

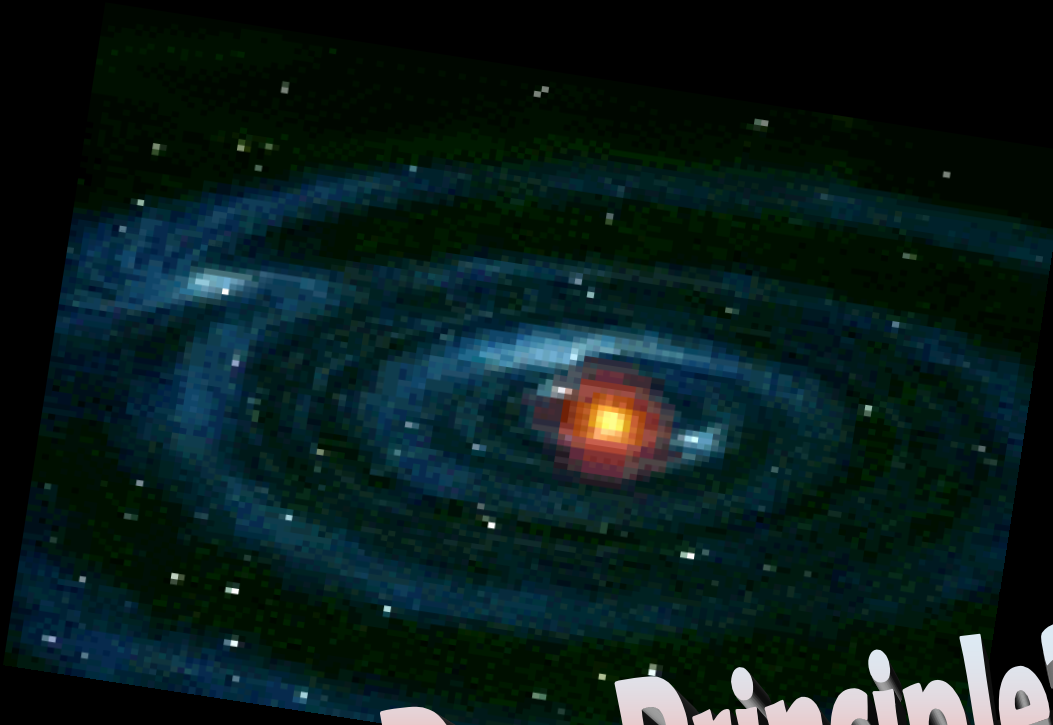
EndTime Issues ...

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Year-Day Principle?



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EndTime Issues... Magazine

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Year–Day Principle

An Aging Concept?

The “year–day principle” has been a mechanical rule that historicists use to encounter Biblical periods of the past. Its application restricts and, therefore, denies the rich allusions to eschatological prophetic time periods. Yet, it is one that many today defend. The defense of this “principle” comes from an aged methodology supported by two key texts: Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. These have been “hermeneutic tools” to define what selective prophetic numbers and periods mean. Yet – there is no contextual instruction that they are to be interpretive prophetic guidelines elsewhere in Scripture.

The concept that in certain time prophecies a “prophetic day” represents an entire calendar year is the distinguishing characteristic of the “year–day principle.” There has not, however, been any consistent rule as to when it should be applied. Some conclude that if a time period is contextually within a prophecy of surreal imagery, it is “prophetic time” (i.e., Daniel 7:25, 8:14). Others arbitrarily apply it to a myriad of numerical periods, justifying the application against the “rejection of literal time.” Daniel 12 is a premier example.

Others posture this way: “As early as the third century B.C.E., the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 were understood to be 70 ‘weeks of years,’ i.e. $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. The LXX, in translating the Hebrew for ‘weeks’ in Dan 9:25-27, inserted the additional phrase ‘of years,’ providing the first published example of what would later be called the ‘year–day principle.’”¹

Yet, little scholarly work seeks to discover other reasons expositors, especially of the Septuagint era, might have had for saying “of years.” Contextually, that prophecy is one of the most significant timing predictions of Scripture. Gabriel extended to Daniel’s people 70 weeks (yes, “of years” is implied) of probation to bring in everlasting righteousness. It relates to the reason the Jewish people were in Babylon. That is our first timing clue. It is associated with missed Shemitas and implies Sabbatical-year language, making “of years” accurate based on Leviticus 25 (not Numbers or Ezekiel).

How one interprets *time* prophecies will dramatically influence his or her historical or end-time views. In turn, that characterizes one’s “apocalyptic perspective.” Is the *Revelation* an urgent warning, a novelty message, a curious history or perhaps so distant in the future it is of no concern? If *predictive* timing messages have already been *fulfilled* in the past, there are few exciting residuals to share except “parables” of “has beens.” If, for instance, the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 is a pivotal sign of the Messiah’s coming, the “end of time” is lasting so long it is now devoid of meaning. Is the devastation from the earthquake and tsunami of December 26, 2004, of any eschatological merit? Only short-lived voices using this as an excuse to talk of the *parousia* (second coming) are briefly heard. Apocalyptic thinking without a timing clue offers little meaning or urgency to such a devastating event. The year–day issue, in how it has been applied, stands indicted for promoting apathy.

The Bible has specific cues to inform its students of *when* and *what events* are significant. Jesus, as an example, said that the “onset” of

¹ <http://sdanet.org/atissue/end/yearday.htm>. [L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (*The Review and Herald*, 1950), 1:170, 174-176]. Moon, Jerry; *The Year–Day Principle and the 2300 Days*.

His *collective* end-time signs would be completed within *one generation* (Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32) (a “timing” prophetic issue collecting dust with many expositors). That alone tells us that the end comes over a *restricted* period. Commensurate with an infatuation to the past is the Cross. If everything important to salvation occurred there, there appears to be excess material in the Canon that could be easily dispensed with. Aren’t there other issues couched within the framework of time that relate to the redemptive process that unfold after the Cross, even right to the very end within a time period? What do we do with all the prophetic clock periods, dates, sequences and appointments that somehow remain in a morass of uncertain passages? *Time* is a fourth dimension to predictive visions and auditions. There is something wonderful about a story when we know the “when” of it. Jesus knew that when He said “**When** ye therefore shall see ...” (Matthew 24:15).

Prophecy is event-driven, in sequence and *always* framed within a timing infrastructure. How we “tell time” determines how significant those Biblical passages are to us! That, in turn, relates to whether they are currently important or relics of the past and then only Biblical factoids. It is tenuous to determine what prophecy is relevant to Christ’s second coming unless we know what the Biblical clocks say. Prophetic studies must begin there!

Daniel 8, as one example, alludes to over ten timing issues, not one of which relates to Numbers 14 or Ezekiel 4. If only the linguistics, events and imagery are studied, they parallel Daniel 7. If *unrelated to the context of time*, we will conclude that they are a “chunk of the same” prophetic “real estate.” Those *timing* words and phrases (i.e., 8:17 and 19), *however*, place Daniel 8 in our era. Daniel 8 is loaded with deliverance, covenant and restoration language. God invites us into an elevated typological study that has *contemporary relevance*. The past becomes a beautiful metaphor for a greater message surrounding the great finale of sin’s conflict.

Thus, the issue demanding resolution by expositors is *how to tell time*. The Biblical clocks tick, have alarms, are divided into a myriad of fascinating digital periods (yes, some are 24-hour periods, a day, alluding to a year – but *unrelated* to Numbers and Ezekiel), and bond intimately to prophetic images and events.

One clock in Daniel 8:14, as an example, is expressed as an “*evening and morning*” – just like a Creation day. But this *evening and morning* clock relates to the *annual* Day of Atonement, which then suggests a year for that day! Those yearly feasts are loaded with clocks that often “tick” with prophecy! That, for example, helps us evaluate that 2300 number, where the word “day” doesn’t exist in the original, but the term “evening and morning” does! Interesting – the “2300” are years from the annual Day of Atonement *evening and morning* typology.

If we tell time in approximation, we might miss the train. That’s why most of God’s clocks are digital – they are precise and accurate – if we just learn *how to tell time*.

This is why the *year–day* matter must be resolved. Scholars posture as if it were sacred, but selectively determine which prophecies it might apply to and which ones it doesn’t. But the prophetic clock rules are very definitive in the Canon. If one accepts the *year–day* principle as a valid tool, how does one pick and choose his prophecy? Appeals to great Biblical scholars of history who applied it cannot resolve that question. The sheer number of loyalists to the year–day camp can never validate that viewpoint as truth.

Linguists appeal to such verses as “for all our *days* pass away under thy wrath, our *years* come to an end like a sigh. The *days* of our *years* be three score and ten” (Psalm 90:9-10) to offer another proof of a year–day or day–year Semitic parallel to chronological prophecy. That is simply illogical! No Biblical permission is given to tie such texts to prophetic interpretation. Such expressions are *cultural expressions* totally unrelated to an interpreting hermeneutic tool.

Numbers and Ezekiel relate to apostasy of God's people and God's judicial response. End-time prophetic key? Not in the least!

One group² that briefly dealt with this issue noted: "The year-day relationship can be Biblically supported, although it is *not* explicitly identified *as a principle* of prophetic interpretation.... Furthermore, the Old Testament provides illustrations of the year-day interchangeability in symbolism (Gen. 29:27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Dan. 9:24-27)."³ Which way do we go? Do we use it or not? It is a *culturally-supported concept*, yet *not identified* in the Bible as a prophetic tool! If so, how do we apply it consistently? The textual illustrations involve a cultural expression, divine judicial sentencing for apostasy and *Shemita* language – all unrelated to each other.

There are many examples of a day for a year. But they relate to established annual events, such as the feasts.

Another scholar and administrator noted: "Although the year-day principle is not affirmed explicitly, the various examples quoted [Genesis 29:27, 41:25-30] show that a principle of calculation was employed from the patriarchal period at least to the time of the Exile that established a day-year, year-day, or even a week-year relationship. There are yet other relationships based on the same principle. This makes it perfectly correct to state that there is a biblical principle according to which 'a day in prophecy stands for a year'"⁴ It is "not affirmed explicitly" yet it is "perfectly correct to state." That's a problem.

These positions point out the challenge. There are year-day clocks. But there are also week-year, day-millennial and day-month prophetic timepieces. And – there are literal time prophecies that mean everything to God's people right

at the end. How do we know which clock to use? The answer is in the *prophetic context* and *using correct hermeneutics*.

The Beginning of "Time"

God initially defined time by celestial objects to "divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Genesis 1:14). The sun and moon, by God's original design, became time pieces for mankind. Their broadest application in a sinless world is not revealed because the story of sin begins in Scripture immediately after the Creation account.

God introduced another clock at Creation – the weekly cycle. It was based on seven *evenings* and *mornings*. It embodied a sequence, and the seventh period was dedicated, set apart, as holy. That was the origin of the Sabbath. Man was to honor that day as sacred. It was to never change. Thus, Adam and Eve were to count 1 to 7 and preserve the integrity of this most unique time piece. Totally unrelated to any celestial object of creation, the Sabbath could not be worshiped as an object where one might say it "represented" what God designed. By design and decree the weekly cycle became a divine institution. Extending to our time, 6000 years later, that week has seven days based on counting the sequence!

When sin arrived, so did prophecy and promise. New clocks were introduced that became tools to understand *redemption* and predictive messages. The year was one of them – but not the only one. The weekly cycle – that heavenly appointed clock – became a *template* for other time pieces, all based on 1–7 with the seventh being set apart and sacred.

In the Biblical record, therefore, we find 7 days, 7 weeks, 7 months, 7 years, 70 times 7 and 7 millenniums presented as *defined periods*. The study of each one reveals amazing clues as to how to interpret a time period inside a prophecy.

We already illustrated a unique tool that comes from the 7 days of Creation. The *sequence* of

² Sanctuary Review Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

³ Adventist Review, September 4, 1980, p. 14; Ministry, October, 1980, p. 18 (emphasis added).

⁴ Zurcher, Jean; "The year-day Principle," Adventist Review, July 12, 1981.

“evening and morning” (not “morning and evening”) has great significance. When that *sequence* is presented, it is typological. It represents a *sacred appointed time*. That means the Creation days are sacred. How? They form the typological foundation of *all* prophetic time.

Aaron’s two sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange fire “before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:1). This was apparently in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Fire “went out” from the Lord and killed them (Leviticus 10:2). Shortly thereafter the Lord spoke to Moses regarding the incident. He was to convey to Aaron that entering the Most Holy Place was not to be a casual experience. God was going to make His presence above the mercy seat, so a new statute was instituted called the Day of Atonement. Only on that day, specifically set aside on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri), would entering the Most Holy Place even be possible, and then only by the High Priest (Leviticus 16).

That would be a Day of Atonement for the *nation*. Israel’s place of meeting God was to be the tabernacle, with the nation’s representatives being the priests (Leviticus 16:33). The Hebrew word for atonement is *kapar*. It comes from an Arabic root meaning to “cover” or “conceal.”⁵ It is related to a similar word used in Genesis 6:14 where Noah was to waterproof the ark by “covering it” (*kapar*) with pitch. God told Moses that the Day of Atonement was to be an “everlasting statute” “to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins [to cover them over] *once a year*” (Leviticus 16:33-34).

That day was to be a Sabbath (Leviticus 23:32). Intriguingly, its sacredness began on the ninth day (and here it is) – the *evening before* the tenth (Leviticus 23:32). That is stunning. That sacred day, when sin would be *covered over*, then removed, started on the *evening before*. The 2300 *evening and morning* prophecy of Daniel 8:14 was given by Jesus as a partial response to Gabriel’s question of 8:13. “How

long” or “until when” would the transgression of desolation occur? Jesus made it clear that the prophecy of the little horn (prophetically tied to the ram and he-goat) would not occur until the end of, or after, 2300 *evenings and mornings* were finished (8:17, 19). Then, in legal language tied to a covenant and Daniel 9, he described precisely *when* sin would be removed. That is atonement language when sin is covered over (by redemptive blood) and then removed. But, and this is so beautiful – there it is – related to these Sabbatical years, which in turn, tie to the Jubilee when everything is restored. We don’t need a “year–day principle.” All we need to understand is the *annual* atonement restoration theme and the meaning of the great Shemita cycles. It then all remarkably comes into place.

Again, the word “days” is missing from the original in Daniel 8:14. It simply says: Until 2300 *evenings mornings* holiness vindicated (or adjudicated). That portrays a legal process that judicially resolves sin (and this is amazing) through the vindication of holiness. The word for vindication (adjudication) is *nisdaq*. It is a passive verb. Something makes it happen. This is now beautifully described in 9:24, where God’s people are to give up sin. When they do, everlasting righteousness (*tsedeq* – noun) comes in. Holiness is vindicated by God’s people giving up sin! It is the ultimate story of how He gets a bride. The love story that began in Daniel 9 (a prophecy), ends in 8:14!

Some argue that the evening and morning were only a half day. The beauty of a holy message is thereby lost – period. The Creation model is our reference – and “the evening and the morning were the ... day” (Genesis 1). Subjectively and objectively, the theme of 8:14 simply conveys that after 2300 atonement days (they were annual, therefore represented years), something legal, holy, dramatic would begin that would lead to everlasting righteousness when the Most Holy would be anointed – no sin left (9:24). The sanctuary is then anointed.

The year–day principle as described by Ezekiel and Numbers doesn’t fit and cheapens the in-

⁵ Harris, R. Laird; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody Press; Chicago, IL), 1980, vol. 1, p. 452.

credible message within these prophecies. God is preparing a people to be His. It is presented in covenant–restoration language when sin is forever “covered over.”

He is choosing witnesses to God’s character who will be everlasting representatives of who that Leader of the universe really is! That starts at the end of or shortly after the 2300 atonement *evenings* and *mornings*.

Another interesting concept relates to the Hebrew word for “day” (*yom* or *yowm*). If it is alone, it could have all kinds of symbolic significance. But when it’s associated with a number, it is always literal.^{6,7,8,9} That is so simple a rule and so profound to prophetic understanding. That means the 1290 “days” and 1335 “days” of Daniel 12 involve literal days of time! A year–day principle for Daniel 12? No! It would totally destroy the meaning and shred the end-time *context* the Bible associates with the deliverance of God’s people and the special resurrection (12:1-2).

Does the “year–day” principle have a prophetic application?

Absolutely! But we turn to the model of time God has designed. There is a week of days (the weekly cycle), a week of months (the sacred festal time – Leviticus 23) and next a week of years (perhaps the most solemn clock in the Old Testament), the seventh year being a Sabbath.

Three prescriptions were to be observed during that year (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:1-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-11, 31:10-13):

⁶ Cassuto, Umberto; *Genesis I* (1961), p. 29, as quoted by Harris, R. Laird, et al. in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II, p. 694.

⁷ Hasel, Gerard F.; *The “Days” of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal “Days” or Figurative “Periods/epochs” of Time?* (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI).

⁸ Stambaugh, James; *The days of Creation: A semantic approach* (Evangelical Theological Society papers, ETS-0152, 1996), pp. 3-4, 10, 12.

⁹ Gentry, Kenneth L, Jr.; *Ordained Servant*, “In the Space of Six Days” (extract), vol. 9, no. 1 (January 2000), pp. 12-16.

- The land was to lie fallow and all agricultural labor was to be suspended. There was to be neither plowing nor sowing, nor were the vines and olives to be attended to. The spontaneous yield was not to be garnered, but was to be left in the fields for common use, and what was not used was to be abandoned to the cattle and wild animals (Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 25:1-7). Of the fruit trees the olive is alone mentioned, because its oil was one of the three great agricultural products; but the law probably applied also to other trees.
- With no crops being reaped during the sabbatical year, the payment of debts would have been a great hardship, if not an impossibility, for many. Hence the creditor was commanded “to withhold his hand” and not to exact a debt from an *Israelite*, though he might demand it of strangers, who were not bound to abstain from agricultural pursuits (Deuteronomy 15:1-3, Hebrew text). The *Talmudists* and many after them understood the law to mean the remission of the debt; but modern commentators generally hold that it merely suspended the obligation to pay, and deferred the creditor from extracting the debt during that sacred year.
- During that sabbatical year the Law was to be read on the *Feast of Tabernacles* to all *Israel* – men, women, and children – as well as to the stranger within the gates, that they might know and fear the *Lord*, and fulfill all the words of the Law (Deuteronomy 31:10-13).

During this Sabbatical or seventh year one could not behave as an owner of land. The poor had free and full access to the crops and orchards. *It was one year when everyone became equal.* Together – as one – they could worship God.

This was so important that God noted they would be exiled from the land if that Shemita or Sabbath was broken. The year–day typology of

the creation week was instituted *by this seven-year statute*. The seventh year represented unity, cleansing, deliverance and dependency. It was a time of utter trust in God. Through resting on that Sabbath, man learns that it is really God who is directing and perpetuating life.

In the Garden of Eden there was no concept of ownership or possession. During the Sabbatical year all the produce of the trees and fields became ownerless so that everyone could experience the earth as belonging to all, *just as at the beginning*. For someone who works six years to build up his land or estate, it is no easy task to admit that one does not ultimately really own his land. It is on loan from the true Owner and is really for the benefit of all. Finally, there is an awareness of a connection between eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the exile from the Garden to the expulsion of the Jews from Canaan, exiled to Babylon, for not observing the Sabbatical year. This association itself alludes to the essence of the Holy Land resembling the primordial Garden of Eden. Breaking the Sabbath was like eating of the forbidden tree. Canaan was to symbolize the “land of promise,” restoration, where the evil of the past is gone forever. In turn, that Shemita year was an enactment of the future imagery of the “heavenly Canaan.”

God provided a commentary on how Israel followed His will. The breach in honoring the Sabbatical year led Jeremiah to prophesy: *“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years”* (Jeremiah 25:11).

“For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10).

More than a generation was lost to the Babylonian captivity. The sacredness of the Creation Sabbath day became a great metaphor for unity and dependence in the Shemita year. *That* is the year-day concept that is the true basis of most

prophecy – especially in Daniel 9 and 12 as a “week of years!”

“And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years” (II Chronicles 36:20-21).

At the end of time, within one generation, the world will be given the chance to come out of Babylon to return to the promised land. The focus of much end-time prophecy is on the *last period of that generation* called the “appointed time.” That is, in turn, associated with the abomination that leads to desolation (Matthew 24:15) as spoken by Daniel the prophet.

Where does the true year-day principle tie to prophecy? There are numerous allusions to that. Jesus Himself used both in Luke 13:6-33. But the premier prophecy relates to the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24. Israel had been in captivity for 70 years – one year for each Shemita dishonored. Daniel was studying the prophecies and understood that, which led to his Daniel 9 prayer. Then Gabriel gave the “70-weeks” prophecy. It related to the restoration of a nation – a people. It was a second chance for Israel – but also the last chance. Israel was once again required to traverse another 70 Shemitas or Sabbatical years. They represented 70 weeks “of years.” The *context* is related to this statute, and ties directly to covenant fulfillment and is in Jubilee language of Leviticus 25, when everything is redeemed. The prophetic calculation is not from Numbers or Ezekiel. That would be out of context. It is beautifully derived from the Shemita statutes.

This is reinforced by Daniel 11. Gabriel returned, and in a summation prophecy, revealed the key kings and leaders who would arise during that probationary period right up to the one who would be a raiser of taxes, which led Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem during the time

of Caesar Augustus. Each king was like a clock ticking, indicating that probation was getting shorter (Daniel 11:2-20).

To simply state that it was a year-day principle of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 sells short the incredible weeks of years or Sabbatical week. End-time redemptive history is bonded to our grasp of Leviticus 25 and Daniel 9.

Thus, each prophecy must be studied in context and without an ill-defined hermeneutic formula. Beginning in Daniel and moving then to Revelation, there is a stunning continuity of timing prophecies. Which clock to use becomes clear. The literal time periods of Daniel 12 envelop the repeated three and a half year periods in Revelation. Prophecy and its timing framework leave

no room for arbitrary formulas, anecdotal applications or opinions. God's rules are precise, lean on the Jewish theocracy for typological instruction and create beautiful keys to unlock the future.

This is only a brief résumé of issues related to time within prophecy. The use of Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 to create a way to deal with the vast network of prophecy cheapens a large segment of Scripture. The incredible tools given to Israel in their statutes clearly open the doors to the apocalyptic prophetic periods – so important to God's people – right now.

Franklin S. Fowler Jr., M.D.



Prophecy

The Seven Seals of Revelation

Commentary on Revelation 4 & 5

Chapter 1

Thoughts Before the Journey

Introduction

In Revelation 1 Jesus appears to John in person on the island of Patmos. Jesus is there portrayed in a Holy Place sanctuary setting – but His appearance suggests that He is about to perform Most Holy Place functions. There are seven major visions in this book, each preceded by a heavenly sanctuary allusion.¹ That first chapter is a preface to messages given specifically to the *leaders* of the seven churches. Through them we see Christ’s pastoral role with His people. But his appearance is one of being ready for His final role in the conflict between good and evil. That imagery matures as one progresses through the book.

In chapters 2 and 3 the overcomers are promised heavenly rewards. These rewards follow a unique progression:

Sustenance

Life

Citizenship

Administrative power

Righteousness like Jesus

Supporting the heavenly administration

Actually sitting on the Father’s throne

The last thought is found in 3:21. It is a segue into chapters 4 and 5 where John is now given a vision of an open door into heaven, which he was invited to step through. This reinforces a promise He made to the Philadelphia church: “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it (3:7).”

During the expose of the seven churches overcomers are promised a place in the heavenly scene. In chapters 4 and 5 John is visually brought into God's throne room – the holy center of the universe. That throne is where the saints will sit and reign with divine Beings. Thus, the meaning of this heavenly vision and what follows is of immense importance to the remnant. The Seals reveal end-time events and players, as we shall discover, associated with executive judgment imagery. That executive authority comes through Christ because He is an overcomer (5:5-6). He reigns, and in a subtle continuation of thematic promises, the overcomer will also reign (1:5-6; 2:26, cf. Exodus 19:6) with Him.

The grandeur of this picture has many purposes. Of highest significance is preparation of the remnant for what they will experience in the unfolding of the Seal events. In this vein John's Apocalypse is to unveil things that "must soon take place" (Revelation 1:1, 19; 4:1). There is an urgency to the message. This has repeatedly come to John in the first three chapters. A timing issue is once again raised.

The heavenly scroll that is depicted in the vision in this throne room is sealed. It will be opened by Jesus, the only one capable of the task. But that work will be done in sequence. The Seals will be broken, beginning with the first, followed by the second, right through to the seventh. The churches were not sequentially numbered. They were all mentioned, and the only semblance of order followed a circuitous postal route. But here each Seal is associated by an event of prophetic importance.

A penetrating question will present itself as we move through these chapters: "Are we witnessing historical information that has already occurred?" If so, then some of the Seals have already been broken and are of no further significance. Or, "Is the imagery symbolic of a time even future to us (2007)?" Evidence mounts that not one Seal has yet been broken. If that can be firmly substantiated, a major path will be opened to understand subsequent visions in an end-time light.

"No single Biblical method of study should be considered sacrosanct, including the historical method of interpretation favored by many Adventists.... Perhaps it is past time for the Adventist Church to discover new vistas of truth on roads not yet traveled.

"To even consider such an idea can be unsettling or frightful for some. E. G. White wrote, 'There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed and that all our expositions of scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair.' [Review and Herald, vol. 69, No. 50] Along similar lines the following was written, 'Some have feared that if in even a single point they acknowledge themselves in error other minds would be led to doubt the whole theory of the truth; therefore they have felt that investigation should not be permitted, that it would tend to dissension and disunion. But if such is to be the result of investigation, the sooner it comes the better. If there are those whose faith will not stand the test of an investigation of the Scriptures, the sooner they are revealed the better for then the way will open to show them their error. We cannot hold that a position once taken, an idea once advocated, is not under any circumstances to be relinquished. There is but One who is infallible – He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'" [E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 125, 1893 edition]²

The sanctuary/throne motif has its parallels in visions of Old Testament prophets. Micah (I Kings 22:19-22), Isaiah (6th chapter), Ezekiel (1st chapter) and Daniel (7th chapter) were a privileged few who beheld the Holy center of authority of the universe. Now John is added to that list.

"When John on Patmos describes his throne vision, he uses words that merge the two earlier visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel. Although he views the majesty of Israel's God, he only describes God by His appearance of bright shining 'jasper' and red 'carnelian.' Further, he sees a halo, in the shape of a rainbow, with an emerald color around the throne (Rev. 4:3), as if to signify that divine mercy surrounds omnipotent justice. John also sees four *living beings* around the throne, resembling the ones that Ezekiel had described (Rev. 4:6, 7). However, John blends them with the seraphim of Isaiah's vision, because he says that each being had six wings instead of four (Rev. 4:8) and had one face instead of four (see Ezek. 1:6). He also says that the beings 'were covered with eyes, in front and in back' (Rev. 4:6), a detail taken from the wheels of the throne of God in Ezek. 1:18."³

Why do we have a throne scene, special beings surrounding that throne and concern for who might open the scroll? John is swept into an enthralling experience that focuses on a book. There are significant events that lead up to the opening of the book. Therefore – we must conclude that the book has something recorded in and on it that is a grand finale of a dramatic experience in heaven. We must conclude that that record is something that is of extreme value but only after the seventh Seal is broken. The sanctuary scene clearly begins with Holy Place typology. What relationship does this have to the seven Seals of record? Is the sanctuary imagery a picture of the timing of the opening of the Seals? Or is the sanctuary and throne motif a description of heaven’s authority to deal with what is to follow – the opening of the Seals? The great issue in the controversy between Satan and Christ is brought down to the foundational question: Who has authority to control and judge? The sanctuary setting is a heavenly message in itself that defines the meaning of what transpires before the throne. It is typological imagery, revealing why Jesus’ kingdom prepares to destroy Satan and his followers. Here we see the preparation stages of the vast court scene that will finally justify and exonerate Jesus as Redeemer, Sanctifier and King to all the universe.

Looking at the book chiastically, chapter 12 is the center. What then are the mirror equivalents of chapters 4–7? Chapters 17–21:4. How does this play out as we study Revelation? More than has ever been addressed before, the structural integrity of God’s prophetic messages are based upon promise and fulfillment, warning and judgment, type compared with antitype. These models can be seen in numerous ways from celestial signs, to the 1260-day prophecies, to the tabernacle services, to the very inherent repetitive model of chiastic Biblical structure. This is the reason Ellen G. White often said that history would be repeated. There would be an introductory or *type* prophetic fulfillment and elsewhere in very similar “mirror” language would be the final or *antitypical* prophetic fulfillment. This structure of information was heaven’s choice to convey the interplay between the conflicts of evil and good. The *type*, though literal, becomes symbolic of the final end or fulfillment of the prophecy yet to come.

This principle is vital in understanding Revelation. This can be carried further to see that Revelation mirrors much of Daniel. In those parallelisms understanding emerges as to how, and often when, prophecy is fulfilled.

This now brings us to the throne room scene where the Seals were removed one by one. This is to be a *type* of what will occur later. A general picture of this is here outlined:

There is another allusion that can be drawn through the chiastic structure. Revelation depicts details of the final conflict between good and evil. There is broad sweeping imagery of

| <u>“Type</u> | | <u>Antitype</u> | |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| <u>Revelation 4:7</u> | | <u>Revelation 17-21:4</u> | |
| 4:1 | Heaven opened | 19:11 | Heaven opened |
| 4:4 | Thrones – 24 elders | 19:4 | Throne with 24 elders |
| 5:1 | Book with 7 Seals – opened in ch. 6 | 20:12 | Books opened |
| 5:6, 9 | Lamb slain | 17:14 | Lamb overcomes |
| 5:10 | Priests to reign | 20:6 | Priests reign |
| 6:2 | Jesus rides a white horse going out to conquer | 19:11 | Jesus rides a white horse as conqueror” ⁴ |

these great contrasts. This is shown in remarkable detail between chapters 4 and 5, and chapter 17. Here we see the sovereign King at the center of the universe preparing to judge. This is compared with the papacy (devil) “sitting” on the “people” of the world with authoritative control. God’s story ends in victory; the papacy is in defeat. This remarkable linguistic play and interplay of messages heightens the anticipation for a resolution to the sin problem. It also inspires hope for those waiting for the final culmination of evil.

Revelation 17 opens to the student details of the final years of the papacy – Satan’s false church – state power. The type in the Dark Ages is met with the antitype in the last three and a half years of history. This can all be contrasted with the Creator God preparing to judge and then reacting in His pre-executive judgment by an outpouring of calamitous events – His final warning before the atonement ceases.

This study will bring fresh insight into God’s final acts to draw mankind to Himself. It does so as disdainful acts of Satan’s final thrust to captivate the world are unveiled.

Chapter 2

Revelation 4

Journey Through “the” Open Door

VERSE 1: “After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.”

Verse 1 – “After this”

There are many *views* as to what the meaning of these words portrays. There are three obvious references, each having significance.

1. The vision of the seven churches has just been completed. One might assume that periodically throughout that vision Jesus paused so John could write and accurately depict the complex symbolism given. That first vision John *saw* was of Jesus here on earth. The words recorded were quotes from His lips. Now Jesus fades from the scene. The next revelation is again with visual and auditory scenes, but this time he is transported to heaven. Thus, “After this” are transition words introducing the next vision.

“The phrase ... (*meta tauta*, ‘after these’) in v. 1 denotes a sequence in John’s receipt of the revelation. It marks the beginning of a new vision as it does a number of times in the book (7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1 ...’ Here ‘it introduces a new section of the book as the scene now changes from a picture of the glorified Christ walking among the churches on earth to that of the Father in the court of heaven ...’ It is true that the sequence of visions given to John may coincide with the sequence of events they predict (Scott), but whenever *meta tauta* is followed by ... (*eidon*, ‘I looked,’ ‘I saw’), John’s primary reference is to the beginning of a new vision.”⁵

Meta means “immediately after,” suggesting no intervening messages, events or delay were experienced until he begins this new vision. John presumably had time to write down the final Laodicean message before the new visual message began.

2. The setting of Revelation is *within* a sanctuary motif. To ignore this is to bring chaos to the meaning of this book. In chapter 1, the introductory scene was predominantly of the earthly Holy Place, but we saw imagery of Jesus depicting His readiness to function in the heavenly Most Holy Place. It was the glorified Jesus who came down for this part of the vision. This imagery was *on earth*, yet it portrayed divine heavenly action. This sanctuary setting now changes. We are given a glimpse into heaven,

God's throne. Thus, "After this" also has a powerful allusion to a continuum from chapter 1's sanctuary imagery. We have a progressive revelation of Holy Place ministry, now projected in heaven.

As we progress through this book we will find two unique and distinct chronological flows of thought. *One*, through the sanctuary imagery, which is sequential and introductory to the second and depicts Divine action. *Two*, imagery of earthly events, man's action, that coincides with the just-revealed heavenly or sanctuary message. There will also be interludes and inserts to clarify the prophetic outline given.

3. The third implication of "After this" is one of *sequence* and *when*. Is there a *timed* message that might be part of this new vision which ties to chapter 1 and even 2 and 3? We have just seen a Holy Place setting. Jesus is ministering to His churches, but shows that He is about to render judgment. This presents anticipatory or proleptic activity. Something beyond the immediate vision is going to occur.

The picture in chapter 1 relating to the *future* presents an eschatological motif: "the time is at hand" (vs 3), "who is to come" (vs 4), "cometh with clouds" (vs 7), "which is to come" (vs 8), "which shall be hereafter" (vs 19). The chiasmic center of chapter 1 of these futuristic thoughts is the second coming of Jesus (vs 7). Early on we *are* invited to think about His second coming.

There are similar clues within the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. Repeatedly, we have references to "the end," His "coming quickly," coming as a thief with heavenly rewards. But in the Philadelphia church Jesus states that he sets before them an open door which is not to be shut (3:7-8). When was the door affixed open? There is an allusion given in Philadelphia to the Most Holy Place.⁶

From the anticipatory imagery of chapter 1 the next sanctuary depiction is preceded in chapter 4 by the phrase "After this." Could this be a follow-through of the anticipatory judgment motif of chapter 1? It is.

The silver thread that strengthens the fabric of this sequential message of Revelation is the timing of Jesus' actions.

"The Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must shortly be done" (22:6), "Behold, I come quickly" (22:7), "Surely I come quickly" (22:20).

What can we conclude to this point? With an eschatological awareness:

Jesus ministers to His church (walking among them).

Jesus is prepared to judge (eyes of judgment).

Jesus' words are precise truth (sword in mouth).

Jesus presents, as a "minister" to the churches, messages of warning, correction and hope.

Jesus now invites John into heaven to observe another sanctuary scene – around God's throne.

Jesus is not present in the initial scene, but we can hear Him speak.

We can *anticipate* that this new vision experience relates to either a continuum of the pastoral role of Jesus or it introduces a new setting that extends His role. The structure of Revelation with its sanctuary imagery invites progression of understanding.

Verse 1 – "I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven:"

Is this the same "open door" that Jesus told John could never be shut in the Philadelphia message (3:8)? That door led to the Most Holy Place. If this is so, this vision begins in the heavenly throne room and is related to the message to only *one* of the churches. To do justice to the contextual setting, we must consider these messages as full of instructive and probationary imagery for *each* church setting. As noted above, there are two separate message lines in Revelation: one represents a progressive heavenly template of sanctuary activity, the other a progressively more detailed earthly flow of summation work in dealing with sin.

We are about to be given a *view* of the throne room *through* an open door. What sanctuary section does this throne room scene typify? Let's review a few additional thoughts. In verse 5 there are seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. This appears to be the Holy Place, consistent with a pre-1844 (Investigative Judgment time) setting. This would complement the progression of the chapter 1 sanctuary theme. Confirmation of this comes in this comment:

“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 law of God.”⁷

Often when expositor White uses Scriptural references, many verses will be quoted if their context contributes to a given flow of ideas. She is always careful to present Scripture in a way that never alters its true meaning. Here, only verse 5 is quoted from chapter 4. The imagery begins in the Holy Place.

Verse 1 – “and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me;”

Immediately we are presented with the same auditory symbolism found in chapter 1, verse 10. There is no doubt that it continues to be Jesus addressing John. The trumpet quality creates the tie. This is not a simple conversation voice but one reminiscent of the awful authoritarian grandeur of Mount Sinai when the law was given. In chapter 1 it symbolized the call of the leaders of “Israel,” the seven churches. But, in a “private” vision setting, why this dramatic trumpet-like voice?

The first feast of the three fall feasts was the Feast of Trumpets. Then within a very short span of time (the seventh Hebrew month) came the Day of Atonement and, lastly, the Feast of Tabernacles.

“The Feast of Trumpets reflects God’s desire to summon His people to repentance so that He can vindicate them on the day of His judgment. The name of the feast is derived from the blowing of the trumpets (Shofar) which was its distinguishing characteristic. The massive blowing of the Shofar on the first day of the seventh month was understood by the Jews as the beginning of their trial before the heavenly court where books would be opened and the destiny of each individual would be decided. The trial lasted ten days until the Day of Atonement (*Yom kippur*) when God would dispose of their sins in a permanent way.”⁸

What was this Shofar trumpet call for? It announced that time was short. The issue of sin was to be resolved, ended, wiped out in ten days. The final judgment scene was soon to be enacted. It announced that the final period of probation had begun.

“The blowing of the Shofar during the Ten Days of Penitence served not only to call upon the Jews to repent but also to reassure them that God would remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment. The ten days preceding the Day of Atonement were not an abstract theological truth, but an existential reality lived out with real trumpet-calls to repentance, trusting in God’s mercy to vindicate them.”⁹

“It is noteworthy that the announcement of the judgment is followed by the opening of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple.”¹⁰

If this is a pre-judgment call, the trumpet’s voice becomes a metaphor for the Feast of Trumpets.

“We notice that the voice that was speaking to John, like the sound of a trumpet, was the same voice that he heard in Rev 1:10. When John heard that voice at the beginning, he turned and saw a vision of Jesus. We can conclude that it was Jesus who spoke to him with a voice like the sound of a trumpet. No-

tice, however, that John has not yet seen Jesus as part of this vision. We may surmise that Jesus was present, but had not come into John's view, as was initially the case in Rev 1:10-12. This point may become significant a little later on."¹¹

The allusion to a Shofar in chapter 4 raises a question. Is this a pre-judgment warning or announcement? Let's begin to analyze this issue:

1. **Chapter 1:**
Sanctuary
Earth
Single trumpet
Addressing leaders of the churches

2. **Chapter 4:**
Sanctuary
Heaven
Single trumpet
To all the churches

Now look at these verses:

"The Lord said to Moses: 'Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. If only one is sounded, the *leaders* – the heads of the clans of Israel – are to assemble before you. When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for setting out. To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the same signal. The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come.'" Numbers 10:1-8.

The typology of this antitypical blowing of the trumpets is most fascinating. Jesus was calling, in chapter 1, the *leaders* of His people.

Blowing of two silver trumpets or a ram's horn (used in the Shofar) were signals to the whole camp of Israel of pending events. This could range from the sound of alarm, to calling the people, calling leaders or as in the Shofar, announcing a call to repentance (*teshuva*).

Can we distinguish what those two trumpet calls symbolize?

1. Evidence weighs that in chapter 1 the trumpet-like voice of Jesus was a call to the leaders of the assembly (Numbers 10:4). Then only one trumpet was used to gather the "heads of the clans of Israel." This is a symbolic segue into the messages that were given to the leaders of the churches to, in turn, give to the congregation.

2. The trumpet-like voice of Jesus in chapter 4 is a simile of the Shofar (Leviticus 23:24-25). In this, time is short – ten days for the Israelites. The Greek word is *teshuva* – the solemn call to repentance. John is listening to the Shofar, announcing that soon it will be the Day of Atonement when the sanctuary is cleansed. It is important to observe that no trumpet call for a religious event or experience of worship occurred in just the Holy Place. Thus, we should soon see Most Holy Place imagery.

"Loudness marks the sound of the voice John heard here as it did in 1:10. Its comparison to a trumpet in the words *hos salpingos* ('as [that] of a trumpet') is almost identical with the comparison at 1:10. This sounds a note of authority with which the voice summoned John. Here the participle *lalouses* ('speaking') replaces ... (*legouses*, 'saying') of 1:11 in describing the voice. It was speaking with John and saying the following words: ... ('Come up here'). This summons, [is] somewhat similar to the one given Moses at Mount Sinai (cf., Exod. 19:20, 24-25)."¹²

This is a call that a major event is about to occur. Jesus' trumpet-like voice provides that announcement. There is debate as to whether the voice of 4:1 was that of the first chapter. The Greek English Interlinear sets the stage to understand:

“The voice – first which I heard”¹³

“The voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said.” (NIV)

It was the voice of Jesus continuing the prophetic narration, and we must conclude by the expression, it is still trumpet-like.

Verse 1 – “which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.”

This is a unique summons that Jesus gives to John. He is in vision but able to “come up.” John is asked to voluntarily go from a “lower place” to heaven and, more specifically, the Throne Room. What “lower” level place did he initiate this move from? We can only conclude from the earth.

This is cross-referenced to Exodus 19, where a trumpet that waxed louder and louder sounded long, and then “the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount” (vs 20) where God had come to abide.

“Infinite Love has cast up a pathway upon which the ransomed of the Lord may pass from earth to heaven. That path is the Son of God. Angel guides are sent to direct our erring feet. Heaven's glorious ladder is let down in every man's path, barring his way to vice and folly. He must trample upon a crucified Redeemer ere he can pass onward to a life of sin. Our heavenly Father's voice is calling us, Come up hither.... The humble, trusting ones are guided and protected in the way of peace. But He who is infinite in wisdom compels none to accept Heaven's most precious gift—compels none to walk in the path which has been cast up at such a cost. Every one is permitted to choose for himself the narrow, shining steep that leads to heaven, or that broader and easier way which ends in death.”¹⁴

What is John going to be shown?

“The promise of *deixo soi* (‘I will show you’) is in execution of the plan of God the Father in granting to Christ the responsibility of transmitting the ... (*apokalypsis*, ‘revelation’) to the churches (cf. *deixai* [‘to show’], 1:1). His action, which fulfills this promise, begins in Rev. 6:1 where the Lamb initiates the process of breaking the seals of the seven-sealed scroll (Beckwith).”¹⁵

Though the letters to the churches have ceased, the command is to write what he would see from the past to the present and into the future. As we have seen, the theme of the Book of Revelation is parousial.

Ever since chapter 1 we are being moved constantly forward toward the final scenes of this earth's history. This book is about the wrap-up of the conflict between Satan and Christ. We are being introduced to a scene that *begins* the final steps in that direction.

Chapter 3

Arriving in God's Throne Room

VERSE 2: “And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.”

Verse 2 – “And immediately I was in the spirit:”

There is a heavenly vision, an open door, the trumpet-like voice of Jesus which says “come up” and “immediately I was in the spirit:” “I was in the Spirit ... Strictly, *I became: I found myself in.* Appropriate to the sudden and unconscious transportation of the seer into the ecstatic state.”¹⁶

This pre-vision statement blends with 1:10, “I was in the spirit” preceding the first vision. “Although the preposition ‘in,’ from the Greek ‘en’ is usually translated ‘in,’ it is also frequently rendered: ‘with, through’ or ‘by (for example, see Rev. 2:23; 8:13; 9:20).’ Therefore, the first phrase might easily be considered to say ‘I was taken up with the spirit’ or ‘through the power of the spirit’ or ‘by the spirit.’ The NEB does, in fact, word it as ‘At once I was caught up *by* the Spirit.”¹⁷

“It is best to conclude that John had returned to his normal senses after the first vision ended in 3:22 and now returns to the same state in which he had been so as to receive a second vision (Charles; Ladd). This is the most natural understanding of the language (Beckwith; Mounce). It is the repetition of the expression from 1:10 that implies an intermittent state when the trance left him (Morris). Apparently the first vision (1:10-3:22) ended, and immediately after, this new summons with its consequent ecstatic renewal came.”¹⁸

“This miraculous ecstatic state wrought by the Spirit of God was, to all intents and purposes, a complete translation from Patmos to heaven. All of the prophet’s senses were operative: his ears heard, his eyes saw, and his emotions were as real as though his body was literally in heaven instead of remaining on Patmos.”¹⁹ This is described by Paul in II Corinthians 12:4.

Verse 2 – “and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.”

This is a transition verse that will help us understand the seven Seals soon to follow. As we build on this with exegetic ties, the meaning of those Seals and the scroll will begin to unfold.

“John was an ardent student of the Old Testament Scriptures, as his frequent allusion to them confirms. He knew of Ezekiel’s experience in God’s throne room. And now, just like Ezekiel, John finds himself invited into God’s throne room to receive a message. He has been told that he is about to learn about the events that were still to transpire before Christ’s return. Can you imagine his eagerness? As his vision progressed, and he saw where he was, I’m sure his mind took him back to Ezekiel’s experience. As he saw the throne, the sea of glass, and the four living creatures he must have been watching it unfold as a familiar dream.”²⁰

“The first thing John mentions seeing is a throne. In other parts of this vision, we see evidence that the vision was one of the heavenly sanctuary. In verse 5, John sees the seven lamps of fire, and in verse 6 he sees the sea of glass (represented by the laver in the original tabernacle and by the bronze sea in Solomon’s temple). Notice, however, that there is no reference to the table of shewbread, the altar of incense, or the altar of burnt offering at this point. Both of the altars appear later in the book of Revelation, but the table of shewbread never does.”²¹

“The throne of God is extremely prominent throughout John’s prophecy, being explicitly mentioned in every chapter except chapters 2, 9, 10, 15, 17, and 18.”²²

“Now, as John looks through the opened, heavenly ‘door,’ the first thing to greet his eye was ‘a throne.’ It must be the same referred to by Jesus in verse 21 of the previous chapter, as the one ‘set down’ upon by His ‘Father.’ So, the ‘one’ seated here is God the Father or ‘the ancient of days’ also depicted in Daniel 7:9, 13 and 22.”²³

Other very fascinating imagery was given John regarding this throne. The throne was “set.” In this *setting* the Greek word is *keimai*, suggesting laid up or put into position. This elicits Daniel 7:9 where thrones were “set up.” “It is possible that (‘was set’) reflects the result of [and] ... act of *placing*.”²⁴ This is profound information. This clearly portrays the descriptive language that was noted by White, “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.”²⁵

The implication of that one word “set” suggests a positional change of God’s throne – it had been “placed” as John begins this throne room scene. The imagery is of a throne with only one on that throne. Jesus is not visible. Only His voice is noted.

“In chapters 1–3 Jesus gives judgment-oriented messages to the seven churches. The act of sitting on the throne is often connected with judgment in the Bible (Ps 9:4, 122:5; Judges 5:10; Rev. 20:4). In vs. 3 is a rainbow above the throne. ‘The bow above God’s throne represents the union of His mercy and His justice’ (Ed 115). All of these features in the first few verses of Rev. 4 are an indication that the stage is being set for a continuation of a discussion of the judgment. If the features in Rev. 17 set the stage for indictment of the harlot, then the contrasting opposites in Rev. 4 may be seen as *setting the stage* for vindication of the Father in the investigative judgment. We may summarize the relationship of the two sections dealing with the investigative and executive judgments as mirror images:

“‘And upon the throne [was] one sitting’ (... *kai epi ton thronon kathemenos*) brings the climax of John’s initial look at the heavenly throne room. This person is undoubtedly God the Father, because He is distinguished from the Lamb in 5:5, 7; 6:16; 7:10 and from the Spirit in 4:5 (cf. 19:4) (Alford; Bullinger; Charles)... Portraying the glory of God was the objective, not a detailed description of the Father’s appearance.

| <u>4-7</u> | <u>17-20</u> |
|---|--|
| Sanctuary setting | Sanctuary setting |
| Seals of book opened | Books opened |
| Outline investigative judgment and the trial of the Father – Father & saints exonerated | Outline executive judgment, including the beast – Satan and Babylon condemned” ²⁶ |

“The combination *kathemenos* (‘sitting’) and the preposition *epe* (‘upon’) frequently designates God throughout the book...”²⁷ He has been placed in readiness for an end-time mission.

“John’s reverent reticence to describe the Ruler of the universe in terms that might seem in any way anthropomorphic is apparent from the fact that he describes Him simply by the participle *kathemenos*, “sitting,” without stating what or who was sitting. He implies only that a presence was upon the throne.”²⁸

The meaning of this Scripture is further enhanced with the exegetic tie to Ezekiel. In “vision *he* saw God’s throne coming from the north in a whirlwind. In symbol, God was seen racing through the universe with tremendous power, seeing everything as He went. He was involved in a work of judgment upon His chosen ones for their sins (see Ezekiel 1, 9 and 10.)”²⁹ The table of shewbread was on the north side of the tabernacle in the Holy Place. God moved from there to the Holiest compartment.

In turn, this ties in with Daniel 7 (see table below).

“God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness.” Psalm 47:8. “The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.” Psalm 99:1.

VERSE 3: “And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*”

Verse 3 – “And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone:”

The description of the Being on the throne prevents one from developing an *image* of what God the Father looks like. Yet there is portrayed visual characteristics of what He is like.

“This is the most explicit description of God the Father in prophecy and, perhaps, in the whole Bible. This ‘reference to the Father stands in striking contrast with the detailed description of the Son (ch. 1:13-16).’ But, the Commentary continues, ‘the Son is human as well as divine, and can therefore be described appropriately in human terms’ (7BC 767).

“So, His appearance like precious gems such as ‘jasper’ and ‘a sardine stone,’ while strange, even bizarre, is an entirely appropriate way to describe One who is totally Divine and did not partake of humanity like His Son. Note the strange ‘rainbow,’ which instead of the multicolored bow we are familiar with, is only a beautiful green, like an ‘emerald.’ We have a significant comment about that bow: ‘the rainbow encircling the throne represents the combined power of mercy and justice’ (Maranatha, 326). Perhaps green is the color of choice because that hue has something to do with ‘life.’ In the natural world, ‘green’ is indicative of ‘life,’ and where there is life, there is hope. Without the ‘mercy and justice’ of God, there would be no hope.”³¹

This sensitivity was further opened up to E. G. White: “I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus’ countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father’s person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, ‘If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.’”³²

| | <u>“Ezekiel 1</u> | <u>Daniel 7</u> | <u>Revelation 4</u> | <u>Revelation 5</u> |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Heavenly scene | 1-28 | 9-14 | 1-11 | 1-4 |
| Throne set [up] | | 9 | 2-6 | 1, 6-11 |
| Father on Throne | 28 | 9 | 2-3 | 1, 7” ³⁰ |

“The Father was enshrouded with a body of light and glory, so that His person could not be seen; yet I knew that it was the Father and that from His person emanated this light and glory. When I saw this body of light and glory rise from the throne, I knew it was because the Father moved, therefore I said, I saw the Father rise. The glory, or excellency, of His form I never saw; no one could behold it and live; yet the body of light and glory that enshrouded His person could be seen.”³³

Because the form of God was hidden, something of His glory is described. There are numerous passages given of visual impressions of God [Exodus 24:10; Daniel 7:9; 1 King 22:19; Isaiah 6:1]. But here we have specific details that carry symbolic weight.

What we call Jasper today is opaque. This could not be the stone that John referred to.

“The key to probable identification of this stone is Rev. 21:11 where it represents a watery crystalline brightness (Alford; Morris). The modern jasper is opaque, but the ancient stone must have been translucent rock crystal, possibly a diamond.

“There is basic agreement regarding the sardius. It was a fiery, deep red stone, most likely a carnelian. In antiquity, it was most often the one used for engraved gems (Swete; Charles). It is the stone for which the city of Sardis was named (Swete).”³⁴

What other clues might be found to clarify this?

“Revised Standard Version:

‘Like jasper and carnelian’

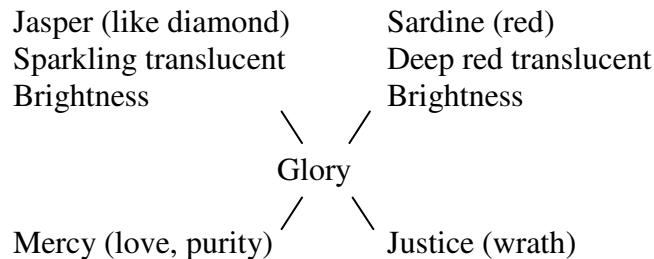
Jasper – red in color; last stone on the breastplate of the high priest.

Sardius – a reddish gem; first stone on the breastplate of the high priest. (Exodus 28:17, 20)”³⁵

Ties to the Old Testament, especially in Ezekiel, related these stones to characteristics of God the Father. Links to chapter 21 of Revelation bring more light, specifically to the choice of stones. “This first mention of ‘jasper’ highlights the summarizing nature of the threefold list, since it is the first precious stone mentioned in ch. 21 (twice: 21:11, 18) and is at the head of the list of the twelve foundation stones of the end-time city’s wall in 21:19. The placement of ‘jasper’ at the beginning of the list in 4:3

underscores the association of divine glory, since it is the only stone in ch. 21 that is explicitly linked to glory (in 21:11 the latter-day city has ‘*the glory of God*, her luminary like a precious stone, *as a jasper stone* shining like crystal; ... The stones intensify the light around the throne by reflecting the unapproachable brightness, and hence glory, surrounding God himself (cf. I Tim. 6:16; Ps. 104:2).”³⁶

The light from these stones is a metaphor for God’s appearance. But because specific light is mentioned that emanates from that throne, we find:



This directs our attention once again to an anticipated judgment scene. For now is imaged the very issues that the judgment is over – the character of God.

Beale adds these further persuasive insights:

“Based on the identifications of the stones above, one is justified in assigning a symbolic connotation to them. Suggested symbolisms have included ... the holiness of God and the justice of God (Alford)... [This] seems most probable because the same mixture of white light (i.e., the diamond) with fire (i.e., the carnelian) pervades the OT and apocalyptic visions of divine majesty (cf. Ezek. 1:4; 8:2; Dan. 7:9; cf. Rev. 1:14; 10:1) (Alford). The picture is that of His anger because of His holy nature reacting in response to the prevailing sinfulness of mankind, resulting in the judgment He is about to send upon the earth (Smith).”³⁷

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