxwell include vs. 19 with what follows in chap. 12. Section C(a) is defined 12 8:241:18 and section C(b) is 11:19-14:20. In the case of chap. 8 there is good reason to begin a new section at vs. 2. The seals end in vs. 1 and the trumpets begin in vs. 2. But here there is no reason why our outline should not agree with an established chapter division. The two men agree in setting it aside, but both are wrong. Chapters 11 and 12 are divided as they should be. We can take the printed text just as it reads.

# Chapter 8

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## More on the Seventh Trumpet

*T*he situation under the seventh trumpet is similar to what we find in Rev 4-5. In my view this is the beginning of the judgment. The trumpets have all sounded, warning the world of judgment to come and now it is here.

### Content of the Passage

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of  
our Lord and of his Christ,  
and he will reign for ever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,  
who is and who was,  
because you have taken your great power  
and have begun to reign,  
The nations were angry;  
and your wrath has come.  
The time has come for judging the dead,  
and for rewarding your servants the prophets  
and your saints and those who reverence your name,  
both small and great –  
and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm, (Rev 11: 15-19)

Here the twenty-four elders are already "seated on their thrones before God" (vs. 16) and the proceedings are about to begin. It is in anticipation of this that the elders say, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign" (vs. 17).

And it is in anticipation of the results of the judgment now starting that they add, "The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who

reverence your name, both small and great - and for destroying those who destroy the earth" (vs. 18).

We can be sure that some such interpretation as this is required because the time for judging the dead is not the same as that for rewarding God's prophets and saints, nor is the latter the same as the time for destroying those who destroy the earth. The time for judging the dead was 1844 and following. The time for rewarding God's prophets and saints is the second coming. The time for destroying those who destroy the earth is after the millennium. So if these three times are all different from each other we cannot at least two of them are being mentioned out of sequence. Which two? To know this we have to find out when the elders are speaking, not just what they are talking about.

I submit that the time when the statement of vss. 16-18 is made, as contrasted with that when the events described there apply, appears in the next verse: "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm" (vs. 19).<sup>52</sup> When was God's temple in heaven opened? Whenever that is, that is when the twenty-four elders say what they do in vss. 16-18. In my view this is the beginning of the judgment. Thus, when they say, "The time has come for judging the dead" (vs. 18a), that is in sequence with goes before and with vs. 19. When they add, "and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great - and for destroying those who destroy the earth" (vs. 18b), that is proleptic. The timeframe for the seventh trumpet is that time when "God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant" (vs. 19) at the beginning of the judgment in 1844.

## Is Vs. 19 Part of the Passage?

Both Strand and Maxwell argue that vs. 19 does not belong there. In the outlines of both men they take Rev 11:19 with Rev 12-14 and not with the rest of Rev 8-11 (apart from 8:1 which is the seventh seal). So let us not give a hasty answer. There is something here that requires discussion.

Ironically, Maxwell does not discuss it. On p. 310 he refers to "Revelation 12-14 (as we'll call our present division, even though it really starts with the last verse of

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<sup>52</sup> The thunders of Rev 11:19 and those of 10:3-4 should be studied together. "The special light given to John which was expressed in the seven thunders was a delineation of events which would transpire under the first and second angels' messages. It was not best for the people to know these things, for their faith must necessarily be tested. In the order of God most wonderful and advanced truths would be proclaimed. The first and second angels' messages were to be proclaimed, but no farther light was to be revealed before these messages had done their specific work. This is represented by the angel standing with one foot on the sea, proclaiming with a most solemn oath that time should be no longer" (Ellen White, quoted in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* [Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1957]: 7:971). What the first angel's message says, once more, is: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come." (Rev 14:7).

chapter 11). . . ."<sup>53</sup> Later on the same page we read in passing that it is an "Introductory sanctuary scene. . . ." Why is it an introductory sanctuary scene?

According to Strand there needs to be a reference to the sanctuary at this point in the book because Rev 4:1-8:1, 8:2-11:18; and 11:19-14:20 all start with a "Victorious Vision" and end with a "Glorious Climax."<sup>54</sup> This is a strong argument, if it is correct, but saying this much is not the whole story.

### **The parallel with Rev 4-5**

Recall that in Rev 4-5 John sees the four living creatures and twenty-four elders in the context of a door being opened in heaven. Here also he sees the four living creatures and twenty-four elders in the context of a door being opened in heaven. Is this a coincidence? I think not. John sees the same things in Rev 4-5 and Rev lib because the same events are taking place in both passages. So there is the parallel with Rev 4-5 to consider.

### **The parallel with vs. 1**

There are also some structural relationships within the chapter that we need to take into account. Below I quote the first and last verses of the chapter along with some context in the case of vs. 1.

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. (Rev 11:1-2)

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and earthquake and a great hailstorm. (Rev 11:19)

Rev 11:1 describes a time in history when God's people are to give special attention to the sanctuary. They are to study it closely. They are to measure it in all its details. When did they do this? The rest of Rev 11:1-14 talks about the "42 months," the "1,260 days," and the events that would happen when these prophetic time periods would come to an end. In this context vs. 1 seems out of place. It has to do with 1844, whereas the rest of the section has to do with 1798. Then we come to the seventh trumpet and with it vs. 19, which also seems out of place. At least Strand and Maxwell feel it is out of place. But when taken together these two misfit passages form an inclusio around the chapter. They stand in chiastic relationship to each other. To do an effective job of removing vs. 19 from this chapter and putting it with the next we would also have to remove vs. 1. Let us not go to either extreme. The text already reads just as it should.

<sup>53</sup> See also God Cares, 2:370,381,387.

<sup>54</sup> *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 48.

### **Why Rev 12-14 cannot begin with a reference to the sanctuary**

We must go beyond the matter of simply saying that 11:19 does not introduce Rev 12-14 with a reference to the sanctuary and make the stronger claim that no reference to the sanctuary could ever go there. It would be out of place.

We now quote the opening verses of the passage that Strand and Maxwell want to introduce with a scene from the sanctuary. "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth" (vss. 1-2). She was about to give birth? So she had not given birth yet. Was Christ a Priest before He became a man?<sup>55</sup> Consider a number of passages from the book of Hebrews.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, Set us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb 4:14-16)

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 5:8-9)

Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. (Heb 7:26-27)

Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. (Heb 8:3)

Was temptation something that Christ had to endure in order to be High Priest for those who are tempted? If so, then Christ could not be a Priest in the timeframe of Rev 12:1-2. If not, then why was He needlessly exposed to it? Would we be able to "approach the throne of grace with confidence" if the One seated there had not "been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin"? Can we have Heb 4:16

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<sup>55</sup> At the beginning of this century Albion F. Ballenger taught that angels were priests in the first apartment up until Christ's death and that when He returned to heaven Jesus went immediately into the second apartment (see Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Three Approaches in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Andrews University Seminary Doctrinal Dissertation Series, vol. 1 [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1981], pp. 112-15). In Ballenger's system Christ never ministered in the first apartment, i.e., before the cross. My point is that nobody ministered before the cross.

without vs. 15? Christ "learned obedience by what he suffered" before He was "designated by God to be a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:8-9).

And what shall we say about Christ's death? Was it necessary "for this one also to have something to offer" (Heb 8:3) as the text implies? The answer to that question is found in Matt 26:39 ("My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me"). If it had been possible to remove this particular cup from His Son we can be sure that the Father would have done so. But there was no other way. Jesus had been born to die and now it was time to make good on all His promises.

But in Rev 12:1-2 none of this had happened yet. So what does Rev 12:1-2 have to do with opening the sanctuary? The context is wrong for this reference or any other that is similar to it. The section in question consists of Rev 12-14 alone. It does not include Rev 11:19.

# Chapter 9

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## Rev 4-5 and the Seven Plagues of Rev 15-16

After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of Testimony, was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in dean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. (Rev 15:5-8)

**T**he seven last plagues occur after the judgment and before the second coming. So the amount of time they occupy is the same as the amount of time it takes for Christ to leave the great judgment hall in heaven and make His way here. The plagues fall while Christ is en route to the earth.

When the angels who pour out the plagues on the earth leave the sanctuary or temple in heaven the door must be opened for them because by this time it had been shut (see Rev 15:5, quoted above). John sees this same door standing open in Rev 4:1 and 11:19. The reason why it is closed now is that the judgment is over. No one can enter the temple again until the seven plagues have finished their work. This much has to do with time.

In the next chapter I emphasize location to illustrate a point about how the plagues relate to each other in groups of 4+3. But this is not all that could be said. Maxwell brings the plagues together in a slightly different way to illustrate a point about how the plagues relate to the trumpets.

We have noticed more than once that there are striking similarities between the seven plagues and the seven trumpets. The first four in each case are directed against the earth, sea, rivers and springs, and heavenly bodies. The fifth in each case is associated with darkness, the sixth with the river Euphrates, and the seventh with a loud voice or loud voices.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> We have noticed more than once that there are striking similarities between the seven plagues and the seven trumpets. The first four in each case are directed against me earth, sea, rivers and springs, and heavenly bodies. The fifth in each case is associated with darkness, the sixth with the river Euphrates, and the seventh with a loud voice or loud voices" (Maxwell, God Cares, 2:429).

There is much to learn from the plagues as we study them in relationship both with each other and with other passages outside Rev 16. But here the emphasis continues to be on the element of time.

The plagues fall after the judgment is over while Christ is en route to the earth, which takes about one week, and nothing - absolutely nothing - happens on earth during His return trip. Those of the wicked who survive the plagues are destroyed "by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thess 2:8).

During the week or so that it takes for Christ to come here it would not be hard to imagine a cacophony of sound on the earth. As the plagues fall people cry out in misery. "And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible" (Rev 16:21). So the sound of cursing mingles with the horrendous sounds of all nature being torn apart, and there is the sound of fervent prayer too as God's saints cry out for deliverance. All the while there is perfect silence in heaven (see Rev 8:1).

By the time Christ gets through there is silence on the earth as well. The sleeping saints have been raised and taken away. "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess 4:17). The wicked, on the other hand, are all dead. Those who were alive when Christ came and tried to flee have been destroyed "by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thess 2:8). So the living are gone and the dead provide little company. There is no middle ground between life and death and therefore no third group.

At this point there is nothing for Satan to do but think. He is surrounded by his handiwork in a form of solitary confinement and as he considers what he has lost a deep silence settles in on the devastated planet that will last not for two weeks only, but for a thousand years.<sup>57</sup>

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. (Rev 20:1 -3)

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<sup>57</sup> As Christ was the active Agent in creation (see John 1:1 -3) so Satan is the antichrist behind his human pawns. As such his work is to replace the work of Christ with its opposite counterpart. In this context consider the following statement: "That the expression 'bottomless pit' represents the earth in a state of confusion and darkness is evident from other scriptures. Concerning the condition of the earth 'in the beginning,' the Bible record says that it 'was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.' Genesis 1:2. Prophecy teaches that it will be brought back, partially at least, to this condition. Looking forward to the great day of God, the prophet Jeremiah declares: I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, to, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down.' Jeremiah 4:23-26" (Ellen White, Great Controversy, pp. 658-59).

# Chapter 10

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## Overview of the Four Sevens

**B**elow we bind together some threads of thought exposed in earlier chapters of part 2. In dealing with the four series of seven of the book of Revelation we must understand how the sevens relate to each other and also how they relate to adjacent chapters.

### The Four Sevens in Relation to Each Other

I would like to propose the following set of relationships among the sevens themselves. The boundary line at 1844 is crossed between the sixth and seventh churches and between the fifth and sixth seals. The trumpets all precede 1844 and the plagues do not fall until after the judgment. See fig. 3 below.

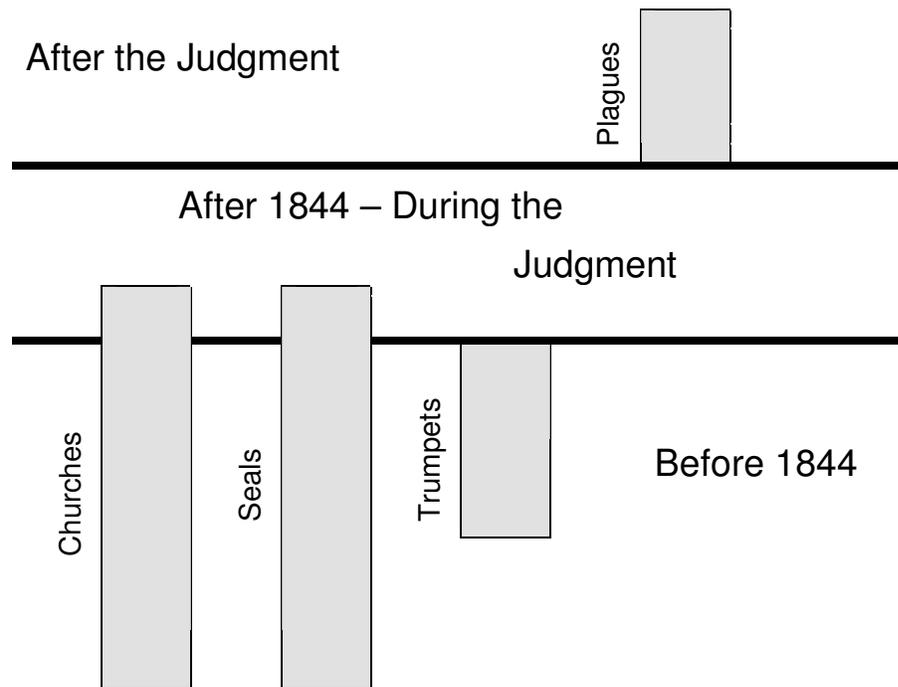


Fig. 3. Application of the seven churches, seals, trumpets, and plagues to history with special reference to the judgment.

We now review some internal facts about the structure of the four series of seven in the book of Revelation. In doing this my point is that both the churches and seals cross the 1844 boundary and that the judgment is therefore in session by the end of both of the first two sevens. The last two sevens are closely related to the judgment but do not occur while it is in session.

### First arrangement: 4+3

It is a well-known fact that the seven trumpets are arranged in groups of 4+3. The last three are called "woes" (see Rev 8:13). The first four plagues appear to be universal (earth, sea, rivers and springs, sun), while the last three use the language of specific places (throne of the beast, river Euphrates, Armageddon).

In the case of the churches and seals, the first four seals follow a shared horse motif (4) while the rest do not (+3). Less obviously, we find the same pattern in the churches. A number of parallels bind Ephesus and Smyrna to Sardis, Pergamum to Philadelphia, and Thyatira to Laodicea.<sup>58</sup> Each letter has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Here I list only those parallels that occur in the letters' introductions and conclusions. See tables 3 and 4 below.

<sup>58</sup> See Hardy, "Structural Characteristics of the Letters to the Seven Churches in Rev 2-3," *Historicism* No. 4/Oct 85, pp. 39-64.

Table 3  
Parallels in the Introductions to the  
Seven Letters

	Group 1	Group 2
(1) Ephesus and Smyrna / (2) Sardis	(a) "who died and came to <i>life</i> again" (Smyrna), (b) "who holds the seven <i>stars</i> in his right hand" (Ephesus)	(a) "who holds the seven <i>spirits</i> of God," (b) "and the seven <i>stars</i> "
(1) Pergamum / (2) Philadelphia	"who has the sharp, double-edged <i>sword</i> "	"who holds the <i>key</i> of David"
(1) Thyatira / (2) Laodicea	"whose <i>eyes</i> are like blazing fire"	"the faithful and true <i>witness</i> "

Table 4  
Parallels in the Conclusions to the  
Seven Letters

	Group 1	Group 2
(1) Ephesus and Smyrna / (2) Sardis	(a) "will give the right to eat from the tree of <i>life</i> " (Ephesus), "will not be hurt by the second <i>death</i> "; (b) "in the paradise of God" (Ephesus)	(a) "will not be hurt at all by the second <i>death</i> "; (b) "before my Father and his angels"
(1) Pergamum / (2) Philadelphia	(a) "a white <i>stone</i> "; (b) "a new <i>name</i> "	(a) "a <i>pillar</i> "; (b) "the <i>name</i> of my God and the <i>name</i> of the city of my God"
(1) Thyatira / (2) Laodicea	(a) " <i>authority</i> over the nations"; (b) "just as I received <i>authority</i> from my Father"	(a) "the right to sit with me on my <i>throne</i> "; (b) "just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his <i>throne</i> "

From these tables it is clear that the churches from Ephesus to Thyatira represent one group and that Sardis to Laodicea represent another. Thus the letters, like the trumpets and seals, can also be arranged in groups of 4+3.

### Second arrangement: 6+1

Having said this much, three of the four series of sevens in the book of Revelation exhibit a 6+1 arrangement as well. I do not find it in the plagues. In the seals and trumpets, however, there is overwhelming structural evidence for the proposed 6+1 arrangement. The first six seals occupy Rev 6 and with the seventh separate from the rest at the beginning of Rev 8 and chap. 7 intervening. Similarly, the first six trumpets occupy Rev 8-9 with the seventh separate from the rest in Rev 10 and chaps. 10-11 intervening.

In the letters to the seven churches the 6+1 pattern is thematic rather than structural. The first five letters precede 1798 and the time of the end, but the first six letters precede 1844 and the beginning of the judgment. This is the point to notice here. The first six letters all occur during the 2300 days of Dan 8. Only the seventh letter goes beyond that time.

### Summary

The important thing here is to understand the 6+1 arrangement of the churches. The 6+1 arrangement of the seals and trumpets is less important and so is the 4+3 arrangement of the churches, seals, trumpets, and plagues. The 6+1 arrangement of the churches, however, has a direct bearing on our understanding of when the "door" of Rev 4:1 is thrown open. More specifically, if chaps. 2-3 brings us down to modern times, and if there is any viable thematic link, what would be more reasonable than to place what follows in the same timeframe as the chapters that have just finished bringing us there? The burden of proof rests with those who would place Rev 4-5 in some other different timeframe.

## More on the Churches and Seals

If we claim that the series of churches in Rev 2-3 brings us through history in a systematic manner starting in the first century and eventually coming to and beyond the end of the 2300 days of Dan 8, why is it difficult to suppose that John's attention shifts in Rev 4-5 from events on earth during the judgment to events in heaven during the judgment? What John sees in heaven is whatever happens there in the timeframe he has brought us to in the series of churches.

And what is that? What happens during the timeframe of Laodicea? What does the word itself mean? If we are Laodicea what is happening in heaven now? That is what John sees in Rev 4-5.

There is an irony to notice as we compare events at the end of chap. 3 and the beginning of chap. 4. As the judgment begins and the entire universe looks on with riveted attention, the church on earth sinks into a deep lethargy. As the interest of the unfallen worlds heats up, the interest of the church dies down until it is lukewarm to all that is going on in heaven and to its own spiritual surroundings on earth.

The letters to the seven churches in chaps. 2-3 provide a natural link between chaps. 1 and 4, i.e., between the first century and the nineteenth when the 2300 days end and the judgment begins. The opposite counterpart of this is the opening of the seven-part scroll, which provides a link in the other direction from the judgment back to events that are discussed in the judgment. Not one bit of this challenges any traditional Seventh-day Adventist teaching.

## The Interlude Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

The sixth seal depicts both the signs that immediately precede the second coming and the second coming itself. When Christ appears in the clouds He is accompanied by all the angel armies of heaven. When those who had opposed Him in the person of His saints see these things happen they are thrown into helpless consternation. Daniel describes this scene from the perspective of the rebellion's leadership. "Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him" (Dan 11:45). John describes it from the perspective of those who have been misled.

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits 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 John says, "The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind" (Rev 6:12-13), those are the signs that precede the second coming. When he says, "The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place" (Rev 6:14). that is the second coming itself, as described in vs. 15-17 (quoted above). See also Rev 16:20 ("Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found"). So the timeframe for this much is secure.

In chap. 7 the sealing of the 144,000 represents the same turbulent set of events from the perspective of those who follow Jesus and have longed for His appearing. The saints are sealed at the end of the judgment before the plagues begin to fall, as we read in vs. 3: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." The harming of the land, the sea, the trees, and whatever is the plagues (see chaps 15-16). God's servants receive His seal in their foreheads just before this.

Please bear in mind that as regards time the plagues fall before Christ returns, or we could say, while He is returning. So the 144,000 are not in heaven at the time John sees them in Rev 7:1-8.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb."

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, they fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

"Amen!  
 Praise and glory  
 and wisdom and thanks and honor  
 and power and strength  
 be to our God for ever and ever.  
 Amen!" (Rev 7:9-10)

Now the scene changes. Clearly, the 144,000 are not in heaven in vss. 1-8 but just as clearly the "great multitude that no one could count" (vs. 9) are in heaven in vss. 9-17. They "have come out of the great tribulation" (vs. 14) and are "before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple" (vs. 15). In vss. 1-8 the great tribulation is about to begin. In vss. 9-17 it is already over.<sup>59</sup>

So is the great multitude the same as the 144,000? When do the 144,000 live? They live just before the plagues fall and are miraculously preserved during that time to see Jesus come. The plagues fall while He is coming. When do the multitude of others live? We are not told directly, but consider the references to "white robes" in 7:9 ("They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands"). This is reminiscent of 6:11 ("Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed"). This happens under the fifth seal, before the signs in the sun, moon, and stars (see vss. 12-14). I conclude that the great multitude of Rev 7:9 includes God's people from all ages of history. The 144,000, on the other hand, live to see Jesus come.

Thus, in the second part of the chapter we are taken forward in time to a scene that places the harrowing experiences of the 144,000 in context. God's people will not always be objects of hatred. Those who live to see Jesus come are not the only ones who will receive the heavenly reward. And so in vss. 9-17 we see all the saints, from all generations, not on earth with plagues falling on their enemies but in heaven standing before the throne of God. This is prolepsis. It is a look forward to things that lie beyond the current story line.

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<sup>59</sup> It would be tempting to think of the "great tribulation" in Rev 7:14 as the plagues of Rev 15-16, ready to begin in 7:3. The 144,000 go through that time, therefore the 144,000 of 7:3 is the same as the multitude of 7:14. But this cannot be. First, those who receive the white robes in 6:11 are dead before the plagues begin. And how did they die? They were martyred during the great tribulation. This is the period Christ describes: "For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Matt 24:21-22). The tribulation of Matt 24 takes place during the 1260 days in the Middle Ages. It was shortened by the Reformation, not by changing the number 1260 to some other number, but by reducing the severity of the saints' distress. This is one reason. Another is that whereas God's people were martyred during the Middle Ages, they are protected during the plagues. So the plagues cannot be the "great tribulation" of Rev 7:14. This leaves some questions unanswered. The tribulation of vs. 14 cannot be limited to the Middle Ages if those who receive white robes are the saints of all ages and from all lands. Nor have all of God's children been martyred. Some have died natural deaths. So I leave to others to say what this clause means. My point here is that it does not mean the plagues. Thus, the 144,000 and the multitude are not merely two names for one group. The 144,000 live to see the plagues and to see Christ come in glory.

In Rev 8:1 the prolepsis ends and we return to the point where we had been in 7:1-8. Jesus has just appeared in the clouds and the wicked have tried unsuccessfully to hide from His presence. It only remains to take the saints with Him back to heaven. Here is the context for the seventh seal. "When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (Rev 8:1).

Notice in passing that the throneroom scene of Rev 7 is different from that in Rev 4-5. The same cast of characters is there, with the addition of those who have been saved from the earth and who were not present before, but notice that the twenty-four elders are silent. They are not bowing down continually praising God. Instead it is the angels "standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures" (Rev 7:11) who say, "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (vs. 12). One of the elders does pose a question to John (see vs. 13) and subsequently answers it (see vss. 15-17), but the dynamics of the situation have changed. The judgment is over. It comes to an end before the time when we see any saints in heaven.

## Prolepsis Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals and in the Seventh Trumpet

In the interval between the sixth and seventh seals, and again within the seventh trumpet, events are mentioned that go beyond what my model predicts in regard to time. Both of these exceptional cases are accounted for by prolepsis - a literary device by which an author looks forward out of sequence to something that lies beyond his current position in the story line. There is a difference between this claim and one which says that sequence has been preserved and that the story line itself moves forward.

At issue is the position of the story line, because both in Rev 7:9-17 between the sixth and seventh seals and in Rev 11:15-19 within the seventh trumpet we are brought back to the throneroom in heaven that we had seen earlier in Rev 4-5. Having established what Rev 7 and 11 are saying I would then like to reason from what we learn in those chapters back to our starting point in Rev 4-5, showing that the latter represents the beginning of the judgment in 1844.

## Summary

There is a good deal of repetition in the book of Revelation, just as there is in Daniel.<sup>60</sup> So it is unnecessary to argue that God's temple remains closed until it is finally opened in chap. 11. It is closed throughout the series of churches up through Philadelphia, but not during Laodicea. The seventh church describes a time during the judgment when the temple of God has been opened (see Rev 4:1). It is closed during the period of the first five seals, but not during the sixth and seventh. If the second coming is described under the sixth seal, that is after the judgment. Again the temple is closed throughout the period of the seven trumpets until they have all finished sounding, but then it is opened (see Rev 11:19).

In this model there is nothing unique in the fact that the temple is opened in Rev 11:19. It is open in chaps. 4-5 and 7 as well. John takes us over the same ground again and again. Otherwise he does not take us over the same time ground and we must find some way to interpret the book such that the order of events corresponds strictly to the order of chapters. In this case the seventh church must precede the first seal and so on. But if we shrink from accepting this idea, why should we also shrink from the implications of rejecting it, i.e., from allowing the temple to be open at the end of the series of churches (Rev 4-5) and seals (Rev 7) as well as at the end of the trumpets (Rev 11)?

Any argument that the second apartment remains closed until it is opened in Rev 11:19 is an argument that all events in earlier chapters apply before 1844. We cannot say on the one hand that the temple remains closed until chap. 11 and on the other hand that the letter to Philadelphia describes the experience of the Millerites, which brings us to the beginning of the judgment.

Speaking of the period of lethargy when Laodicea sleepily considers whether or not to open its own door to Jesus (see Song 5:2-3), John says, "After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven" (Rev 4:1). Jesus - already in this early chapter of the book - has thrown open His door to them. As He says in another passage, "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut" (Rev 3:8). If Jesus has opened this door in chap. 3 let us not try to keep it closed until we come to chap. 11.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> In regard to the repetitious style of Daniel, Shea writes that, "As a concluding observation, we should not neglect the aesthetic side of this feature of chiasmic structure. Various commentators have observed that the type of writing present in Dan 4 and 5 is very repetitious. The dullness of the repetitions to the modern eye recedes in importance, however, when it is realized that these transparently repetitious passages actually form an integral part of the larger literary design of these two chapters. Thus, instead of contributing to boredom, these repetitions should enhance one's appreciation for this work as a carefully crafted piece. The narratives of the two chapters do indeed relate history, but they do so in an aesthetically artistic fashion" (Andrews University Seminary Studies 23 [1985]: 294).

<sup>61</sup> "Similarly, let us not try to keep it open until we come to chap. 11. It is open in chap. 3 because the events referred to there happen after 1844. If other events in later chapters happen before 1844 the door to the second apartment will be closed when they occur.

# *Part 4*

## The Three Angels' Messages

# Chapter 11

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## Rev 4-5 and the Disappointment of Rev 10

**D**espite its title this chapter really does have a direct bearing on the three angels' messages, as its location in part 4 implies. In fact I think the reader will agree, having read it, that the relationship between the two chapters (Rev 10 and 14) is surprisingly close.

### Rev 10 and the Judgment

Rev 10 describes a period in the church's history when it believes - on the basis of its study of a "little scroll" (Rev 10:2,9-10), presumably Daniel<sup>62</sup> -that its mission on earth is done. It would not have to prophesy any more because Jesus was going to come and make all such witnessing activity a thing of the past. When the church learns it is mistaken about the nature of the event it expected there is a bitter disappointment.

I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour, Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings. (Rev 10:10-11)

What makes the church's experience with the little scroll turn sour? It is the fact that they must prophesy again. They find nothing distasteful in talking about Jesus, but they had hoped for more than that. They had hoped to see Him in person and be in His presence. Rev 10 describes the experience of the Millerites who preached that Christ would return sometime during 1843 (see Dan 12:12), then that the date would be October 22, 1844. But what does all of this have to do with Rev 4-5 and the judgment?

Jesus did exactly what He said He would do on the above date. "'See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty" (Mal 3:1). Christ was the Lord that the Millerites were seeking so actively and so publicly. They were His messengers and on October 22, 1844 He suddenly came to His temple.

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<sup>62</sup> The word translated "scroll" is not the same in Rev 10:2,9-10 (*biblaridion*) as it is in Rev 5:1-5,8-9 (*biblion*). The force of saying so is blunted, however, by the fact that in Rev 10:8 the word is *biblion*, as in chap. 5. Thus both words occur chap. 10 and they are used interchangeably. And yet, bringing us back to our starting point, the word used most in chap. 10 is not the same as that used exclusively in chap. 5. For further comment on the identity of this "scroll" or "book" see part 6 below ("The Spirit of Prophecy").

The prophet says "suddenly" because the coming he is talking about in the above passage would be a surprise. We have already read in Rev 10 how surprising it was for the Millerites. But there is an irony here. How could Christ's coming be a surprise to people who were going everywhere preaching about it?

They thought they would see Him come in the clouds with power and great glory, whereas what He had in mind was quite different. He came to His temple. Of course this is exactly what He said He would do, but they had misunderstood His intent. The temple He would come to so suddenly - in so surprising a manner, so unexpectedly" was not the earth where His people were looking for Him but the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven. Christ had done what He said, but His people had misunderstood Him. Mal 3 is the natural counterpart to Rev 10.

Like Columbus discovering the New World, they thought they were finding one thing whereas in fact they were finding something else. But this does not make the Millerites' discovery any less important. Columbus did not find a new way to India, as he hoped, but what he did find nearly doubled the size of our world as it was known in his day. In the same way the Millerites' discoveries opened new theological vistas that have occupied us ever since. What they found had always been there awaiting discovery, but now - after Miller - these things could be seen and appreciated by any who chose to see and appreciate them.

## Rev 10 in Relation to Rev 14 and 18

As stated above, the disappointment of God's people in Rev 10 centers on the fact that they would have to prophesy again, when they thought those days were over because of Jesus' second coming. If the operative word here is "prophesy," then what were they told to say? John does not tell us in Rev 10 nor does Daniel tell us in Dan 11 when he mentions the final giving of this very same message. Daniel does not use the word "prophecies" or "messages." Instead (in NIV) he uses the word "reports": "But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many" (vs. 44). This passage is describing the loud cry of the third angel in Rev 18.

North and east (i.e. northeast) from Egypt is the direction one would have to go in order to reach Jerusalem. This is not literal language. Here Jerusalem, as the place where the temple once stood and God was worshiped, is a code word for God's people, whoever and wherever they might be. At the time in history when this passage is fulfilled God's people are faithful Christians scattered everywhere around the circle of the globe. So let us not try to carry the geographical language too far. In any event, there were reports. It is a pity that we do not know what they say in Dan 11 or what the church is told to prophesy in Rev 10.

But we do know what the reports say! What Daniel calls "reports" John calls "messages." We can read the full text of these messages in Rev 14:6-13. The second and third messages are given again with great emphasis in Rev 18:1-8 and 9-24 respectively. More than this, we are commanded to share in the work of giving these

messages. We are the three angels - the ones commissioned to bring these three messages to the attention of a lost world.

When the judgment begins in heaven God commissions His servants on earth to let everyone know. And so they must prophesy again, telling everyone, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). This, incidentally, is a message they cannot give until they understand that there will be a judgment and that it will take place in heaven before Christ comes. The earliest Adventists did not preach this message until after the passing of the time in 1844. It was a message they thought they would never have to give. In any event, this is one part of what they were told to prophesy in Rev 10.

There are two other parts " in Rev 14:8 and Rev 14:9-12. The sealing up of the message in Rev 10 does not apply to the three angels' messages, but to the Millerites' misunderstanding of that portion of Daniel which led to the disappointment.<sup>63</sup> When the seven thunders spoke John started to write down they said, but was commanded not to. Here is the context for that command.

Notice that the error was exposed with a voice seven times louder than thunder, or alternatively as loud as thunder seven times over. And yet the Millerites still got this wrong! But let us not be too harsh with them. Christ warned His disciples that He "must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again" (Luke 24:7; see also Matt 16:21; Luke 13:33). When everything happened just as He said it would, and two disciples said, "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19), Jesus answered, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (vs. 25).

The Scriptures had clearly predicted Christ's death - the temple services predicted His death countless times every day - and so had He in talking with them, but with the event actually upon them His followers were still crushed by what happened. This same scenario was to be reenacted in a different venue some nineteen hundred years later in connection with the second coming rather than the first. The Scriptures were clear. Christ's followers should have known better, but they were still crushed when the event occurred.

We have talked about the "messages" part of the three angels' messages. Now let us talk about the "angels." It is true that angels are powerful supernatural beings, lower than God but higher than man. This, however, is not Rev 14 has in view. In the Old Testament an angel (*mal'āk*) is anyone sent on another's behalf.<sup>64</sup> This fact explains how

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<sup>63</sup> "The special light given to John which was expressed in the seven thunders was a delineation of events which would transpire under the first and second angels' messages. It was not best for the people to know these things, for their faith must necessarily be tested" (Ellen White, SDA Bible Commentary, 7:971).

<sup>64</sup> The word *mal'āk*, in its various forms, occurs 213 times in the Old Testament with examples found in twenty-six of the thirty-nine books. In one case the referent is inanimate, in ninety-nine cases clearly human. Sixty-one times it refers to an angel, and fifty-two times to a divine Being which I identify with the pre-existent Christ" (Hardy, "What Does the Word *mal'āk* Mean?" Historicism No. 5/Jan 86, pp. 2-25).

the preexistent Christ can be called an Angel in many Old Testament passages.<sup>65</sup> Clearly He is not an angel in the sense of Greek *aggelos* (or English "angel"). Instead He is the Creator of the angels. And yet a number of inspired authors do use the Hebrew term *mal'āk* when describing Him. What this illustrates is the difference between the two words. It says nothing about the nature of Christ. The same word can be applied equally well to inanimate forces of nature, as in Ps 104:4 which says, "He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants" (see 1 Kgs 19:11-13).

The angels of Rev 14 are ordinary people who bear a message for God. In Rev 10 the ones given a message are the disappointed Millerites who would later become Seventh-day Adventists. They are told to prophesy again. This is their commission. What they tell the world is that instead of focusing attention on seeing Jesus in the sky they are to focus on Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. There is to be a judgment in heaven before Christ comes. More than this, "the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7).

Christ will truly come in the sky with all the angel armies of heaven "and every eye will see him" (Rev 1:7), but not yet. There are other things to do first.<sup>66</sup> The judgment must sit. The books must be opened. And someone must say so. This is our message as Seventh-day Adventists. If we do not give it, who will? Must God raise up another people? Why should He need to? He has already done that. The three angels are those entrusted with giving the three messages. We are those angels. So let us be found faithfully doing the work He has given us.

Notice that Rev 14 bears the same relation to chaps. 4-5 that Rev 18 bears to chap. 19a. Rev 14 applies especially at the beginning of the judgment. So does Rev 4-5. Rev 18 applies especially to the end of the judgment. So does Rev 19a. The two sections (Rev 4-5 and 19a) are chiasmic counterparts of each other. When the judgment finally does end (in Rev 19a) it only remains for Christ to return immediately afterward (in Rev 19b).

So it is not only the case that we can know what John heard in Rev 10. We must take up that message ourselves so that "every nation, tribe, language and people" (Rev 14:7) can make an intelligent decision to accept what Christ has done and is doing and be a part of His kingdom. Jesus wanted to come in 1844 and could have done so shortly afterward,<sup>67</sup> but He is Lord of all the earth and was concerned about more than a handful of Millerites.

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<sup>65</sup> "(a) The angel of Jehovah identifies himself with Jehovah; (b) he is identified with Jehovah by others; (c) he accepts worship due only to God. Though the phrase 'angel of Jehovah' is sometimes used in the later Scriptures to denote a merely human messenger or created angel, it seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed his final coming in the flesh" (Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* [Philadelphia: Judson, 1907], p. 319).

<sup>66</sup> Here is the fulfillment of Christ's words, "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth" (Rev 3:10). He kept His followers from the hour of trial by delaying the hour of trial. It would come later and those who first gave the message of Christ's return would be spared. They had suffered enough in their own generation.

<sup>67</sup> "Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received (their

The message we have been describing is not well served by obscuring the relationships among Dan 7, Rev 4-5, and Rev 19a. Whatever clarifies them clarifies it, and conversely whatever obscures them obscures it. Rev 4-5 quotes Dan 7 and is parallel to Rev 19a. Let us embrace these relationships and emphasize them.

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welcome into the city of God" (Ellen White, Testimonies to the Church [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948], 6:450).

# Chapter 12

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## Rev 4-5 and the Three Angels' Messages of Rev 14 and 18

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the eiders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. (Rev 14:3)

**R**evelation 14:1-5 corresponds more closely to an earlier passage in Rev 7:1-17 than to what follows in Rev 14:6-13. And yet because of the textual association between that and the three angels' message and because in the present model the throne scene of Rev 14:3 is the same as the judgment announced in Rev 14:7 I include a brief summary of the three messages here.

In Rev 18 the second and third messages are repeated. Thus, Rev 18:1-3 corresponds to 14:8 (the second message) and Rev 18:4-24 corresponds to 14:9-12 (the third message). The similarity extends to the amount of space each message occupies. Number 2 is short, number 3 is long. The subject matter in the two chapters is identical. The parallel is exact.

In the present context notice that Rev 14 describes the beginning of the time when the three messages would be given, while Rev 18 describes the last moments of that time. Just before Christ comes the messages are taken to the world with immense force. On the one hand we are dealing with the beginning of the judgment (see Rev 14:7), and on the other with the end of the judgment (see Rev 19:1-10). The period during which the three angels' messages are given to the world corresponds to the period during which the judgment is in session in heaven. The two events not only happen at the same time but it is a major function of the messages to call people's attention to the judgment. The two are directly related and it is our function to convey this fact.

I point out above that some of what we read in Rev 14 is repeated in Rev 18. In this regard notice two facts. First, the repetition involves only the second and third messages. The first is linked to a specific time. It announces the beginning of the judgment (see Rev 14:7) and would be out of place when the judgment is coming to an end. And so we speak of the loud cry of the third angel (not the loud cry of the first angel).<sup>68</sup> Actually Rev 18:1-3 is the loud cry of the second angel, since what he says

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<sup>68</sup> "A few years later when the third angel's message had become the dominant factor in their theology, added support was given to the idea that their missionary work would succeed because the proclamation of the warning message was to take place with a "loud voice" (Rev. 14:9). Since 1850 this final future proclamation of the last warning message came to be identified by the term

corresponds to Rev 14:8. The loud cry of the third angel is found in Rev 18:4-24. Those verses correspond to and expand on the themes of Rev 14:9-12.

The second point to notice is that when Daniel refers to the last mighty efforts to give these messages he does not use that term but calls them "reports" instead (see Dan 11:44). The intent of what he says, however, is the same whatever word is used to translate it. These messages or "reports from the north and east" have so powerful an impact that the world's last usurping king of the North is infuriated by them (Dan 11:44-45). What infuriates him is the loud cry of the third angel (see Rev 18), just [before Michael stands up at the end of the judgment (see Rev 19a; Dan 12:1), prior to coming back to earth in glory (see Rev 19b).

When Michael stands up, He mounts a white horse in the language of J Rev 19:11, and leads all the angel armies out of heaven (see Rev 8:1). Here again we see Michael and His angels actively engaged in battle (see Rev 12:7; Matt 26:53; Ps 24:8). The two armies cannot confront each other until the second one arrives. When it does arrive, that is the second coming. Its arrival is brought about by His arrival. But my point here is that the subject matter of Rev 19a, which immediately precedes these events, is the end of the judgment.

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'the loud cry' of the third angel or of me third angel's message" (Gerhard P. Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], p. 219; see also pp. 233,275).

# Chapter 13

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## Brief Note on Rev 11a

**I**n the same way that Rev 10 deals with the end of the 2300 days, Rev 11a deals with the end of the 1260 days. The one chapter brings us to 1844, the other to 1798.

There are a number of clues in regard to time in both chapters. In chap. 10 the angel says, "There will be no more delay!" (vs. 6). KJV says "that there should be time no longer." The intent cannot be that time should cease at that moment because in vs. 11 John is told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." The fact that the church would have to do that is what made its experience so bitter in and around 1844. So this is not the end of history as we know it. But clearly something had changed. The reference is to the end of the great 2300-day time period of Dan 8. These things are discussed in another chapter.

In Rev 11a, on the other hand, we have a full range of references to the period from A.D. 538 to 1798. "They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth" (vss. 2-3). And again, "For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial" (vs. 9). Here the same period is described as a number of months, a number of days, and a number of years.

Notice two things in this regard. First, the numbers correspond on the assumption that a month is always 30 days long. We do not need to find an actual calendar on which every month is 30 days in order to appreciate the point being made. The numbers are round enough that everyone will be able to catch what they mean. And second, there is day-year symbolism in the third case. Each "day" of the prophetic period of 1,260 days itself stands for a prophetic day, i.e., for a literal year.

Notice also that this same period is mentioned again in chaps. 12 ("The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days" [Rev 12:6]) and 13 ("The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months" [Rev 13:5]), and twice in Daniel ("The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time" [Dan 7:25]; "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed" [Dan 12:7]).

Seven times God brings us back to the 1260 days, or 42 months, or three and a half years of prophetic time. This is the Middle Ages - the period skipped over by the gap that so many of our Evangelical friends propose. If we subscribe to a gap theory we must ignore this period. If we allow the above Scriptures to interpret themselves and apply them to history in a manner consistent with other similar prophetic time periods we cannot ignore it. We cannot ignore what God lays under such heavy emphasis.

Something happened during this time (from A.D. 538 to 1798) that the church needs to understand. God requires us to understand it and to help others to come to a clear understanding of what happened then as well. This part of our message is not something we can set aside if we choose.

Above I refer to other similar prophetic time periods. Which ones are they? There are the 2300 days of Dan 8, the 70 weeks of Dan 9, and the 1,290 days and 1,335 days of Dan 12. All of these periods must be accounted for using similar principles of interpretation if we are to achieve a coherent understanding of them. If we do not, how can we convey a coherent understanding of them? The relationships among the various prophetic periods are shown below. See fig. 4.

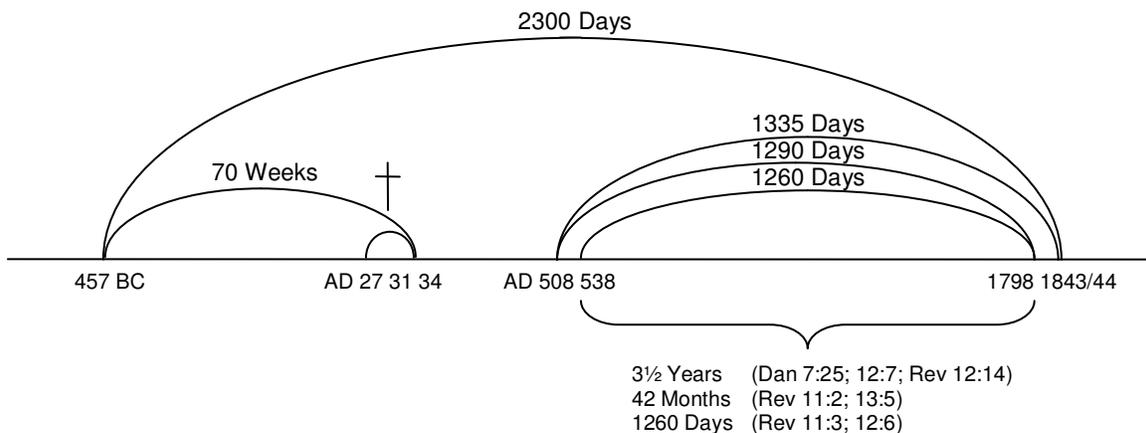


Fig. 4. Relationships among prophetic time periods drawing together eleven references to five different time periods in Daniel and Revelation.

There are five different time periods here. I list the 70th week separately because that forms an inclusio around the cross. If we make the cross our starting point, going from left to right along the arc of the 70th week, the entire structure can be drawn without lifting one's pencil. If this is not elegant, what is elegance? Two books spanning both major divisions of the Scriptures, five different time periods, eleven references to those time periods, foretold six hundred years apart and thousands of years in advance, all brought together in a seamless whole without any gaps or omissions.<sup>69</sup> I did not create this structure by choosing to talk about it. "This is the finger of God" (Exod8:19).

<sup>69</sup> The arc for the 1,335 days extends not to 1844 but to 1843 (508+1,335=1843). Recall that historically the disappointment of Rev 10 comes in two parts. There was the passing of the time in 1843, which was never tied to a given day, and the passing of the time in 1844, when the Millerites expected Christ to return more specifically on October 22. So one does have to lift one's pencil between the end of the 1,335 days and the end of the 2300 days. Doing so is an acknowledgement that both phases of the Millerite experience at this crucial time in prophetic history were genuine, because they are validated independently by separate prophetic time periods. Some will object to doing this, but to whatever extent they do to that same extent they fulfill Rev 3:9 ("I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars - I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you").

So let our opponents call us sectarian if we wish. We have a message that no one else can come remotely close to in its reliance on Scripture, internal cohesion, and focus on Christ.

# *Part 5*

In Regard to Rev 19a

# Chapter 14

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## What Exactly Does John See In Rev 4-5?

We have talked about where the events of Rev 4-5 occur and also when they occur, but have not discussed the events themselves. When the four living creatures praise God and the twenty-four elders lay their crowns before the throne, what does that mean? What are the twenty-four elders doing in Rev 4 and why do they do it? Yes they are praising God, but what more can we learn from their actions?

### Why Do the Twenty-Four Elders Praise God?

There are clues in the text of the passage. John describes the elders as being seated on thrones. They also prostrate themselves before God, but their predominant posture is one of being seated. "Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders" (Rev 4:4a). Next, they have crowns on their heads. It is true that they place these crowns on the floor. And yet once they do this the crowns do not remain there. "They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads" (Rev 4:4b).

So how can both sets of facts be true? Simultaneously they cannot both be true. But if these things happen at different times there is no conflict. For the most part the elders are seated and their crowns are on their heads. But from time to time they bow before God and place their crowns on the floor before Him. Thus the activity of the twenty-four elders is cyclic. They do not lay their crowns down before God once - permanently -and remain prostrate forever more. Instead they do this many times in an ongoing sequence of repeated actions.

This is one part of the cycle. The elders bow low and remove their crowns. But what happens when they are not doing these things? What does the rest of the cycle consist of? I am talking here about the times when the elders are seated on their thrones with crowns in place on their heads. What do they do while they are seated? And at what intervals do they leave this posture? To answer this last question we will have to know what is happening on the throne around which they are gathered.

Whenever the living creatures praise God the elders bow down. So how often do the living creatures praise God? On one reading they never stop. And yet each time they praise God the elders bow down. At issue is what it means to repeat an action. What it

does not mean is that the action is performed obsessively without any pause. It could just as easily mean that the action occurs many times.<sup>70</sup>

And why do they praise God? Granting that He always deserves praise, why do those closest to the throne - surrounded by innumerable angels all listening intently - praise Him at intervals in the manner described here? There is not an unrelenting din of grateful confusion before the throne. If there is order in any court we would expect to find it in that one (see 1 Cor 14:40). One part of the answer is provided by the act of raising the question. Something happens which causes these beings to praise. Otherwise what they say is pointless. What they say is a response to something. What causes that response?

Again there are clues within the text. One is so obvious that it might be overlooked. Consider the location of the twenty-four elders. They are seated on thrones but not randomly. These other thrones are arranged in a circle around the throne of God (see Rev 4:4; 5:6). And at the center of that throne is "a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). Everyone's focus is on the throne. This in itself is not a complete answer, though. There is more.

God is saying something in Rev 4 and I submit that what the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders respond to is what they hear God say. Whatever that is forms an extended series of separate pronouncements. This follows from the fact that there is an extended series of responses. When God speaks everyone listens attentively and when He finishes speaking they all praise Him for what He has said. Then He says something more. Just as the response is repeated, what causes it must also be repeated. This process may be assumed to have a beginning and an end. But within a certain window of time it continues without a break.

One reason for saying that the proceedings must end is because Jesus is still in the middle of the throne when John sees these things (see Rev 5:6). This fact implies that the process must end because Jesus has promised, "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). Michael must stand up (Dan 12:1). The Rider of Rev 19:11 must mount the horse that He rides at the head of all the angel armies of heaven. Christ must leave heaven if He is to come back to earth. So

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<sup>70</sup> The grammatical category of aspect deals with the shape of an action rather than the time when it is performed. By "shape" I mean whether an action occupies a moment of time or a period of time, and, if it is repeated, whether the resulting series of actions is perceived as occupying a period of time rather than a succession of single and unrelated moments. This is not everything there is to say about aspect but it is the part that concerns us here. I maintain that the momentary act of taking off a crown and laying it before the throne, as it is repeated many times, forms a sequence of actions that is perceived as being ongoing. But this sequence, like every other, is made up of smaller parts. In any event, what we see in Rev 4 is a single act repeated over an extended period of time. It is the idea of repetition that I am trying to capture here. This fact about John's account will be immediately obvious to anyone who has studied aspect extensively. For an accessible introduction to the topic of grammatical aspect see Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Those wishing to pursue the matter further can see also Frank W. Hardy, "Navajo Aspectual Verb Stem Variation" (University of New Mexico, Ph.D. dissertation, 1979), abstracted in *Dissertation Abstracts International* 40 (February 1980): 4572-A; JDK80-03087.

the court scene of Rev 4-5 must one day come to an end precisely because Jesus occupies so central a role in it.

## What Does God Say that Would Call Forth Such Praise?

When God speaks from the throne in Rev 4 what He says has to do with those whose lives come in review before Him. He is the Judge of all the earth because He is the Creator of all the earth.

"You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they were created  
and have their being." (Rev 4:11)

God needs no deliberation to reach the decisions that He has known from eternity He would have to announce. And yet He stoops to explain. In every case God shows Himself to be more than fair. It is His decisions in the judgment that cause the twenty-four elders to marvel at His wisdom and to express themselves as they do. And when we learn what His decisions are we will marvel at His wisdom too. As each new case is heard His decisions are ratified by His creatures gladly and with a full heart. The praise of the onlookers is their response to God's wise and gracious decisions in the judgment. This is the context for Rev 4-5.

Just here there is special insight into the meaning of Dan 8:14 when it says. "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." In the context of Dan 7:27 judgment is given to the saints (they are acquitted) but in Dan 8:14 the saints are not mentioned. Instead the text says that in the judgment the heavenly court itself is what gets "cleansed" or "vindicated" (*nišdaq*). If the question is what is cleansed in the judgment, the answer is, "Unto two thousand three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan 8:14, KJV).

In every case that comes before Him God illustrates His earlier description to Moses: "'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness'" (Exod 34:6). By laying out innumerable specific examples of His dealings with mankind (see Rev 7:9) the principles of His government are revealed, and in revealing those principles they are vindicated. For God to reveal the principles of His government in this way is for Him to reveal the principles of His character because the two are the same. The judgment is not a venue for revealing human weakness to the universe but for revealing God's goodness. The judgment is an act of self-revelation on God's part.

This is where Jesus was taking the discussion when He said, "'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them'" (Matt 5:17). In the judgment, as in His life on earth, it is Christ's purpose to "magnify the law [the constitution of His Father's government, the transcript of His own character], and make it honorable" (Isa 42:21, KJV). In this way Jesus gives us the ultimate fulfillment of the fifth commandment, to honor His Father. One contribution of

Dan 8:14 is to predict that He would be universally and undeniably successful in this endeavor.

One contribution of Rev 4-5 is to show us the manner in which God's loyal creatures respond as the above process unfolds. When God gets through, every knee will bow, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11). It is an impressive scene that the four living creatures and twenty-four elders witness and that we are invited to view with them. It would be an even greater cause for wonder if they were to remain silent with all of this happening before them. And so they do not remain silent. They express their praise repeatedly, from the depths of their hearts, and in more than one way.

Whenever 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:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they were created  
and have their being." (Rev 4:9-11)

# Chapter 15

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## The Parallels with Rev 19a

*J*ohn returns to the throneroom of Rev 4-5 in Rev 7, 11,14, and 19a. Of these five descriptions, Rev 4-5 and 11 shows how the judgment begins and Rev 7,14, and 19a shows how it ends. The two groups of passages are clearly similar, but also distinct in regard to which part of the process they describe.

If Rev 4-5 is the first passage to deal with the beginning of the judgment and if Rev 19a is the last to deal with its close, then these chapters form a natural inclusio around any similar references between them, placing the entire book of Revelation in the context of the judgment, i.e. in the context of the sanctuary.

In saying this I specifically deny that every part of Revelation has to be applied in the timeframe of the judgment. Much of the book does not apply during the end time. The first five churches, for example, the first five seals, and all seven trumpets all apply to 1798 and the time of the end. Instead these middle chapters apply to history just as Seventh-day Adventists have always taught.

The reason why they apply to so much history is that the judgment takes the full sweep of history into account. If people from "every nation, tribe, language and people" (Rev 14:6) are saved, then people from every nation, tribe, language and people must first be judged. And to do this the background for their lives must be introduced into evidence. "For we will all stand before God's judgment seat" (Rom 14:8).

If God is to be shown fair in His dealings with all men, He must reveal what His dealings with all men have been - in every age. Old Testament history will be considered in the judgment as well as what we are reading about here. But when all has been said and done, i.e. when all the evidence has been reviewed, then all in attendance at the hearings will have an opportunity to express themselves. They do this starting from the outer parts of the hall.

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

"Hallelujah!  
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,  
for true and just are his judgments.  
He has condemned the great prostitute  
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.  
He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

And again they shouted:

"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever," (Rev 19:1-3)

Next we hear from the twenty-four elders surrounding the throne and the four living creatures who are closer still.

The twenty-four eiders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen. Hallelujah!" (Rev 19:4).

Finally there is a voice from the throne itself at the center of the throne which in turn is at the center of the great judgment hall.

Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

"Praise our God,

all you his servants,

you who fear him,

both small and great!" (Rev 19:5)

Only one Being in our vast universe can speak from the throne and call God "our God" (vs. 5). This is Christ. Why does He say what He does at just this point in the proceedings? The audience has given their verdict as it were on the decisions handed down by the heavenly court and they gladly accept what has been said and done. Moving closer in, the twenty-four elders are next, along with the four living creatures, and they show that they too are in full agreement. No one in heaven or on earth, lost or saved, can fault God for any of His decisions. In each case brought before the court He has been more than fair.

But there is one more factor to consider. When Jesus came to this world He was treated as a transgressor though He deserved none of it. There was nothing even remotely fair about the treatment He received on the cross. In being treated as He was Jesus established God's justice in saving us, but He Himself did not deserve to be shamefully treated by men and excluded from the Father's presence during His dying agonies.

Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed."<sup>71</sup>

At issue, recall, is the fairness of God's government. So has God really been perfectly fair? Is there not something that Jesus might wish to say in this regard? There is. What He says is, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" (Rev 19:5). It is an affirmation of personal loyalty and also a direct order from heaven's Commander.

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<sup>71</sup> Ellen White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1940), p. 25.

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready,

Fine linen, bright and clean,

was given her to wear." (Rev 19:6-8)

Here we see the great contrast between Christ's character and that of Lucifer. Lucifer had been excluded from councils between the Father and the Son which were none of his business and he started going about telling the angels how He had been treated unfairly. Christ, on the other hand, came to our earth and lived a life made all the harder by constant contact with sin and died in our place, as though He Himself had personally committed every sin that anyone was or would ever be guilty of, and when asked about the treatment He had received in the process bypassed the whole matter, telling His subjects to give praise to God instead of dwelling on such matters,

This sort of response is one reason why God's law deserves to be vindicated. We can be very glad that we have the God we do instead of some other (see Exod 20:2-3) and that He seeks to protect us from worshipping a selfish enemy who would harm us (see Exod 20:4-6). As His subjects we can be glad He has the sort of law or character that He does. We can also be glad that He has taken the trouble to reveal what He is like to mankind in the person of His Son.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb 12:2-3)

The final moments of the judgment bring the focus of all heaven's attention to the Son of God at the center of the throne. Having done this the work of judgment is over. It only remains for the Son to lay aside His priestly to the rescue of those He has acquitted. This happens immediately afterward in the second part of the chapter (Rev 19b).

# *Part 6*

## The Spirit of Prophecy

# Chapter 16

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## Ellen White on Rev 4

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 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 Saw of God.

Thus those who were studying the subject found indisputable proof of the existence of a sanctuary in heaven. Moses made the earthly sanctuary after a pattern which was shown him. Paul teaches that that pattern was the true sanctuary which is in heaven. And John testifies that he saw it in heaven.<sup>72</sup>

*H*ere Ellen White appears to say that in Rev 4 everything John saw was in the first apartment but the second apartment in Rev 11, that the one chapter has its setting in John's day and the other in our own, that the events of Rev 4 pertain to the daily service while those of Rev 11 pertain to the yearly service or day of atonement. Does she say this?

What she says is that the lamps of Rev 4 and golden altar of Rev 8 are in the first apartment. None would disagree. She also says that opening God's temple in Rev 11 means opening the second apartment of that temple. Again there is nothing controversial here. Her point is that there is a real temple in heaven and that it has two apartments. More specifically she says, "Here the prophet was permitted to behold the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950), pp. 414-15.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

What Ellen White does not say can be important too.<sup>74</sup> What she does not say is that when John sees these things God's throne is located in the first apartment. We know that at certain times in history the throne truly is in the first apartment, because when Christ begins His second apartment ministry both the Father and the Son undergo a change of location. "I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming chariot go into the holy of holies within the veil, and sit down."<sup>75</sup> Then the Son joins Him there. So the throne of God is in the first apartment prior to 1844. That is not the question. At issue is whether the throne is in the first apartment in Rev 4.<sup>76</sup>

Ellen White's intent in the first paragraph quoted above is clarified in the second, i.e. that there is a temple in heaven and that it has two apartments. To support this claim she quotes passages that describe objects which only be found in the one place (the lampstands) or the other (the ark of the testimony). Beyond this she does not go. More specifically, she does not state or imply that Rev 11 gives us our first glimpse of second apartment events in the book of Revelation. Let us leave the matter where she left it.

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<sup>74</sup> "She was blessed with an encyclopedic knowledge of the Scriptures and her use of them was so comprehensive that it is of potential interest to know which passages she does not quote extensively. The purpose for doing such a study would not be to learn more about her concept of inspiration. Her concept of Bible inspiration is that it was inspired. But there are certain passages (notably Dan 11 and Rev 7-8) that she leaves more or less alone in her published writings. If there is a reason for this, I assume it was a good reason. One possible explanation is that there was more to learn about these passages and that the time had not yet come to take a strong position on them" (Frank W. Hardy, "Ellen White's Use of Bible Versions Other Than King James," *Historicism Supplement/M* 90, p. 2). I have no special agenda in saying this or any special interpretation of the neglected chapters, but I do believe that if God had a reason for saying what He did through Ellen White He also had a reason for omitting what He did not say. All of the Spirit of Prophecy is significant and not just me parts we wish to emphasize.

<sup>75</sup> Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 55.

<sup>76</sup> In regard to the throne Ellen White says, "In the temple in heaven, the dwelling place of God, His throne is established in righteousness and judgment. In the most holy place is His law, the great rule of right by which all mankind are tested. The ark that enshrines the tables of the law is covered with the mercy seat, before which Christ pleads His blood in the sinner's behalf. Thus is represented the union of justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption" (*Great Controversy*, p. 415). If what she describes on p. 414 has the same timeframe as what she describes on p. 415, then placing the throne in the first apartment within that timeframe will have a number of unacceptable implications. The law is in a place separate from the ark, or the ark is an object different from God's throne and Christ pleads our cases in a location other than where the Father is. But why should He not stand before the Father? None of this makes any sense. The only assumption that will allow us to keep all these factors together is that the throne is in the second apartment - within the timeframe of Great Controversy, pp. 414-15.

# Chapter 17

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## Ellen White on Rev 5

**E**llen White quotes the two hymns of praise found in Rev 5:12-13 on a number of occasions. The twenty-four elders sing in vs. 12 and "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and on the sea, and all that is in them" sing in vs. 13. One or both of these hymns are quoted in the last paragraphs of *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*. All end with a reference to these hymns.

### Timeframe of the First Advent

We begin with the reference to Rev 5:12-13 that is found at the end of *The Desire of Ages*.

There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commanders of the angel hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds, are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion, all are there to welcome the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.

But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. He approaches the Father, . . .

The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the beloved." Eph. 1:6. . . .

With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:12.

Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be

unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 5:13.<sup>77</sup>

I quote this passage at length because it is so important to the present argument. There can be no question that here Ellen White is applying Rev 5:12-13 to the time of the first advent. So that settles it. No further discussion is necessary. Rev 4-5 does not describe a judgment that takes place in our day. Or is this what she says?

## Timeframe of the Second Advent

Exactly what does Ellen White say and not say about Rev 5:12-13? First of all, to learn what she says about the present passage we will have to read more quotations than this. What she says here does truly refer to the scene depicted in Rev 4-5 and she explicitly applies what it describes to events that took place in the first century A.D. two thousand years ago. But this is not her only use of the passage.

### The Acts of the Apostles

Recall that The Acts of the Apostles also ends with a reference to this same scene from Rev 5.<sup>78</sup>

We may have a vision of the future, the blessedness of heaven. In the Bible are revealed visions of the future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, and these are dear to His church. By faith we may stand on the threshold of the eternal city, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life co-operate with Christ, regarding it as an honor to suffer for His sake. As the words are spoken, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, "they cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, Exclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. . . . Honor, and glory, and power, but unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Matthew 25:34; Revelation 5:12, 13.<sup>79</sup>

Here the hymns of praise in Rev 5:12-13 are placed in the timeframe of the second advent on the lips, not of angels, but of human beings redeemed from the earth. Immediately afterward Ellen White quotes Rev 7:9-10. This is a fascinating bit of commentary. In *Testimonies for the Church* (vol. 8, p. 44) and *The Ministry of Healing* (pp. 506-7) she again draws a connection between the hymns of praise in Rev 5:12-13 and Rev 7:9-10. And in *The Great Controversy* (pp. 648-49) she quotes Rev 5:12-13 in the context of Rev 7:14-17. Both passages from Rev 7 have to do with the multitude that no one can count, brought to view between the sixth and seventh seals in the timeframe of the second coming.

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<sup>77</sup> Desire of Ages, pp. 834-35.

<sup>78</sup> [Remove] \*\*\*\*\*

<sup>79</sup> Acts of the Apostles, pp. 601-2.

## The Great Controversy

No one who has read it can ever forget the magnificent peroration with which Ellen White ends *The Great Controversy*.

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.<sup>80</sup>

Notice, however, that the paragraph just before this one is Rev 5:13. The timeframe for *Great Controversy*, p. 678 is not the first coming but the second, and Ellen White draws on the hymn of praise in Rev 5:13 in bringing her account of the conflict to a close. So we must account for *Desire of Ages* pp. 834-35, it is true, but there are other statements to consider along with it.<sup>81</sup> Here is one from *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

At that time the wicked will all be destroyed. They will become "as though they had not been." Obadiah 16. And every voice in the whole universe will unite in joyful phase to God. Says the revelator, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Revelation 5:13.<sup>82</sup>

And another from *Desire of Ages*.

John, in the Revelation, looking toward to the eternal state, hears a universal anthem of praise undisturbed by one note of discord. Every creature in heaven and earth was heard ascribing glory to God, Revelation 5:13.<sup>83</sup>

This list is not comprehensive, but of the passages I have been able to find only one applies the hymns of praise in Rev 5:12-13 to the timeframe of the first advent. All the others apply it later.

## Discussion

If we could return briefly to the passage quoted first - the one from *Desire of Ages*, pp. 834-35 - please notice a fact we had overlooked before. At the beginning of the quotation Ellen White states,

There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commanders of the angel hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds, are assembled. The heavenly council before

<sup>80</sup> *Great Controversy*, p. 678.

<sup>81</sup> In addition to those quoted below consider *Desire of Ages*, p. 131; *Great Controversy*, pp. 647, 671; *Selected Messages*, 1:289; *Testimonies*, 2:215; and *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1093.

<sup>82</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 541.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 545.

which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion, - all are there to welcome the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.<sup>84</sup>

What was that about the "heavenly council"? The heavenly council is that body which performs the investigative judgment at the end of the age, is it not? So if we appeal to the above quotation in an effort to place Rev 4-5 in the first century, would doing that demonstrate too much? Did the judgment begin in A.D. 31 after all, as our detractors would have it? The answer is no, but let us make sure before going on that we understand why.

### Other sessions of the court

In his book entitled, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*,<sup>85</sup> William H. Shea discusses twenty-eight passages from the Old Testament that portray a judgment motif or that show God issuing judgments in some way. Some of these are given from the earthly tabernacle in the wilderness, others from the earthly temple in Jerusalem, and still others from the heavenly temple in heaven. Here is one example: "From heaven you pronounced judgment, and the land feared and was quiet - when you, O God, rose up to Judge, to save all the afflicted of the land" (Ps 76:8-9). And there are many other similar passages.

The Adventist concept of the pre-advent investigative judgment has held that God's judgment of His people is currently being conducted in His heavenly sanctuary. In OT times, whether judgment came from the earthly tabernacle, the earthly temple, or the heavenly temple, it came from a sanctuary God actively used at that time. Thus God's past judgment activity from His sanctuary provides a background for, and a biblical link to, what Adventists have had to say about that type of activity by God in the present.

These biblical parallels for the investigative judgment currently being conducted in the heavenly temple indicate that this modern counterpart is only unique in its scope and extent, it is not unique in kind or quality per se. Adventists have been somewhat shortsighted on this subject, thinking that an investigative judgment at this time is completely and utterly unique and without parallel.<sup>86</sup>

The heavenly council has met any number of times and we catch hints of this in a number of Old Testament passages. It evidently met to welcome Jesus at His ascension. That, once more, is what Ellen White says.

The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion, - all are there to welcome the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

<sup>85</sup> *Daniel & Revelation Committee Series*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), pp. 1-24.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

In regard to the above session of the heavenly council let me make two points. First, an obvious parallel to this scene is found in Job 1 ("One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, . . ." [1:6 margin]) and 2 ("On another day the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, . . ." [2:1 margin]).

Notice that Job 1 and 2 have different sessions of the heavenly court in view. The one was "One day," while the others was "On another day." These are different days and different sessions. Notice also that these two different sessions occurred close enough together that Job was alive during both of them. This does not mean that the court convenes often, but it does mean that the session at which it performs the investigative judgment is not entirely unique. From time to time, as circumstances might warrant, the court meets. And according to Ellen White this court or "heavenly council" met to welcome Christ after His ascension.

### **Rev 5:12-13 and the heavenly court**

In linking Christ's ascension to Rev 5, Ellen White also links Rev 5 to the heavenly council. And by applying Rev 5:12-13 to both the first coming and the second she shows that her understanding of the passage is not limited to either timeframe exclusively. It is not the case that when the angels praised Christ in the language of Rev 5 at His ascension they refuse to say those same words again at any later time. Indeed, when Christ takes us to heaven at the second coming it will be our privilege to join the angels in praising Him in the language of Rev 5. Ellen White says this repeatedly.<sup>88</sup>

Having come this far, could the words of Rev 5:12-13 be said at any time in between the two advents at some other session of the heavenly court? Would such words be appropriate, for example, in the context of the judgment? What words would be more appropriate there?

A second point I would like to make is that, just as the heavenly council met centuries ago to welcome Christ, in the judgment that same body is given a similar task. One function of the judgment is to prepare a guest list for the marriage supper of the Lamb. When it is finished all the saints of earth will be welcomed after the second coming with as much joy as Jesus was after the first, because we are His friends. If correct, this concept places the judgment in a different light. Making up a guest list for the marriage supper? Is this the same judgment we have studied all these years? It seems unlikely. But have we understood the judgment in all its varied ramifications until we include this aspect of it?

Ellen White does not disallow or weaken the interpretation of Rev 4-5 proposed here by anything she says in *Desire of Ages* or by anything she says elsewhere. What the Spirit of God revealed through Ellen White is not at variance with what that same Spirit revealed through John. The same cohesive and reasonable model emerges coequally from both sources.

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<sup>88</sup> See *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 601-2; *Desire of Ages*, p. 131; *Great Controversy*, pp. 545,648,671,678; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 506; *Selected Messages*, 1:289; *Testimonies*, 8:44.

# Chapter 18

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## Ellen White on Rev 6

**E**llen White has some fascinating comments about the "book" (or "books," or "scroll") that is sealed with seven seals. Just as the biblical evidence is mixed, so the Spirit of Prophecy is mixed, and in precisely the same manner. On the one hand she says people's decisions are recorded in the "scroll" or "book":

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.<sup>89</sup>

So one thing we must say about the scroll is that it is a historical document written as the events occur. It tells what people have done and is unsealed for review at a later time. In another place, however, she states that prophetic material is included and even whole books of Scripture:

All that God has in prophetic history specified to be fulfilled in the past has been, and all that is yet to come in its order will be. Daniel, God's prophet, stands in his place, John stands in his place. In the Revelation the Lion of the tribe of Judah has opened to the students of prophecy the book of Daniel, and thus is Daniel standing in his place. He bears his testimony, that which the Lord revealed to him in vision of the great and solemn events which we must know as we stand on the very threshold of their fulfillment.<sup>90</sup>

In this case the scroll is prophetic and more specifically it is associated with the book of Daniel. Notice that her context for saying this is that Daniel stands in his place, he bears his testimony. This is what she was referring to in the case where the "book" is a historical record. As such it bears testimony to what has been done. In the same passage she goes on to say:

In history and prophecy the Word of God portrays the long continued conflict between truth and error. That conflict is yet in progress. Those things which have been, will be repeated. Old controversies will be revived, and new theories will be continually arising. But God's people, who in their belief and fulfillment of prophecy have acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages, know where they stand. They have an experience that is more precious than fine gold.

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<sup>89</sup> Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941), p. 294.

<sup>90</sup> Idem, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1958), 2:109.

They are to stand firm as a rock, holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.<sup>91</sup>

Here, instead of confining herself to Daniel alone, Ellen White brings in the "history and prophecy" of the entire body of Scripture. This is entirely consistent with everything I have said above. In the judgment God does not do His work by half measures. He brings together all the evidence that would have any bearing on a given case. He reviews in exhaustive detail the entire context for each life wherever and whenever that person might have been lived. Thus in Revelation we have a record of major events that would occur and that would come in review before God over the last twenty centuries of earth's history.

In the earlier books of the New Testament we have, in addition, a record of Christ's life and the response of those heard either Him or His chosen apostles. But the judgment is not confined to so relatively narrow a timeframe. In the Old Testament we have a record of how people responded to God, and how He led or tried to lead them, that extends through all the earlier centuries back to creation. Every particle of this will be brought forward and entered as evidence in the judgment. Not one bit of it will be left out.

What Daniel wrote is a part of that record. So the book of Daniel will become an exhibit for the court. What about the Jewish leaders' decision to crucify Christ? Nothing is left out, or glossed over, or omitted.

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb4:12-13)

The "scroll" unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah includes all aspects of the evidence presented in the judgment. And this in turn is one part of what it means that the scroll was sealed with seven seals, a figure signifying completeness. The point that I wish to emphasize here is that this "book" includes a record of the decisions people have made. Such a record cannot be complete, or ready to seal, until the actions recorded there have been performed. There is prophecy and also history in the "scroll" - a history that will not be reviewed until the judgment.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

# *Part 7*

## Conclusion

# Conclusion

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Two themes emerge from the present study. One is that no clean contrast exists between Rev 1-14 and 15-22. The other is that the throne and praise that we find in Rev 4-5 are associated with the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary in and after 1844.

Of the two, the first theme serves the second. My main point has to do with the time and place of Rev 4-5. This in turn is the chiasmic counterpart of Rev 19a. Rev 4-5 describes the beginning of the judgment and Rev 19a describes the end of the judgment. The chapters in between for the most part show us the sorts of evidence reviewed in the judgment. Here is the overriding focus of the book of Revelation.

## Rev 1-14 and Rev 15-22

We consider the supporting theme first. Kenneth Strand, and with him C. Mervyn Maxwell, have developed and elaborated a model for understanding the book of Revelation in which the book is arranged chiasmically and also has two contrasting halves - one "historical," the other "eschatological."

I propose accepting the first part of this formulation and rejecting the second. The book is arranged chiasmically, just as Strand says and with his original outline largely intact, but from this it does not follow that the chapters which come before the chiasmic center of the book are different from those which come afterward. It is an assumption that they do. The assumption is unsubstantiated and in fact does not bear scrutiny.

I do not deny that there is a broad shift from history to eschatology as we move from the beginning of the book to the end. Clearly Strand was onto something here. But I do deny that the shift is as abrupt as he suggests or that it has to do primarily with structural facts. It is thematic in nature and occurs gradually as we move through the book.

If by "eschatology" we mean the study of last events, events occurring during the end time should qualify as being eschatological. A number of these occur in Rev 1-11. Examples include the letters to Philadelphia and Laodicea, the fifth and sixth seals, the extra material in Rev 7 and 10, and the three angels messages. This is one point. A lot of eschatological material occurs in Rev 1-14.

If by "history" we mean things that have actually taken place, any real events that have ever occurred should qualify as being historical. Are there no real events in Rev 12-22? At issue is not whether they have occurred already, but when they do occur whether they are real.

To have structural meaning, which is the claim Strand makes, the distinction between "history" and "eschatology" must go beyond the question whether a given event has occurred yet. Before me as opposed to after me is not a question put to the text but to the reader of the text and it will potentially have a different answer in each generation. There must be something more than this. If there is not a qualitative difference between historical events and eschatological events then there is not a qualitative difference between history and eschatology.

If there is a qualitative difference, what is it? Historical events are real in the sense that they actually occur in time and space. Are eschatological events somehow unreal? If not do they become historical once they occur? If so how are they different from those historical events that have already occurred?

Let us go beyond the hypothetical. There are test cases. The great disappointment of Rev 10, occurring as it does after 1798 during the time of the end, is eschatological under the definition I propose. Was it real and therefore historical? It was just as real as the War of 1812 fought thirty-four years earlier and the Civil War which began some twenty years afterward. Following up the idea of wars for a moment, have modern wars gotten less real than these as we get farther away from historical time and farther into eschatological time? Let us take the Second World War for example. Our grandparents and their grandparents were all born well within the time of the end.

Perhaps we are using the wrong definition of eschatology. 1798 is too early. Eschatology begins (in Rev 15-16) with the falling of the plagues while Christ is en route to the earth. This means that many - in fact the vast majority - of events that occur within the time of the end do not qualify as eschatological. This cannot be the right definition either. At this point we are thrown back on a before me/after me distinction, which will not work in a structural context.

I suggest that the distinction between history and eschatology, in the book of Revelation and in every other, is precisely along these lines. It is relative rather than qualitative. Pfandl has led the way here.<sup>92</sup> For Moses the Babylonian captivity was clearly eschatological.<sup>93</sup> So one's historical vantage point is an unavoidable factor in determining whether an event seen from that vantage point is historical (it has already happened) or eschatological (it has not already happened). The event must also have such a high level of significance that when it happens it brings an era to an end. But my point is that events which do this are real and therefore historical once they occur. For a first century reader almost the entire book of Revelation will have been eschatological.

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<sup>92</sup> Pfandl's published dissertation. The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel, is discussed in an earlier chapter. He points out that in every age certain events have been promised for the distant future and were considered eschatological. For ancient Israel, the birth of a Savior to come was the paradigm example of eschatology. But now it has happened and so for us it is no longer eschatological but historical. The distinction does not reside in the event itself but in our relationship to the event as regards time. There are two factors to consider here rather than one and since we are one of those factors our definition of eschatology must always be relative to our historical point of view. Prophecy is to history as eschatology is to ancient history.

<sup>93</sup> For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall upon you because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord and provoke him to anger by what your hands have made" (Deut 31:29). See Pfandl, *ibid.*, p. 151.

(The epiphany to John, the letter to Ephesus, and the first seal are exceptions.) After Christ has come and we are all in the kingdom almost the entire book will be historical. (The lake of fire after the millennium and the descent of the Holy City are exceptions.)

Strand is certainly correct in saying that Revelation is arranged as a chiasm and that the chiastic center of the book comes between chaps. 14 and 15. The reason why I oppose taking the additional step of contrasting Rev 1-14 with 15-22 as a whole is, first, because I do not believe the hypothesis has been supported with strong arguments and that it is factually unsound, but second, I oppose it because it leads one to view material from the two halves in terms of any contrasts, or differences, or dissimilarities that they might have. This is a fundamentally wrong emphasis and if pressed it is self-contradictory. A and A' are parallel and therefore similar, but B is historical while B' eschatological and so they are dissimilar. The chiastic framework brings the parallels together while the bifurcation hypothesis drives them apart. The two parts of the model are ultimately at odds with each other. So let this divided house fall. Let us keep Strand's brilliant chiastic analysis and discard his bifurcation theory.

## The Background Contribution of Rev 2-3

It is impossible to understand Rev 4-5 without first having a correct understanding Rev 2-3. Some would like the letters to the seven churches to remain static with respect to time, such that they do not take us beyond the first century. If we start wrong here, nothing else will be right later on.

If, on the other hand, the letters to the seven churches bring us forward step by step through time, as Seventh-day Adventists have always taught, what time do they bring us to? My position is that the letters do indeed have different ages of history in view and that when we get to Laodicea, that letter describes the remnant church during the time of the judgment starting in 1844. There is nothing innovative in saying so. The church is on earth. We all know that. The praise described in Rev 4-5 is in heaven. No one says otherwise.

So if the timeframe of the last letter in the series is later than the letters that lead up to it and at the beginning of Rev 4 only the venue changes, we have the judgment in heaven taking place in the timeframe of the letter to Laodicea. Is this doctrine new in some way? Of course the judgment takes place in the timeframe of Laodicea. My only possible innovation in any part of this is the claim that John supports this idea in Rev 4-5. Why shouldn't he do that? If he says the same things elsewhere, that is acceptable, but if he says them here, that is not. I can't follow such logic.

Placing the judgment in and after 1844, as my model does, is not the same as attacking our historic position on the judgment. Our liberal scholars want Rev 4-5 to take place in the first century and the second apartment. This destroys the significance of 1844. Our conservative scholars want Rev 4-5 to take place in the first century and in the first apartment. This destroys the continuity of the broader passage starting in chap. 2 and much of the immediate context. But why must we assign Rev 4-5 to the first century? It is true that the focus of time must drop back to the first century at some point

in order to capture the parallels between the seven churches and the seven seals, but why not make this switch at the beginning of Rev 6? Why must it take place at the beginning of Rev 4?

I challenge the reader to reflect on the following illustration. As you climb a set of stairs and then step off the highest tread ask yourself, Where am I? Answer: Not at the bottom of the stairs. When you finish climbing a set of stairs you are at the top of the stairs. In the same way, when we finish following John through the various ages of church history one after another in Rev 2-3, and we finally come to the last one, where are we then? Answer: Not at our starting point back in the first century.

The letter to Laodicea in Rev 3 and the throneroom scene of Rev 4-5 describe events that take place at the same time, but in different places. While the church here is busy being lukewarm and uninterested, the heavenly sanctuary is ringing with heartfelt praise because of the wise and loving decisions being announced in the judgment. What begins in Rev 4-5 ends in a corresponding manner in Rev 19a, after which it only remains for Christ to mount the white horse of Rev 19:11 and lead all the angel armies, who wanted so eagerly to come to His aid in Gethsemane (see Matt 26:53), back to earth to rescue His beleaguered saints. This is Michael and His angels.

Incidentally, at the end of Dan 11 and the beginning of Dan 12, where Michael is mentioned by name, we have the same type of literary usage. Dan 11:44-45 take place on earth; Dan 12:1 takes place in heaven. The king is here; Michael is there. The king vents his rage on earth; Michael stands up in heaven. But not at different times. The reason why the king comes to his end and no one will help him (see vs. 45) is that Michael stands up, comes here, and causes him to come to his end in such a way that no one could possibly help him. "Who can stand when he appears" (Mal 3:2)? Not the king of the North.

The time relationships we have seen earlier in Dan 11:44-45 and Dan 12:1 have their counterpart in Rev 2-3 and 4-5. In both cases the location of events changes, but the timeframe does not.

## Parallels with Rev 4-5

A specific set of parallels that I wish above all to bring together is that between Rev 4-5 and 19a. Supporting this are additional parallels between Rev 4-5 and Dan 7. Both must be seen and appreciated in order to understand the thematic emphasis that the book of Revelation places on the judgment. Both are unusually important, but my point here has to do primarily with the relationship between Rev 4-5 and 19a.

### **Rev 4-5 and Dan 7**

I have argued above that Rev 4-5 must be placed at the beginning of the judgment in 1844. If Dan 7 describes the judgment and if Rev 4-5 runs parallel to Dan 7 then Rev 4-5 also describes the judgment. In this case Dan 8 is parallel to both. On the one hand we have the judgment, on the other the cleansing of the sanctuary. Seventh-day Adventists have always studied the two chapters together and have derived their

1844 starting date for the judgment by expanding the scope of this system of parallels to include Dan 9 as well as Dan 8 and Dan 7.

The judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary are not two events but one, despite the fact that they are described in two places (Dan 7 and 8). By quoting Daniel as he does John links what he sees in Rev 4-5 to what Daniel saw seven centuries earlier. So now these same events are described in three places. And if we link Rev 4-5 to Rev 19a and other similar passages (see e.g. Rev 7:11; 11:19; 14:3) we lend still further support to a position we have long held.

### **Rev 4-5 and 19a**

The context in which we find Rev 4-5 fits the time honored Seventh-day Adventist prophetic framework perfectly. The seven churches lead us step by step from John's day to our own. When the prophet reaches the period of Laodicea (whose name refers to people being judged) the prophet's attention shifts from earth to heaven and he sees what is happening there in the same timeframe that the letters have brought him to in the preceding chapters. No interpretation of the relationship between Rev 3 and 4 could be more natural than this one. So at this point we have been brought down to the end time - to the beginning of the judgment, when the door to the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary is thrown open (see Rev 4:1).

John does not see the throne of God in the first apartment, nor does he see the second apartment from the first. He sees the first apartment from the second through the open door of Rev 4:1.

Then, as Christ prepares to open the seven seals in Rev 5, we notice that the document He opens is - precisely - a document that needs opening. It has already been written and sealed. It is complete. It therefore deals with events that are completed, that were done in the past, before the seals are broken. This fact tells us two things. It tells us that the events are not witnessed as they occur but are reviewed as already past. Otherwise the seals would not already be in place. And it also tells us that the review occurs in a time far distant from John's own. The process of review does not begin until the seals are in place. Otherwise why would they need to be broken?

The subject matter of the sealed document takes us back in time to a period when the church would go everywhere boldly, conquering new territory for Christ. This was the first Christian century during John's lifetime. Then later the falling away would occur gradually over time and so the horses used as symbols would change colors from white, to red, to black, to pale. This change does not occupy space but time.

What John records is an overview of the church's history and also the history of the world outside the church. Why are these things important? So that the life choices of people living through those successive ages could be understood fully and fairly against the historical backdrop for their lives. This process of thorough review is the judgment.

The cyclic nature of what the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders do in Rev 4-5 confirms such an analysis. They speak out in to praise God. but not until they have listened carefully to Him as He explains the decisions of the court. This is the judgment. What the twenty-four elders say is a response to what God says. As He

declares on case after case they acknowledge His wisdom and fairness and in this way God's dealings with mankind are vindicated before the universe.

In the judgment God explains Himself. He does not convene the court to seek information but to impart it. He stoops to explain because He wants His creatures to understand His character, which is the foundation for His government. And as the truth about God dawns more and more fully on the minds of those in attendance, they respond again and again in heartfelt praise, acknowledging both His justice and His mercy.

## Summary

Rev 4-5 depicts the beginning of the judgment and Rev 19a is its chiasmic counterpart, showing its closing scenes just before Christ returns. When the work of our great High Priest is finally over He lays His priestly robes aside and leads out all heaven on white horses to rescue His beleaguered saints on earth. Thus the judgment ends in Rev 19a and Christ returns to earth in Rev 19b. Next comes the millennium in Rev 20 and after that the New Earth in Rev 21-22.

What comes between Rev 4-5 and 19a is a summary of information submitted as evidence in the judgment. The events are not reviewed as they occur. Thus the judgment does not begin in the first century as the events occur, nor do the events we are talking about occur in the last days during the judgment. The events occur first, spanning the period from the apostolic age to our own day, and the judgment which reviews them comes afterward. And in this case the time of final review was specified in prophecy. "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan 8:14,KJV).

Within this context, asking if we can find the judgment in Scripture is like asking if we can find Revelation in Scripture. The whole book, from chap. 6 to and including chap. 18, shows us the main lines of evidence that would eventually be reviewed in the judgment, when the time for reviewing them should finally come - exactly on schedule - in 1844.