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THE THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE OF REVELATION
IN LIGHT OF SELECTED APOCALYPTIC SYMBOLS



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BY
DESMOND JOHN STEYN

THE THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE OF REVELATION IN LIGHT OF
SELECTED APOCALYPTIC SYMBOLS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Desmond John Steyn

May 1986

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The many divergent interpretations of the book of Revelation seem to create a problem concerning the understanding and appreciation of it. Many Christians are disturbed at their seeming inability to understand Revelation, and skeptics use this evidence in order to attack the validity of the Bible.

The object of the study, therefore, was to address this problem. It was decided that one particular approach be used. This included the identification and study of symbols found in Jewish apocalyptic literature that were in many ways similar to selected symbols found in Revelation, the uncovering of the essential message of these Jewish apocalyptic symbols, and the interpretation of Revelation in light of these symbolic passages.

This approach proceeds through a four-level methodology. The first level included a study of apocalyptic literature in general. Since Revelation is in many ways similar to Jewish apocalyptic literature, the study of this literature sheds light on and broadens the horizon with regard to the essential understanding of Revelation.

The second level consisted of researching the specific symbols in the Jewish apocalyptic literature which correspond to selected symbols in Revelation. Three symbols were chosen: The beast of Revelation 13:1ff.; the "time, times, and half a time" of Revelation 12:14, and related symbols; and the final conflict, the eschatological event of Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-3, 9-15; 16:12-16; 12:7-17. Many related

Jewish apocalyptic symbols were discovered and their meanings were collected.

The third level consisted of the interpretation of Revelation in light of the meanings of the selected Jewish apocalyptic symbols. This resulted in the conclusion that the beast referred to Rome as a literal persecuting power. The symbol of the "time, times, and half a time" referred to a combination of the physical and spiritual "state of affairs" which existed during the entire Christian dispensation. The final conflict symbolized the spiritual state of mankind as a result of the coming of the Messiah. All of this led to the combined conclusion that while the writer of Revelation was referring to the literal persecuting power of Rome, he was speaking about timeless spiritual principles that can be applied to all ages between the first and second comings of Christ.

The fourth level consisted of comparing these conclusions to the existing methods of interpreting Revelation. It became apparent that the interpretations which combine, in one way or another, the preterist and philosophy of history views, were the most acceptable, while the remaining views were to be treated with caution.

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A Thesis

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The Faculty of the Graduate School

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of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Desmond John Steyn

May 1986

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS


Dean of the Graduate School

April 10, 1986
Date

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Chairman

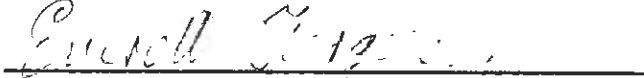




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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation¹ is a profoundly unique literary phenomenon which has established its authoritative place in the collection of inspired writings commonly called the New Testament Canon.² Because of its intriguing but difficult style and message, it has created varying reactions, some of which are so extreme that they cannot be ignored.

One reaction to the book of Revelation is that it is better left alone. Those who advocate this attitude, do so because they are alarmed at the wildly divergent interpretations that exist. They claim that if so many great scholars arrive at so many different interpretations, which interpretation, if any, is to be believed. Henry Barclay Swete admits: "To comment on this great prophecy is a harder task than to comment on a Gospel, and he who undertakes it exposes himself to the charge of presumption."³

¹The book of Revelation is also referred to as the "Apocalypse."

²The word "canon" is a transliteration of the Greek word κανών *kanon*, which in turn is borrowed from the Hebrew word קֶנֶה *kaneh*. This describes a reed or measuring rod, which implies a rule or comparison. During the first few centuries A.D. the books which came to be part of the New Testament were subjected to a series of tests and rules. Those that passed the tests were considered inspired and were accepted in the group of writings which came to be known as the Canon of the New Testament. International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Canon of the Old Testament," by George L. Robinson. Since the book of Revelation is included in this canon, it is to be regarded as inspired and therefore worthy of consideration.

³Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1907), p.x.

On the other hand, many individuals have been attracted to the book of Revelation because of its uniqueness and mysteriousness. As a result, many commentaries have been produced. Jim McGuiggan sums it all up when he says of Revelation:

And don't tell me it is a simple book to understand for that is clearly an overstatement. Perhaps for some of you professional students and teachers with a lot of time on your hands the book has become simple, but it isn't for the rest of us. And when I look at the mass of commentaries written on the book and see how they differ often and widely, I wonder if it is really simple for anyone.⁴

With these comments in mind, it would seem possible then, that between the Bible student and the Apocalypse, a "love-hate" relationship could exist. The student would love the Revelation because of its place in the New Testament Canon and because of its fundamental message of comfort and hope.⁵ Yet on the other hand, the seemingly illusive symbolism that abounds in the book could leave the student quite apprehensive and frustrated. Leon Morris makes a valid statement in this regard:

We recognize that it is a part of the Canon of Scripture and therefore we accord it formal recognition. But we remain uneasy and we do not make use of it. We turn our backs on its mysteries and luxuriate in John's Gospel or the Epistle to the Romans.⁶

⁴Jim McGuiggan, The Book of Revelation (Lubbock, Texas: Montex Publishing Company, 1978), p. 12.

⁵Although many scholars may be divided on the specific meanings of the symbols, they almost all agree on the basic message of Revelation, which emphasizes comfort and hope in times of hardship.

⁶Leon Morris, Revelation, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Great Britain: Staples Printers Rochester Ltd. at the Stanhope Press, 1969), p. 15.

Statement of the Problem: The
Divergent Interpretations

It takes no effort to conclude that the book of Revelation, with all of its highly figurative and symbolic language, has become the platform for a wide variety of interpretations. The problem that exists lies in the overabundance of the interpretations of the symbols of Revelation and the resulting confusion. This fact is even acknowledged when one considers the historical development of the interpretation of Revelation.⁷

In one way or another, these historical systems of interpreting Revelation have survived until the present day. Many noteworthy

⁷The historical development of the interpretation of Revelation is discussed at length by Andre Fueillet, The Apocalypse, trans. T. E. Crane (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1964), pp.11-21, John M. Court, Myth and History in the Book of Revelation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), pp. 1-19, and R. H. Charles, Studies in the Apocalypse, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), pp. 1-78. Following is a brief outline of the historical development of the interpretation of Revelation, based upon a combination of the material gleaned from Fueillet, Court, and Charles, who make mention of the many individuals and interpretations: The Chiliast school, originating with Justin Martyr (d.167), Tertullian (d.220), and others who believed in the doctrine of the Millennium. Irenaeus (d.200), who originated the recapitulation view. Hippolytus (d.235), who advocated a combination of Chiliasm, Contemporary-Historical, and Recapitulationism. Clement of Alexandria (d.220) and Origen (d.254), who advocated an arbitrary spiritual or allegorical method of interpretation which came to be known as the "Alexandrian" school. Tychonius the Donatist, at the close of the fourth century, who combined the spiritualizing and the recapitulation methods. Joachim of Floris (d.1195), who combined chiliasm and recapitulationism. Joachim also introduced the Church-Historical method, fixing times and historical events to certain chapters in the Revelation. This was developed by Petrus Aureolus (d.1317), Nicolous of Lyra (d.1329), and Martin Luther (d.1534), who even combined it with a strong anti-papal polemic. Many other views and combinations of views such as the eschatological and astronomical methods came into consideration. One of the most noteworthy of these later views was the contemporary-historical method which developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this system, the interpreter attempted to see the Revelation in the historical, political, and religious situation in which it was written. It is interesting to note that in one form or another, these early interpretations have survived to the present day.

contemporary scholars hold in one form or another these views. The most common and more popular views that are still being taught today will be discussed.

The Futurist Method

This view sees Revelation as describing events which are all future, not only to the writer of the Apocalypse, but also in relation to this present church age. With regard to the actual time in which this description of future events is to take place, Ray Summers says:

The futurists hold that the events from chapters 4 to 19 are to take place within the brief space of seven years. This period of tribulation is interpreted to be the seventieth week, mentioned in the familiar prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, which seventieth week they regard to be separated by many centuries from the other sixty-nine and to come in at the close of the Christian Era.⁸

A group of futurists called Dispensationalists⁹ generally believe that the seventieth week will come within the present generation, which will be seen in the coming of Christ to set up His kingdom.¹⁰

⁸Ray Summers, Worthy Is The Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p.28.

⁹Dispensationalism was initiated in the nineteenth century by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), the founder of the Plymouth Brethren. His devoted follower, Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921), propagated this doctrine in his special edition of the Bible with footnotes. It consequently became a very popular doctrine. The basic teaching of this doctrine states that no prophecy of the Old Testament refers to the establishment of the church, only to the kingdom. Christ came and attempted to establish the kingdom, only to be rejected by the Jews. He was then forced to leave the church in its place, with a promise to establish the kingdom at a later date, when the temple would be rebuilt, the literal reign from the throne of David would take place, and the reinstatement of animal sacrifices, circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the Levitical priesthood would be restored. William E. Cox, An Examination of Dispensationalism (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980), pp. 6, 13, 19, 30, 39.

¹⁰Harold Hazelip, "Revelation 20 and the Millinim," Restoration Quarterly 18 (1975): 230.

One of these contemporary Dispensationalists, Hal Lindsey, even goes so far as to suggest that seventieth week will begin around 1988.¹¹

The futurists also tend to interpret everything in Revelation literally. Hardly anything is symbolic. E. B. Elliott gives this description: "The Israel depicted in it being the literal Israel; the days in the chronological periods literal days; and the Antichrist, or Apocalyptic Beast under his last head, a personal infidel Antichrist. . ."¹²

Since the awesome judgments of the seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath have never literally taken place, the futurist must therefore place them in a period to come. Often accompanying this is the future literal reign of Christ on earth for one-thousand years. This particular doctrine of the reign of Christ is called millenarianism.¹³

¹¹Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1977) p. 161.

¹²E. B. Elliott, Horae Apocalypticae, vol. 4 (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1866), p. 507.

¹³Summers, Worthy Is The Lamb, p. 29, makes the observation that not all futurists are millenarian. It has been observed however, that millenarian is generally a futurist, although he may not necessarily see the entire book of Revelation as such. Dispensationalists, Premillennialists, and Chiliasts, although they have some differences of opinion, are all millenarians, in that they all believe in the literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. Loraine Boettner (The Millennium [Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957, pp. 139-141]) observes that this millennial reign will take place on earth after the second coming of Christ but before the end of the world. Boettner also notices that the major difference of opinion between the Chiliast and the Dispensationalist is that the Chiliast believes that "the Christians who constitute the church and go through the Tribulation and are exposed to its afflictions, at the end of which Christ comes . . . while Dispensationalism, on the other hand, holds that the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation, that Christ may come at any moment without warning signs, that at His coming the righteous . . . are caught away in a secret Rapture to meet the Lord in the air, where they remain for a period of seven years. During this time the Antichrist brings upon the earthly inhabitants the tribulation described in Revelation 4-19.

These then are the essential teachings of the futurist method of interpreting the book of Revelation. There is no doubt that this has become an extremely popular view, having gained a large following and a massive amount of exposure through books, television, and movies. Harold Hazelip has given it the appropriate title of "Rapture Fever," and makes mention of the many works produced in relation to this doctrine.¹⁴

This view tends to have many inconsistencies and doctrinal irregularities, but because of its overwhelming popularity, it cannot be ignored.

The Philosophy of History Method

This view holds that Revelation teaches great theological and ethical principles, but does not refer to any specific historical event or situation.¹⁵ William Milligan, in his consideration of this view, says:

While the Apocalypse thus embraces the whole period of the Christian Dispensation, it sets before us within this period the action of great principles and not special incidents; we are not to look in the Apocalypse for special events, but for an exhibition of the principles which govern the history both of the world and the Church.¹⁶

Therefore, with regard to the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls, the Idealist holds that they refer to forces or tendencies which could be fulfilled over and over as these forces are repeated in history. In other words, the seals, trumpets, and bowls each represent the entire

¹⁴Hazelip, p. 229.

¹⁵Morris, p. 18, refers to this method as the "idealist" view.

¹⁶William Milligan, The Revelation of St. John (London: MacMillan and Company, 1886), pp. 153-154.

course of history, covering the same territory only from a different aspect.¹⁷

John M. Court sees the Idealist method as one that requires extensive use of allegory, typology, and figurative interpretations.¹⁸ While some scholars feel that this view opens Revelation up too much to arbitrariness, others feel that it still has meaning to all situations, including the situation in which the early Christians found themselves, especially since it helps one to recognize the hand of God in history. Summers elaborates on this when he says that the "goal toward which all history is moving is the complete triumph of the cause of God among the affairs of men."¹⁹

It seems quite reasonable then, that the Revelation should apply to all ages. If it did not, then for much of the time during the course of history, it would be an obsolete letter.

The idealist view is, therefore, if followed exclusively, a non-committal approach which is generally not objectionable to most other views. Not many would deny that Revelation teaches great theological and ethical principles. But on the other hand, many would assert that Revelation does teach more than just that.

The Preterist Method

This method of interpretation holds that the chief prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled between the destruction of Jerusalem and the

¹⁷Summers, pp. 141-142.

¹⁸Court, p. 4.

¹⁹Summers, p. 43.

fall of the Roman Empire, with an emphasis on the Domitianic reign.²⁰

This view is aptly described by the use of the word "preterist" which is taken from the Latin word praeter, meaning past or beyond.²¹

Within the Preterist school, two divisions exist. Albertus Pieters describes them as the right wing and the left wing preterists.²² The left wing group is so named because of their ultra-liberal approach which is not in keeping with generally accepted biblical doctrine such as the inspiration of Revelation. The right wing preterist, on the other hand, accepts the inspiration of Revelation.

Preterists see everything in Revelation as having occurred, from today's standpoint, in the past. Only the final judgment and the perfected state of mankind is still to take place.²³ In relation to the past, they seek to find the historical events which surrounded and affected the early Christians. In so doing, they find Revelation meaningful to those early Christians. Ray Summers observes that:

²⁰Isbon T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1919), pp. 334-335.

²¹Summers, p. 43. This view is also called the contemporary-historical method. Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, The new International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 41.

²²Albertus Pieters, Studies in the Revelation of St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), pp. 40-43, describes the left wing preterist as the liberal theologian who rejects the inspiration of Revelation, and who maintains that it is no more valuable than any other apocalyptic writing. He also does not attempt to find events described in Revelation that are fulfilled in the life of the church, and they scoff at John's attempt to "prophecy" the events described in Revelation. On the other hand, the conservative right wing preterist accepts the inspiration of Revelation.

²³The right wing preterist maintains that chapters 1 to 19 of Revelation refers to things past, while chapters 20 to 22 refers to the final advent, where all mankind and not just Rome, is ushered into the judgment scene of God.

The primary purpose of the book was to "reveal" to the persecuted Christians the nearness of Christ and the certainty of a speedy victory of their cause over the imperial policies of Rome.²⁴

Some preterists suggest that although Revelation was written for the early Christians, it has an application for Christians today in that God is always in control.²⁵

Robert H. Mounce sees Revelation as more than a message primarily to the Christians of John's day. In order to uphold this assertion, he makes this statement:

It is difficult to believe that John envisioned anything less than the complete overthrow of Satan, the final destruction of evil, and the eternal reign of God. If this is not to be, then either the Seer was essentially wrong in the major thrust of his message or his work was so hopelessly ambiguous that its first recipients were all led astray.²⁶

It can therefore be concluded that although the Preterist view performs an important task in that it seeks to establish the background in which the Revelation was written, its general approach can also include a message for all ages.

The Continuous-Historical Method

Also called the Historicist view, this method attempts to take seriously the fact that John calls the Revelation a "prophecy" in chapter one verse three. It maintains that the Revelation embraces important conditions and movements in the history of the world and the church from the writer's age to the present time.²⁷ This, the

²⁴Summers, p. 45.

²⁵Ibid. This also conforms to the general application of the entire New Testament.

²⁶Mounce, p. 42.

²⁷Beckwith, p. 335.

Historicist believes, is the unfolding of the prophecy which includes the Roman Empire and its persecution of Christians, the invasion of the barbarians including the Goths, Vandals, Huns, Lombards, the Mohammedan invasions, the Turkish invasions, the rise of papal power, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the effect of individual leaders such as Charlemagne, Garibaldi, and Mussolini, and the ultimate fall of the papacy. This would all finally terminate in the great consummation recorded in Revelation 20-22.²⁸

While this method of interpretation is extremely interesting, it seems to leave itself wide open to much criticism. It is entirely out of touch with the situation of the Christians to whom it was originally given.²⁹ It causes one to assign symbols arbitrarily to historical events.³⁰ It places too much emphasis on the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy.³¹ Merrill C. Tenney sums this all up when he says of the continuous historicist:

He is consequently compelled to stretch the symbolism in successive stages over the remaining period of history until Christ's return, and he is forced to make arbitrary identification of symbols with definite events. The result is a framework of

²⁸This outline of historical events was taken from a combination of the events mentioned by Mounce, p. 42; Summers, pp. 36-37; Henry H. Halley, Bible Handbook, 24th ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), pp. 683-740; and Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, ed. Ingram Cobbin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1962), pp. 1536-1538.

²⁹Summers, p. 38, also suggests that a suffering Christian in the first century would have found no comfort in being told of events that were to happen in the distant future.

³⁰For a comprehensive discussion on the arbitrary assigning of symbols to historical events, see Pieters, pp. 48-49.

³¹Summers, p. 38.

guesses on which no two independent historicists agree completely, and which involves making the identification on very uncertain clues.³²

The Historical-Background Method

This view, mentioned by Ray Summers, is essentially a combination of the right wing preterist and philosophy of history methods.³³ It takes into account the logical deduction that Revelation was written primarily for the purpose of comforting Christians in the early centuries (preterist), but that the timeless principles can be applied to all ages and situations in which Christians find themselves (philosophy of history). Summers prefers to keep it separate from the preterist method because of the undesirable association of the left wing preterist school.³⁴ He goes on to say:

Therefore, it appears wise to treat the historical-background method as a separate method of interpretation rather than to view it as one division of another division of the preterist method. It deserves more recognition than that type of treatment would give to it.³⁵

It is interesting to notice that some exponents of the preterist and contemporary-historical methods hint at the approach mentioned by Summers, even though they do not actually admit to embracing (to a greater or lesser degree) the philosophy of history method. For example, R. H. Charles, a preterist, makes this statement concerning his view:

³²Merrill C. Tenney, Interpreting Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), pp. 144-145.

³³Summers, pp. 45-46.

³⁴Ibid., p. 45.

³⁵Ibid., p. 46.

This method rightly presupposes that the visions of our author relate to contemporary events and to future events so far as they arise out of them . . . The Apocalypse is not to be treated as an allegory, but to be interpreted in reference to definite concrete kingdoms, powers, events, and expectations. But, though the visions of our author related to contemporary events, they are not limited to these. For . . . no great prophecy receives its full and final fulfillment in any single event or series of events. In fact, it may not be fulfilled at all in regard to the object against which it was primarily delivered by the prophet or seer. But if it is the expression of a great moral and spiritual truth, it will of a surety be fulfilled at sundry times and in divers manners and in varying degrees of completeness in the history of the world.³⁶

Upon consideration of this statement, it seems that even a noteworthy scholar such as R. H. Charles would accept tenets of the historical-background method.

This method is difficult to fault because of its adoption of the philosophy of history view which is a low-key, non-committal approach, and its adoption of the preterist view which is a noteworthy approach because of its intention of establishing the background of the Revelation. Perhaps the only criticism that can be applied to this view is that it, like the preterist view, may find difficulty in relating the symbols of Revelation to specific events in the early centuries. On the other hand, it does not necessarily place too much emphasis on these specific historical events because of its willingness to apply the symbols to any age.

The Recapitulation Method

This method is also called Progressive Parallelism. Although it is not an entirely different method of interpretation from some of the other more common views, it does deserve to be mentioned as a separate

³⁶R. H. Charles, The Revelation of St. John, vol. 1, The International Critical Commentary, eds. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920), p. clxxxiii.

method because of its unique presentation. It takes into account the fact that Revelation must be interpreted in the light of contemporaneous events. William Hendriksen, a recapitulationist, upholds this view when he states in his seventh proposition that: "The Apocalypse Is Rooted In Contemporaneous Events and Circumstances. Its Symbols Should Be Interpreted in the Light of Conditions Which Prevailed When the Book Was Written."³⁷ This is a similar methodology to the Preterist view. At the same time it believes that the symbols convey principles which are applicable to all times and situations. In connection with this principle, William Hendriksen says in his sixth proposition:

The Seals, Trumpets, Bowls of Wrath and Similar Symbols Refer Not to Specific Events, Particular Happenings, Details of History, But to Principles - of Human Conduct and of Divine Moral Government - That Are Operating Throughout the History of the World; Especially, Throughout the New Dispensation.³⁸

This assertion is a similar methodology to the Philosophy of History view.

Thus, in its own combination of the Preterist and Philosophy of History views, it seems to be in some ways, similar to Summers' Historical-Background method which also combines in one way or another, the Preterist and Philosophy of History views.

The principle that sets this method apart from the others however, is seen in William Hendriksen's first proposition which states: "The Book of Revelation consists of seven sections. They are parallel: each

³⁷William Hendriksen, More Than Conquerors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 58.

³⁸Ibid., p. 56.

spans the entire new dispensation, from the first to the second coming of Christ."³⁹

Hence the name "Recapitulationist." It recapitulates the entire Christian dispensation seven times, but each time it covers the dispensation, it does so in a different way, emphasizing different aspects each time.⁴⁰

James B. Coffman studied this view and adopted it. He even went so far as to say:

We believe that this is the true and correct method of understanding Revelation, and dare to predict that the method will be far more widely received in the future than at present. Already, there are many great minds, notably those of Lenski and Plummer who accept the principle of parallelism, without wholeheartedly developing it, as did Hendriksen.⁴¹

Conclusion

While some views seem to make sense to some individuals, to others they do not.⁴² It must be conceded, however, that some scholars do

³⁹Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 48, produces a diagram which explains the different aspects which are emphasized each time. For example, chapters one to three emphasize the church in the world; chapters four to seven emphasize the suffering, persecuted church; chapters eight to eleven emphasize the avenged, protected, victorious church; chapters twelve to fourteen emphasize the opposition of Christ by the dragon; chapters fifteen and sixteen emphasize the final wrath upon the impenitent; chapters seventeen to nineteen emphasize the fall of Babylon and the Beasts; and chapters twenty to twenty-two emphasize the dragon's doom, and the victory of Christ and the church. It must also be noted that this system of recapitulation is somewhat different from the method originated by Irenaeus who was essentially a Chiliast, holding to the literal thousand year reign. Charles, Studies in the Apocalypse, p. 9.

⁴¹James B. Coffman, Commentary on Revelation (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1979), p. 10.

⁴²Many reasons are given for this problem. One of the major reasons is that different denominational doctrines sometimes require specific views in order to uphold their specific doctrines. This sometimes leads to confusion. For example, a view held by a Jehovah's

attempt to eliminate the more radical views which create confusion. Only much research and debate will arrive at a more acceptable, and generally recognized interpretation of Revelation.

In the meantime, however, the many conflicting methods only serve to create a misunderstanding of the scriptures, a dissension among many religious individuals, and a loss of faith in the Bible by many who are adversely affected by these divergent interpretations. As a result, many people choose to ignore the wonderful book of Revelation, and consequently miss out on the powerful messages of hope and victory contained therein. It also gives the skeptics the ammunition they need in their claims that the Bible is not inspired.

The divergence of interpretations is a problem!

Purpose of the Study

While the book of Revelation contains an abundance of visions and mystical symbols, one must realize that the mere existence of these symbols is not the cause of the present confusion resulting in the diversity of interpretations. Rather, the individual's treatment and application of these symbols is the cause of confusion.⁴³

Since the language contained in Revelation is typically Apocalyptic, the major purpose of this study will be to establish the nature and purpose of Apocalyptic literature, and then to show how this is used by John to establish the theological purpose and message of the

Witness would be quite foreign to a Roman Catholic.

⁴³The visions of Revelation are applied either literally, symbolically to specific events, or philosophically. The various views of interpretation give credence to this.

symbols found in Revelation.⁴⁴ This approach takes into account the fact that in order to eliminate the symptoms, which are the divergent views, the cause must be dealt with and rectified. The different interpretations are merely the symptoms, while the arbitrary treatment and application of Apocalyptic could well be the cause of the confusion.

It will also be kept in mind that the message of Revelation must of necessity conform to Biblical doctrine, and must fit into an acceptable Biblical framework.⁴⁵

Importance of the Study

It takes no effort to conclude that a refining process must take place in order to establish which interpretations are theologically sound and which are not. It is obvious that since many of the views are so different, some of them at least must be Biblically unsound, and therefore dangerous. As G. B. Caird observes:

From the time of the millenarian Papias to the present day it has been the paradise of fanatics and sectarians, each using it to justify his own peculiar doctrine and so adding to the misgivings of the orthodox.⁴⁶

⁴⁴In many instances, the symbols in Revelation allude to specific symbols found in Old Testament and non-canonical apocalyptic literature.

⁴⁵A Biblical framework consists of the Bible's doctrines and teachings. While it is possible to misinterpret and misunderstand some of these great Biblical doctrines and teachings, it is also possible to interpret them correctly and to understand them. Whenever any of the Bible's doctrines contradict each other, a mistake has been made in the interpretation or understanding of at least one of them. The same principle applies to the interpretation of Revelation and the doctrines found therein. If an interpretation of Revelation does not conform to the established and accepted Biblical doctrines, then it is possible that Revelation has been misinterpreted and must therefore be re-interpreted. This principle can also be applied in reverse, where an acceptable interpretation of Revelation can help in the understanding of some of the Bible's doctrines and teachings.

⁴⁶G. B. Caird, A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), p. 2.

The primary importance of this study will be found in an attempt to discover the most theologically sound interpretation of Revelation through the study and application of Apocalyptic symbols. It is hoped that this will in some way contribute to the ultimate acceptance of a common interpretation.

While this may sound very idealistic, there is no harm in researching and debating the pertinent issues in order to arrive at a commonly shared and doctrinally sound viewpoint. It is possible to find the correct interpretation. Admittedly, it may be difficult to find the exact answer to every single detail, but the general interpretation at least can be arrived at. G. B. Caird, in his consideration of this topic, concludes that "John was not compiling a week-end problem book. Whatever else he may have intended, he cannot have set out to mystify."⁴⁷ Add to this the fact that "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (I Cor. 14:33), and it must be concluded that a common interpretation of Revelation is possible.

Methodology

This study will proceed through four levels.

First Level

The first level requires a study concerning Apocalyptic literature in general.⁴⁸ This will include a study of its background, rise,

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁸ This study will not necessarily take into account any specific writing or book at this stage, but will simply consider the fundamental principles of apocalyptic literature. This will include the apocalyptic evidence found in the Old Testament, New Testament, Apocrypha, and Pseudepigrapha.

influence, popularity, characteristics, and theological message and purpose.

There is no doubt that Apocalyptic literature has made an important impact on Christian doctrine and theology. As Leon Morris states in his observation on the views of Kasemann and Freedman:

Kasemann sees Apocalyptic as the "mother" of Christian theology, Freedman as the "controlling factor" ⁴⁹ in New Testament literature. Both ascribe to it a dominating role.

Hence the need to study Apocalyptic literature. The information derived from this study will be invaluable in providing a general knowledge concerning this important type of literature. It will then be used as a platform from which the more detailed and specific studies will be carried out.

Second Level

The second level of study will consist of research into selected symbols in the Old Testament, as well as symbols found in non-canonical Apocalyptic literature, which correspond to selected symbols in Revelation. Special care will be taken to make sure that these symbols are typically apocalyptic, and that they compare very closely to the selected symbols found in Revelation.

Once this is achieved, a study of the relevant symbols will be undertaken in order to arrive at the intended theological significance and meaning. This study will of necessity include an examination of the background in which each symbol was written. It will also include, whenever necessary, an examination of specific words and anything else that would contribute to the understanding of its meaning.

⁴⁹Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 9.

Third Level

The third level will consist of an examination of the application of these symbols in Revelation. It will see whether John used these symbols, or at least the message contained therein. This will be necessary because of the differences of interpretation with regard to the meanings of the symbols of Revelation. Richard Soulen makes the following statement in relation to this topic:

The hermeneutic problem, broadly speaking, is the problem of interpretation; it arises whenever meaning is in doubt. The history of hermeneutic reflection is therefore the history of the deepening perception of the problem of meaning . . . The hermeneutical task, therefore, is that of discerning and transferring meaning from one time and place to another.⁵⁰

This statement makes sense when one realizes that the problem of interpreting the meaning of Revelation exists because it is difficult for contemporary scholars to understand and appreciate fully the message that was written in the first century A.D.⁵¹ Hence the need for the application of the message of apocalyptic literature as a possible means of interpreting Revelation.

In connection with this, Richard Soulen states that: "The hermeneutic principle, or principle of interpretation, may be loosely defined as the key by which the interpreter gets into the circle of

⁵⁰Richard N. Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), p. 75.

⁵¹G. B. Caird, "On Deciphering the Book of Revelation," Expository Times 74 (1962-1963):82, expounds upon this problem by asserting that contemporary critics often make the mistake of attributing to a creative writer an understanding equal to their own. He illustrates this point by saying, "It is said that a German professor, lecturing on "As You Like It," emended the text of the exiled duke's speech, "Books in the running brooks, sermons in stones"? No! What the poet must have written was: "Stones in the running brooks, sermons in books." It is quite possible that many scholars have treated Revelation in the same way.

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understanding."⁵² This key or principle by which the process of understanding is initiated can be called a pre-understanding.⁵³

The intention of this third level, therefore, will be to use the understanding of pertinent Apocalyptic symbols as the key by which to understand the related symbols found in Revelation. It is hoped that this method will help in understanding the theological message of Revelation as seen in selected Apocalyptic symbols.

Fourth Level

The fourth level will consist of taking the theological message of Revelation (which will have been arrived at in the third level methodology) and comparing it to each of the methods of interpretation. Care will also be taken to ensure that the outcome fits into an acceptable biblical framework. By so doing, it is hoped that the unacceptable views of interpretation will be exposed, and the acceptable view or views will be strengthened.⁵⁴

Definition of Terms

Apocalyptic

The word "apocalypse" is a transliteration of the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις, which appears in the first verse of the book of Revelation. The word ἀποκάλυψις means "uncovering," "unveiling," "revealing," being derived from the preposition ἀπό "from" and the

⁵²Soulen, p. 76.

⁵³Ibid. A detailed discussion on the hermeneutical task and principle will take place under the heading "Hermeneutic" below.

⁵⁴For a detailed chart illustrating the methodology of this thesis, please consult appendix A.

verb καλύπτω "to cover."⁵⁵ Hence the beginning of Revelation refers to the unveiling or revealing of the message of Jesus to John.⁵⁶

Modern scholars have taken the word "apocalypse" in its generic sense, and have applied the adjective "apocalyptic" to all writings, whether Jewish or Christian, which possess similar characteristics to the book of Revelation.⁵⁷

Apocrypha

The word "apocrypha" is a transliteration of the Greek word ἀπόκρυφος . It is derived from the preposition ἀπό "from" and the verb κρυπτός which means "to hide," "conceal," "to withhold from sight or knowledge."⁵⁸ Thomas W. Davies describes it as an adjective in the neuter plural, denoting strictly "things hidden" or "concealed." He adds that it came to signify what is obscure, recondite, and hard to understand, and that the term "apocrypha" was used synonymously with the term "esoteric," which conveyed the idea of being understood by only a select few.⁵⁹

In early Christian usage, the word "apocrypha" was also applied to those Jewish and Christian writings which are now called "Apocalyptic."

⁵⁵Wigram, Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers, n.d.), p. 42.

⁵⁶The title "Revelation" is the translation of the title "Apocalypse" given to the book on the basis of the word ἀποκαλυψις .

⁵⁷Beckwith, p. 168.

⁵⁸Wigram, p. 43.

⁵⁹The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "Apocrypha," by Thomas Witton Davies. This article presents a good historical survey of the use of the term "apocrypha." Davies also makes mention of Clement of Alexandria (d. 220) who was probably the earliest Greek writer to use the words ἀπόκρυφα and ἑσωτερικά synonymously.

In modern times however, the word "apocrypha" is used by Protestants to denote the collection of noncanonical religious writings found in the Septuagint and Vulgate.⁶⁰ Protestants consider these works to be uninspired and therefore uncanonical, while the Roman Catholic Church accepts them as authoritative.⁶¹ The Catholic usage of the term "apocrypha" denotes that which is noncanonical, of doubtful authority, or spurious.⁶² In an interesting article, Archibald Alexander lists ten important considerations in describing what is apocryphal and what is not. These considerations include style, internal contradictions, contradictions to historical fact, and such like.⁶³

Some of these apocryphal writings contain the characteristics of apocalyptic literature and therefore will be consulted in the course of this study.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Soulen, pp. 19-20. He also mentions the fact that there are Old Testament and New Testament Apocrypha. The Old Testament Apocrypha found in the Septuagint and Vulgate include Tobit, Judith, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach, Baruch, The Prayer of Azariah, The Song of the Three Young Men, The History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, First and Second Maccabees, First Esdras, Second Esdras, The Prayer of Manasseh. There are also many other works which are considered apocryphal, including the many so-called New Testament Apocrypha. Pieters, pp. 25-26, mentions that the Old Testament Apocrypha were written during the period of intertestamental history, while the New Testament Apocrypha were written during the second and third centuries A.D., in obvious imitation of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

⁶²A Catholic Dictionary, s.v. "Apocrypha," by Donald Attwater. This article implies that the Roman Catholic Church accepts the fourteen extra books found in the Septuagint and the Vulgate as canonical.

⁶³Archibald Alexander, "Deciding What Does Not Belong in the New Testament," Gospel Guardian 25 (1974): 606. For an excellent discussion on this topic, consult E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. Mc. L. Wilson (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), pp. 21-68.

Pseudepigrapha

The word "pseudepigrapha" comes from the Greek words ψευδής "false," and γραφή "writing."⁶⁴ It therefore means "false writing," or "falsely entitled." Richard Soulen notes that in Protestant tradition since the seventeenth century, the term "Pseudepigrapha" has been used to designate those ancient Jewish and Hellenistic-Jewish writings not in the Old Testament canon or in the Apocrypha. The Pseudepigrapha are often attributed to a patriarch or prophet and are therefore pseudonymous, while others are anonymous. Some are psalms, others are apocalypses, legendary histories, or Wisdom-type literature.⁶⁵

The Pseudepigrapha are also noted for their extensive use of apocalyptic style. In relation to this, D. S. Russell states:

They represent several types of literature, but undoubtedly the most common and the most important is that of apocalyptic. Some of them are apocalypses, properly so called, whilst others, though not predominantly apocalyptic, have quite considerable apocalyptic elements in them. Indeed there are a few, if any which do not come into this category.⁶⁶

During the course of this study, the Pseudigrapha will also be consulted.

⁶⁴Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, eds. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 184, 879.

⁶⁵Soulen, p. 135.

⁶⁶D. S. Russell, Between the Testaments (Philadelphia: The Muhlenburg Press, 1960), p. 85. Russell also lists some of the relevant Pseudepigrapha which includes I Enoch, Jubilees, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Psalms of Solomon, The Assumption of Moses, The Lives of the Prophets, The Martyrdom of Isaiah, and the Sibyline Oracles.

Hermeneutic

Introducing statement

The application of various hermeneutical principles forms an important function in this study. It is therefore necessary to discuss in some detail these applications. This will serve to give an understanding of the approach taken in the methodology of this study.

The word "hermeneutic" is derived from the Greek Hermes, the messenger of the gods and the interpreter of Zeus.⁶⁷ D. R. Dungan explains that: "Every Hermeneus was, therefore, an interpreter, as he was supposed to inherit some of the mystic qualities of this god of philology, this patron of eloquence."⁶⁸

The principles of hermeneutics are an important aspect in the science of the interpretation of the Scriptures.⁶⁹ The Hermeneus is, therefore, the individual who is involved with the application of this particular science.

Some relevant hermeneutical approaches to be used in this study

After undergoing a period of being tested and scrutinized, the principles of the hermeneutical task have become somewhat refined.⁷⁰

⁶⁷D. R. Dungan, Hermeneutics (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 1.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Interpretation," by G. H. Shodde.

⁷⁰Refer to Soulen, pp. 73-74 for an in-depth survey of this process.

These principles have emerged in a system which has been referred to by some scholars as the "New Hermeneutic."⁷¹

Bernard L. Ramm expresses his approval of it by saying that:

The new hermeneutic takes as its task the formation of a theory of interpretation or hermeneutics that is philosophically and theologically more comprehensive than anything heretofore.⁷²

A. C. Thiselton notes: "The key question in the new hermeneutic, then, is how the New Testament may speak to us anew."⁷³

With these observations in mind, the exponents of this hermeneutical system have considered various means by which the Bible can become more relevant to the world of today; Revelation included.

Philosophy

One of these considerations is the idea of a positive relationship between existentialist philosophy and theology.⁷⁴ Braaten develops this approach by saying that:

Theology and preaching need the help of the philosophy of existence in order to open their eyes to the real questions of the man to whom the gospel is addressed. This is clearly an instance of thinking in the pattern of the law/gospel dialectic. This makes room for the notion that philosophy also has a job to do toward a theological hermeneutic.⁷⁵

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Bernard L. Ramm, Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 133-134.

⁷³A. C. Thiselton, The New Hermeneutic, ed. I. H. Marshall, New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 308.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 309.

⁷⁵Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, vol. 3, New Directions in Theology Today (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 144. Exponents of this view include scholars such as Brunner, Tillich, Bultmann, and Ott.

Thiselton seems to uphold Braaten's approach by asserting that hermeneutics cannot be separated from philosophy because it concerns a general theory of understanding. This theory of understanding involves philosophy.⁷⁶

Language

Another important consideration, with regard to the New Hermeneutic, is that language itself is interpretation. Ramm explains this assertion by saying that:

Language is also profoundly existential in character. Whenever a person speaks he is already engaging in hermeneutics for he is interpreting his world. The word itself is thus hermeneutical and existential.⁷⁷

This statement implies that the description of a situation in one context could become meaningless in another. Ernst Fuchs recognizes this problem and claims that in order to overcome it, one must arrive at a common understanding, or empathy of the situation.⁷⁸ Thiselton sums up this approach by saying that: "The hermeneutical task today is to re-create that common world of understanding which is the necessary basis of effective communication of language and appropriation of its truth."⁷⁹

⁷⁶Thiselton, p. 308. This approach seems to make sense in light of the fact that in considering the interpretation of Revelation, it would be logical to take into account the situation in which the recipients of Revelation found themselves, and to realize that the message of Revelation must answer to a real existential concern that they might have had.

⁷⁷Ramm, p. 134. This statement is pertinent in light of the symbolic language of Revelation, which consequently would require interpretation.

⁷⁸Thiselton, p. 311.

⁷⁹Ibid. This concept is illustrated by referring to the language of the home, where a single word or gesture may set in motion a train of events because communication functions on the basis of a common understanding. It is possible that this was the situation that existed among the original recipients of the Revelation. This would mean that

Theology of world history

Yet another consideration, with regard to the New Hermeneutic, is the theory put forward by Wolfhart Pannenberg. He recognizes that the hermeneutical problem is constituted by the fact that a wide gulf exists between the biblical world of thought and that of our time, and believes that the answer to this problem lies in the theology of a Universal world history.⁸⁰ This he believes, is the key to his hermeneutical theory; because the task "is that of finding an overarching perspective that can bring the horizons of the past and present together without obliterating their distinctive characteristics."⁸¹ Braaten sums up this approach by quoting Pannenberg who states:

Thus the present situation may be related to that of early Christianity in terms of that horizon which alone connects both without blurring their differences, namely, the horizon of the historical process. The hermeneutical difference between the traditional texts and our present time would be at once respected and superseded in a concept of the history connecting both, if this history can again be regarded as the work of the Biblical God."⁸²

So it seems that in considering the application of the New Hermeneutic (especially in light of apocalyptic literature and the book

the modern day interpreter should attempt to get into that circle of common understanding by understanding the common meaning of the language before he attempts to interpret the Revelation.

⁸⁰Braaten, pp. 144-145.

⁸¹This approach is illustrated by using Hans-Georg Gadamer's "merging horizons," where the horizon of the present-day interpreter must be enlarged sufficiently to encompass the horizon of the text to be interpreted.

⁸²Braaten, p. 146, quotes Wolfhart Pannenburg, "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle in Protestant Theology," Dialog 2 (1963): 312. This approach would also seem to have some bearing on the message of Revelation and its application to all ages.

of Revelation) various approaches such as philosophy, language, and the theology of world history, should be taken into account.

Methods of Application

The hermeneutic circle

The application of these approaches should be helpful in attaining the understanding necessary for arriving at an acceptable interpretation. This would form an important function in what is called the "Hermeneutic Circle." Soulen describes the hermeneutic circle (or spiral) by stating that:

. . . the circle refers to that profound interrelationship which the words of a sentence have with the meaning of the sentence as a whole, and which a sentence has with the paragraph as a whole, and so on outward to the work as a unity, and then finally expanding to include all the elements contingent upon an adequate understanding of the text at hand. In short, the interrelationship of text and context.⁸³

The hermeneutic principle

Along with the attempt to relate the text to its context, the interpreter must apply what is called the "hermeneutic principle." This is also referred to as the "key by which the interpreter gets into the circle of understanding."⁸⁴ This "key" or "principle" is a pre-understanding of the text or context in question.⁸⁵ This pre-understanding could arise from the consideration given to the principles of philosophy, language, theology of world history, apocalyptic, and such like. Once this pre-understanding is achieved, the next step is to

⁸³Soulen, p. 75.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁸⁵Ibid.

apply it to the text in question. This method is described in another way by Thiselton, who uses an analogy developed by Fuchs. He says that:

It is possible, on the one hand, to theorize about an understanding of "cat" by cognitive reflection. On the other hand, a practical and pre-conceptual understanding of "cat" emerges when we actually place a mouse in front of a particular cat. The mouse is the "hermeneutic principle" that causes the cat to show itself for what it is.⁸⁶

By the same token, the principles of philosophy, language, apocalyptic, and such like are the "mice" that are used to cause the cat (the text) to show itself for what it is.⁸⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be noted that the principles set forth by the hermeneutical system sometimes referred to as the "New Hermeneutic" are quite relevant to the proper understanding of the text. These principles and approaches will be used and referred to in the course of this study.

⁸⁶Thiselton, p. 310, quotes Ernst Fuchs, Hermeneutik, (n.p.:Tubingen, 1970), pp. 109-110.

⁸⁷For the purpose of this study, more emphasis will be placed on the use of apocalyptic literature.

CHAPTER II

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Introduction

For many years, apocalyptic literature had been neglected as a relevant means for the understanding of the Jewish tradition and the Christian message. D. S. Russell called apocalyptic the "Cinderella among biblical and theological studies," but goes on to say that, "More recently, however, there has been a revival of interest, not least among biblical and systematic theologians."¹ Walter Schmithals adds to this by observing that ". . . the religious phenomenon of 'Apocalyptic' as such was not discovered until modern times."² He adds that the history of the study of apocalyptic is barely two hundred years old.³

Since the serious study of apocalyptic as a religious phenomenon, different attitudes have been displayed. For example, some scholars hold a view similar to D. N. Freedman, who maintains that apocalyptic is the controlling factor in the literature of the New Testament.⁴ On the other hand, some scholars agree with men like W. G. Rollins, who refuses

¹D. S. Russell, Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 4.

²Walter Schmithals, The Apocalyptic Movement, trans. John E. Stealy (New York: Abington Press, 1975), p. 50.

³Ibid.

⁴David N. Freedman, "The Flowering of Apocalyptic," Journal For Theology and the Church 6 (1969):167. He elaborates on this statement by asserting that the content and context of the synoptic gospels are apocalyptic, and that the rest of the New Testament writings and the atmosphere of the early church reflect the same apocalyptic tones.

to see apocalyptic as anything more than one unoriginal strand in a very complex pattern with regard to the New Testament.⁵

In any event, all scholars (even the scholars most opposed to apocalyptic as a relevant means of religious phenomena) must admit to the existence of apocalyptic in the New Testament and therefore the necessity of taking apocalyptic into account when searching for the Christian message. This approach is summed up by Charles T. Fritsch when he observes as follows:

Apocalyptic, however, whether we like it or not, is part of the Old and New Testaments. To rule it out of consideration altogether is to distort the Biblical message of hope by omitting in advance what is obviously a part, if not the whole, of the Biblical perspective.⁶

Hence, there is the necessity for taking apocalyptic into account.

Even though the study of apocalyptic is necessary for understanding part of the New Testament message, there is, however, some uncertainty on what apocalypticism, in its purest sense, really is. Hans D. Betz observes this problem by asserting that, "Whoever uses the term apocalypticism ought to be aware of the fact that we have not yet succeeded in defining it in a satisfactory way."⁷ In spite of this, there are many characteristics which are typically apocalyptic and

⁵Morris, Apocalyptic, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 10-11, mentions the view by Wayne G. Rollins, "The New Testament and Apocalyptic," New Testament Studies 17 (1970-71):454-472. Rollins even goes so far as to suggest that certain aspects of early Christianity opposed the main thrust of apocalyptic.

⁶Charles T. Fritsch, "The Message of Apocalyptic For Today," Theology Today 10 (October 1953):357.

⁷Hans Dieter Betz, "On the Problem of the Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism," Journal For Theology and the Church 6 (1969):135-136.

cannot be ignored.⁸ However, the defining of apocalyptic does not end there. This is realized when Margaret Barker observes:

If one takes certain characteristics of presentation, such as visions, a fairly common procedure, then books with a similar style are deemed apocalyptic. On this reckoning, Zec. 1-8 can be thought of as an early apocalypse, at the very least a forerunner. If on the other hand, one takes certain characteristics of theology, such as the particular and peculiar interest in eschatology, a different set of books which manifest this concern are classed as apocalyptic. Zec. 1-8 is then no longer an early work of this kind, but Is. 56-66 is eligible for consideration.⁹

These observations by Betz and Barker seem to imply that one must not stop searching for the "pure meaning" of apocalypticism. Schmithals calls this the "essence" of apocalyptic, and intimates that in order to achieve it one must, ". . . show whether the presupposition is correct that in apocalyptic we are dealing with a unique religious phenomenon, that is, with a specific understanding of the world, of history, and of existence."¹⁰ In other words, how did the believer in apocalyptic understand himself in the midst of his world, in the presence of God, in association with other people, and in the present time between past and future.¹¹

In conclusion, one must admit that in spite of the different reactions to apocalyptic as a religious and theological phenomenon, one

⁸These characteristics can be described as the "outward appearances," or "evidences" of apocalyptic thought. They will be discussed in more detail under the heading "Characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature" below. Although Betz accepts the fact that these literary elements of style are important, he does, however, question whether these "characteristics really grasp the salient points of apocalypticism." Ibid.

⁹Margaret Barker, "Slippery Words: III. Apocalyptic," Expository Times 86 (1978):324.

¹⁰Schmithals, p. 29.

¹¹Ibid., p. 31.

cannot disregard it. However, in order eventually to arrive at its intended message, it becomes necessary to search for the underlying influences which gave rise to the form in which apocalyptic found itself. That is, it is necessary to search beyond what has already been revealed. However, in so doing, one must be as objective as possible, or the ensuing result could be detrimental. In his discussion on the growing popularity of apocalyptic, Paul D. Hanson makes mention of the danger of subjectivity:

As a student of a long-neglected field, it is gratifying to find our subject becoming popular. But popularity brings risks, especially the temptation to allow current interpretations of contemporary apocalyptic movements to become uncritically normative for our interpretation of ancient apocalyptic.¹²

Hence the method and message of apocalyptic must be studied as objectively and as critically as possible.

Rise of Apocalyptic

Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature in general, fits into the period between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100.¹³ There are, however, various Jewish apocalyptic works which were written centuries before 200 B.C. Among these works are some canonical writings. These include sections from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, and of course, the epitome of Jewish apocalyptic writings, the book of Daniel.¹⁴ Upholding

¹²Paul D. Hanson, "Old Testament Apocalyptic Reexamined," Interpretation 25 (October 1971):455.

¹³George Howard, "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," Restoration Quarterly 6 (1962):77. The vast majority of scholars agree with this dating.

¹⁴While many of the more liberal scholars believe that Daniel was written around 167 B.C., the more conservative view holds to a sixth century B.C. date. Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament, revised ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 364, and Roland K. Harrison, Introduction

the view of a pre-200 B.C. date for the rise of apocalyptic, Frank M. Cross states that, "The origins of apocalyptic must be searched for as early as the sixth century BCE."¹⁵

Considering the literary influences and the purpose for the writing of Jewish apocalyptic, it seems quite reasonable to conclude that it arose during the sixth century B.C. at the latest, and then flourished during the two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.

Background and Milieu

The vast majority of scholars agree with the fact that the world in which the ancient Jews found themselves was the main reason for the production of apocalyptic.¹⁶ This included primarily the various anti-Jewish governments which took turns ruling the nation of Israel from 586 B.C. into the New Testament era.¹⁷ These governments made life difficult for the Jews, with a climax in the bloody reign of the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes. James Kallas observes in this regard:

Apocalyptic thought flourished during a time of intense suffering, and it is the attitude toward suffering which is the basic hallmark of this literature . . . the historical climax of which came during the reign of the half-mad Seleucid ruler, self styled

to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 1110-1127, among others, argues effectively against the 167 B.C. date.

¹⁵Frank M. Cross, "New Directions in the Study of Apocalyptic," Journal For Theology and the Church 6 (1969):161.

¹⁶This endless list of scholars would include prominent men such as Beckwith, Barclay, Caird, Freedman, Russell, Rowley, Morris, Charles, Pieters, and Hendriksen, to name just a few.

¹⁷Beginning with the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., the nation of Israel was subjected to domination by the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Seleucids, and Romans. For a detailed historical survey of these events consult The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "Apocalyptic Literature" by J. E. H. Thomson.

as "The Splendid," Antiochus Epiphanes. With his insane zeal for furthering Hellenism, he dedicated himself to the total extinction of Judaism. He butchered pigs on Solomon's altar. He proscribed the reading of the Law. If a Jewish male infant was circumcised, the entire family and the officiating priest were slaughtered.¹⁸

This statement by Kallas illustrates the type of existence the Jews had to endure. Undoubtedly, apocalyptic arose in a background of persecution and suffering. There were, however, other factors involved in the intensifying of persecution and the production of apocalyptic. As the "Prince of God," or the "Righteous Remnant," the nation of Israel found it difficult to accept that they would continue to be persecuted.¹⁹ They realized that they lacked power,²⁰ but looked forward to a time when this power would be restored, and they would once again be the self-governing nation they once were.²¹ With these things in mind, apocalypticism arose, and served to stimulate a reaction by the Jews against the governing powers. This created uprisings by the Jews, which in many cases brought the persecutions upon themselves. James Anderson observes this phenomenon and quotes Russell, who says of apocalyptic: "This was inflammatory material in the hands of those who wished to appeal to the religious fanaticism which became a feature of a particular section of the Jewish people."²²

¹⁸James Kallas, "The Apocalypse: An Apocalyptic Book?" Journal of Biblical Literature 86 (1967):69.

¹⁹Baker's Dictionary of Theology, s.v. "Apocalyptic" by George E. Ladd.

²⁰Hanson, p. 474.

²¹Freedman, p. 173.

²²D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 17, adds that the Jewish war of A.D. 66-70, and the Bar-Kochba rebellion of A.D. 132-135, were instigated by the apocalyptic hope that God would intervene and save His people. It seems then, that the Jews found themselves caught

In any event, it must be concluded that the background in which apocalyptic arose was one of persecution, violence, and suffering. Not only did this state of affairs exist for the ancient Jews, but it also existed for the early Christians under the persecuting dominance of the Roman Empire. It was in this period of persecution that the book of Revelation and some of the non-canonical Christian apocalypses were written.²³

Purpose of Apocalyptic

The predominant purpose of apocalyptic literature was to be a "gospel for bad times," which "did much to encourage the faithful to continue their struggle against evil powers . . ."²⁴ Not only did apocalyptic give the persecuted Jews comfort and hope, but it also gave them strength to retaliate. In some cases, their retaliation caused their downfall, but in other cases their retaliation resulted in victory.²⁵

While some apocalyptic writers may have intended their works to be interpreted in a physical context, it is certain that others intended to

up in a "vicious circle," which consisted of persecution, which gave rise to the production of apocalyptic literature, which in turn stimulated a rebellious attitude, which in turn caused the rebels to be persecuted all over again.

²³Ibsen Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), pp. 197-206.

²⁴Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Apocalyptic Literature" by D. S. Russell.

²⁵Frank C. Porter, The Message of the Apocalyptical Writers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), pp. 3-4, describes the Hasmonean kingdom as a victorious result of their apocalyptic-inspired uprising, and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as a suicidal result of an apocalyptic-inspired uprising. The Jews' nationalistic attitude and the belief in a future physically restored kingdom caused them to see the apocalyptic message as pertaining to physical existence, hence they interpreted apocalyptic in a physical context.

inspire nothing more than faith and hope. In this regard, Frank Porter observes that "The Jewish apocalyptic literature begins then, . . . as an intense affirmation of faith in Israel's God against the sacrilegious efforts of the Greek king."²⁶

In many instances, the struggles of the people of God were not against physical violence but against false religion and worldliness propagated by the governing powers. William Ferrar puts it aptly by saying that apocalyptic was a ". . . reaction to the growing religious claims of the Roman Empire to enchain the conscience."²⁷ Of course, in most instances, physical violence would erupt as a result of passive resistance by the people of God.

In the Christian setting, passive resistance to Rome resulted in the persecution of Christians, with the book of Revelation being written in order to "strengthen the faith, endurance, and hope of the Christians in Asia Minor."²⁸

W. C. Allen accepts the fact that both Jewish and Christian apocalypses were written in order to inspire faith, hope, and action for the people of God in the face of persecution. He also observes that

²⁶Ibid., p. 11. Porter's reference to the "Greek king" has Antiochus Epiphanes in mind. The principle, however, includes all persecuting powers.

²⁷William J. Ferrar, The Apocalypse Explained for Readers of Today (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1936), p. 15.

²⁸Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Apocalyptic and Gnosis in the Book of Revelation and Paul," Journal of Biblical Literature 92 (1973):565. F. B. Rhein, An Analytical Approach to the New Testament (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1966), p. 359, elaborates on the persecution of Christians by observing that under Domitian's rule, emperor worship was enforced, creating much anxiety for the Christians who refused to submit to such false worship.

this was done by setting forth the present as a time of suffering, but looking toward the future as a time of deliverance and triumph.²⁹

Another possible purpose of apocalyptic is noted by Morris, who claims that it was produced in order to fill the vacuum which was created by the cessation of prophecy.³⁰

This combination of circumstances created a situation to which this new type of literature responded. Apocalyptic therefore flourished in Jewish and Christian circles.³¹ In relation to this, many scholars hold the view that "it is impossible to regard apocalyptic as essentially foreign."³² It must be conceded however, that foreign literature did, at least to some degree, influence the Jewish and Christian style of apocalyptic.

Literary Influences on Apocalyptic

There is an abundance of evidence which helps to show that Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature was influenced by foreign sources. Perhaps the most commonly accepted foreign influence is that of Persian Zoroastrianism.³³ This religion influenced Babylonian religious thought,

²⁹W. C. Allen, The Message of the Book of Revelation (New York: Abington-Cokesbury, 1939), p. 16.

³⁰Morris, Apocalyptic, pp. 24-25.

³¹Ibid., p. 26.

³²Ibid., pp. 26-27. Morris quotes from Rowley, Russell, Frost, and Hanson, in order to uphold his view that apocalyptic is essentially Jewish.

³³Stanley B. Frost, Old Testament Apocalyptic: Its Origin and Growth (London: The Epworth Press, 1952), pp. 71-73. Zoroastrianism, started by Zoroaster, a Persian reformer, was built upon older Iranian ideas. Beginning around the seventh century B.C., it eventually became the Persian state religion in about A.D. 211. Walter Schmithals (p. 116) outlines this religion by stating that it believes in a primordial, eternal, ineradicable contrast of good and evil that exists in world

which in turn influenced Jewish religious thought at the time of the exile.³⁴

Some scholars hold that not until the Greek period does the influence of Zoroastrianism become marked in Jewish writings.³⁵ The more conservative scholars, however, believe that Zoroastrian influence on Jewish writings took place much earlier than the Greek period. In order to uphold this view, they cite the book of Daniel as the prime example.³⁶ Yet at the same time, Hellenistic influence on apocalyptic thought cannot be ignored. This is noticed by scholars such as D. S. Russell,³⁷ H. D. Betz,³⁸ and A. Y. Collins.³⁹

Another foreign influence upon Jewish apocalyptic literature was old Canaanite mythical lore. Frank Cross observes that Canaanite, as

history, which is divided into four periods of three thousand years each. This will climax in the end of the world, when all men will pass through the judgment fire which comes from heaven.

³⁴Ferrar, p. 7. Ferrar illustrates this observation by comparing Babylonian and Jewish accounts of the primeval struggle between the Serpent-Dragon and God, the picture of the chariot-throne of God, the Cherubim, and the spirits of the winds.

³⁵Frost, p. 72.

³⁶Harrison, p. 1132.

³⁷Russell, Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern, p. 7, mentions a certain Berossus, who preached a Greek-philosophized blend of Iranian esotericism with Chaldean astrology and determinism.

³⁸Betz, p. 138, describes apocalypticism as a "Hellenistic-oriental syncretism."

³⁹Adela Yarbro Collins, "The History-of-Religions Approach to Apocalypticism and the 'Angel of the Waters,'" The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (July 1977):379, maintains that some apocalyptic visions combine a Jewish and Hellenistic cosmological motif.

well as Iranian, Mesopotamian, and Greek borrowings all played a part in the evolution of Jewish apocalyptic.⁴⁰

Some scholars also believe that Egypt influenced Jewish apocalyptic thought. C. C. McCown argues for this in much detail by observing that Egyptian documents dating from 2000 B.C. to A.D. 300 contain typically apocalyptic characteristics and messages.⁴¹ Hans D. Betz adds to this by mentioning an Egyptian-Hellenistic cosmogony called "Kore Kosmu" which he believes "provides the most complete information about the tradition lying behind Rev. 16:2ff."⁴² On the other hand, scholars such as Frost believe that Egypt counted for little in Israel's religious life.⁴³

In any event it can be concluded that a number of foreign sources influenced Jewish apocalyptic thought. Isbon T. Beckwith offers a reason why this foreign influence took place by stating that:

The apocalyptist is not essentially an originator; he adopts, transforms, interprets apocalyptic matter already at hand. . . The apocalypses do not spring from the professional scribes or the official class; they are for the most part folk-literature; hence folklore, popular legends and ideas inherited or adopted from a non-Hebrew source could the more easily have found their way into this field.⁴⁴

Not only did these foreign influences affect Jewish apocalyptic, but they also affected Christian apocalyptic as well. In connection

⁴⁰Cross, p. 165.

⁴¹C. C. McCown, "Hebrew and Egyptian Apocalyptic Literature," Harvard Theological Review 18 (October 1925):367-368. McCown strengthens his argument by mentioning the relationship between Israel and Egypt during the premosaic age, and intimates that the Hebrews could have been influenced during that time.

⁴²Betz, pp. 142-143.

⁴³Frost, p. 72.

⁴⁴Beckwith, p. 171.

with this, G. F. Snyder observes that:

That form of literature we call apocalyptic . . . existed in Akkadian literature, well before the advent of Jewish apocalypticism and continued into the post-Christian era as a literary style. . . .⁴⁵

Relationship of Apocalyptic to Prophecy

There is undoubtedly an intimate relationship between apocalyptic and prophetic literature. H. H. Rowley believes that apocalyptic is the child of prophecy, but that it is also diverse from prophecy.⁴⁶ He adds that it is "essentially the re-adaptation of the ideas and aspirations of earlier days to a new situation."⁴⁷ The new situation, as has already been discussed, came about when prophecy ceased and when persecution arose. Thus the situation of the time called for something to fill the resulting vacuum.⁴⁸

The decline of prophecy and the rise of apocalyptic

The advent of prophets during the pre-exilic time was of paramount importance. They declared the counsel and will of God, either through

⁴⁵G. F. Snyder, "The Literalization of Apocalyptic Form in the New Testament Church," Biblical Research 14 (1969):5. The influence of these foreign sources is not difficult to comprehend since Christianity was rooted in the Old Testament and in Judaism anyway.

⁴⁶H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic 3rd ed. (New York: Association Press, 1962), p. 15. Frank C. Porter (p. 4) also sees apocalyptic as a revival of prophecy.

⁴⁷Ibid. Ferrell Jenkins, The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 36, upholds Rowley's statement by comparing Daniel 4:10-18 to Ezekiel 31:1-9; Daniel 12:2 to Ezekiel 37:1-14; the Ezra Apocalypse to Daniel 7. He also mentions the many allusions of Revelation to the Old Testament.

⁴⁸Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 25. In connection with this, D. S. Russell, Britannica, p. 113, holds that the apocalyptists proceeded to interpret and reinterpret unfulfilled prophecies in the light of their own day and of the approaching end.

the spoken or written word. R. H. Charles observes this phenomenon but also notices the transition from prophecy to apocalyptic:

Prophecy was the form of expression adopted by most of the great religious leaders in Israel and Judah from the eighth to the fourth century B.C. But when prophecy became impossible owing to the claims of the law, its place was taken, from the fourth century onwards, by apocalyptic, . . ."⁴⁹

Walter Schmithals also recognizes this fact when he observes that salvation for the Israelites had retreated into the distance because they had broken the covenant with God, and it had now become too late to repent.⁵⁰ Prophetic warnings had now become obsolete. George Howard sums up the situation by stating that "The prophets predicted the future only as arising out of the present, rather than one which was distant and unrelated to their own time."⁵¹ However, the new situation in which the Israelites found themselves, consisted of looking forward to a distant, unrelated, uncertain future. A new approach to this new set of circumstances was now needed,⁵² and hence the necessity for a new type of literature. Apocalyptic seemed to answer this need. However, the

⁴⁹R. H. Charles, Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 14. Evidence for cessation of prophecy can be found in intertestamental literature such as I Maccabees 4:46; 9:27; 14:41; and II Baruch 85:3, which explicitly states that "the prophets have fallen asleep."

⁵⁰Schmithals, p. 132. This obviously refers to the period after the Babylonians had destroyed the Jews and had taken many into exile.

⁵¹Howard, p. 80.

⁵²Schmithals, p. 132.

transition from prophecy to apocalyptic was not sudden.⁵³ The differences crept in slowly but surely.

Differences between apocalyptic and prophecy

In spite of the fact that apocalyptic is the legitimate child of prophecy,⁵⁴ and that it was really an attempt to rationalize and systematize the predictive side of prophecy,⁵⁵ there is ample evidence to show that there are significant differences between apocalyptic and prophecy. It is also quite important that a clear-cut distinction between apocalyptic and prophecy be achieved. Otherwise, the attempt to define apocalyptic could become difficult. Associated with this is the need to look at apocalyptic through the ancient's eyes. As Bruce Vawter observes: "Nevertheless, the association of apocalyptic with prophecy in the ancient mind should impose on us the obligation to be very clear in our own mind regarding the basis on which we distinguish the two."⁵⁶

Some of the more prominent differences between apocalyptic and prophecy are as follows: Apocalyptic is concerned with a future that breaks into the present by a divine catastrophic event, while prophecy

⁵³Porter, p. 20. In order to uphold this assertion, Porter states: "Not only do the apocalyptical writers make much use of the prophetic books, but post-exilic prophecy, from Ezekiel on, develops in the apocalyptical direction. In order to understand the apocalypse, therefore, we must take account both of its dependence on prophecy and of the tendency of late prophecy to assume the apocalyptical type."

⁵⁴Fritsch, p. 360.

⁵⁵Russell, Britannica, p. 113.

⁵⁶Bruce Vawter, "Apocalyptic: Its Relation to Prophecy," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 22 (1960):33.

is concerned with a future that arises out of the present.⁵⁷ Apocalyptic sees the great world empires as God's adversaries which will ultimately be destroyed, while prophecy sees these empires as instruments in God's hands, which are used for punishing the sinful.⁵⁸ Apocalyptic was generally pseudonymous, while prophecy was spoken in the name of the prophet.⁵⁹ Apocalyptic sees the messianic hope as referring to the whole world, while prophecy sees this hope as referring only to Israel.⁶⁰ Apocalyptic contains a more prominent predictive element than prophecy, which in turn was more concerned with preaching righteousness.⁶¹ Apocalyptic was more concerned with the doctrine of a future blessed life than was prophecy.⁶² Apocalyptic was more concerned with a new heaven and new earth surviving a catastrophic end of the world,⁶³ while prophecy was only concerned with preventing a digression from a good situation to a bad one.⁶⁴ Apocalyptic uses visions to convey predictions, while prophecy uses visions (in an implied sense) to convey exhortation.⁶⁵ Apocalyptic uses weird arbitrary symbols in its visions,

⁵⁷Howard, p. 80.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Russell, Britannica, p. 113.

⁶⁰International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "Apocalyptic." This is also called the eschatological hope by Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 7.

⁶¹Summers, pp. 6-7.

⁶²R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), pp. 178-179.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Summers, p. 7.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 8.

while prophecy uses natural symbols to convey the natural course of events.⁶⁶ Apocalyptic prefers prose and the inclusion of some poetic sections, while prophecy prefers brief oracles, usually presented in poetic form.⁶⁷

These and many other differences serve to prove that apocalyptic is to be regarded as a separate literary phenomenon from prophecy. There are, however, a few similarities.

Similarities between apocalyptic and prophecy

George Howard sees prophecy and apocalyptic as similar only in the sense that they are both radically ethical and nothing else.⁶⁸ There are, however, some other similarities: Both prophecy and apocalyptic are oftentimes associated with political and religious revival.⁶⁹ Both prophecy and apocalyptic proclaim a day of deliverance from this present evil age.⁷⁰ George E. Ladd sees many similarities between prophecy and apocalyptic, especially in the area of eschatology. He even goes so far as to suggest an approach which he calls "prophetic-apocalyptic."⁷¹

In summing up the differences and similarities between prophecy and apocalyptic, Ray Summers notes the following:

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Rowley, p. 16.

⁶⁸Howard, p. 80.

⁶⁹Rowley, pp. 18-19.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 24.

⁷¹George Eldon Ladd, "Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?" Journal of Biblical Literature 76 (1957):192-200. In order to uphold his proposition, Ladd suggests that Jesus' eschatological teaching is both eschatologically apocalyptic and ethically prophetic. "It is, in short," he says, "prophetic-apocalyptic."

They are alike in many ways touching their general fields, but they are quite different when it comes to a specific application of method to field. They differ both in matter and in form. . . .

From this study it is readily observed that prophecy and apocalyptic are kindred though different types of thought and literature from the viewpoint of context.⁷²

In all of this, however, the question remains: What did apocalyptic actually see prophecy as, and how did it treat prophecy?

Apocalyptic and the interpretation of prophecy⁷³

During the intertestamental period, Jewish exegetes were aware of what they thought were contradictions in scripture, and they made it their work to remove these so-called contradictions. However, many difficulties still remained and as a result, in order to overcome these problems, many different exegetical traditions were developed, especially by the main Jewish parties such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Essenes. However, a common hope expressed by all of these parties was that these exegetical difficulties would be removed during the messianic age when God would explain the meanings of his word. All that remained was to wait for this age of the coming of the messiah.

Some other parties, such as the Qumran community, believed that the hidden meanings of the words of the prophets (which were the prophets themselves) referred not to the prophets' days, but to the "end of the days." These "end days," according to the Qumran community, were

⁷²Summers, pp. 6-8.

⁷³Unless otherwise indicated, all of the material relating to this topic is taken from Russell, Method and Message, pp. 178-182. Consult this work for a detailed discussion of apocalyptic and the interpretation of prophecy.

taking place during their own time, and they believed that the real meaning of the scriptures was being revealed through them.⁷⁴

In spite of this, many difficulties still remained. These related to unfulfilled prophecies.⁷⁵ The apocalyptic writers, as students of prophecy, believed that they had been raised up by God to make known the meaning of prophecy to the people.⁷⁶ They were particularly concerned with the predictive element in prophecy, especially since so many prophecies were unfulfilled.⁷⁷

The apocalyptists reinterpreted the prophecies in a way which dealt positively with the dawning of a new and glorious age. In essence, they turned the prophetic promises into apocalyptic assurances. In summing this up, D. S. Russell says of apocalyptic:

Its entire message - the Golden Age, the Day of Judgment, the overthrow of evil, the transcendent Messiah, the Two Ages, rewards and punishments, even the doctrine of the resurrection and

⁷⁴Many writings found in the Qumran caves refer to this belief. Russell, Method and Message, p. 181, mentions and discusses the relevant Qumran works which deal with this belief.

⁷⁵Too many events, foretold by the prophets, had not come to pass. David N. Freedman (pp. 170-171) discusses the topic of unfulfilled prophecy, and notices that the Jews (and more specifically the Qumran community) became disillusioned with the long wait for the glorious messianic age. This disillusionment came to a head when they thought that this new age would be ushered in by the Hasmoneans (the ruling Jewish party at the time when apocalyptic flourished) but was not.

⁷⁶Barker, p. 326, believes that it is impossible at this stage to attribute the apocalypses to any specific party. She does, however, believe that they were not written by the ruling classes.

⁷⁷More particularly, the prophecies relating to the new age, or new heaven and earth, which would be ushered in by the "Day of the Lord," when all nations would come to Zion, and where the mighty deliverer's kingdom would last forever. These prophecies are found in such places as Isaiah 4; Daniel 2; Micah 4; and so forth.

the life to come - is an attempt to bring to the point of fulfillment the prophetic message and so to vindicate the purposes of Almighty God whose word could not be broken.⁷⁸

In order to do this, however, the apocalyptists adopted a specific method of interpreting prophecy. This included: Searching for unfulfilled predictions which dealt with a future destiny and which were, at the same time, capable of ingenious exegesis; interpreting and reinterpreting prophecy whenever necessary;⁷⁹ claiming that the hidden meanings of prophecy was in the process of being revealed through them;⁸⁰ using pseudonymity in order to reinforce the claims that apocalyptic was authoritative;⁸¹ drawing upon foreign and non-biblical traditions, mythology, symbolism, and ideas as part of the interpretative process;⁸² using traditional ideas or events to explain the actual, and sometimes using actual events to explain the traditional;⁸³ using allegorical numbers to calculate specific events, and the time of the end.

⁷⁸Russell, Method and Message, p. 184.

⁷⁹Russell explains this by using the example Daniel 9:2ff as an interpretation of Jeremiah 25:11, and using the example of II Esdras 12:11-14 as a reinterpretation of Daniel 7.

⁸⁰It is interesting to notice that in this respect, the apocalyptist had the same outlook as the Qumran community. Perhaps it is not surprising then that apocalyptic writings were found in the Qumran caves.

⁸¹Pseudonymity will be discussed in greater detail under the heading "Pseudonymous" below.

⁸²Although the apocalyptist borrowed much foreign material, he used it as he liked, giving new meanings to symbols and such like in order to suit his purpose. This can be detected in places like Revelation 6 where John uses the four horsemen of Zechariah 6 differently in order to communicate his particular message.

⁸³An example of this is the literal three and a half years mentioned by Daniel 7:25 as referring to the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes. Revelation 11:2ff; 12:14; and 13:5 uses this three and a half years to describe a traditional (general) period of persecution of Christians.

All of these methods, used in an attempt to interpret prophecy, resulted in the peculiar characteristics which came to be known as apocalyptic.

Characteristics of Apocalyptic
Literature

It has been noted by various scholars that there is more than just one set of characteristics relating to apocalyptic. Beckwith sees what he calls the "external and formal kind" of characteristic as only one group of characteristics.⁸⁴ Rowley also sees this group of characteristics as only a part of the entire apocalyptic make-up. He even suggests that "some of these are rather the accidents than the essence of apocalyptic."⁸⁵ Betz adds to this discussion by noting that there is a difference between simply stating the formal characteristics and actually grasping the nature and concept of apocalypticism itself.⁸⁶

Upon that basis, it can therefore be seen that apocalyptic consists of more than just the external, formal, mechanical characteristics. It consists, also, of the "characteristics" which serve to express the underlying ideas and concepts. These include:

⁸⁴Beckwith, p. 169. This group includes visions, pseudonymity, mysteriousness, dualism, pessimism, and so forth.

⁸⁵Rowley, p. 25.

⁸⁶Betz, p. 135. In order to uphold this assertion, Betz states that these outward characteristics of apocalyptic are found in other Hellenistic-oriental religious writings, and that they cannot be simply interpreted as a development rooted in Old Testament prophecy. He then goes on to suggest that in order to understand the essence of apocalypticism, one must detect its underlying questions and see how on that basis the tradition has been interpreted. (Betz, p. 137).

eschatology,⁸⁷ religio-historical environment,⁸⁸ the philosophy of existence,⁸⁹ and so forth. It must, however, be noted that these underlying ideas and concepts are not presented as specific concerns. Rather, the expression of these concerns is inherent in apocalyptic literature in general.

While these "non-external characteristics" are of utmost importance, the external characteristics of apocalyptic must not be minimized. As Beckwith observes:

But there are also certain other characteristics of a more external and formal kind, the recognition of which will not only define the class more clearly, but will also serve to prevent the misinterpretation of many passages found in literature of this nature.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Beckwith, p. 169. Beckwith sees eschatology as the most fundamental of apocalyptic characteristics, but he also sees it as separate from the external and formal kind of characteristic. In fact, there is also much eschatological material that is not apocalyptic. Many prophecies and sayings concerning the time of the end are not necessarily presented by means of apocalyptic imagery.

⁸⁸Betz, p. 139. In order to uphold his belief in the important study of religio-historical environment, Betz maintains that in order to grasp the nature and concept of apocalypticism itself, one must become aware of the "complicated and often surprising relationships of apocalyptic traditions and related traditions of the religio-historical environment." He also says:

"We have to free ourselves from the idea of treating apocalypticism as an isolated and purely inner-Jewish phenomenon. Rather we must learn to understand apocalypticism as a peculiar manifestation within the entire course of Hellenistic-oriental syncretism." (Betz, p. 138.)

This approach will be developed further under the heading "Historical Perspective" below.

⁸⁹Schmithals, p. 147. Schmithals observes that the changing understanding of reality itself determined the development of the movement. Obviously, involved in this understanding of reality was the philosophy relating to this existence.

⁹⁰Beckwith, p. 169.

Both the external and internal characteristics can also be grouped according to literary and religious characteristics.⁹¹ However, the approach taken in this paper will be to list them randomly, but at the same time, to keep in mind the fact that some characteristics exist as a result of, or in relation to other characteristics. This will be noticed as they are dealt with.

Visions

The prophets had used visions in their messages, but the apocalyptists developed them to a fantastic degree, using them as the chief method of expressing truth.⁹² These visions were extremely imaginative and consisted of strange animals, astronomical events, combinations of elements, weird effects upon the earth and living creatures, and so forth.⁹³ Added to these pictures are colors, sounds, numbers and other elements with a strong emotional content.⁹⁴ Picturing these weird visions made it easy for the seer and the reader to remember what they saw.⁹⁵

⁹¹Ladd, Baker's Dictionary, pp. 51-52.

⁹²Summers, p. 18. Summers also observes that the vision is the most highly distinctive feature in apocalyptic literature (Summers, p. 19).

⁹³Examples of these weird visions can be found in Ezekiel 1 (the throne of God upon the wheels and four living creatures), Daniel 2 (the image made of different metals), Daniel 7 (the four weird beasts), Daniel 8 (the ram and he-goat), Joel 2 (the astronomical events), Zechariah 6 (the four chariots), and so forth. Other good examples of visions are found in I Enoch 85; 86; 89; II Enoch 12; 15; 19; II Esdras 11; Sibylline Oracles 1:326-30; and of course, practically the entire book of Revelation.

⁹⁴D. T. Niles, As Seeing the Invisible (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1961), pp. 28ff.

⁹⁵Summers, p. 25.

Symbols

All of the visions used by the apocalyptic writers were symbolic. These symbols were used to communicate his thoughts to those who were familiar with the process.⁹⁶ In some instances, however, a writer would borrow another's vision and make it symbolize something else.⁹⁷ Morris refers to this as the use of "conventional imagery."⁹⁸

The major reason for the use of symbolism is noted by Summers, who believes that the apocalyptist was attempting to see the invisible, paint the unpaintable, and express the inexpressible. All of this could only be achieved by the use of symbols.⁹⁹ A less important reason is that the symbols were secret codes invented to deceive the oppressive enemies in dangerous times.¹⁰⁰

In the attempt to interpret symbols, Summers suggests:

It appears that the wise thing to do in interpreting symbols is to follow the proper method of interpreting parables - find the central truth which is being portrayed and let the details fit in the most natural way.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 20. However, Summers also observes that while the symbols have a meaning for the initiated, they are hopeless jargon to those who are unacquainted with such terms.

⁹⁷Frost, p. 16. William Ferrar adds that the Jewish seer preferred to rearrange old images to suit his own purpose, rather than to have to adopt new ones (Ferrar, p. 4).

⁹⁸Morris, p. 36. He adds, however, that this did "not mean that the apocalyptists were not transmitting genuine experiences of their own." For a detailed discussion of this, consult Russell, Method and Message, pp. 165f.

⁹⁹Summers, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 36. ☆

¹⁰¹Summers, p. 20.

Dualism

This concerns at least two specific areas which the apocalypticist draws upon. It means firstly, the struggle between the two supreme powers, good and evil, God and Satan. Secondly, it means the contrast between the two ages, the present evil age, and glorious age to come.¹⁰² In a sense, these two concepts are dependent upon each other in the fact that the glorious future can only take place when the good power overcomes the evil. G. E. Ladd sums it up when he says: "The transition from this age to the coming age can be accomplished only by the supernatural inbreaking of God. This dualism is not metaphysical or cosmic, but historical and temporal."¹⁰³

The reason why the apocalypticist sees a future physically redeemed earth is because many of the prophets had spoken of a future redeemed earth.¹⁰⁴ Not only was this coming age going to break into the present temporary and perishable age, but it was going to be imperishable and eternal.¹⁰⁵

However, before this new age dawned, the present miserable age would be beset with all kinds of upheavals and catastrophes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Barker, p. 325.

¹⁰³ Ladd, Baker's Dictionary, p. 52.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Old Testament scriptures which refer to this are found in Isaiah 32:15-18; 11:6-9; 65:17; 66:22; 13:13; 34:4; 51:6; Haggai 2:7. Non-canonical apocalyptic passages which draw upon this imagery are I Enoch 45:4f; 51:1-5; 62:16; the Assumption of Moses 10:1; II Esdras 7:28, 29; Baruch 32:6; and so forth.

¹⁰⁵ Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 48.

¹⁰⁶ Schmithals, p. 25, lists many of these catastrophies by quoting from the various apocalyptical writings.

This dualistic concept was quite important to the apocalypstists because it very adequately gave the persecuted the enduring hope they needed in order to look forward to a glorious future.

Closely related to this dualism are the concepts of eschatology and the coming of the messiah.

Eschatology

According to many scholars, apocalyptic and eschatology go hand-in-hand. Barker, in her discussion of this subject, says that "Eschatology, whatever it may eventually be seen to comprise, is the content of apocalyptic for New Testament scholars."¹⁰⁷

Eschatology is characterized by the belief in the "last days" and the events surrounding those "last days." The Old Testament prophets as well as the apocalypstists described these events in much imaginative detail.¹⁰⁸ Probably the most important aspects of the "last days" will be the replacing of the present evil age with the new heaven and new earth.

¹⁰⁷Barker, p. 325.

¹⁰⁸Some of the events surrounding the "last days" include: A time of unprecedented trouble (Isa. 13:9-11; Dan. 12:1), terrified people crying and trembling (Zeph. 1:14ff; Joel 2:1ff), people seeking for a place to hide (Isa. 2:10; Hos. 10:8; I Enoch 102:1-2), neighbors rising up against each other (Zech. 14:13), murder (I Enoch 100:1,2; II Esdras 6:24), earthquakes, famines, fire, and sword (Ezek. 14:21; II Baruch 27:7; II Esdras 5:8; 6:22), supernatural manifestations (II Esdras 6:22; I Enoch 80:2-3; Jubilees 23:18ff), astronomical events (Isa. 13:10; 24:23; Assumption of Moses 10:5; I Enoch 80:4ff). All of these events would remind the people that the end was near. Finally the exiled Jews would be gathered to Jerusalem to worship God on His holy mountain (Isa. 27:12, 13) and the creation would provide them with sustenance (II Baruch 5:5-9; 29:5-8; Isa. 35:1; 51:3). The New Jerusalem would come down from heaven (II Baruch 4:2-6) and replace the molten, destroyed earth (Sibylline Oracles 3:796-806) with its beauty and glory (Isa. 54:12f; Tobit 13:16). Peace would reign supreme (Isa. 2:4; 54:13) and even animals would exist together in peace (Isa. 11:6-9). All painful experiences, such as death, sorrow, weariness and pain would cease (Jer. 31:12; Isa. 25:8; 33:24; 35:10; 65:20-22).

Involved in this event will be the resurrection and judgment of good and evil.¹⁰⁹

Thomas Kepler notices some specific beliefs held by the apocalyptists with regard to eschatology. These include the belief that God is not immanent, but transcendent, and does not have a close and intimate relationship with man. As a result, he uses intermediaries or angels to communicate with man. God is also externally limited by another power, called Satan. This evil power is vying with God for the loyalties of all men (who have free moral choice) and even all angels. However, the day will come when God overcomes Satan, and the leader of the new age will be sent from above.¹¹⁰

An interesting development pertaining to eschatology is what has come to be known as "realized eschatology." Kepler sums up realized eschatology well when he says:

This type of eschatology sees the 'new age' which eschatology usually envisions at the end of history, as being 'present' or 'realized' in our midst; it sees the time of judgment and the resurrection 'day' as 'here and now' for the Christian believer.¹¹¹

This is quite acceptable when it is looked at in light of the eternality of God. In this respect, Elizabeth Fiorenza makes mention of Ernst Lohmeyer, who believes that the "boundary of time is abolished in an eschatological perspective, so that this eschatological future has already become present for believers."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Daniel 12:2 states that "many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Revised Standard Version).

¹¹⁰Thomas S. Kepler, The Book of Revelation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 4-5.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹²Elizabeth Fiorenza, "The Eschatology and Composition of the

At this stage, it must be stressed that apocalyptists themselves were not realized eschatologists. They looked forward to a future eschatological event when the Messiah would come to establish his kingdom. However, the element of the "here and now" is detected in various apocalyptic works.¹¹³

It would make sense then, that to the believer in apocalyptic the concept of eschatology (especially realized eschatology) would provide him with a glimmer of optimism, in spite of the prevailing pessimism that existed in apocalyptic writings.

Pessimism

Since apocalyptic literature was "born of crisis,"¹¹⁴ it stands to reason that everything in the apocalyptists' world was negative and unpleasant. They believed that nothing they could do would change the situation. They also "did not believe there would be an orderly evolution to a better state of affairs."¹¹⁵ In that sense, their outlook to their present existence was pessimistic. This was because they believed that the present era was under the control of Satan. In fact, many apocalyptists believed that to try to improve the present existence would only have retarded the day when things would have reached their

Apocalypse," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (October 1968):550, quotes E. Lohmeyer, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (Tubingen, 1953), p. 193.

¹¹³Thomas S. Kepler, The Book of Revelation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 5. This "realized" element will be treated in far more detail under the section "The Final Conflict" below.

↳ ¹¹⁴Freedman, p. 173.

¹¹⁵Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 38.

worst. This would have in turn, delayed the coming of God, since He would only come when things reached their worst.¹¹⁶ So, the existence of the apocalypticist was one of patient but pessimistic endurance.

In spite of this, however, there was also, paradoxically, an element of optimism inherent in the apocalypticist's message.

Optimism

Some believers in apocalyptic were more concerned with the coming of the "end days" than with the pessimistic existence. As Morris observes:

They evidently took to heart that strand of apocalyptic teaching which saw God as intervening in the last days and felt sure that they were living in the last times. The wild visions of apocalyptic spurred them on to heroic endeavor. If they struck the first blow, they seem to have reasoned, no doubt God would stand by them.¹¹⁷

This reasoning was found even in the foreign religions which influenced apocalyptic. That is, the world would not be abandoned to the evil one, and in the end, all righteous men would be saved.¹¹⁸

In close relationship with the concepts of eschatology and optimism is the belief that "fixed periods must intervene before the consummation."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Kepler, p. 5.

¹¹⁷Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 38.

¹¹⁸Schmithals, pp. 120-121. This concept predominated in the Persian Zoroastrian religion.

¹¹⁹Ladd, Baker's Dictionary, p. 53.

Determinism

Even though the righteous deserve to inherit the new age without waiting any longer, the kingdom does not come because the course of this evil age is predetermined and must run its course.¹²⁰ In connection with this, John J. Collins considers the prophecy in Daniel 9¹²¹ and says that it

. . . functions to assure the reader that the end is near. The manner in which this assurance is given presupposes a deterministic view of history. The course of history has a predetermined duration and a fixed number of periods. . . . The very idea . . . readily lends itself to the inference that the events predicted were already determined in the time of the visionary, whether Enoch, Daniel, or the Sibyl. The impression of determinism was accentuated by the division of history into a set number of periods which explicitly determined its duration.¹²²

One of the greatest merits of the apocalyptic view of determinism is that it helps to answer the question concerning human suffering. If the righteous sufferer was able to see God's hand in the course of events and realize that his lot was a part of God's plan (which would ultimately end with the righteous receiving their reward), he would be able to accept his suffering and would look forward, with optimism, to the great eschatological event.¹²³ This, of course, would mean that the

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Daniel 9 mentions the vision of the seventy weeks and the different events that will occur within this period, culminating in a period of tribulation. In the final verse (27), the "decreed end" of the "desolator" is mentioned. This chapter in Daniel serves as an ideal example of determinism. See also Daniel 11:36.

¹²²John J. Collins, "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 29 (July 1977):335.

¹²³Morris, p. 46.

righteous sufferer would have adopted a specific philosophical attitude about his present existence.

Philosophy of Existence

Carl E. Braaten sees a necessary interreaction between philosophy of existence and theology.¹²⁴ He uses Heinrich Ott's statement that preaching must answer to the real existential concern of man.¹²⁵

This idea is appreciated when one realizes that the apocalyptists were attempting to appeal positively to man's existence in troubled times. Yet at the same time, the events of the day were instrumental in helping the apocalyptic writer to formulate his philosophy which was then made manifest through his writings. In this regard, Porter says:

It is true, however, that the apocalypses are most closely connected with these events, and that we need not only the events to help us interpret the books, but the books to enable us to understand the events, especially on their inner side, the ideals and motives and emotions that entered into them.¹²⁶

Porter also states that the apocalypses base their practical message on certain theories of the world and of history.¹²⁷ But what exactly do these theories (philosophy) entail?

¹²⁴Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, vol. 2, ed. William Hordern, New Directions in Theology Today (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 144.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 143, mentions the statement by Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), n.p.

¹²⁶Porter, p. 4.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 50. The reason is that they attempt to explain the present dominance of evil and the nearness of its overthrow.

For some apocalyptic writers, a pessimistic outlook prevailed.¹²⁸ However, the optimistic Persian outlook which believes that at the end, all men will be saved, seems to have influenced apocalyptic thought in the sense that it too looked forward to a future salvation.¹²⁹ The predominant view of existence for the apocalyptist was that it was necessary to live in this evil, persecuting world because it was decreed by God who also decreed that at the end, the righteous would be saved.¹³⁰ In light of this approach, the present suffering for the apocalyptist was but a small price to pay for inheriting the kingdom of God.

Another element closely related to this philosophy of existence is relationship to historical time. William Beardslee seems to think that a sense of man's existence in historical time is important for the interpretation of apocalyptic.¹³¹ In relation to this, he says: "Some apocalyptic writers were, in their own way, historical scholars who gathered traditions about the past and related their own people's existence to the wider movement of history."¹³²

¹²⁸This can be detected in some writings such as IV Esdras 4:12 where the writer says: "It would have been better if we never had come into the world than now to live and to suffer in sins and not to know why."

¹²⁹Schmithals, pp. 121-123. Although, in this area, there were differences of detail between Zoroastrianism and apocalyptic, the general view is quite similar.

¹³⁰This prevailing idea incorporates and is developed in apocalyptic dualism, eschatology, and determinism (already discussed above).

¹³¹Beardslee, p. 425.

¹³²Ibid.

Historical Perspective

Although the prophets and apocalyptists were more interested in theology than in history, they did take history very seriously.¹³³ They did, however, see history in different ways from one another. While the prophets saw specific historical events as "the carriers of cosmic significance,"¹³⁴ the apocalyptists saw history as a unity which consisted of past, present, and future, all being bound up together.¹³⁵ As G. E. Ladd observes:

They do not view the present against the background of the future, but their viewpoint encompasses the entire sweep of history for the purpose of interpreting history theologically. The apocalypses are theological treatises rather than truly historical documents.¹³⁶

In light of this observation, one can appreciate the apocalyptists view of the transcendental position of the kingdom and its place in historical perspective. As Russell observes: "It is that transcendental and other-worldly kingdom that really matters, and it is to that kingdom that the whole of history moves and in which it finds its fulfillment."¹³⁷

This same idea is expressed and developed further in a religio-historical context by Hans D. Betz,¹³⁸ who in turn discusses Wolfaart

¹³³Morris, p. 63.

¹³⁴Hanson, p. 478. This included, and was a result of the belief that historical events were not bound to an inevitable progression towards a predetermined end: repentance could cause prophesied judgment to be transformed into salvation within the course of history.

¹³⁵Morris, p. 64. This is typical of apocalyptic determinism.

¹³⁶Ladd, Baker's Dictionary, p. 52.

¹³⁷Russell, Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern, p. 25.

¹³⁸Religio-historicism can be described as the "history of religion(s)." It refers to the application of the historical method of analysis to the study of religion. Students of this method seek to understand the religion of the Old and New Testaments within the context of their historical environment, including the other religions of that

Pannenberg's understanding of apocalyptic.¹³⁹ Betz notices that to Pannenberg religio-historicism plays a fundamental role.¹⁴⁰ He then goes on to quote Pannenberg who says of history:

This development comes to its fullest expression in apocalypticism. Not only does the decisive salvation lie in the future, but no meaning at all can any longer be found in the present events. Any continuity between the present and the future has become invisible, so that two eons stand opposed to each other. Only the beginning of the eschatological "new eon" will also reveal the meaning of this present eon. Consequently, apocalypticism has for the first time developed the idea of a universal history.¹⁴¹

This attitude concerning historical perspective caused the apocalyptists to be less concerned with a single situation and its immediate outcome. Instead, they would review long periods of history and divide them into ages, each marked by its own spirit and character.¹⁴² This is referred to by Schmithals as a "unitary perspective" which the reader of apocalyptic could use to ". . . determine his own place in

time and region (Soulen, p. 145). For a detailed discussion and example of the practical application of this approach in relation to apocalyptic, consult Hans D. Betz, "On the Problem of Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism," Journal For Theology and the Church 6 (1969):134-156. The work of the religio-historicists served to shed light on the immense distances which separate the understandings and expectations of the world of the Bible from that of our own. This realization among modern scholars helped them to attempt all the more to find the evidence which makes the Bible meaningful to people today. (Soulen, p. 145.) The study of this subject in relation to apocalyptic by scholars such as Betz, Pannenberg, Weiss, and others, has been invaluable to the understanding of the relationship between apocalyptic and New Testament thought. For more detail in this area, consult the following footnote.

¹³⁹Hans D. Betz, "The Concept of Apocalyptic in the Theology of the Pannenberg Group," Journal For Theology and the Church 6 (1969):192-193.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 192

¹⁴¹Betz, The Concept of Apocalyptic, p. 193, quotes Pannenberg, Offenbarung als Geschichte, Kerygma und Dogma (n.c. : n.p., 1965), pp. 96ff.

¹⁴²Rowley, p. 16.

the course of history and, by understanding the future in terms of the past, and from its perspective, can properly relate himself to what is to come."¹⁴³

Pseudonymity

Apocalyptic literature was generally pseudonymous. This would mean that the writer would use the name of an illustrious, well known historical figure in order to get his writing accepted and read.¹⁴⁴ Various reasons have been suggested as to why this was done,¹⁴⁵ but whatever the real reason, it seemed to have helped apocalypticism become a literary force in ancient Judaism, producing much good.¹⁴⁶

Ethics

G. E. Ladd believes that there is very little ethical exhortation in most of the apocalyptic writings, because they were simply not concerned with warning the unrighteous to repent. Rather, they sought only to comfort the righteous.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, R. H. Charles sees

¹⁴³Schmithals, p. 18.

¹⁴⁴Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 50.

¹⁴⁵Summers, p. 17, suggests that since the apocalyptical writers used so much from early sources, they were simply giving credit where credit was due, by naming their source as the writer. R. H. Charles, Eschatology (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), p. 203, suggests that the ceasing of prophecy and the subsequent closing of the Old Testament canon made it impossible for "non-Old Testament characters" to get a hearing. Pseudonymity was used to overcome that problem. Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 52, suggests that the contents of specific writings seemed to be related to the character after whom it was named. These are just some of the reasons offered. They serve to prove that no one can be sure of the real reason.

¹⁴⁶Summers, p. 18.

¹⁴⁷Ladd, Baker's Dictionary, p. 53.

apocalyptic as radically ethical because of its uncompromising optimism, its unconquerable faith, its constant rhetoric against evil, and its urge to the righteous to remain righteous.¹⁴⁸ Leon Morris notices some truth in both attitudes and says: "The point at issue is whether the original readers of apocalyptic were being comforted and confirmed in their way of life, or denounced and urged to repent."¹⁴⁹ He sees evidence of both of these teachings in apocalyptic.¹⁵⁰

Esotericism

Apocalyptic literature is generally esoteric. This means that its message was represented as something that was to be kept from general knowledge, and was to be handed down in secret.¹⁵¹

This means that apocalyptic was understood by only a select few "until the time of the end."¹⁵² Only those with the required wisdom and knowledge would be able to understand its meaning.¹⁵³ It is possible that only the ones initiated into the apocalyptic group were "wise" enough to understand every detail; but the apocalyptists also believed that they were living in the time of the end and that the meaning was being made known in a general, but limited, sense.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 30.

¹⁴⁹Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 59.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 59-61.

¹⁵¹Rowley, p. 16.

¹⁵²Many references mention this revealing of the apocalyptic message at the "time of the end." Among them: Daniel 12:9; I Enoch 1:2; II Enoch 33:10-11; and so forth.

¹⁵³See Daniel 12:10 and Revelation 17:9 which refer to this.

¹⁵⁴Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 33.

The Theological Message of
Apocalyptic Literature

Since this study concerns the theological message of Revelation in light of selected apocalyptic symbols, it is imperative at this point briefly to define and discuss the concept of theology, the relationship it has to the message of apocalyptic, and the general theological message of apocalyptic. This will serve as a foundation upon which to build when each specific symbol is selected and studied.

Theology

The word "theology" is a combination of the Greek words, θεός God, and λόγια words, and can be described as the "study of God," or the "study of things pertaining to God." It is also defined as "A body of doctrines concerning God, including His relationship with man."¹⁵⁵

There are a number of different emphases in matters pertaining to theology. The two most prominent are biblical and systematic theology. Although each approach concentrates on a different area, they do not oppose each other.¹⁵⁶ In fact, each one plays a vital role in forming a well balanced concept of theology. This is seen in Charles Hodge's statement:

So the Bible contains the truths which the theologian has to collect, authenticate, arrange, and exhibit in their internal

¹⁵⁵The Practical Standard Dictionary, rev. ed. (1966), s.v. "Theology."

¹⁵⁶Baker's Dictionary of Theology, s.v. "Theology" by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Bromiley adds to this by saying that true theology is given by the Bible itself as the revelation of God in human terms, while at the same time, a theology of the Church exists because of the exposition, reflection, presentation and interpretation of the scriptures.

relation to each other. This constitutes the difference between biblical and systematic theology. The office of the former is to ascertain and state the facts of scripture. The office of the latter is to take those facts, determine their relation to each other and to cognate truths, as well as to vindicate them and show their harmony and consistency.¹⁵⁷

This statement by Hodge reveals that the treatment given to the Bible in the form of theological study is nothing less than a science.¹⁵⁸ James Lindsay agrees that theological study is a science, and concludes: "Its ideal as a science is to present a clear, complete and comprehensive survey of the Bible's teachings."¹⁵⁹

This "ideal" is achieved by taking into account and applying what Henry C. Thiessen calls the "four parts" of theology.¹⁶⁰ The first part is called "Exegetical Theology."¹⁶¹ The second part is called "Historical

¹⁵⁷ Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol. I. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Biblical Theology" by James Lindsay.

¹⁶⁰ Henry C. Thiessen Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 46.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. This area of research includes the study of biblical languages, archaeology, text, introduction, hermeneutics, and biblical theology. G. W. Bromiley (Baker's Dictionary of Theology, s.v. "Biblical Theology" by G. W. Bromiley) also emphasizes that "... exegetical and expository study is an essential and basic part of biblical theology."

Theology."¹⁶² The third part is called "Systematic Theology."¹⁶³ The fourth part is called "Practical Theology."¹⁶⁴

These different areas of emphasis combine to produce a well-balanced understanding of God's nature, laws, and relationship with man. Yet at the same time, the need for objectivity is imperative. This is noticed by Bromiley who states:

To be really biblical in our theology, we must take the Bible as it really is. We must accept it on its own terms. We must see and study and state things on its own basis and from its own standpoint. We must not force it into an alien philosophical scheme. We must be genuinely historical, adopting its own approach and shaping our theology in accordance with the pattern which it imposes.¹⁶⁵

The ultimate aim of theological study is expressed by Lindsay:

The importance of Biblical Theology lies in the way it directs, corrects, and fructifies all moral and dogmatic theology by bringing it to the original founts of truth. Its spirit is one of impartial historical inquiry.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶²Ibid. This traces the history of God's people in the Bible and in the Church since the time of Christ. It concerns the origin, development, doctrines, organizations, practices, and spread of Christianity. J. Lindsay emphasizes the importance of historical theology by saying that: "The Biblical Theologian should be a Christian philosopher, an exegete, and above all, a historian." International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Biblical Theology."

¹⁶³Ibid. This takes the materials furnished by exegetical and historical theology and arranges them in logical order under the great heads of theological study. Thiessen, p. 28, elucidates on this when he says that:

"The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the scientist, - a body of unorganized or only partly organized facts. God has not seen fit to write the Bible in the form of a Systematic Theology; it remains for us, therefore, to gather together the scattered facts and to build them up into a logical system."

¹⁶⁴Ibid. This seeks to apply to practical life the things contributed by the other three parts of theology.

¹⁶⁵Baker's Dictionary of Theology, s.v. "Biblical Theology" by Geoffrey W. Bromiley.

¹⁶⁶Lindsay, p. 470.

The Relationship of the Concept of Theology
to the Message of Apocalyptic

Henry Thiessen makes the statement that "In theology a man organizes his thoughts concerning God and the universe, and in religion he expresses in attitudes and actions the effects these thoughts have produced in him."¹⁶⁷

This statement applies as much to apocalypticism as it does to any other Bible-related subject. The apocalypticist develops specific ideas on God and his relationship to man, and these ideas are then made manifest as a result of his reaction to historic events. These ideas are conveyed in the form of writings and religious expression.

In light of this, it then stands to reason that apocalypticism contains a theology, and must therefore be treated as such. In other words, in order to find the theological truths in the message of apocalyptic, the theologian must collect, authenticate, arrange, and exhibit these truths in relation to each other.¹⁶⁸ This is achieved by applying Thiessen's method of "four parts."¹⁶⁹

Yet at the same time, since the emphasis is on Biblical truth, all study on apocalyptic must be carried out in relation to the Bible's own

¹⁶⁷Thiessen, p. 28.

¹⁶⁸Compare this method to the method mentioned by Charles Hodge on page 65 above, where he deals with it in more detail.

¹⁶⁹Refer to Thiessen's method above on page 66 and footnotes 160 to 164 for details.

viewpoint.¹⁷⁰ In other words, it is imperative that the theologian arrives at Bible-based apocalyptic truths.¹⁷¹

No one would hold that Biblical truths are not contained in apocalyptic literature. However, just as it is necessary to "gather the scattered facts" of the Bible, and to "build them up into a logical system,"¹⁷² so, it is also necessary to gather the scattered facts of the apocalyptic message, and to build them up into a logical Bible-based system.¹⁷³

Once these "scattered facts" are collected, authenticated, compared and arranged, they begin to form what can be referred to as "doctrines." It is within these doctrines that the theological message of apocalyptic is conveyed.

The General Theological Message of Apocalyptic

Some of the more important doctrines which convey the theological message of apocalyptic are as follows: Divine control; the unity, arrangement and predetermination of history; the existence of angels and demons; the problem of evil; the problem of human suffering; the coming

¹⁷⁰For more detail in relation to this, refer back to Bromiley's statement on page 67, where he emphasizes the need to base all theological thought in accordance with the pattern which the Bible imposes.

¹⁷¹This makes sense in light of the fact that many apocalyptic works are canonical, and especially since this study is concerned with the theological message of Revelation.

¹⁷²Thiessen, p. 28.

¹⁷³For example; just as many scriptures from all over the Bible are required in order to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, so would many references from apocalyptic works be required in order to establish the various Bible-based apocalyptic doctrines.

of the Messiah; the Messianic kingdom; the time of the end; life after death.

These doctrines are glued together to form the theological message of apocalyptic which says that God, who is in control of all existence,¹⁷⁴ has predetermined that history is to be unfolded according to his eternal plan.¹⁷⁵ A part of this plan is to allow Satan and his demons¹⁷⁶ to exert the power of evil over mankind.¹⁷⁷ This would cause suffering and tribulation to come upon humanity.¹⁷⁸ Yet at the same time, God's angels, as his messengers, play a part in manifesting the omnipresence of God and the protecting of his people.¹⁷⁹ Finally, opposition of the two forces, good and evil, comes to a head and God destroys Satan once and for all.¹⁸⁰ This is also a part of the predetermined plan.

Conclusion

It seems quite evident that the method of theological study can be applied to apocalyptic. It is also quite obvious that the general theological message of apocalyptic has many things in common with the general theological message, or theme of Revelation.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴Russell, Method and Message, pp. 205-213.

¹⁷⁵Schmithals, p. 18.

¹⁷⁶Russell, Method and Message, p. 254.

¹⁷⁷Howard, p. 80, notes that this evil was not due to man's sin, but due to the influence of fallen angels.

¹⁷⁸Kallas, p. 73, believes that suffering played a major role in the purpose of apocalyptic.

¹⁷⁹Russell, Method and Message, pp. 235-244.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., Britannica, p. 113.

¹⁸¹Just as the message of apocalyptic sets forth the divine plan of God in history, so, the book of Revelation sets forth the ideas that God

Writings Which Are Considered
Apocalyptic

Apocalyptic literature is found in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Apocrypha, and the Pseudipigrapha. Some works are entirely apocalyptic while other works contain only sections which can be described as apocalyptic. On the other hand, some works are not essentially apocalyptic, but contain certain themes or ideas running through them which are characteristic of apocalyptic. This does create a certain dilemma when attempting to define and group apocalyptic works. Leon Morris makes a statement in this regard when he says that:

The boundaries of apocalyptic are not well defined and those who know most about it are least apt to be dogmatic. But there are certain broad characteristics of the literature which goes by this name. At the very least, it is worth drawing attention to the kind of books that are in mind when the term is used, the general ideas which these books express, and the problems they raise.¹⁸²

The books and sections of books which bear these apocalyptic characteristics are as follows.

Old Testament Apocalyptic

The book of Ezekiel contains much material that is typical of apocalyptic. Porter maintains that it is the first work in which marked

is in control (Rev. 4; 5; 7; 11:15-19; 13:7; 15:20), that history is predetermined (Rev. 1:1; 6:11; 11:17-19; 13:8; 17:8; 19:11-21; 20), that Satan and his demons are at work (Rev. 9; 12; 17; 19:11-21; 20:3, 7-9); that tribulation comes as a result of evil (Rev. 2:10; 6:9-10; 14:12-13; 20:9); that God's angels are aware of all occurrences (Rev. 4:6-8; 5:2; 7:1; 8:3, 4, 6; 1:11; 11:15; 14:15, 17; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 20:1; 21:9), that the two opposing forces of good and evil would result in a final conflict (Rev. 12:7-17; 16:12-16; 19:11-21; 20:1-3; 10-15), and that the Messianic kingdom would be the result of the new age (Rev. 5:10; 7:15-17; 14:1-5; 15; 21; 22).

¹⁸²Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 23.

apocalyptic features first appear.¹⁸³ The book of Daniel contains much apocalyptic material, and can be described as the most important of the Jewish apocalypses.¹⁸⁴ Zechariah 1-8 also introduces important apocalyptic features, as does Joel. Both of these works make free use of older prophecies, and add new features descriptive of their day.¹⁸⁵ Classed among these apocalyptic sections are the oracles against the nations. These are found in Isaiah 13-23; Jeremiah 46-51; and Ezekiel 25-32. Later apocalyptists used these sections against the oppressive kingdoms of later times.¹⁸⁶

Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical Apocalyptic

While only some sections in the Old Testament Apocrypha are apocalyptic, almost all of the Pseudepigrapha are apocalyptic. As non-canonical writings, both the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical apocalyptic writings will be listed together.¹⁸⁷ The apocalypses are as follows: I Enoch 1-36,¹⁸⁸ I Enoch 83-90, Sibylline Oracles book three,¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³Porter, p. 21.

¹⁸⁴Swete. p. XXIV. Schmithals, pp. 189, 191, upholds this view, and gives Daniel priority of place in his list of apocalyptic works.

¹⁸⁵Porter, p. 24.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁸⁷This list of writings is taken from Swete, pp. XXV-XXVI; Thomson, pp. 164-178; Porter, pp. 299-352; Morris, Apocalyptic, pp. 21-23; Beckwith, pp. 181-197; Summers, pp. 8-16; F. C. Grant, Ancient Judaism and the New Testament (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1959), pp. 86-87; Schmithals, pp. 188-212.

¹⁸⁸I Enoch (also called Ethiopic Enoch, or the book of Enoch), consists of five separate sections. It is perhaps the most important of the non-canonical apocalypses relating to Christian doctrine (Summers, p. 9).

¹⁸⁹The Sibylline Oracles consists of eleven different books.

I Enoch 72-82, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Book of Jubilees,
I Enoch 91-108, I Enoch 37-71, The Assumption of Moses, The Martyrdom of
Isaiah, II Enoch, Psalms of Solomon, II Baruch, Sibylline Oracles book
four, II Esdras, Apocalypse of Abraham, and the Sibylline Oracles book
five.

New Testament Apocalyptic

Contained within the New Testament are some sections of books which bear all of the characteristics of apocalyptic. These sections include Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2; Jude 12-16; and a few other less important references. Of course, the epitome of New Testament apocalyptic is the book of Revelation itself.

Other Apocalyptic

There are many less important apocalyptic writings such as the Apocalypses of Adam, Elijah, Zephaniah, and so forth.¹⁹⁰ However, one set of writings worth considering is the Qumran scrolls. These consist of many apocalyptic elements, and the most obviously apocalyptic among them is the War Scroll. The Qumran community has helped greatly in the understanding of apocalyptic, due to their contribution to this literary phenomenon.¹⁹¹

However, only the earliest four will be considered here. Swete mentions that they are quite serviceable for illustrating the book of Revelation (Swete, p. XXVI).

¹⁹⁰Swete, p. XXVI.

¹⁹¹Morris, Apocalyptic, pp. 22-23. Refer to this article for a list of other Qumran writings which contain apocalyptic elements.

CHAPTER III

THE COLLECTING OF THE SYMBOLS OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE WHICH CORRESPOND TO THE SELECTED SYMBOLS OF REVELATION

Introduction

There is a general agreement among most scholars that the book of Revelation is an apocalyptic writing.¹ Although there are some noteworthy differences between Revelation and apocalyptic literature in general, there are also, however, many important similarities.

There is a notable amount of evidence to show that the early Christians were familiar with apocalyptic literature. There is also much evidence to prove that the writer of the book of Revelation used many apocalyptic symbols which were borrowed from and which alluded to many Jewish apocalypses.²

Although it is quite possible that an apocalyptic writer would borrow a symbol and then change its meaning in order to suit his purpose,³ it is also quite possible that an apocalyptic writer would

¹Many scholars attest to this. Among them: Frank C. Porter, The Message of the Apocalyptic Writers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), p. 5; Ferrell Jenkins, The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 34; Ibsen Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), p. 197; Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 78; and others.

²This included canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic writings. As has already been noted, these Jewish apocalypses were also influenced to some degree, by other sources.

³William Ferrar, The Apocalypse Explained for Readers of Today

borrow a symbol because its original meaning was relevant to his purpose.⁴ It is therefore possible that the writer of Revelation used many apocalyptic symbols from other writings because their original meanings were also relevant to the message which he was attempting to communicate.

In light of this assumption, some apocalyptic symbols which bear close similarities to selected symbols found in Revelation will be examined. It is possible that the messages found therein would shed some important light on the meanings of the symbols found in Revelation.

However, before these steps can be taken, it is necessary to establish a foundation upon which to build. This will include examining the significance of apocalyptic to early Christianity, and the relationship between the book of Revelation and apocalyptic literature.

The Significance of Apocalyptic to the Beginnings of Christianity

There is no doubt that apocalyptic literature was popular among the ancient Jews and early Christians. D. S. Russell notices its wide usage during that time and concludes: "The evidence points rather to the fact that apocalyptic was a fairly strong current in the mainstream of Judaism in the years immediately before and after the beginning of the Christian era."⁵

(New York: MacMillan and Company, 1936), p. 4. D. S. Russell, Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 184, also believes that many symbols were taken by Christian apocalyptists from Jewish apocalyptic and were adapted for their own purposes, not only by interpreting them in the light of Christ, but also by interpolating phrases and passages of a distinctly Christian character.

⁴This aspect will be dealt with in some detail below.

⁵Russell, p. 28. Consult this work for a detailed outline on the

The Christians in their turn, took over this literature and popularized it still more by adapting it to their own use.⁶ This was possible because the transcendent element⁷ contained in apocalyptic could be used by Christians and could help them to "express and elaborate and prove their new hopes centering in Jesus."⁸ With this in mind, Porter concludes: "It is not strange therefore that the Jewish apocalypses passed over from Judaism to Christianity, and the preservation of all that we have, after Daniel, is due to their use by Christians . . ."⁹

Many scholars¹⁰ believe that Jesus Himself used apocalyptic concepts in order to convey His message.¹¹ E. F. Scott even goes so far as to say: "That Jesus was in sympathy with the apocalyptic hopes of

development of the popularity of apocalyptic.

⁶Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Apocalyptic Literature" by D. S. Russell, pp. 112, 115. It must also be remembered that most of the early Christians had been brought up in the Jewish faith anyway, and would therefore have been familiar with Jewish apocalyptic. Ferrar, p. 9.

⁷This includes the messianic new age and the events surrounding it.

⁸Porter, p. 5. Porter adds to this statement by noticing that the conceptions used by the New Testament writers, such as angels, the messianic judgment, the future life, and so forth, are contained more in Jewish apocalyptic than anywhere else.

⁹Ibid. Beckwith, p. 197, says much the same thing.

¹⁰Among them; H. Betz, F. Porter, E. F. Scott, and others.

¹¹Jesus' discourse in Matthew 24 (cf. Mark 13) was typically apocalyptic, as was his preaching concerning the "end days," which would precede the sudden day of the coming of God. E. F. Scott, "The Place of Apocalyptical Conceptions in the Mind of Jesus," Journal of Biblical Literature 41 (1922): 139-141. Also, the important use which Jesus made of the book of Daniel (cf. Matt. 13:32; 24:30-32; 25:46; 26:64; Mk. 9:12; Lk. 13:39; 19:43) is very significant. Porter, p. 5. Also Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" is found in Daniel, I Enoch, and other apocalypses. Howard, p. 82.

his time and that he understood them in no merely metaphorical sense, can now be regarded as certain."¹²

Albert Schweitzer even believed that Jesus was an apocalypticist and died on the cross in order to "force God into the eschaton."¹³ While this may be an extreme view concerning Jesus' relationship to apocalyptic, and while other scholars do not even believe that Jesus used apocalyptic concepts,¹⁴ it must be admitted that a fair amount of apocalypticism is found in the New Testament.

Since Jesus used apocalyptic expression in one way or another,¹⁵ it would seem obvious that His disciples would have done the same.¹⁶

¹²Scott, p. 137. This view is developed by Ernst Kasemann, New Testament Questions of Today (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), pp. 111-137, who states that Jesus' preaching on mission, freedom, faith under fire, eschatology, and the kingdom, are all aspects of a primitive Christian apocalyptic which developed from a combination of Jewish apocalyptic and primitive Christian prophecy. He adds that on this basis, apocalyptic is the mother of Christian theology.

¹³Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1926), p. 369. Hans Betz, "The Concept of Apocalyptic in the Theology of the Pannenberg Group," Journal for Theology and the Church 6 (1969): 194, also notices the view held by U. Wilckens that even Christ's appearance, message, death, and resurrection can only be understood in apocalyptic terms.

¹⁴Among them, C. E. B. Cranfield (The Gospel According to St. Mark, [Cambridge; n.p., 1959], p. 388), who admits that while the language of apocalyptic may have been used, the concepts and the purpose are not in keeping with typical apocalyptic.

¹⁵M. Barker, "Slippery Words 3: Apocalyptic," Expository Times 86 (1978): 327, observes that at least one of the ways in which this apocalyptic expression found its way into New Testament Christianity was through its connection with prophecy. This is understood more clearly by noticing Kasemann's observation when he says that Jesus' statement (concerning the coming of the Son of man at the end time) in Mark 8:38 is clearly "a primitive Christian prophecy, proclaiming eschatological law." Kasemann, p. 111.

¹⁶This is detected in II Thessalonians 2; I Corinthians 15; and Revelation. Russell, Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 41-48, also sees the disciples as being

It can therefore be concluded that "the language of the apocalypticists has influenced that of the Christians"¹⁷ and that "the Jewish apocalyptic world of fancy and feeling entered deeply into the mind and heart of early Christianity."¹⁸

Differences Between the Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic

While the book of Revelation is undoubtedly the most conclusive example of the influence of Jewish apocalyptic upon the New Testament, one must at the same time, admit that many unique elements are also contained within its pages.

In this sense, Revelation contains some differences to the general characteristics of apocalyptic. The writer calls the Revelation a "prophecy" (Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19), while apocalyptic writings are usually distinguished from prophetic writings.¹⁹ Revelation is not pseudepigraphical (Rev. 1:4) while the apocalypses are. This is probably because John received his inspiration from Christ and not from a second-hand source and therefore had "no need to seek shelter under the name of a Biblical saint."²⁰ While the apocalypses are pessimistic

influenced by Christ's apocalypticism; especially in their discussions of the kingdom as a new divine order (Matt. 12:28), as the revealing of a mystery (Mk. 4:11), as a present event (Mk. 1:15), and as a future event (Mk. 14:62).

¹⁷Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 73.

¹⁸Porter, p. 299.

¹⁹Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John, Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 23. F. B. Vawter, "Apocalyptic: Its Relation to Prophecy," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 22 (1960): 33, concludes that Revelation belongs to the prophetic tradition.

²⁰Henry B. Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1907), p. xxviii. Ray

in the sense that the forces of evil were in control in the present age,²¹ Revelation is optimistic in the sense that "history is the place wherein God has wrought out redemption."²² While some apocalypses generally do not concern themselves with the denunciation of evil and the moral exhortations to nobler living, Revelation does.²³ While the apocalypses were generally esoteric in character, Revelation was an open letter which was to be circulated among the churches.²⁴ While the apocalypses indulged in the lengthy ex eventu prophecies of history, Revelation did not.²⁵ While the apocalypses waited for the Messiah to come and defeat Satan, Revelation pictures the Messiah as already victorious over Satan.²⁶

It is obvious that some noteworthy differences between Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic exist. These differences have caused some

Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 54, also adds to this by saying that Christianity had thrust the Old Testament into a subordinate place, and with Jesus as the new authority, new, inspired authors came to the fore.

²¹Jenkins, p. 41.

²²Morris, Revelation, p. 24. G. E. Ladd (Baker's Dictionary of Theology, s.v. "Apocalyptic" p. 53) helps to explain this by saying that: ". . . John embodies the prophetic tension between history and eschatology. . . . History is eschatologically interpreted."

²³Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 965. Evidence of this is seen in Revelation 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19.

²⁴Adela Yarbro Collins, "The History of Religions Approach to Apocalypticism and the 'Angel of the Waters,'" The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (July 1977): 340-341.

²⁵Ibid., p. 330. Morris Revelation, p. 24, sheds more light on this by saying that the apocalyptists retraced history in the guise of prophecy, while Revelation looked from its own days toward the future.

²⁶Morris, Revelation, p. 25.

scholars to question whether Revelation is truly an apocalyptic writing.²⁷ However, the vast majority of scholars hold the attitude expressed by John Collins, who maintains that all of the differences ". . . are superficial differences which do not reflect a significant change of perspective. There is no reason to deny 'that the Apocalypse is an apocalypse.'"²⁸

This statement by Collins makes much sense, especially when the similarities between Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic are seen.

Similarities Between the Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic

There are many more similarities between the book of Revelation and apocalyptic literature than there are differences. Some of the more important similarities include: The use of visions,²⁹ the use of

²⁷Among these scholars is James Kallas ("The Apocalypse: An Apocalyptic Book?" Journal of Biblical Literature 86 [1967]: 69-80), who suggests that while Revelation contains some apocalyptic characteristics, it is not to be regarded as an apocalyptic writing, because its attitude towards suffering is not in keeping with the basic hallmark of this type of literature. However, there is much evidence to show that Christians toward the end of the first century A.D. were persecuted (cf. Rev. 2:10; 6:9; 10), and in a general sense, their attitude toward persecution was much the same, as detected in the similarity of message between Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic.

²⁸Collins, p. 342.

²⁹Some examples of Revelation using similar visions to Jewish apocalyptic include: The throne of God and the four living creatures (cf. Rev. 4; and Ezek. 1), the four beasts (cf. Rev. 13; and Dan. 7), the apocalyptic description of destruction (cf. Rev. 6:12-17) and so forth.

symbolism,³⁰ the concept of dualism,³¹ the eschatological advent,³² the concept of determinism,³³ the philosophy of existence,³⁴ the historical

³⁰This is even seen when Revelation interprets some of its own visions such as the seven stars (Rev. 1:20), and the mystery of the harlot (Rev. 17:9-11).

³¹Just as the Jewish apocalyptists believed in two opposing forces and two opposing ages, so Revelation sets forth the opposition between good and evil (Rev. 19:11-21), and the contrast between the present evil age (Rev. 6:10; 9:1-21) and the glorious age to come (Rev. 21:9 - 22:5).

³²This includes the events surrounding the "last days." This consists of: A time of trouble (cf. Rev. 20:3, 7; and Isa. 13:9-11; Dan. 12:1), terror (cf. Rev. 9:5, 6; and Joel 2:1ff), people seeking for a place to hide (cf. Rev. 6:16; and I Enoch 102:1-2), murder (cf. Rev. 17:6; and I Enoch 100:1-2), earthquakes, famine, fire, and sword (cf. Rev. 6:1-12; and Ezek. 14:21; II Baruch 27:7), astronomical events (cf. Rev. 6:12-13; and Isa. 13:10; 24:23; I Enoch 80:4-6), the advent of the new age, the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:9-27; and II Esdras 10:44-59), the blessings contained therein (cf. Rev. 7:15-17; 22:1-5; and Jer. 31:12; Isa. 25:8), and the judgment scene (cf. Rev. 20:11-15; and Dan. 12:2).

³³As in Jewish apocalyptic, Revelation sets forth a predetermined system of events. This is detected in passages such as Revelation 1:19 ". . . what is to take place hereafter"; Revelation 6:11 ". . . until the number . . . should be complete"; Revelation 13:8 ". . . whose name . . . before the foundation of the world . . ."; and Revelation 20:7 "And when the thousand years are ended . . ."

³⁴This attitude that one must live in a cruel world and tolerate it until the new age dawns is detected in Revelation 2:10; 6:9-11; and 12:11; where it is seen that the suffering of the persecuted is a necessary but small price to pay for inheriting the kingdom.

perspective,³⁵ and the exhortation to ethical living.³⁶

Conclusion

While it is obvious that the early Church used apocalyptic literature, it must be recognized that Christians used it with their own purpose in mind. As Swete concludes in his discussion of the writing of the book of Revelation:

Whatever view may be taken of his indebtedness to Jewish sources, there can be no doubt that he has produced a book which, taken as a whole, is profoundly Christian, and widely moved from the field in which Jewish apocalyptic occupied itself. . . . The Jewish Messiah, an uncertain and unrealized idea, has given place to the historical, personal Christ, and the Christ of the Christian apocalypse is already victorious, ascended, and glorified.³⁷

In connection with this, Morris also says of Revelation:

While it has connections with apocalyptic it is yet different. It is a Christian writing setting forth what God has done in Christ and what He will yet do, and using something of the apocalyptic method to bring all this out.³⁸

In light of these observations, the application of Jewish apocalyptic symbols to the Christian situation will be studied.

³⁵Just as the apocalypstists saw history which consisted of past, present, and future all being bound up together (Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 64), so, it seems that Revelation does the same thing. Although John describes the situation of his day, his mixing of the tenses in his visions implies the use of a "unitary perspective" (W. Schmithals, The Apocalyptic Movement, trans. J. Steely [New York: Abington Press, 1975], p. 18). For example, John sees the heavenly worship scene as taking place now (Rev. 4, 5), and he sees the destruction of evil as taking place now (Rev. 6, 8, 9). Yet at the same time, he sees the destruction of evil as a future event (Rev. 18:9), the great tribulation as a future event (Rev. 20:7, 8), and the vindication of the elect as a future event (Rev. 6:11). This implies a "now and then" situation, all bound up in one.

³⁶This is seen in John's messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3), and in other places such as Revelation 9:4; 14:4, 12; and so forth.

³⁷Swete, p. xxix.

³⁸Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 81.

The Symbols of Revelation and Apocalyptic
Literature Selected for Comparison

Introduction

Since the purpose of this thesis is to discover the most theologically sound method of interpretation of Revelation through the study and application of apocalyptic symbols, it will be necessary to choose the symbols found in Revelation that could be used to help overcome the problem of divergent interpretations.

For that reason, it will be necessary to choose the symbols from Revelation which are "victims" of the most divergent interpretations. It would be senseless to use the symbols which the different interpretations generally agree upon.

Care will be taken to make sure that the selected symbols are typical of apocalyptic and that they are capable of conveying a theological message.

In some cases, a symbol used from Revelation will be added to by a number of other similar relevant symbols which, when combined together, will provide a more complete message.³⁹

The method of presentation of this section will be to select the relevant symbol, and under a pertinent heading, give the reference found in Revelation, give a brief description of the symbol, give some reasons why the symbol was chosen, and give the list of related references and symbols.⁴⁰

³⁹For example, the symbol conveying the "time of the end," can consist of the events contained in Revelation 12:7-17; 16:12-16; 19:11-21; 20:1-3, 7-10).

⁴⁰This list will consist of primarily the canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic symbols, and secondarily, all other Old Testament

The First Symbol: The Beast From the Sea

References in Revelation

The most important passage that deals with the beast from the sea, is found in Revelation 13:1-8. At the same time, however, Revelation 12:3-4, and Revelation 17:3, 7-16 cannot be ignored since they both contain many similarities to the beast of chapter 13.⁴¹

A description of the symbol

John sees a beast with ten horns and seven heads (Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3) rising out of the sea (Rev. 13:1), and wearing ten diadems (Rev. 13:1). (Rev. 12:3 shows the dragon wearing seven diadems.) With a blasphemous name (Rev. 13:1, 5; 17:3), it had the characteristics of a leopard, a lion, and a bear (Rev. 13:2). Having a mortal wound that was healed, men followed it with wonder and gave obeisance to it and the dragon (Rev. 13:3, 4, 8). It was then allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months (Rev. 13:5, 7) and make war on the saints and to conquer them (Rev. 13:7; 12:17; 17:6).

The reasons for choosing the symbol

There are three reasons for choosing this particular symbol. Firstly, as Beckwith states: "... the significance of the Beast ... forms a cardinal factor in the purpose and scope of the entire book."⁴² This means that the beast and all that it represents, is the cause of

and New Testament references which would have some bearing on the symbol found in Revelation.

⁴¹These similarities will be noted in the description of the symbol below.

⁴²Beckwith, p. 393.

concern for the recipients of the Revelation. The message of Revelation is designed to comfort the saints while in the shadow of this beast.

Secondly, the figure of the beast is derived from ancient traditions, including Canaanite and Babylonian myths and Hebrew folk legends where a monster opposes the supreme powers, and attempts to bring chaos into order, evil into good, and death into life.⁴³ These legends are found in apocalyptic and canonical writings, which bear many similarities to the figure described in Revelation.

Thirdly, there are many different and confusing interpretations concerning this beast,⁴⁴ and an attempt to eliminate some of the unfounded interpretations would be none too soon.

A List of related apocalyptic and scriptural references

The symbol of the beast in Revelation bears many close similarities to the beasts of Daniel 7:3-8, 15-28 and the winged eagle of II Esdras 11-12. These two references are considered to be the primary sources of John's vision.⁴⁵

Some of the similarities are as follows: The beast comes up out of the sea (Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:3; II Esd. 11:1). It has many heads (Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:4; II Esd. 11:1). It has power over the earth (Rev. 13:7;

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴The futurist sees the beast as the future revived Roman Empire under the leadership of the Antichrist (Mc Guiggan, p. 182). The preterist sees the beast as the Roman Empire in the early centuries as a civil persecuting power (Beckwith, p. 635). The continuous-historicist sees the beast as a Roman civil or secular power that sustained the Papacy in its career of persecution (Barnes, p. 1537). The philosophy of history school sees the beast simply as the forces of evil working through civil governments (Morris, Revelation, pp. 165-166).

⁴⁵Ferrar, pp. 13-14.

Dan. 7:6; II Esd. 11:5,6). It has eagles wings (Dan. 7:4; II Esd. 11:1). It has horns (Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:7), and diadems upon the horns (Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:7). It appears as a leopard, a bear, and a lion (Rev. 13:2; Dan. 7:4-6). (II Esd. 11:39 mentions "four beasts".) It had a head that "woke up" and took control (Rev. 13:3; II Esd. 11:29-35). It uttered blasphemous things (Rev. 13:6; Dan. 7:8). It made war on God's people (Rev. 13:7; Dan. 7:21; II Esd. 11:40). It was finally destroyed (Rev. 19:20; Dan. 7:11; II Esd. 11:40-46).

While Daniel 7 and II Esdras 11-12 can be considered the primary sources, there are however, many other secondary sources which could shed light on the symbol of the beast. Hosea 13:7-9 also mentions the imagery of the lion, bear, and leopard. Sibylline Oracles 2:25 mentions the beast. Assumption of Moses 10:8; II Baruch 39:5ff; 36:5-10; and II Esdras 12:11ff refer to and attempt to interpret, or reinterpret, the fourth beast of Daniel 7:23. In this same sense, a sea dragon opposing God is mentioned in Isaiah 27:1. Ezekiel 32:2 also refers to Egypt as a sea dragon which will eventually be destroyed (Ezek. 32:3-8; Ps. 87:4; 89:10, 11; Isa. 30:7). II Baruch 67:7; I Maccabees 1:24; Assumption of Moses 8:5, refers to the blasphemous nature of a beast.

The Second Symbol: The Concept of Time

References in Revelation

While there is no specific symbol relating to the concept of time, there are many examples found in Revelation where the existence of a symbol lasts for a certain period of time. It is possible that the understanding of the Revelation may have much to do with the understanding of John's use of these certain periods of time. One of

the most prominent periods of time found in Revelation is the period of forty-two months.

The forty-two month period is found in Revelation 11:2; 13:5. This same period is referred to as 1260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), and as a "time, times, and half a time" (Rev. 12:14).

A description of the symbols

Revelation 11:2 mentions the holy city being trampled by the nations for forty two months. Revelation 11:3 talks about the power of the two witnesses to prophecy for 1260 days. Revelation 12:6 talks about the wilderness where the woman is to be nourished by God for 1260 days. Revelation 12:14 mentions the nourishment of the woman for "a time, times, and half a time." Revelation 13:5 mentions the exercising of the authority of the beast for forty-two months.

Revelation 20:2, 3, 7, mentions the seizing of Satan, binding him for a thousand years, and then releasing him for a period of time after the thousand years.

The reasons for choosing this symbolism

There are three reasons for choosing these symbols of time. Firstly, just as the symbol of the beast seems to underlie the message of Revelation, so the forty-two months and the thousand years seem to underlie the time-span with which this message is concerned.

Secondly, the Hebrews concept of time was different to modern man's. As Russell observes:

They thought of time not as an abstract idea, but rather in terms of the quality of the event or occurrence which it marked. The passing of time is essentially a succession of real content; not its measurement, but rather its substance, its quality, its character

was what mattered for the Hebrews. They were not absorbed, as we are today, in a historic consciousness, Nor did they think of time in terms of past, present, and future.⁴⁶

A proper understanding of this concept of time could have a great impact on the understanding of the symbols, and on their interpretation.⁴⁷

Thirdly, there are some very different interpretations concerning these periods of time.⁴⁸

A list of related apocalyptic and scriptural references

The period of the forty-two months is found only in the book of Daniel. In Daniel 7:25, the eleventh horn is described as a blasphemous persecuter of God's people who will rule for "a time, times, and half a time." In Daniel 12:7, a man clothed in linen tells Daniel that the events surrounding the time of trouble will last for "a time, times, and

⁴⁶Russell, Method and Message, p. 206.

⁴⁷The interpretations of the Futurist, Continuous-historical, and even to a degree, the Preterist, are based upon the unfolding of time-bound events. If, according to Hebrew thought, time was not linear, but qualitative, then it is possible that historic events are not as important as some of these interpretations would have us believe.

⁴⁸The futurist sees the forty-two months as being the last three and a half years of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24-27 (Mc Guiggan, p. 152). The continuous-historicist sees it as being the period in which the Papacy prevails (Barnes, p. 1645). The preterist sees it as "the period of the last terrible sway of Satan in the world before the coming of the Lord" (Beckwith, p. 252), the period of protected Christianity (Caird, p. 152), the protection of Christians from Rome (Mc Guiggan, p. 150). Many other views also exist. For some of these, see McGuiggan, p. 151. The period of a thousand years is seen by the futurist as a literal period of time when Christ reigns on earth (Lindsey, p. 166). The continuous-historicist sees it as a period when righteousness will reign (Barnes, p. 1711). The preterist sees it as the perfect binding of Satan's work in Rome against the Church (Mc Guiggan, p. 274). The philosophy of history school sees it as representing the whole of time between Christ's first and second comings (Morris, Revelation, p. 234). For some other views, see Mc Guiggan, pp. 274-276.

half a time." Daniel 12:11 mentions the same period as taking place in 1290 days.

A secondary reference that would help to shed some light on the understanding of the forty-two months is found in the Ascension of Isaiah 4:12, which mentions that the last world power will rule for three years, seven months, and twenty seven days (this could have some bearing on the 1335 days of Daniel 12:12). II Esdras 5:4 speaks of a time after the "third period" which will become the "time of God." I Kings 18:1ff; Luke 4:25; James 5:17, mentions the drought caused by Elijah which lasted for three and a half years. II Esdras 5:4 and Luke 21:24 refer to the "time of the Gentiles" in light of the forty-two month period and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Third Symbol: The Final Conflict

References in Revelation

The references in Revelation concerning the conflict surrounding the time of the end are found specifically in chapters 19:11-21 and 20:1-3, 7-15, with chapters 6:12-17; 12:7-17 and 16:12-16 adding some pertinent details.

Description of the symbols

The combinations of these symbols consists of a heavenly battle between God's host and Satan's henchmen (Rev. 12:7-9; 19:13). The result of this battle is felt on earth when mankind is made to suffer because of foul spirits that issue from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13-14). The followers of these demonic spirits gather with the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet to make war on God at a place called Armageddon (Rev. 16:14-16). At

this war which takes place on the great day of God the Almighty (Rev. 16:14; 19:15), the Word of God, who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:13, 16), is dressed in a bloody robe (Rev. 19:13), wears a sharp sword (Rev. 19:15), and sits on a white horse (Rev. 19:11). He makes war on the Satanic host (Rev. 19:19-20; 20:1-3, 10), he smites the nations with a rod of iron, and he treads the grapes of wrath (Rev. 14:18-20; 19:11-15). The beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), and their followers are also slain and thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:21; 20:15). Then the dragon, who is Satan, is bound and released (Rev. 20:1-3, 7), only to be thrown, once and for all, into the same lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). This lake of fire is the second death (Rev. 20:14). In all of this, the faithful saints are made to suffer (Rev. 12:10, 17; 20:9). However, they are able to overcome (Rev. 12:11; 20:6) because they "loved not their lives even unto death" (Rev. 12:11).

The reasons for choosing this symbol

This particular symbol was chosen for four basic reasons. Firstly, it is a prime example of apocalyptic dualism and eschatology, and it has many close similarities with other apocalyptic symbols. The concept of the "time of the end" is also quite common in non-apocalyptic canonical writings. Secondly, this symbol has been interpreted quite differently by the various methods.⁴⁹ Thirdly, the eschatological hope

⁴⁹The futurist method believes that this symbolizes a future battle between God and Satan, and a future battle between physical world powers (Mc Guiggan, p. 232). The preterist believes that it refers to the downfall of Rome (Caird, pp. 204, 207). The continuous-historicist believes that it refers to the struggle of the church against the Papacy, the Turks, and the Mohammedans, who are Satan's henchmen, and who are finally overcome and destroyed by Christ (Barnes, pp. 1537-1538). The philosophy of history school believes that it refers to

underlies the essential theme of Revelation and can be detected throughout the whole book. Fourthly, the symbolism of the eschatological event includes both transcendent and temporal elements. That is, a combination, or working together, of the spiritual and physical aspects of life.

A list of related apocalyptic and scriptural references

For a more complete understanding of the eschatological event, it will be necessary to give and explain the many references which, when combined, form a more complete picture. These references will consist of non-canonical apocalyptic, Old Testament apocalyptic, New Testament apocalyptic, and whenever necessary, other references which will have a bearing on the symbol in Revelation.

The final conflict (eschatological event) will arise because of the two opposing ages and powers,⁵⁰ which cannot exist side by side. This conflict will consist of a heavenly battle (compare Rev. 12:7; 19:11; and Sibylline Oracles 3:796-808), between God's host and Satan's henchmen (compare Rev. 12:7; 16:14; 19:19; and I Enoch 10:13ff; 62:2).

One of God's chief warriors in this battle is the angel Michael (Rev. 12:7), who is the patron angel of the saints in Israel (I Enoch 20:2), who guards Israel against the onslaught of ungodly powers (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1) who are in turn represented by patron (demonic) angels (Sirach 17:17; Jubilees 15:31-32). Not only does Michael do battle in place of the Messiah, who at this stage is passive (I Enoch 90:37; II

nothing more than the power of evil which is and will be overcome by Christ (Morris, Revelation, pp. 230-232).

⁵⁰For more detail on this aspect, refer to the discussion on dualism on page 53 above.

Esdras 4:27; 7:28; II Baruch 29:3), but he also acts as mediator between God and righteous men (Testament of Levi 5:7; Testament of Daniel 6:2) and defends the faithful against the accusations of Satan (compare Rev. 12:10; and Testament of Levi 5:6; Testament of Daniel 7:2, 3; I Enoch 11:7; 40:7). This all involves a battle between Michael and Satan the antagonist (Jubilees 10:8, 11; Testament of Daniel 6:1), which takes place in the last times (Dan. 12:1; I Enoch 90:14; Assumption of Moses 10:2).

Another chief warrior is the Messiah himself (compare Rev. 19:13-16; and Psalms of Solomon 17:23-27). He is faithful, true, and righteous (compare Rev. 3:14; 19:11; and I Enoch 38:2; 53:6). He leads the heavenly host (compare Rev. 19:13; and Testament of Levi 3:3; II Enoch 17; II Esdras 19:6), who are the faithful (II Esdras 7:32). He wars against Satan who attempts to set his throne on an equality with God (II Enoch 29:4-5), in heaven (Job 1:6, 7; Zech. 3:1; I Enoch 40:7; Ascension of Isaiah 7:9ff; II Enoch 7:1). As a result of this war, the Messiah casts Satan out of heaven, down to earth (compare Rev. 12:9; and II Enoch 29:4-5; Luke 10:18; Jude 6, 9).

While on the earth, Satan's influence through the demonic spirits (compare Rev. 16:13, 14 and I Enoch 15:8, 9, 11; 16:1, 19; 99:7) causes suffering and death for man on earth (compare Rev. 12:17; and Wisdom of Solomon 2:24; II Enoch 66:6; II Esdras 4:2, 27).⁵¹ This occurred because man was corruptible (compare Rev. 16:14; and II Esdras 4:11).

However, the present suffering was seen to be done away (compare Rev. 19:11ff; and II Esdras 7:31; II Baruch 44:9, 12). This was to take

⁵¹For more detail concerning the eschatological event and man's suffering on earth, refer to page 54, footnote 108.

place on the great day of God (Rev. 16:14; 19:15; II Pet. 3:12), which was to occur at the end of time (I Enoch 16:1; Jubilees 10:5-11; Assumption of Moses 1:18; II Baruch 27:15; 29:88.⁵² This was to take place at "Armageddon" (compare Rev. 16:16; and I Enoch 56:7; 90:13-19), where the Messiah was to defeat the beast, false prophet, kings of the earth, and wicked people (compare Rev. 19:20, 21; and II Esdras 7:31, 37; 8:1; 12:32; II Baruch 39-40; 44:9, 12; I Enoch 10:13ff; 62:2; Assumption of Moses 1:18; II Baruch 27:15; 29:8; 54:21; I Enoch 50:2; 90:19; 91:12; 95:7; 96:1; 98:12). In fact, anyone hostile to god would be defeated (Sibylline Oracles 3:740; Tobit 13:11; 14:6ff). The Messiah would carry out this judgment with rod (or sword) of his mouth (compare Rev. 19:15, 21; Psalm 2:9; Psalms of Solomon 17:26, 27, 39; I Enoch 62:2).

As a final event, the binding of Satan's powers takes place (compare Rev. 20:1, 2; and Isa. 24:22; I Enoch 18:11-16; 19:1-2; 21:1-10; 10:13-15; 54:6). Satan is then punished temporarily (I Enoch 10:4-5), but is then let loose only to be punished eternally (compare Rev. 20:7, 10; and I Enoch 10:6).

Some other New Testament references which deal with the "last days" and related subjects are Matthew 24:21-31; Mark 13:21-27; Luke 21:25-28; I Corinthians 15:24-28; I Thessalonians 4:14-17; II Thessalonians 2:1-12; II Timothy 3:1-7; II Peter 3:1-13; I John 2:18-29.

⁵²Notice how both the Messiah and Michael (Dan. 12:1; I Enoch 90:14; Assumption of Moses 10:2) defeat Satan and his henchmen at the end of time.

Conclusion

The symbols relating to the beast, the concept of time, and the final conflict, were chosen not only for the reasons already stated, but also for the fact that they are very much interwoven with each other. The combination of these three symbols produces in a nutshell the theme of Revelation. For example, the beast, which represents the influence of an evil power over the lives of God's people, exists for a certain period of time. However, during this period of time, God's people are protected and sustained. Finally, the beast is destroyed by the Messiah in the final conflict.

Another reason for choosing these three symbols is the fact that they represent both the physical and the transcendent elements. For example, the beast represents the physical side, the final conflict represents the spiritual side (breaking into the physical), and the period of time represents the existence (state of affairs) of the situation.

In order to understand the meanings of these symbols, not only are they to be interpreted in light of the apocalyptic message, but they are also to be interpreted in light of each other.

At this point it must be stressed that not every single apocalyptic and biblical passage mentioned above will be dealt with. Time and space will not allow this. However, the more important, weightier passages which deal more specifically with the symbols in question will be used. The other passages will have been mentioned to show the extent to which the symbolism has been used in apocalyptic literature.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESEARCH INTO, AND APPLICATION OF THESE SYMBOLS AS AN AID TO INTERPRETING REVELATION

Introduction

As has already been observed, the beast from the sea, the apocalyptic concept of time, and the final conflict are the symbols which have been chosen for research.

The study of these symbols will be used as a hermeneutic principle by which the theological message of Revelation is attained.¹

The Beast From the Sea

Related Apocalyptic Symbols

Hosea 13:7-9

In this passage, Hosea is prophesying the destruction of Israel. He describes the means of destruction by saying that God will be to them like a lion, a leopard, and a bear; and that as these animals tear and devour their prey, so Israel will be destroyed.

This warning was made by God through Hosea because of the Israelite nation's sins.²

¹It is important at this stage to realize that the hermeneutical system and the theological approach used in this study bear many close similarities and complement each other. Refer to the detailed diagram on appendix B which illustrates the interrelationship between the hermeneutical system and the theological approach, and the part they play in the system of this study.

²By the time Hosea started preaching (a short time before

Although there is no evidence to suggest that each animal represented a specific nation, history has proven that Israel was destroyed first by the Assyrians (who captured the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.) and then by the Babylonians (who captured the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C.). Therefore, in a general sense, the beasts did represent foreign nations.³

With this in mind, it can be concluded that the lion, leopard, and bear in Hosea 13:7-9 represent nations which ultimately caused havoc with God's people. It is possible that Daniel may have noticed this and may have reinterpreted Hosea's animals to represent specific nations in Daniel 7.

Daniel 7:3-8, 15-28

Daniel saw four great beasts coming up out of the sea.⁴ They are interpreted as four kings who shall arise out of the earth. The fourth beast will make war with the saints and will prevail over them, only to be destroyed himself in the end, while the saints reign in an everlasting kingdom.

Jeroboam's death which occurred in 743 B.C.), the northern kingdom of Israel had deteriorated into an apostate, idolatrous nation, which courted the Assyrian and Egyptian nations. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Hosea," by James Robertson. Some of the specific sins of Israel were; lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6), pride (Hos. 5:5), instability (Hos. 6:4), wordliness (Hos. 7:8), backsliding (Hos. 11:7), and idolatry (Hos. 13:2). George L. Robinson, The Twelve Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1926), pp. 23-25.

³This is strengthened by the fact that Babylon was an instrument in the hands of God (Jer. 20:4).

⁴The first was like a lion with eagle's wings. The second was like a bear with three ribs in its mouth. The third was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. The fourth was a strong destroyer with iron teeth and ten horns.

It is imperative that this vision be seen in light of the background of the writing of Daniel. The Israelite nation was, at the time of the writing of Daniel, in great distress because of the gentile nation which was oppressing them.⁵ It was possible that they had begun to lose faith in the God who had at one time promised that David's throne would not be vanquished (Psalm 89:3-4, 26-29). It is also possible that their expectation of the coming of the Messiah was destroyed because of the disappearance of the throne of David. These thoughts, along with their impending persecution, caused the Jews to be in great distress. Daniel rises to the occasion and attempts to restore the people's hope by convincing them that the destruction of David's throne is only temporary, and that it will one day be restored (Dan. 7:17-18). He reminds the people that the present situation was brought upon themselves because of their own iniquity (Dan. 8:12, 23; 9:3-19; 24; 11:30-34; 12:2, 10; cf. Ps. 89:30-32). He then shows them that God is sovereign and omnipotent (Dan. 1:2; 3; 5:25-30; 6), and because of this, his promise to David will not change (Dan. 7:17-18 cf. Ps. 89:33-37). With regard to the Messianic kingdom, Daniel convinces the people

⁵Whether Daniel was written in the sixth or in the second century B.C. is irrelevant at this stage because in both periods of Jewish history, the Israelites were in a state of persecution. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took the Israelites captive to Babylon (II Kings 25:1-12), where they remained until they were set free by Cyrus in 536 B.C. Conservative scholars claim that Daniel was written during this time. Liberal scholars believe that Daniel was written during the time of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes (around 165 B.C.) and was intended to encourage the persecuted Jews. In any event, in both cases, the Jews were being persecuted and were in need of encouragement. However, as has already been observed on page 33, footnote 14, this study opts for the sixth century date. Gleason Archer, A Study of Old Testament Introduction, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 379-403, argues effectively for a sixth century date.

not to give up hope, because the kingdom will indeed come, but only after the fourth world kingdom has come (Dan. 2, 7).⁶ This is the general purpose for the writing of Daniel.

It would seem that the recipients of Daniel's message would want more information concerning these four world powers. Daniel gives it to them.⁷

The vast majority of scholars have concluded that the four beasts represent four world empires. Conservative scholars hold that the lion represents the Babylonian empire, the bear represents the Medo-Persian empire, the leopard represents the Greek empire, and the fourth beast represents the Roman empire.⁸ Liberal scholars hold that the lion represents the Babylonian empire, the bear represents the Medes, the leopard represents the Persians, and the fourth beast represents the Greek empire.⁹

⁶This outline of events relating to Daniel's purpose for writing was taken from Jim McGuiggan, The Book of Daniel (Lubbock, Texas: Montex Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 18-20.

⁷It seemed like a necessary thing to do because speaking in vague generalities may not have had the calming effect that Daniel was attempting to achieve. He gives so much exact detail (even though they are given through symbols) that many scholars (mostly the liberals) find it difficult to believe that the vision could have been prophesied, and conclude that Daniel must have been personally present. Archer, p. 395.

⁸Among these scholars are G. Archer, pp. 396-398; R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, revised ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 1127-1128; J. Mc Guiggan, Daniel, p. 136; E. J. Young, The Prophecy of Daniel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 141-147; and J. Copeland, A Study of Daniel (Abilene, Texas: Quality Publications, 1973), p. 36. It is also interesting to note that they all see the four kingdoms of Daniel 7 as the same four kingdoms represented by the parts of the image of Daniel 2. They also use the detailed descriptions of the beasts to prove that they symbolize the four world empires. Consult these works for the details.

⁹Among these scholars are C. F. Keil, The Book of Daniel, trans. M. G. Easton, eds. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on

In all of this, whether one accepts the conservative or the liberal interpretation, the same message is still communicated: The beasts represent various world empires which dominate the lives of God's people.

To the Jews, these empires were considered evil because as long as they remained, Israel would be subjected and persecuted. The mere description of these beasts serves to convey that message. As Joyce Baldwin observes:

In eagerness to identify the beasts it is important not to miss the emotional reactions these fierce symbols arouse . . . The reader is meant to register terror before these fearsome beasts, especially in view of their supernatural features, and not regard them merely as signs, satisfactorily interpreted by reason alone. Moreover animals, normal, hybrid and mythical, depicting gods, cities and nations, though a common sight in Babylon, were repulsive to the exiles who lived by the law of Moses.¹⁰

It can therefore be concluded that the Jews were shown, through Daniel's vision, that they were to suffer persecution by various nations for many years to come. However, in the very same vision, Daniel sees the coming of the everlasting kingdom of the Son of man (Dan. 7:9-14, 22-27). The establishment of this kingdom causes the destruction of the

the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 223-228, and James A. Montgomery, The Book of Daniel, eds. S. Driver, A. Plummer and C. Briggs, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1927), pp. 286-290. It seems that the major reason why the liberal scholars insist on this particular interpretation of the four empires is that they cannot accept that Daniel could prophesy so many intricate details about the Roman empire. However, if the fourth beast was the Greek empire then (according to the liberals) there is a strong possibility that Daniel was there at the time, and the so-called "prophecies" were simply the recordings of historical facts. It must be stressed at this point that this study rejects the liberal interpretation, which is argued against very effectively by Archer, p. 397; Harrison, pp. 1127-1128; Copeland, p. 36; and Mc Guigan, Daniel, p. 62.

¹⁰Joyce G. Baldwin, Daniel, ed. D. J. Wiseman, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), pp. 138-139.

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fourth kingdom¹¹ (Dan. 7:11, 26), of which many terrifying details are given.¹²

Therefore, added to this conclusion is the fact that although the people of God are to suffer persecution by these world powers,¹³ it is a foregone conclusion (due to Daniel's vision) that they will overcome these evil persecuting powers because God has so decreed.¹⁴

II Esdras 11-12

The writer of the apocryphal book of II Esdras saw coming up out of the sea an eagle with twelve wings and three heads. It reigned over the earth, and subjected all things to it. While doing so, its wings seemed to have wills of their own, taking turns to rule the earth. Eventually, the three heads gained control over the earth, oppressing the inhabitants. However, they began to destroy each other. About that time, a creature like a lion addressed the eagle on behalf of the Most High and said to it, "Are you not the one that remains of the four beasts which I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of my times might come through them?"¹⁵ The lion then proceeds to pass

¹¹This everlasting kingdom is also represented by the rock which was hewn out of the mountain, and which crushed the image in Daniel 2. Young, pp. 77-80.

¹²These details will be discussed when the study on Revelation 13 is made below.

¹³Especially the fourth power (Dan. 7:21, 25), which rules the people of God for "a time, two times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25).

¹⁴This philosophy is in keeping with apocalyptic dualism, determinism, and eschatology. For the details, refer back to pages 53-54, 58.

¹⁵II Esdras 11:39 in The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Revised Standard Version, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 51. This eagle is therefore equated with the fourth beast of Daniel 7. As II Esdras 12:11 says: "The eagle which you saw

judgment on the eagle and foretells its destruction. After that, the vision is explained to the writer.¹⁶

The background situation of II Esdras has a great bearing on its message. As a Jew, the writer of II Esdras was obviously perplexed when he saw the suffering of his people at the hands of the Roman Empire. He realized that this situation had to be dealt with, and towards the end of the first century A.D.¹⁷ wrote this book in order to establish three things: to denounce the wickedness of Rome, to lament the sorrows that had befallen Jerusalem, and to attempt to understand the reconciliation of God's justice, wisdom, power, and goodness with the many evils that

coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel."

¹⁶The details of this vision refer specifically to the Roman empire. Even Bruce Metzger, who takes the liberal approach to Daniel, and who therefore believes that Daniel's fourth kingdom is the Greek empire, admits that II Esdras "reinterprets" the fourth kingdom to refer to the Roman empire. Metzger, Apocrypha, p. 51. Other scholars (some of whom also take the liberal view to Daniel's date of writing) who also believe the eagle of II Esdras refers to the Roman empire are: Frank C. Porter, The Message of the Apocalyptical Writers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), p. 349; L. H. Brockington, A Critical Introduction to the Apocrypha (London: Gerald Buckworth and Company, 1961), p. 24; W. Schmithals, The Apocalyptic Movement, trans. J. Stealy (New York: Abington Press, 1975), p. 199; H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, 2nd ed. (London: Butterworth Press, 1947), p. 117; and Charles C. Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature: A Brief Introduction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 122. Taken at face value, it seems that the conservative view which interprets Daniel's fourth kingdom as Rome, agrees with the view in II Esdras that Daniel's fourth kingdom is Rome.

¹⁷Bruce M. Metzger, An Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 22, and Russell, Between the Testaments, p. 81, date the writings of II Esdras about A.D. 90. It must also be noted that while chapters 3 to 14 were written by a Jew towards the end of the first century A.D., chapters 1 and 2 were written later by a Christian, and chapters 15 and 16 were also added at a later stage by a Jew or a Christian. L. H. Brockington, p. 20, describes this in detail.

beset mankind.¹⁸ This was possibly sparked by the destruction of Jerusalem years before.¹⁹ The essence of II Esdras is captured by Bruce Metzger when he observes that:

In spite of the essentially pessimistic outlook of the book, the seer's strong religious faith enabled him to rise above the fires of adversity to high spiritual levels. His agonizing is both honorable and pathetic as he seeks "to justify the ways of God to man."²⁰

In all of this, one message comes through clearly. In spite of the present suffering and tribulation of God's people,²¹ a glorious future will come when the oppressive nation will be destroyed and God's people will be freed and vindicated by the Messiah.²²

Since the dating of II Esdras is very close to the dating of the book of Revelation, it is possible that Revelation may not have used II Esdras as a source. On the other hand, it may have. One thing is certain; the similarities between these two writings are very close in many places.²³

¹⁸Metzger, Oxford Apocrypha, p. 23.

¹⁹Russell, Between the Testaments (Philadelphia: the Muhlenburg Press, 1960), p. 81. This is in keeping with the fact that apocalyptic is produced in times of crisis.

²⁰Metzger, Oxford Apocrypha, p. 23.

²¹To the writer of II Esdras, this referred to the Jewish nation.

²²This message reaches its climax in II Esdras 11-12.

²³If Revelation did not use II Esdras as a source, it is then quite possible that they both had a similar source, or alternatively, were the products of a similar apocalyptic tradition. Some of the similarities between II Esdras and Revelation are as follows: The end of the present age is not far off (Rev. 1:3; II Esd. 4:44ff.); the voice of the Messiah sounds like many waters (Rev. 1:15; II Esd. 6:17); the seer fainted at the sight of the vision (Rev. 1:17; II Esd. 5:14); four winds are involved (Rev. 7:1; II Esd. 13:5); a multitude of peaceful followers exists (Rev. 7:9; 14:1-5; II Esd. 13:12); the wicked prosper (Rev. 11:7-10; II Esd. 5:10-13); the wicked trample God's people underfoot (Rev. 11:2; 20:9; II Esd. 8:55-57); the wicked will rule for a while

It can therefore safely be concluded that II Esdras is attempting to encourage his people in the face of Roman oppression.²⁴ This is done by revealing enough details in his visions to help the people identify the oppressors and then by describing their oppressor's destruction at the hands of the Messiah. Again, this is the result of the predetermined plan of God.²⁵

II Baruch 39:5-8

The writer of II Baruch says:

After that, a fourth kingdom arises whose power is harsher and more evil than those which were before it, and it will reign a multitude of times like the trees on the plain, and it will rule the times and exalt itself more than the cedars of Lebanon.²⁶

(Rev. 13:5 ff; 17:6; II Esd. 5:6); the beast from the sea will oppress God's people (Rev. 13:1 ff; II Esd. 11-12); the Messiah will then be revealed with his host (Rev. 19:13-14; II Esd. 7:28); he will come in the clouds, land on mount Zion, and will be attacked by a multitude of wicked men (Rev. 14:14-16; 16:14-16; II Esd. 13:5-11); he will then destroy them with fire from his mouth (Rev. 16:14-16; 19:17-21; II Esd. 13:5-11); the mountains and depths will be affected (Rev. 8:7-13; II Esd. 8:23); the resurrection of all men will occur before the great judgment scene (Rev. 20:11-15; II Esd. 7:31-37); where the books of judgment are opened (Rev. 20:12; II Esd. 6:20); and finally, the prophesied appearing of the new and holy city of Zion will take place (Rev. 21:1-22:5; II Esd. 7:26; 10:27, 44-45). In all of this, the understanding of the symbolism in one book could help the understanding of the symbolism in the other. It must, however, be remembered that Jewish expectation of the Messiah (that he has not yet come) is different from the Christian expectation of the Messiah (that he has come, that he returned to his Father, and that he will be coming again at the end of the days).

²⁴II Esdras 9:38-10:48 describes in detail the oppressive nature of the Romans. This is made manifest in the destruction of Jerusalem and the tribulation of the Jews. For more detail relating to this, consult the sources mentioned on page 101, footnote 16, which establishes the Roman Empire as the oppressive nation.

²⁵This is seen in the fact that God shows the seer the things which must take place.

²⁶A. F. J. Klijn, "II Baruch," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company

In light of the date of writing and the background of II Baruch,²⁷ it is obvious that the writer is here referring to Rome as the fourth kingdom.

While II Baruch does not mention any specific beast, he does mention the fact that the fourth kingdom was more devastating than the previous ones. This is in keeping with Daniel 7:7; 8:17-20.

Add to this the fact that II Baruch 5-8 also mentions that it is during the time of this fourth kingdom when the Messiah will come to conquer.²⁸

Again, the conclusion to II Baruch 39:5-8 is that the fourth kingdom is a foreign nation (the Roman empire) which oppresses God's people (the Jewish nation of Israel), and which will ultimately be destroyed by the Messiah.

Inc., 1983), p. 633.

²⁷ Many noteworthy scholars such as Klijn, p. 617, Schmithals, p. 199, and Andrews, p. 59, believe that II Baruch was written between A.D. 70 and A.D. 100. Andrews also mentions R. H. Charles, who believes that it consisted originally of various documents written between A.D. 50 and A.D. 100 and were then edited or rewritten into its present form around A.D. 130. He also notices that C. C. Torrey holds that the whole of II Baruch was written prior to A.D. 70 and that the apparent allusion to the destruction of the temple was a later secondary interpolation. Andrews, p. 59. In any event, it seems quite safe to conclude that II Baruch was written between A.D. 70 and A.D. 100. It was during this time that the Jews were being oppressed by the Roman empire. C. C. Torrey believes that the cedar of II Baruch 35 ff. is also the fourth kingdom of II Baruch 39, which is the Roman empire. C. C. Torrey, p. 125.

²⁸ This is again mentioned in II Baruch 39:7-8 where the writer says:

"And it will happen when the time of its fulfillment is approaching in which it will fall, that at that time the dominion of my anointed one which is like the fountain and the brine, will be revealed." Klijn, p. 633.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion, based upon Hosea 13:7-9; Daniel 7:3-8, 15-28; II Esdras 11-12; II Baruch 39:5-8, is that the beasts all represent foreign empires which are bent upon oppressing God's people. One clear message that keeps appearing is that one of the beasts, the fourth, which is also the fourth empire or kingdom, is more devastating than the previous ones. It is during the reign of this kingdom that the Messiah comes.

The Application of These Symbols to the Interpretation of Revelation

Introduction

It is very obvious that there are many strong similarities between the beast of Revelation 13 and the symbols found in Hosea 13, Daniel 7, II Esdras 11-12, and II Baruch 39.

Although the writer of Revelation uses these symbols and messages for his own purpose, it takes little effort to realize the similarities and to understand the basic message that John was trying to convey.

This next section of study will concentrate on specific parts of the beast of Revelation 13:1-7. Wherever they match the symbols discussed above, an examination of that part of the symbol will take place.²⁹ This will also take into account related symbols and concepts which would help to shed light on the overall message.

The beast comes up out of the sea

In Revelation 13:1, John sees the beast coming out of the sea. Daniel 7:3 and II Esdras 11:1 see the same thing. This means that the

²⁹Refer to page 84 for these parts of the symbol.

sea plays an important part in the symbolism. It is possible that an ancient traditional mythology is drawn upon. Leviathan,³⁰ the sea-monster, features quite prominently in this mythology and in the Old Testament prophets.³¹ Isaiah 27:1 describes Leviathan as "the twisting serpent" and as "the dragon that is in the sea." In each case it is mentioned, this sea dragon is destroyed by God because of its resistance to him and because of its oppression of God's people. In Isaiah 30:7,

³⁰Leviathan. In Hebrew לִיָּאָתָן is taken from the root נָתַף which means, "to turn, twist, surround, or encircle." F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 531.

³¹Beckwith, p. 633 mentions this traditional mythology. R. B. Y. Scott mentions the closeness of the biblical mention of Leviathan to the Canaanite myth which has been found in the Ras Shamra tablet I AB, and which says:

"When thou hast smitten L-t-n, the fleeing serpent, (and) hast put an end to the tortuous serpent, The mighty one with seven heads . . ." R. B. Y. Scott, "The Book of Isaiah," The Interpreter's Bible, vol. 5, eds. G. A. Buttrick et. al. (New York: Abington Press, 1956), p. 311. It is interesting to note that this Canaanite sea-monster also has seven heads (cf. Rev. 13:1). There are also many references in the Old Testament to this monster. As R. B. Y. Scott observes on Isaiah 27:1: "This is a prophetic oracle in response to the foregoing psalm of entreaty, and here the dependence upon traditional mythological material is very obvious. There are numerous references in the O.T. (as well as in Rev. 12:3-17; 20:10) to the overthrow by Yahweh of the dragon variously known as Leviathan (Isa. 27:1; Ps. 74:13-14; 104:26), as Rahab, "the Rager" (Isa. 30:7; 51:9; Ps. 89:10; Job 9:13; 26:12-13), as Tannin, "the Dragon" or "the monster" (Isa. 51:9; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; Ps. 74:13; Job 7:12); as the serpent (Isa. 27:1; Amos 9:3; Job 26:13); or as the Sea (Isa. 51:9-10; Hab. 3:8; Ps. 74:13; Job 7:12; 26:12; 38:8; cf. Rev. 21:1). The myth is in the first instance the story of the slaying or imprisonment by the Creator of the Dragon of Chaos, and when projected into eschatology, as here, it becomes the symbol of the final overthrow of God's enemies and the establishment of his unquestioned sovereignty." Scott, p. 310.

God calls Egypt "Rahab,"³² and in Isaiah 51:9-10, God calls Rahab (Egypt) a "dragon"³³ and describes its destruction.³⁴

The obvious conclusion to this evidence is that all powers which oppose God and his people are likened to a monster or dragon that is in the sea and will ultimately be destroyed by God.³⁵

Therefore, the meaning of Revelation 13:1 in light of apocalyptic symbolism is that it is a foregone conclusion that this sea beast is doomed to destruction at the hand of God because of its oppression of his people.³⁶ This is a necessary step in the coming of a new and glorious age.³⁷

³²Rahab. In Hebrew, רַהַב which means, "to act stormily, boisterously, arrogantly, defiantly." F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, p. 923.

³³Dragon. In Hebrew, תַּנִּינִים means simply, "Dragon, sea-monster," and is the mythological personification of chaos. Ibid. p. 1073.

³⁴This destruction takes place through God's manipulation of the sea (Isa. 51:10). It is important to remember that at the time of the exodus the Egyptian Pharaoh and his army were destroyed by the closing of the sea (Ex. 14:27-31). This enabled the Hebrews to escape to freedom. This freedom theme is also noted in Isaiah 51:11 (as in all apocalyptic literature) where God says that after the destruction of Rahab his people will return to Zion with everlasting joy and gladness, where sorrow will be no more (cf. Rev. 7:17).

³⁵Perhaps another symbol of the sea found in Isaiah 57:20 would have a further bearing on the message at hand. In this passage, the wicked are likened to a tossing sea. Since the beasts are wicked because of their oppressiveness and since peoples and nations are represented by the beasts, it stands to reason that the sea represents wickedness.

³⁶Again, this concept lends itself to apocalyptic determinism and predestination.

³⁷If the recipients of Revelation knew anything of the message of apocalyptic, they would have found encouragement in the mentioning of the sea because of the underlying implications.

The beast has seven heads, ten horns,
and ten diadems upon its horns

Many ancient writings mention beasts with many heads.³⁸ In most cases, these heads represent individuals in authoritative positions. This is recognized in Daniel's third beast³⁹ and the eagle in II Esdras.⁴⁰ In Revelation 17:7-18 the mystery of the beast is explained to the seer, and in verse ten he is told that the seven heads are seven kings.⁴¹

³⁸The Ras Shamra tablet I AB mentions a beast with seven heads. (Refer to page 105, footnote 31 for the details.) II Esdras 11 mentions a three headed beast, Daniel 7:6 mentions one with four heads. John M. Court observes that the beast of Revelation ". . . combines the features of all four beasts in Dan. 7, and the sum of their heads is seven." John M. Court, Myth and History in the Book of Revelation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 124.

³⁹The four heads of Daniel's third beast represent either the rulers of the four kingdoms that arose out of the Greek empire (Mc Guiggan, Daniel, p. 139), or the four Persian kings, Cyrus, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Darius (Arthur Jeffrey, "The Book of Daniel" The Interpreter's Bible, vol. 5, eds. G. A. Buttrick et al. [New York: Abington Press, 1956], p. 454). These two views depend upon whether the interpreter holds the conservative or liberal view of the dating of Daniel. In any event, it is obvious that the heads represent authoritative individuals.

⁴⁰Scholars agree unanimously that the three heads on the eagle refer to the Roman Emperors. (Refer to page 101, footnotes 15 and 16 for the details relating to this). In fact II Esdras 12:23-28 says that these heads are kings who will rule more oppressively than before, but who will ultimately destroy each other.

⁴¹In Revelation 17:10, the Greek word for "kings" is βασιλεις, which is the nominative plural of βασιλεύς, "king, monarch, or one possessing regal authority." The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, ed. Harold K. Moulton (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 67. The title of βασιλεύς was also conferred upon "Alexander the Great and was a favorite designation of his successor in the Syrian and Egyptian monarchies." J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930), pp. 104-105. This title was also passed on to the Roman Emperors as is seen in I Timothy 2:2 and I Peter 2:13, 17.

Some scholars hold that the "kings" mentioned in Revelation 17 refer to nothing other than the Roman emperors themselves.⁴² Other scholars see the "kings" as referring to various kingdoms which manifest a world monarchy which is hostile to God, with the seventh head representing the kingdom where antichrist manifests himself to the full.⁴³

In any event, it seems that the seven heads represent the persecution of God's people, whether in the form of the many world empires, or specifically in the form of the Roman empire itself.

However, taking into account the observations made in the apocalyptic symbols and the arguments presented above, it seems logical

⁴²John M. Court, Myth and History, pp. 124-126, upholds this reasoning by adding that the heads wore a "blasphemous name" (Rev. 13:1) as well as the beast himself (Rev. 17:3). He concluded that the emperor worship of Rome and the ensuing idolatry and deification of emperors was nothing less than blasphemy.

⁴³Isbon Beckwith (pp. 395-396) mentions this view which identifies the "kings" with Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Macedonia, and Syria, with Rome being the sixth "king" and the seventh representing a kingdom yet to come in the apocalypticist's future. However, Beckwith sees some inconsistencies with this view which attempts to base its interpretation on the statement in Daniel 7:17 that "These four great beasts are four kings . . ." This asserts that "king" is used in the sense of "kingdom." On the other hand, Beckwith sees the "kings" of Daniel 7 as referring to individuals and holds up his position by stating:

"But the analogy of Dan. which the Apocalypticist has distinctly in mind here would require a succession of beasts, if a series of empires were meant; the four empires of Dan. are represented by four separate beasts. On the other hand the heads and horns in Daniel's vision do not represent a succession of empires, but belong to a single empire, 7:6f, and the horns are expressly defined as kings in that empire, 7:24. Furthermore in Rev. the entire paragraph 17-19:5 is concerned with the destruction of Rome; reference to earlier monarchies would have no relation to the woman of the introductory vision, 17:1-6 in that paragraph. It seems certain that the 'kings' of 17:10 are persons, not kingdoms, and that the Roman emperors are meant."

to conclude that the beast with seven heads, ten horns,⁴⁴ and ten diadems upon its horns⁴⁵ refers to the Roman empire as manifested through the power of its kings or emperors. All of these attributes simply emphasize the evil nature of this beast, especially in light of the fact that "The kinship between the beast and the dragon (Satan) is seen in the fact that both have ten horns and seven heads (cf. 12:3)."⁴⁶

The beast is comprised of a leopard, a bear, and a lion

It is quite obvious that this part of the imagery was also drawn from Daniel 7:4-6, which mentions in reverse order the lion, the bear, and the leopard. It is possible that Daniel, in turn, took his imagery from Hosea 13:7-8. Daniel obviously knew that God described the destruction of Israel in the symbolism of the lion, bear, and leopard, and then himself applied these symbols as specific destructive world powers. He also did not neglect to mention the fourth beast during which time the Messiah would come.

⁴⁴The ten horns of the beast of Revelation 13:1 were obviously taken from Daniel 7:7. In Daniel, the horns are generally taken to symbolize both power and individual kings. The majority of scholars seem to accept both of these meanings as can be seen in the discussions by E. J. Young, The Prophecy of Daniel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 147, and C. F. Keil, The Book of Daniel, trans. M. G. Easton, Commentaries on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 228. These two interpretations of the meanings of the horns harmonize with each other in that a nation's strength is manifested through its leadership.

⁴⁵The diadems of Revelation 13:1 portray royalty. This simply adds to the fact that the persecuting power of Rome is attributed to its emperors. G. E. Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 177.

⁴⁶Ibid.

The writer of Revelation obviously noticed this and incorporated the beasts of Hosea and Daniel into the beast of chapters 13 and 17, taking special care to mention the pertinent qualities found in Hosea and Daniel.

The conclusion therefore, is that since John mentioned these similar aspects, it is very possible that he wanted to convey the similar basic message. That is, the beast, as a world power, oppresses God's people.

The beast is a fourth

Another important aspect relating to this beast is that it is the fourth. John does not mention this specifically but it takes little effort to realize that, by way of its description, it is indeed the fourth beast of Daniel 7, II Esdras 12, and II Baruch 39. The underlying message of Revelation 13 is therefore the evil persecuting nature of Rome, during which time, according to Daniel 7, the Messiah was to come.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Many have questioned John's prophecy concerning the imminent coming of the Messiah. It is generally understood that the Messiah did indeed come during the time of the fourth kingdom as prophesied by Daniel. Christians today understand that to refer to the first advent of Christ (his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection). However, how is one to understand the coming of the Messiah as described by John? Since he had already come (first advent), and since he did not come during the time of the persecuted Christians in the first century, was John misinformed, or did Christ actually come a second time during the reign of that fourth kingdom. This problem will be investigated and hopefully, solved under the section entitled, "The Final Conflict" below. This concept of time has a very strong bearing on the understanding of the beast and the message of Revelation, as will be seen later.

The beast is blasphemous

Revelation 13:5-6 mentions the blasphemous nature of the beast, and its utterances against God. Again, this is detected in Daniel 7:25 and a few other sources.⁴⁸

No doubt, John was simply emphasizing again the evilness of this beast, realizing full well that Rome was being spoken about.

Conclusion

Seeing the symbol of the beast of Revelation 13:1-7 in the light of selected apocalyptic symbols shows that John was undoubtedly describing Rome, which was oppressing God's people (the Christians) during his time of writing.

The fact that the beast came from the sea meant that it was indeed a powerful evil nation. Its many heads, with their horns and crowns simply emphasized the powerful leadership ability of its emperors. This was also emphasized by the fact that it was able to exercise its authority over all the earth. Its animal-like description not only expressed its fearsomeness but also conveyed the fact that it incorporated into itself the various other nations as well, as was prophesied by Daniel and as was done by Rome.

⁴⁸II Baruch 67, according to R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, vol. 2 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 475-476, was written just after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Verse 7 mentions the "king of Babylon" which no doubt refers to the Roman emperor at the time, and then proceeds to mention that he will "speak great things in his heart in the presence of the most high." Verse eight then claims that this king will also fall at last. The Assumption of Moses, written between 3 B.C. and A.D. 70 (ibid., p. 411), also describes the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Romans. Chapter eight describes how the Jews will be imprisoned, tortured, and crucified. Verse five then states that, ". . . they shall be forced by goads to blaspheme with insolence the word . . ." (ibid., p. 420). This adequately shows the blasphemous nature of Rome.

The fact that this beast concentrated its terror on the Christians brings forth an important consideration: It became nothing less than blasphemous, which could not go unchecked by God. So it seemed logical that during this time the Messiah would come to vindicate his elect.

This message was emphasized by the fact that this evil beast was the prophesied fourth kingdom which would ultimately be destroyed by God. Seen in light of the whole theme of Revelation, which is victory in the face of persecution (as is developed and climaxed in the heavenly worship scenes, the overthrow of Babylon, and the destruction of Satan), it seems that this Roman oppressor of God's people was a living loser. This foregone conclusion would have stimulated even the frailest child of God, because John, as a well seasoned Christian, was obviously aware of the fact that victory was found in Jesus alone. This he makes abundantly clear in the Revelation and in the image of the beast.

Adela Y. Collins makes an important observation in this regard when she says that the imagery of Revelation is best understood in the context of the ancient combat myths (as is seen in the beast). Her reason for this assertion is this: "Since every major ethnic tradition of the ancient Mediterranean had at least one combat myth, the mythological language of Revelation would have been cross-culturally intelligible."⁴⁹

Collins then goes on to say:

These mythic traditions were selected and adapted to interpret a situation of religious political conflict and persecution. The identification of the adversary with the forces of chaos and the

⁴⁹Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation," Harvard Theological Review 69 (1976):424.

depiction of the ultimate defeat of that adversary provide a proleptic experience of victory for the readers and enable them to pursue a course of non-violent resistance to the point of death.⁵⁰

Hence the use of the beast of Jewish apocalyptic literature serves well as a hermeneutic aid for understanding and interpreting the beast of Revelation.

The "Time, Times, and Half a Time"

Research Into Related Apocalyptic Symbols

Daniel 7:25

After describing the horrific details of this destructive beast, Daniel then mentions an eleventh "horn" who will be given dominion over the saints of the most High for a "time, two times, and half a time."⁵¹ Again, this takes place during the reign of the fourth beast (Dan. 7:23), which the previous section established as Rome.⁵²

The period of time mentioned is of special interest. C. F. Keil notices that:

The choice of the chronologically indefinite expression $\overline{\text{time}}$, time, shows that a chronological determination of the period is not in view, but that the designation of time is to be understood symbolically.⁵³

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹This eleventh horn is described in Daniel 7:24-25 as one who rises after the ten horns (kings), who sets himself in opposition to God, His law, and His saints. The resulting persecution of the people of God caused Daniel to write the prophecy. The purpose for the writing of Daniel has been discussed on pages 97-99 above.

⁵²As concluded in the section dealing with the beast of Revelation 13 above.

⁵³Keil, p. 242. This statement is based upon the fact that Daniel does not use the word "years," but rather, "times."

This is developed in his observation that scholars such as Ebrard and Klieforth see that in the midst of a rise in persecution, a sudden end takes place.⁵⁴ Isbon Beckwith maintains that it is probable that the author of Daniel uses the symbol of "time, times, and half a time" to describe the indefinite but short period which he pictures as preceding the end.⁵⁵ These views seem to be in keeping with Daniel 7:26, which promptly mentions the dominion of this king being taken away.

Andre Lacocque, on the other hand, sees the timespan more in terms of a definite chronological expression.⁵⁶ This is also maintained by Leon Wood, who sees Daniel 9:26-27 as a rationale for this view.⁵⁷

It is interesting to note at this point that some commentators have seen the reign of the "horn" of Daniel 7:25 to refer to Antiochus

⁵⁴Ebrard and Klieforth see the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 7:25 (and Rev. 12:14) as symbolic of persecution, where "time" (persecution) is doubled by "times" (increased persecution). But then, just as one would expect this persecution to be doubled yet again, it is halved, or cut short, thus symbolizing an end to the persecutor in the midst of his power. Ibid., p. 244. Ebrard and Klieforth see "times" as symbolic of persecution because of the context in which it appears.

⁵⁵Beckwith, p. 252. He believes that this refers to the rule of Antiochus IV which was to be followed by the day of the Lord, the destruction of the enemy, and the coming of the Kingdom.

⁵⁶Andre Lacocque, The Book of Daniel (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), pp. 153-154, also sees the vision as referring to Antiochus IV who persecuted God's people (the Jews) for "just over three years between 168 and 165 [B.C.]." He adds that the expression "time, times and half a time" should therefore be understood from this perspective as "one year, two years, and half a year." This he maintains is realized in Daniel 12:7, 11.

⁵⁷Leon Wood, A Commentary on Daniel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing house, 1973), pp. 201-202, believes that Daniel 9:26-27 speaks of the Antichrist who:

" . . . breaks covenant with israel at the midpoint of a week of years, which means at the three-and-one-half-year mark, after which he brings severe persecution on the nation for the last half of the week, a period of three and a half years"

IV, while others have understood it to refer to Roman domination.⁵⁸ For the purpose of this study, which is more concerned with the meaning of the symbol, it will not be important to establish which nation is referred to by Daniel. What is important is to establish the underlying meaning of the "time, times, and half a time." The mere fact that it is used elsewhere in Daniel, in the book of Revelation, and in other apocalyptic works, proves that it must have some symbolic message.⁵⁹

This period has been identified with the " 'times of the Gentiles' of Luke 21:24,"⁶⁰ wherein God's people were persecuted. It has also been referred to as a "broken seven" which indicates incompleteness.⁶¹ Still others see it in a broader sense as the "symbol of any period of great calamity."⁶² G. C. Luck sees it specifically as the breaking of

⁵⁸This recalls the liberal and conservative views regarding the dating of Daniel and the four beasts of chapter 7. Refer back to pages 33-38, and 96-98 for a discussion on these issues.

⁵⁹Daniel 12:7, 11; II Esdras 5:4; Ascension of Isaiah 4:12; Revelation 11:1-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.

⁶⁰Montgomery, p. 312. This has been interpreted by various scholars to refer to either the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, the coming of the Son of Man, or both. In all of this, one thing stands out clearly: The people of God will suffer tremendous tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:9, 21, 29; Mk. 13:19). Wood, p. 202, calls it the "Great Tribulation of Matthew 24:21." Theodore H. Epp, The Times of the Gentiles (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible Publications, 1969), p. 14, believes that the phrase "times of the Gentiles" has to do with Gentile world governments as they relate to Israel, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem in 606 B.C. and ending with the second coming of Christ. He is therefore more concerned with the symbolic principles than with trying to pinpoint a specific time.

⁶¹McGuiggan, Daniel, pp. 44-45, sees the number seven as symbolic of completeness and unity, and the number three and a half as incompleteness and therefore symbolic of "a situation of uncertainty as regards the oppressor's power."

⁶²Beckwith, p. 252.

the treaty between "antichrist" and the Jews which then culminated in the "truly intensive portion of the tribulation period."⁶³

Irrespective of the different possible meanings of the "time, times, and half a time" put forward by the various scholars, one important common-denominator stands out: This period of time involves the terrible persecution of God's people. "Of this the significance is plain."⁶⁴ Although some scholars have attempted to make it fit a definite three-and-a-half year period, the attempt at finding the correct dates for the so-called three-and-a-half year period have been somewhat arbitrary and based upon shaky foundations. A mere examination of these various attempts proves this fact.

It seems somewhat safer to conclude along with Keil that the word "time" is a chronologically indefinite expression.⁶⁵ In connection with this train of thought, McGuiggan states: "This phrase does not speak of a period of time except that time is consumed in the fulfilling of the phrase!"⁶⁶ Also seen in connection with this is the symbolism lying behind this period of time.⁶⁷

The overall conclusion, therefore, is that the persecution of God's people will last for an undetermined period, but will be short-

⁶³G. Coleman Luck, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 90, believes this to be the last half of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24 in which antichrist will cause suffering and desolation (Dan. 9:27). He uses the term "antichrist" as a reference to the king of Rome.

⁶⁴Beckwith, p. 252.

⁶⁵Keil, p. 242.

⁶⁶McGuiggan, Daniel, p. 44.

⁶⁷Refer back to the discussions on page 115 and footnote 54 in connection with this.

lived and will end when the persecutor is cut down in the middle of his power.⁶⁸

Daniel 12:7

In this section of scripture, Daniel is told of the events surrounding the final tribulation and the end (Dan. 11:40-12:4). This prompts him to ask the question, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" He is told, "... for a time, two times, and half a time" (Dan. 12:7).

Many scholars see Daniel 12:7 in exactly the same light as they see Daniel 7:25 and therefore do not bother to comment in detail on this verse. Instead, they simply refer the reader back to Daniel 7:25.⁶⁹

However, some interesting points have been brought to the surface by various other scholars. F. W. Farrar holds that the "three years and a half" have their commencement in the "terminus a quo which is expressly mentioned in ver. 11."⁷⁰ C. F. Keil, who sees Daniel 12:7 within the context of chapters 11:40 - 12:13, notices the explicit

⁶⁸This is developed in more detail by H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1949), p. 326, and by Keil, p. 244.

⁶⁹For examples of this, consult McGuiggan, Daniel, p. 84, Leupold, p. 540, Luck, p. 123, Lacocque, p. 249, and many others.

⁷⁰F. W. Farrar, The Book of Daniel, ed. W. R. Nicoll, Expositor's Bible (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 327. He relates this to the events surrounding Antiochus IV, where Daniel 12:11 mentions the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up.

references to the ultimate end time⁷¹ and states in his comment on Daniel 12:6 as follows:

To these "wonderful things" belong not merely the crushing of the holy people in the tribulation such as never was before, but also their deliverance by the coming of the angel-prince Michael, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal separation of the righteous from the wicked (ch. XII. 1-3). This last designation of the period of time goes thus, beyond a doubt, to the end of all things, or to the consummation of the kingdom of God by the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.⁷²

Taking into account the different observations made by various scholars and the context in which the statement "time, times, and half a time" appears (Dan. 11:40-12:4), the logical conclusion is that Daniel is speaking about a period of indefinite time in which God's people are being persecuted, as well as the ending of that persecution by the destruction of the persecutor. This "end" is seen as both temporal and spiritual. In that symbolic sense, it can therefore apply to Antiochus IV or to Rome and also to the ultimate end and the destruction of Satan and his henchmen as persecutors of God's people.⁷³

⁷¹This is found in Daniel 12:1-4, which mentions that the people whose names were "written in the book" will awake from the dust of the earth to everlasting life as the stars, while the rest will awake to everlasting contempt.

⁷²Keil, pp. 491-492. He makes mention here of a variety of scholars (Bleek, v. Lengerke, Maurer, Hitzig, Ewald, Havernick, Auberlin, Zundel) who recognize this as referring to the ultimate end, but who also see in it a reference to the time of Antiochus IV. After examining the various views and attempts by these scholars to reconcile these two time references, Keil himself concludes that the two statements in Daniel 12:7 ("time, times, and half a time" and the reference to the end of the "shattering of the power of the holy people") refer to:

". . . two definitions of one period of time, the first of which describes its course according to a symbolic measure of time, the second its termination according to an actual characteristic. None of these definitions of time has any reference to the oppression of the holy people by Antiochus, but the one as well as the other refers to the tribulation of the time of the end."

⁷³The idea of a prophecy having both a nearer temporal and a

Daniel 12:11

In this verse, Daniel is describing the same period of persecution of God's people, except that he now refers to the period as "a thousand two hundred and ninety days."⁷⁴

The fact that this period is found in the same context as the "time, two times, and half a time" and that it consists of the same chaotic existence, proves that it is simply another way of describing the same period of time. Therefore, the conclusion to this 1290 days is the same as to the "time, times, and half a time" above.

II Esdras 5:4

In the fifth chapter of II Esdras, the writer describes in graphic detail the evils that were to befall the people of God.⁷⁵ However, in

distant spiritual application is not foreign to the Old Testament prophets. One example is found in Isaiah 7:14 which talks of the birth of a child who will be called Immanuel. This was to be a sign to Ahaz that God would not desert him in his time of need. This same promise was fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23 with the birth of Christ.

⁷⁴Why Daniel decided to refer to the same period in terms of days is not known. Scholars can only guess. It has been suggested that this is merely an extension of the symbolism. McGuiggan, Daniel, p. 85 and Revelation, p. 149, notes that this adds up to three years and seven months. However, he explains that since the Jewish calendar consisted of thirty day months, it was necessary to add an intercalary month, the second Adhar, every so often, in order to bring it into line with solar months. His conclusion therefore, is that Daniel included the month of Adhar. It is also necessary to mention that the "1290 days" has been used by such commentators as Leon Wood (p. 202) and Andre Lacocque (p. 154) to support their views that the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 7:25 is a literal three and a half year period. However, the fact that they cannot apply the literal 1290 day period to a specific historical situation, and also the fact that they generally cannot agree on a specific incident which incorporates the 1290 day period means that their position is arbitrary and must be treated with caution.

⁷⁵Refer back to pages 100-102 which deal with the background of II Esdras and his reason for writing.

verse four, he inserts an interlude which describes the confusion and ultimate elimination of this reign of terror. This all takes place after the "third period."⁷⁶

This indefinite "period" of time seems to contain all of the elements found in Daniel's "time, times, and half a time." Especially since it refers to a time after the "three periods."⁷⁷ Beckwith concludes that II Esdras 5:4 refers to the "three times" still granted to the hostile world power before the end.⁷⁸

These observations result in the conclusion that II Esdras was probably familiar with Daniel's "time, times, and half a time," and used the number symbolically for his own purpose in order to tell his readers that the oppressors would exist for a limited period of time, and would then be destroyed, just as Daniel had told his readers.

Ascension of Isaiah 4:12

In this passage, the pseudepigraphical writer makes mention of the last world power,⁷⁹ which he refers to as the incarnation of

⁷⁶II Esdras 5:4; "But if the Most High grants that you live, you shall see it thrown into confusion after the third period; and the sun shall suddenly shine forth at night, and the moon during the day." The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, ed. Bruce Metzger, p. 31. In a footnote to the verse, Metzger notes that the reference to the "third period" is "cryptic," and draws attention to II Esdras 14:11-13 (which describes the age as being in the latter part of its life and warns the reader to repentance while there is yet time) as a possible meaning to II Esdras 5:4.

⁷⁷Literally post tertiam, "after the third." Metzger, Apocrypha, p. 31.

⁷⁸Beckwith, p. 252. This means that the "three periods" are equivalent to the "time, times, and half a time." It also ties in with the allusion in II Esdras 12:11 to the "fourth beast" of Daniel 7:7, 19, 23.

⁷⁹This world power, no doubt, is a reference to Rome. It is the "last" in the sense that it is the fourth of the four beasts. The

"Beliar,"⁸⁰ and mentions that it will rule for "three years, seven months, and twenty-seven days."

Beckwith believes that this is equivalent to the "1335 days" of Daniel 12:12 and says that it is taken directly from that.⁸¹ If this is so, then the writer of the Ascension of Isaiah is using the same symbolism from Daniel 7 and 12 for the same purpose as the writer of II Esdras: To comfort his readers in times of Roman persecution by letting them know that for the limited period of time, they would be persecuted; but if they survived until the end of that period, they would see the end of the terrible beast.

writing of this work is said by R. H. Charles to have taken place "not much later than the middle of the first century A.D." Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, p. 155. W. O. E. Oesterley, The Books of the Apocrypha (London: Paternoster, 1914), p. 220, mentions the fact that the Ascension of Isaiah was written by a Christian author who, in the form of a prediction by Isaiah, gives a resume of the early history of the Christian Church and foretells the last judgment in an apocalyptic fashion. C. C. Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 134, observes that the Ascension of Isaiah was combined with two other works, now known as the Martyrdom of Isaiah, and the Vision of Isaiah. He agrees with Oesterley that the section called the Ascension of Isaiah is a Christian work dating around A.D. 50.

⁸⁰Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, p. 159, notices that Beliar is the chief of the evil spirits and the opponent of the Christ (cf. II Cor. 6:15; Jubilees 1:20; Sibylline Oracles 2:167) which is to proceed from the emperors of Rome, working signs, deceiving the elect, and finally being burnt up.

⁸¹Beckwith, p. 252. The 1335 days of Daniel 12:12 is found in the same context as the "time, times, and half a time," and the "1290 days." Daniel says that the one who comes to the 1335 days is blessed (Dan. 12:12). This implies that if the oppressed child of God can survive until beyond the 1290 days of tribulation, he will be blessed with the awareness of the existence of the reign of the Messiah.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion based upon Daniel 7:25; 12:7, 11; II Esdras 5:4; and the Ascension of Isaiah 4:12, is that the period of time referred to as "time, times, and half a time," "1290 days," and "three years seven months and twenty-seven days," symbolizes the chronologically indefinite period of time in which the people of God suffer tribulation at the hands of an ungodly oppressor.

Also inherent in the symbolism, by way of the context, is the fact that the coming of the Messiah will occur. This is seen in light of the description of the eternal events that surround the "end time." In other words, both a physical and a spiritual state of affairs is seen in these events.

It seems evident that Daniel was the first to use this symbolic period of time,⁸² which was then used by the writers of II Esdras and the Ascension of Isaiah for their own purpose, which was very similar, in principle, to Daniel's purpose.

The Application of These Symbols to the Interpretation of Revelation

Introduction

It is very obvious that there are many strong similarities between the "time, times, and half a time" of Revelation 12:14 and the symbols

⁸²It is very possible that Daniel was aware of, and used for his own symbolic purpose, the three-and-a-half year drought caused by Elijah (I Kings 18:1ff) in which God's people suffered. At the end of that period of time, the rains fell, putting an end to their tribulation. This also seems to be the basis for John's symbolism of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:6, where John describes them as having "power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall. . ." This immediately recalls the incident recorded in I Kings 18:1ff., where Elijah accomplished just that.

found in Daniel 7:25; 12:7, 11; II Esdras 5:4; and the Ascension of Isaiah 4:12.

The period of tribulation in which the writer of Revelation found himself, and the context in which the symbolic period of time appears, is amazingly similar to the situations in which Daniel, II Esdras, and the writer of the Ascension of Isaiah found themselves. It therefore takes little effort to realize the similarities and to understand the basic message John was trying to convey.

This next section of study will concentrate on the expressions for time found in Revelation that relate to the periods mentioned in the apocalyptic symbols above.⁸³

The beast exercises his authority for forty-two months

In Revelation 13:5, the beast was "allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months." This forty-two month period is equivalent to 1260 days or three and a half years. From the earlier discussion on the meaning of the beast,⁸⁴ it was seen that the recipients of the Revelation, as the children of God, were suffering greatly under the dominance of Rome. In relation to this symbolism, Rome has a limited period of time in which to exercise its persecuting power.⁸⁵

⁸³Refer to page 88 for these details.

⁸⁴Refer to pages 96 to 114 for these details.

⁸⁵This limitation is enhanced by the foregone conclusion that the sea beast is doomed to destruction (refer to pages 104, 111-113 for this conclusion). Added to this is the knowledge that the "time, times, and half a time" implies a cutting off of its power in the middle of its prime (refer to page 115 for this conclusion).

An important point to mention was that the beast was "allowed" (Rev. 13:5) to exercise its authority. This means that God had determined its operation.⁸⁶ This further implies that God was able to end its time whenever He wished, thus predetermining the period of its operation.⁸⁷

The beast of Revelation is said to be "correctly identified with this fourth beast of Daniel's vision . . ." ⁸⁸ In light of this, the conclusion to the forty-two month reign of the beast of Revelation is in keeping with the conclusions made concerning the apocalyptic symbols dealt with above.⁸⁹ Of course, John uses the meanings of the symbols for his own purpose, which is to comfort his fellow Christians in the face of the oppressive power of Rome.

One important aspect to consider is John's mention of the future eschatological ultimate end.⁹⁰ This seems to be in keeping with Daniel's mention of the same thing in Daniel 11:40-12:4.⁹¹ Just as Daniel sees more than just a temporal tribulation and deliverance of

⁸⁶Homer Hailey, Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 288.

⁸⁷This predetermination by God is noticed in Daniel 7:26; 12:1, 12; II Esdras 11:44; and other places where the end of this oppressor is announced and described. This is adopted by John in Revelation 16:13-16; 19:19-21.

⁸⁸Wood, p. 202. A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), p. 146, develops this same view in detail. So also McGuiggan, Daniel, p. 252, and many others.

⁸⁹Refer to pages 119, 121-123 for these conclusions.

⁹⁰This is found in Revelation 19:11-20:15.

⁹¹Refer to page 119 for a discussion on this.

God's people,⁹² so John sees more than just a temporal, physical deliverance of Christians from the hands of Rome. He sees the destruction, not only of Rome, but of Satan himself (Rev. 20:1-3; 10). He sees the punishment of the followers of the beast not only as temporal (Rev. 19:17), but as spiritually eternal (Rev. 20:14, 15). He sees the glorious reign of the saints not on earth, but in heaven (Rev. 4, 5, 7, 14, 20-22).

All of this suggests an existence that consists of something more than just that which is earthly. In light of this, Hailey (who observes that this period of time is also mentioned in relation to the trampling of the holy city, the woman in the wilderness, her nourishment, and the prophecying of the two witnesses), concludes that: "All five instances refer to the same period and are not to be taken literally."⁹³ In his discussion on the period of the beast, C. F. Keil insists that the fourth world kingdom is the Roman empire, and sees its destruction as taking place between the first and second comings of Christ.⁹⁴

⁹²Refer to C. F. Keil's comments on page 119 and in footnote 72 for a discussion on this.

⁹³Hailey, p. 228. The majority of commentators seem to attest to this view. Among them are: Barnhouse, p. 196, McGuiggan, Revelation, p. 149, Beckwith, p. 599, A. Pieters, Studies in the Revelation to John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), p. 144. G. B. Caird, p. 132, discusses the same thing and concludes: "John uses this figure as a kind of cross-reference [referring to Daniel's "time, times, and half a time"] so that every time it occurs we know we are being shown a new aspect of his central theme." Even the continuous historical school holds to this view, as is seen in Johnson's statement that in the five different passages "the same period of time is named, and evidently covers in each case, the same period of the history of the Church." B. W. Johnson, Vision of the Ages (Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 218.

⁹⁴Keil, p. 271.

Hendriksen simply maintains that the forty-two month period of the beast lasts throughout the entire gospel age.⁹⁵

These observations imply that there is a somewhat timeless element involved in the principles relating to the three and a half years of the beast. This element is developed even more fully when the other symbols in Revelation relating to the period of the beast are investigated.

The holy city is trampled by the nations for forty-two months

In Revelation 11:1-2, John was given a measuring rod and was told to measure the temple of God and those who worship there. But he was told not to measure the outer court because it was "given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months."

It is clear that this takes place during the time of the beast.⁹⁶ However, it is not meant to be a literal "trampling." This is noticed by R. H. Banowsky who claims that the Greek word for "temple" $\nu\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$,⁹⁷ refers to the holy sanctuary where God dwells. He also notices in verse 19, that John sees this temple of God ($\nu\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$) in heaven, wherein is

⁹⁵Hendriksen, p. 154.

⁹⁶Refer to page 126 and to footnote 93 above, which discusses this.

⁹⁷Concerning the use of the word $\nu\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ in Revelation 11:1-2, The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, s.v. " $\nu\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ " by O. Michel, notices that the word $\nu\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ is used specifically for God's holy place in the Jerusalem temple. However, Michel realizes that Revelation presupposes the existence of a heavenly temple. He also notices that in Revelation 3:12, the $\nu\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ is used metaphorically in referring to the Christian as a pillar ($\sigma\tau\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$) in the temple. In connection with this, he quotes J. Behm, Die Offenbarung d. Johannus (n.p. 1935), p. 58, who says:

"The first task of the seer, equipped with the new prophetic witness (10:8ff., 11), is to set before the Christianity of his day the fact that it is God's holy domain, protected against the storms of the final period of tribulation, kept for the salvation of fulfillment, separated from the pagan world, which desecrates the divine territory that falls into its hands."

contained the ark of the covenant. He concludes that this could not refer to the literal temple, since it did not contain the ark of the covenant during Christ's day. He also adds that it would be impossible to measure the people in a literal sense. Therefore, it was not to be taken literally, but symbolically.⁹⁸

Within this symbolic context, then, is the forty-two month period. This means that it too should be taken symbolically. Indeed, there is also a distinctly spiritual eternal element in this whole vision.⁹⁹ This raises the question: Is John seeing more than just that which relates to the temporal situation of the Christians on earth?

The two witnesses prophesy
for 1260 days

In Revelation 11:3, it is seen that during the forty-two month period of the oppressiveness of the beast and the trampling of the holy city, two witnesses prophesy. In the following verses, John sees these two witnesses killed by the beast and their death celebrated by the world. He also sees them resurrected from the dead and raised into heaven on a cloud.

One important aspect is that the prophesying of the two witnesses takes place during the period of the beast. The nature of their existence, their prophesying, martyrdom, and resurrection to eternal

⁹⁸R. H. Banowsky, Revelation Notes for Study (78 page pamphlet, 1953), p. 28. He adds that this trampling for forty-two months is also based upon Daniel 7:25.

⁹⁹This will be developed more fully under the section entitled "The Final Conflict" below.

life with God, are undoubtedly symbolic of the Christian life on this earth.¹⁰⁰

It is also interesting to notice that while the witnesses are resurrected at the end of the period of tribulation (Rev. 11: 11, 12), it seems that the beast and his followers continue to exist (Rev. 11:12). This implies that although the suffering, preaching, and protection of God's people are seen in terms of forty-two months or 1260 days, these periods are not necessarily synchronized with each other in a literal time span.¹⁰¹

Another point of note is that this description by John raises another question: Why is the physical torment of Christians on earth answered in terms of spiritual or heavenly freedom and existence?

The woman is nourished by God in the wilderness for 1260 days

The protection and nourishment of the woman is mentioned in Revelation 12:6, after she delivers a male child and is then attacked by the dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. The woman then flees into the wilderness where she is nourished

¹⁰⁰This is the conclusion of the vast majority of commentators. Some of these included McGuiggan, pp. 152-157; Beckwith, p. 600; Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 144-145; Hendriksen, p. 156; Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 164; Johnson, p. 222. Notice that almost all of the different interpretations of Revelation are represented by these commentators. Only the Dispensationalists see the two witnesses differently. Hal Lindsey, There's a New World Coming (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 150, sees the two witnesses as referring specifically to Moses and Elijah. But even then, their proclamation is in keeping with the New Testament message, which is every Christian's duty.

¹⁰¹Consult the diagram on appendix C which explains that the period of the beast and the period of the prophesying of the two witnesses does not necessarily need to synchronize with each other.

and protected for 1260 days (also described as a "time, two times, and half a time" in verse 14).

This takes place during the time of the beast, the trampling of the holy city, and the preaching of the two witnesses.¹⁰²

A point of note is that this attack upon the woman by the dragon takes place on earth (Rev. 12:13), despite the fact that she is seen in a heavenly or non-physical or spiritual sense as described in Revelation 12:1-6. This raises yet another question: If the woman (and her offspring, Rev. 12:17) is persecuted by the dragon on earth, why does John see her existence, her escape, and her protection in a spiritual as well as physical sense?

Conclusion

Upon examination of the five different occurrences in Revelation of the "time, times, and half a time," it seems obvious that they are all different aspects of one central theme. They can also be described as different elements relating to the same state of affairs. They do not contradict each other, but rather build upon each other to produce a full and detailed picture of the theme of Revelation. This theme is in keeping with the repeated message of the apocalyptic literature dealt with above. That is, God's people will be persecuted for an indefinite but limited period of time as decreed by God.

This implies that the end of the period of persecution is predetermined by God. This is seen in the fact that John is able to mention a specific number of months or days in relation to its existence. Again, this seems to be in keeping with the apocalyptic

¹⁰²Refer to page 126 and footnote 93 which establishes this.

symbolism. Yet, although John uses a specific number of months or days, the period described by means of the symbols is indefinite.

Another aspect inherent in the symbols which exist during this period of time is the interrelationship between the physical and the spiritual. This is detected in the seemingly transcendental aspects of the visions discussed and is brought to the fore by the various questions raised in the section above.¹⁰³

In conclusion therefore, this period of time does exist physically on earth in the sense that it relates to a physical state of affairs. Yet at the same time, it seems, by the description of the transcendental element, that it incorporates a spiritual state of affairs as well.¹⁰⁴

The Final Conflict

Research Into Related Apocalyptic Symbols

I Enoch 62:1-13

The pseudepigraphical book of I Enoch, dated by R. H. Charles between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100, is held by him in high esteem.¹⁰⁵ He, along with most other scholars recognizes the fact that many different

¹⁰³Refer to pages 128 and 129 which contain these questions.

¹⁰⁴This concept will be developed more fully under the section entitled "The Final Conflict" below, which will also, hopefully, answer the questions raised above.

¹⁰⁵Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, vol. 2, p. 163. He expresses his high regard for I Enoch by including it as one of the works which:

"... have begun to come into their own owing to their immeasurable value as being practically the only historical memorials of the religious development of Judaism from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D., and particularly of the development of that side of Judaism, to which historically Christendom in large measures owes its existence."

authors had a part in the writing of I Enoch, and as a result, the various sections are to be dated differently.¹⁰⁶ He maintains that the section which includes chapter 62 is to be dated between 94 B.C. and 64 B.C.¹⁰⁷ However, other scholars opt for a first century date.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶One of these scholars is W. Schmithals (The Apocalyptic Movement, trans. J. Stealy, [New York: Abington Press, 1975], p. 193) who also notices that: "All the individual pieces are of more or less pronounced apocalyptic origin. . ."

¹⁰⁷Charles, p. 171. The section in which chapter 62 appears includes chapters 37-71. It is also called the Similitudes of Enoch. Charles believes that according to the style and character of this section of Enoch, the writers are the "Chasids or their successors the Pharisees" (p. 164). These writers, according to Charles, often denounced the Maccabean princes and their Sadducean supporters. This he detects in this section of I Enoch. According to this evidence, Charles believes that the earliest possible date for the writing of the Similitudes of Enoch (I Enoch 37-71) is 94 B.C., with the latest possible date being 64 B.C. This he bases upon the fact that there are no allusions to Rome which imposed its authority in the affairs of Judea from 64 B.C. onward, and which certainly would have been condemned in the writings if they were written during that time. On the other hand, the conclusion by Charles that the Chasidim or Pharisees are the writers of I Enoch 37-71 is contested by some later scholars. One of those being J. C. VanderKam who believes that no specific group can be referred to because "It is difficult to recognize in the righteous and sinners of the Epistle any traits that are specific enough to justify party labels." James C. VanderKam, Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition, eds. Bruce Vawter et. al., The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, vol. 16 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), p. 143. David W. Suter (Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch, Society of Biblical Literature: Dissertation Series [Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979], pp. 23-25) also believes that Charles' argument that "Rome was unknown to the author [of I Enoch 37-71] is not convincing." Suter mentions recent attempts at dating I Enoch 37-71 by centering on I Enoch 56:5-7 which is said to be related to a Parthian invasion of either 40 B.C. or A.D. 115-117. However, he does not find enough evidence to uphold either date.

¹⁰⁸One of these scholars is E. Isaac, who recognizes Charles' reasons for the dating of this section, but makes mention of the 1977 meeting at Tübingen, and the 1978 meeting in Paris of the SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminar, where the dating of the Similitudes of Enoch was discussed. The topic of discussion was J. T. Milik's dating of the Similitudes of Enoch. Milik had argued that the Similitudes of Enoch was a late Christian work. J. T. Milik, The Books of Enoch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 76-78, 83-85. The consensus of the meeting

E. Isaac recognizes the importance of I Enoch and maintains that it was "known to many Jews, and early Christians, notably the author of Jude."¹⁰⁹ He then cites many works which used I Enoch as a source¹¹⁰ and concludes that it throws much light on Essene theology and early Christianity.¹¹¹

In all of this, the writer of I Enoch 37-71 is recognized by most scholars as being Jewish (either Chasidim, Essene, or Pharisee). Also, the dating of I Enoch, whether it be as early as 200 B.C. or as late as A.D. 100, shows that it was written during the period when the Jews were

was that this section of I Enoch was Jewish and was written in the first century A.D. In light of this, Isaac maintains that I Enoch already contained the Similitudes by the end of the first century A.D. E. Isaac, I (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1983), p. 7. J. J. Collins also rejects Milik's attempt to date the Similitudes of Enoch around the second or third century A.D. and concludes that according to I Enoch 56:5-7 (which he believes refers to a Parthian invasion) and I Enoch 67:7-9 (which he believes refers to Herod's attempt to heal himself at the waters of Callirhoe), the Similitudes should be dated "some time about the turn of the era." J. J. Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypses," Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia 14 (1979): 39. In a very concise presentation, J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone ("The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes," Harvard Theological Review 70 [1977]: 58-60) discuss Milik's dating of the Similitudes and disagree with him. They conclude that the Similitudes were written by a Jew and the "final composition of the Similitudes took place at some time during the first century C. E."

¹⁰⁹ Isaac, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ These include Jubilees, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Assumption of Moses, II Baruch, II Esdras, and the canonical Book of Jude.

¹¹¹ Ibid. This included I Enoch 37-71 which will be seen below.

undergoing trial and tribulation.¹¹² This explains the reason and purpose of the apocalyptic element in parts of I Enoch.

E. Isaac also attaches much theological importance to the apocalyptic element in I Enoch. This includes the discussions on the Messiah,¹¹³ and the descriptions of the eschatological event.¹¹⁴

In I Enoch 62:1-13, the judgment of the kings, the mighty, and the dwellers on the earth is described. They are told to open up their eyes and recognize the "Elect One" (verse 1), the word of whose mouth slays all sinners (verse 2) and judges the kings and the mighty (verse 3), who will be in pain as a woman in labor (verse 4) and will be terrified (verse 5). This "Elect One" is also referred to as the "Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory" (verse 5). While this "Son of Man" gives all kinds of glory and honor to his elect ones (verses 7, 8, 13-16), he will judge and deliver the earthly ones to the angels for punishment (verses 10-12) and his sword will be drunk with their blood (verse 12). All of this occurs because the "kings" and the "mighty" (verse 1) oppress his children and his elect (verse 11).

¹¹²In the second century B.C., the Chasidim were appalled at the reign of Antiochus IV. Then came the Maccabean period and the ruling Hasmonean priesthood which also revolted the Chasidim. After that came the Roman oppressors who ruled for hundreds of years. In all of this, the Jews felt debased and oppressed. It therefore does not matter which date applies to I Enoch 37-71.

¹¹³Isaac, p. 9, notices that I Enoch depicts the Messiah as a majestic, dominating, pre-existent, heavenly being, passing judgment upon all mortal and spiritual beings. In I Enoch 37-71, the Messiah is placed in the context of reflections upon the last judgment, the coming destruction of the wicked, and the triumph of the righteous ones. Isaac adds that "This eschatological concept is the most prominent and recurring theme throughout the whole book."

¹¹⁴The most prominent places in I Enoch where this event is described are chapters 1-5; 61-62; 83-89. These will be discussed in detail below.

In all of this, the description of the judgment of the earthly kings, the mighty, and the dwellers on the earth is seen in a transcendental other-worldly vision.

I Enoch 1-5

In this section of the book of I Enoch,¹¹⁵ the destruction of the earth is seen to take place (1:7) from out of heaven (1:4) where all the earth will be destroyed (1:6-7), where all will be convicted of their works (1:9), where the righteous elect will be rewarded with peace and prosperity (1:8), and where the unrighteous will be destroyed (1:5, 9).

I Enoch 5:4 describes in detail the evil deeds of those who oppress the righteous elect.¹¹⁶ Verses 5-7 then go on to describe the destruction of the unrighteous oppressors.¹¹⁷

Again, it is interesting to notice that within the context of a judgment on the earthly is found the eternal¹¹⁸ transcendental element.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵I Enoch 1-36 is called by more recent scholars the "Book of Watchers" and is dated by Charles around 164 B.C. This date is also held by G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 48, and by J. J. Collins, Semeia, p. 37. E. Isaac (p. 7) dates this section during the first century A.D. Again, whether I Enoch 1-5 was written during the time of the Hasmoneans or the Romans, the basic situation is still the same. The Jews are under the dominance of a foreign power.

¹¹⁶This includes not obeying the commandments of the Lord, speaking proud and hard words, and being hard-hearted.

¹¹⁷This includes an "eternal execration" (verse 5), finding no mercy (verse 5), accursedness (verse 6), and no salvation (verse 7).

¹¹⁸This eternality is detected in I Enoch 5:5, where the years of the righteous will be "multiplied in eternal execration" (eternal abomination), and in I Enoch 5:9, where the righteous will exist in "eternal gladness and peace."

¹¹⁹This is detected in I Enoch 1:4, 9, which mentions the eternal God coming out of his heavenly dwelling, bringing ten thousand holy ones to execute judgment.

I Enoch 83-88

In I Enoch 83-88,¹²⁰ the same sequence of events as in chapters 1-5 is described, except in far more detail. Chapter 83 deals with the destruction of the earth by God from Heaven. Chapter 84 describes Enoch's prayer for the deliverance of the righteous ones. Chapters 85 and 86 describe in the symbolism of white, black, and red bulls, the corruption of Judaism. This is described through the symbolism of a star which fell from heaven and mingled and mated with the pure oxen, causing them to give birth to strange animals not of the original herd. Chapter 87 describes seven angels coming out of heaven; three take Enoch to a place where he can observe the four angels carrying out the destruction of the unrighteous. Chapter 88 describes in the symbolic form of stars and bulls the destruction of the Gentile oppressors at the hands of these four angels. He describes how the first angel "seized that first star which had fallen from heaven, and bound it hand and foot and cast it into the abyss" (I Enoch 88:1). The other three angels did the same with those who were the products of the first star.

R. H. Charles believes that all of this is symbolic of the corrupting influence of the Ptolemies and Seleucids. The resulting rise of Maccabean power was also considered a corruption of pure Judaism. The resulting binding and destruction of the star and its offspring are meant to symbolize the destruction of the Gentile power and influence which the Jews thought was an abomination.¹²¹

¹²⁰I Enoch 83-90 is called the section of the "Dream Visions" and is dated around 160 B.C. by Charles, p. 171, who sees it referring to the time of the Maccabean revolt but before the death of Judas Maccabaeus (161 B.C.).

¹²¹Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, vol. 2, p. 171.

In all of this, the same basic message comes through: The physical destruction of the present oppressive system is described, but is done in symbolic, transcendental terms.

Sibylline Oracles, Book 3:796-808

The Sibylline Oracles consist of a large number of "cryptic" sayings in the form of prophecies which date between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D.¹²² These oracles were held in high esteem by the ancient pagans. The Jews and later the Christians used these oracles for their own propaganda.¹²³ The extant Sibylline Oracles are a mixture of heathen, Jewish, and Christian apocalyptic utterances.¹²⁴ However, some of the oracles can be identified with certainty.

¹²²F. C. Grant, Ancient Judaism and the New Testament (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1959), pp. 86-87.

¹²³H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (New York: Association Press, 1963), p. 74. Also, H. T. Andrews, An Introduction to the Apocryphal Books of the Old and New Testaments, ed. C. Pfeiffer (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1964), pp. 72-73, mentions that the oracles were the pagan counterparts to the Biblical prophecies and were products of the Sibyls, women whose mysterious utterances were thought to foretell future events. The Jews noticed the effectiveness of these oracles among the pagans and began to produce their own in order to use as propaganda to spread their faith.

¹²⁴Shirley Case, The Revelation of John (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1919), p. 105.

The third book, particularly verses 97-819, is of Jewish origin and is dated the second century B.C.,¹²⁵ possibly during the reign of Ptolomy VII.¹²⁶

Verses 796 to 808 of book three describe in detail the events surrounding the heavenly battle which will take place "when the end of all things is coming on the earth" (verse 797).¹²⁷ The oracle goes on to describe swords appearing by night in the star-lit heaven, the failing of the sun at midday, and the shining of the moon (verses 798-803). Verses 804 to 808 then say:

I will tell you a very clear sign, so that you may know when the end of all things comes to pass on earth: when the swords are seen at night in starry heaven toward evening and toward dawn, and again dust is brought forth from heaven upon the earth and all the light of the sun is eclipsed in the middle from heaven, and the rays of the moon appear and return to earth. There will be a sign from the rocks, with blood and drops of gore. You will see a battle of infantry and cavalry in the clouds, like a hunt of wild beasts, like a mist. This is the end of war which God, who inhabits the heaven, is accomplishing. But all must sacrifice to the great king.¹²⁸

From these verses, it seems obvious that the Jewish writers were describing the ultimate overthrow of their oppressors. It is also

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 75. Also C. C. Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 109, and John J. Collins, The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism, Society of Biblical Literature: Dissertation Series (Missoula, Montana: University of Montana, 1972), p. 33.

¹²⁶Torrey, p. 109. Again, during this period of time, the Jews were unhappy with the state of affairs, and looked forward to a time of future deliverance. Seen in the broader context of verses 97-819, it is obvious that the Jewish writer was referring to the oppressive power of his day. For example, verses 171-174 say: "Then shall come the Greeks overwhelming and unholy: then a very motley race of Macedonia shall hold sway, who shall come as a dread war cloud upon mortals. But the God of heaven shall smite them utterly."

¹²⁷Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, vol. 2, p. 392.

¹²⁸Charlesworth, pp. 379-380.

obvious that they were aware of the fact that this overthrow could only be achieved through God's intervention. Hence the description of the heavenly battle scene. Again, the other-worldly element is present.

Psalms of Solomon 17:23-27

The pseudepigraphical Psalms of Solomon consists of a collection of eighteen psalms very similar in form and literary character to the canonical psalms.¹²⁹ They have been dated around 50 B.C.¹³⁰ The seventeenth Psalms of Solomon represents a strong nationalistic feeling on the part of the Jews, who were still reeling under the invasion by the Roman general Pompey and the subsequent Roman rule.¹³¹

The context in which the Psalms of Solomon 17:23-27 finds itself is clearly a display of the prevailing Jewish "temper in orthodox circles under the conditions described."¹³² Verses 23-27 then go on to describe the ultimate destruction of the pagan conqueror himself:

¹²⁹Torrey, p. 106.

¹³⁰Albertus Pieters, Studies in the Revelation of St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), p. 29. This date is upheld by Torrey (p. 107), who believes that the internal evidence points conclusively to just after the time of Pompey who invaded Palestine in 63 B.C. F. C. Grant, p. 87, also dates this work between 63 B.C. and 40 B.C. So also Nickelsburg, p. 203.

¹³¹Torrey, p. 107.

¹³²Ibid. Torrey shows an example of this from verses 5-10. These verses describe a party who had misused its office and had abused its lawful prerogatives, including even the kingship. As a result, their wickedness corrupted the people. Ultimately, this wickedness met with its just deserts. Torrey believes that this refers to the late Hasmonean princes. He adds that verses 11-14 describe a foreign conqueror who took the city and slew and exiled the evil rulers. This, Torrey believes, refers to Pompey. Nickelsburg (p. 207) agrees with this and discusses in detail the fact that verses 17-22 convey the message that the Roman power was sent by God as punishment for the Hasmonean rulers.

Behold, Lord, and raise up for thy people their king, the son of David. At the time which thou, God, hast appointed, to hold sway over Israel, thy servant. Gird him with strength to shatter the wicked rulers, Cleansing Jerusalem from the Gentiles who trample it to destruction; In wisdom and righteousness to drive out the evil men from our inheritance, Crushing their arrogance like the vessels of the potter, Shattering all their substance with a rod of iron. Destroying the ungodly nations with the word of his mouth.¹³³

From these verses it can be seen that the Jewish writers of the Psalms of Solomon¹³⁴ looked forward to the Messianic removal of the Roman oppressors.¹³⁵ also inherent in these verses is the evidence that a physical situation (the re-establishment of the Jewish kingdom on earth) was to be dealt with by means of what Nickelsburg describes as a "semidivine being,"¹³⁶ the Messiah.

Again, this seems to point to the fact that the Jews were aware that only by divine intervention would they be delivered from their enemies.

II Esdras 6:18-24; 7:26-42; 11:43-46; 12:31-35

The background and purpose of II Esdras has already been discussed above,¹³⁷ where it was seen that the author was describing the events surrounding the oppressive power of Rome. Scattered throughout II

¹³³Torrey, p. 107.

¹³⁴These writers are thought by Nickelsburg (p. 203) to have "emanated from circles closely related to the Pharisees."

¹³⁵Although the Jewish writers referred to this deliverer as the "son of David," it is clearly stated in verse 36 that this son of David was the Messiah.

¹³⁶Nickelsburg, p. 208, states: "Although the Messianic king will be a human being, the author [of Psalms of Solomon 17] attributes to him certain semidivine characteristics . . ."

¹³⁷Refer to page 100 for this discussion.

Esdras is the mentioning of the end of the persecuting power of Rome. This was described by means of the "signs of the end of the age."¹³⁸

In chapter 6:18-24, an angel describes to the writer of II Esdras the "coming days," when the evil ones will pay the penalty of their iniquity, when the books will be opened, when the sound of the trumpet terrifies the inhabitants of the earth, when people will war with each other, and various other incredible occurrences will take place. These are referred to as the "signs" (verse 20).

In chapter 7:26-42, the imagery of chapter 6:18-24 is referred to when the writer is told by the angel: "For behold, the time will come when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass . . ." (verse 26). He then goes on to say that the "city"¹³⁹ will appear, the ones having been delivered from the evils of the world will see the wonders of the Most High, the Messiah will be revealed, and the ones with him shall rejoice for four hundred years. Then they shall all die, including the Messiah: but after seven days the corruptible world shall perish, the new world with all the inhabitants will be raised to a new life, but the final judgment scene will take place, where the good will be separated from the bad, and everything pertaining to physical life will cease to exist. Only the "splendor of the glory of the Most High" will be left, by which "all shall see what has been determined for them" (verse 42).

¹³⁸The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, ed. Bruce Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 34. All quotes from II Esdras will be taken from this source.

¹³⁹According to Metzger, p. 37, this city refers to the heavenly Jerusalem.

II Esdras 11:43-46 deals more specifically with the destruction of the winged beast. A "creature like a lion was aroused" (verse 37) and spoke to the eagle-beast on behalf of the Most High (verse 36). He reminded the beast of its many iniquities (verses 38-42) and then exclaimed that the insolence and pride of this beast has caused itself to be destroyed because the "times" and the "ages" (verse 44) of the Most High are completed. The lion then describes the destruction of this beast and mentions that the whole earth will be freed from its violence.

Chapter 12:31-35 explains that the lion of chapter 11 was "the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of the days . . ." (verse 32) and who will denounce, reprove, and judge the wicked, while the righteous will be made joyful.

In all of this is seen the same basic message as was found in the apocalyptic passages dealt with above. That is, the physical deliverance of God's people is seen in terms of a divine transcendental intercession.

Conclusion

From examination of each of the apocalyptic references that dealt with the eschatological event, namely I Enoch 62:1-3; 1-5; 83-88; Sibylline Oracles 3:796-808; Psalms of Solomon 17:23-27; II Esdras 6:18-24; 7:26-42; 11:43-46; 12:31-35, it was determined that these references have a very large number of elements in common with each other.

All nine references examined above describe the judgment and destruction of the evil oppressors (the leaders and their followers) of God's people. Seven describe the joyful deliverance and existence of the righteous elect. Six describe the fact that the judgment is to

proceed out of heaven. Six references specifically mention that the Messiah is to come on that occasion, while the other three references state that God himself or his angels will carry out the destruction of the wicked. Five references mention that the earth itself will be destroyed. Four references mention that there is a determined time when all of these things will take place. Two references mention that the Messiah will smite the evil with a sword, while another reference mentions the use of a rod of iron. Two other references mention that the Messiah will smite the evil with the word of his mouth.

All of these observations show that the general apocalyptic description of the end time consisted of a very common form of expression, making use of similar symbols in order to convey a similar message.

At this stage it must not be forgotten that all of these apocalyptic writings were produced by Jews suffering various forms of tribulation by their oppressors. Whether the oppression was by the Greeks, Seleucids, Hasmonians, or Romans, the fact that the Jews were being dominated and their way of life was being attacked or influenced was tribulation enough. In all of this, they looked forward to a physical Messiah who would lead them to victory. There is also an abundance of evidence inherent in their writings which suggests that they knew that only by divine intervention would they be able to escape the clutches of their oppressors. This appreciation of the divine element is described in transcendental other-worldly terms.

It is also noticed that all of the similarities mentioned among the apocalyptic writings dealt with above are also used in Revelation,

including many other elements as well.¹⁴⁰ These will be examined in the next section of this study, which deals with the symbols found in Revelation that have affinities with the symbols dealt with above.

The Application of These Symbols to the Interpretation of Revelation

The war is in heaven between the Messiah and the beast

In Revelation 19:11-21, John looks into heaven¹⁴¹ and sees the "Faithful and True" and his army (verses 11, 13, 19)¹⁴² pitted against the army of the beast (verse 19).¹⁴³ The Messiah and his army are sitting on white horses.¹⁴⁴ He is arrayed in such awesome attire and is presented in such terrifyingly descriptive details that it becomes

¹⁴⁰Some of these elements include the opening of the book of life, the sounding of the trumpet, the appearance of the city of God, the darkening of the sun, the streams of blood, the battle in the clouds, the use of horses in the battle, the terror of the evil ones, the falling of the evil star and its binding, and finally its being thrown into the bottomless pit with its followers. These visions will be compared to the references in Revelation below.

¹⁴¹This vision of a heavenly battle scene was found to be quite common in the apocalyptic passages dealt with above, for seven of the nine references mention the event as coming out of heaven. Some of the more obvious ones include I Enoch 1:3-4; 87; Sibylline Oracles 3:807.

¹⁴²The "Faithful and True" refers undoubtedly to Christ himself who is the Messiah. He is called the "faithful and true witness" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14) and the "Word of God" (Rev. 11:13 cf. Jn. 1:1). Many other characteristics in Revelation 19 also describe him as the Christ. These include the sharp two edged sword issuing from his mouth (verse 15), the rod of iron (verse 15 cf. Psalm 2:9), and the name "King of kings and Lord of lords" (verse 16). The vast majority of commentators agree that these details are descriptive of Christ. Among them are Hendriksen, p. 217; Lindsey, p. 249; Johnson, p. 325; Beckwith, pp. 287, 731; Morris, Revelation, p. 229; Summers, p. 197. Notice that each of the six basic methods of interpretation have here been represented.

¹⁴³The beast has already been established as Rome.

¹⁴⁴The symbolism of the horses has already been seen in the Sibylline Oracles 3:805, where they are used to overcome the wicked,

obvious to the reader that he is unconquerable. Again, these descriptive details have been seen in the apocalyptic works above.¹⁴⁵

Revelation 12:1-6 also describes a conflict in heaven¹⁴⁶ where the dragon features quite prominently. The dragon (which has been identified in Revelation 12:9; 20:1 as Satan) has many characteristics which are similar to those of the beast.¹⁴⁷ Verses seven to twelve go on to describe a war in heaven where Michael¹⁴⁸ and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels (verse 7). The dragon is then thrown

¹⁴⁵These details include his eyes as a flame of fire (verse 12), he is clad in a robe dipped in blood (verse 13), he has in his mouth a sharp sword with which to smite the nations (verse 15; cf. Sib. Or. 3:798; I Enoch 62:12), he rules with a rod of iron (verse 15; cf. Rev. 12:5; Psalms of Solomon 17:27 and Psalm 2:9 which deals with the triumph of the Messiah over the nations). In this sense, I Enoch 62:2 describes the conviction of the evil by the word from the mouth of the Messiah.

¹⁴⁶This has been discussed in some detail on pages 89-90.

¹⁴⁷These similarities are seen in the fact that the dragon and the beast are both red (Rev. 12:3; cf. Rev. 17:3), they both have seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems upon their heads (Rev. 12:3; cf. Rev. 13:1; 17:7), they both ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition (Rev. 20:1-3; cf. Rev. 17:8), they both create havoc with God's people (Rev. 12:17; cf. Rev. 13:7), and so forth.

¹⁴⁸John A. Lees (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "Michael") points out that Michael is the Archangel who features quite prominently in the apocalyptic writings such as I Enoch 9:1; 40:9; 68:2.3; Ascension of Isaiah 9:23; and so forth. He is seen as one of the "chief princes of Israel" (Dan. 10:13, 21), and as the "great prince" (Dan. 12:1). In these passages "Michael appears as the heavenly patron champion of Israel; as the watchful guardian of the people of God against all the foes earthly and devilish" (Lees, p. 2049). It is also noticed that I Enoch 87-88 describes the advent of seven great angels who destroy the unrighteous, one of which attacks the evil star himself and destroys it. It seems that in keeping with this apocalyptic tradition, John mentions the archangel as fighting against Satan on behalf of God's people.

down to the earth,¹⁴⁹ where he persecutes God's people (verses 9, 13, 17) by giving his authority to the beast (Rev. 13:1ff).

The message communicated thus far is that the dragon and the beast are in no position to stand against the awesome power of the Messiah and his angels. In fact, they are expelled from heaven. As a last resort, the dragon and his consort the beast attempt to force their authority upon the children of God. This takes place on earth.

The heavenly battle is fought on earth

In Revelation 16:13-19, the influence of the dragon, beast, and false prophet¹⁵⁰ is seen. This is probably the result of and development of the events described in Revelation 12:17-13:10, where the dragon makes war on God's people and gives his authority to the beast, who in turn wars on the saints and conquers those whose names have "not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 13:8).

It is obvious that through their influence, the dragon, beast, and false prophet of Revelation 16:13-16 gain many followers (cf. Rev. 13:8-

¹⁴⁹In a sense, this imagery is found in I Enoch 86:1ff which describes a star falling from heaven and influencing God's people, causing them to become unrighteous. Although the writer of I Enoch was describing the political events of his day, it seems that this same imagery is used by John to describe the coming to earth of Satan and his influence over people. In Revelation 9:1, John sees a star falling from heaven wreaking havoc among God's people. With Rome as the persecuter of God's people, it is very easy to compare this message to that of I Enoch 86:1ff. This is developed further in Revelation 16:12-16.

¹⁵⁰The false prophet features in Revelation 16:13, where he acts as a co-antagonist along with the dragon and beast. However, just as the dragon and beast are finally destroyed, so is the false prophet (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

10).¹⁵¹ This is seen in the demonic spirits which pour from the mouths of the dragon, beast, and false prophet, who perform "signs" (Rev. 16:14) which deceive the kings and dwellers on the earth.

Verse fourteen then describes how the dragon, beast, and false prophet, together with all of their followers, "the kings of the whole world" (Rev. 16:14), gather together "to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (Rev. 16:15). The mentioning of this great battle recalls the description of the heavenly battle scene in Revelation 19:11-21.¹⁵²

In all of this, the earthly, physical element is very obvious. The conflict takes place on earth among God's people. However, the transcendental other-worldly element is very much in view.

One other important consideration in Revelation 16:13-16 is the fact that these evil hordes and their leaders gather for battle at the place "which is called in Hebrew Armageddon" (verse 16).¹⁵³ It is

¹⁵¹This seems to present the same message as was seen in the advent of the "star" of I Enoch 86:1ff. Refer to footnote 149 above for these details.

¹⁵²This scene in Revelation 19:11-21 will be described in more detail below.

¹⁵³W. Ewing (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "Har-Magedon") notices that only Revelation 16:16 uses the name "Armageddon." He holds that it very possibly refers to Meggido, which includes a mountain and a plain which was ideal for battle. In Judges 4-5 the Israelites had been under Canaanite bondage for some twenty years. After praying to God for deliverance, the Israelites finally overcame the Canaanite army at Megiddo. Jabin (the king of Canaan) and Sisera (the general of the Canaanite army) were destroyed. God's will was done; his people were free. In II Chronicles 35:20-24, Josiah the king of Judah went out to war with Necho king of Egypt who was on his way to do battle at Carchemish. God had told Necho to go to Carchemish, and when Necho heard that Josiah intended to war against him, he sent word to Josiah saying, "What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war; and God has commanded me to make haste. Cease opposing God, who is with me lest he destroy you" (II Chron. 35:21). In the

possible that the symbolism associated with the picture of Armageddon helped the reader to realize that the dragon, beast, false prophet, and their followers are doomed to destruction. This is seen in light of the historical events surrounding the battles that took place at Megiddo: That is, God's will was always done. He always won. All of this simply adds up to the fact that the evil hordes who are lined up for the great heavenly battle are as good as destroyed. This is a foregone conclusion.

The earth and its dwellers
are destroyed

As has already been mentioned, the destruction of the unrighteous has been described in all nine of the apocalyptic references discussed above.¹⁵⁴ So also in Revelation 19:17-21.

In chapter 19:17-18 the birds of the air are called by an angel to eat the bodies of the destroyed unrighteous. This occurs even before the battle takes place, again adding to the foregone conclusion that the

following verses, it is seen that Josiah ignores Necho's words, attacks him at Megiddo and is killed (verses 22-24). In Judges 6:33, the defeat of the Midianites at the hand of Gideon also took place at Megiddo. It can therefore be seen that irrespective of who is involved, God's will is always done. It is quite possible that those who knew of the great battles that took place at Megiddo also knew of this great truth. In light of this, W. Ewing goes on to say of Megiddo: "It will be remembered that this is apocalypse. Har-Magedon may stand for the battle field without indicating any particular locality." (p. 1340). Ray Hawk ("Armageddon," Firm Foundation 94 [1977] :85) believes that the battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16 is parallel to the events described in Revelation 19 and 20.

¹⁵⁴Some of these include I Enoch 62:1-3 which specifically describes the destruction of the kings and the mighty (cf. Rev. 16:14; 19:19); Sibylline Oracles 3:806, which likens this battle to a hunt of wild beasts (cf. the beast of Rev. 13); Psalms of Solomon 17:25 which refers to the destruction of the evil as a "shattering"; and II Esdras 6:23, which describes the terror of the unrighteous that accompanies their destruction.

evil hordes are doomed to destruction. Verse 18 mentions that no-one will be spared. From the greatest to the least, all followers of the beast will be destroyed. Verses 20-21 then states that the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur, while the rest were slain by the sword¹⁵⁵ that issues from the mouth of the one who sits upon the horse. The birds then gather and are gorged with their flesh (verse 21).

Revelation 20:7-9 talks of the influence of Satan upon the world, causing them to attack the people of God; ". . . but fire came down from heaven and consumed them" (verse 9).¹⁵⁶

All of this shows that the followers of the beast who attack the saints are destroyed. This is very much in keeping with the messages of the apocalyptic passages dealt with above. Added to this are many other descriptive details of the destruction of the unrighteous.¹⁵⁷

Revelation 19:21 describes the destructive sword of the Messiah, which is also described in Sibylline Oracles 3:798. In Revelation 14:19-20, the destruction of the evil are symbolically described as being trampled as the "grapes of wrath" with their blood flowing "as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵The imagery of the sword has been discussed on page 143.

¹⁵⁶II Esdras 12:3 also talks of the burning with fire of the evil oppressor (the eagle) of the righteous.

¹⁵⁷Refer to footnote 154, which mentions some of the apocalyptic descriptions relating to this.

¹⁵⁸This recalls I Enoch 1:4 (which speaks of God treading upon the earth); Psalms of Solomon 17:26 (which describes the crushing of the wicked by the Messiah); and Sibylline Oracles 3:804 (which describes the destruction of the righteous and likens the event to "dripping streams of blood").

It is also noticed that five of the nine apocalyptic passages mention not only the destruction of the unrighteous but also the destruction of the earth itself. Similar imagery is found also in Revelation 6:12-16; 8:5-12; 16:17ff.

From this, it is seen that the details in Revelation relating to the divine destruction of the evil earthly inhabitants are in very many ways similar to the details found in the apocalyptic passages. In spite of this earthly symbolism, the transcendental element is still in view.

The righteous elect and the unrighteous hordes are separated for eternity

It has already been seen that the heavenly battle takes place on earth,¹⁵⁹ where the evil are destroyed. Now John looks into heaven and sees the eternal separation of the righteous and the unrighteous.

In Revelation 19:20, John has already seen that the beast and false prophet have been thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. In Revelation 20:1-2, an angel from heaven seizes the dragon, binds him with a chain, and throws him into the bottomless pit.¹⁶⁰ Later, he is released, only to be thrown once and for all into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and false prophet were (Rev. 20:10). This lasts "for ever and ever" (verse 10).

In Revelation 20:11-15, the great judgment scene is described. From the presence of God, "earth and sky fled away" (verse 11).¹⁶¹ The

¹⁵⁹ Refer to page 145, footnote 145 for the details relating to this.

¹⁶⁰ This recalls I Enoch 88:1 (cf. Rev. 9:1) which has been discussed above on page 135.

¹⁶¹ This recalls II Esdras 7:38-42, which speaks of the day of judgment when all things, including the sun, moon, and stars, will cease to exist.

"books were opened" (verse 12)¹⁶² and the dead were judged by "what was written in the books, by what they had done" (verse 12),¹⁶³ and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (verse 15).¹⁶⁴ It is seen then, that the followers of the dragon and the beast are destroyed for eternity (cf. Rev. 20:10) just as the dragon and the beast.

On the other hand, the righteous elect will rule with the Messiah in heaven. This is a dominant theme in Revelation and is found in chapters 4; 5; 7:9-17; 14:1-5; 15; 19:1-8; 20:4-6; 21; 22:1-5. Of the nine apocalyptic passages dealt with above, six mention the rewards of

¹⁶²This recalls II Esdras 6:20 (which describes the opening of the books at the judgment scene); Daniel 7:10 (which also describes the opening of the books at the judgment scene in the kingdom of the Son of Man); Daniel 12:1 (which talks of the time when the righteous will be delivered and "everyone whose name is found written in the book" will be blessed).

¹⁶³The deeds of all people have been recorded in the "books." These "deeds" of the people are their works, good or bad. I Enoch 1:9 describes the coming of God who will "convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness." II Esdras 6:19 mentions that a voice whose "sound was like the sound of many waters" (cf. Rev. 1:15) told him that he requires from the "doers of iniquity the penalty of their iniquity."

¹⁶⁴The book of life is also mentioned in Revelation 13:8; 17:8, where each worshiper of the beast is described as "one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb that was slain." This adds much weight to the fact that the destruction of the unrighteous is a predetermined event. In a sense, this is seen in II Esdras 7:42, which mentions that there shall come a time when all "shall see what has been determined for them."

the righteous.¹⁶⁵ Also seen is the fact that the holy city will appear, the new "Jerusalem"¹⁶⁶ coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:10).¹⁶⁷

Conclusion

The description of the many eschatological details of Revelation 12:7-11; 16:13-16; 19:11-21; 20:1-15 are amazingly similar to the details seen in I Enoch 1-5; 62:1-3; 83-88; Sibylline Oracles 3:796-808; Psalms of Solomon 17:23-27; II Esdras 6:18-24; 17:26-42; 11:43-46; 12:31-35.

At this stage it must be remembered that the Jewish apocalyptic writers, in keeping with their traditional concept of the Messiah, looked forward to a day when a physical Messiah would overthrow the physical oppressors, allowing the Jews freedom to restore their physical Jewish nation. However, in the book of Revelation, John was looking toward the coming of the spiritual Messiah who would save his people from the oppressive sinful powers of the beast.

In all of this, the symbolic events in the apocalyptic passages are very similar to those found in Revelation. This is because the essential principles of a deliverer coming to save his people are the

¹⁶⁵This is found in I Enoch 1:8 (which says that the righteous will have peace, prosperity, and protection); 5:7-9 (which says that the elect will have peace, salvation, eternal sinlessness, and eternal gladness and joy); 62:13-15 (which describes the salvation of the elect, their banquet with the Son of Man [cf. Rev. 3:20], and their being clothed with garments of glory [cf. Rev. 19:8, 13]); II Esdras 12:34 (which talks of the joyful existence of the righteous).

¹⁶⁶II Esdras 7:26 mentions the "city which now is not seen shall appear." Revelation 21 describes this city in fine detail. It is also described in Hebrews 12:22-23 which refers to it as the "new Jerusalem" and describes it as the heavenly abode of the saints.

¹⁶⁷Notice that not only does the wrath of God come out of heaven, but also the dwelling place of his people.

same. However, John was using these symbols for his own purpose. In that sense, as the Jewish messiah was to Israel, so Christ was (and still is) to Christianity (the church), the spiritual Israel.

In both Revelation and the apocalypses, this final conflict is seen over and over again as a transcendent, other-worldly, spiritual, heavenly event. Yet at the same time, it is seen to have its effect on earth. In light of this, Elizabeth Fiorenza states:

In the short intermediary time between the exaltation of Christ and his coming the battle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan will take place on earth. The focal point of this final conflict for the earth is the Christian community, which acknowledges and represents during this time the claim of God's rule over the world. Through the blood of Christ the christian community is ransomed from the world and from the rule of the power of sin so that it can be a basileia for God. The Kingdom of God, which in the eschatological future will be realized in the entire cosmos, is now through the reality of the Christian community present on earth in the midst of the worldly demonic powers.¹⁶⁸

Although John, in Revelation, presents the eschatological event as a future occurrence, there also seems to be an underlying message that the eschatological event exists in the present as well. This can be seen in Revelation 11:15 which says that the "kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord . . ."; 12:10, which says that "Now the salvation . . . kingdom . . . of his Christ have come."¹⁶⁹ This view is held by a number of scholars, among them Elizabeth Fiorenza, who has stated above that the eschatological event is "now" and "present" in the

¹⁶⁸Fiorenza, Eschatology, pp. 559-560.

¹⁶⁹The fact that John sees the destruction of the beast and the reign of the saints could imply, in a spiritual sense, that the situation already exists. Add to this the evidence that the spiritual condition of all people, good and evil, has been seen "from before the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8; 17:8 cf. 22:10, 11), and the fact that other passages in the New Testament refer to the present existence of Christians in the spiritual realm (Heb. 12:22-24; Eph. 2:5-6).

kingdom but will be "realized" in the future.¹⁷⁰ J. Marcellus Kik agrees with this and states: "Even while upon earth the resurrected saints [the "raised up" of Eph. 2:6] sit with Christ in heavenly places."¹⁷¹

In light of these observations, it could be safe to conclude that not only will the eschatological event occur in the future, but in a spiritual sense, it occurs now.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰Fiorenza, Eschatology, pp. 550-560. Other scholars who hold this view are: Rudolf Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 151-152; Ernst Kasemann, "On the Topic of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," Journal for Theology and the Church 6 (1969): 123, 126; Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics vol. 2, ed. William Hordern, New Directions in Theology Today (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 164; D. N. Freedman, "The Flowering of Apocalyptic," Journal for Theology and the Church 6 (1969): 173.

¹⁷¹J. Marcellus Kik, An Eschatology of Victory (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), p. 43. He also mentions John 5:24-25 as an aid to understanding this concept.

¹⁷²This can be illustrated by mixing two colors of paint; red and blue. If red is mixed with blue, then purple is produced. If blue is mixed with red, the same result occurs; purple is produced. It also does not matter when the two colors are mixed, the same result takes place; purple is produced. In this sense, whether the second coming of Christ (the Messiah) takes place, or whether the individual person dies, the same result occurs; that is, the person is ushered into the presence of the Messiah. To the person living on earth, both the coming of the Messiah and the death of the person are future events. In this sense, John is able to refer to this as a future event.

CHAPTER V

Summaries, Conclusion, Comparison, and Observations

A Summary of the Study Thus Far

The object of this study was to address the problem that exists as a result of the wildly divergent interpretations of Revelation.¹ It was decided that one particular approach be used to address the problem.² This would include the discovery and research of symbols found in Jewish apocalyptic literature (canonical, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphical) that were in many ways similar to the selected symbols found in Revelation,³ the discovery of the essential message of these Jewish apocalyptic symbols, and the interpretation of Revelation in light of these symbolic messages.⁴

Before this system of study was performed, it was necessary to study selected topics pertaining to apocalyptic literature in general (background, purpose, influence, relationship to prophecy,

¹Refer to pages 1-15 of this study which mentions the divergent interpretations.

²There are oftentimes many ways to solve a problem. The attempt at discovering and using different approaches and methods is therefore a valid one. Ideally, each method should contribute to the final, conclusive solution.

³Refer to pages 83-94 of this study which deals with this part of the study.

⁴This part of the study includes pages 95-115.

characteristics, and theological message).⁵ It was also necessary to study the hermeneutical principles and approaches (including the knowledge and application of philosophy, language, theology of world history, and hermeneutic circle).⁶ This provided a substantial platform of knowledge which made possible a more comprehensive and conclusive understanding of the literature in question and the task at hand.⁷

Also important was the need to study the relationship of Jewish apocalyptic literature to the beginnings of Christianity and more specifically to Revelation. This was necessary because the early Christians existed in the same world of thought as the apocalyptists and had used apocalyptic literature themselves.⁸

Once all of this was carried out and a platform of knowledge and understanding was developed, it was possible to meaningfully discover and research the relevant apocalyptic symbols. Three groups of symbols relating to three specific areas were dealt with: The beast, the "time, times, and half a time," and the final conflict.⁹ A conclusion

⁵Refer to pages 31-74 for the information pertaining to the study of apocalyptic literature.

⁶The discussion on the hermeneutic principles and approaches is found on pages 25-30. While not actively stated, these principles were kept in mind and influenced the approach of this study.

⁷Refer to the diagram in appendix D which illustrates how the information gained by studying apocalyptic literature and the hermeneutic principle can help to construct a platform which enables one to extend his horizon of understanding to where it merges with the horizon of the apocalyptist.

⁸This section of the study includes pages 75-82.

⁹These three symbols present the major themes in Revelation. The book was written because of the advent of the beast which "forms a cardinal factor in the purpose and scope of the entire book" (Beckwith, p. 393). The beast was to exist for a certain period of time during

to each symbol was arrived at.¹⁰ All that now remains is to harmonize the three conclusions in light of the Biblical framework.

A Harmonization of the Conclusions to the Beast,
"Time, Times, and Half a Time," and the Final
Conflict in Light of the Biblical Framework

Introduction

It is obvious that the different conclusions to the three symbols dealt with must harmonize with each other in order to produce a comprehensive and valid theological statement. These conclusions must also conform to the Biblical framework. That is, they must have a sound scriptural basis, and they must not contradict Biblical doctrine.

It is also necessary, at this stage, to remember that the Jewish apocalyptists "still thought of survival in terms of the nation . . ." ¹¹ while John looked forward to the spiritual coming of the Messiah to

which time the saints were to be persecuted but protected. The final conflict, the coming of the Messiah to vindicate his elect, was also apparent throughout the whole of Revelation. Refer to Elizabeth Fiorenza, "The Eschatology and Composition of the Apocalypse," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (October, 1968): 556, who deals extensively with this topic.

¹⁰ These conclusions are found on pages 112, 130, and 151.

¹¹ D. S. Russell, Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 39.

establish his spiritual kingdom.¹² This must be kept in mind when considering the meanings of the symbols in Revelation.

The beast from the sea

The conclusion arrived at concerning the beast was that to the first century Christian, it represented Rome as a persecuting power. The use of the word "beast" in I Corinthians 15:32 and Titus 1:12 seems to uphold the fact that individuals or a nation could be referred to.¹³

¹²As a disciple of Christ, John was aware of the spiritual aspects relating to the Messianic expectation. This awareness is seen in John 3:36; 5:24; 14:1-3; 18:36; I John 3:14, where the writer makes mention of the spiritual realm of existence. With this in mind, John proceeds to relay the same message in the symbols of Revelation. Another point of note is that as a communicator of God's word, John was inspired (cf. II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:21; I Cor. 2:6-1?). In this sense, John had God's "stamp of approval" on his symbolic description of the physical and spiritual conditions of his time.

¹³The Greek word for "beast" in Revelation 13:1 is *θηρίον*. This same word appears in I Corinthians 15:32 where Paul says he "fought with beasts at Ephesus." F. W. Grosheide (Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953], p. 375) believes that this refers to the struggles of Paul "with Jews or Gentiles in which his life was in danger (cf. II Cor. 1:8, 9; 11:23)." F. F. Bruce (I and II Corinthians, New Century Bible Commentary, ed. M. Black [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971], p. 194) adds that the phrase "humanly speaking" in I Corinthians 15:32 means that Paul is using figurative language to refer to a peril at the hands of an infuriated mob, possibly the riot at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:23ff). In Titus 1:12, Paul again uses the word *θηρίον* in referring to the evil reputation of the Cretans. A. T. Hanson (The Pastoral Epistles, New Century Bible Commentary, ed. M. Black [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982] pp. 176-177) deals extensively with the subject of the reputation of the Cretans and concludes that they are the "beasts" referred to by Paul. R. A. Ward (Commentary on I and II Timothy and Titus [Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974], p. 245) mentions that the phrase "evil beasts" refers specifically to the Cretans and the danger that they can be to the church. In that same sense, the Roman power, as the "beast," is a danger to the church.

The "time, times, and half a time"

The conclusion to the "time, times, and half a time," "forty-two months," and "1260 days,"¹⁴ was that they all represented the same indefinite period which exists between the first and second comings of Christ. These periods of time further symbolize the state of affairs or quality of existence, both physical and spiritual, during the course of this age. The symbolism which occurs during this "time" period can be referred to as a "combination state"¹⁵ where the two elements (the physical and the spiritual) oftentimes seem to "intrude" into each other's territory.¹⁶ Many scriptures attest to this. These passages include the ones dealing with the "flesh,"¹⁷ with "darkness" and "light,"¹⁸ and more obviously, with salvation and condemnation.¹⁹

¹⁴Hereafter referred to as the "'time' periods."

¹⁵The various symbols which exist during the "time" periods are proof of the "combination state." While the beast is typically earthly (in that he is described on earth, with earthly qualities, cf. Rev. 13:1-8; 17:8ff.), the protected woman is typically transcendental (in that she is described in heavenly qualities, cf. Rev. 12:1, 14). On the other hand, there is a mixing, or combining of the earthly and heavenly qualities as well (cf. Rev. 12:1-17; 19:11-20:15). These same principles apply to the two witnesses (cf. Rev. 11:3-12), and also to much of the rest of Revelation.

¹⁶This is seen in the intrusion of the beast (physical) into the territory of the Christian (spiritual). If this was not possible, then the exhortation to Christians to remain faithful would have been meaningless (cf. Rev. 2:7, 10, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). The intrusion of the spiritual into the physical is seen when people who are slaves to the realm of "flesh" with its passions, desires, and death (cf. Rom. 7:5, 25; 8:3, 5-8, 13; Gal. 5:17-6:8; Js. 1:14, 15) are saved from the consequences of the flesh by the Spirit (cf. Rom. 7:6; 8:4, 9-11), who has been given to people through their obedience to the Word (cf. Jn. 1:1,2; 5:24; 6:63; Acts 2:38; Rom. 1:16; Js. 1:21).

¹⁷Refer to footnote 16 for these passages on "flesh."

¹⁸Just as one can be called from darkness into light (I Pet. 2:9, 10), so can one choose to remain in darkness (Jn. 3:19, 20), or return back to darkness from light (cf. II Tim. 4:10; Heb. 6:4-6).

In many instances, the "combination" of the indestructible spiritual state is seen to be existing in the faithful Christian. Romans 8:28-39 is a prime example, which says that once a person becomes a child of God, absolutely nothing can separate him from that spiritual protection.²⁰ The Christian is therefore urged to remain "faithful unto death" so that he will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 4:7,8).

In all of this, the Christian who attempts to remain faithful is persecuted.²¹ Yet at the same time, he is protected - not physically, but spiritually.²² This is essentially the message contained in the symbols relating to the "time" periods, which exist for as long as Christianity exists.²³

¹⁹Some of these would include Mark 16:16; John 5:24; 12:48; Romans 8:1; Philippians 1:28; and so forth.

²⁰This is typically the theme of Revelation as characterized by the "time" periods. During the reign of the beast (forty-two months) the Christians are troubled and persecuted because of their preaching (Rev. 11:1ff.), but they are protected during that time (Rev. 12:6, 14). II Timothy 2:11, 12 also attests to this. However, Christians can be caused to forsake the Lord under pressure (cf. Jn. 1:13-15; I Thess. 3:5; Heb. 3:12). To the first-century Christian, the pressure to forsake the Church was being applied by Rome. In Matthew 10:28, Jesus brings out the same principle when he says, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell."

²¹This is represented by the persecuting power of the beast. Other scriptures that attest to the persecution of Christians because of their faithfulness are Matthew 13:20-21; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; II Thessalonians 1:4-10; I Peter 1:6-7; 4:16-19.

²²Refer to footnote 20 for the scriptures relating to this.

²³Refer to the diagram in appendix C which explains this in more detail.

The final conflict

The conclusion to the final conflict (the eschatological event surrounding the coming of the Messiah to vindicate his elect and to destroy the unrighteous) is that it was to be a spiritual occurrence when once and for all time the spiritual would "intrude" into the territory of the physical. This was seen in the destruction of the beast and the casting into the fire the dragon and all of his followers. Not only was this to be a future event, but spiritually, it exists even in the present time.²⁴

There are many scriptures that deal with the results of the final conflict as a wholly spiritual event which occurs even in the present.²⁵

Conclusion

After noticing the many scriptures that tend to uphold the interpretations concerning the beast, the "time" period, and the final conflict, it seems safe to conclude that the three symbols fit into a Biblical framework.

²⁴For an explanation of this, refer to Fisrenza's statement on page 153 and to the analogy on page 154, footnote 172.

²⁵As the judgment of the righteous and unrighteous is described in terms of a future occurrence (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:10-15), so is it also seen in terms of a present reality. John 5:24 describes the believer in Christ's word as one who "has eternal life, he does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life." John 12:48 describes the non-believer as one who "has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day." In light of this, Hebrews 12:22-23 makes sense when it says of the present faithful Christians living on earth:

"But you have come to mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus . . ."

In light of this, scriptures such as Matthew 8:10, 11; Ephesians 2:4-7; Revelation 4, 5, 7, 14, 15, convey the same idea.

The harmonization of the three symbols can therefore be stated as follows: John, the writer of the book of Revelation, was revealing to the first-century Christians the eternal spiritual truths relating to man's relationship to God and his struggle against the worldly influences that seek to tear him away from salvation.²⁶ John communicated this message at a time when the Christians needed it most²⁷ - during the period of the Roman oppression.²⁸ He also communicated this message in a way that the first-century Christians

²⁶A scriptural backing for this reality would be Romans 7:7-25, where Paul the apostle describes in detail the constant struggle of the Christian against sin. This is a timeless principle because it applies to Christians living in any age. The preaching of the two witnesses for "1260 days" (Rev. 11:3) symbolizes the preaching of Christians throughout the entire Christian dispensation (which will end when Christ comes again). During this time, they will be persecuted but protected. In this sense, the "time" period represents the timeless principle.

²⁷In various ways, this same message of remaining faithful during times of trial had been communicated to the first century Christians. Scriptural examples of this are found in Matthew 24:9-12; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:31-39; and II Thessalonians 1:4-10 which forms an excellent summary of the theme of Revelation.

²⁸The description of the beast as Rome helped the Christians to identify their source of persecution. This helped them to relate to it, not as an illusive concept, but as a real-life everyday threat to their spiritual existence. It must be remembered that the description of the beast referred to Rome, and nothing else. Yet at the same time, the "1260 days" preaching of the witnesses implies that the situation lasts until Christ comes again. It seems, therefore, that these two symbols are out of synchronization with each other. However, this seemingly contradictory situation can be harmonized by not only applying Rome to the situation at hand, but by applying the principles involved in the situation. That is, as Rome attempted to persecute Christians for their faithfulness, so in all ages, Christians are troubled and tempted because of their faithfulness. These principles endure until Christ comes again. The use of literal, physical happenings in history to present spiritual principles is not uncommon to the Bible. For example, a person living in the present does not have to suffer Job's specific ailments and problems in order to apply the principles and teachings found in Job. Likewise, the person living in the present does not have to be persecuted by Rome in order to apply the principles presented in Revelation.

could understand and appreciate - as symbolic tribulation material.²⁹ In all of this, the transcendental element was always in view. This served as a reminder to Christians that the principles related to that which was eternal and spiritual, and that these principles could only be accomplished by and through God.³⁰

In this sense, John, in visionary symbolism, was able to "look" into the physical and spiritual realms in order to see the final outcome of the followers of the forces of good and evil. He was able to see the destruction of the beast and his unrighteous henchmen, and he was able to see the glorious reign of the victorious Messiah and his saints. From this wonderful vision, the saints could draw their strength.

A Comparison Between the Findings of the Study and the Existing Methods of the Interpretation of Revelation

Introduction

The findings of this study, as a basic interpretation of Revelation,³¹ will now be compared to the essential interpretations that exist at present.³² It will not be necessary to go into much detail.

²⁹This recalls the hermeneutic principle which states that language was used to interpret one's world. Refer to page 26 for this discussion. Since the first-century Christians were familiar with apocalyptic material and the underlying meanings and messages of various symbols, it stands to reason that this type of literature would be ideal for John to use.

³⁰The heavenly worship scenes and everything relating to the final conflict (the destruction of the unrighteous by the Messiah, and the heavenly judgment scene) served to convey this message.

³¹These findings, as a basic interpretation of Revelation, are described in the conclusion on page 161 above.

³²The more important existing interpretations have been described on pages 4-14. It will be necessary to refer to each of these methods before the comparisons can be appreciated. This step is the fourth and final level of the methodology of this study.

Only the essential messages will be compared. The outcome should then serve as a platform for further study.

As each method of interpretation is discussed, only the parts that would have a bearing on the differences and similarities will be dealt with. This will avoid too much repetition.

The Futurist Method³³

The essential interpretation of the futurist school is that the events described in Revelation 4-19 are to take place in the future. They see world conflict, with the beast of Revelation 13 as a future antichrist, almost ready to take control. This is seen in Lindsey's statement:

"Is the time ripe for the appearance of the Antichrist?" I believe that the present worldwide economic, political, and social disturbances will boil over into an unmanageable mess which will culminate during the rapidly approaching Tribulation period. Then the frantic populace will race to proclaim this powerful, smooth-talking peacemaker as the savior of the world.³⁴

This interpretation of the beast is entirely out of keeping with the message contained in Revelation, in light of Jewish apocalyptic symbols.³⁵

The futurist also sees the final conflict, the battle of Armeggedon, as a literal battle that will take place on earth, where

³³Refer to page 4 for a discussion on this method.

³⁴Hal Lindsey, There's a New World Coming (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 171.

³⁵While it may be possible to stretch the principle to apply to a future conflict, it is certainly not feasible to apply the many characteristics of the beast to an individual who will appear in history thousands of years after the first-century Christians received the Revelation telling them that "the time is near" (Rev. 1:3).

world powers will annihilate each other.³⁶ Many futurists see the final conflict as taking place now, but with its full impact to come shortly. An excerpt from the Watchtower magazine says: "So concerning the exact day and hour of the apocalypse [armageddon] nobody knows, but the evidence shows that we are living in the era of the apocalypse."³⁷

This interpretation is also not in keeping with the meaning of the symbols in Revelation which state that the final conflict and the battle of Armageddon is a spiritual state of affairs and has always existed in the sense that a righteous Christian, although he is battling the forces of evil in this world, is saved, as long as he remains faithful.

In light of these brief observations, the futurist method is to be treated with the utmost caution, if not entirely rejected.

The Continuous-Historical Method³⁸

The continuous-historical school is generally agreed that the beast of Revelation 13 refers to Papal Rome.³⁹ While this school recognizes that Rome is involved, they place its persecuting power way beyond the period that is meaningful to the first-century Christians.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 204-216.

³⁷"Apocalypse When?" The Watchtower 107 (February 15, 1986):6. While on the surface, this statement may not seem too out of keeping with the spiritual sense of the saved and unsaved people on this earth, it is to be seen in light of the context in which it appears. This context says that a literal worldly war is in the making. Ibid., pp. 1-24.

³⁸Refer to page 9 for the discussion on the continuous-historical method.

³⁹Among these are B. W. Johnson, A Vision of the Ages (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 253-257; Henry H. Halley, Bible Handbook, 24th ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), p. 636; Albert Barnes, Barne's Notes on the New Testament, ed. Ingram Cobbin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1962), pp. 1536-1537.

This raises an important question: How could a message that deals with a situation hundreds of years in the future be relevant to the very people who need encouragement in the face of tribulation? This is the greatest weakness of the continuous-historical method.

Also, the method of the continuous-historical approach does not seem to take into account the purpose of apocalypticism. That is, to comfort the people of God in times of persecution. In light of this, the continuous-historical method is to be treated with caution.

The Preterist Method⁴⁰

While the preterist method is correct in identifying the beast with Rome, it has been seen that sometimes, the first-century situation has been emphasized to the point where the eternal spiritual principles are de-emphasized. This is seen particularly in the events surrounding the final conflict.

McGuiggan sees the battle of Armageddon as the "battle of God and Rome."⁴¹ He sees the same thing in Revelation 19, where: "The battle results in victory, of course, for the Lord. Rome, . . . has gone down in fire and blood and smoke."⁴² J. W. Roberts sees the battle of Armageddon as a battle which will "take place at Rome and result in her

⁴⁰Refer to page 7 for the discussion of the preterist method.

⁴¹Jim McGuiggan, The Book of Revelation (Lubbock, Texas: Montex Publishing Company, 1978), p. 232.

⁴²Ibid., p. 259. See also page 271.

downfall."⁴³ He sees the battle in Revelation 19 as "the struggle between the early church and the Roman empire."⁴⁴

While these interpretations are entirely in keeping with the message of the beast in light of Jewish apocalyptic writings, there seems to be a lack of the practical applications of the timeless principles involved.⁴⁵ For example, the battle at Armageddon can quite easily apply to more than just the battle between God and Rome.

These interpretations seem to be entirely in keeping with the message of the beast in light of Jewish apocalyptic writings. However, if the destruction of Rome was to be that which the suffering Christian was to look forward to, then it is possible that he would have become disappointed in that Rome only ceased to be a persecuting power around A.D. 311.⁴⁶ To the suffering first-century Christian, an event two-hundred years in the future would have as little comfort as an event two thousand years in the future.⁴⁷ Therefore, there must of necessity be more to the meaning of the symbol of the beast.

⁴³J. W. Roberts, The Revelation to John (Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Company, 1974), p. 131.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 169. Roberts adds, however, that this battle was spiritual or figurative in that it was "fought with the gospel of Christ, as that gospel was proclaimed, lived, confessed, and witnessed in death by the followers of Jesus Christ."

⁴⁵Again, this goes back to the understanding of the "1260 days" of the preaching of the witnesses. If their "1260 days" ends with the second coming of Christ, then their situation does not only exist during the time of Rome, but it goes beyond it. This becomes a timeless principle which can be applied in any age.

⁴⁶Early fourth century A.D., the emperor Constantine became a Christian and as a result, Roman persecution of the church stopped. Encyclopaedia Britannica vol. 6, s.v. "Constantine," by D. M. Nicol.

⁴⁷As a persecuted child of God, the Christian in the first century A.D. would have looked forward to a time when he could escape the beast through the coming of the Messiah.

In light of this observation, while the preterist view has much truth with regard to the interpretation of the symbol of the beast, it seems that there is still something lacking. It is quite possible that the answer can be found in the transcendental element which implies that the principles are timeless because they are spiritual.⁴⁸

Taking into account this timeless principle, one can say that the Christian living in the first century A.D. would be able to survive, in a spiritual sense, until beyond the beast, even though on earth, the beast would last longer. This survival by the Christian becomes realized in his death,⁴⁹ because whether he goes to Christ, or whether Christ comes to him (at the second coming), the same result occurs.⁵⁰

Therefore, although Rome is described in the figure of the beast, its destruction should not be looked at in terms of physical annihilation, but rather in terms of spiritual victory for the saints, and spiritual defeat for the unrighteous.

The Philosophy of History Method⁵¹

The philosophy of history method seems to lay little emphasis on the fact that the beast is Rome. In relation to this, Leon Morris

⁴⁸This timeless element has been seen in the various symbols mentioned above where the other-worldly heavenly visions are seen to be beyond the time-bound physical realm.

⁴⁹At death, the Christian can no longer be tormented, tested, or tempted by the beast. His death ushers him into the eschatological event where he claims his reward (Rev. 2:10 "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (cf. II Tim. 4:7-8).

⁵⁰Refer back to the analogy on page 154, footnote 172 which explains this concept.

⁵¹Refer to page 6 which deals with this method.

states: "This seems too simple," and adds that "... there is much more to the beast than ancient Rome."⁵²

As a result of this, the philosophy of history method sees the visions in Revelation only as symbols representing the principles which govern the history of the world and the church.⁵³ Included in these principles is the fact that the beast represents all world powers who set themselves in opposition to God's people.⁵⁴

While it is quite acceptable to adopt the principles relating to this view, it is also vital to see the book of Revelation as a meaningful message to its recipients, the first-century Christians. Besides, there are far too many specific characteristics involved in the description of the beast for it not to be Rome. Being able to see how the early Christians reacted to Rome is also an encouragement for Christians of later centuries who may have to go through similar experiences with evil oppressors.

In light of this, the philosophy of history method is acceptable in that it attempts to apply the timeless principles to all ages. However, it is lacking in that it neglects to see the first-century situation as it should. Because of this, it is possible that it could miss out on some important lessons.

⁵²Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John, Tyndale New Testament Commentator Series (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 165.

⁵³William Milligan, The Revelation of St. John (London: MacMillan and Company, 1886), p. 154.

⁵⁴ Morris, p. 166.

Conclusion

In many places in Revelation, the various interpretations seem to overlap.⁵⁵ However, there are many places where the differences are radically opposed to each other. After examining and comparing the various views, it seems that a combination between the preterist and the philosophy of history views could be the most sensible.

This would mean that while all of the symbols in Revelation are interpreted in light of the first-century context, the principles found therein could be applied to all ages. This even seems to be in keeping with the general New Testament message. For example, once the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about specific problems at Corinth the modern-day Christians are able to learn from this first-century situation by applying the principles to their own time.

Similarly, while the first-century Christians endured specific tribulations, the modern-day Christians are able to learn from their experiences, and can be strengthened in the face of modern-day trials and temptations.

The historical-background method⁵⁶ and the recapitulation method⁵⁷ both combine the philosophy of history and the preterist methods. While there are some differences in the presentation of these methods, their essential message is much the same. But these, and other methods that combine the preterist and philosophy of history methods, are

⁵⁵One example of this is the view that the different symbols relating to the "time" period (the "1260," "forty-two months," and "time, times, and half a time") all occur during the same period of time. Refer to page 125, footnote 93 which proves this point.

⁵⁶Refer to page 11 which deals with this method.

⁵⁷Refer to page 12 which deals with this method.

essentially acceptable, as long as they continue to keep the finer details of the basic interpretation within the historical context and within the accepted Biblical framework.

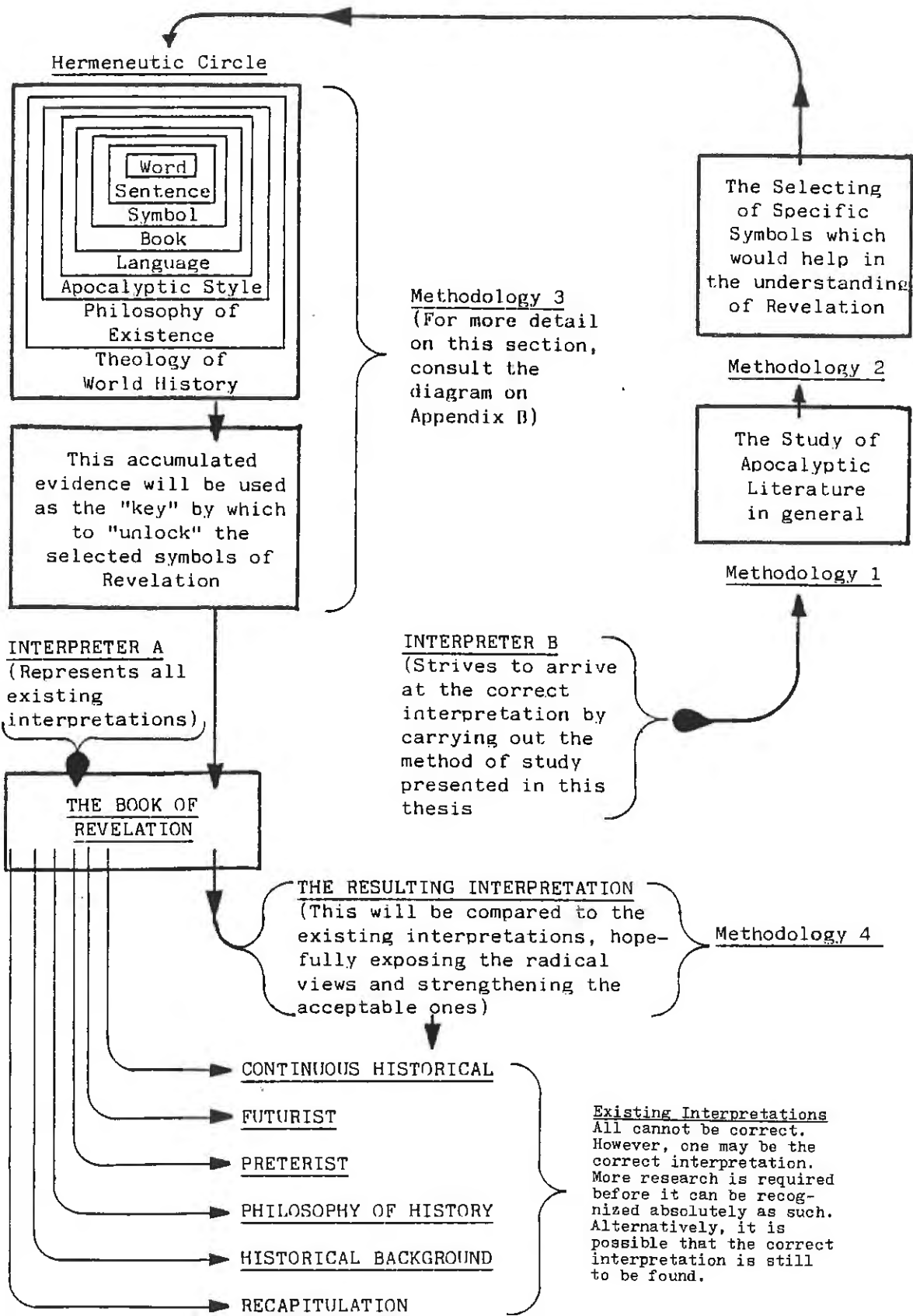
Final Statement

Research has shown that there are many affinities between the symbols found in Jewish apocalyptic literature and the symbols found in Revelation. There is, therefore, much evidence that John, the writer of Revelation, was aware of, and used, Jewish apocalyptic literature.

While the essential message of Revelation was much the same as that of the Jewish apocalyptists (which was the comforting of the people of God in times of tribulation), John went one step further by attempting to explain the spiritual existence of mankind on earth. This included the glorious present spiritual reign of the saints, and also the terrible spiritual destruction of those who dare to oppose the Almighty God, even while still on earth. In this sense, John was attempting to see the unseeable, describe the indescribable, and explain the unexplainable. In light of this, the use of symbolic apocalyptic imagery was the ideal means of communication.

Found within the rich symbolism of Revelation is the timely message of comfort and hope in the face of tribulation. Christians today (as in all ages) can find these eternal principles and with full confidence in the omnipotence of their Messiah can stand firm against the onslaught of the evil one and his henchmen. This is Christianity. This is the message of Revelation.

APPENDIX A



Collected information based upon the hermeneutic circle and the theological approach is collected and used in the interpretation of Revelation

It is imperative that the doctrines of the Bible are used as the criteria upon which the doctrines of Revelation are based. There can be no contradiction (pp. 68-69)

Jewish apocalyptic symbols are used because they suit the purpose for the writing of Revelation (pp. 74-80). However, it is realized that although Revelation is apocalyptic, it has a specific Christian purpose and must be treated with that in mind (p. 82).

All of these factors combined produce Bible-based apocalyptic doctrines (p. 69).

INTERPRETER

Must see the symbols of Revelation within (in relation to) the larger context (p.28).

THE BOOK OF REVELATION
Written in the first century for a first century audience.

The end result of these combined efforts should result in an acceptable interpretation of Revelation

The "key" or preunderstanding which helps the text in question show itself for what it is (p. 29)

The impartial inquiry of Biblical Theology strives to arrive at the truth

Theology of World History
(pp. 27-28, 61-63)

This approach captures the historical development of God's people through the ages and then attempts to eliminate the gulf that exists between the biblical world of thought and our time. Seen in light of apocalyptic historical perspective (which sees past, present and future all bound up together), it attempts to correlate the apocalyptic's concept of existence (expressed in apocalyptic language) to our time. Therefore, this part of the hermeneutical task is to encompass all of the hermeneutical steps in a "timeless" context which consequently makes the first century message relevant today.

Philosophy of Existence
(pp. 25, 59-60)

The apocalypticist's attitude toward his real-life situation greatly influenced his message. Since his preaching had to answer to the real existential concerns of his people, his message would have been chosen with care. This attitude (philosophy) forms a background to all that has been included thus far in the hermeneutic circle. That is, each word, sentence, symbol, writing, language, and style would have been chosen in order to effectively communicate his view with regard to the situation in which he finds himself.

Apocalyptic Style (Background)
(pp. 30-64)

An understanding of the reasons for the rise of apocalyptic, its purposes, and its influence is imperative because the resulting characteristics convey the apocalypticist's approach to existence and history. This finds expression in the language of the day (of which Revelation is an example).

Language (p. 26)

The writer uses language to interpret his world. The hermeneutical task today is to understand the language used during the time that apocalyptic literature was written.

Book

Revelation is to be looked at in light of its symbols, sentences, and words (smaller context), and in light of its use of and relationship to language, apocalypticism, theology and philosophy (larger context).

Symbol (p. 52)

These are studied in relation to their smaller and larger contexts, and in relation to each other and to similar symbols in other works.

Sentence

Where necessary, each sentence is studied in order to shed light on the meaning of a symbol.

Word

Where necessary, each word is studied in order to shed light on the meaning of a symbol.

Practical Theology (p. 67)

Seeks to apply to practical life the things contributed by exegetical, historical, and systematic theology.

Historical Theology
(p. 67)

This emphasizes the origin, development, doctrines and practices of God's people down through the ages.

Practical Theology
(p. 67)

Is concerned with existence. This oftentimes affects and is affected by the philosophical views of the people.

Systematic Theology
(p. 67)

Seeks to gather all the separate aspects of theology and build these up into a logical and understandable system.

Exegetical Theology
(p. 66)

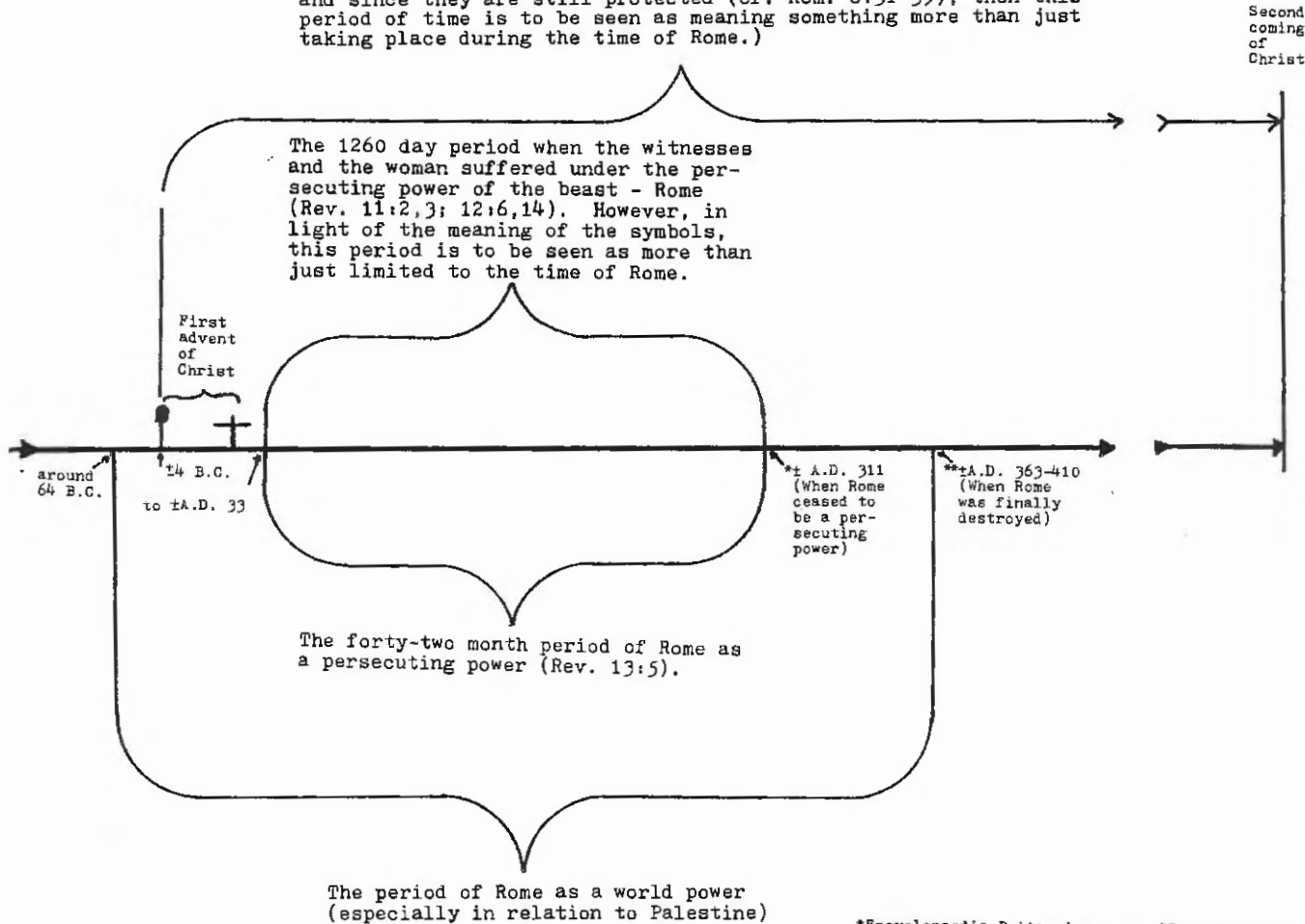
The study of the text, language, background and anything else pertaining to exegetical and expository study which forms an essential and basic part of biblical theology.

HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE (p. 28)

THEOLOGICAL APPROACH (p. 65)

(Notice the similarity of emphasis, approach and method between the two)

The 1260 day period of the preaching of the witnesses (Rev. 11:3).
 The 1260 day period of the protection of the woman (Rev. 12:6,14).
 (The witnesses and the woman, in one sense or another, are symbolic of everything to do with Christianity [refer to page 128 and to footnote 100 for information on this]. If they were only protected during the time of Rome, then they would, by implication, not be protected any longer, because Rome as a persecuting power, no longer exists. But since Christians still exist and preach, and since they are still protected (cf. Rom. 8:31-39), then this period of time is to be seen as meaning something more than just taking place during the time of Rome.)

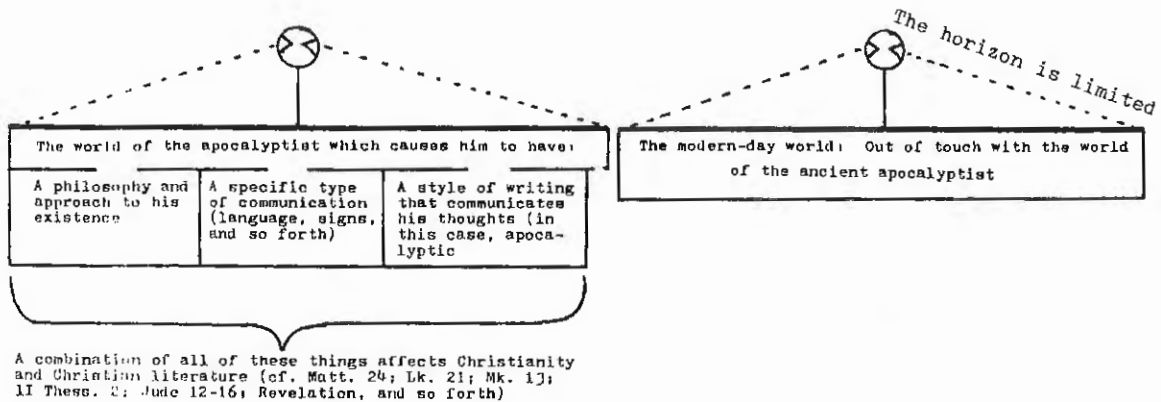


While some methods of the interpretation of Revelation (mostly the preterist) hold that the period of the beast refers to the literal period of the existence of Rome, this diagram shows that the 1260 day period in which the witnesses prophesy (Rev. 11:3) and in which the woman is nourished (Rev. 12:6), which is also referred to as the "time, times, and half a time" (Rev. 12:14 cf. Dan. 7:25), does not necessarily synchronize with the so-called literal forty-two month period of the authority of the beast (Rev. 13:5), which is also the period of the trampling of the holy city (Rev. 11:2). The implication, therefore, is that the periods of time do not necessarily refer to a specific period on earth, but rather, transcend that limitation. This means that the period of time should be seen not as referring to a physical situation, but to a spiritual "state of affairs," or "quality of existence." While Rome did exist for a literal period of time on earth, the meaning of the other time-related symbols demand that Revelation not refer only to the period of Rome, but rather, to the period of the entire Christian dispensation.

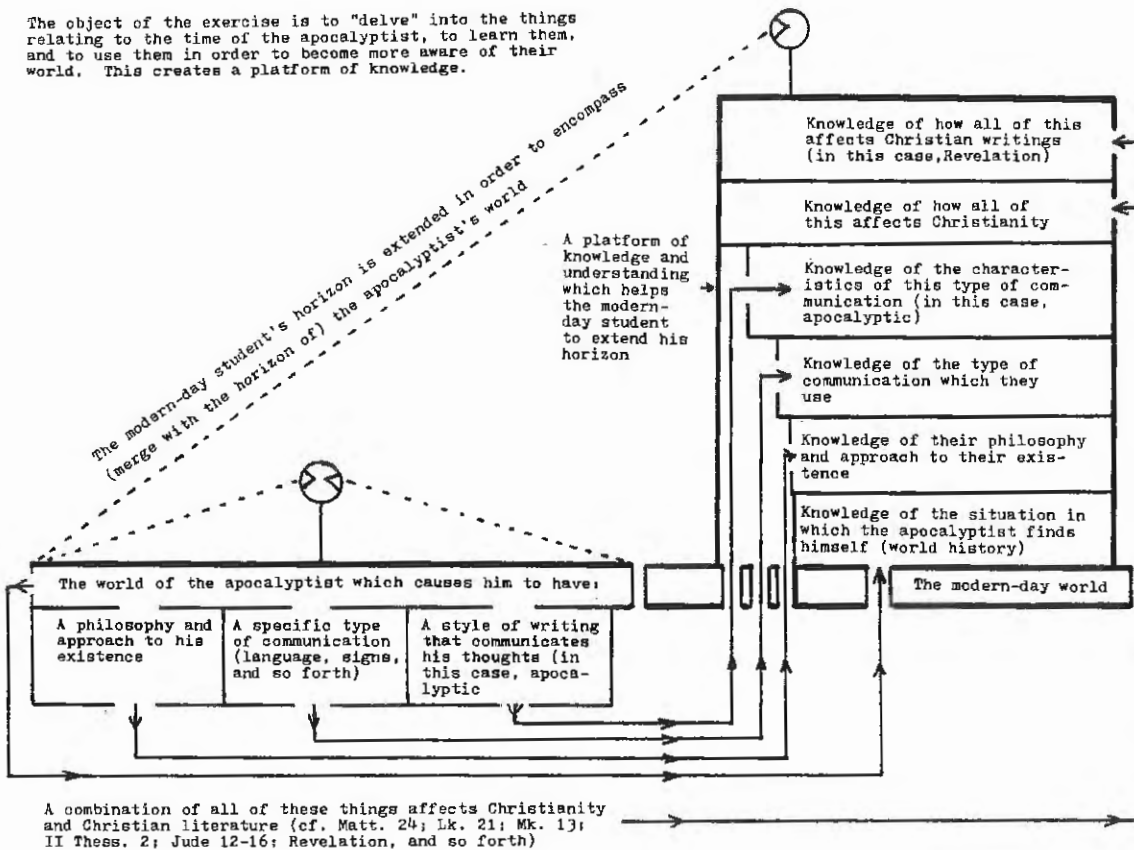
*Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Constantine."
 **Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Roman History."

APPENDIX D

Below are two diagrams which illustrate how the information gained by studying everything pertaining to apocalyptic literature can help to construct a platform of knowledge which helps to understand the situation in question and the task at hand. The first diagram shows the limited horizon of the student due to a lack of knowledge. The second diagram shows the method of accumulating evidence which helps to extend the student's horizon.



The object of the exercise is to "delve" into the things relating to the time of the apocalyptist, to learn them, and to use them in order to become more aware of their world. This creates a platform of knowledge.



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