

THE PARALLEL LITERARY STRUCTURE OF REVELATION 12 AND 20

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In three previous studies on literary structures in the Apocalypse I have dealt successively with the chiasmic arrangement of materials within one narrative (Rev 18),¹ the application of the covenant formulary to the letters for the seven churches (Rev 2-3),² and the chiasmic arrangement of materials found in two balancing narratives (Rev 5 and 19).³ I would like to extend this series of studies here by calling attention to the parallel (non-chiasmic) structural forms found in two narratives located in relatively similar positions in the overall structure of the book, Rev 12 and Rev 20.

For a preliminary observation on the location of these two narratives in the overall structure of the book, K. A. Strand's outline of that structure may be noted.⁴ In that structure, Rev 12 is within a section which Strand has entitled "Evil Powers Oppose God and His People."⁵ As such, this narrative comes very close to the center of the book, where his transition from the "historical

¹William H. Shea, "Chiasm by Theme and by Form in Revelation 18," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 249-256.

²William H. Shea, "The Covenantal Structure of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 71-84.

³William H. Shea, "Revelation 5 and 19 as Literary Reciprocals," *AUSS* 22 (1984): 249-257.

⁴Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 2d ed. (Naples, Florida, 1979), p. 52. Though here the two main divisions of Revelation are simply designated "Part I" and "Part II" (see, however, the preceding page), in a revised form of the diagram, Strand refers to these two main divisions of Revelation as "Historical Series" and "Eschatological Consummation Series" (see Strand, "Apocalyptic Prophecy and the Church," *Ministry* [Oct., 1983], p. 23).

⁵Strand, *Interpreting*, p. 52, and "Apocalyptic Prophecy," p. 23.

series" to the "eschatological-consummation" series occurs. In fact, this fourth major bloc is the concluding sequence in the "historical series."⁶

Rev 20, on the other hand, is located at the end of Strand's seventh major bloc of materials in the book (Rev 19-20), that which he has entitled "Judgmental Finale by God."⁷ If one excludes the final bloc of material that deals with the New Earth (Rev 21-22), which obviously is very distinct in content, Rev 20 can be thought of as located at the conclusion to the main eschatological section of the book.

Thus, we find these two narratives, Rev 12 and 20, to be located at relatively similar and corresponding positions in the book as the concluding sections of the historical and the main eschatological series, respectively. This represents a non-chiastic parallel. However, as Strand has also pointed out, there is a chiastic correspondence, as well. He has indicated in a diagram (for convenience, incorporated as Diagram 2 at the end of this article) that one of the more limited chiasms in the book of Revelation deals with the entry of the evil forces opposing God's people, and then depicts, in reverse order, their demise.⁸ The first entity among these evil powers is none other than the devil himself, Satan, the great dragon. Chap. 12 is devoted to his activity during the historical period. Chap. 20 is the corresponding counterpart, as Satan, the dragon, meets his millennial imprisonment and the final defeat.

Given the types of literary correspondences found elsewhere in different passages in the book of Revelation, one might also expect to find some sort of correspondence between chaps. 12 and 20. And indeed, this proves to be the case. The type of correspondence through which these two narratives compare the most directly is in their use of very similar literary structures for their respective contents. Beyond that, however, there are also correspondences in thematic development and in alternation of the vertical and horizontal dimensions.

⁶See n. 4, above.

⁷Strand, *Interpreting*, p. 52, and "Apocalyptic Prophecy," p. 23.

⁸Kenneth A. Strand, "Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 16 (1978): 403. See also his discussion on p. 402.

1. *The Literary Structure of Revelation 12*

Regardless of any difficulties in interpretation, the progression of thought in Rev 12 is straightforward. As outlines in the commentaries illustrate, the transitions between that chapter's main thought units or sections are relatively well demarcated.

The narrative opens with a five-verse section which depicts a conflict between a glorified woman (vss. 1-2)—commonly interpreted as the church (or Israel as an earlier phase of the church)—and the dragon (vss. 3-4)—commonly interpreted as the devil and/or his earthly agent(s). The particular point of this conflict revolves around the man-child whom the woman delivers. Since this man-child was caught up to the throne of God and is to rule all nations with a rod of iron (vs. 5) he is commonly—though not universally—identified by the commentaries as representing Jesus Christ. Thus, we may identify this initial five-verse section of chap. 12 as describing the early phase of conflict between the dragon and the woman.

The next verse in this narrative (vs. 6) should be seen as transitional to an intermediate section that deals further with the conflict between the dragon and the woman. This transitional verse indicates that having given birth to the man-child, the woman, now more definitely identifiable with the church, found it necessary to flee into the wilderness for the purpose of self-preservation. There she remained, protected by God, for a specified period of time—1260 days.

At this point, the flow of the narrative dealing with the conflict between the dragon and the woman is interrupted to include a parenthetical section (vss. 7-12) which explains the origin of the dragon's enmity towards the woman. This section of the narrative is in part descriptive (vss. 7-9) and in part hymnic (vss. 10-12). The first portion of this central section describes a conflict in heaven between the dragon ("that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan" [vs. 9]) and his angels with Michael, the leader of the angels on God's side. Michael and his host emerged victorious, and the dragon and his host were cast down to earth. The second part of this central section celebrates the defeat of the dragon and warns the inhabitants of earth of his enmity.

Several different interpretations have been given to this central section. Some interpreters see it as a description of a conflict in

heaven in which evil originated prior to the creation of mankind. Others see it as a description of the victory gained by God over the devil at the time of the incarnation of Christ. Still others see it as a description of the victory gained by God through Christ's atonement on the cross. Our purpose here is not to give a detailed exegesis or interpretation of this passage. It is rather to see where these verses fit in the literary structure of the chapter. That point is clear, even though commentators may differ in their interpretation of the text itself. These verses provide a central bloc of material in the chapter; and the main flow of the narrative which is more directly concerned with the conflict between the dragon and the woman, resumes following this excursus.

The next section of the narrative, vss. 13-16, returns, then, to the subject of the woman in the wilderness, under attack by the dragon. In vs. 6, which we have noted above, it is mainly the actions of the woman herself that are in view. That subject is now treated again in vs. 14. But vs. 15 then continues with the other aspect of the subject—the actions of the dragon towards the woman during her residence in the wilderness. He pursued her there and poured out a great flood upon her to sweep her away. The earth helped the woman, however, and rendered the flood ineffectual (vs. 16). The length of time that the woman was resident in the wilderness is given again, in this instance as “a time, two times, and half a time” (vs. 14), which is equivalent to the 1260 days mentioned earlier in vs. 6.

For literary structural purposes, it is important to note how closely the contents of vs. 14 correspond to those of vs. 6:

Rev 12:6

“And the woman . . .
fled . . .
into the wilderness,
where she has a place
prepared by God,
in which to be nourished
for 1260 days.”

Rev 12:14

“And the woman was given the two
wings of the great eagle that
she might fly from the serpent
into the wilderness,
to the place
where she is to be nourished,
for three and one-half times.”

A comparison of the Greek phraseology found in these two verses indicates that the same words are used in them for “into the wilderness” and the “place” to which the woman fled. The same

verbal root for "nourish" is used in different forms in its two occurrences. While the verbs "to flee" and "to fly" are not the same, they convey a similar idea. Finally, both verses end with a time period, and those time periods should be equated.

From these specific lexical relationships, and also from the general thematic relationships present, it is evident that the content of these two verses makes a direct connection between them and that in fact vs. 6 and vss. 13-16 form an *inclusio* around the central section of vss. 7-12. Specifically, vs. 6 provides an initial statement about the flight of the woman into the wilderness, while vss. 13-16 provide an amplifying and concluding statement on the same subject. Thus, the complete or overall statement about the intermediate period of conflict between the dragon and the woman has been divided, and its two parts have been utilized to frame or enclose the central statement about the war between Michael and the dragon in heaven.

The final verse of the chapter, vs. 17, refers to the third and final phase of conflict between the dragon and the woman. In this case, at the end of the 1260 days, it is the remnant of her seed or offspring with which the dragon aims at making war. The nature of this final conflict is spelled out in more detail in the subsequent two chapters, which contribute in making up the bloc of prophecies in Rev 12-14.

There is a certain thematic link between the beginning and the end of Rev 12. Both deal with the dragon's attack upon the woman's offspring. In the first case, it is her principal offspring, the man-child, that is attacked; and in the latter case, it is the remnant of her offspring that is his target. Furthermore, the man-child at the beginning of the narrative should be interpreted as referring to Jesus, with the remnant at the end of the narrative bearing testimony to Jesus. And finally, in vs. 5, the dragon "stood" before the woman when she was about to bear her child, and at the end of the narrative the dragon "stood" upon the sand of the sea. (The same verbal root is present in these two passages. Some hold that this final statement should be connected with Rev 13, but this lexical correlation suggests that it may be correctly located at the end of Rev 12.)

From this survey of Rev 12, the contents of this chapter can now be reduced to a basic outline:

- A. Vss. 1-5 — Early dragon-woman conflict
- B¹. Vs. 6 — Intermediate dragon-woman conflict
- X. Vss. 7-12 — Michael-dragon conflict in heaven
- B². Vss. 13-16 — Intermediate dragon-woman conflict (resumed)
- C. Vs. 17 — Final dragon-woman conflict

2. *The Literary Structure of Revelation 20*

Like Rev 12, the thematic progression and the literary structure in the narrative in Rev 20, about the millennium, are relatively straightforward. The first three verses describe events that are to take place at the beginning of the millennium. The principal event to occur then is that Satan is to be imprisoned. Vs. 3 of this section is transitional in that it not only recites events to occur at the beginning of the millennium, but also anticipates the reversal of conditions at the end of the millennium—the loosing of the devil from his prison for a time.

The central section of the narrative (Rev 20:4-6) describes events that will occur during the millennium. The saints, especially the martyrs, will be resurrected and reign with Christ for 1000 years. During this period of time, they will sit upon thrones judging with him, as priests to God. A blessing is pronounced upon those who share in this first resurrection, and their fate is contrasted with the wicked, who will not come to life again until the 1000 years are ended.

The third major section of this narrative describes events that will take place at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:7-10). The devil will be loosed from his prison then, and he will go forth to deceive the nations of the wicked, whose resurrection has been referred to in vs. 5. He gathers them together for a final assault upon the city of God, but they meet their fate when fire comes down from God and consumes them.

For the purpose of studying the literary structure of this narrative, it is important to note the transitional nature of vs. 3 at the end of the first section and the transitional nature of vs. 7 at the beginning of the third section of this narrative. The former deals with the transition from events at the beginning of the millennium to the next section which describes events during the millennium, while the latter deals with the transition from events during the millennium to the next section which deals with events at the end of the millennium.

Given this transitional function for these two verses, one might expect to see some lexical correspondences between them. This proves to be the case, as can be seen from the following comparison:

Rev 20:3

“He threw him into the pit,
and shut and sealed it over him,
that he should deceive
the nations no more,
till the thousand years are ended.
After that he must be loosed
for a little while.”

Rev 20:7

“And when the thousand years are ended
Satan will be loosed from his prison
and will come out to deceive
the nations”

Much of the phraseology in these two verses is virtually identical. The correspondence is exact in the Greek of the phrase about the ending of the thousand years. In the cases of the dual occurrences of the verbs “to loose” and “to deceive,” the same roots are employed in different forms. The object of this deception, the nations, is the same. Also, it is evident from these correlations that the “prison” mentioned in vs. 7 is the same as the “pit” in which Satan is to be shut up in vs. 3. Even though vs. 3 concludes the section which deals with events at the beginning of the millennium, statements are made there which anticipate events that are to occur at the end of the millennium, as described further in vs. 7. The latter verse thus supplements and expands upon the former.

These close lexical and thematic relationships demonstrate that these two verses were written in such a way as to link them directly to each other. This serves the purpose not only of continuing the flow of the narrative about the millennium, but it also serves the structural purpose of forming an inclusio—(a frame or envelope)—around the central section, which deals with events during the millennium. That being the case, Rev 20:3 and 20:7 stand in the same position in their narrative as do Rev 12:6 and 12:13-16 in theirs, and these two sets of paired verses function in the same way, by forming an inclusio around the central sections of their respective narratives. An important further point of comparison between these two sets of paired statements is that both of them include references to time periods.

For our present purposes, the scene describing the judgment to take place at the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15) may be reserved

for a later comment. The literary structure of Rev 20:1-10, which we have covered thus far, may be summarized in an outline, as follows:

- A. Vss. 1-2 — Events at the beginning of the millennium
- B¹. Vs. 3 — Transition from the beginning of the millennium
- C. Vss. 4-6 — Events during the millennium
- B². Vs. 7 — Transition to the end of the millennium
- D. Vss. 8-10 — Events at the end of the millennium

3. A Comparison of the Literary Structures of Revelation 12 and 20

At this juncture, we may compare the literary structures of Rev 12 and 20. A first point of comparison that can be made between these two narratives is that they both describe a series of events occurring through a span of time; they each cover an era. Included within that era are prophetic time elements. Moreover, both of these eras are divided prophetically into a tripartite scheme. The three sections of this tripartite scheme deal with events at the beginning, through the middle, and at the end of their respective eras.

The central section of each of these narratives has been demarcated in a special way. The portions of text which introduce and conclude their respective central sections have been tied together through very direct lexical and thematic connections. Thus, as noted above, vss. 6 and 14 in Rev 12 and vss. 3 and 7 in Rev 20 are literary brackets around the central sections of their narratives that may be described as *inclusios* which provide frame or envelope constructions around those central sections.

These *inclusios* differ somewhat in the way they are made up, however. In Rev 12, the central section itself has been divided and an additional, almost-parenthetical section has been inserted between its two divisions. In Rev 20, the order of march in the narrative is more directly progressive, with no such parenthetical passage having been inserted. The section which deals with events during the millennium itself serves the same purpose in this instance, but the *inclusio* which frames it is no less distinct.

In abbreviated form, the outlines of these two narratives may now be compared as follows:

<i>Rev 12</i>		<i>Rev 20</i>	
Vss. 1-5	Beginning of the era	A. Beginning of the era	Vss. 1-2
Vs. 6	Transitional statement, of middle of the era	B ¹ . Transitional statement, to middle of the era	Vs. 3
Vss. 7-12	Central statement, parenthetical	C. Central statement, of middle of the era	Vss. 4-6
Vss. 13-16	Transitional statement middle of era resumed	B ² . Transitional statement to end of the era	Vs. 7
Vs. 17	End of the era	D. End of the era	Vss. 8-10

4. *Thematic Correspondences Between the Narratives*

The relations between Rev 12 and 20 involve both literary structure on the large scale indicated above and also specific lexical and thematic correspondences. An especially prominent example of the latter variety of relationship is present in the series of names and epithets applied to God's main adversary in Rev 12:9 and 20:2. In both instances he is identified as "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan." The same four names and epithets occur in the same order in both passages of the Greek text, and these two passages are the only places in the entire book where this series as a whole is applied to him. This unique parallel between these two passages provides some evidence of an intent to connect the two narratives.

The last verse of Rev 12 describes a scene in which the dragon "stood on the sand of the sea." When the devil leads his great host in their march upon the city of God in Rev 20:8, "their number is like the sand of the sea." The same Greek phrase is used in both instances, and it is also connected with the devil and his work (in the first instance, used in a symbolical sense; in the second, applied in a more metaphorical way). Furthermore, the devil's function as deceiver is emphasized by the use of the same verbal root in both narratives: In 12:9 he is the one who "deceives" the whole world; in 20:3 he is bound so that he cannot "deceive" the nations any longer; and in 20:8 he is loosed once more and comes out of his prison to "deceive" the nations one final time. Though the target audience is not referred to in precisely the same terms, it is evident that that audience for these deceptions is essentially the same in Rev 12 and 20.

In both of these narratives we encounter the saints as the special group to whom the devil is opposed. In both instances they are said to give their “testimony.” In 12:11 this testimony is one of the aspects of their lives by which they overcame the devil, while in 20:4 this testimony is identified as the factor which brought about their martyrdom. The word for “souls” occurs in these same two passages, as well—in 12:11 the faithful ones loved not their “souls” unto death as they gave their testimony, while in Rev 20:4 John beheld the “souls” of those who had been beheaded for giving their testimony. The use of these same word clusters in these two passages supports the idea that the same group of people is in view in both of them. The same group is also identified in the same terms under the fifth seal (Rev 6:9), and there is an interesting quasi-chiastic alternation in the word order of the original text for the order in which these elements appear in these three passages:

<i>6:9</i>	<i>12:11</i>	<i>20:4</i>
souls word of God their testimony	word of their testimony souls	souls their testimony word of God

It seems evident that the intent of the text is to refer to the same group through the use of the same terminology in all three cases.

The position of the martyrs, and of the church more generally, in these two narratives brings up the subject of more broadly based thematic relations between them. While God and Christ stand supreme and are ultimately sovereign over all of the events described in these two narratives, the focus in particular is upon two main protagonists—the devil and the church.

The fates of these two entities follow rather reciprocal patterns through the course of the respective narratives. In general, Rev 12 portrays the devil on the offensive and the church on the defensive, with this general picture interrupted in the central section to describe an initial defeat of the devil—the one that took place in heaven during his confrontation with Michael. In Rev 20, on the other hand, the picture is reversed. The chapter begins with a picture of an initial defeat of the devil, and it ends with a picture of his final defeat, but between these two poles we encounter the victorious members of the church, especially the martyrs, whom the dragon had previously defeated in a limited physical sense. Now

they have come to life in the resurrection and are reigning with Christ as priests to God.

Thus, these two narratives follow an A:B:A pattern, both in terms of literary structure and in terms of the theological themes treated within the units in that structure. The negative and positive poles have been reversed, however, in terms of the fate and outcome for the two main protagonists in the two narratives.

Another theme which alternates between Rev 12 and 20 is that of the blessing and the curse, a couplet of ideas which has distinct covenantal overtones. Towards the end of Rev 12, a woe is pronounced upon the earth because the devil has been cast down to it and is vigorous in prosecuting his work (vs. 12). This statement occurs in the second, or hymnic, half of the central unit of the narrative. By way of contrast, a blessing is pronounced in the same location in the millennial narrative—a blessing upon those who have come up in the first resurrection (Rev 20:6).

5. *The Alternation of Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions*

An additional important aspect of these two narratives is their use of the vertical dimension of apocalyptic; i.e., the connection between earth and heaven that is found in them. The situation with respect to this is relatively straightforward in Rev 12. Although there is reference to John's seeing signs in heaven at the beginning of this chapter, it soon becomes evident that these signs portray earthly events—the attack of the devil upon the church in the world. Then, in the central section of the chapter, the scene shifts to heaven, to the war between Michael and the dragon. Finally, the latter portion of the chapter becomes quite emphatic that the scene for this warfare has shifted back to earth. Thus, Rev 12 begins with a scene on earth, shifts to a scene in heaven, and concludes with another scene on earth. This A:B:A pattern of the vertical dimension in this chapter follows that same A:B:A pattern also utilized for the literary structure and theological themes, as noted earlier.

The matter of the vertical dimension in Rev 20 is more complex. First, there is the question of the location of the "pit," "prison," "abyss," to which the devil is confined during the millennium. Since he is released from this prison to work with his hosts on earth again, it seems reasonable to conclude that this location of confinement, whatever its precise nature, should be thought

of as closely connected with the earth in one way or another. The final episode in this narrative also takes place on earth (Rev 20:7-10).

That leaves for examination the larger question of where the action of Rev 20:4-6 is to take place. Since they identify the events of the Christian era with those of the millennium, some amillennial interpreters see these events in Rev 20:4-6 as occurring in heaven in correspondence with the course of spiritual events on earth throughout this era.⁹ Among premillennial interpreters in general, there has been a tendency to locate the events of Rev 20:4-6 on earth;¹⁰ but a minority view among premillennial interpreters sees these events as occurring in heaven.¹¹ To the extent to which similar patterns exist for the vertical dimension between the structurally parallel passages in Rev 12 and 20, to that extent the suggestion that the events of Rev 20:4-6 have a heavenly setting receives some further support. Thus, the movement in Rev 20:1-10 is sequentially from earthly (vss. 1-3), to heavenly (vss. 4-6), to earthly again (vss. 7-10).

The three patterns—those of literary structure, thematic development, and vertical dimension—can now be correlated with each other through the use of another outline:

⁹It is common among present-day amillennial interpreters to locate Rev. 20:1-3 in heaven and 20:4-6 on earth, both spanning the Christian era. For a representative example of this, see A. Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in R. G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1977), p. 165. The first known statement of an amillennial position in early Christian literature comes from Augustine, who changed his own stance from premillennialism to amillennialism and set forth his amillennial views in *The Kingdom of God*, book 20.

¹⁰For representative examples of the "historic premillennial" position see G. E. Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism" in Clouse, p. 17; and for a representative example of the dispensational position, see H. A. Hoyt, "Dispensational Premillennialism," in Clouse, pp. 91-92. Though both of these positions hold to an earthly millennial kingdom, the dispensational position is unique in stating that this is a kingdom for the Jews—in fact, it is supposed to be the kingdom promised to the Jews in the OT, then promised to them again by Christ but rejected by them in NT times, and now finally fulfilled to them during the millennium.

¹¹This position is held by Seventh-day Adventists; and for a representative example, see F. D. Nichol, ed. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 (Washington, D.C., 1957): 886.

Rev 12			Rev 20			
<i>Structure</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Locus</i>		<i>Locus</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Structure</i>
Beginning	Satan's initial attack	Earth	A	Earth	Satan's initial defeat	Beginning
Vss. 1-6						Vss. 1-3
Middle	Satan's heavenly defeat	Heaven	B	[Heaven]	Church victorious	Middle
Vss. 7-12						Vss. 4-6
End	Satan's final attack	Earth	A'	Earth	Satan's final defeat	End
Vss. 13-17						Vss. 7-10

6. *The Final Scene of Revelation 20*

One final scene of Rev 20 remains to be discussed, and that is the Great-White-Throne scene of vss. 11-15. On the basis of its contents, this scene is both connected with and yet separate from, the preceding narrative about the millennium. The "lake of fire," which is mentioned in vss. 14-15 of this scene, has already been referred to previously, in vs. 10, in the third descriptive scene of the millennial narrative. These two references obviously have in view the same "lake of fire." Thus, to put the Great-White-Throne scene in correct chronological order, one would have to insert it between vs. 9a and vs. 9b, because the fire which goes to make up that lake comes down at that point in the narrative.

To some extent, therefore, the final two scenes of this chapter go over the same ground twice. But each of the two scenes has its own major emphasis. The earlier of the two emphasizes the destruction of the devil and his agents, perhaps because the whole narrative of Rev 20 began with him as its subject. Then the closing scene which follows places its emphasis upon God as the judge, who presents his final judgment at this time. This second supplementary scene thus provides a fitting thematic conclusion to the events of the millennium.

This final section of Rev 20, in vss. 11-15, appears also to provide a fitting structural conclusion to this bloc of text. One reason for this can be seen from a comparison with the narrative of Rev 12. The question arises as to whether any corresponding feature can be found there.

In this connection, attention should be called to Rev 11:19. Contrary to the current chapter divisions of the text of the English Bible, this verse belongs with Rev 12, not with what precedes it, as Strand has pointed out.¹² Each of the major lines of prophecy in Revelation is introduced with what Strand has identified as the "Victorious Vision."¹³ Rev 11:19 fits satisfactorily into that category as an introduction to the major line of prophecy presented in Rev 12 through 14. Following this, the next major bloc of prophecy in Revelation includes the seven bowls or plagues and the fall of the impure woman in Rev 16-18, introduced by the Victorious Vision of Rev 15.

The bloc of prophecy which includes the presentation of the millennium begins in Rev 19, introduced by the Victorious Vision of 19:1-8. But this same bloc of prophecy also concludes with a Victorious Vision, that of Rev 20:11-15. This latter Victorious Vision brings the events of the millennium and of salvation history proper to a close. As such, it is especially fitting that it should be added to the end of this narrative.

This concluding material in Rev 20:11-15 balances, in turn, with the Victorious Vision in Rev 11:19 that immediately precedes the narrative of Rev 12. In addition to this structural balance, these two Victorious Visions share some related thematic elements as well. In 11:19 the Ark of the Covenant was seen in God's temple in heaven, and from it issued lightning, thunder, hail, and an earthquake—events that in Revelation are characteristic of God's judgments (cf. 4:5, 8:6, and 16:18). Because of the fact that the glory of God was represented as dwelling over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the OT sanctuary (Exod 25:22; 30:6; Lev 16:2; Num 7:89), that location came to stand for God's earthly throne. In like manner, we may think of God's throne in heaven as associated with the Ark of the Covenant seen by John in the vision of it given to him in Rev 11:19.

These aspects of this scene in Rev 11:19 relate to what was seen in the final Victorious Vision of Rev 20:11-15; namely, God's throne from which he gives judgment. Thus, these two Victorious Visions

¹²Strand, *Interpreting*, pp. 46-47, 48, 51, 52.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 48, 51.

share in common these two themes: God's throne, and the judgment given from it. These alternately balancing scenes have been added to the diagram of the parallel literary structures of Rev 12 and 20 which summarize this study (see Diagram 1 at the end of this article).

7. *Conclusions*

Some concluding observations are now in order on the nature of the literary structures of Rev 12 and 20 and their significance.

1. A distinct form of literary structure has been derived from the text of Rev 12, and that form is followed quite closely in Rev 20. This form consists of a tripartite division of the narrative, in which the central section of the three is in each instance framed by a repetitive *inclusio* that links the first section with the third.

2. The contents of the narratives set in these two frameworks, however, are not identical. Thematically, they are almost reciprocals of each other. Their similarity in form, therefore, should not be pressed to the point of making them identical. The millennial era of Rev 20 is not the same as the era of the church in Rev 12. This pattern is comparable to other chiasmatically parallel patterns in the book (e.g., the trumpets and plagues are similar, but not identical).¹⁴ The relationship here is rather that of two eras, one of which (Rev 20) follows the other (Rev 12).

3. The relatively balanced locations of those two narratives in the overall structure of the book should be noted. Rev 12 is within the final historical series, whereas Rev 20 is within the final eschatological series, if the somewhat different material in chaps. 21-22 is excluded. Moreover, chaps. 12 and 20 are chiasmatic counterparts in a chiasm that reveals the devil's activity in history and then his being judged in the eschatological consummation.

4. A general parallelism between these two passages supports the idea that both of these prophetic narratives span eras. The first section of the tripartite structure of Rev 12 pertains to the beginning of the Christian era; the middle section carries time forward toward the end; and finally, attention is called in the last section to the dragon's wrath with the remnant of the woman's offspring. In

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 46-47.

Rev 20, the first few verses introduce the millennium, then comes the description of the millennium itself, and finally the narrative describes the events at the close of the millennium.

5. Not only are these two parallel passages prophecies about eras, but they both also contain specific time elements relating to the extent of their respective eras. I would suggest that the first time prophecy (in Rev 12) appears to be given in symbolic time, whereas the other (in Rev 20) appears to be given in literal time. There is an intriguing correspondence here with the use of time periods in the Book of Daniel. This matter deserves discussion beyond what can be provided here, and I hope to treat this subject in a later article.

6. Finally, a few theological observations may be made on these two parallel prophecies. Rev 12 and 20 both confirm to us that the ultimate defeat of God's great adversary is assured. The church and its members may yet suffer physically at his hands, but a preliminary victory over him has already been won and thus his ultimate defeat and destruction are certain. The example of the martyrs who have gone before us stands out here, for they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. God will one day reverse this earthly situation, just as the fates of the respective parties shift according to the prophetic transition from Rev 12 to Rev 20. God is the final sovereign judge, and he will ultimately restore his creation and set right the wrongs that have been inflicted upon his earthly servants by their adversary in ages past.

DIAGRAM 1

COMPARATIVE STRUCTURES—REVELATION 12 AND 20

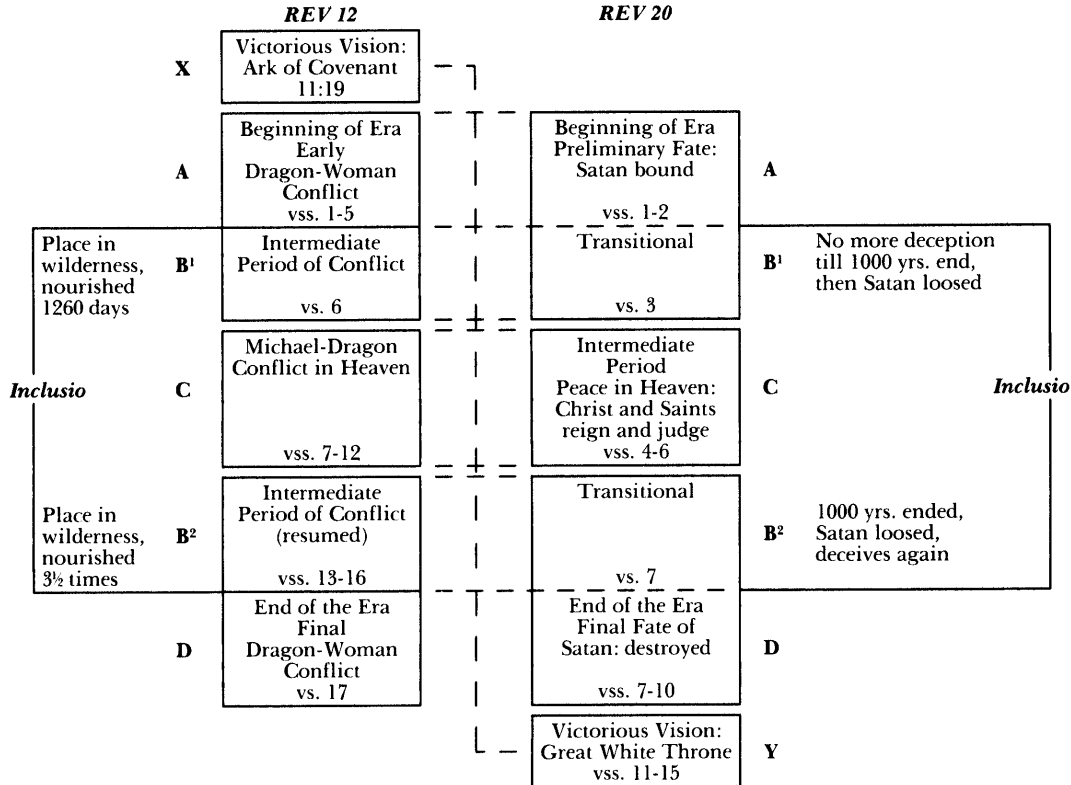


DIAGRAM 2

THE EVIL HIERARCHY INTRODUCED AND JUDGED
 (only the first verse of multi-verse references is given)

A. Dragon (12:3)

B. Sea-Beast (13:1)

C. Earth-Beast = False Prophet (13:11)

D. Babylon (14:8)

E. Beast-Worshippers (14:9)

E'. Beast-Worshippers (16:2)

D'. Babylon (16:19)

C'. Earth-Beast = False Prophet (19:20)

B'. Sea-Beast (19:20)

A'. Dragon (20:2)

Note to Diagram 2: This diagram is from Kenneth A. Strand, "Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 16 (1978): 403. For further information concerning it, see Strand's notes to it on p. 403 and his general discussion on p. 402.