The War in Heaven: Michael and Messiah in Revelation 12

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The book of Revelation is notorious for an almost chaotic diversity of interpretations, no doubt as a result of the surprising symbols like those found in other apocalypses. The book is saturated in apocalyptic symbolism, and many of the characters are not so much named as caricatured. Revelation 12, a central chapter both in location and theology, contains characters whose importance and background have been thoroughly investigated: (1) the celestial woman, (2) the dragon (Satan), and (3) the Messianic child. John throws an unexpected name into this mix of characters—the angel Michael.

This study examines the role of Michael in Revelation 12 from two perspectives: (1) that of the ideal, first century audience, and (2) that of the author of the Apocalypse. In Revelation, angels assume a variety of roles, and even Jesus is depicted in what may be called “angelic” terminology. Michael, the only angel mentioned by name, appears at a pivotal point in Revelation’s narrative and embarks on a significant battle with the dragon, Satan. The role Michael assumes in this story would seem to belong naturally
to the child Messiah of Rev. 12:5, yet instead of Messiah removing the dragon from heaven, Michael and his angels fight the war.

This study considers the roles of Michael and Messiah in Revelation 12, looking specifically for a paradigm through which the first century author and audience may have understood the story. This paradigm grows from an investigation into the various interpretive streams used by John in Revelation 12 and how his audience understood those streams. These streams present various roles for Michael in the developing eschatology of Jewish (and Christian) theologies. Some of Michael’s roles mirror aspects later assigned to Messiah. Although these concepts could lead to a confusion of Messiah with Michael, a close reading of Revelation actually indicates that Michael was understood as subservient to Messiah. Indeed, this examination of the Michael traditions suggests that John may have reinterpreted Michael’s eschatological function in Revelation 12. This study investigates that reinterpretation and compares Michael’s new function to the role of Messiah in Revelation.
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Every research project produces its own story and arises from a distinct community. In many cases, that community quite literally grows as the project unfolds and as the story deepens. This work is certainly no exception, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank many of those who facilitated and encouraged the research involved herein.

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DEDICATION

To William L. Lane (1931-1999), scholar, mentor, friend
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The book of Revelation is notorious for an almost chaotic diversity of interpretations. No doubt the language and symbolism of Revelation play a major role in the production of so many different interpretations. Employing images similar to those found in both Jewish and Christian apocalypses, the author of Revelation takes his readers into a world that spans and embraces both the physical and supernatural realms. It is a world in which supernatural and natural blend, producing strange symbols and scenes that appear "to the uninitiated modern reader (as) grotesque imagery . . . "1 The reader of Revelation encounters a strange realm in which the mundane world of physical existence is invaded by symbolic monsters, incredible miracles, angelic visitations, and heavenly battles.2 In a book so saturated in symbolism, few of the actors' real names are used or revealed. God, the Lamb (Jesus), and Satan are the primary characters identified by their names (or titles). Many characters in Revelation find expression as caricatures or symbols, with one notable exception, the angel Michael. In Revelation 12 (a chapter that some scholars view as a pivotal section of the work),3 John throws an unexpected name into the mix of angels, monsters, and demons—the angel Michael.


Michael’s appearance in Revelation 12 is surprising primarily because of the activity of the angel. Revelation 12 contains a visionary account portraying the difficult birth of Messiah, an attempt by the dragon (i.e., Satan) to destroy Messiah, the removal of Messiah to heaven, and a dramatic heavenly war in which Satan is defeated. Indeed, the whole chapter apparently revolves around a rivalry between the Dragon (Satan) and the Messiah and his community (symbolized in some way by the celestial woman and her children). Yet, when the war breaks out in heaven, Michael appears and leads the angels in battle against the Dragon. Why does Michael fight this battle (and not God or Messiah)? Is Michael some kind of christological figure, or does his appearance here reflect some familiar stream of tradition? How would the first readers of the Apocalypse understand Michael’s role in this story? How should Michael’s role be understood? How does his appearance in chapter 12 fit with the story and overall theology of Revelation? This dissertation seeks to determine as precisely as possible the role of Michael in Revelation 12 as understood by the author and his audience.

Justification of the Study

Why another book on Revelation and its symbolic world? In light of the numerous works on Revelation, the casual reader may think that every possible angle has already been covered with respect to Revelation and its characters. While it is true that a literal storehouse of material exists on Revelation and its various symbols, there may well be some important aspects of this fascinating example of first century literature yet to be discovered and thoroughly examined. Michael’s appearance is just one such element of exegetical material that could give clues to a better understanding and appreciation of

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4 G. B. Caird, Revelation of St. John, 153; and Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 195-96.
literature like the Apocalypse. In fact, several factors point to a need for a study designed to clarify the importance of Michael in Revelation 12.

The centrality and importance of chapter 12 to Revelation is perhaps the most important factor indicating a need for this study. At the very least, chapter 12 marks a major division in the book. Two cycles of seven plagues have taken place and judgment has been rendered (twice! Cf. Rev. 6:12-8:1; 11:15-19), and the readers no doubt expect the story to end. Instead, Revelation 12 practically intrudes upon the readers like "an uncharacteristically abrupt fresh start, devoid of literary links with anything that precedes."5 Revelation 12 interferes with the flow of an otherwise clean story and introduces new characters and new ideas into a story which for all practical purposes had ended! In fact, some scholars view chapter 12 as the beginning of a kind of parenthesis in Revelation, representing not only the mid-point of the book itself, but also supplying something of the central purpose of the book (even to the point of understanding chapter 12 as an illustration of the underlying heavenly cause for the current problems of the church).6

Revelation 12 produces new characters and fresh concepts that inform and shape the rest of the story of the Apocalypse. In other words, it not only serves as a kind of mid-point for Revelation, chapter 12 also launches the readers into a new story or plot. In

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6 Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 234-35; Boring, Revelation, 150-51; and Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 191. Each of these authors, along with Bauckham, recognizes that Revelation 12 is the beginning of a new section comprising chapters 12 through 14. At any rate, chapter 12 is prominent in this new section of material because of the new actors and events found in it. It presents a "fresh start" or new movement in the story, and by doing so sets the stage for the rest of the story.
fact, some authors see Revelation 12 as an intentional introduction of new material
designed either to precede or to parallel events mentioned previously in the book.\textsuperscript{7} In
spite of its importance, however, not all of the actors in chapter 12 are given due
attention. Michael is practically overlooked or at best given a cursory treatment when the
chapter is considered.\textsuperscript{8}

Another factor indicating the need for this study involves the evolution of
Messianic and angelic roles in apocalyptic literature. Apocalypticism is sometimes
understood as an influential stream of Jewish religion which helped to define and to
distinguish Christianity from its parent, and Revelation is often characterized as a
Christian apocalypse.\textsuperscript{9} Angelology evolves considerably in both Jewish and Christian
apocalyptic literature. Angels become more active and visible, assuming roles that
become increasingly mediatiorial.\textsuperscript{10} Michael, as one of the four main archangels, appears

\textsuperscript{7} Robert W. Wall, \textit{Revelation}, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA:
(London: Christian Community Press, 1980), 94-95; Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 15-17; and Adela

\textsuperscript{8} Even A. Y. Collins (\textit{Combat Myth}, 107-9) gives Michael's role in the story little attention, even
though she perceives Revelation 12 as representative of the whole book. She places Michael here primarily
due to redactional connections to a story of the primordial fall of Satan. William Kimbro Hedrick, in his
dissertation "The Sources and Use of the Imagery in Apocalypse 12" (Berkely, CA: Graduate Theological
Union, 1970), 4-5, asserts that chapter 12 is the best example of John's use of extra-Jewish and Jewish
traditions, yet fails to treat adequately the extra-biblical traditions regarding the angel Michael. If chapter
12 is representative in some sense of the use of the "combat myth" or other materials in Revelation, then the
substitution of Michael for Messiah (the expected combatant/actor in the immediate context) should be
examined in more detail.

\textsuperscript{9} John J. Collins, \textit{The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of
Christianity} (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1984), 205-7, 210-12; and Walter Schmithals, \textit{The

\textsuperscript{10} D. S. Russell, \textit{The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic} (Philadelphia: Westminster
often in this literature and undergoes extensive development.\textsuperscript{11} Even though this extensive development is widely recognized, few have attempted to examine the evolution of one particular angel or the impact of that angel’s developing roles on a particular text.\textsuperscript{12} Since Michael assumes roles in some texts which are often attributed to Messiah (e.g., presenting the saints’ prayers to God and enacting divine judgments),\textsuperscript{13} a consideration into how some early Christians understood angels (especially Michael, the angel of Israel) may shed light on the development of christological ideas. Is it possible that Michael and his evolving roles provide a link between Christianity and Jewish apocalyptic ideas? At the very least, Revelation 12 adds to the Michael traditions. What, if any, link there is to other traditions about Michael should be examined.

\textit{Purpose of the Study}

As previously stated, the specific goal of this work is to determine as precisely as possible the role of Michael in Revelation 12 as it may have been understood by the author of the Apocalypse and his audience. This investigation will test the hypothesis

\textsuperscript{11}One interesting treatment of the developing roles of angels is Margaret Barker’s \textit{The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God} (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992). She traces the development of the Christian doctrine of Jesus’ divinity to the evolution of ideas about the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament and non-canonical literature. She even identifies Michael at one point as the “great angel” (pp. 87-88), providing a great deal of material documenting his various roles and titles.


\textsuperscript{13}See Ezek. 9:3-6; Dan. 12:1-4; Zech. 1:23, 3:1-10; \textit{I Enoch} 40:9, 89:76, 91:15-16; \textit{Test. of Dan} 6:2; Rev. 8-9. See also Barker, \textit{Great Angel}, 33-38, 84-94.
that this Michael story flows out of and is best understood against the backdrop of several streams of Michael traditions found in canonical and non-canonical literature. In order to accomplish this goal, the Michael story of Revelation 12 must be located within the developing streams of traditions concerning the angel.

The roles attributed to Michael (and other angels) are in many cases very similar to christological roles found in Revelation. As a result, the Christology of Revelation and its relationship to the developing roles of angels must be considered. Of special interest is the relation of angels to the Christ in Revelation and how their respective roles interact or overlap. The investigation is thus concerned with any possible connection between angelology and Christology in Revelation. Interaction with other studies investigating Michael's christological or angelic roles would no doubt give a helpful

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14 It should be noted that some of the documents used in this study are of disputed date. They were selected primarily due to their proximity to Revelation in material/subject matter. The main concern is to locate the books within a milieu that either feeds into the community of Revelation or that flows naturally out of it. As noted by Margaret Barker (Great Angel, 134, 163, 167-68), sometimes the presence of similar ideas (even in later documents) gives evidence of a development or flow of a particular doctrinal stream. For more, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 53-55. Of course, this line of reasoning must be tested further with reference to the particular texts involved. Also, since some of these works are apocalyptic in character, some consideration must be given to the genre of apocalyptic literature and its relationship to Revelation. For more, see J. J. Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypses," Semeia 14 (1979) 21-59; David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. K. H. Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 157-98; and Bruce J. Malina, On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), xiv-xvii.

15 For lists of some of these similarities, see Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 213-245; and Alan F. Segal, Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, vol. 25 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 137-46. Some of the roles listed include warfare on behalf of the saints (Rev. 12:7-10; 19:11-21), supernatural (practically divine) appearance (Rev. 1:12-16; 10:1-7), enacting divine judgments (Rev. 6:12-17; 20:11-15), etc. See footnote 13 for passages in which angels assume similar roles.

16 Loren Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 3-5, notes that the general development of Christology among first century Christians may have been encouraged by the developing angelology of many forms of Judaism. See also, Larry Hurtado, One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 93-114; and Barker, Great Angel, 1-3.
overview of the scholarly thought in this area, but unfortunately not much work regarding Michael in Revelation 12 is available.\textsuperscript{17}

The search for clues on Michael's role and the reason(s) for his appearance in Revelation 12 requires investigation into three primary areas of research. Some consideration must be given to the developing roles of angels (and particularly Michael) in both canonical and non-canonical literature and the relationship of this development to Revelation 12. Second, an investigation into the evolution of Michael's role in the eschatological war and in the defense of the righteous must be given. Finally, the character of Revelation 12 and its importance to the overall theology (and especially to the Christology) of the rest of the Apocalypse must be examined. Of course, the desired result in these investigations is the avoidance of the pitfall of merely finding parallel texts and labeling them "sources" while searching for the cultural and/or mental milieu within which the story of Revelation 12 was nurtured.\textsuperscript{18}

The final stage of this study is an interpretation of Revelation 12 in the light of the relevant information gleaned both from other writings and from the Apocalypse itself. The primary goal is an elaboration of the possible understanding of Michael's role from

\textsuperscript{17} Some works discuss Michael and his potential role as either Messiah or the Spirit of Messiah, but these works rarely deal specifically with Revelation 12 (one of only five explicit references to Michael in the Bible—Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). E.g., see George Johnston's \textit{The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 102-18. For other works dealing with Michael and messianic ideas, see the bibliography of Charles A. Gieschen, \textit{Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence}, Arbeiten zur geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, XLII (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1998), 355-70.

\textsuperscript{18} Fossum makes this point well in \textit{The Name of God}, iii-iv. The term "parallelomania" has been applied to the attempts to find various parallel sources (especially "literary" ones) behind every unusual text in Scripture. Our hope here is to avoid this danger both by acknowledging the creativity of the author of Revelation and by carefully considering the individual texts at our disposal. The goal is not merely to list all the "parallels" to Revelation 12, but rather to gain some kind of grid or paradigm from which to interpret this work. This grid will then be applied to the story in Revelation 12 in an attempt to understand better how the story may have been "heard" by its first readers.
two viewpoints: that of the author and that of the readers of Revelation. This part of the study involves some investigation into how the first readers may have received and/or understood the text. Some consideration is also given to how material such as Revelation may have been processed and through what kind of paradigm it would have been understood. 19 The end result of this study should be both insight into the understanding of Michael's role in Revelation 12 and a new awareness of how the first readers may have understood the multifaceted character of the book's symbols. 20

Method of the Study

The investigation described above calls for a carefully articulated method of study. This investigation of course takes advantage of the discoveries and conclusions of several approaches to the study of Revelation. Before delineating the details of the method applied here, a general review of these approaches may be helpful. As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza notes, adequately interpreting Revelation is an often elusive goal for scholars, which perhaps explains the lack of serious scholarship in this area during certain periods of time. 21 Those scholars who attempt to bring fresh interpretations to the book do so through a variety of methods, including: (1) an eschatological or futurist


interpretation, (2) a symbolic or idealist interpretation, or (3) some form of an historical critical approach. Some scholars actually embrace more than one of these categories in their interpretations.\(^{22}\)

**Review of Revelation Research**

The eschatological or futurist approach focuses on the prophetic nature of Revelation as a primarily predictive text regarding events yet to occur.\(^{23}\) Some of these approaches seem to focus so much on the future or predictive aspects of John’s vision that they practically exclude any serious consideration of the historical experiences of John or his audience.\(^{24}\) Some scholars adapt this approach by viewing Revelation as grounded in the time period in which it was written but with a particular view to future events. Ernst Lohmeyer, for example, holds that while the first 3 chapters are rooted in


John’s contemporary experience, chapters 4-21 are thoroughly eschatological. Another proponent of this approach is Mathias Rissi, who understands Revelation as a “prophetic interpretation” of the history which occurs between “two divine interventions which are . . . decisive for all human history,” the first appearance of Jesus and his return at the end of the age. In other words, Revelation gives an overview of what will happen before the return of Christ to judge the world. The primary problem with such views is that they tend to ignore the historical boundaries of the text for what is usually considered the future or predictive aspects. This tendency demotes the significance of the historical origin of Revelation as a means of interpreting the book.

Symbolic or idealist approaches interpret Revelation as a work of theological or poetic power which transcends the original intentions of the author (or, even, the original interpretations of the first audience). This model finds its roots in the Alexandrian school which produced Origen and his allegorical method of interpretation. According to this approach, Revelation is primarily concerned with ideas and concepts. It sets out in poetic form certain theological principles that elucidate how God acts in the world. In many cases, little consideration is given to the historical situation because the truths are considered timeless and not bound by history. A modern example of this approach is found in the works of Austin Farrer. Farrer interprets Revelation by means of three symbolic interpretations:


symbolic keys—the number seven, the Jewish liturgy, and astrology.\textsuperscript{28} He views Revelation as primarily liturgical, sometimes associating its liturgy with ideas he gleans from Daniel. In other words, the meaning of Revelation is discovered in its liturgical nature and in its language.\textsuperscript{29} The obvious problem with this approach is its subjectivity. Although historical situations are not completely ignored, the proponents of this approach often read a theology of their own design into the structures of Revelation.\textsuperscript{30}

Most modern scholars of Revelation utilize some form of an historical critical approach. Historical critical approaches focus on discovering something of the original historical situation of the text, its audience, or its author. In other words, the interpreter seeks to reconstruct the moment of origin of the narrative as the essential locus of meaning for every subsequent moment in the history of interpretation. Proponents of this model often scrutinize different aspects of the text, including sources, structure, rhetorical


\textsuperscript{30} Wall, \textit{Revelation}, 35-36; Guthrie, \textit{Relevance}, 23-28; and Wainwright, \textit{Mysterious Apocalypse}, 146-48. Other scholars seem to use an idealist approach. David Barr certainly comes close in his studies on Revelation as an oral performance (see "Blessed Are Those Who Hear: John's Apocalypse as Present Experience," in \textit{Biblical and Humane: A Festschrift for John F. Priest}, edited by Linda B. Elder, David L. Barr, and Elizabeth S. Malbon [Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996], 87-103; and "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis," \textit{Interpretation} 38 [1984]: 39-50), but his approach focuses too much on the situation of the first hearers to be truly idealist. John Court (\textit{Myth and History}, 10-19, 164-65) also approaches an idealist interpretation, although he also combines the mythological language of Revelation with its historical situation. Many reader-oriented methods come resemble an idealist approach inasmuch as they locate the primary meaning of the text in the understanding of the contemporary reader rather than in the historical situation of the text. E.g., see Edgar McKnight, \textit{Post-Modern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 27-62. These approaches often are valuable in that they focus on an understanding of the whole narrative text and not its component parts. Some historical critical approaches (which have atomistic tendencies) would no doubt profit from the idealists' recognition that Revelation is a complete and unified whole, not just a combination of parts.
technique, authorial intent or organization, social setting (both of the text and of its audience), and language.  

There are numerous examples of the application of historical critical methods to Revelation. The following are representative samples of some of the major approaches. R. H. Charles, in his International Critical Commentary on Revelation, utilizes a literary critical or a source critical approach. Charles breaks the text down into what he believes are its component parts, and then attempts to determine both the sources of the individual parts and the means by which the author reconstructed them into a whole. Several structural approaches to Revelation are discussed in the next chapter. Basically, this approach focuses on the structural development of the text and how that structure...

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31 Of course, these aspects represent the major historical critical methodologies of form criticism, structural criticism, rhetorical criticism, redaction criticism, sociological criticism, and textual criticism. Adequate investigation of each of these methods would require more space than allotted here. For an overview of how these methods are applied to Revelation, see Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 119-58; Guthrie, *Relevance*, 12-33; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 12-32; and Court, *Myth and History*, 1-19.


33 According to Fiorenza, as scholars came to appreciate the unity of Revelation, source critical and comparative approaches were applied less and less (*Justice and Judgment*, 16-17). Recently, David Aune revives a type of source and redaction criticism in his *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Incorporated, 1997). Aune explains that a source critical approach to Revelation is still valid because of the emphasis in literary criticism on intertextuality, “a way of reading a text that sees it as part of a nexus of other texts and cultural systems, whether in the horizon of the author or his readers” (*Revelation 1-5*, cvi). The present study follows a similar line of reasoning.
aids in interpretation. The search for authorial intent is common, including the commentaries by Beasley-Murray, Mounce, and Aune. This approach seeks to understand both the original intent of the author and the possible interpretation of the text in its original historical situation. Sociological studies of Revelation are a relatively new addition to the scholarly community. This approach seeks to place the text or its readers in their original historical setting. The goal is to understand how the social setting shaped the language of the text and how this language functions in its social situation. This brief summary shows that a wide range of methods exist for interpreting Revelation.

Literary critical approaches to Revelation are a relatively new development, but the proliferation of texts from this perspective reveals that many view this approach as valuable. Some scholars focus primarily on the rhetorical technique of Revelation and how the text communicates to its audience. David Barr, in his discussions on the oral presentation of Revelation, argues that the text is organized in such a way as to demonstrate the presence of God's kingdom and to cause the readers to enter into the

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35 Leonard L. Thompson, The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 202. Among the proponents of this approach, Thompson lists Court (Myth and History), Fiorenza (Justice and Judgment), and A. Y. Collins (Combat Myth and Crisis and Catharsis). Obviously these scholars (like many others) rely on a combination of approaches to interpret Revelation.

36 For a more extensive overview of literary critical approaches to Revelation, see Wainwright, Mysterious Apocalypse, 141-58.
world of the Apocalypse. Adela Yarbro Collins understands the language of Revelation as a means of producing a catharsis for the original readers who were in some sense cut off from society. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza likewise emphasizes the aesthetic nature of John's narrative, but she focuses primarily on how the deep structure of the text evokes participation on the part of the reader. That is, Fiorenza focuses on how the structure of the text, combined with the readers' powerless situation in society, calls for certain actions from the readers.

Each of these scholars recognizes the need to combine their literary critical approach with historical critical studies in order to ground Revelation in its historical setting and to avoid a reduction of the text to mere archetypal or ontological concepts. They recognize that the "ideal" world of the text cannot be properly interpreted without some understanding of the "real" historical world which produced the text. Before attempting an interpretation of a literary text, then, it is usually wise to try to locate that text in the historical or cultural milieu which produced it. To accomplish this goal, consideration must be given to the intended audience of Revelation. So, a second critical

37 David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment," Interpretation 40 (1986): 256. Barr elaborates on this approach in "Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation," 39-50; "Reader in/of the Apocalypse," 79-89, and "Blessed Are Those Who Hear," 87-103. Barr also notes that the language of Revelation encourages a liturgical interpretation of the work. See "Apocalypse as Oral Enactment," 243-56 and "Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation," 45. Others note the liturgical nature of Revelation and in some cases even try to tie the work to a specific liturgical event. Farrer (Rebirth of Images, 94-95) stresses a relation to the Jewish liturgical year. Prigent proposes a Passover setting for Revelation 4-5 and emphasizes its possible uses in an Eucharistic setting (see Apocalypse et Liturgie [Neuchâtel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1964], 39-79). There is no doubt that Revelation was intended to be read aloud (probably at a gathering of believers), but beyond that the liturgical setting of the book is not clear.

38 A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 141-61.


method utilized here revolves around the identification of the author and the audience of Revelation, and clues to their social setting and identity are found in the text itself.

Critical methods emphasizing the readers of a text are also a relatively new element in Revelation studies. The three scholars mentioned above identify the social situation of the first century audience to some degree. They also set out to explain how the audience may have responded to Revelation.\(^{41}\) Leonard Thompson, on the other hand, considers Revelation from the viewpoint of the sociology of knowledge and stresses the diversity of people whom it attracts. He understands the appeal of Revelation as not being confined to those who are oppressed or persecuted but primarily to people who are discontent with the existing order of society.\(^{42}\) For Thompson, then, Revelation originates with a "cognitive minority" who view their life experiences differently than those in authority. As such, the book continues to resonate with people who perceive themselves as out of step with society.\(^{43}\) So, a methodologically sound approach to Revelation combines both a consideration of the language of the text (and the texts which feed into it) and an understanding of the audience to whom the text is presented.


\(^{42}\) Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 191-97.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 193. Thompson's approach has the advantage of identifying both the social setting of the original audience of Revelation and the likely social situation of modern readers who draw heavily on the language of the text to understand their world. Thompson does not attempt to interpret Revelation based on his sociological approach, but the conclusions he draws about the social setting of the readers are helpful in framing discussions about possible understandings of the narrative and the world view that supports those readings.
A Proposed Method for Revelation 12

This study utilizes historical critical methods in its interpretation of Revelation 12. The primary approach in this study may be termed a literary critical one in that it takes into consideration the integrity and the communicative ability of the text(s) under consideration.\textsuperscript{44} In other words, the assumption is that the author of Revelation intended his document to communicate to the readers a message that at some level they could understand and appropriate. The inclusion of Michael in Revelation 12, therefore, must have had meaning to the readers in some way. The text of Revelation, therefore, is a self-sufficient story that is best understood by the consideration of both intrinsic and extrinsic influences on it.\textsuperscript{45}

One goal of this dissertation is to sketch a paradigm that may resemble the interpretive milieu through which Revelation 12 was understood. Simply stated, this investigation focuses on the information available to the readers from the signals both in the text of Revelation 12 itself and from the various tributaries that may have fed the interpretive stream from which Revelation 12 flowed and was understood. In other words, this study attempts an understanding of the story of Revelation 12 based on two elements of literary criticism: (1) the "real" (historical) world of the author of the Apocalypse and his readers and (2) the narrative world of Revelation 12 and associated


\textsuperscript{45} Chapter 2 will focus primarily on the intrinsic elements for understanding Revelation. Chapter 3 will consider some possible extrinsic influences. Chapter 4 will return to intrinsic components with particular focus on Revelation 12. The goal will be to provide a fresh reading of Revelation 12 based on both extrinsic and intrinsic influences. For further discussion of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of literary criticism, see Petersen, \textit{Literary Criticism}, 29-33.
texts. Of course, to accomplish this goal requires consideration of other historical aspects of the text(s), namely the date, provenance, genre, and social setting.

Since interpretation necessarily involves both text and reader(s) in the process, a careful delineation of these components is necessary. The primary text of this study is the Revelation of John as it appears in the most recent edition of the United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament. The text of Revelation involves a mixture of literary genres, including the categories of epistle, apocalypse, and prophesy. In addition to these literary types, the author of Revelation apparently utilizes a diverse group of traditions in developing his story and the narrative world that encapsulates it. Many of these traditions find expression in both biblical and extra-biblical literature. Of course, the specific focus of this study is Revelation 12 and the traditions associated with the story of Michael and the war in heaven. In order to develop a proper paradigm for understanding this story, therefore, it will be necessary to begin the investigation with a close reading of the text of Revelation 12 in an attempt to find the intrinsic clues that may help the reader understand the story better.

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46 Many studies focus primarily on the historical (or “real”) textual world of the Apocalypse and its hearers or conversely on the narrative world of the text of Revelation. In reality, the two worlds are difficult to separate. As Beardslee points out, the author of Revelation has carefully crafted a narrative world that embraces (and in some ways even transcends) the real world in which he and his audience live (see Literary Criticism of the New Testament, 56-58).

47 K. Aland, et al. (eds.), The Greek New Testament (Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck, 4th rev. ed., 1993). References will be made to certain English translations where needed and proper attribution will be given at that time. All scriptural quotations are my translation unless otherwise noted.

48 For an overview of these categories, see Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 12-29; and Boring, Revelation, 1-45. One of the more clever attempts to redefine the genre of Revelation is found in Malina, Genre and Message. Malina identifies Revelation as an astral prophesy, and he interprets it by means of Hellenistic astral or astrological/astronomical information. Malina’s primary contribution is a new wealth of comparative data by which Revelation can be interpreted.

49 Hedrick, “Sources and Use,” 4-5.
A close examination of Revelation 12 reveals a multifaceted story based on the evolution of many traditions and ideas contained in literature outside of but somewhat contemporary to Revelation.\(^50\) The goal of this dissertation is the location of Revelation 12 in the stream of traditions which may have influenced the writing or the reading of the story. To accomplish this goal, a roughly chronological schema of the various traditions regarding Michael and the war in heaven will be developed, beginning with Daniel and extending up to Revelation (and perhaps a little beyond).\(^51\) Once a general chronology is established, each text is considered in an effort to determine how Michael's role evolves within that text. Literary and redactional concerns are then considered in an effort to discern the possible reasons for and/or meanings of the changes in Michael's various roles. In other words, after a close reading of Revelation 12, comparative materials will be brought to bear in an effort to reconstruct in some way the development of Michael's role in heavenly war in its various trajectories with special emphasis on the particular reflex of this tradition present in Revelation 12.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 4-6; Pierre Prigent, *Flash sur l'Apocalypse* (Neuchatel [Suisse]: Delachaux & Niestle, S.A., 1974), 53-64; and Mounce, *Revelation* (1977), 234-35. In most cases, diverse literary or oral sources are assumed. The scholarly disagreement comes when the question of exactly what traditions comprise the primary source of Revelation 12. For purposes of this study, the creativity of the author is assumed to the degree that he may well have been conversant with numerous traditions. Pinpointing a particular one is not the goal, but rather the plan is to approximate the location of Revelation 12 on a kind of evolutionary paradigm that may help explain how this story was understood/read.

\(^{51}\) Many of the works mentioned in this study are of disputed date and provenance, however, so any measure of certainty is unlikely. A quick comparison of Margaret Barker's *Great Angel* to Loren Stuckenbruck's *Angel Veneration* or the relevant articles in James Charlesworth's two volume *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985) reveals the sharp disagreement regarding provenance and date of these texts. Materials are consulted from a wide spectrum of literature, but some attempt is made to locate them within Revelation's chronological or geographical frame of reference or to show how the ideas contained in these materials influence the culture out of which Revelation originated. Some of the texts consulted include 1 and 2 Enoch, the *Shepherd of Hermes*, the *Life of Adam and Eve* (Vita), the *Qumran War Scroll* (1QM), the *Sybilline Oracles*, 3 Baruch, the *Testament of Abraham*, and the *Apocalypse of Moses*. Of course, the canonical materials will also be considered (including, but not limited to, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Jude, and Revelation).
The examination of the text, however, is just one part of the interpretive process, since no interpretation is possible without a reader. Who is the reader of Revelation as posited in this study? The primary reader presupposed throughout this dissertation is the ideal implied reader of Revelation.\(^{52}\) The implied reader, as understood here, is the reader within the text, as opposed to the actual, historical reader residing outside of the text.\(^{53}\) In other words, the implied reader is an ideal reader whose interaction with the text itself almost always produces the desired response. That is, the implied reader always brings to the text “whatever knowledge, understanding, or emotion the text calls for at any juncture.”\(^{54}\) So, the ideal implied reader always brings to the text a full understanding of the concepts, traditions, and even the mysteries of the text. In other words, this implied reader reflects ideally the intentions of the author. An investigation the views of the implied reader, then, necessitates some consideration of the author’s point of view.

The characteristics of the implied reader for Revelation are evident from the text itself. The implied reader, according to Powell, “is not necessarily to be thought of as a first-time reader. In some instances the narrative text apparently assumes the reader will come to an understanding only after multiple readings.”\(^{55}\) Indeed, the text of Revelation

\(^{52}\) Due to space constraints, only a brief sketch of the reader is offered here as it pertains to this research. For a more thorough discussion of the technical aspects of narrative or literary criticism, see Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 11-21, and Barr, “The Reader off/in the Apocalypse,” 79-91.

\(^{53}\) My indebtedness to David L. Matson and his work *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts: Pattern and Interpretation* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) must be noted here. The materials in his introduction helped sharpen the focus to this current dissertation, and many of the following ideas are further elucidated in his book (pp. 20-23). See also, Barr, “The Reader off/in the Apocalypse,” 79-85.

\(^{54}\) Matson, *Household Conversion*, 20; and Barr, “The Reader off/in the Apocalypse,” 85.

\(^{55}\) Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 20.
gives evidence of this when it states “Blessed is the one who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, who keep what is written in it, for the time is near” (1:3).\(^{56}\) The idea of keeping the words of the prophecy imply a reader who is serious about investigating the document and applying what is found therein. The implied reader, therefore, is one who is constantly searching the text in an effort to apply universally the directions of the text to life.

As noted above, however, the narrative world of Revelation is in some ways dependent on the historical world that lies outside of it. In other words, for the implied reader to understand fully the narrative world of Revelation, there must be some connection to the real, historical world that helped form the text. An understanding of historical events and first century society is necessary at times for a complete reading of a text.\(^{57}\) That is, the real readers of Revelation have a role to play in any proper reading of the book. After all, an implied reader can hardly exist without a real reader first existing.\(^{58}\) In fact, the roles of the ideal implied reader and the real reader often overlap in the interpretive process, causing a blurring of the lines between them. What, then, can we say about the real readers of Revelation?

\(^{56}\) Other passages that imply multiple readings include the repeated phrase “Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9), and the closing warning of 22:18 to anyone who hears the words of the book.


\(^{58}\) Matson, *Household Conversions*, 22; and Barr, “The Reader of/in the Apocalypse,” 81-83. It may also be said that the implied reader’s existence is tied in some way to an understanding of the author’s intent.
The real, historical readers of Revelation are people who are culturally and historically bound. That is, they exist at a given time and place. In the case of Revelation, they are Christians, probably members of one of the seven churches in Asia Minor to whom Revelation is addressed in the last decades of the first century C.E. According to the text of Revelation, these readers either experience or are expecting to experience some form of persecution (and in some cases, even martyrdom!). The real readers of Revelation may even be disenfranchised people who hold no real power or have no real connection with the current ruling group.

As Christians, they are no doubt familiar with many of the same traditions that John employs in writing his Apocalypse, including both the biblical and non-biblical traditions. Being bound historically to a certain time, they are also better able to understand historical allusions in the forms of symbols as they appear in the text. In other words, the real readers (like the implied readers) are able to make connections with the text due to their proximity to both the events and the texts that helped shape the text of Revelation. So, where the implied reader opens up a kind of universality to an interpretation of Revelation, the real reader helps to ground that interpretation in historical events and traditions.

The reader of Revelation, therefore, is in essence some kind of combination of the implied and real readers. This combination helps in the interpretation of Revelation 12

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60 See, e.g., Rev. 2:9-17; 13:5-10; 17:7-14. See also Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 187-88.

61 Fekkes, Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions, 42-44.
by giving a historically grounded time frame in which to search. In other words, the traditions that concern this study come from the end of the first to the middle of the second century C.E. This overlap narrows the search by limiting the focus of interpretation to materials familiar to the author and the readers. These individuals were familiar with apocalyptic, prophetic, and persecution literature. They inherently understood the symbols of beasts, antichrists, dragons, and harlots as well as the symbols of celestial women, angelic warriors, lambs, and living creatures around a celestial throne.\textsuperscript{62} So, in the search for doctrinal streams flowing into the story of Revelation 12, there must be an acknowledgment that the author and the readers of Revelation 12 may well have had a more than passing familiarity with other materials dealing with Michael.

Any interpretation of Revelation 12, therefore, must include concerns of both the implied and real readers. In other words, a proper understanding of Revelation 12 is one that makes sense both in the historical world from which it came and (by application) to the ideal world of the implied reader.\textsuperscript{63} The goal is not merely to find historical antecedents for Michael's role in Revelation 12, but also to utilize those antecedents in a fresh reading of the story that is applicable to all implied readers.

\textit{Outline of the Study}

Since the goal of this study is to identify as precisely as possible the streams of tradition from which the readers of Revelation would have drawn in trying to understand

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\textsuperscript{62} Malina, \textit{Genre and Message}, 12-22, makes this point clearly, although his conclusions are quite a bit different from most scholarship on the matter.

\textsuperscript{63} It should be fairly obvious by now that this combination of implied and real reader, though determined in some ways by the text, may also include modern interpreters of Revelation 12. Although modern readers are neither the original readers nor the ideal readers of the text, they may certainly bring some of the characteristics of both to an interpretation of Revelation.
chapter 12, each chapter necessarily builds upon the previous ones in a kind of telescopic approach, that is, going from broad strokes to a more focused treatment. Chapter 2 consists of a general overview of Revelation's structure and the role of chapter 12 in the structure and narrative development of the book. It includes an overview of Revelation 12 in order to ascertain the internal clues to the story's meaning and purpose, especially Michael's inclusion and role in the chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses more on the texts from which the Michael traditions may be best understood. A chronological introduction to the relevant texts (including an examination into the possible provenance of each text and the relevance of these texts to the study of angelology in Revelation) comprises the major part of this chapter. The goal is to establish the basic flow of the interpretive streams that may clarify the Michael story in Revelation 12. After the chronology is in place, the focus turns to an overview of the development of Michael's roles in the texts. So, chapter 3 sketches the basic schema delineating the evolution of Michael within the literature of the time.

Chapter 4 involves an application of the data gathered above to an interpretation/reading of Revelation 12. The specific goal is to gain insight into three main areas: (1) the use of the warfare motif, (2) the perceived role of Michael, and (3) the grid or milieu from which this story was read and/or understood in the first century.

Chapter 5 comprises a final evaluation of Michael's significance in Revelation 12 with regards to the general Christology of Revelation. Some investigation of the relationship between the angelology and the Christology of Revelation is included in order to clarify further Michael's particular role in Revelation 12.
CHAPTER TWO

The Place of Chapter 12 in Revelation

Every chapter of a literary work has some role to play in advancing the plot of the story, but is it ever possible to say that one chapter plays a more important role than others in the overall narrative? If so, how does one determine the relative importance of the various component parts of a book? Three clues are often used to determine the significance of a specific chapter of a book. First, the overall structure of the book may give some indication of the role of a particular chapter. For example, a chapter placed at the beginning of a work usually introduces the reader to at least some of the main themes and/or characters of that work. Likewise, a chapter at the end of a work often concludes or sums up the book (or, in some cases, serves as an epilogue of sorts to wrap up the advancing plot). Second, linguistic or narrative markers often point to the importance of certain chapters, and they certainly play a significant role in developing an outline of a work. The use of a key phrase or idea may give evidence of a major development in the book. For example, in Revelation new sections may be marked off by the use of such phrases as "after these things" and "and I saw."¹ Third, sudden or unexpected changes in the plot or theme may indicate the relative importance of certain chapters. For instance,

a chapter that unexpectedly adds new characters or dramatically alters the movement of
the plot may prove pivotal to the overall direction of the work.

Determining the importance of Revelation 12 requires inquiry into three areas:
(1) the overall structure of Revelation and the place of chapter 12 in that structure, (2) the
general use of linguistic markers in Revelation to indicate new developments and how
chapter 12 fits that pattern, and (3) a general overview of Revelation 12 and the role its
themes or actors play in advancing the plot of the whole work. An investigation into the
first two areas should provide enough material to give a general outline of Revelation,
and that outline should reveal the location of chapter 12 in the overall scheme of the
book. The last area should reveal the topical importance of Revelation 12 to the rest of
the Apocalypse. The goal is to demonstrate the importance of chapter 12 to the overall
plot of the Apocalypse, thus setting the stage for an analysis of the characters in chapter
12 and their roles in Revelation.

The Structure of Revelation

Revelation's structure presents its own set of problems with regards to the relative
importance of individual chapters. Many scholars acknowledge that there is little or no
consensus on the general structure of the book. A variety of linguistic features in
Revelation play the role of street signs on the overall map of the book. The lack of

2 One of the most recent to lament this state of affairs is David E. Aune, Revelation 1-5, xci. After
his initial complaint, Aune gives a fourteen page description of various structural theories attached to the
Apocalypse. This description concludes with a three page outline of Aune's own design. For more
discussion on the structural problems of Revelation, see Richard Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy: Studies
on the Book of Revelation (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd., 1993), 1-37; Beasley-Murray,
Revelation, 29-32; Adela Yarbro Collins, Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation, Harvard Theological
Review, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, no. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 5-55; and Robert
consensus arises, however, when each scholar assigns a different level of importance to the linguistic features.

The problem of this lack of consensus is especially evident with regards to Revelation 12-14. As Richard Bauckham notes, "Most attempts to discern the structure of Revelation have found it particularly difficult to see how chapters 12-14 fit into the overall structure . . . [because] chapter 12 seems an uncharacteristically abrupt fresh start, devoid of literary links with anything that precedes." The truth of Bauckham's observation is evident in the placement of chapter 12 in various outlines of Revelation. Some scholars see Revelation 12 as the mid-point and thematic center of the Apocalypse, while others see it as a mere interlude or parenthesis pointing the reader to later ideas or chapters. In fact, John McLean states that Revelation's literary form is so complex that more than one structure may be correct. Even David Aune advocates incorporating various insights from different scholars to determine Revelation's outline. Taking a cue from these scholars, then, three basic approaches to the structure of Revelation will be considered: (1) recapitulation theory, (2) numerical theories, and (3) symmetrical or chiastic theories. The goal in considering these approaches is to determine as precisely as possible a basic outline of Revelation and the place of chapter 12 in that structure.

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5 Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xci, c.

6 Although these approaches are regularly chosen by scholars, this list is not exhaustive (for additional bibliographies, see A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 46-47, and Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xci-xci). In fact, some scholars blend more than one approach into their basic understanding of the structure of the
Recapitulation Theory

A major problem in analyzing the structure of Revelation is how to address the apparent repetitions within the central section of the book (i.e., 6:1 to 19:10). Most often noted are the apparent parallels between the plagues unleashed by the seven trumpets and by the seven bowls. Some kind of relationship apparently exists between these parallel or repetitive segments, and the question remains as to the purpose of that relationship.

The recapitulation theory was first proposed by an early commentator on Revelation, Victorinus of Pettau. He argued that the seven bowl plagues (15:1-16:21) do not follow chronologically the seven trumpet plagues (8:6-11:15), but are actually parallel accounts of the same events in different forms. Later interpreters would add the seven seals of Rev. 6:1-8:1 as another version of the same events. So, this argument states that the bowls and the trumpets restate the predicted eschatological events of the seals.

A. Y. Collins takes this theory of recapitulation and blends it with her own distinctive number theory to propose a structure of Revelation built around two cycles of visions, 1:9-11:19 and 12:1-22:5. Within each cycle the number seven is significant. Both cycles contain at least three sets of materials organized by the number seven. The

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7 Scholars disagree as to the actual degree of repetition that exists in the Apocalypse, although most point out some aspect of it in their commentaries. See Aune, Revelation 1-5, xci-xciii; and A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 8-13 for a contrast. A. Y. Collins acknowledges possible parallels among four series of seven, namely, seven messages, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls (Combat Myth, 8). Although some scholars may dispute her numbering, most would agree to some amount of repetition between the trumpets and bowls.

8 A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 8; Aune, Revelation 1-5, xci. Victorinus flourished around 275-300 C.E., and his commentary on Revelation is one of the oldest, fully intact commentaries in existence.

first cycle includes the messages to the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets. The second contains two sets of seven unnumbered visions and the seven bowls. Recapitulation does not occur in the entire book of Revelation but appears primarily in five of John's revelatory experiences: (1) the seven seals (6:1-8:5), (2) the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19), (3) seven unnumbered visions (12:1-15:4), (4) the seven bowls (15:1-16:21) with a Babylon appendix (17:1-19:10), and (5) seven unnumbered visions (19:11-21:8) with a Jerusalem appendix (21:9-22:5). Each of these five narratives recapitulates a threefold pattern of (a) persecution of the faithful, (b) divine judgment of their adversaries, and (c) triumph of God, the Lamb, or the faithful.11

A. Y. Collins also notes that the first cycle of visions is recapitulated by the second, i.e., the second cycle gives a fuller expression of events or ideas introduced in the first.12 Thus, events introduced in chapters 4-5 are fully expressed and investigated in chapters 12-21. In this scheme, chapter 12 not only introduces the second cycle of visions, but also presents the material to be recapitulated in chapters 13-21. So, according to A. Y. Collins, chapter 12 functions as the midpoint of Revelation and also sets the stage for the rest of the book.13 Chapter 12 provides both the impetus to Revelation's conclusion and the clearest expression of the combat myth, the pattern by

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11 A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 32-40. The method by which Collins arrived at these five narratives is discussed below in the section on number theories. Collins does not include the seven letters to the churches because she does not find the same pattern of recapitulation in them that she discerns in the other five narratives.

12 Ibid., 41-43.

13 Ibid., 28-31, 57-59.
which John allegedly composed Revelation. In this theory, then, much of the Apocalypse is a recapitulation of some form of the combat myth in an interlocking series of visions hinged on chapter 12.

Jan Lambrecht also embraces recapitulation in his attempt to delineate the structure of Revelation. Lambrecht labels John's development of Revelation as an "encompassing technique" which views the recapitulation in Revelation as a simple repetition of events in an increasing intensification from one set to the next. That is, each repetition builds on the first item and intensifies its meaning, implications, or plot development.

Lambrecht's outline of Revelation revolves around what he perceives as the three major judgments of the book—chapters 6-7 (the seven seals), 8:7-11:19 (the seven trumpets), and 16:2-21 (the seven bowls). Each successive judgment repeats and intensifies the one(s) before it and is introduced by a visionary experience that also intensifies in each successive occurrence (chapters 4-5 introduce the seals, 8:1-6 introduces the trumpets, and 11:15-16:1 introduces the bowls judgment). In each of the first two septets of judgment, the seventh part intensifies and advances the plot toward its fulfillment in the completion of judgment in the seventh bowl, which is explicated by Revelation 17-22.

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14 Ibid., 1-3, 231-34.


16 Ibid., 81.

17 Ibid., 85-86, 89-90.
Lambrecht identifies three interludes which play a major role in his outline: (1) Rev. 7:1-17, (2) Rev. 10:1-11:13, and (3) Rev. 12:1-14:20. These three interludes do not interrupt the text, but rather they are carefully placed by the author to prepare the readers/hearers for the rapidly progressing movement in the book’s plot development.\(^\text{18}\)

These interludes serve as rest stations at which the audience is expected to pause and as a sort of directory of information which provides both summary and new material for plot advancement. According to Lambrecht, these intercalations serve as a delaying function to encourage the persecuted readers/hearers and as a portrait of demonic opposition that justifies God’s coming punitive judgments.\(^\text{19}\) Chapters 12-14 comprise the setting and the actors for the final dramatic scene of God’s judgment in the outpouring of the bowls. In this interlude the finale of the book is introduced and staged.\(^\text{20}\)

The two views above are complex applications of recapitulation theory, but they view recapitulation differently. The theory of A. Y. Collins is impressive in its demonstration of the various uses of the combat myth motif in Accadian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Egyptian, Greek, Qumranic, and possibly even Christian materials. Her application of this particular motif to Revelation 12 is also illuminating, but the use of the term “recapitulation” to describe the repetitive use of a motif does not seem appropriate. A recurring cycle or stereotyped outline used to narrate an experience is not necessarily recapitulation.\(^\text{21}\) Another weakness in this approach involves the two sets of unnumbered

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\(^\text{18}\) Ibid., 95-99.  
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 99.  
\(^\text{20}\) Ibid., 98-99.  
\(^\text{21}\) Aune, Revelation 1-5, xcii. Aune further notes that “just because the book of Judges uses a stereotyped outline to narrate the experience of premonarchic Israel in terms of recurring cycles of national
visions (Rev. 12:1-15:4; 19:11-21:8). The choice of what constitutes a vision seems to be arbitrary at times. The emphasis seems to be more on the number seven than on actually explicating what comprises a vision or a formula introducing a vision. Despite these weaknesses, A. Y. Collins' conclusion that chapter 12 is a pivotal point in Revelation lends support to the view taken in this study.

Lambrecht's proposal also has much to commend it. His refinements on the use of recapitulation are very helpful, and his complex outline of Revelation's development shows a deep appreciation for the skill of the author. Lambrecht tends to understand recapitulation as not merely the repetition of a literary motif, but as a literary device in which the plot is developed by use of repetition and intensification. Another strong point of his study is the emphasis on the skill of the author in blending various traditions into a new understanding of the world and its end. In addition, the discussion of Revelation's intercalations points out the importance of these interludes (especially the one which includes chapter 12) to the progression and development of the plot. As above, this emphasis supports the current thesis regarding the importance of Revelation 12 to the whole book.

22 McLean, Seventieth Week, 245-47. A discussion of vision formulas will follow in the section on linguistic markers.

23 Lambrecht, "Structuration," 103; and McLean, Seventieth Week, 263.
Numerical Theories

Numbers play a significant role in Revelation, and some may also give an indication of the structure of the book. Richard Bauckham notes that the most significant numbers in Revelation are seven, four, three, and twelve.²⁴ Perhaps the most obvious of these numbers is the number seven as seen in the seven churches, seven lampstands, seven stars, seven angels, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. It comes as no surprise then that some scholars build their outlines around the number seven.²⁵

Adela Yarbro Collins’ use of sevens has already been mentioned above in the discussion of her theory of recapitulation. Collins builds her understanding of Revelation’s structure around five series of septets.²⁶ She borrows this idea from the

²⁴ Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 30-31.

²⁵ There are several theories regarding the method by which John combined the various sevens into a coherent structure. This chapter will consider only a couple. David Aune (Revelation 1-5, xciv) notes that many scholars agree that John uses at least four groups of seven to structure major portions of the narrative: seven proclamations (2:1-3:22), seven seals (5:1-8:1), seven trumpets (8:2-11:18), and seven bowls (15:1-16:21). In fact, these groups are the foundation of most outlines using septets as the organizing principle. See Aune, Revelation 1-5, xciii-xcv; and Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 7-13.

²⁶ Actually, it may be more accurate to say that she builds her understanding of the recapitulation in Revelation around five series of septets. A. Y. Collins’ outline contains six series of septets enclosed by a prologue and an epilogue (Combat Myth, 19). The actual outline appears below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prologue</th>
<th>1:1-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>preface</td>
<td>1:1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prescript and sayings</td>
<td>1:4-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The seven messages</td>
<td>1:9-3:22</td>
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<tr>
<td>The seven seals</td>
<td>4:1-8:5</td>
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<tr>
<td>The seven trumpets</td>
<td>8:2-11:19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven unnumbered visions</td>
<td>12:1-15:4</td>
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<tr>
<td>The seven bowls</td>
<td>15:1-16:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Babylon appendix</td>
<td>17:1-19:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven unnumbered visions</td>
<td>19:11-21:8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerusalem appendix</td>
<td>21:9-22:5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>22:6-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>sayings</td>
<td>22:6-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>benediction</td>
<td>22:21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
work of Austin Farrer. Farrer linked the series of seven with the days of creation and with the Jewish calendar of feasts and lectionary. Although interesting, Farrer's theory proved to be highly speculative and did not win general acceptance. In his commentary, he shifted the emphasis to the correspondences between series of seven in Revelation and the "Danielic half-week of tribulation." A. Y. Collins labels this interpretation as "speculative," even though she claims that "the analysis of that structure [of Revelation] suggested in A Rebirth of Images is still the most faithful to the indications of literary organization within the book of those which have been so far proposed."

Farrer's schema for Revelation divides the book into six sections based upon the number seven. The following represents his basic outline: (1) seven messages (1:1-3:22), (2) seven seals (4:1-7:17), (3) seven trumpets (8:1-11:14), (4) seven unnumbered visions (11:15-14:20), (5) seven bowls (15:1-18:24), and (6) seven unnumbered visions (19:1-22:21). This analysis offers an interesting view of Revelation's structure, but it is not completely convincing. The primary problem is the two sets of "unnumbered" visions. As mentioned above, the counting of these visions seems almost arbitrary. Grouping these so-called "unnumbered" visions into sets of seven may well be the result of an overemphasis on the importance of the number seven to the structure of Revelation.

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28 Farrer, Revelation, 7-13.

29 A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 13-14. Even though Collins criticizes Farrer's approach as speculative, she embraces it without giving much evidence to support it.

30 Farrer, Rebirth of Images, 45.
The author of Revelation was no doubt perfectly able to include explicit septets when it suited him, so why include an unnumbered series of seven?\(^{31}\)

Problems also arise with regards to how many visions are actually contained in the two "unnumbered" series.\(^{32}\) It is not clear that 11:15-14:20 and 19-22 contain precisely seven visions. More than one way exists for dividing these sections of text. Farrer uses a formal method to distinguish the individual visions in the two unnumbered series. The visions in 11:15-14:20 are determined by counting the introductory formulae of the vision accounts. According to Farrer, visions in Revelation are usually introduced with ἠκολούθια or ἐκάλλους.\(^{33}\) A precise application of this rule, however, would lead to the conclusion that chapter 12 contains two visions within the first three verses, making the count in that section at least eight.\(^{34}\) Even if Farrer's reasoning stands, the question still remains as to the reason the author would not use explicitly numbered visions if his goal was to organize the narrative around six series of seven.

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\(^{31}\) Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xciv.

\(^{32}\) Kenneth A. Strand maintains that the structure of Revelation is comprised primarily of eight complete prophetic sequences (which he calls the "major visions"). Revelation contains other "individual visionary experiences," but these are not basic for the structure. In other words, Strand finds fewer visions than Collins around which to organize an outline of Revelation. See Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25 (1987): 107-21.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 47-49. For more discussion of Farrer's view, see A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 13-16. Collins explains further by arguing that the use of "I saw" or "x appeared to y" are "typical and very old introductory formulae of vision accounts; cf. Exod. 3:2, Amos 9:1; Isa. 6:1" (pp. 48-49). She also refers to Moses Sister, "Die Typen der prophetischen Visionen in der Bibel," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 78 (1934): 399-430. I was unfortunately unable to locate this article before completing this study.

\(^{34}\) Farrer and A. Y. Collins make a good case for combining these two occurrences of ἠκολούθια into one vision, but that still overlooks the formal use of the method. See Farrer, *Rebirth of Images*, 47-49; and A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 14.
Farrer further includes Revelation 17-18 as the conclusion to the seven bowls of 15-16, even though there seems to be little justification in the text for doing so.\textsuperscript{35} He also does not recognize the explicit parallels set up between 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9, leading him to ignore these structures when he divides the text. According to Aune, these two sections form a set of paired angelic revelations which frame 19:11-21:8, a significantly different structure from that in chapters 1-16.\textsuperscript{36} The sections comprised of 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9 are difficult to integrate into Farrer's overall outline and are relegated to appendices in the adaptation of this theory by A. Y. Collins.\textsuperscript{37} Although not insurmountable, these problems do raise reasonable doubts about an outline of Revelation based strictly on series of seven.

As mentioned above, three of the septets, the seven seals (5:1-8:1), the seven trumpets (8:2-11:18), and the seven bowls (15:1-16:21), exhibit a special structural relationship of some kind. The seventh seal (8:1), which is separated from the sixth by the discussion of the sealing of the 144,000 in 7:1-17, apparently contains all the plagues of the seven trumpets (and possibly the seven bowls) that follow. Further, the seventh trumpet, also separated from number six by the narrative about the little scroll and the two witnesses (10:1-11:13), seems to contain the plagues of the seven bowls. The seventh bowl, however, is not separated from the sixth. It, along with a series of divine

\textsuperscript{35} Aune, \textit{Revelation 1-5}, xcv.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., xcv. More will be said on Aune's theory in the next section. Aune views these sections as framing units that reveal a significant departure from the use of septets as an organizing principle in Revelation.

\textsuperscript{37} For Collins' outline, see footnote 26 above.
plagues, ends with the decisive pronouncement “It is done!” (16:17). When the messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2:1-3:22 are added to the three septets, a major (and apparently central) portion of the narrative is found to be organized around sets of seven. The use of septets is one aspect of John’s structure of Revelation, even if they cannot be expanded to include the whole book.

Theories of Symmetry or Chiasms

In dealing with the complex issue of structure, some scholars seek for an answer in the concepts of symmetry or chiasms. Although the two concepts are similar, the results with regards to an outline of Revelation are often quite different. Symmetrical structure may be defined as having a similarity of form or a correspondence between parts.

38 For more, see Aune, Revelation 1-5, xciv-xcv; and Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 86-95. It should be noted, however, that the seven bowls are separated from the other judgments by the events described in chapters 12-14. A point of interest here is that the beginning of the bowl plagues is strikingly similar to the beginning of the events in chapter 12, namely by the use of the phrase “a great sign . . . in heaven.” The major difference is that 12:1, 3 use the passive idea that the signs “appeared,” while in chapter 15 the author uses the active form “I saw.” Is there some connection between the events in Revelation 12-14 and the seven bowls that is structurally significant? Perhaps chapters 12-14 represent an aspect of the seventh trumpet or should be included between the sixth and seventh bowls (cf. Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 86, 97-99). At the very least chapters 12-14 act as a prelude to God’s final judgment, a scenario played out in the chapters following this section. As Bauckham observes, “chapter 15 is the point where the narrative begun in chapter 12 with the dragon’s threat to the pregnant woman converges with the narrative begun in chapter 5 with the Lamb receiving the scroll in order to open it” (Climax of Prophecy, 16, emphasis his). Both narratives reach a provisional conclusion in the sequence of the seven bowls and receive further closure in 19:11-21:8. Once again, chapter 12 is viewed as pivotal to the action in Revelation.

39 J. Massyngberde Ford utilizes a rather unique approach to organizing Revelation around numbered sets. She suggests that the original formation was six series of six, representing incompleteness and expressing a lack of fulfillment felt by John the Baptist and his followers (who wrote chapters 4-22) before the coming of Christ. According to this view, John the Baptist wrote chapters 4-11, a disciple of his added 12-22, and a later Christian redactor added chapters 1-3 and other details showing a familiarity with Jesus. Although Ford’s view is very clever and fascinating, it does not do justice to the text and tends to ignore important historical information regarding the authorship of Revelation. It is mentioned here simply as another indication of how numerical sets are used to organize the text of Revelation. See McLean, Seventieth Week, 236-41; and Ford, Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, The Anchor Bible, vol. 38 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 46-56.
Chiastic structures are usually characterized as a rhetorical device involving inversion of the second of two (or more) parallel elements.

Both approaches attempt to organize Revelation around a set of similar, even repetitive elements. Although the number of these elements may vary, the basic premise remains the same: John is intentionally using a rhetorical device to organize his narrative around parallel ideas or sets of parallel ideas.

Elisabeth S. Fiorenza best represents the symmetrical approach. She maintains that Revelation is a call to justice and judgment on behalf of those suffering unjust persecution or oppression. She contends that the main concern of the narrative of Revelation is eschatology rather than salvation history. In other words, Revelation is not simply a linear or chronological narrative of historical events, but rather a topical, even theological, exposition of John's eschatology. This eschatology is rooted in the pessimistic mindset of Jewish apocalyptic literature, but with the difference that John foresees a future redemption for all persecuted Christians.

Fiorenza suggests that Revelation is a literary product of early Christian prophecy. Furthermore, she stresses that three major theological motifs influence the movement of the narrative: (1) an imminent expectation of the eschatological end among Christians,

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43 Ibid., 138.
(2) the importance of prophetic interpretation of current events in the Christian community, and (3) the final establishment of God's rule through Jesus Christ in judgment of the nations. The final structure of the book takes shape as the author skillfully incorporates various theological themes and traditions into "a unitary composition and an optimal configuration of form and content."

Fiorenza identifies in great detail the "architectonic designs" that she claims are the controlling factors in the arrangement of the Apocalypse. These designs include Old Testament allusions that are fused into the text rather than quoted, the use of a common stock of symbols and images, the use of numbers and numerical structures, and the use of interludes and/or intercalations. Fiorenza considers the intercalations as most important because they help the author join sections together by interweaving them with each other. By identifying these joints or intercalations, the exegete will discover the proper divisions of the book.

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44 Ibid., 146-52. See also, McLean, Seventieth Week, 252-53.

45 Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 163.

46 Ibid., 170-73.

47 Ibid., 173. Fiorenza goes to great lengths to explain her understanding of these intercalations and their placement within the text of Revelation. Insufficient space keeps this concept from being investigated here in depth. Fiorenza's own placement of the intercalations in Revelation seems almost arbitrary at times. For example, Fiorenza gives the surface structure of Revelation as follows:

A  1:1-8
B  1:9-3:22
C  4:1-9:21; 11:15-19
D  10:1-15:4
C'  15:1, 5-19:10
B'  19:11-22:9
A'  22:10-22:21

The first pattern of A-A' is obvious, but the second set of intercalations, B-B' do not parallel each other as well. The vision of Christ in B and the vision of the second coming of Christ in B' match up well,
Fiorenza understands three compositional techniques to be most decisive in the structure of Revelation: (1) the pattern of seven, (2) the two scrolls and the christological visions in 1:12-20 and 19:11-16, and (3) the method of intercalations and interlocking. On the basis of the combination of these patterns, she proposes the following outline:

I. The inaugural vision and the seven letters to the churches (1:9-3:22);
II. The seven sealed scroll (4:1-9:21; 11:15-19; 15:1, 5-16:21; 17:1-19:10);
III. The small prophetic scroll (10:1-15:4);

Fiorenza divides these four major sections into the intercalations listed in footnote 47. The central intercalation is Revelation 10:1-15:4, wherein the prophetic interpretation of the political and religious condition of the Christian community is expressed. Using Greek tragedy as her guide, Fiorenza concludes that the climax of Revelation is expressed in this central section which contains the exposition of the information in the little scroll.

Although Fiorenza’s work has much to commend it, especially the detailed analysis of architectonic designs, structural parallels, and other compositional techniques, her theory has some problems. Fiorenza does not think that it is possible to reconstruct a historical chronological development of Revelation because the framework of the text is primarily topical. This topical arrangement does not preclude a chronology, however, but the letters to the seven churches do not parallel the visions of catastrophic judgments. For more criticisms, see McLean, *Seventieth Week*, 256-59; and Kenneth Strand, “Chiastic Structure,” 406.


49 Ibid., 175-77. For more criticism of this view, see McLean, *Seventieth Week*, 256-59. The primary argument against this understanding of Revelation’s structure is the location of the climatic center at 10:1-15:4. As Strand points out, the letters to the churches seem to be a more explicit prophetic interpretation of the political and religious situation of the community (“Chiastic Structure,” 406).
since others have developed structures that include both.\textsuperscript{50} Fiorenza also fails to utilize adequately the relationships between the three series of seven judgments (seals, trumpets, and bowls), focusing instead primarily on the seals. As a result, Fiorenza's concentric intercalations (see footnote 47) combine the seals and trumpets into section C which is then paralleled with the bowls in section C'. Are the trumpet judgments simply subsumed into the seals as Fiorenza's structure implies, or should the arrangement be expressed differently? At any rate, Fiorenza's theory places the section containing Revelation 12 at the center or as the climax of the narrative's plot.

Kenneth Strand presents a chiastic structure for the book of Revelation.\textsuperscript{51} He gives two basic arguments for his view. First, he proposes a twofold theme for Revelation, namely, that the reader of Revelation gains hope from the "promise of Christ's coming in victory at the eschatological climax, and an assurance of God's presence even now."\textsuperscript{52} Strand suggests that this theme is evident from the prologue and epilogue of Revelation (especially 1:7-8 and 22:12-13), representing respectively an intentional relationship between Christ's return and the presence of the Alpha and Omega. The references to Christ's coming (Rev. 1:7; cf. 22:12) cause the readers/hearers to look ahead to eschatological judgment, but find their exposition primarily in the second major division of the book (15:1-22:5).\textsuperscript{53} The Alpha-Omega references (1:8; cf. 22:13)

\textsuperscript{50} See A. Y. Collins, \textit{Combat Myth}, 5-44; and McLean, \textit{Seventieth Week}, 224-34.


\textsuperscript{52} Strand, \textit{Interpreting Revelation}, 43.

\textsuperscript{53} Strand, "Chiastic Structure," 408.
should produce assurance of God's presence among his people even in an age where they are mistreated. So, these references relate primarily to the ideas developed in the first major section of the book (Rev. 1:12-14:20). In this line of reasoning, the first part of Revelation deals primarily with the historical age and leads up to the second part, which focuses on the eschatological judgment.

Strand's second argument hinges on a literary analysis of what he believes are the basic thematic counterparts in Revelation. He mentions a few of these counterparts in his conclusion:

As for the counterparts, the section on the 7 Churches relates to the New Jerusalem-New Earth section as "promise and fulfillment," . . . The Throne-Room/7 Seals section in 4:1-8:1 has numerous parallels with the section from 19:1-21:4 (these include the basic setting of the throne, 24 elders, 4 living creatures, and anthems of praise; references to God's "judging and avenging" the blood of the martyrs; . . . mention of white clothing, and of the wiping away of tears; etc.). Finally, the double section of trumpets and dragon-plus-beasts in 8:2-14:20 finds clear and obvious counterparts in the double section on plagues and beast/Babylon in 15:1-18:24.

Strand locates the main division of Revelation between chapters 14 and 15. The reason for separation here is thematic. From Strand's view, these two sections most adequately convey the common themes that serve as counterparts, with the first section (1-14) providing the historical setting and leading to the second and eschatological section (15-22). He develops the following outline to illustrate this proposal:

54 Ibid., 408.
55 Ibid., 407.
56 Ibid., 407. For a further elaboration of these themes, see Strand, Interpreting Revelation, 43-50; and "Victorious-Introduction Scenes," 269-77.
57 Strand, "Chiastic Structure," 401. See also, Strand, Interpreting Revelation, 51; and "Eight Basic Visions," 108. Strand's outline is not a true chiastic structure since the "D" elements do not strictly mirror each other.
Strand locates the division between chapters 14 and 15 rather than chapters 11 and 12. He maintains that the evil hierarchy of the Dragon (12:3), the Sea-Beast (13:1) and the Earth Beast (who works closely with and is equated to the False Prophet, 13:11) belongs to a broader section of Rev. 8:2-14:20. This section is a large doublet embracing the trumpets and the evil hierarchy, but also presents an "Egypt-Babylon" motif. It also parallels the development in 15:1-18:24, another large doublet carrying the unifying "Egypt-Babylon" motif.58

Strand's theory is commendable in spots, especially with regards to his insights into the impact of the prologue and epilogue on the structure of Revelation. Some questions arise, however, with regards to the twofold division of his model into historical and eschatological parallels. His inclusion of the seal and trumpet judgments in the historical section is troubling to some since these judgments seem to be major eschatological events.59 Another problem arises in the area of the correlation of Strand's

58 Strand, "Chiastic Structure," 403. This "Egypt-Babylon" motif is recalled in the plagues of the trumpets and bowls, which are reminiscent of the plagues on Egypt. These merge and give way to a Babylonian theme, the crucial transitional element being the introduction of the "great river Euphrates" in 9:14 and 16:12. Strand admits in a note that the Babylon motif is more obvious in the second doublet (note 7, p. 404). One wonders whether or not the lack of an outright mention of Babylon in the first doublet does any damage to Strand's theory.

59 McLean, Seventieth Week, 250. The sixth seal is especially problematic since it is introduced by a great earthquake and other cosmic phenomena. See also Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 199-209.
counterparts. He views the trumpet judgments as merely warnings so that the bowl judgments might be seen as the consummation of the trumpets and the beginning of eschatological judgment.\textsuperscript{60} This reasoning does not seem consistent with the language of Revelation. The trumpets appear as actual plagues similar to the bowls (and, for that matter, the seals as well). Also, this view places the trumpets under the historical setting of the book, but the trumpets are introduced in the text with obvious eschatological overtones (8:1-6).\textsuperscript{61} How then are they to be considered an "historical" aspect of the book?

Conclusion

Many scholars agree that the book of Revelation is "a remarkably well-constructed literary piece, containing a multiplicity of neatly intertwining patterns."\textsuperscript{62} Consequently, the structure of Revelation has been studied extensively from the methodologies of form, religious-philosophical, historical-philological, and source criticism. Searches for the hidden key to Revelation's structure have produced theories that look to the book of Daniel, the book of Isaiah, and even Greek drama for material to produce an outline for the Apocalypse.\textsuperscript{63} As seen above, some outlines of Revelation

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\textsuperscript{60} Strand, "Chiastic Structure," 401-2; and \textit{Interpreting Revelation}, 51-52.

\textsuperscript{61} McLean, \textit{Seventieth Week}, 251.


give a prominent place or pivotal role to chapter 12 in the development of the narrative. Although no general consensus exists concerning Revelation’s structure, some basic things can be said about the overall development of the book.

The author of Revelation has obviously taken considerable care to construct his narrative. If there is an area of consensus about Revelation, it is the understanding that John carefully integrated the various parts of his story into a literary whole. There is also a general recognition that the structure of the Apocalypse somehow gives the audience clues to understanding the meaning of the narrative. In other words, structure advances the plot of the story and encourages the continued reading and/or hearing of the text. Coupled with this recognition is the idea that John no doubt intended his readers/hearers to understand or at least decipher the meaning of the text. After all, in the letters to the seven churches, he admonishes the audience to listen to what the Spirit says to them, and one aspect of the word άκοω carries the meaning of “understand.” Most writers expect at least some understanding of their narratives, and readers expect to come to some level of understanding with regards to the meaning of the text. This expectation is often realized with the help of clues in the structure and wording of the narrative.

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64 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 2; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 9-13; Strand, “Eight Basic Visions,” 107; Aune, Revelation 1-5, xci; Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 159-60; and Mounce, Revelation (1977), 45-47.


66 William A. Beardslee, Literary Criticism of the New Testament (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), iii–iv. See also, Edgar V. McKnight, Postmodern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 14-20, for a further discussion on the importance of the reader to this enterprise of understanding or reading a narrative.
Linguistic Markers in Revelation

A basic way for a writer to inspire close reading of a text is through the use of certain linguistic markers. In the case of Revelation, it is important to remember that John is writing primarily for hearers (1:3). So, it is reasonable to assume that he may have indicated some rudimentary kind of structure to aid the readers/hearers in finding their way through the narrative. This structure then may be indicated in some way by linguistic markers or peculiarities in the text. In fact, a text intended for oral performance would of necessity reveal something of its structure through the clever use of linguistic markers.

As with structure, there are many explanations of what constitutes a linguistic marker. Since linguistic factors may be construed in a variety of ways, the initial problem lies in determining what comprises a linguistic marker in the book of Revelation. Another problem considered in this section is the relative importance of chapter 12 to the rest of Revelation. If chapter 12 really plays a pivotal role in the structure and progress of Revelation's narrative, then there must be some way to show its importance by means of linguistic markers. Although not all of the linguistic markers discussed below relate directly to Revelation 12, they play a significant role in the development of Revelation's overall structure. An outline of that structure should then indicate the position of chapter


68 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 2-3; and Barr, "The Apocalypse as Oral Enactment," 243-56.

69 Aune, Revelation 1-5, xci.
12 with regards to the rest of the book. So, the final goal is to produce an outline that
gives at least the macrostructure or a superficial structure of Revelation.

For the purpose of this study, a linguistic marker is any linguistic form (i.e., a
meaningful unit of speech, a morpheme, a word, a sentence, a phrase, etc.) that appears to
introduce or distinguish a portion of the text as different from other sections. Linguistic
markers serve the purpose of setting off sections of text for special consideration. For
example, the narrative of Revelation begins and ends with the basic characteristics of a
letter, namely a prologue (1:1-8) and an epilogue (22:6-21). These two sections frame
the rest of the work and act as an introduction and conclusion to the narrative movement
of the text. As such, these sections are (in some sense, at least) linguistic markers.

A discussion of all of Revelation’s linguistic markers would require an entire
book. So, this section will focus primarily on those markers most often noted by
scholars as distinguishing the more important sections of Revelation. Three kinds of
linguistic markers are prevalent in Revelation: (1) formal markers (i.e., special use of
words as a kind of formula), (2) repetitions, and (3) interludes or intercalations.

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70 A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 5-8; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 3; Beasley-Murray,
*Revelation*, 12-14; and Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John*

71 Barr, “Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation,” 46.

72 See, for example, the dissertation of Vester Eugene Wolber entitled “A Study of the Literary
Structure of Revelation as an Aid to Interpretation,” (Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological
Seminary, 1950). Also, the dissertation by William K. Hedrick applies a similar approach to just one
chapter of Revelation. See “The Sources and Use of Imagery in Apocalypse 12” (Berkely, CA: Graduate
Theological Union, 1970).

73 It must be noted from the outset that I am indebted to numerous students of Revelation who went
before me into these difficult waters. Most important for this section are the works of Richard Bauckham
(*Climax of Prophecy*), David Aune (*Revelation 1-5*), and Kenneth Strand. Their invaluable work in this
area enabled me to tread water in relative safety without drowning. Others who aided in this process will be
noted as needed.
Formal Markers

Formal markers were briefly mentioned in the discussion of Farrer's approach to the structure of Revelation. Simply stated, these markers are a word or set of words used in a formulaic manner to set off a section of text. As previously mentioned, Farrer relied primarily on the introductory formulae which utilized the words καὶ ἑιδοὺ or ὡφθην. For Farrer, the presence of these words represented the introduction to a new vision. Although there is some validity to this idea, the problem lies in John's constant use of ἑιδοὺ throughout Revelation, many times in a manner not explicitly visionary. Indeed, some variation of the verb appears approximately 40 times in the Apocalypse. Certainly ἑιδοὺ is used in a formulaic sense, often coupled with the equally formulaic ἑδοῦ, but its frequency in the text requires some sort of context or other marker to create an obvious introductory formula.

A better candidate for use as an introductory formula is the phrase ἐν πνεύματι. This formula occurs four times in Revelation in four visionary experiences (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), which belong to and introduce four major sections of material (1:9-3:22; 4:1-5:14; 17:1-19:10; and 21:9-22:9). In 1:10 and 4:2 the actual phrase is ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι, while 17:3 and 21:10 render it as καὶ ἀπῆνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι. Each

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74 Farrer, *Rebirth of Images*, 46-49.

75 As mentioned above, the expressions "Behold, I saw..." or "And he looked, behold..." often appear as a introductory formula in visionary accounts. See especially Exod. 3:2; Amos 9:1; Isa. 6:1 (A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 13-14, 48-49). With regards to Revelation, however, the sheer number of occurrences of this formula seems to render it less potent as an introductory formula. In fact, the use of these words in Revelation is less as an introduction and more as a means of advancing the text. John is relating a story of his visionary experiences, and the use of "behold, I saw" is just one way of progressing the story, but it is not necessarily a means of delineating between important sections of the narrative or of introducing new visionary material.
occurrence of this phrase locates John in a different place. The first use of the phrase locates John on the isle of Patmos (1:9). The second states that he was called “up here” to observe the events surrounding the “throne standing in heaven” (4:1-2). The third has John taken by an angel into “the wilderness” (17:3), and the fourth has an angel carry John to a “great and high mountain” (21:10).

A comparison of these visions is instructive. The first pair are both introduced by a “great voice” like a trumpet (1:10; 4:1), while each of the second pair begins with mention of one of the angels who had the seven bowls (17:1; 21:9). Each of the first pair introduces a vision of Jesus. The first introduces a vision of Jesus as he warns the churches of coming times of trouble and admonishes them to remain faithful (Rev. 1:19; 2:10-11, 13, 17, 24-29; 3:10-13 20-22), while the second reveals a vision which ends with the worship of the Lamb who can loose the seven seals of the scroll (5:5-10, 13). In other words, the first two visions present a picture of Jesus as the one who warns and encourages his followers on earth and as the one who (with God) receives honor and worship in heaven. In the first vision John is commanded by the voice to write letters to the churches (Rev. 1:11), while in the second vision the voice commands John to “come up” to heaven where he sees God’s throne (4:1). Finally, the first vision ends with Jesus’ statement that he shares the throne of God (3:21), while the second vision reveals the

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77 Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, 33; and Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 3-4. Tenney argues that the contrast here is between the persecuted community and the sovereign reign of God, but Bauckham largely ignores a contrast here. Perhaps a more likely contrast lies in the roles of Jesus. In the first section, he warns and prepares the churches for what will follow, while in the second he is the one who unleashes the judgments leading up to the events of which he warned the churches. The fact remains that both of these occurrences introduces a new vision of Jesus in a new location, thus setting off these sections as transitions in John’s story.
Lamb receiving worship with the one “who sits upon the throne” (5:13). The major themes of perseverance through suffering (1:9; 2:10-11) and redemption through Jesus’ blood are also introduced in these first visions (5:9-10).

The second pair likewise introduce new visions. The first takes John to the wilderness where he receives the vision of the great Harlot Babylon (Rev. 17:1), while the second takes place on a high mountain and presents the Bride, New Jerusalem (21:9). Since the wilderness is sometimes associated with judgment and harlotry by the prophets (cf. Jer. 3:1-5; Ezek. 16:15-24; Hos. 2:2-13), it seems significant that John would use this imagery to describe the judgment of Babylon.\(^78\) The condemnation and adultery of Babylon are then contrasted to the purity and devotion of the Bride, New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-22:5).\(^79\) This contrast presents to the readers of Revelation the startling difference between the followers of Jesus and the followers of the dragon. The faithful enjoy an intimate relationship with God and the Lamb (21:23-27; 22:3-5), while those who side with the dragon receive only judgment (19:19-20:3, 11-15).

The comparison and contrast between chapters 17 and 21 are not limited to the two women introduced. The literary parallels between these sections are also quite


\(^{79}\) J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: PA: The Westminster Press, 1979), 254; G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of Saint John the Divine* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 212-13; Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, 33; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 4-5; and Court, *Myth and History*, 156-59. Court adds that the mountain may also represent the place of the reception of the Law by Moses, and this New Jerusalem is the embodiment of those who keep the Law through fidelity to Jesus. He also notes that the New Jerusalem is in some sense a contrast to the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3. According to Court, the vision of the New Jerusalem elucidates the promises made to “the one who overcomes” in the churches. Some of the references listed include: Smyrna, 2:11, cf. 21:4, 8; Pergamum, 2:17, cf. 22:4; Sardis, 3:5, cf. 21:27, 22:14; Philadelphia, 3:12, cf. 21:22, 22:4; and Laodicea, 3:21, cf. 22:3. These parallels indicate that the visions of chapter 1 and chapter 21 are connected and may well provide a further frame for the events narrated between them.
striking. As both Richard Bauckham and David Aune point out, the corresponding phrases of 17:3 and 21:10 actually belong to a broader linguistic parallelism between 17:1-3 and 21:9-10. These sections read as follows:

And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came, and he spoke to me saying, “Come, I will show you” . . . and he carried me away into the wilderness in the spirit . . . (17:1,3)

And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came, and he spoke to me saying, “Come, I will show you” . . . and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain . . . (21:9-10)

Like the first pair of visions, these two contain a command to John, although this time the command is specifically from an angel. The parallels in the introductions of the second pair of visions are obvious, but what is striking is the continued parallelism found in the conclusions to these two sections (19:9-10; 22:6-9). The conclusions read as follows:

And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” And I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” (19:9b-10)

And he said to me, “These are faithful and true words. . . .” . . . I fell to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” (Rev. 22:6, 8-9)

These visions end with an affirmation of the truthfulness of God’s word in John’s visionary experiences, as well as an admonition to offer worship only to God.

These structural markers delineating two parallel sections 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:6 are very clear. The thematic parallels coupled with the linguistic parallels indicate that these sections are set apart for a reason. Some scholars see this section as a climax

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80 Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 4-5; and Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xcv-xcvii. Aune and Bauckham both present tables showing the parallels, although Aune’s is the most extensive. For reasons of space these charts will not be reproduced here.
towards which the whole book progresses, while others see the parallelism as primarily a framing device that represents a departure from the use of the series of seven.\(^{81}\) So, the phrase ἐν πνεύματι appears four times in visionary experiences that seem somewhat parallel: (1) each vision occurs in a specific place, (2) each contains a command for John, and (3) each ends with either a scene of worship or an admonition to worship. At any rate, the conclusion remains that the use of ἐν πνεύματι in these four sections of text certainly acts as some kind of introductory formula.

Another formula John uses to describe visionary experiences is καὶ σημεῖον ὁφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, which appears three times in Revelation. In 12:1 and 12:3, the formula reads “Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὁφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, . . . καὶ ὁφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ . . .,” and represents a “quite fresh introductory formula, unlike any John has used before . . .”\(^{82}\) The other use of this formula appears in 15:1, the section which introduces the seven bowl judgments. In Rev. 15:1, the formula reads as follows: “Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ μέγα καὶ θαυμαστών.”\(^{83}\) In chapter 15, John replaces ὁφθη with εἶδον, but otherwise the formula remains intact. The basic formula here includes the idea that a “sign in the heaven” appeared to or was otherwise seen by John. Although these visions seem linked to 12:1 by similar linguistic markers, they also appear to be separate in some way. It is interesting to note that after 12:1, the subsequent signs are called “other” and (in the case of 15:1) “great.” The implication in 12:3 and

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\(^{81}\) Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 4-5; and Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xcvii.

\(^{82}\) Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 15.

\(^{83}\) Note that here John uses “I saw” in the formula as a means of introducing a new vision within the text. The appearance of εἶδον here is an example of how it may be used in introductory formulae.
15:1 then is that these signs are other than the first sign in 12:1. So, John uses this particular formal marker to introduce three new visions near the center of his narrative.

The importance of this particular formula lies in the material it introduces. Chapter 12 represents a fresh start and a new beginning of material. It comes after the seventh trumpet and after a second representation of judgment (Rev. 11:15-19). The signs in 12:1 and 12:3 are linked to each other in the story that follows, and introduce new characters into the drama. This formula cues the audience to the beginning of a new story or new chapter. The same basic formula in 15:1 acts as a frame of sorts, combining with the original use in chapter 12 to cause a connection between the material in chapters 12-14 and chapter 15. Revelation 15:1 introduces the seven bowls, the last judgments of God on the earth. By using a formula similar to 12:1, 3, John connects these signs and helps the audience connect them as well.

The visions introduced in Rev. 12:1, 3 share at least one similarity with the visions in the four passages discussed above. First, the vision appears in a particular place (namely, heaven, 12:1, 3, cf. 15:1). In the case of chapter 12, however, this vision also ends with a change of place. In Rev. 12:14 the woman is carried off into the wilderness, perhaps foreshadowing the coming vision of the Harlot Babylon (17:3). The

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86 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 16; Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, 41; and Wall, Revelation, 192. John appears to use this particular formula to introduce and to link two important bodies of material. Chapter 12 introduces the characters that figure prominently in chapters 13 and 14. The judgment of those characters finds its expression in chapter 15 and following.
difference in chapter 12 is that the wilderness is a place of protection, while the wilderness in Rev. 17:3 may refer to the judgment of Babylon. So, the material in Revelation 12 may serve as a bridge by which the actions in the two pairs of visions (1:9-3:22/4:1-5:14 and 17:1-19:10/21:9-22:9) are connected. The action in the first pair moves from Patmos (Rev. 1:9) to heaven (4:1). Rev. 12:1-3 introduces visions that appear in heaven and end in the wilderness (12:14; cf. 12:6), the same place that the second pair of visions (of the two women) get their start (17:3).

In closing, then, this section shows that linguistic formulae exist in John’s narrative in order to set apart portions of the text for special reference. In particular, the formal markers mentioned above serve as distinct starting points for five important visions in Revelation: (1) 1:9-3:22 (Jesus warns and encourages his followers), (2) 4:1-5:14 (the Lamb receives worship with God in the heavenly throne room), (3) 12:1-16:21, (the Messiah and the faithful community are attacked by the dragon and judgment begins), (4) 17:1-21:8 (Babylon is judged and Messiah comes in judgment) and (5) 21:9-22:9 (the Bride of Messiah is introduced and the faithful receive their reward). These five visions advance the main plot in Revelation’s story and represent the main body of an

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87 It is interesting to note that the word ἠρημος only appears three times in Revelation, twice in chapter 12 and once in 17:3. G. K. Beale, in The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek New Testament Commentary, I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, editors, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1999), notes that the wilderness metaphor in Revelation is similar to the representation of the wilderness in the Old Testament. The wilderness is a place of protection and tribulation (Deut. 8:14-16, Hos. 2:14-16). The wilderness is also an uninhabitable place where sin, evil, and judgment dwell (Isa. 13:20-22; 34:10-15; Jer. 9:10-12; 50:39-40; Ezek. 6:14; cf. Matt. 12:43 and Luke 11:24). The vision in 17 “appears thus in the spiritual dimension of a ‘desert’” (Beale, 851). That is, Babylon is pictured as being in judgment and in a deserted place spiritually. The vision in 12:6, 14, however, depicts the wilderness as a safe haven, reaching back to the images of the Exodus (Exod. 19:4; Deut. 1:31-33; 32:10-12). Even so, the wilderness is still a place of trial as well (Rev. 12:14-17). Beale also notes a connection between the wildernesses of Rev. 12 and 17. For more, see Beale, Revelation, 645-46, 648-50, 669-71, 851-53.
outline of the book. In other words, these five sections taken together form a basic schema of the narrative. Special phrases are not the only mnemonic device John used, however; repetitions also appear that seem to set apart some portions of the text.

Repetitions

Repetitious themes and phrases are stock devices when a narrator wants the audience to remember the story.\(^{88}\) The most obvious repetitions in Revelation are the three septets of judgment (the seals, trumpets, and bowls). John uses these septets to bring the audience almost half way into the work. The seven letters to the churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets take the readers/hearers up to chapter 12. There a new chapter of the story begins leading into the final set of seven (the bowls). It also introduces the audience to three signs (12:1, 3; 15:1) and two contrasting scenes dominated by female figures each introduced by an angel from the last septet (17:1 and 21:9).\(^{89}\) In other words, the septets help drive the narrative and give mnemonic hooks upon which the readers/hearers can hang their memories until the story reaches its midpoint.

Besides the septets, John also employs other repetitious phrases as linguistic markers.\(^{90}\) Some of these are noted above, with the longest being the paired angelic

\(^{88}\) Barr, “The Apocalypse as Oral Enactment,” 243-56. For more on the repetitious nature of Revelation, see Aune, Revelation 1-5, xcii-xcviii; and Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 7-15, 22-29. For an outline of Revelation that sees the entire text as a sort of repetition or recapitulation, see Charles H. Giblin, The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991).

\(^{89}\) Barr, “Apocalypse as Oral Enactment,” 244-45; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 4-7; and Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, 33-34.

\(^{90}\) Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 7-15, 22-29. Bauckham gives an extensive list of the repeated phrases in Revelation (22-29).
revelations of 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:6. Others are not as extensive, and the repetition is
not always as exact as in the examples above. One example that is tied to the seals,
trumpets, and bowls first appears in Rev. 4:5. Here the scene is the heavenly throne room
of God, and John describes sounds coming from the throne as “flashes of lightning,
voices, and peals of thunder.” The scene sounds suspiciously like Sinai and may well be
an allusion to the Sinai theophany (Exod. 19:16; cf. Jubilees 2:2).\(^1\) This basic formula is
expanded in three other places—8:5; 11:19; and 16:18-21.\(^2\) Revelation 8:5 adds an
earthquake to the original list, while 11:19 includes the earthquake plus a great hail storm.
In 16:18-19, the earthquake and hail storm are described in more detail.

This repetition seems to anchor the divine judgments of chapters 6-16 to the
inaugural vision of God’s throne in chapter 4.\(^3\) It intensifies the judgments that appear in
the seals, trumpets, and bowls, so that 11:19 and 16:18-21 apparently encompass the
judgment series that precede them.\(^4\) The septets are linked by a technique of overlapping

\(^{1}\) Ibid., 8; Wall, Revelation, 93; M. Eugene Boring, Revelation, Interpretation, a Bible
Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 104; Beasley-Murray,
Revelation, 115-16; and Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, 171-72.

\(^{2}\) For comparison, here are the four main references (somewhat abridged):

4:5—“flashes of lightning, voices, and peals of thunder”
8:5—“peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake”
11:19—“flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hail
storm”
16:18-21—“flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and great and
heavy hail stones”

The original chart is found in Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 8. See also Tenney, Interpreting
Revelation, 34-35.

\(^{3}\) Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 8; and Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, 34-35.

\(^{4}\) For more on this trait, see Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 95-99, 103. See also, Bauckham, Climax
of Prophecy, 7-9.
or interweaving in which the seventh item introduces the next set of judgments. So, the seventh seal in 8:1 results in the appearance of the seven angels with the seven trumpets in 8:2, after which the judgment of the seven seals occurs in 8:3-5. A similar device is used between the trumpets and the bowls in 11:19 and 15:5-6. Although separated by an intercalation in chapters 12-14, the trumpets and bowls are linked together by the appearance of the open temple in heaven. The point to note here is that John uses repetition to tie these judgments together and to aid in the progression of the story.

Another repetition of importance is actually a clever chiasm of sorts that helps to integrate the section of 19:11-20:15 into the structure of the book. Revelation 19:11-20:15 presents the vision of Christ as the Judge, the rider on the white horse. The principal enemies of Christ (and God's people) appear in the book in the following order:

- Death and Hades (6:8)
- the dragon (12:3-4, 7-17)
- the beast and the false prophet (13:1-18)
- Babylon (17:1-18)

The order in which their destruction occurs is reversed, creating a sort of chiastic arrangement:

- Babylon (18:1-24)
- the beast and the false prophet (19:20)

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97 There are anticipatory references to the beast (11:7) and to Babylon (14:8 and 16:19) that some may argue would interfere with this ordering. These earlier references, however, are brief glimpses of the characters. The beast from the abyss is merely mentioned in 11:7, but his character is introduced in detail in chapter 13. The passages that mention Babylon are of a similar nature. In fact, the first mentions of the beast or Babylon serve primarily to whet the hearers' appetites for more information, which is only given later. So, these earlier appearances are not descriptive enough to serve as real introductions to the characters and may well be discounted on that basis. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 20-21.
the dragon (20:1-10)
Death and Hades (20:14)

This chiasm ties the section describing Christ the Judge to the judgments begun in the seals and expanded in the trumpets. It also thematically links Rev. 19:11-20:15 to the introduction of the dragon and the explanation for the persecution of the church in 12:3-4, 7-17 (cf. 13:1-8) and to the judgment of Babylon in 17 and 18. The final judgment of all the world (including Babylon) is thus completed in 19:11-20:15. This section is also sandwiched between the parallel sections mentioned above (Babylon and the Bride, 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:6 respectively) and serves as a transition between the descriptions of the two women. 98

Another repetition that ties to the judgment begun in Revelation 19 involves the mention of Ps. 2:9. This verse appears three times in Revelation: (1) 2:26-27, (2) 12:5, and (3) 19:15. This particular Psalm is an enthronement hymn, most likely composed for the coronation of an Israelite king at the time when he ascended to his throne. The king was traditionally anointed with oil to signify his position, and this anointing is represented in the word “Messiah” (or, “anointed one”). As a result, Psalm 2 was often interpreted as a hymn about Messiah, especially with reference to Messiah’s judicial and martial abilities to remove oppressors in the messianic age. 99

98 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 5-6.

99 Caird, Revelation, 149-50; Sweet, Revelation, 194, 197; and Frederick J. Murphy, Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John, The New Testament in Context, edited by Howard Clark Kee and J. Andrew Overman, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 139-40, 391-92. Note the application of Psalm 2 to the Davidic Messiah in Psalms of Solomon 17:21-25. This particular passage includes a reference to the purging of the Temple and Jerusalem, a theme found in Rev. 11:1-3. In fact, the language of Pss. Solomon 17 and Rev. 11 is strikingly similar. In Pss. Solomon 17:22, the psalmist implores God to purge the city and to remove the “gentiles who trample her (Jerusalem) to destruction,” while Rev. 11:2 describes a section of the Temple that “is given over to the nations (τοῖς ἐθνεῖσιν, also translated “Gentiles”), and they will trample over the holy city . . . .” At the very least, both the authors
John's use of Psalm 2 seems to follow a pattern. First, Jesus encourages the people in the church at Thyatira to overcome so that they might receive authority over the nations to "rule them with a rod of iron," just as Jesus received this authority from his Father (Rev. 2:26-28). Second, John describes the birth of Messiah by applying Ps. 2:9 to the male child born to the celestial woman in Rev. 12:5. This child's authority is then tied to God's salvation, power, and kingdom in 12:10. That the authority of Christ has come is evident in that the dragon, "the accuser of our brothers," has been defeated and the followers of Christ have overcome the dragon "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even unto death" (12:10-11). So, chapter 12 explains how the readers/hearers may overcome and receive the promise of Rev. 2:26-28. Finally, the description of Christ as the coming Judge in Rev. 19:15 signals the beginning of the fulfillment of 2:26-28 as Christ judges the nations and puts them to death by his sword (19:20-21). The use of Ps. 2:9 thus ties the admonition of Rev. 2:26-28 to the means of overcoming in 12:5 and to the promised fulfillment in chapter 19. In other words, Rev. 12:5-11 indicates that the audience may participate now in the authority over the nations by following Christ's example of faithful witness and martyrdom. By doing so, they prepare themselves to reign with him after he judges the nations (cf. Rev. 20:6; 22:3-5). Like other linguistic markers, this repetition

expected a kingly Messiah who would usher in the last age and ultimately overthrow the enemies of God's people.

100 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 314, 323-24; and Beale, Revelation, 267-68, 639-42, 962-63.

101 Beale, Revelation, 640.

establishes chapter 12 as a kind of midpoint for Revelation in which important information is communicated to the readers/hearers.

Repetitions appear to be used often to form frames within which certain aspects of John’s story take place. The septets, the allusion to Sinai, and the chiasm of God’s enemies all serve to tie certain aspects of Revelation together in a way that both helps readers/hearers remember the story and aids in the general progression of the plot. Like formal markers, the repetitions serve as focal points where the audience gains bearings before moving on to the next sequence in the plot. Besides formal markers and repetitions, John also uses interludes or intercalations in Revelation.

*Interludes/Intercalations*

An interlude in a linguistic sense is text that either interrupts the apparent flow of the narrative or that fills space between two related events. An intercalation is similar in that it appears to interrupt the narrative, but it also often brings new information or explanation to the narrative. No matter which term is used, sections of Revelation apparently serve as rest stations where the audience is encouraged to pause and consider

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103 Many repetitions exist that are not investigated here, primarily because they do not seem to play as important a role as those mentioned. For a good introduction to the various repetitions in Revelation, see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 22-29. One of the more interesting repetitions is the sevenfold use of “tribes and tongues and people and nations” found in Rev. 5:10; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; and 17:15. Bauckham deals with these repetitions in chapter 9 of his book (see pp. 257-66). These repetitions do not seem to be used as organizing markers, however, but apparently are used as vehicles for John’s theological view of Christ’s sovereignty.

104 Barr, “Apocalypse as Oral Enactment,” 244-45.

105 Lambrecht, “Structuration, 95; and Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 171-72. The concepts of interlude or intercalation seem closely related, so the words will be used interchangeably. Merrill Tenney suggests the use of the term “parenthetical” to describe the sections discussed below (see, *Interpreting Revelation*, 40-41). The four passages discussed below not only interrupt the flow of the narrative of Revelation, but actually seem to add new information to the text and help to propel the narrative on to the next item.
new characters and themes. This new information provides the impetus for the readers/hearers to continue on to the consummation of the narrative.

Three main intercalations exist in Revelation: (1) 7:1-17; (2) 10:1-11:14; and (3) 12:1-14:20. Revelation 7:1-17 comes immediately after the sixth seal in 6:12-17. This seal appears to introduce the coming of a final judgment, but instead the audience finds the beginning of a new section with new information. In 7:1-8 the 144,000 “servants of our God” on earth are sealed, while 7:9-17 presents a great multitude in heaven. Both passages refer back to the fifth seal (6:9-11), especially to the martyr’s cry for vengeance. In 6:11, the martyrs in heaven (cf. 7:9-17) are told to wait for a short time, until the number of their fellow servants (cf. “servants of God” in 7:3) who were to be killed have been completed. The martyrs are each given a “white robe” (6:11), the same terminology used to describe the multitude in 7:9-14. Revelation 7:9-17 appears to be linked to chapters 4-5 as well through the imagery of God’s throne, the Lamb, and the host of heaven (the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures). Also, chapter 7 as a whole serves as a break between the sixth and seventh seals, and as such introduces the last seal

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106 These intercalations are one of the few areas of consensus among scholars of Revelation, although some divide the second one into two interludes—10:1-11 and 11:1-14. For discussion on these issues, see Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 95-99; Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 171-73; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 16-20; and McLean, Seventieth Week, 241-67. Other intercalations exist in Revelation and are often relegated to hymnic materials. See Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 171-73 and Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 99-103.

107 Some see these as two separate groups (Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 95; Wall, Revelation, 116-19), while still others see the people represented here as one and the same (Caird, Revelation, 94-95; Sweet, Revelation, 7). The passage can be read either way with equal application and appreciation, although Wall’s view is commendable. He states that the 144,000 represent the faithful of Israel (note the absence of any christological manifestation in 7:1-8) and the multitude represents the victorious believers from around the world worshipping the Lamb (see Wall, Revelation, 116-21).

and sets the stage for its opening. So, chapter 7 interrupts the narrative of the seals just before the last seal in order to remind the readers/hearers of the concerns of the persecuted Christians and the situation of the martyrs. Revelation 7 also promotes the progress of the overall plot by supplying the setting for the opening of the seventh seal.

The second intercalation stands in a position similar to the first. Revelation 10:1-11:14 comes immediately after the sixth trumpet (9:13-21) and just before the seventh (11:15). In 10:1-11, John describes his encounter with a mighty angel who gives John a little scroll which he is told to eat. The contents of the little scroll generate much debate among scholars. Some claim that the little scroll is the Gospel of God or some version of the Word of God to John. Other scholars, with varying degrees of certainty, hold that the first thirteen verses of chapter 11 make up the content of the little scroll. Still other commentators see the contents of the scroll as referring to the persecution of

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109 Lambrecht, "Structuration," 96; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 8-9; and A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 16-17. Collins explains the connection further by noting that the prayers offered in 8:3-5 actually repeat the prayers of vengeance in 6:9-11 and that the casting of the fire to earth foreshadows the coming judgments of the trumpets. The interlude, then, sets the stage for these heavenly actions by encompassing the events of chapter 6 as well as introducing the reader/hearer to chapter 8. The silence in heaven is the anxious hesitation of the saints as they watch to see how God responds to their prayers (Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 150).

110 The scene here is reminiscent of Ezek. 2:8-3:11 and Dan. 12:5-13. The Ezekiel passage details the calling of Ezekiel in which he is told to eat a scroll as a part of his prophetic commission. The passage from Daniel presents an angel standing with one foot on the land and one foot on the sea, who raises both hands and swears by the name of the Lord that judgment will come soon. John has cleverly combined these two apocalyptic visions into a version of his own calling as a prophet. See, Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 170-75; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 208-17; Catherine Gunalus González and Justo L. González, Revelation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 68-70; and Lambrecht, "Structuration," 96.

111 Morris, Revelation, 138. Morris adds that since John did not state specifically what the little scroll contained, then "we are on dubious ground when we attempt to improve on him" (p. 138).

112 Lambrecht, "Structuration," 96; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 171; and Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 260. Beasley-Murray also notes that such an interpretation is really too wooden, and that the central significance of the little scroll lies in a reaffirmation of John’s prophetic ministry as a whole (p. 172).
the Church and the judgment of the world as revealed beginning in Revelation 12. The common theme in all these views is the call to John to prophesy again. Thus, this scene may best be viewed (as the one in Ezekiel) as John’s receiving a prophetic message and ministry from God. Part of John’s commissioning in chapter 10 includes the measuring of the temple and the vision concerning the two prophets in Revelation 11, tying together chapters 10 and 11 into a literary unit.

Perhaps even more important than the contents of the little scroll is the relation between this intercalation and the first one in chapter 7. Although the two sections have no literary links between them, they both serve as lengthy interruptions in the sequence of judgments which delay the final, seventh judgment. Such a delay would be particularly felt in an oral performance, since the issue of the current delay of judgment may be fresh in the minds of the hearers who are suffering in some way for their faith. As well as symbolizing the delay of judgment, the two intercalations are distinguished from the series of judgments by showing a concern primarily for the people of God. In Rev. 7:1-17, the delay is for the protection of God’s people so that they might triumph in heaven, while in 10:1-11:14 the delay is to permit a prophetic witness of God’s people. As Richard Bauckham notes:

The relationship between the first two series of judgments and the two intercalations is the structural means by which John is able to relate the story of God’s judgment on

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an unbelieving world to the story of God’s people in an unbelieving world and their witness to that world.\textsuperscript{116}

In other words, John uses these intercalations to cause the readers/hearers to pause for a moment to consider their role in both the salvation and judgment of the world.

The third intercalation, Rev. 12:1-14:20, is unlike the two that precede it in that it does not interrupt the flow of a septet. It actually represents a fresh start, introduced by a new formal marker and depicting brand new characters and events not mentioned previously in Revelation.\textsuperscript{117} Revelation 12 depicts the struggle between the Dragon (Satan) and the Woman (and her children). Chapter 13 deals with the introduction of the two Beasts, the Sea Beast, (Satan’s representative, 13:1-10) and the Land Beast (the false prophet; 13:11-18). Chapter 14 reintroduces the 144,000 of chapter 7 (but this time in the presence of the Lamb; 14:1-5), while it also issues a call for repentance and a warning of judgment (14:6-13 and 14-20 respectively).\textsuperscript{118} This intercalation puts emphasis on the responsibilities and actions of both the suffering community of believers and the unrepentant, unbelieving world. Coming before the last series of judgments, this third and largest intercalation once again sets the scene of conflict, encourages believers to

\textsuperscript{116} Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 13. David Barr goes even further in his description and states that the hearers of Revelation are transformed as they understand that it is somehow their suffering witness that will bring salvation and judgment to the unbelieving world, just as Jesus’ suffering was really the salvation of many and the destruction of evil. See, “Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation,” 48-49.

\textsuperscript{117} Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 15; Caird, Revelation, 153-54; Boring, Revelation, 149-50; Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, 41; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 191-92; Wall, Revelation, 157-58; and Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 174-75. Through diligent mapping of the architectonic pattern of the book, Fiorenza concludes that the material encompassing chapter 12-14 begins a new model with new actors and actions.

\textsuperscript{118} Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 16-17; and Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 97-98.
faithfulness, and makes evident the responsibility and culpability of those who will be punished.\textsuperscript{119}

Although this third intercalation is not thoroughly integrated into the preceding material, it is connected to what follows. John links it to the account of the seven bowls, even using the same interweaving technique that he used to link the series of seal judgments to the series of trumpet judgments.\textsuperscript{120} The vision of God's people triumphant over the Beast (15:2-4) is sandwiched between the introduction of the seven angels with the last seven plagues (15:1) and the account of their preparation to pour out the bowls on the earth (15:5-8). Furthermore, the angels with the seven bowls are introduced by a variation of the same formula that introduces the woman and the dragon in chapter 12. This formula marks the events of chapter 15 as a continuation of the events in Revelation 12. While the bowls parallel numerically the septets of the seals and the trumpets, in their own setting they also parallel the events signified in the war in heaven.\textsuperscript{121} The convergence of chapters 12-14 and 15-16 is evident in the way they refer to the forces of opposition to God.\textsuperscript{122} Finally, Revelation 12-14 has thematic ties to the other two


\textsuperscript{121} Tenney, \textit{Interpreting Revelation}, 41; Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 15-16; and A. Y. Collins, \textit{Combat Myth}, 14-15. Bauckham also notes that the event described in 15:5 echoes 11:19a, while 16:17-20 expands 11:19b, apparently making the bowls a fuller representation of the seventh trumpet (\textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 16). So, Revelation 15 becomes the point where the narrative begun in chapter 12 (i.e., the dragon's threat to the woman and her offspring) converges in some way with the narrative begun in chapter 5 when the Lamb received the sealed scroll and began to open it.

\textsuperscript{122} Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 16. The opponents of God are described as follows: (1) those who had the mark of the beast (16:2; cf. 13:16-17); (2) the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (16:13; cf. 12:3-4, 7-9; 13:1-4); and (3) Babylon the great (16:13; cf. 14:8).
intercalations and functions as a means of focusing more clearly on the subject
foreshadowed in 7:1-17 and 10:1-11:13: the conflict between the people of God and the
forces opposed to God.\textsuperscript{123}

From this analysis of the three main intercalations in Revelation, at least two
conclusions seem relevant. First, the integration of these interludes into the structure of
the text shows careful consideration on the part of the author.\textsuperscript{124} Second, John uses the
intercalations as a retarding or delaying device to slow the hearers down and to focus
them once again on their role of suffering in salvation.\textsuperscript{125} Although the interludes
interrupt the continuous narrative, they do not necessarily break the overall pattern of the
book. The interludes are so well integrated into Revelation, in fact, that they serve to
propel the narrative onward in spite of their delaying function.

\textit{Conclusion}

This section has been primarily concerned with recognizing the various linguistic
markers used by John. In the process, something of the superficial structure of Revelation
should also have been revealed. The problem with any outline of Revelation lies in the
fact that John obviously applied himself diligently to putting together some kind of
coherent whole, while scholars are determined to break it down into its constituent

\textsuperscript{123} Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 16-17; and Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 98. Note that some
thematic connections exist between this last intercalation and those that precede it. In Revelation 14:1-5,
the 144,000 of 7:1-8 reappear as a sealed remnant for the Lamb. Also, the appearance of the Beast in 11:7
is anticipatory of his full introduction in chapter 13. In this small way, John weaves his text together in a
careful manner, producing a united whole that no doubt caught the attention of his hearers and stuck in their
memories (see Barr, “Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation,” 43).

\textsuperscript{124} Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 99; Fiorenza, \textit{Justice and Judgment}, 173; and Barr, “Apocalypse as
Symbolic Transformation,” 43.

\textsuperscript{125} Lambrecht, “Structuration,” 99; and Barr, “Blessed Are Those Who Hear,” 103.
parts. Nonetheless, the elucidation of John’s linguistic markers provides an opportunity to produce at least a macrostructure of Revelation.

The subtleties of the structure of Revelation, with its complex interweaving of major sections, make any outline of the book difficult. The discussion above, however, identifies some important sections in Revelation. The following is therefore a division of Revelation into those sections discussed above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1-8</td>
<td>Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:9-3:22</td>
<td>Vision of Christ among the churches and the call to faithfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:1-5:14</td>
<td>Vision of heavenly worship (including the throne of God and the Lamb who overcomes by being slain) leading to two septets and two intercalations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:1-8:1, 3-5</td>
<td>The seven seals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:2, 8:6-11:19</td>
<td>The seven trumpets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:1-14:20</td>
<td>Interlude—Vision recounting the story of God’s people in conflict with evil leading up to final septet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:1, 15:5-16:21</td>
<td>Seven bowls interrupted by vision of God’s conquering people (15:2-4), no intercalation between bowls six and seven (judgment has finally come and begins in earnest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:1-19:10</td>
<td>Introduction and judgment of Babylon the Harlot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:11-21:8</td>
<td>Introduction of Christ the Judge (including judgments of the beast, the false prophet and the dragon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:9-22:9</td>
<td>Introduction of New Jerusalem, the Bride (faithful ones receive rewards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:6-22:21</td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

126 Barr, “Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation,” 43; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 2; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 45; and Sweet, Revelation, 35-36.

With this outline in hand, it may be helpful to consider an overview of Revelation with particular emphasis on Revelation 12.

**Overview of Revelation and Chapter 12**

Scholars give at least three different reasons for the writing of Revelation. First, many view the book as primarily a written response to persecution, giving both a reason for the problems the believers are facing and a proper response to it. The assumption is that some kind of persecution (whether local or national) faced the churches addressed in chapters 2-3. As many scholars point out, however, there is no real evidence of state sponsored persecution in Asia during the reign of Dominitian. A second view states that the purpose of Revelation is as a form of “therapeutic” or “cathartic” literature aimed at Christians who were experiencing (or at least felt) some form of social deprivation or repression. Although the first recipients of Revelation may have had such feelings or experiences, there is no evidence in the text to suggest that John expected his narrative primarily to be a means for dealing with negative emotions or perceived loss. Most likely, the problem which John addresses in Revelation is one of assimilation, i.e., how far should Christians go to accommodate or assimilate the non-Christian milieu in which they lived. The text of Revelation indicates that John issued a call for radical assimilation.

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commitment to the Christian world view, a faithfulness that rejects the non-Christian elements in which it lives and embraces the idea of victory through death with Christ as the exemplar of that faithfulness. In other words, the message of Revelation claims that the Church gains victory over the opponents of God “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony (martyrdom?), because they loved not their lives unto death” (Rev. 12:11).

This call to radical faithfulness is evident throughout Revelation. In the prologue, the emphasis is on the faithfulness of Jesus, “the faithful witness [and] the firstborn of the dead . . . [who] has freed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev. 1:5), while the epilogue encourages believers to separate themselves from God’s opponents by keeping “the words of this prophecy” given to them by the faithful testimony of Jesus (22:7-16). The vision of Christ among the churches (1:9-3:22) includes the promise of rewards from Christ to those who persevere and overcome the demonic elements. When the Bride, New Jerusalem, appears in 21:9-22:5, these rewards are given to the faithful who have overcome.

The third main section of Revelation (4:1-5:14) introduces the formerly slain Lamb who is able to open the seals because he purchased others for God by his blood. This section also sets the stage for the first two sets of septet judgments in 6:1-11:19. A parallel exists with the section which discusses Babylon and her judgment (17:1-19:10) and in which Christ comes as a victorious warrior and judge (19:11-21:8). The Lamb

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130 Barr, “Blessed Are Those Who Hear,” 94-95; Talbert, Apocalypse, 11-12; Fiorenza, Justice and Judgment, 8-9; and Wall, Revelation, 39-40.

131 For an excellent discussion detailing these rewards, see Court, Myth and History, 156-59.
who is slain (the victim) becomes the overcoming warrior (the victor). In each section, the opponents of God are judged by their lack of fidelity to God’s ways and to the Lamb. The middle section, Rev. 12:1-16:21, is sandwiched between these parallel sections and forms a bridge of sorts that links the sections together. As such, this section not only contains themes from the other sections, but it also explains the reason for the conflict the churches face and introduces the major characters that will participate in the rest of the story. For this reason, chapter 12 will be considered in more detail.

Overview of Revelation 12

Revelation 12 tells a story wrapped in apocalyptic symbolism. First, the difficult birth of Messiah is described. Then, John depicts the dragon’s attempt to thwart the Messianic child from accomplishing his mission to “rule all nations with a rod of iron” (Rev. 12:5). The Messianic child is snatched to heaven and a heavenly battle ensues. Finally, the dragon’s anger is poured out against the other offspring of the woman who gave birth to the Messianic child. The dragon’s anger seems to result from his losing his place in heaven after the heavenly war. This brief outline gives the main action of Revelation 12, but more detail is necessary to give an adequate overview.

As previously noted, Revelation 12 marks a major division in the book. Here John turns aside from the details of the seals and the trumpets introduce a whole new scenario. In fact, some commentators claim that just when the audience would be expecting the end of the story (the final judgment as a result of the final trumpet), John in

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fact starts the story all over again with the birth of Messiah. In this new story John seeks to explain "the underlying cause for the hostility" which the churches are facing. This hostility has already been briefly described in the story of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14) as one that results from the age-old conflict between God and Satan. In chapter 12, John paints three distinct pictures of this conflict: (1) the dragon's attempt to kill Messiah at his birth (12:1-6), (2) the war in heaven (12:7-12), and (3) the resulting attack on the children of the woman (12:13-17). Each of these pictures is a symbolic rendering of historical events surrounding and resulting from the birth and enthronement of Messiah (Rev. 12:5).

In the first picture, John describes the beginnings of the conflict between God and Satan by symbolically telling the story of Messiah's birth. This story introduces three of the main characters in chapter 12: (1) the woman, (2) the dragon, and (3) the child.

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133 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 15-17; Bock, Apocalypse, 94-95; Boring, Revelation, 150; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 19-20; McLean, Seventieth Week, 235-236; and Wall, Revelation, 157.

134 Mounce, Revelation (1977), 234; Sweet, Revelation, 194-95; J. M. Ford, Revelation, 194-95; and Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 191.

135 For a discussion of the enthronement of Messiah, see Caird, Revelation, 148-50; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 238-39; Sweet, Revelation, 197; Talbert, Apocalypse, 49; Wall, Revelation, 161; and André Feuillet, "The Messiah and His Mother according to Apocalypse 12," Johanneine Studies (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965), 257-92. The idea of enthronement comes from the use of Ps. 2:9. Psalm 2 is commonly thought of as an enthronement psalm with special emphasis on the Davidic Messiah. In other words, the dragon fails to devour the child precisely because the child is enthroned as God's Messiah and thus under God's protection.

136 It should be noted that no small amount of work has been done on the possible sources for the symbols in Revelation 12. Myths from Babylon, Egypt, Persia, and Greece have all been brought forth as the possible forerunners to this story. John's story reflects a knowledge of these myths, but he obviously reshapes them to fit his own needs and to portray his theology. Our goal here is simply to retell the story as clearly as possible, interpreting where necessary. For an excellent discussion on the myths associated with Revelation 12, see Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 191-206; Charles, Revelation, Vol. 1, 298-332; Hedrick, "Sources and Use," 179-90; and Anton Vögtle, "Mythos und Botschaft in Apokalypse 12," Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt (Göttingen: Van Den Hoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 395-415.
The woman is described first, using language that has led many to suppose an astrological background to the story. This woman is “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev. 12:1). She is pregnant, even to the point of enduring labor pains just before giving birth (12:2). It is likely that for John the woman represents the messianic community, Mother Zion. Being “clothed with the sun” may anticipate the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, who is described in Rev. 21:11 as having “a brilliance ... like a very costly stone.” The “twelve stars” are perhaps a reference to Joseph’s dream in Gen. 37:9, where the twelve sons of Jacob are seen as stars, and in which Jacob (Israel) is the sun and his wife, Rachel, is the moon. These symbols help to identify this woman further as the representative of God’s Ideal Community (Israel) through whom Messiah comes.

The second character bursting on the scene is the dragon. He is described as a “great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems” (12:3). This symbolism is strikingly similar to Leviathan of the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 27:1; Ps. 74:12; and Isa. 51:9-11). Generally speaking, the dragon is a representation of the ancient foe of God (perhaps the symbol was borrowed from the old Babylonian myth in which the dragon is the guardian of chaos and hence the enemy of created order). In

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138 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 199; Sweet, Revelation, 195-96; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 236; Caird, Revelation, 149-50; Talbert, Apocalypse, 48; and Roger D. Aus, “The Relevance of Isaiah 66:7 to Revelation 12 and 2 Thessalonians 1,” Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 67 (1976), 255-56.

139 Bill Kellermann, “O Holy Nightmare,” Sojourners 14 (Dec. 1985), 35. Kellermann further notes that in Revelation the number twelve is often the number of God’s community.
Rev. 12:9 he is further described as “the serpent of old (i.e., the deceiver of Genesis 3) who is called the devil and Satan . . . .” Horns are a standard symbol of power, so his ten horns represent great amounts of power (although in chapter 17 they also resemble kings). The seven heads may resemble a purposefulness or consciousness of action.  

In other words, the dragon knows what he intends to do and will pursue it ruthlessly. He is here presented as a dreadful foe, who is mighty enough to sweep away a third of the stars with just a brush of his tail (12:4). 

The dragon is not passive, but he is patiently waiting for the arrival of the third major character (Rev. 12:4b). Verse 5 gives a brief statement about this person, he is “a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron . . . .” This allusion to Psalm 2 makes the readers/hearers think of Messiah.  

This concept is expanded in Rev. 12:5b, where it is stated that the child “was caught up to God and to his throne.” Here is the enthronement of God’s promised Messiah. It apparently happens so fast that the dragon does not even have a chance to respond.

A brief excursus may be necessary to give a better understanding of the ascension in the New Testament. The Christ event (death/resurrection/ascension/exaltation) is usually presented as the point at which Satan is cast down from his place of authority as

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141 Aus, “Relevance of Isa. 66:7,” 253-54. For Aus, it is the combination of the quote from Psalm 2 with the allusion to Isa. 66:7 that ensures a messianic interpretation here.

142 For more on enthronement of Messiah, see footnote 135 above. See also Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 200; Hedrick, “Sources and Use,” 30-34; and Prigent, *Apocalypse 12*, 145. It certainly appears that John refers here to the exaltation of Jesus. Cf. Rev. 2:26-27 and 15:2-8, where Jesus is the obvious recipient of God’s throne. The use of Psalm 2 in Rev. 2:26-27 and 12:5 links the two passages and identifies Jesus as the recipient of power to rule in both cases.
the accuser in heaven. In Job, Satan appears in the court of God to accuse Job before the Lord. This passage has been generally understood as Satan's role in the heavenly court. The New Testament, however, presents the kingdom (i.e., authority) of Satan as rapidly fading because of Christ. For example, Phil. 2:9-11 states that Jesus' exaltation results in the submission of all creatures to his Lordship. Also, Col. 2:15 shows Christ disarming "the principalities and powers" by his death on the cross. The Christ event, therefore, appears to be the point at which Satan is cast down. By ascending to God's right hand, Jesus usurped the accuser and cast him out of heaven. Where the accuser once stood, the advocate now reigns (cf. Eph. 1:19-2:10; 1 Pet. 3:18-22).  

As scene one closes, the woman flees into the wilderness where she has "a place prepared for her by God so that there she might be nourished for 1260 days" (Rev. 12:6). At this point John gives no reason for the flight of the woman, but an explanation is found in scene three. In that scene, the dragon comes down to earth in a rage, and he seeks to destroy the woman (presumably because he could not destroy the child). Interestingly enough, scene three parallels 12:6 in that the woman goes into "the wilderness ... where she is nourished for time, times, and half a time." This "wilderness" probably has a two-fold meaning. First, it represents a time of testing or preparation like that endured by God's people in the past (i.e., Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jesus). Second, it is perhaps also a place of safety just as the desert was a safe haven for the Israelites when

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143 For further discussion, see Susan Garrett's *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), and Wesley Carr's *Angels and Principalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). The point to recognize here is that, in general, New Testament Christology views Jesus as the conqueror of Satan, but in Revelation 12 the person who casts Satan down is Michael.
they escaped Pharaoh. The question here is: What caused the dragon to turn so vehemently toward the woman when his earlier focus was the child? The answer is found in scene two.

Scene two chronologically follows the catching up of the child to God's throne. Immediately after the Messiah is caught up to God's throne, John declares that a war broke out in heaven (Rev. 12:7). Spiritual wars are not all that unusual in apocalyptic literature, but this war takes an odd twist. It seems that when the heavenly war occurred, the dragon and his angels should have been met in battle by the recently enthroned Messiah. In fact, if 12:10 was our only clue, we might conclude that this is exactly what happened. Revelation 12:7 tells us that it is Michael and his angels, not Messiah, who are the instruments of the dragon’s defeat. Why does John use Michael here instead of Messiah? Answering this question is one of the main goals of this dissertation. How would the first readers/hearers of this story have understood the role of Michael? What paradigm existed for them to process this story and to understand it?

Besides the celestial woman, Michael is the only character mentioned in Revelation 12 who does not appear later in the narrative. Messiah shows up in 19:11-21:8 as the victorious judge. The Dragon is judged and cast into the lake of fire in chapter 20 along with his helpers, the beast and the false prophet. In the other places where warfare is mentioned in Revelation (19:11-20; 20:7-10), Messiah or God fights

144 Caird, Revelation, 152; Wall, Revelation, 161-62; Morris, Revelation, 155-59; and Hedrick, "Sources and Use," 51-52. See also Court, Myth and History, 116-20, where a fairly extensive discussion of these two wilderness ideas is presented.

145 Of course, the celestial woman may well be compared to the other women who appear: Babylon the Harlot (17:1-19:10) and the Bride of Christ (21:9-22:5). Strictly speaking, however, the woman of chapter 12 does not appear again. Her offspring are central to the developing point, however, and it may be that her influence is felt in the story in that manner.
without any mention of Michael. This pivotal section of Revelation, then, introduces the character of Michael as a warrior and opponent of the Dragon, without any real elucidation of Michael’s role or any explanation for his appearance. Chapter 3 will develop a paradigm for reading Revelation 12 with a particular focus on how the role of Michael may have been understood from the perspective of the first readers/hearers.
CHAPTER THREE
The Interpretive Milieu of Revelation 12

The search for the understanding of a text requires some investigation into context, especially if the context is foreign to the readers. As Marcus Taft points out, the proper “mental lexicon” is often necessary to understand the information being communicated.¹ A “mental lexicon” is the stored entries in an individual’s mind resulting from involvement in a community’s shared experience that allows for the successful processing of spoken or written communication.² If the information communicated by a text proves foreign to the readers’ mental lexicon, then some misunderstanding may result unless their lexicons are in some way expanded.

The language of Revelation exhibits the use of a lexicon dramatically different from that of most modern readers. Employing images similar to those found in some Jewish and Christian apocalypses, the author of Revelation takes his readers into a world in which supernatural and natural blend, producing strange symbols and scenes that may

¹ Marcus Taft, Reading and the Mental Lexicon (East Sussex, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Ltd., 1991), 1-2. Taft makes his point with the following quote: “Even with hard yakka, you’ve got Buckley’s of understanding this dinkum English sentence, unless you’re an Aussie.” Taft explains that although an Australian has no problem understanding the sentence, other English speakers and readers may find terms like “yakka,” “Buckley’s,” and “dinkum” foreign and indefinable. That is, an Australian is equipped with the proper “mental lexicon” to make sense of the sentence, while others may need to expand their “mental lexicon” by investigating the social context of the sentence. Proper context often proves invaluable for proper interpretation.

appear “to the uninitiated modern reader (as) grotesque imagery. . .” The language of Revelation extends “beyond local politics to global issues and beyond global issues to cosmology.” Utilizing what Leonard Thompson labels a “nesting language,” John uses symbols and ideas that nest “urban Asia Minor into ever-larger contexts—ultimately into a cosmic vision that includes the whole social order, the totality of nature, and suprahuman divinities that invade but transcend both society and nature.” In other words, the language of Revelation exhibits both a broad range of experiences and concepts that seem designed to draw the readers/hearers into the narrative world of the text. That is, Revelation metaphorically allows the audience to enter the world of the text if the proper connections are made.

The best means for modern readers to achieve a proper connection is by a careful consideration of two aspects of the text. The first aspect is the historical and social context of Revelation. This element aids interpretation by revealing something of the experience of the first century audience, giving some means of comparison between the original social setting and that of current readers. An examination of the text for clues to

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4 Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 5.

5 Ibid., 5. Thompson explains this concept of “nesting language” with reference to measuring cups that stack by being nested into larger sizes.


its date, authorship, audience and genre will be performed, producing some parameters within which a fresh interpretation may be attempted. These parameters will also be useful in determining something of the interpretive streams which feed into John's story in Revelation 12.

The second aspect focuses on the possible streams of tradition that inform or give meaning to Revelation 12. These streams of tradition are primarily found in other literary texts similar in nature to Revelation, although the reference to literary texts should not be understood as a search for the textual sources of Revelation 12. The goal is to discover something of the development of traditions regarding Michael and the war in heaven. As the evolution of these traditions is traced textually, a kind of interpretive stream or symbolic world should become evident by which modern readers can understand how Michael functions in Revelation 12 from the perspective of the first readers/hearers.

Building on this perspective, a similar hermeneutic may be applied to a modern reading.

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9 Revelation indeed includes many quotations of or allusions to Old Testament and non-canonical texts, as evidenced most clearly by R. H. Charles in vol. 1 of his International Critical Commentary on *Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1920), especially pages lxii-lxxxvi. In many cases, however, the usage of actual "literary" sources is unclear, even though the allusion to the concepts of a text or family of texts may be evident. Certain knowledge of the library to which the author had access is simply not possible, and most recreations of "literary" sources are speculative. The goal here is the development of some kind of interpretive trajectory that aids the reader in understanding the text as it now stands. The materials listed below are not to be considered strictly as "literary" sources for the story in Revelation 12, but rather as streams of tradition that feed into and out of the story of Michael and which help the reader/hearer to interpret and to understand Michael's role. For more on the development of interpretive streams, see Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 94, 162-64, 167-69; and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 53-55.
of the events in Revelation 12. This section will be guided by information concerning the social setting of Revelation and will establish a paradigm within which Revelation 12 may be interpreted.

_The Historical Context of Revelation_

The stated interest of this study is limited to the situation in which Revelation (and particularly chapter 12) was first written and read. Of course, any reconstruction of the original setting of Revelation is a process which, as Thompson points out, resembles “a feedback loop of continuous readjustment as one moves from reconstructing the text to the thing being reconstructed and back again to the reconstructing.” In other words, a reconstruction of the original situation of Revelation, its author, and its audience necessitates an in-depth consideration of the text itself as well as information gathered from sources outside the text. So, the one reconstructing the setting of the Apocalypse must return to the text regularly both to discover more information and to compare the information gathered from other sources.

By limiting the inquiry to the original situation of Revelation, the primary argument is that a seer named John wrote the Apocalypse as a means of communicating with other Christians who lived in roughly the same geographical area (i.e., Asia Minor) and in the same time period (i.e., the end of the first century of the Common Era).  

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10 Stuckenbruck, _Angel Veneration_, 42-43.

11 Thompson, _Apocalypse and Empire_, 4.

12 Thompson, _Apocalypse and Empire_, 4-5. Thompson adds, however, that the significance of John’s message is not limited only to its first century Asian social context. As noted above, the language of Revelation is originally situated in a context foreign to most modern readers. As modern readers attempt to expand their “mental lexicons” in order to connect with the text of Revelation, they do not operate in a
Another reason for limiting the study to the original situation of Revelation is to set the historical parameters for the paradigm and the texts to be used in interpreting the story of chapter 12. A consideration of the historical and social setting of Revelation, then, involves some discussion of the date of the text, its author, the audience who first received the text, and the genre of the text.

**Date**

In wrestling with the date of the writing of Revelation, scholars usually point to two main theories and then argue for one on the basis of internal and external evidence. The two theories most often considered as prime candidates for the time period of Revelation's composition center on two different rulers of Rome: Nero (54-68 C.E.) and Domitian (81-96 C.E.). Using both internal and external evidence, many scholars rule out a Neronic date for Revelation. First, around 155 C.E., Polycarp states in his epistle to the Philippians that the church in Smyrna did not exist during Paul's time. This statement, if accurate, would set the terminus a quo for the composition of Revelation around 64 C.E. (the approximate time of Paul’s death). Second, Revelation (13:3; 17:11) vacuum. Indeed, they usually bring to the text a rich background of reading materials and the connections made with those materials help to inform the interpretation of the current text. In the language of chapter 1, the reconstruction of the historical setting of Revelation gives insight into the situation of the real reader, while the attempt to understand the text through this material and other information may propel the modern reader into the role of the implied reader.

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13 Charles Talbert includes an interesting third candidate, the reign of Trajan (98-117 C.E.), based primarily on information gleaned from Dorotheus and Theophylact on Matthew 20:22 (see pages 8-9 of The Apocalypse). R. H. Charles also mentions this possibility but disregards the evidence as late and as a misunderstanding of Irenaeus (Revelation, vol. 1, xcii). While Talbert does not strongly advocate a date for Revelation in Trajan's reign, he raises some interesting questions regarding the possibility of dating Revelation to the beginning of second century C.E. Most commentators, however, focus primarily on the reigns of Nero and Domitian.

14 Talbert, The Apocalypse, 8, and David E. Aune, Revelation 1-5, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Incorporated, 1997), lviii.
shows a distinct familiarity with the myth of Nero’s return, a story that evidently became popular after Nero’s death (ca. 68 C.E.). Third, the use of the term “Babylon” in Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5-18; 18:2, 10, 21) with reference to Rome would seem to point to a date after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Roman soldiers (ca. 70 C.E.). Some scholars argue that Rev. 11:1-2 presents the temple as still standing, and this information points to a pre-70 C.E. date. It is entirely possible, however, that the author of Revelation writes metaphorically regarding the temple and uses his own recollections of the temple before its destruction. At any rate, outside of a literal reading of Rev. 11:1-2, the Apocalypse contains little evidence of the temple’s existence at the time of writing.

Besides the lack of evidence for dating Revelation during Nero’s reign, other external considerations indicate a possible date around the time of Domitian. The external evidence includes the writings of Irenaeus (ca. 180 C.E.), who explicitly states that the Apocalypse was seen at the end of Domitian’s reign (Adv. Haer. 5.30.3).

Although there is some question regarding the accuracy of Irenaeus’ statement, his

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15 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, xcv-xcvii; A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 59-60; Thompson, Revelation, 13-14; Talbert, The Apocalypse, 8; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, lx-lxii.

16 A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 57-58; Thompson, Revelation, 13-14; Talbert, The Apocalypse, 8; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, lxi. Rome is called “Babylon” since like ancient Babylon of the Old Testament, Rome is a temple destroyer. Also, in Jewish apocalyptic literature, Rome is symbolized as “Babylon,” and in almost every case these Jewish apocalypses were written after 70 C.E. (cf. 4 Ezra 3:1-2, 28-31; 2 Baruch 10:1-3; 11:1; 67:7; Sibylline Oracles 5.143, 159).


18 Talbert, The Apocalypse, 8; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, lx-lxii.
opinion was widely accepted in the ancient church. Origin (Hom. in Matt. 16:6), Victorinus (Comm. in Apoc. 10:11; 17:10), and Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. 3.23.5-19) all accept a date during Domitian’s reign for Revelation. This material (if accurate) would set the terminus ad quem at around 96 C.E., the end of Domitian’s reign. Some scholars question the validity of these sources since a widespread persecution of Christians by Domitian is often tied to this date of Revelation, yet little historical evidence supports such a view. Nonetheless, the weight of the external evidence seems to point to Domitian’s reign as the setting for the composition of the Apocalypse. Most commentators opt for a date toward the end of Domitian’s reign (ca. 95-96 C.E.), although there are some dissenting voices suggesting earlier or later dates. At the very least, however, most scholars conclude that Revelation is a document which originated toward the end of the first or the beginning of the second century.

Author

The book of Revelation states that its author is an individual named John who had been placed on the island of Patmos for his testimony concerning Jesus (Rev. 1:1-2, 4, 9; 22:8). John evidently exercised some degree of authority with the churches in Asia Minor, inasmuch as the letters to the seven churches reveal an almost intimate awareness

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19 For more discussion on the relative accuracy of these external citations, see Charles, Revelation, xci-xciii; A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 54-56; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, lviii-lx.

20 A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 55-56, 97-99, 104-7; Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 15-17, 95-115; Talbert, The Apocalypse, 9; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, lxiv-lxx. We will return to the issue of persecution in Revelation in the discussion regarding the audience and their social situation. Also, as Talbert notes, whether “there was a widespread persecution of Christians under Domitian is irrelevant for dating the Apocalypse because Revelation does not reflect either a past or a present great persecution but rather a future tribulation (Rev. 2:10; 3:10). . .” (p. 9).
of the particular situations of each group. Beyond these points, however, very little personal information is revealed about the author of Revelation.

The ancient church interpreted the information in Revelation regarding John in two different manners. One group concluded that the apostle John, a son of Zebedee and one of the twelve, wrote the Apocalypse. Among those who held this view were Justin Martyr (ca. 150 C.E., Dialogue with Trypho 81), Irenaeus (ca. 180 C.E., Adversus Haereses 5), Tertullian (Against Marcion 3.14.24), Clement of Alexandria (Quis Dives 42), and Hippolytus (On the Antichrist). Others believed that it was the elder John who penned Revelation. Eusebius (Historia Ecclesiastica 7) reports that Dionysius of Alexandria (third century C.E.) wrote a treatise in which he disputes the apostolic authorship of Revelation based on a careful examination of the vocabulary and style of the text. Dionysius concluded that the person who wrote the Gospel and Epistles of John could not be the same individual who wrote the Apocalypse. For the most part, modern scholars agree that a comparison of the texts of the Gospel and Revelation lead to the conclusion that the two texts were written by different individuals. Revelation is

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22 A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 25-26; Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 12; Talbert, The Apocalypse, 2; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, lii.

23 Mounce, Revelation (1977), 25; A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 28-29; Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 12; Talbert, The Apocalypse, 2; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, liii.

24 Mounce, Revelation (1977), 28-31; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 35-37; A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 30-31; and Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 12. David Aune introduces at least four other candidates: (1) the elder John, (2) Cerinthus, (3) John Mark, and (4) John the Baptist. The last two are not convincing, according to Aune, who focuses much of his discussion on the other two possibilities plus the apostle John. Cerinthus is ruled out by most scholars because the evidence for his writing of Revelation is scarce (Aune, Revelation 1-5, liii).
usually understood as being authored by someone other than the apostle John, perhaps even an elder of the same name.

The personal identity of John may never be discovered. The external evidence is conflicting, and the internal evidence does not give enough specifics to substantiate his identity beyond question. The evidence from Revelation (1:9-11; 2:1-3:22; 10:8-11; 19:9-11; 22:8-10, 16, 18-19) indicates that the author considered himself a Christian prophet, one who wandered either randomly or by a prescribed circuit among the churches of Asia.\(^{25}\) The letters to the seven churches reveal that John assumed some authority as a leader in these churches, and that he sees himself as a true prophet whose claims conflict with those considered to be false prophets (e.g., Nicolaitans, Jezebel, and Balaam in chapters 2-3, especially 2:14-15; 2:20; cf. 19:10; 22:9, 18-19). Still in question is whether or not this particular John came to the churches as a member of a “school” of prophets or as the head of such a community.\(^{26}\) For the purposes of this study, however, the main point is that the author of Revelation believed himself to be a Christian prophet who proclaimed a prophetic message to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1:3; 19:10; 22:7, 9-10, 18-19). Not only was John familiar with these churches, he was also conversant in prophetic and apocalyptic concepts.\(^{27}\)

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\(^{27}\) Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 36-37; A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 46-47; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 107; Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 13; Talbert, *The Apocalypse*, 2-3; and Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, l-lvi. Many of these same authors argue that John was a Jewish Christian, probably even Palestinian. At the very least, internal evidence shows that John was familiar with Jewish concepts, especially apocalyptic and prophetic ones. Some of the studies listed above and in the bibliography deal more extensively with the particular identity of the author.
The author John apparently viewed himself as a persecuted person. In Rev. 1:9 John states that he shares with the churches in the “tribulation” and “patient endurance in Jesus,” and that he was on the island of Patmos “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” Although debate continues regarding whether or not Patmos was used as a penal colony, that does not mean that John could not have been sent there as an exile.\(^{28}\) Coupled with the references to martyrdom in 6:9 and 20:4, Rev. 1:9 may be read as providing a reason for John’s presence on Patmos. He was exiled there because his testimony of Jesus somehow generated sufficient problems for someone in power in the Roman government to want to be rid of him.\(^{29}\) At the very least, Revelation indicates that John viewed himself as part of a group who experienced tribulation as a result of their testimony of Jesus. This realization introduces the next topic, the audience to whom the book is addressed.

**Audience**

Revelation 1:4 states that the prophecy was sent to the seven churches in the province of Asia: (1) Ephesus (2:1), (2) Smyrna (2:8), (3) Pergamum (2:12), (4) Thyatira (2:18), (5) Sardis (3:1), (6) Philadelphia (3:7), and (7) Laodicea (3:14). These seven cities are located along the western edge of Asia Minor, at least fifty miles from Patmos.\(^{30}\) In other words, Revelation is to be associated primarily with urban life in the Roman

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\(^{30}\) Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 116; and Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 77.
Empire, specifically in the province of Asia. The compositions of these cities were as diverse as many cities today. Many nationalities, religions, and social groups were represented in each city, more than could be dealt with adequately in this study.\(^{31}\) The main concern here is to develop some understanding of the situation of the churches as they existed in the first century.

Evidence for the existence of Christian communities in the cities of Asia comes primarily from Christian sources. The earliest sources are the letters associated with Paul and the book of Acts, while some cities are mentioned in the writings of Ignatius as well as the book of Revelation. In fact, it is entirely possible that Paul himself established some of these churches and that a Pauline tradition continued to flourish there even to the time of the Apocalypse.\(^{32}\)

The Pauline materials reflect a lifestyle in which Christians shared fully in urban Roman life and even learned in some cases to accommodate their Christianity to that experience.\(^{33}\) Christians in the province of Asia came from all walks of life and ethnic groups. The churches consisted of educated and uneducated, rich and poor, artisans and traders. Passages like 1 Cor. 1:26 indicate that educated, powerful, and noble persons inhabited the church, as well as their less well off counterparts. Christians were expected

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\(^{31}\) For material in this section, I am indebted to the excellent and detailed discussions of the seven cities of Asia in Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 117-67; and Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 136-264.


to live a life that could not be slandered, while participating in the urban life of Rome, even entertaining and being entertained by non-Christians.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, the churches of Asia included people from various levels of social and political experience, from the practically powerless slave to the prosperous and powerful politician.\textsuperscript{35} This diverse collection of people shared, however, a common commitment to Jesus and a basic understanding of the language of Revelation.

Pauline sources, then, seem to indicate that Christians in Asia Minor were not singled out as a group for mistreatment or persecution. The language of the Apocalypse, however, paints a different picture. The letters to the seven churches contain language that indicates either a past or currently ongoing experience of hardship or persecution.\textsuperscript{36} There is mention of martyrdom for the name of Jesus (Rev. 2:13) and the future threat of persecution (2:10). Opponents like the Nicolaitans and Jezebel are mentioned in the same breath as the need to endure patiently and to persevere (2:2-3, 6, 9-10; 3:8-10). Warnings against idolatry and immorality are mixed with encouragement to remain steadfast and pure (2:13-15, 20-25). Each of the letters even ends with an admonition to the Christians to overcome so that they may receive the promised rewards.

\textsuperscript{34} Thompson, \textit{Apocalypse and Empire}, 129. See especially 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 9:22; 10:14-21, 27-28; 14:23-24; also Phil. 2:15. At the end of the second century, Tertullian makes a similar claim in his \textit{Apology}, namely that Christians share a similar manner of life, the same dress, and the same requirements for living as other people living in urban Roman provinces. They work as farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, butchers, and other jobs along with non-Christians (\textit{Apol.} 42). That is, ordinary Christians shared in the common life of both cities and empire, even though their morals and religion sometimes set them apart.

\textsuperscript{35} Talbert, \textit{The Apocalypse}, 24-25. Talbert finds this composition detailed even in the letters to the seven churches in Rev. 2-3. From Talbert's view, Revelation is not addressed primarily to a deprived segment of society, but rather to a spiritually anemic group of complacent Christians who have perhaps accommodated too much of Roman culture.

The language of the letters, combined with other references to conflict in Revelation (e.g., 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 11:7-8; 12:11, 17; 19:1-3), led many scholars to postulate either a widespread persecution of Christians or some other crisis under the reign of Domitian. Sometimes the crisis is economic, other times it is religiopolitical, but in all cases the crisis seems to stem from Domitian’s supposed tyrannical megalomaniacal tendencies and his insistence on the importance of imperial worship. Recent studies reveal, however, that Domitian’s rule did not include any widespread persecution of Christians, either economic or religiopolitical. If no widespread crisis existed when Revelation was written, then how can the crisis language in the book be explained? John apparently uses a particular language to paint a perspective or create a worldview of crisis for his readers/hearers. That is, through his writing John creates a narrative world in which persecution or crisis is imminent and into which he attempts to draw his readers/hearers. This aspect of Revelation may be designated a function of its genre as an apocalypse.

37 Mounce, Revelation (1977), 32-36; Beasley- Murray, Revelation, 38; A. Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis, 104-107; Boring, Revelation, 8-12; Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 16-17; and Bruce M. Metzger, Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 16. It should be noted that Collins and Thompson do not accept the theory of a real, nation wide, historical crisis for Christians, but they deal critically with the theories of others who do.


**Genre**

Revelation 1:1-6 states that the author intends to write a letter to the seven churches of Asia, and this letter purports to carry a prophetic message. The visions of Revelation are usually linked to the literary genre of an apocalypse, and indeed some apocalyptic texts view themselves in terms of prophecy (e.g., *1 Enoch* 81:5-6 and *Jubilees* 32:21-26). John’s prophetic words also fit nicely into the apocalyptic genre. Revelation thus includes prophetic/apocalyptic visions and messages in an epistolary framework. 40

The word “apocalypse” refers to a particular literary genre. Although scholars of apocalyptic literature do not agree on the precise characteristics of an apocalypse, John J. Collins and other members of the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature’s Genre project proposed an useful definition:

"Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world. 41

Others, noting that the definition lacks a mention of function or purpose, add that an apocalypse “intended to influence both the understanding and behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.” 42 In other words, an apocalypse communicates knowledge about a transcendent reality with the purpose of motivating its readers/hearers to action. Others offer a more explicit description of the particular function of apocalypses, stating


that they are “intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority.” As noted above, however, if no real historical crisis precipitates the writing of a particular apocalypse, what then is the function of the crisis language?

Some scholars, recognizing this state of affairs, conclude that the purpose of apocalyptic literature is not simply to encourage or to offer hope to its readers. Rather, Revelation and other apocalypses create a world in which crisis exists and into which the author draws his audience by means of symbolic language. To understand how a text creates a world, some understanding of the function of language is necessary. Language seeks to communicate something from a speaker (or writer) to a hearer (or reader), but the nature of that “something” varies with the context of the language. In other words, the thing communicated may convey something about the speaker, provide information for the hearer, or call on the hearer to respond in some manner. These aspects of communication represent three of the functions of language: (1) expressive, (2) informative, and (3) performative. The expressive function of language reveals something about the speaker/writer or his experience, feelings or situation. The informative function attempts to communicate to the hearer or reader simple information

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in the form of data or history or concepts and ideas. The performative function creates the expectation of action on the part of the hearers/readers.

The successful exchange of information typical of the informative aspect of language is almost never attained outside of a community situation. That is, all language and communication has a context or is capable of creating a context, if proper connection is made between speaker/writer and hearer/reader. The creation of a proper context is a characteristic of a fourth aspect of communication, the determinative function, in which language does one of three things: (1) it calls attention to itself (as in poetry with its rhyme and meter), (2) it creates a connection between speaker and hearer by which a channel of communication is opened, or (3) it serves to regulate the communication by establishing the codes by which communication is accomplished. The determinative function of language thus establishes the context in which communication will occur by choosing the genre, making a connection, and providing the codes for understanding. In other words, good communication occurs when the intended information is set in a proper context resulting in a common or similar understanding of that information between the speaker/writer and the hearers/readers.

An apocalypse creates a world for its audience by using language in both its informative and determinative modes. The informative aspect of an apocalypse focuses

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47 Barr, “Blessed Are Those Who Hear,” 97. Barr labels these the aesthetic, connective, and regulative functions. These factors are determinative in that they shape the ways meaning is conceived in statements.
on the transcendent reality of life.\footnote{I. I. Collins, \textit{Apocalyptic Imagination}, 31-32; Thompson, \textit{Apocalypse and Empire}, 31; and Barr, \textit{“Blessed Are Those Who Hear,”} 92-95. As Thompson notes, it is important to remember that “an apocalypse does not reveal another world, it reveals hidden dimensions of the world in which humans live and die; that is, an apocalypse is not world-negating but, rather, world-expanding: it extends or expands the universe to include transcendent realities, and it does this both spatially and temporally” (p. 31).} That is, an apocalypse conveys the information that the real, mundane world of the readers/hearers is in some form of crisis because at some level it has rebelled against the proper authority of God. The crisis may not be an actual, historical event; rather, it may consist of a simple accommodation to the ways of the world system that is anti-God. The apocalypse, then, informs the audience of this crisis and creates a new one by demanding that they choose God's perspective even though that will no doubt create a real, physical crisis.\footnote{Barr, \textit{“Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation,”} 41, 48-50.} The crisis that may result from the proper choice gives the illusion that evil is in control because of the tension created when the readers/hearers decided for God and against the world system. The truth, however, is that God has been and is in control at every point. That is the message of hope of which the apocalypse informs the audience.\footnote{Barr, \textit{“Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation,”} 49-50.}

The determinative aspect of an apocalypse presents the information to the readers/hearers by drawing on the known imagery of biblical and apocalyptic literature and the known circumstances of the audience. The imagery and circumstances are interwoven into an almost poetic, symbolic world by the author. The author presents this world in a multivalent and intertextual narrative where biblical and extrabiblical materials are blended into a cohesive whole. The blending of texts and concepts forms new
symbols and creates possibilities for new meanings.\textsuperscript{51} That is, the author of an apocalypse sets the context for communication through the blending of common traditions with the circumstances of the audience in such a way as to cause them to realize the existence of the crisis.

John accomplishes the informative aspect of an apocalypse in Revelation by using conflict language and establishing a clear dichotomy between the world system and the people of God.\textsuperscript{52} For example, the letters to the seven churches are full of "us" and "them" type of references in which John sets his teaching against that of the false prophets. John also represents the powers and leaders of the world system as beasts and dragons, while presenting those on God's side in terms of faithful witnesses, martyrs, and true prophets (e.g., contrasting the two witnesses in Rev. 11:3-11 with their opponents, the beast and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah). The determinative aspect of Revelation is evidenced by the way John weaves various traditions, both canonical and non-canonical, into his narrative.\textsuperscript{53} Some of these traditions will be examined in the next section, but examples include the use of angelic appearances from Daniel in the description of Jesus (see Rev. 1:12-16 and Dan. 7:9-14) and the four horsemen from Zechariah (see Rev. 6:1-8 and Zech. 6:1-3). John's technique blends these traditions with


\textsuperscript{52} Barr, "Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation," 40-43.

\textsuperscript{53} Barr, "Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation," 42-43; and J. J. Collins, \textit{Apocalyptic Imagination}, 14-16.
the circumstances of his audience in a way that creates fresh meanings for him and his readers/hearers. So, Revelation exhibits both aspects of apocalyptic language.

According to the information above, then, Revelation is an apocalypse written by a Christian prophet (possibly a Jewish Christian from Palestine) to a diverse group of urban Christians in Asia Minor near the end of the first century C.E. The purpose of the Apocalypse appears to be the creation of a new world-view among its audience in which the readers/hearers must choose between a commitment to the things of God or an accommodation to the world system which opposes God. This information forms the social and historical background for reading Revelation. As such, this material serves as a good foundation for reading the strange events portrayed in Revelation 12 by providing something of the perspective and experience of the first readers/hearers. One other area of consideration remains before attempting an interpretation, however, and that is the use of traditions in Revelation 12.

*Interpretive Streams for Revelation 12*

John utilizes a variety of materials as the well from which he draws his multivalent and strongly evocative symbols. These materials flow into Revelation much like a multitude of streams flow into the Mississippi River. That is, the Mississippi River is fed by many streams, yet it is not comprised of any single stream. These streams flow

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54 Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 81, 84-86. The multivalent nature of the symbols in the Apocalypse gives the author a flexibility that allows him to offer a comprehensive (i.e., transcendent) view of reality that is better equipped to address the circumstances of the Christian communities of Asia Minor. That is, by use of diverse symbolic materials, John creates a world in which the transcendent reality of God's control directly affects the mundane world of the Churches. Because the Christians of Asia Minor shared something of the traditions of these multivalent symbols, they were drawn into the world which John had created. The problems as John perceived them became real as the Churches entered the narrative world of Revelation.
from a variety of sources and add to the river their own particular flavor or aspect. A
good example of this concept is the general development of the roles of angels in the Old
Testament and intertestamental literature.

Generally speaking, New Testament concepts regarding angels sprang from the
fertile ground and abundant harvest of ideas among the writings of the Old Testament and
the intertestamental period. The developing views of Jewish religious thought in these
materials reveals a diversity of ways of speaking of God. Margaret Barker notes that
although Judaism became a monotheistic religion, "pre-Christian Judaism was not
monotheistic in the sense that we use that word."\(^{55}\) As D. S. Russell notes, the Old
Testament presents ample evidence that the Jewish ideas of monotheism were "held in
conjunction with a belief in a spiritual world peopled with supernatural . . . beings who,
in some ways, shared the nature, though not the being, of God."\(^{56}\) This is precisely where
angels play a role in the Old Testament: namely, they are the supernatural beings who
shared something of the nature of God and acted as his representatives on earth, often to


the point of being identified with God (e.g., Gen. 32:24-30; Exod. 3:24, 23:20-33; and Judg. 6:11-24).\textsuperscript{57}

These angelic representatives also serve as a sort of “heavenly court” for God in which decisions concerning activities on earth are made (e.g., Job 1:6-12; Ezek. 1:4-28, 9:1-10:22; and Zech. 3:1-10).\textsuperscript{58} These angels act in defense of those under God’s protection (Exod. 14:19-20; 2 Kings 19:35-37: and Isa. 37:36-38) and as angels of destruction towards those who resist God (2 Sam. 24:16-17; 1 Chron, 21:12-17; and Ps. 78:49). In other words, the angels are not simple messengers, they are also warriors in the Old Testament. Nonetheless, the Old Testament writers rarely develop the individual character of these angels, and for the most part they remain as anonymous “angels of the Lord.”

The intertestamental period witnessed considerable expansion of the concepts and roles of angels. Details about the numbers, names, functions, natures, and origins of angels are developed which, though they may have their origins in canonical literature, give far more detailed information than their sources.\textsuperscript{59} A detailed hierarchy of angels


arises in the literature of the intertestamental period. In fact, Jubilees 2:2 actually lists three orders of angels: (1) the angels of the presence, (2) the angels of sanctification, and (3) the angels set over natural phenomena. These angels perform a variety of tasks, but primarily they serve as agents to perform God's desires.

One important task assigned to the angels is intercession. Although found in the Old Testament (e.g., Zech. 1:12; Job 5:1; 33:23), angels of intercession find greater prominence in the apocalyptic traditions like 1 Enoch. For example, 1 Enoch 40:9 and 89:76 describe angels like Michael, who are "merciful and forbearing" and who plea with God for mercy for the people under their watch. In fact, the Testament of Dan 6:2 describes the interceding angel, Michael, as "the mediator between God and men for the peace of Israel" (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5 where Paul assigns this role to Jesus alone). So angels are

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61 D. S. Russell, *Method and Message*, 249-254. See also 1 Enoch 71:7. The fallen angels also underwent further development, with several non-canonical books revealing their origins in elaborate detail. Building off of some version of Genesis 6:1-4 (in which "sons of God" [angels?] intermarry with mortal women), many of these stories involve a conflict between the good angels who remained loyal to God and the evil angels who followed their own interests (see 1 Enoch 6-10 and Jubilees 4:15-5:6. Cf. 1 Enoch 86:1-6; Testament of Reuben 5:6-7; 2 Enoch 7:1-7; 2 Baruch 56:10-16; Jude 6; and 2 Pet. 2:4). In the Latin version of the Life of Adam and Eve (14:1-16:3), the fall of the evil angels is described by Satan himself. In this story, after God created Adam in his own image, Michael commanded all the angels to worship the human. The devil refused to worship because "I am prior to him in creation; . . . He ought to worship me" (Life 14:3). Michael declares that God's wrath will be against the devil and his angels if they do not worship Adam, but Satan replies, "I will set my throne above the stars of heaven and will be like the Most High" (Life 15:3; cf. Isa. 14:13-14). As a result, God expels the devil and his angels and casts them down to the earth. No real war is fought in these materials, but the reason for conflict and chaos on earth and in heaven is graphically illustrated. For more on fallen angels, see D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1992), 109-11.
now becoming more than just servants, they are perceived as agents of mediation through whom humans may obtain grace from God.  

One other major development during this time is the naming of the angels. This practice actually has its start with Daniel, where both Michael and Gabriel are named as chief princes in God's court (Dan. 10:13, 21; 8:16; 9:21). These two often appear together in the literature of the period, but sometimes they are listed with others, namely Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Saraquel, Remiel (cf. I Enoch 20:1-7; 81:5; 90:22; Rev. 8:2). These angels become known as God's seven archangels. Each one has a different function in God's court, such as Michael being "set over the best part of humanity and over chaos" (I Enoch 20:6; Greek Life of Adam and Eve 32:3). The Testament of Solomon lists some of these angels as counterparts to specific demons. In other words, the names of these angels serve the purpose of warding off and overcoming the demons. This angelic role is similar to the concept of guardian angels. Simply put, this concept states that each nation has a particular angel (or group of angels) whose job is to watch over that nation and defend it on a spiritual plane. This idea is clearly evident in many passages (Dan. 10:13, 20, 21; 12:1; Jubilees 15:31-32; I Enoch 89:59-67; 90:20-39). In

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63 For a detailed look into the phenomenon of naming angels, see Saul Olyan's A Thousand Thousands Served Him, 31-70.

64 Olyan, A Thousand Thousands Served Him, 18.

65 D. S. Russell, Method and Message, 243; and Segal, Two Powers, 187.

66 D. S. Russell, Method and Message, 245; and Segal, Two Powers, 187-188. In some cases, this job became intensely personal as an angel became a guardian for a specific individual (see Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15).
fact, Michael becomes the guardian/patron angel of Israel/the people of God in later traditions (Dan. 10:13-14, 21; 12:1; Jubilees 35:12; 1 Enoch 20:5; 1QM 17:7-8; cf. Testament of Moses 10:1-3; Testament of Levi 5:1, 6; and Testament of Dan 6:1). Later Jewish and Muslim interpreters pick up on this role of Michael and read him back into the Old Testament in various places, e.g., as the angel who spoke to Moses from the burning bush or as the one who stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac.  

Likewise, Revelation, and especially chapter 12, comprise a mixture of several streams of tradition or interpretive streams. The streams that feed into Revelation 12 originate from a variety of sources and comprise materials both apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic. In this study a “stream of tradition” is defined by the following criteria: (1) it has a thematic similarity to Revelation 12 (i.e., it contains information about wars in heaven or Michael), (2) its date of composition is either prior to or contemporaneous with that of Revelation, (3) it originates in close proximity to the provenance of Revelation (i.e., Palestine or Asia Minor), or (4) its genre shows similarities to that of Revelation (i.e., prophetic/apocalyptic). 

The point is not simply to develop a list of literary sources.

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68 The four criteria above serve to locate the texts in similar historical, thematic, and generic streams. The criteria are simply a means of identifying a similarity or commonality among the texts discussed, they are not meant as rules to which strict adherence is expected. In other words, the four criteria are guidelines, a means of identifying possible streams and a way of bringing the streams together. The Nile is not a stream that feeds into the Mississippi, even though they have some similarities as rivers. The Nile is not located near the Mississippi, so it does not serve as a stream that feeds that river's progress. Even so an interpretive stream needs to be located on the hermeneutic map in such a manner as to connect it
for Rev. 12:7-12, but rather to locate this passage in the stream of interpretive
development of ideas about Michael and the war in heaven. In other words, this study
will be concerned primarily with showing evidence of the same or similar ideas; it will
not be advocating direct dependence between Revelation and the documents considered
below.

Given the prominence of Michael in Revelation 12 and the war in heaven, special
attention is given to pertinent traditions as they are preserved in early Jewish documents,
while applicable materials from other environments will be drawn upon within the
exegetical analysis of Apocalypse 12. So, any interpretive streams of Revelation 12
include materials that may have informed the author or the audience regarding the various
roles of Michael, especially with regards to conflict with the devil or dragon, and which
would fit some of the criteria listed above. Some materials which may have served as
interpretive streams for Revelation 12 are: (1) Isa. (14:12-15; 27:1), (2) 1 Enoch (10:11-
16; 89:61-90:22), (3) Dan. (10:12-14, 18-21; 12:1), (4) the War Scroll (1QM 17:5-8), (5)
11QMelchizedek (11Q13 2:7-14; 4QAmram), (6) the Testament of Moses (10:1-2), (7)
Jude (v. 9), and (8) the Shepherd of Hermas (various passages). Each text will be
considered individually to see how closely it fits the criteria above and to note the
material in that text that is particularly relevant to Revelation 12. Each text will be

to Revelation 12 besides the simple thematic similarities. The criteria, then, are the map that allows a
proper location of the texts as interpretive streams of Revelation 12.

69 The Shepherd of Hermas actually dates shortly after the Apocalypse, and some may question the
validity of using a later text in the interpretation of an earlier one. Later texts, however, often contain ideas
that may be dated to an earlier period. Even if the ideas are later, this text may show the trajectory or
development of a particular interpretive stream and give insight into an earlier use or interpretation of the
concept. See Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 46-47; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 53-55; and
discussed in roughly chronological order so that the general stream of development of the traditions may be noted.

Isaiah

The book of Isaiah is often recognized as one of the most influential biblical forces behind the formation of both Jewish and Christian eschatology. The discovery of the Isaiah scroll (1QIsa) at Qumran combined with the many references and allusions to Isaiah in the New Testament materials reveals but a portion of the influence of this material on the development of Jewish and Christian religious traditions. John’s eschatology in Revelation resembles to a great extent that of Isaiah in its emphasis on judgment and salvation as well as other themes. John also apparently borrows the form of Old Testament oracles regarding judgment and salvation as well as the dualistic framework of many of the prophets. It should come as no surprise, then, to discover that one stream that feeds into the traditions of Revelation 12 flows from Isaiah.

The Isaiah scroll, one of the longest units in the Hebrew canon, contains material collected over a long period of time. Scholars generally agree that the book of Isaiah

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represents something of the preaching of Isaiah ben Amoz and that the book has undergone fairly extensive redaction. \(^{74}\) Simply stated, the book of Isaiah contains materials representing an historical period from around 740 to 539 B.C.E. The book is traditionally divided into two or three sections, representing the various redactional stages through which it developed. \(^{75}\) The first section, chapters 1-39, was composed between 734-701 B.C.E. and contains the chapters under consideration in this study.

The two passages that relate most to Revelation 12 are Isa. 14:12-15 and 27:1. The first passage falls under the second major unit of Isaiah 1-39. This unit, comprised of chapters 13-23, is commonly labeled oracles or prophesies against foreign nations. \(^{76}\)

Isaiah 14:12-15 comes in the midst of an oracle against Babylon and states:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit. \(^{77}\)

Although the context suggests that this taunt is aimed at the king of Babylon, some scholars view the situation as involving an astral deity or some supernatural being. \(^{78}\) The

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\(^{77}\) Passage quoted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, *The New Oxford University Annotated Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1973). All Old Testament quotations are from this translation unless otherwise noted.

identity of this being is much debated, but the main emphasis for the purpose of this study is that this being attempted to invade heaven and establish himself as superior to God.

The result of this presumption was defeat and being brought down out of heaven to Sheol. So, in Isa. 14:12-15 as in Rev. 12, there is an adversary (possibly an astral deity or even an angel of some sort) who goes to heaven with the purpose of imposing his authority by force of warfare, only to be defeated and cast down from heaven.

The second passage comes from the section of Isaiah (chapters 24-27) most often labeled the Isaiah apocalypse because it shares some of the same characteristics of other apocalypses. Isaiah 27:1 is one of the first passages to link the serpent Leviathan with the dragon of the sea. It mentions the judgment of God on Leviathan and states that God will “punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, ... and will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” Isaiah 27:1 is the only canonical text besides Rev. 12:9 to mention both the serpent and

some kind of primeval fall story similar to the stories of the Watchers in 1 Enoch 6-10. In fact, the Latin Life of Adam and Eve (14:1-16:3) interprets this passage in just this manner. Origen later takes up a similar reading after noting that the astral terms of Isaiah 14 do not seem to fit the historical king of Babylon (De Principiis, I.v.4-5, IV.iii.9). The association of stars or astral deities with angels is an ancient tradition and one that is evident in many writings (e.g., Judg. 5:20; Job 38:6-7; Dan. 8:9-11; Sybilline Oracles Book 5:512-531; Jude 13 and Rev. 1:20; 12:4). For further discussion on the astral aspects of prophecy and the angelic hosts, see Bruce J. Malina, On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 1995), 25-46.

the dragon together in one judgment. Although the fate of the dragon is different in Revelation 12 than in Isaiah 27, the fact remains that the connection between these passages is the combining of the serpent motif (from Genesis 3 and ancient Canaanite Leviathan stories) with the punishment of the dragon from the sea. So, Isa. 27:1 represents the first eschatological judgment to include both a serpent and a dragon.

1 Enoch

1 Enoch (also known as the Ethiopian Apocalypse of Enoch) is the oldest of the three pseudepigraphal books attributed to Enoch, the person who apparently did not die, but was taken up into heaven (Gen. 5:24). The book may have been written originally in Hebrew or Aramaic, but it only exists in complete form in the Ethiopic, and in some fragments in Aramaic, Greek (1:1-32:6; 6:1-10:14; 15:8-16:1; 89:42-49; 97:6-104), and Latin (106:1-18). Portions of 1 Enoch were found at Qumran, and it is mentioned in other works both canonical and non-canonical. The book of 1 Enoch appears to be

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80 Fekkes, Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions, 183. Fekkes also notes that Revelation 12 shows other similarities to this section of Isaiah, particularly 26:17-27:1. Two parallels are mentioned: the hiding of the people for a short period of time (Is. 26:20; Rev. 12:14), and the woman crying out in labor pains (Is. 26:17; Rev. 12:5-6). Fekkes correctly recognizes that there may be a connection between Rev. 12:9 and Is. 27:1, but that the other connections are tenuous at best (see pp. 182-83). A more likely antecedent for the woman in labor is Isaiah 66:7-8. For a discussion of its use in Revelation 12, see Fekkes, 183-185; and Roger D. Aus, “The Relevance of Isaiah 66:7 to Revelation 12 and 2 Thessalonians 1,” Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 67 (1976): 252-68.


82 J. J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 33-34; Sparks, Apocryphal Old Testament, 171-73; and Isaac, “1 Enoch,” 8-9. 1 Enoch apparently was well known to many Jews and Christians. As already noted, portions of 1 Enoch were discovered at Qumran, but it was also apparently known by the author of Jubilees (4:19). A quote from 1 Enoch appears in Jude 14-15, and the book was used in some form by the Christian
divided into five major sections: (1) The Book of the Watchers (ch. 1-36); (2) The Book of Similitudes (ch. 37-71); (3) The Book of Astronomical Writings (ch. 72-82); (4) the Book of Dream Visions (ch. 83-90); and (5) the Book of the Epistle of Enoch (ch. 91-107). Since each section is variously dated from 200 B.C.E. to 50 C.E., only sections relevant to this study will be discussed with regards to date.\textsuperscript{83}

\textit{1 Enoch} contributes much to intertestamental understandings of topics like angels, resurrection, heaven, judgment, and Messiah. The themes found in this book apparently made an impression on some New Testament writers, especially the author of Revelation.\textsuperscript{84} \textit{1 Enoch} is also considered as an early Jewish apocalypse, with portions of the work originating even before Daniel. \textit{1 Enoch} certainly shows many of the marks of apocalyptic literature, including a heavenly journey, interpreting angels, a recitation of history, and the sole sovereignty of God over all events both cosmic and earthly.\textsuperscript{85} \textit{1 Enoch} contains much useful information regarding the developing roles of angels in Jewish theology, but \textit{1 Enoch} 10:11-16 and 90:14-24 are of most interest to this study because they specifically mention Michael and/or angelic warfare.\textsuperscript{86}

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\textsuperscript{83} Evans, \textit{Noncanonical Writings}, 23; Sparks, \textit{Apocryphal Old Testament}, 173-77; Collins, \textit{Apocalyptic Imagination}, 33-34; and Isaac, “1 Enoch,” 7.
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\textsuperscript{84} Evans, \textit{Noncanonical Writings}, 23; and R. H. Charles, \textit{Revelation}, vol. 1, lxxiii-lxxxiii. Charles reproduces a rather extensive list of “parallels” between Revelation and \textit{1 Enoch} that includes no less than 10 passages from \textit{1 Enoch}, and that list does not include possible allusions to \textit{1 Enoch}.
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\textsuperscript{86} Other passages mention Michael in interesting roles which may be reflected elsewhere in Revelation. One such passage, \textit{1 Enoch} 40:3-10, mentions Michael as one of a group of four angels. Here Michael is the angel who “blesses the Lord of Spirits for ever and ever” (40:3) and is “merciful and
1 Enoch 10 falls within the section called the Book of the Watchers, apparently the most ancient of the five sections of 1 Enoch. The Book of the Watchers probably existed at one time in a complete Greek version, and there were no less than five copies of it in Aramaic at Qumran.87 These Qumran fragments, combined with evidence that this portion was presupposed in Jubilees in the mid second century B.C.E., leads many scholars to date the Book of the Watchers to the pre-Maccabean era before 175 B.C.E.88

The section that contains chapter 10 comprises the story of the rebellion of the angels (called “Watchers”) and their judgment. The material here is an elaborate retelling of the story in Genesis 6, and the action in chapter 10 occurs after the angels Michael, Gabriel, Suriel, and Uriel petition God to do something about the terrible earthly consequences of the Watchers’ rebellion (1 Enoch 9:1-11). God appoints his angels to certain tasks in dealing with this rebellion, and to Michael he says:

Make known to Semyaza and the others who are with him, who fornicated with the women, that they will die together with them in all their defilement. And ... bind them for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground ... until the eternal judgment is concluded ... And destroy all the souls of pleasure and the children of the Watchers, for they have done injustice to man. Destroy injustice from the face of the earth. And every iniquitous deed will end, and the plant of righteousness and truth will appear forever and he will plant joy. (1 Enoch 10:11-12, 15-16)89

longsuffering” (40:9). He is one of four angels who intercede on behalf of humanity. This passage sounds somewhat like the four living beings and elders who praise God and the Lamb in Revelation. Is Michael one of the four living beings in Revelation?


89 All quotations of 1 Enoch come from the text translated by E. Isaac in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1, unless otherwise noted.
So, Michael is sent against Semyaza, one of the leaders of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 9:6-7), and against the giant offspring of the Watchers. God commissions Michael to bind these angels and their offspring and to cleanse the earth of evil. Although a war is not explicitly stated here, it certainly is implied in the description of Michael binding the fallen angels and cleansing the world of evil. 90

*1 Enoch* 90:14-24 is part of the Book of Dreams in the fourth major section of *1 Enoch*. This section is composed of two “dream visions” about future events that Enoch saw when he was a young man. The visions contain revelations regarding the creation of the world, the entrance of sin into the world, the coming judgment of sin, and the lot of the righteous who remain faithful to the ways of God. The first vision correlates to the flood story of Genesis and comprises *1 Enoch* 83-84. The second vision (chapters 85-90) is often called the “Animal Apocalypse” because Enoch relates the history of the world in an allegorical form in which humans are depicted as animals, the sinful angels are fallen stars, and the seven archangels are human beings. 91 The “Animal Apocalypse” contains

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an apparent reference to Judas Maccabeus in *1 Enoch* 90:9-12, which leads some scholars to date this apocalypse between 164-161 B.C.E.\textsuperscript{92}

This apocalypse draws heavily on Gen. 6:1-4 and its reinterpretation in *1 Enoch* 6-11. Many stars fall from heaven, possibly led by Azazel or Semyaza (*1 Enoch* 83:1-3; 88:1; cf. *1 Enoch* 10:4), and they become bulls who mate with heifers (i.e., the women) to produce camels, elephants, and donkeys (i.e., the giants, 86:3-6). Four white beings come from heaven (the four angels of *1 Enoch* 6-11?) and bind the bulls and their offspring (87:1-88:1). After a retelling of the story of Noah (89:1-9), the focus shifts to the birth of sheep (the nation of Israel) and the continuing apostasy of those sheep from God (89:41-77).\textsuperscript{93}

The Lord appoints seventy shepherds (angelic patrons) to oversee his sheep during certain seasons (89:64; 90:5), and these shepherds prove derelict in their duties and actually try to destroy the sheep.\textsuperscript{94} A ram (or a great horn, i.e., Judas Maccabeus) rises and leads the sheep against their oppressors (90:9-13).\textsuperscript{95} The ram is overpowered, however, by a severe attack from the wild animals (90:13-16). Over against the oppressors stands another angel, who records their misdeeds and pleads Israel's case before God (89:61-64, 68-71, 76-77; 90: 17, 20, 22) and who comes to the aid of the ram


\textsuperscript{95} Tiller, *Animal Apocalypse*, 16, 62-63, 354-56.
(90:14). Some scholars point out that this angel is the equivalent of Michael in Daniel 12:1 and the angel in Testament of Moses 10:2, and should probably be identified as Michael. The battle is cast in decidedly eschatological terms, with the true sheep of God being vindicated and the wild beasts and fallen stars receiving judgment in a fiery abyss (90:24–28). The angel who comes to the aid of the ram in battle also plays a role in the judgment of the wild animals and shepherds who oppressed the sheep (90:20–27).

1 Enoch then presents two apocalyptic stories from the second century B.C.E. in which Michael plays a significant role. Like Revelation 12, 1 Enoch 10 and 90 each present a story in which an angel fights against other angels in a battle. Also like Revelation 12, 1 Enoch portrays the antagonist of Michael as a leader of fallen angels. Unlike Revelation 12, these passages also give the angel a role in the final judgment of both wicked angels and humans. Also, the materials in 1 Enoch place these battles in two different stages of history. 1 Enoch 10 places the incident close to the beginning of time, at the primeval fall of the angels as recorded Genesis 6. 1 Enoch 90 also uses Genesis 6, but places the battle as an eschatological event ushering in a new age in which God will rule on the earth (cf. 1 Enoch 10:15–16).

Daniel

The book of Daniel is the chief example of an apocalypse in the Old Testament. The authorship of Daniel is unknown, although the author purports to be a Hebrew by the

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96 Tiller, Animal Apocalypse, 326–27; Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, 92; I. J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 55; Russell, Method and Message, 201; and Davidson, Angels at Qumran, 109–10.
name of Daniel. Although the events of the book are set during the time of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews (sixth century B.C.E.), the work was actually written around 165 B.C.E. when Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria and ruler of Palestine, was persecuting the Jewish people.

The book of Daniel is not included among the prophets in the Hebrew canon; instead it finds its home among the Writings. It was found among the writings of Qumran, and concepts from Daniel apparently influenced or were paralleled in several Qumran documents. The book of Daniel differs from other Hebrew Scripture in that a major portion of the book is written in Aramaic (2:4-7:8), the language the Jews adopted in Babylon. Although generally accepted as a single unit, the book of Daniel is composed of two distinct sections: chapters 1-6 and chapters 7-12. The first section consists of several tales about Daniel and his friends, who are in exile in Babylon. The second section contains four apocalyptic visions received by Daniel. The second section also contains the material most relevant to Revelation 12.

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97 John J. Collins, Daniel: A Commentary on the book of Daniel, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 24-25; Tullock, Old Testament Story, 356-57; John J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 68-70; and Dearman, Religion and Culture, 240-41. The name Daniel was well known around ancient Palestine. Daniel was the name of a traditional, legendary figure in Canaanite myth, and a Daniel is mentioned in Ezek. 14:14 and 28:3 (Collins, Daniel, 1-2). Whether or not either of these is related to the Daniel for whom this book is named is not known.


99 For an overview of Daniel's relation to Qumran, see J. J. Collins, Daniel, 72-78.


The visions of Daniel 7-12 are cast in the form of ex eventu prophecies and purport to reveal the course of world history, culminating in the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes and the establishment of God’s eschatological kingdom. In fact, this section of Daniel represents the material most firmly set in the Maccabean period. Although different in content from chapters 1-6, the visions of the second section build on the world-view prevalent in those stories. This world-view recognizes that even though present circumstances seem to portray a world out of God’s control, the truth remains that God is the sole sovereign over all events. The language of the visions creates a world in which earthly kingdoms are in competition with the kingdom of God.

This apocalyptic world-view dominates the materials in chapters 10-12, where the most elaborate revelation of the book of Daniel is found. These chapters contain many typical apocalyptic concepts, including revelations about the end of the ages, eschatological upheavals bringing judgment to the wicked and salvation to the righteous, and an interpreting angel. These materials are rooted in the assumption that whatever happens on earth is an archetype of what is occurring in heaven. Here in the midst of these apocalyptic visions are materials that apparently feed into the stream of traditions


103 J. J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 91-92; and Dearman, Religion and Culture, 262-63.

104 J. J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 87-91; and Dearman, Religion and Culture, 258-61.

for Revelation 12; namely, Dan. 10:12-14, 18-21, and 12:1. Each passage mentions the angel Michael by name and ties him in some way to battle or judgment.

Daniel 10:12-14 comes in the midst of Daniel’s vision in which he sees a great struggle that results in his mourning and fasting in order to gain some understanding of the vision (10:1-3). After three weeks of mourning, an angel appears to Daniel and supplies him with additional details of a struggle yet to come. It represents a clue to the cosmic nature of the struggle between God and the forces of evil; the oppression of Daniel and his friends is just one aspect of widespread rebellion against God. The best indication of the cosmic nature of the struggle is the report that the angel who came to Daniel was delayed three weeks by opposition from another angel described as the “prince of Persia” (10:12-14). The angel further instructs Daniel to “fear not, . . . be strong and of good courage” (10:19) because the events to come are already written in a book. In other words, the events to come are preordained and under God’s control (Dan. 10:19-21).

In the midst of the angel’s explanations to Daniel, the name of Michael makes its first appearance in the Old Testament. The first mention is in Dan. 10:13-14:

The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.107

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106 Dearman, Religion and Culture, 258.

107 “Prince” is the label given to leading angels in Daniel (cf. Joshua 5:14; Testament of Abraham 2:2-3). Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 126; and J. J. Collins, Daniel, 375. See also, 1QS 3:20; CD 5:18; and 1QM 13:10, where Israel’s protector is a “prince of lights” often identified as Michael.
Michael, then, comes to aid the interpreting angel in his battle against the prince of Persia so that the message could be delivered to Daniel. This theme of angelic warfare is picked up again in Dan. 10:18-21, where a future struggle is described. After encouraging Daniel, the angel states:

Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I am through with him, lo, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince (10:20-21).

Here Michael is cast more explicitly in the role of a warrior, but he is also mentioned as the prince of Israel for the first time. So, Daniel 10 explicitly mentions Michael as both the protector of Israel and as a warrior against other princes.

The last reference to Michael appears in the midst of an eschatological prophecy.

Dan. 12:1 states:

At that time shall arise Michael the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people will be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book.

The mention of Michael here seems to be that of both a judicial advocate and an executor of judgment, but the text is not explicit regarding Michael's exact role. At any rate,

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108 J. J. Collins, Daniel, 376; and Mary Dean-Otting, Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature, Judentum und Umwelt herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Dr. Johann Maier, Band 8 (New York, NY: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), 150, 172. Collins notes that this marks a departure from earlier tradition in which no angel was set over Israel. The Jews were considered the Lord's own portion with no guardian angel. See Deut. 32:8-9; Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 17:17; Isa. 63:9; Jubilees 15:31-32 (cf. 1 QM 13:10; 17:7). For more discussion, see Paul D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 80-84.

109 J. J. Collins, Daniel, 390. This material in Daniel reflects ideas in an earlier work, Zechariah. Zech. 12:7-9 describes an eschatological judgment in which the Lord gives Israel victory, and that victory comes with the house David. "like the angel of the Lord," leading the way into battle. Although the angel is not directly involved in the battle, the implication here is that the house of David, like the angel of the Lord in Exodus, will lead God's people to victory in the final battle.
Michael here assumes what may be understood as both a militant and judicial role, and he is mentioned again as the protector of Israel.

The material in Daniel 10-12 then represents an apocalyptic stream of interpretation in which Michael is explicitly named in both a warrior and protector role. Like Rev. 12:7-12, Michael fights against angelic opposition in a heavenly battle. Daniel 12, like Isaiah 27, presents this battle in the form of an eschatological judgment. Daniel 12, however, does not list Satan or any of his angels as the recipients of judgment, but the focus is primarily on the earthly persecution and opposition. Nonetheless, Daniel 12 supports the idea of a battle involving angels occurring at the end of the ages.

*War Scroll (1QM)*

The *War Scroll* (also known as the *War Rule* or the *War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*) describes the great and final eschatological battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. The Sons of Light, described as “the sons of Levi, the sons of Judah, and the sons of Benjamin, those exiled in the desert” (1QM 1:2), are the faithful Jews, especially the members of the Qumran community. Once the battle begins, a host of angels led by Michael will join the Sons of Light. The Sons of Darkness, on the other hand, represent an army of Belial composed of the evil angels, some traditional enemies of the Jews (i.e., the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and the “Kittim of Asshur”), and unfaithful Jews, “those who have violated

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the covenant" (IQM 1:1-2). These armies, comprised of both human and supernatural beings, meet in a final apocalyptic struggle between good and evil.\(^{111}\) This final war ends in a victory for the righteous over the unrighteous and establishes the reign of God's representatives on the earth.

The War Scroll contains information for use by the Sons of Light in waging war against the Sons of Darkness. It appears to be a composite document, however, consisting of four basic sections: (1) a general introduction to the combatants (column 1), (2) various regulations and descriptions of weapons, trumpets, battle formations, and directives for the priests and Levites who will lead in the final war (columns 2-9), (3) a collection of various hymns and prayers related to the struggle (columns 10-14), and (4) a detailed description of the eschatological battle containing information similar to column 1 (columns 15-19).\(^{112}\) The composite nature of the text creates a problem for interpretation and makes it difficult to discern an accurate date of its composition. Many scholars follow Yigael Yadin in dating IQM in its final form to the closing decades of the first century B.C.E.\(^{113}\)

Whatever its exact date, IQM should not be mistaken for simply a military manual. Its purpose and nature is completely theological, and the war described in its

\(^{111}\) The concept of angels aiding humans in earthly battles is also reflected in 2 Macc. 3:25-28, 3 Macc. 6:18-19, and 4 Macc. 4:9-11.


\(^{113}\) Yadin, Scroll of the War, 244-46; Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls, 104; Dupont-Sommer, Essene Writings, 167; and Reddish, Apocalyptic Literature, 230. Each of these notes that IQM apparently uses Daniel (IQM 1, 15-19; cf. Daniel 10-12), placing the earliest date after 165 B.C.E. This evidence, coupled with references to Roman tactics and weaponry, places the date for IQM sometime after 63 B.C.E.
columns symbolizes the supernatural conflict between the spirits of Light and Darkness. In fact, the earthly conflict is only a part of this larger cosmic conflict. Like other apocalyptic literature, the War Scroll sees events in terms of God’s designs and purposes, with the outcome firmly ensconced by the hand and will of God. History is not left to chance, God will intervene and defeat the wicked while justifying the righteous. In this sense, 1QM represents a strong example of apocalyptic writing at Qumran.

The focus of the war in 1QM is primarily on the earthly battle, but the war in heaven is alluded to frequently. 1QM 12:1-2 presents the gathering of God’s angelic army in terms of “a multitude of holy ones” who dwell in the midst of the camp of the people of God. The conceptual framework here is similar to Daniel 10:13, 20-21 in which the angels are available to aid each other and to aid God’s people. This imagery is also reflected in 1QM 1:10, where “the congregation of the gods and the congregation of men shall engage one another, resulting in great carnage.”

This coming war on earth and in heaven will also witness a new role for Michael. Of course, Michael retains his normal role of guardian of God’s people against the fallen

114 Vermees, Dead Sea Scrolls, 104; Reddish, Apocalyptic Literature, 230; Dupont-Sommer, Essene Writings, 165; and J. J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 128-129. In a similar vein to 1QM, the Thanksgiving Psalms (1QH) mention a battle between the hosts of Belial and the hosts of God. In the midst of a thanksgiving for deliverance, the author of 1QH describes a time of incomparable trial (3:19-36). Belial and his hosts attack the earth (and, presumably, the righteous ones of God) and spread destruction in both heaven and earth. Soon after, “the heavenly hosts shall raise their voice” and begin the “war of the heroes of heaven,” which continues until “an annihilation that has been determined from eternity is complete” (1QH 3:29-36). Like 1QM, this passage describes in eschatological terms a cosmic struggle that has a predetermined outcome. For further discussion of the eschatological war in 1QH 3, see Davidson, Angels at Qumran, 189-94.

115 Reddish, Apocalyptic Literature, 230; Vermees, Dead Sea Scrolls, 104; Dupont-Sommer, Essene Writings, 165-66; and J. J. Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 129-30.

angels (1QM 13:10-11), but his role in the upcoming battle is even greater. 1QM 16:13-17:9 describes how the chief priest is to come before the men during a hard pressed battle to encourage them. He is to assure them of victory with the following words:

Today is His appointed time to subdue and to humiliate the prince of the realm of wickedness. He will send eternal support to the company of His redeemed by the power of the majestic angel of the authority of Michael. By eternal light He shall joyfully light up the covenant of Israel—peace and blessing for the lot of God—to exalt the authority of Michael among the gods and the dominion of Israel among all flesh (1QM 17:5-8).

The end result of the conflict will be the defeat of the wicked ones and the exaltation of Michael and Israel.

1QM then is an example of an apocalyptic work in the region of Palestine that emphasizes both a heavenly and an earthly war in which Michael and other angels play significant roles. Like Revelation 12, Michael is the leader of a host of others against the forces of evil and fallen angels. Also like Revelation 12, Michael and his angels triumph in the war and establish a righteous kingdom. 1QM differs from Revelation 12, however, in that the war results in Michael growing in authority, while in Revelation 12 the authority is ascribed to the Lamb and to God. 1QM also places this battle at the

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117 1QM 13 refers to a “Prince of Light from old” who has assisted God’s faithful community. Although not named specifically here, Yadin and others are fairly certain that this “Prince of Light” is Michael. See Yadin, *Scroll of the War*, 235-36; and Davidson, *Angels at Qumran*, 147-48. The term “prince” is used in Daniel to refer to angels, but also to reflect the dual level of activity in the cosmos. That is, there is a corresponding heavenly conflict for every earthly conflict. “Prince” is also used of angels in *Testament of Simeon* 2:7, *Testament of Judah*, 19:4, and 1 Enoch 6:3.

118 Davidson, *Angels at Qumran*, 225-27. The ideas here are similar to those found in Dan. 10:1-12:1. The idea of Michael’s authority being exalted, however, is puzzling. There seems to be a hint of Dan. 12:1 here, but in Daniel no mention is made of Michael’s authority. Perhaps the author of 1QM had other roles of Michael in mind. For example, the *Testament of Abraham* 2:2 and 2 Enoch 71:28-30 (both dated ca. 50-100 C.E.) mention Michael as the commander-in-chief of God’s angelic hosts. 3 Baruch 11:1-9 (ca. 70-150 C.E.) also notes that Michael holds the keys to God’s kingdom and receives prayer that he brings into the presence of God. At any rate, the author of 1QM expected Michael to play a major role in the final battle of the eschatological age and in establishing the reign of righteousness on earth.
eschatological end of the ages. That is, it is the final battle in which God and his people overcome the wicked forces, both human and angelic.

11QMelchizedek (11Q13)

11QMelchizedek is preserved in a single, fragmentary manuscript whose script seems to place it around the first century B.C.E., so the actual composition may have been at some earlier time. Originally the text consisted of at least three columns, but the first is lost except for a line written perpendicularly in a margin. Much of the second column survived, as well as the beginnings of some lines of the third column. 11Q13 brings together and interprets several Old Testament passages dealing with the jubilee year, the day of atonement, and judgment. This interpretation is accomplished along the lines of the Qumran community’s eschatological perspective. Quotations from and allusions to Leviticus 25 find a significant place in the content and structure of 11Q13.

The narrative of 11Q13 focuses on Melchizedek as an eschatological figure, a heavenly deliverer. Melchizedek is presented as a redeemer who secures liberty for those captive to Belial and who enacts the judgment of God on Belial and the evil spirits

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associated with him. Like Michael in 1QM, Melchizedek leads the good angels against the armies of evil at the end of the ages. The battle takes place after the tenth jubilee and is connected with the Day of Atonement:

The “D[ay of Atonement] shall follow af[ter] the [te]nth [ju]bilee period, when he shall atone for all the Sons of [Light] and the people [e who are pre]destined to Mel[chi]zedek... For this is the time decreed for “the year of Melchiz[edek]’s favor,” [and] by his might he will judge God’s holy ones and so establish a righteous kingdom, as it is written about him in the Songs of David, “A godlike being has taken his place in the council of God; in the midst of the divine beings he holds judgment.” Scripture also says about him, “Over [it] take your seat in the highest heaven; a divine being will judge the peoples.” Concerning what Scripture says, “How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Selah,” the interpretation applies to Belial and the spirits destined to him, because all of them have rebelled, turning from God’s precepts [and so becoming utterly wicked.] Therefore Melchizedek will thoroughly prosecute the vengeance required by God’s statutes. [Also, he will deliver all the captives from the power of Belial, and from the power of all the spirits destined to him.] Allied with him will be all the [“righteous] divine beings” (11Q13 2:7-14).

So, this text presents Melchizedek as an angelic (“godlike being”) redeemer who takes a seat among the council of God (the heavenly court of angels?). Although a war is not explicitly described, Melchizedek is cast in both the role of judge of Belial and the role of deliverer and captain of God’s host. The only other person in all the literature at Qumran that is cast in similar roles is Michael.

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123 The Scriptural texts in this passage in order of their appearance are: Isa. 61:2 (modified); Ps. 82:1; Ps. 7:7-8; and Ps. 82:2.

A being very similar to Melchizedek in 11Q13 appears in another fragment at Qumran, 4QAmram. 4QAmram is an Aramaic document often dated to the second century B.C.E., slightly before 11Q13.\(^{125}\) The ideas in 4QAmram fit in well with the concepts from other Qumran documents, particularly with the division of humanity into those belonging to the light and those belonging to the darkness (1QS 1:9-10; 1QM 1:1). In 4QAmram, each part of humanity is under the rule of an angelic being: the sons of the light under the Prince of Light and the sons of darkness under the Angel of Darkness (1QS 3:18-21). In 4QAmram, the ruler of the sons of darkness is Melchiresa, described as the angel of darkness. The name of his opponent is missing in the text due to the fragmentary nature of the document, but Melchizedek is usually postulated as the Prince of Light in this text.\(^{126}\) The interesting aspect of 4QAmram lies in the purpose behind the opposition between the two angelic Princes. The battle fought in this text is not eschatological, rather, it is a struggle for the soul of Amram at his death.\(^{127}\)

The concept of two angels disputing for the control of a dying person gets its first mention in 4QAmram, but it is firmly rooted in the canonical material dealing with the advocate angel (the Angel of the Lord) and Satan figures in Zechariah 3 and the book of Job. Later Jewish and Christian texts continue this tradition and give names to the

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\(^{125}\) Kobelski, _Melchizedek_, 24-25. For further discussion of the text and dating problems, see Jozef T. Milik, “4Q Visions de Amram et une citation d’Origène,” _Revue Biblique_ 79 (1972): 77-97.


\(^{127}\) Kobelski, _Melchizedek_, 76-77.
particular angelic figures (Jude 9). In many of the later documents, Michael plays the role of the Angel of the Light/Lord who escorts the righteous dead to heaven while not allowing the Angel of Darkness an opportunity to get them. This fact led some to conclude that Melchizedek in 4QAmram and 11Q13 is actually equivalent to Michael himself, only assuming a priestly role. At any rate, these Qumran documents portray a heavenly conflict between angelic beings that has consequences for humans on earth.

The Melchizedek texts, then, are another example of Qumran literature of an apocalyptic nature that emphasizes the role of an angelic Prince of Light who opposes the designs of the demonic Prince of Darkness in some kind of cosmic struggle. Even though Michael is not explicitly named in these documents, the roles played by Melchizedek parallel those of Michael in other literature. In 11Q13, Melchizedek leads God's army against the host of Belial in a final cosmic struggle in which Belial is defeated, just as in

128 Ibid., 72-83; and Mary Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 91-92. This idea also finds some expression in intertestamental texts. For example, the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* 32:3; 37:6; 40:1-2; and 41:1-2 (ca. 60-100 C.E.) portrays Michael as over humanity, as the one who takes Adam to heaven and prepares his body for burial, and as the angel who was "set over the bodies of men." The *Testament of Abraham* 1:4 and 20:10 (ca. 50-100 C.E.) casts Michael in a similar role with Abraham at his death. Although these works give no opponent to Michael, it is interesting that they specifically point to Michael's dual role in taking care of the bodies of God's chosen ones at death and in escorting the newly dead one to heaven. Michael quarreling with the devil is also mentioned in *Life of Adam and Eve* 13-16. Other texts mention a quarrel without naming the angel (e.g., 1QS 3:20-24; *Testament of Dan* 6:1-3; and *Testament of Moses* 10:1-2).

Revelation 12 Michael and his angels fight against and expel the dragon and his angels. In 4QAmram, Melchiresha is thwarted from doing harm to Amram by a Prince of Light who has come to escort him to heaven. The implication here is that Melchiresha is normally opposed by Melchizedek, much like the dragon is opposed by Michael in Revelation 12. The goal of the battle may be different, but the tradition of opposing angels remains intact.

*Testament of Moses*

The *Testament* (sometimes *Assumption*) of Moses claims to be a prophecy delivered by Moses before his death. The only extant manuscript is in Latin and is apparently a translation of a Greek version. At least one-third of the original work appears to be lost, including the portion that some scholars believe contains the so-called *Assumption of Moses* to which Jude 9 may refer. Evidently the book intended to supply the details which are lacking in Moses' final charge to Joshua in Deuteronomy 31. In fact, the book is actually an apocalypse which sketches the history of Israel from the time of Moses' death to the end of the ages (1:18).

The date of the *Testament of Moses* is difficult to ascertain with any precision. The book appears to be composite in nature, with portions dating perhaps from the time

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of the Maccabean revolt (ca. 160 B.C.E.) to the time just before the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Most scholars agree that the text as it currently exists dates from the early years of the first century C.E.\textsuperscript{132} It is difficult to determine with precision the author of the text, but the final text reflects the general outlook of later Hasidic movements with a stress on apocalyptic and sometimes pacifist motifs.\textsuperscript{133} The overall theological outlook of the book views the world from a deterministic and a covenantal perspective. In other words, the Testament of Moses perceives history as moving in a determined direction based on the Deuteronomic pattern of sin and punishment. The covenants of God will hold firm in spite of the sinfulness of the people, however, even though the Testament looks forward to a climatic, eschatological judgment.\textsuperscript{134} For the author of the Testament, then, God's plan always comes to completion, even though his people do not always cooperate in those plans willingly.

In this work, Moses is ready to commission Joshua as the leader of the Jews, but before doing so Moses offers an extensive prophecy regarding the history of Israel. The prophecy covers the history of Israel up to the final judgment. This final judgment is portrayed in chapter 10, and this chapter contains the passage most relevant to this study. In 10:1-2, the Testament of Moses states:


\textsuperscript{133} Sparks, Apocryphal Old Testament, 603-4; Priest, “Testament of Moses,” 921-22; and Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, 213-14.

\textsuperscript{134} Priest, “Testament of Moses,” 922; Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 103-4; and Sparks, Apocryphal Old Testament, 603-4. Collins notes that it is the emphasis on an overview of history and the deterministic outlook that make this work most like other apocalypses (p. 105).
Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation. Then the devil will have an end. Yea, sorrow will be led away with him. Then will be filled the hands of the messenger, who is in the highest place appointed. Yea, he will at once avenge them of their enemies.\(^{135}\)

The messenger or angel, who is usually identified as Michael, is consecrated for the purpose of carrying out vengeance on the enemies of God's people.\(^{136}\) The goal of this vengeance is the overthrow of the enemies of God and the establishment of God's people to an exalted position (10:7-10).

Some parallels between Testament of Moses 10 and Daniel 12 are cited by scholars.\(^{137}\) In particular, the arrival of an angel to deliver God's people and the total destruction of God's enemies are prominent themes in both books. At any rate, this passage reflects a similar interpretive milieu to that of Daniel and other apocalyptic works. The Testament of Moses, then, is a first century apocalyptic work of unknown provenance that places the conflict between good and evil angels in an eschatological framework. As in Revelation 12, the devil is specifically singled out for judgment and that judgment takes the form of a battle in which another highly placed angel exacts God's vengeance. Although the angel in Testament of Moses is unnamed, this passage

\(^{135}\) All quotes are from the translation of J. Priest in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1, unless otherwise noted.

\(^{136}\) J. Priest, "Testament of Moses," 932 (see especially footnote 10a); Kobelski, Melchizedek, 72, 139; and Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 63. The language of “filling the hands” is reminiscent of ordination to the priesthood (see Exod. 28:41; 29:9; Lev. 21:10), although the messenger here acts more like a warrior than a priest. Priest notes a parallel to 11Q13 where Melchizedek (a priestly figure) works vengeance on Belial. For other references to angels in a priestly role, see Testament of Levi 5:5-6 (1st century B.C.E.); Testament of Dan 6:1-2 (ca. 100 B.C.E., where the angel is a mediator between God and humans and also stands against God's enemies); 2 Enoch 33:10 (ca. 1st century C.E., where Michael is the angel of intercession/mediation); and 3 Baruch 11-16 (ca.100-150 C.E., especially 11:1-9, where Michael is the primary angel in this role).

\(^{137}\) Priest, "Testament of Moses," 923-24; Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, 82-83; and Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 105.
shows that the concept of an avenging angel continued to evolve in Jewish literature around the time of Revelation.

**Jude**

The Epistle of Jude is primarily concerned with false teachers who have infiltrated the Christian community and led some of its members away (v. 4). Little is said of the content of their teaching, but Jude gives an almost vindictive view of their character and methods. The false teachers are immoral (vv. 4, 7, 16) and covetous (vv. 11, 16) people who reject authority (vv. 8, 11) and behave like irrational animals (v. 10). The author of Jude likens these false teachers to the children of Israel who reveled in their wanton acts of adultery and idolatry after escaping Egypt, and to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah who “acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust” (vv. 5-8).

The author of the book purports to be “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,” but the exact identity of Jude is not clear and many scholars think that the

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139 Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 11-13; Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 54-56; Walter M. Dunnett, “The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988): 289-90; Ehrman, *New Testament*, 294; and J. Daryl Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993), 49-50. Bauckham identifies these false teachers as teachers of an antinomian libertinism rather than as Gnostics. Bauckham and Dunnett note that antinomianism is evident in Corinth in the 50s, but also (if Revelation is rightly dated to the reign of Domitian) in Asia in the 90s. The lack of any cosmological dualism like that found in true Gnosticism relegates the teaching of Jude's opponents to at most a possible precursor to Gnostic thought, without any distinctly Gnostic tendencies. The lack of any real reference to Gnosticism then argues against a second century C.E. date for Jude. In fact, the likelihood that Jude belongs to the milieu of apocalyptic Jewish Christianity (see below), combined with the possibility that the epistle is written to combat teachers of “antinomian libertinism,” places the letter sometime in the second half of the first century C.E. For more on the date of Jude, see Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 13-16; Dunnett, “Hermeneutics of Jude,” 290-91; and Charles, *Literary Strategy*, 58-59, 65-74.
work is pseudonymous.\footnote{Ehrman, \textit{New Testament}, 294. For arguments that the author of the epistle is Jude, the brother of Jesus, see Bauckham, \textit{Jude}, 2\textit{ Peter}, 14-16; and Green, \textit{2 Peter and Jude}, 48-52.} Regardless of the author’s true identity, he addresses his readers in the language of their experience, applying ideas from the Jewish background which they shared to the new situation of the people of God that has come about through their experience with Jesus.\footnote{Thomas Wolthuis, “Jude and Jewish Traditions,” \textit{Calvin Theological Journal} 22 (1987): 40-41; and Dunnett, “Hermeneutics of Jude,” 291. Wolthuis and Dunnett observe that the readers of this epistle were probably from a Jewish Christian background like Jude. They would understand and appreciate the allusions made to Old Testament ideas and intertestamental concepts.} Jude urges the faithful ones in the community to “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3) and to stand firm against the persuasive arguments of the false teachers who (according to Jude) pervert God’s grace and deny the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4).\footnote{Green, \textit{2 Peter and Jude}, 52.} He conveys his urgent message of hope and steadfastness through the language of Old Testament types and intertestamental allusions.

Scholarly attention to Jude, though scarce, has focused on the character of the epistle as either a representative of early Catholicism or as an example of Jewish Christian apocalyptic literature.\footnote{Bauckham, \textit{Jude}, \textit{2 Peter}, 8-11; Green, \textit{2 Peter and Jude}, 52-54; and Charles, \textit{Literary Strategy}, 15-19.} The concept of “early Catholicism” labels Jude as a product of a post-apostolic and developing Christianity that by the second century could be distinguished by three main features: (1) a fading of the hope of an imminent return of Christ, (2) increased institutionalization, and (3) crystallization of the faith into a set
dogma. These three features do not figure prominently in the theology of Jude, however, and actually seem absent in the epistle. The hope of Christ’s return is apparent throughout the letter (vv. 1, 14, 21, 24), and even part of the argument against the false teachers hinges on the view that they will be judged by the Lord at his coming (vv. 14-15). There is no sign of ecclesiastical officials in Jude and no hint of the need for church officials to respond to or to quell the false teaching of Jude’s opponents. In fact, the epistle emphasizes the need for the whole Christian community (i.e., all of Jude’s readers) to uphold the faith in the face of the false teachers. The first two elements of an “early Catholic” Jude, then, do not even explicitly appear in the book. A hope for Christ’s imminent return is present and no hierarchy of ministry is expressed.

The case for viewing Jude as an example of “early Catholicism” usually leans heavily on an interpretation of “the faith” in verses 3 and 20 to refer to “a fixed body of orthodox doctrine, passed down from the apostles, which only has to be asserted against heresy.” No argument based on the text of Jude exists which requires that Jude’s use

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145 Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 8-9; and Charles, Literary Strategy, 58.

146 Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 9; Green, 2 Peter and Jude, 54; and Charles, Literary Strategy, 57-58, 61.

of “the faith” denotes anything different than simply a reference to the gospel itself.\textsuperscript{148} In fact, an understanding of “the faith” in Jude as a fixed body of doctrine actually fails to take into account that the dispute between Jude and his opponents dealt more with the relationship between the gospel and moral ethics than with concepts of orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{149} In light of these things, it seems unlikely that Jude fits the category of “early Catholicism” to which it has often been relegated.

The Jewish character of Jude’s Christianity has been acknowledged more recently, but “it has not been sufficiently appreciated in locating the epistle within a possible Jewish-Christian Palestinian milieu, and hence, within an earlier dating than most critics are willing to concede.”\textsuperscript{150} At the very least, the epistle of Jude belongs to the milieu of apocalyptic Jewish Christianity, in that it combines elements from Jewish apocalyptic literature with a Christian mindset. Jude’s use of both Old Testament types and Jewish pseudepigraphal texts as well as the apocalyptic mode in which the letter is presented all point to the marked Jewishness of the letter.\textsuperscript{151} Two particular texts stand out in this regard, \textit{I Enoch} (Jude 14) and the \textit{Testament of Moses} (Jude 9). Both works are Jewish apocalyptic works, and Jude and his readers apparently had a high regard for them, which

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{148} Bauckham, \textit{Jude}, 2 Peter, 9; Green, 2 Peter and Jude, 53-54; and Charles, \textit{Literary Strategy}, 56-57.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Bauckham, \textit{Jude}, 2 Peter, 9; and Green, 2 Peter and Jude, 52-54.
\item \textsuperscript{151} Bauckham, \textit{Jude}, 2 Peter, 9-11; Green, 2 Peter and Jude, 54; Woltzuis, “Jude and Jewish Traditions,” 21; Dunnett, “Hermeneutics of Jude,” 287-88; and Charles, \textit{Literary Strategy}, 58-59.
\end{enumerate}
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(along with other aspects of the letter) seems to place Jude definitely within the realm of those whose Christianity was of an apocalyptic type.\textsuperscript{152}

That Jude uses a variety of noncanonical materials in his little epistle has not escaped the notice of scholars. Some discovered allusions or parallels to texts like the Testament of Naphtali 3:5 (Jude 6), Testament of Asher 4:4-5; 7:1 (Jude 7-8, 10), and Testament of Reuben 5:5 (Jude 4).\textsuperscript{153} 1 Enoch of course shows up several places in Jude, most notably in verses 14-15, where 1 Enoch 1:9 is quoted. Materials or concepts from 1 Enoch appear in Jude 6, 8, and 12-16.\textsuperscript{154} The passage of most relevance to this study, however, is Jude 9, where Jude apparently quotes a portion of the Assumption (or Testament) of Moses.

In the midst of a discussion of the false teachers’ rejection of authority and their apparent attempt to justify themselves as autonomous moral selves, Jude 9 mentions a tradition involving the burial of Moses: “But Michael the archangel, when he disputed...
with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’” \(^{155}\) This reference as a unit has no direct Old Testament background, although the tradition Jude uses is built on speculation surrounding the burial of Moses in Deut. 34:5-6 and the words of Michael to the devil come from Zech. 3:2. The vision of Zech. 3:1-5 is a courtroom scene in which Satan, the accusing angel, confronts the angel of the Lord in a legal dispute over the standing of the high priest Joshua. \(^{156}\) Although the source of Michael’s words may come from Zechariah, the non-canonical Jewish traditions in the Testament of Moses are most likely the origin of the story to which Jude refers in verse 9.

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\(^{155}\) Richard Bauckham argues that the second portion of this verse should be translated “he did not presume to condemn him for slander,” based on the context of the story in which the devil brought a slanderous judgment against Moses. Bauckham’s point is that Michael, as Moses’ advocate, did not take upon himself the authority to reject the devil’s accusation as malicious slander, but rather he simply appealed to the Lord’s judgment/authority. See Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 60-64. According to Bauckham, Jude is contrasting the behavior of the false teachers (who felt themselves free from moral authority) to that of Michael (who could not reject the devil’s accusation on his own authority). The false teachers presumed themselves to be free, and so brought reviling judgments against even the angels (presumably the givers and guardians of the Law). Jude claims that not even the angels are free from subjection to the authority of God, and neither are the false teachers. Only God is the truly righteous judge and proper moral authority.

\(^{156}\) Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 65; Wolthuis, “Jude and Jewish Traditions,” 30-31; and Charles, Literary Strategy, 149-50. Charles notes that the task of discerning the actual source material for this passage is made difficult by Jude’s interweaving of diverse Jewish traditions about the burial of Moses. Charles also notes that Zechariah 3 “admits no apparent connection to the tradition of Moses’ death in Deuteronomy 34” (p. 149). Bauckham disagrees, however, and notes that the Zechariah passage establishes an idea of a judicial contest between Satan and the angel of the Lord (p. 65). The angel of the Lord in Zechariah dismisses Satan’s case against Joshua with God’s commanding word asserting his authority over Satan. The angel of the Lord then directs other angels to clean Joshua up, and he admonishes Joshua to walk faithfully in God’s ways (cf. Life of Adam and Eve 41:1-48:7, where Michael is described as being appointed to look after human’s bodies and to cloth the righteous dead in clean linens). Similar ideas are later applied to other episodes in the history of Israel. Jubilees 17:15-18:16 shows the angel of the Lord coming to Abraham’s defense when Abraham was asked to offer up Isaac (a later rabbinic tradition, Yal. Rub. 43:3 mentions Michael as the angel that debates Satan and rescues Abraham and Isaac). 4QAmram also applies this tradition to the death of Moses’ father. At the time of his death, Amram mentions that the two angels “disputed about me and said . . . and they were carrying on a great contest about me” (4QAmram 1:10-11). This terminology is strikingly similar to Jude 9, and helps to show the broad application of the idea of a verbal contest between an accusing angel and the angel of the Lord.
There is general agreement that the source for Jude 9 was the lost ending of the *Testament of Moses*.\(^{157}\) Moses, as a prophet and the lawgiver, became an integral part of Israel’s history and religion. His death occupied the thoughts and writings of many Jewish authors of apocalypses.\(^{158}\) Of particular interest to many of these writers was the nature of Moses’ burial. Angels are typically portrayed as burying Moses, with Michael playing a leading role.\(^{159}\) Although the particular version of this story is no longer extant in the *Testament of Moses*, a reasonable reconstruction has been made using sources that seem to preserve the substance of the story.\(^{160}\) This reconstruction is helpful because it provides further information on the developing roles of Michael and other angels.

The story as it probably existed in the *Testament of Moses* describes Moses’ death in the following manner. After Moses died, God sent the archangel Michael to remove the body of Moses to another place for burial, but Samael, the devil, opposed Michael, disputing Moses’ right to an honorable burial. Michael engaged the devil in dispute over the body, with the devil bringing a charge of murder against Moses. This charge was


nothing but slander against Moses, and Michael responded using the terminology of Zech. 3:2. The devil fled, and Michael removed the body to bury it as God commanded.\(^{161}\)

Jude evidently assumes that this tradition (like that of *1 Enoch*) is familiar to his readers. He adapts a Palestinian tradition for his specific purpose of showing Michael as one who, having authority, recognized a higher authority and thus stands in utter contrast to the false teachers.\(^{162}\) So, like the material in Revelation 12, the epistle of Jude flows out of a rich, Jewish background of apocalyptic materials. The Palestinian community, like Asia Minor, was a diverse melting pot of peoples and a rich source of non-canonical apocalyptic traditions. Jude, building his letter on some Palestinian materials, reflects an understanding of angels similar to that of Revelation. Also, Jude 9 gives evidence of another contest between the devil and Michael, albeit the conflict appears to be primarily judicial and not military. Nonetheless, Jude 9 represents the only other canonical source of a reference to Michael besides Daniel, and gives that reference in the context of a dispute with the devil, like both Daniel and Revelation.

*Shepherd of Hermas*

The *Shepherd of Hermas*, one of the longest documents among the Apostolic Fathers, was highly esteemed among certain early Christians, particularly the eastern churches. Some early church leaders (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius) even referred to the *Shepherd* as authoritative teaching or as a possible part


of the Christian canon. The *Shepherd of Hermas*, along with the *Epistle of Barnabas*, is contained in Codex Sinaiticus (a fourth century C.E. Greek manuscript of the Bible) after the books of the New Testament. On the other hand, a second or third century list of canonical books, the *Muratorian Canon*, lists the *Shepherd* as a useful book, but does not give it canonical status.

The *Shepherd* states that it is the work of a certain Hermas, who apparently was born into slavery and later sold to a woman named Rhoda who lived in Rome (Vision 1.1.1). Eventually Hermas gained his freedom and made a life for himself in Rome with his wife and children. The author claims to write during the time of Clement (Vision 2.4.3), a reference often understood to be Clement, bishop of Rome around 96 C.E.

The *Muratorian Canon*, however, identifies Hermas as the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome around 140-154 C.E. As a result, many scholars view the *Shepherd of Hermas* as a composite work and locate its composition in a period between 95-140 C.E., with some

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165 All citations and quotes from the *Shepherd of Hermas* are from the translation by Kirsopp Lake in *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), unless otherwise noted.

166 Reddish, *Apocalyptic Literature*, 255; Jardine, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 5-6; and William Jerome Wilson, “The Career of the Prophet Hermas,” in *Personalities of the Early Church*, vol. 1, edited with introductions by Everett Ferguson (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 1-2 (this article is a reprint of the original which appeared in *Harvard Theological Review* 22 [1927]: 21-62). Although the possibility exists that this autobiographical information from the *Shepherd of Hermas* may be fictitious, some scholars maintain that the information is probably accurate in light of the convincingly individualistic information from the narrator. Reddish, Jardine, and Wilson all approach the material as though it is authentic. For a general discussion of the identity of Hermas, see Jardine *Shepherd of Hermas*, 3-7, and Wilson, “Career of Hermas,” 1-17.
concluding that the final edition of the *Shepherd* was completed in the early second century C.E.\textsuperscript{167}

The book is divided into three sections: the *Visions*, the *Mandates*, and the *Similitudes* (or *Parables*). The work is a series of revelations Hermas received while a member of a Christian community in Rome.\textsuperscript{168} In these revelations, Hermas was commissioned to write a book (*Vision 2.4.2-3*), the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which derives its name from one of the revelatory figures who appears as a shepherd (*Vision 5*). The *Visions* are comprised of five different episodes in which Hermas is visited by a figure who reveals special information to him. The revelation in the first four visions comes through an older woman who grows progressively younger in each vision. This woman is identified to Hermas as the church (*Vision 2.4.1*). The fifth vision introduces the Shepherd, who brings Hermas new revelation in the form of commandments (*Mandates*) and parables (*Similitudes*).\textsuperscript{169}


\textsuperscript{168} That the *Shepherd* originated in Rome is fairly certain, since this location is mentioned in the text itself and is confirmed by the Muratorian Canon. See Reddish, *Apocalyptic Literature*, 255-56; Jardine, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 9-13; and Wilson, “Career of Hermas,” 2-3.

\textsuperscript{169} Reddish, *Apocalyptic Literature*, 256; and Wilson, “Career of Hermas,” 31. Wilson notes the apocalyptic nature of *Vision 5* (and especially Hermas' experience), but he adds that the whole work of the *Shepherd* fits the pattern of an apocalypse. It is revelatory literature set in a narrative context that reflects a belief in a transcendent reality that is both temporally and spatially beyond the present world (see *Sim*. 6.2-3; 7.1-7; *Man.* 5.1-2; 6.2; *Vis.* 4.3.3). Reddish (256-57) also views the eschatology of the *Shepherd* as apocalyptic because it portrays rewards and judgments beyond history and a future destruction of the world.
The second section of the book is comprised of the Mandates, a collection of ethical and religious exhortations on a variety of topics. There is some similarity between the contents of this section and the ideas contained in Hellenistic Jewish moral teaching and the book of James. Mandates 5 and 6 teach a doctrine similar to the idea of the two spirits in the Community Scroll (1QS 3:13-4:26) at Qumran, namely, that two angels or spirits (one good and one evil) contend for control of people. The final section of the Shepherd contains ten parables given by the Shepherd to Hermas. The message of the Similitudes is similar to the first two sections of the book and deals primarily with repentance and morality.

The Shepherd of Hermas utilizes several figures as mediators of the visions received by Hermas, such as the old woman and the Shepherd. Chief among interpreting agents is the Shepherd, who is also called the Angel of repentance (Vision 5.7; Similitude 9.1.1; 9.33.1) and who serves as Hermas' angelus interpres throughout the Mandates and the Similitudes. This figure, as well as other references to angels in the Shepherd, is the focus of much of the debate regarding the Christology and angelology of the book. The Shepherd speaks to Hermas of several angelic beings, but some of these beings seem

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170 Reddish, Apocalyptic Literature, 256; and Jardine, Shepherd of Hermas, 131-32.


172 Moxnes, “God and His Angel,” 50; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 215. Jardine points out that this angelic Shepherd is reminiscent of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John 10:1-18. See his Shepherd of Hermas, 129. Interestingly, Jardine does not notice that in this parable in John, Jesus refers to himself as the door or gate to the sheep pasture. In Similitude 9.12.6, the Shepherd refers to the Son of God as the gate to the city of God.
to relate primarily to one particular angel. The Shepherd/Angel of Repentance claims that he received his commission from another angel, the Glorious Angel (Sim. 9.1.1-3). The Glorious Angel (also referred to as the Revered Angel in Vis. 5.2, Man, 5.1.7) justifies the righteous and directs the actions of other angels like the Shepherd and the Angel of Punishment (Sim. 7.2-3). This Glorious Angel is also linked to the Angel of the Lord in the Shepherd, since Similitude 8.1.2 describes the Angel of the Lord as "glorious and very tall." The Glorious Angel is later identified as Michael in Similitude 8.3.3, the one "who has power over the people and governs them." Michael is the only angel given a proper name in the Shepherd. He is called "the great and glorious angel" in Similitude 8.3.3, and this title may have reminded the readers of the theophanies of the Old Testament in which the Glory of Yahweh is revealed to his people (Exod. 13:21-22; 14:24). These theophanies are also sometimes linked to the manifestation of the Angel of the Lord (Exod. 14:19-20; 23:20; Num. 20:16). At any rate, the language used to describe the Glorious Angel is similar to that used in the description of the Glorious Man in Similitude 9.6.1, 9.7.1, and 9.12.8. This Glorious Man is an angelic figure in the midst of six angels and is described as "the Son of God" (Sim.


175 For further discussion on the relationship between these angelic figures, see Moxnes, "God and His Angel," 49-56; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 215-20.

176 For more on these Glory traditions, see Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 70-88; and Jarl Fossum, Name of God, 162-91, 225.
Much like the appearance of Melchizedek at Qumran, the Glorious Man of the *Shepherd* is often linked to Michael, the Glorious Angel. Indeed, the Glorious Angel is described in *Similitude* 9.1.1-3 as the “Son of God,” just like the Glorious Man of 9.12.7-8. It would appear, then, that Hermas at the very least identified Michael and the Son of God (=Jesus?) in similar roles, if not as the same person.

The *Shepherd of Hermas* represents a Christian apocalypse written near the time of Revelation. Like Revelation, the *Shepherd* describes angelic beings as interpreters and as judges or protectors. Most importantly, the *Shepherd* mentions only one angel by name, Michael, just like Revelation 12. Although Michael is not involved in warfare in the *Shepherd*, he does seem to be closely aligned with the Son of God in some manner. Michael in Revelation 12 also appears near a Son of God figure (the child, born to the

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177 Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 226. Although Gieschen fails to note it, this gathering of seven angelic beings is reminiscent of the concept of seven archangels found in intertestamental literature (1 Enoch 20:1-7; 3 Enoch 17:1-4). Could some connection exist between the seven archangels, Hermas’ seven angels, and the seven spirits and seven angels of Revelation 1:4, 17-20? Gieschen notes that Michael plays a significant role as leader of the angels (even archangels) in some Jewish literature.

178 Ibid., 225-26. See also, Moxnes, “God and His Angel,” 50-52; and Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 106-7. Michael also serves as the one who has authority to allow the righteous to enter the tower of God, where they are crowned and remain under Michael’s authority (Sim. 8.3.3-8). Later, the Son of God serves as the gate and door to the tower of God, which is described as the Church (Sim. 9.7.1-9.8.1). Is Michael’s authority to allow entrance to the righteous the same as the function of the Son of God as the gate?

179 Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 225-26; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 107; Wilson, “Career of Hermas,” 28; and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, 17 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1970), 28. Longenecker also mentions 2 Enoch 22:4-9 as a possible allusion to Michael in a christological role. He notes that Tertullian and Epiphanius accuse the Ebionites of believing that Christ was a human who was filled with the spirit of an archangel. For traditions in which the righteous become angels or are represented in angelic terms, see James H. Charlesworth, “The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies, 17 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 135-51. Charlesworth disagrees with the identification of Michael and Jesus here, although he admits to some confusion regarding Hermas’ Christology. Charlesworth notes, however, that the idea of Jesus as an angel is found in some later Christian traditions (Gospel of Thomas log. 13; Testament of Solomon 22:20), and that this concept may have developed from the Jewish traditions regarding the angelic nature of figures in Israel’s past (see pp. 144-45).
celestial woman, who will rule with a rod of iron, 12:5). At the very least, the *Shepherd* gives some insight into further developments of Michael traditions after Revelation. Shortly after the Apocalypse was penned, therefore, some Christians were attempting to identify Jesus in terms similar to those used to describe Michael.

In these two apocalypses, Christ and Michael seem inexorably linked in some way, especially with regards to the suffering of the saints. In *Similitude* 8.3.3-8, Michael permits entrance into the tower of God to those who “wrestled with the devil and conquered him, ... those who suffered for the law.” In Rev. 12:11 and 17, after Michael defeats the devil in battle, the righteous are described as those who overcame the devil, “not loving their lives even to death” and as those with whom the dragon makes war because they “keep the commandments of God.” Although the language is not an exact match, it is interesting to note that Michael’s only explicit appearance in either apocalypse is connected to the suffering of those who keep the commandments of God.

*Conclusion*

The historical context for an interpretation of Revelation 12 includes the date, authorship, audience, and genre of the Apocalypse. So, Revelation is a first century apocalypse written by a prophet to the churches in Asia Minor. This statement forms the historical grid of our interpretive paradigm. In other words, the historical information serves to ground the text and its interpretation in a particular setting. As an apocalypse, Revelation includes materials from a variety of texts and traditions. The materials that relate to Michael and the war in heaven comprise the interpretive streams which
illuminate a reading of Rev. 12:7-12. These streams form the conceptual grid of our interpretive paradigm.\textsuperscript{180}

The interpretive streams give information that allows the reader to understand more clearly the development of the ideas in Rev. 12:7-12. For example, Isaiah gives insight into the possible origin of evil angels and the ultimate judgment of the serpent and the dragon. \textit{1 Enoch} adds material to the origin story and introduces the concept of good angels fighting against evil angels in an eschatological battle. This text also introduces Michael as an agent in the judgment and destruction of evil. The material from Daniel further expands the role of Michael and depicts him as a guardian of Israel who aids other angels in their conflicts with evil.

\textit{1 Enoch} (with other texts) assigns numerous roles to Michael. Michael often serves as the leader of the angelic army (Dan. 10:12-14, 18-21; Rev. 12:7-8; \textit{2 Enoch} 22:6; 33:10; 71:28; and 1QM 17:6-7). He functions as an intercessory angel or in a priestly manner (\textit{1 Enoch} 68:1-5; \textit{2 Enoch} 33:10; 1QM 13:9-14; \textit{Testament of Moses} 10:1-2; cf. 11Q13 2:7-14 and Zech. 3:1-5). Michael is also described as the guardian or patron of Israel, the righteous ones, or the best part of humanity (Latin \textit{Life of Adam and Eve} 32:3; \textit{1 Enoch} 20:1-5; Dan. 12:1). This role as guardian of a nation is particularized in 4QAmram (and Jude 9?) to focus the angel’s guardianship over an individual (Amram or Moses) rather than a group. The \textit{Shepherd of Hermas} represents another step in this development by identifying Michael in some way with the Son of God or Messiah.

\textsuperscript{180}The historical grid locates the text in a particular social setting, while the conceptual grid identifies the thematic atmosphere which gives meaning to the ideas and events in Revelation 12. The historical grid is concrete, while the conceptual grid is more abstract.
Michael is also tied in some manner to the suffering of the righteous in this text. These traditions present the development of Michael and his roles up to the time of Revelation 12. An interpretation of Rev. 12:7-12 can now be attempted using these concepts as the paradigm for reading the role of Michael in the war in heaven. That interpretation is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR
Reading Revelation 12

Approaching a reading of Revelation 12 has been a winding and complex journey. Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse introduces a section of material that is central both to the progress of the plot and to the development of the characters of the story. The significance of chapter 12 is perhaps rivaled only by the variety and complexity of the traditions that form its background.

The soil in which the plot of Revelation 12 is planted is composed of some of the richest and most theologically charged materials in the development of Jewish traditions. These materials are fused into a story by John, who writes to a diverse group of Christians in Asia Minor. As chapter 3 showed, the schema for reading Revelation 12 involves both an historical and a conceptual grid. The historical grid is the experience of those first century persons who first encountered the Apocalypse, while the conceptual grid comprises the traditions that fed like streams into the development of the ideas (particularly regarding Michael and wars in heaven) in Revelation 12. The goal in this chapter is to combine these grids into a reading of Revelation 12 that approximates that of the first century readers/hearers.

In order to accomplish this goal, then, a general review of modern interpretations of Revelation 12 will be given first in order to locate the text in the current milieu and to give an understanding of how others have read this material. After discussing these views, some consideration will be given to the possible readings of Revelation 12 by
considering its component parts. In this section, a reading will be given using the grids from chapter 3 of this study. Finally, this chapter will close with a consideration of the implications of this first century reading on the Christology of the Apocalypse. The primary goal, then, is to discover as closely as possible how the first readers/hearers of Revelation 12 understood the role of Michael in the heavenly war.

**Interpretations of Revelation 12**

Early Jewish apocalyptic literature has been characterized as primarily “re-mythologizing the long-since de-mythologized religion” of the Old Testament, since the imagery of ancient myths was often revived in the apocalyptic visions as a means of pointing out the theological significance of history.¹ The mythical and poetic quality of John’s vision of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12 has provoked scholars to search out its origins among the ancient myths, and that search illustrates how intricate and inextricable are the blending and interaction of cultural/religious traditions and influences.² Indeed, John apparently drew on and fused together traditions, patterns, and concepts from a variety of different cultures and mythologies. The attempt to narrow


Revelation 12 down to its primary source has led to a variety of suggestions from scholars. The primary candidates are: (1) Babylonian traditions, (2) Greek myths, (3) Egyptian concepts, and (4) Holy War or Combat Myth traditions.

**Babylonian Traditions**

Hermann Gunkel proposed that Revelation 12 may be traced to a Semitic original based on the Babylonian creation myth which pitted the seven-headed dragon Tiamat against the god of light, Marduk. Tiamat, a water monster in the *Enuma Elish*, was a sworn enemy to the other Babylonian gods as a result of the death of her consort Apsu at the hands of Ea. Ea, along with the celestial goddess Damkina, produced an offspring named Marduk, the sun god. Marduk agreed to defend the other gods against Tiamat’s wrath if they would make him the supreme king of the gods. The other gods, afraid of the wrath of Tiamat and her associated dragons, vipers, and sphinxes, accepted Marduk’s terms. Marduk defeated Tiamat in battle and used her carcass to create the sky and the earth.

Similarities to Revelation 12 exist in this Babylonian epic, but perhaps fewer than Gunkel supposed. The dragon Tiamat is certainly similar to the red dragon of Revelation. Tiamat was also a water monster, a fact that seems related to the dragon’s action in Rev.

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12:15. Marduk’s mother, Damkina, is also described in celestial terms similar to those used in Revelation 12. The parallels between these stories really end with these characters. In the Enumah Elish, Tiamat is a destroyer of gods, but no explicit mention is made of her casting down a third of the stars (cf. Rev. 12:4) or of her persecution of Damkina directly (cf. Rev. 12:13-16). Tiamat does not come to devour Marduk at his birth, and Marduk is not rescued miraculously from the threat (cf. Rev. 12:2-6). Also, in the Babylonian epic, a child of the gods is the hero, while in Revelation 12 the opponent of the dragon is not the child born to the celestial woman, but rather Michael and his army (cf. Rev. 12:7-9). The dissimilarities in the materials are greater than the possible parallels, and thus it seems unlikely that John’s story borrowed much from this stream.

Greek Myths

Albrecht Dieterich argued that the story of Revelation 12 arose from the Greek myth about the dragon Python and his attempt to kill Leto, who was about to give birth to

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5 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 311; Prigent, Apocalypse 12, 122; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 193; and Ivan M. Benson, “Revelation 12 and the Dragon of Antiquity,” Restoration Quarterly 29 (1987): 98-99. Benson adds that mention is made in the Babylonian literature of a “raging” or “red gleaming” serpent whose likeness was erected in the Temple of Marduk.

6 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 311; Prigent, Apocalypse 12, 122; and Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 193. Prigent and Charles also note that Gunkel understood the eagle in Rev. 12:14 as representative of the constellation called the Eagle and as a servant of Marduk. This correlation is not explicit from a perusal of the Babylonian materials, however, and is not certain. In fact, Prigent and Charles note that Gunkel later repudiated some of the parallels he drew between Revelation 12 and Babylonian mythology.


Apollo. Python, the son of Earth, learned by means of a prophecy that he would be killed by the yet unborn child of Leto. Python therefore pursued Leto to destroy her, but she was aided in her escape by Poseidon, who placed her on the island Ortygia and sank the island beneath the sea. After failing to find Leto, Python returned to Parnassus, at which time Poseidon returned Ortygia from the depths of the sea. Leto gave birth to Apollo, who immediately attained the full strength of his adult godhood. Four days after his birth, Apollo found Python at Parnassus and killed the dragon. A variant form of the story includes an interesting parallel to Revelation 12. In this version, Python threw the chaotic waters of the world into such an uproar that Leto could not give birth to Apollo. The earth came to Leto's aid, however, and raised the island of Delos, a desolate place.

Another Greek myth pits Zeus against Typhon. In the account of Nonnos, Typhon


10 Hyginus presents the most complete form of this story in Fabulae 140, and an English translation is found in David Aune, Revelation 6-16, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B, David Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph Martin, editors (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Incorporated, 1998), 670. For the Latin text, see C. Julius Hyginus, Fabularum Liber (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), 42. A similar story is found in Lucian Dialogi Martini 9 and Lucan Bellum Civile 5.79-81. For the Greek text of Lucian see Seventy Dialogues, introduction and commentary by Harry L. Levy (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 105-6. For the Latin text and an English translation of Lucan, see The Civil War, Books I-X, translated by J. D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928, reprinted 1943), 244-45. See also Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 312; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 192; Benson, "Revelation 12," 99; Prigent, Apocalypse 12, 120-21; and A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 64, 78. Charles also notes that Leto was represented as wearing a veil of stars at one time. For an excellent overview of Dieterich's view and a discussion of the various Greek sources behind the story of Python and Leto, see Hedrick, "Sources and Use," 99-113.

11 Hesiod, Homeric Hymn 3.1-178, 294-368. For the Greek text with an English translation, see Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936, reprinted 1943), 325-37, 345-51. See also Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 312; Hedrick, "Sources and Use," 110-14; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 192; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 670-71. According to Bauckham, this variant was current at John's time and appears as the best candidate for influencing the imagery of Revelation (see Climax of Prophecy, 195-98). Hedrick notes that this myth may have been known in Asia during John's time, and he discusses the evidence thoroughly in chapter 4 of his dissertation.
wanted to gain the throne and scepter of Zeus, i.e., rule over heaven. Typhon rebelled against Zeus, and his rebellion involved an attack on the stars (cf. Dan. 8:10-11). Typhon stretched his hands upward and seized the various constellations, pulling them from their places and literally removing them from the sky.\textsuperscript{12} This action is certainly reminiscent of Rev. 12:4, where the dragon is depicted as sweeping a third of the stars (angels?) from heaven with his tail.

The combination of these myths certainly yields some striking parallels to Revelation 12.\textsuperscript{13} The woman, the child, and the dragon of Revelation 12 correspond closely to the characters in the Greek myths. Even the individual traits, like the threat of water toward the woman or the aid of the earth on the woman's behalf, are readily recognizable. A problem arises, however, in that these two different myths must be combined to arrive at this close correspondence. One form characterizes the waters as hostile to the woman, while another shows the waters as an aid to her. One myth lists Apollo as the champion born to Leto, while the other has Zeus as its champion.\textsuperscript{14} John may have known the variations of the Greek stories, and he is a masterful enough story-


\textsuperscript{13} Beasley-Murray calls the Greek myths the "closest parallel" to Revelation 12, even though he does not accept them as the primary source for John's story (see his \textit{Revelation}, 192-97, especially 192). Hedrick agrees that the Greek myth of Leto probably served as a source for John when he composed Revelation 12 (see "Sources and Use," 114-20, 179-84). See also Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 197 and A. Y. Collins, \textit{Combat Myth}, 63-67. Collins bases her explanation of the combat myth partially on the Greek story of Python and demonstrates that the Python-Leto-Apollo myth was relatively well known in western Anatolia just before the end of the first century C.E. (\textit{Combat Myth}, 245-61).

\textsuperscript{14} Charles, \textit{Revelation}, vol. 1, 312-13, and Aune, \textit{Revelation 6-16}, 671-72. Other problems include the following: (1) Revelation 12 does not end with the defeat of the dragon, (2) Revelation 12 depicts the woman as fleeing to a wilderness, not an island, and (3) Revelation 12 has the woman giving birth before she flees, not after. See also Gollinger, \textit{Das "große Zeichen"}, 130.
teller to weave them together into an almost seamless story. The Greek traditions, however, do not include a figure like Michael in their stories. The champion is usually the child born to the celestial woman, not some other character who interrupts the narrative by his abrupt arrival. The Greek myths are closer to Revelation 12 than the Babylonian traditions, however, and may well be a distant relative whose influence was felt even in the Jewish streams from which Revelation flowed.

*Egyptian Concepts*

After much investigation, Wilhelm Bousset decided that Egyptian mythology formed the foundation of the story of Revelation 12. In particular, Bousset viewed the myth of Hathor, Osiris, Horus and Seth as parallels to John's story. Hathor (i.e., Isis), who gives birth to Horus (the sun god), is sometimes associated with the moon and depicted as one who "longingly pursues the sun." Seth, opponent of Isis and Horus, is often identified with the dragon Typhon. In the late Egyptian period he was described as

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17 Charles notes that the Greek myth may have influenced the distinctively Jewish source which John utilized in writing Revelation 12 (*Revelation*, vol. 1, 313). See also Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 192-97 and Benson, "Revelation 12," 97-100 for similar opinions. A. Y. Collins and Hedrick assert that John was directly influenced by the Leto myth (see note 13), but the evidence is not completely convincing. If John borrowed the themes of this myth, he significantly altered the plot to fit his apocalyptic world-view. Also, he introduced characters that none of the other stories used, namely, Michael and his angels. This new material suggests at least some other streams as the primary fountains for John's story.


19 Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 52-54. For an English translation, see J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's "De Iside et Osiride,"
red in color and was often pictured attacking Isis. Seth kills Osiris (Hathor's husband) and turns to pursue the pregnant Hathor. Hathor/Isis, on the run from Seth, collects the bones of Osiris and gives a miraculous birth to Horus. In a boat of papyrus, Hathor/Isis escapes to the island Chemnis. Horus, the champion of the story, matures and eventually overcomes the dragon, who is imprisoned and ultimately destroyed by fire.

Although the Egyptian story shows some similarities to Revelation 12, it is still lacking in some important details. First, as in the Greek story, the woman escapes to an island rather than into a wilderness. Second, there is no mention of the snatching up of the child/hero from potential digestion by the dragon. In fact, in the Egyptian story, the dragon seems primarily focused on the destruction of the woman, while in Revelation 12 the dragon appears to be after the child first. Third, the dragon in the Egyptian story does not use water to attack the woman. In fact, the woman escapes the dragon's wrath by using the water as a means of transportation. Finally, the Egyptian myth portrays the

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21 Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 12-17 (Griffiths, Plutarch's "De Iside et Osiride," 135-45). For English translations, see "The Contest of Horus and Seth for Rule" in Pritchard *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 14-18; and Budge, *From Fetish to God*, 444-57; and "The Wanderings of Isis" in Budge, *From Fetish to God*, 491-503. See also Jonathan Cott, *Isis and Osiris: Exploring the Goddess Myth*, 1st edition (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994), 9-24; Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 1, 313; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 193; A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 62-63; and Prigent, *Apocalypse 12*, 124-25. Bauckham notes that the myth of Horus and Typhon (Seth) was assimilated at some point into the myth of Apollo and Python, and it may have been known in Asia through the cult of Isis. He further notes, however, that it is almost impossible to know what variant of the story would have been familiar to the people of Asia (see *Climax of Prophecy*, 197, footnote 80).

22 Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 1, 313; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 193; and Prigent, *Apocalypse 12*, 125. Beasley-Murray notes that John's story reflects the myths discussed above, and that evidence exists that indicates that many of these myths were adapted and edited by Rome "to buttress the claims of the Roman emperors to religious adulation" (p. 193). The obvious implication is that John adapted these myths to his own messianic story as a contrast to what Rome had to say. Although this possibility exists, it in no way explains the blatant interruption of the Michael material into the story of Revelation 12. If John
hero/child as the dragon slayer, while in Revelation Michael and his angels fight against the dragon.\footnote{Aune further notes that a chief difficulty with this particular proposal is that the primary version of the Egyptian myth current in the Greek world is a truncated version found in Herodotus 2.156. Aune also finds no evidence that this particular myth was in circulation during the first century C.E. (see Revelation 6-16, 674).} As in the other myths above, no room is found for a substitute like Michael in the hero's stead. Indeed, if John fashioned his story in Revelation 12 after these myths, he dramatically altered a significant portion of the story.

**Combat Myth or Holy War Traditions**

In 1976, Adela Yarbro Collins published her dissertation, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, in the Harvard Dissertations in Religion series. This study marked a different approach to reading Revelation and chapter 12 in particular. Collins argues that John has adapted two Jewish sources in Revelation 12: first, a narrative of conflict between a pregnant woman and a dragon—a story that is very similar to the Greek myth of Leto discussed above; and second, the depiction of a heavenly battle.\footnote{A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 83, 101-55; and Charles Homer Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy*, Good News Studies 34 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 125.} She further argues that most of Revelation is influenced by a traditional structure known as the combat myth, and this structure is most clearly seen in Revelation 12.\footnote{A.Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 57-59; Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 138; and John M. Court, *Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 71. David J. Halperin draws a similar conclusion about early Jewish myths involving the heavenly ascension of a divinely appointed hero or the heavenly invasion of a rebel against the divinity. In Halperin's hypothesis, both myths find their source in generational conflicts that often arise within individual families as children begin to reach maturity and strive to attain the status of their parents (see his "Ascension or Invasion: Implications of the Heavenly Journey in Ancient Judaism," *Religion* 18 [1988]: 47-67).}

carefully crafted his story, utilizing such an amazing backdrop of concepts and myths, then surely he had a very good reason to alter the story with the Michael material.
The typical pattern of the combat myth derives from Near Eastern mythology (including Egyptian, Greek, and Babylonian traditions) and appears in some Old Testament passages (e.g., Job 9:13; 26:12; Isa. 27:1; 51:9-10). According to Collins, the traditional combat myth includes the following: (1) a dragon or dragons, (2) forces representing chaos and disorder, (3) an attack, (4) the champion, (5) the champion’s death, (6) the dragon’s reign, (7) recovery of the champion, (8) battle renewed and victory, and (9) restoration and confirmation of order.  

The conflict, graphically described, is often linked to either the ordering of creation or to eschatological expectations. That is, the battle between the forces of chaos and the forces of order usually results in the creation of all things or the end of time.

According to Collins’ hypothesis, the combat myth expressed in Revelation 12 is closely tied to the Greek myth of Python-Leto-Apollo. The similarities between the two are noted above, and Collins goes into painstaking detail to delineate the parallels between these stories. The most interesting aspect of this theory, however, are the roles of the champion and Michael. For Collins, the child in Rev. 12:5 is the champion

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26 A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 55-61, 65-70. Collins delineates the various aspects of the combat myth evident in Revelation 12 in the following manner: (1) the dragon (12:3), (2) chaos and disorder (12:4a), (3) the attack (12:4b), (4) the champion (12:5a), (5) the champion’s “death” (12:5b), (6) recovery of the champion (12:7a), (7) battle renewed and victory (12:7b-9), (8) restoration and confirmation of order (12:10-12a), and (9) the dragon’s reign (12:12b-17). John Court (*Revelation*, 71) breaks the myth down to three basic elements: (1) a rebellion of evil forces, often symbolized as dragons or other monsters; (2) a temporary victory for the forces of chaos over the forces of order; and (3) a final victory for the forces of good by means of an appointed hero. See also Halperin, “Ascension or Invasion,” 47-49.


primarily because he is born to the celestial woman and his reign is described as an "universal kingship" by use of Ps. 2:9. The problem here is that, unlike Apollo in the Greek myth, the child in Revelation 12 does not engage the dragon. Collins even notes that Revelation 12 "is distinctive in that the champion's role in fighting the dragon is not taken by the hero, his female ally (wife, sister, mother, or daughter), nor by his son, but by an angelic ally, Michael." Similarly, Collins speaks of the "death" of the child/champion with reference to his "rescue from the dragon" by asserting that "the removal of the child to the throne of God would of course bring the death and exaltation of Jesus to mind for Christian readers." After this "death" or "rescue", however, the child plays no further role in the story. In other words, there is no "recovery" of the champion. In fact, Collins indicates that such a recovery is found in Rev. 12:7, the introduction of Michael and the warfare in heaven. If this explanation is accurate, then Michael is most likely the champion, not the child.

29 Ibid., 60, 66.

30 Ibid., 60. See also Aune, Revelation 6-16, 671-72.

31 A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 60; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 672. Collins argues that the appearance of Michael is simply an insertion into the story from a primordial tale of the fall of Satan. In other words, Michael appears because he was in the Jewish source used by John (Combat Myth, 102, 107-8, 114, 129-30). Collins maintains that this story of Satan's fall was combined with the story of the woman and the dragon to depict the eschatological defeat of Satan. Collins treatment of the question of the champion's identity seems inadequate. Is the champion of Revelation 12 the child or Michael?

32 A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 60-61. Indeed, if the combat myth was as well known in Asia Minor as Collins indicates, then the first readers of Revelation 12 may well have identified the child with Michael. Collins notes that not all of the features of Revelation 12 are accounted for by the use of any single known form of the combat myth. John is free and creative with the myth, leading to the conclusion that "the author of Revelation was consciously attempting to be international by incorporating and fusing traditional elements from a variety of sources" (Combat Myth, 58). This creativity on John's part may explain some of the discrepancies mentioned here.
A related approach to the combat myth is the use of Jewish Holy War traditions in Revelation. Several scholars maintain that the theme of holy war, "in its prophetic-apocalyptic transposition, pulsates in John’s thought and suffuses John’s lengthy vision" in Revelation. Simply stated, the biblical concept of holy war focuses on God’s unaided defeat of the oppressors of his people and his securing for them a lasting inheritance according to his promise. The people are merely required to follow God’s directives and to participate as he commands. Key elements of the Holy War tradition as inferred from the Old Testament include: (1) the consecration of God’s people, (2) oracles and sacrifices before the battle, (3) the appearance of the ark of the covenant, the visible sign of God’s presence, (4) the use of horns and trumpets to stress the religious aspect of the war, (5) faith on the part of God’s people, (6) God fighting for his people, often calling the elements of nature into service to throw the enemy into confusion, (7) the anathema on the vanquished enemy and goods, and 8) the secure possession of the land which God had promised.

Later studies focused on the transition of the Holy War traditions from an earthly or mundane perspective to a more spiritual or cosmic one. In other words, the concept of holy war obtained a more transcendent expression in prophetic (and some early apocalyptic) literature, in which God alone becomes the primary combatant against and

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the victor over the forces of evil. In these cases, the Holy War tradition is often expressed in the form of the "Divine Warrior Hymn." Common aspects of the hymn (e.g., Isa. 26:16-27:6) include crisis or threat, war, victory, and feast. Although the battle involved often included an earthly aspect, it slowly evolved into a more cosmic struggle which was understood to mirror an earthly reality.

Since Holy War traditions play a prominent role in Jewish eschatological (and apocalyptic) expectations, its use in Revelation is not too surprising. Like other data, however, the concept of holy war is tailored by John to his Christian perspective and according to his own creative desires. The perspective of holy war is evident in such passages as Rev. 6:17 and 16:14 where the "great day" of God's wrath appears. John's transformation of the Holy War tradition includes the concept that the triumph of God's people lies in participation in Christ's death and resurrection, not in any actual physical combat. In other words, the victory comes as a result of a cosmic, eschatological battle.

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38 Giblin, *Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy*, 29. Bauckham goes a step further, however, and finds several features of the Holy War tradition in Revelation, including the following: (1) the conquering Messiah (5:5-6), (2) a messianic army of 144,000 (7:2-14), and (3) a consecrated army of celibates (14:1-5). See *Climax of Prophecy*, 213-32.
between God's agent and the agents of evil. In fact, this theme of Holy War appears to structure the entire course of events in Revelation.³⁹

The use of the Holy War tradition in Revelation is more directly relevant to chapter 12 in that it allows for an explanation of Michael in the heavenly war. In the Holy War traditions, God is often depicted as using an agent to deliver his people. Sometimes he does it himself (as in the Exodus story), but other times he uses "the angel of the Lord" (e.g., Judg. 2:1-5; Isa. 63:7-9; Dan. 12:1-4; Zech. 3:1-5). Later traditions would understand this "angel of the Lord" to be one of a number of named angels, often Michael himself.⁴⁰ Also, Richard Bauckham argues that Revelation is a type of Christian War Scroll like that found at Qumran (1QM).⁴¹ Since Michael plays a prominent role in the eschatological battle of 1QM 17, then perhaps Michael's appearance in Revelation 12 results from John's familiarity with the Qumran War Scroll. At the very least, the use of Holy War ideas to interpret Revelation is by far the most consistent with the events in chapter 12.

Conclusion

Besides the Holy War tradition, none of the materials mentioned above allows for an adequate explanation for Michael's appearance in Revelation 12. Each story shows certain similarities to Revelation 12. For example, the Babylonian myth presents a red

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⁴¹ Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 210-37.
chaos dragon (Tiamat), while the Egyptian story depicts a celestial woman related to the sun and moon. Even the Greek myth (as interpreted by A. Y. Collins into a combat myth) allows for several similarities. There still remains the question of the champion’s identity in Revelation 12. In the stories above, the champion is a child of the celestial woman, but in Revelation 12 the champion appears to be Michael. Since the child in Rev. 12:5 is not named, could he be Michael? At the very least, is it possible that the first readers/hearers of Revelation could have understood the child as the champion Michael? How then should Revelation 12 be read?

**Reading Revelation 12: A Jewish Eschatological Story?**

Reading Revelation through the lenses of the first century audience resembles the task of assembling a puzzle. The various pieces are gathered and placed next to each other in an effort to get some semblance of order. Once the pieces are all laid out, the assembly of the puzzle may occur. After it is assembled, an interpretation of the appearing picture may be attempted. With that in mind, this section will attempt the assembly of the puzzle and an interpretation of the picture that appears. In order to accomplish this task, further consideration must be given to the traditions or stories behind Revelation 12. These materials will then be applied to Revelation 12 in order to clarify the roles of the main characters and the plot of the story. This application should provide a reading that reflects something of the perception of the first readers/hearers. Throughout this section, the thesis will be advanced that Revelation 12 represents a thoroughly Jewish eschatological and apocalyptic viewpoint.
Evidence Suggesting Two Separate Traditions

Revelation 12 has been read for centuries from a Christian perspective, and rightly so, since it finds itself in the middle of a thoroughly Christian apocalypse. Several scholars, however, explore the possibility that this chapter is actually the result of the blending of two disparate Jewish traditions. The first tradition or source is a story describing the conflict between a pregnant woman and a dragon (the basic combat myth), while the second represents a depiction of a heavenly battle between two groups of angelic combatants. The main argument is that John redacted these Jewish materials, adapting them for his own purposes and adding certain Christian aspects found primarily in the hymn of Rev. 12:10-11.

R. H. Charles and others point out a number of characteristics in Revelation 12 that suggest that its story originated with different sources or traditions. First of all, the story in Revelation 12 seems disjointed in places. For example, verses 1-6 tell the story of the dragon’s attack on the woman, and that story would seem to come to a close with the child being caught up to heaven and the woman fleeing to the wilderness. The war in heaven then occurs in verse 7, with no explicit connection to the conflict in verses 1-6.

42 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 299-314; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 192-96; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 101-14; John Court, Myth and History in the Book of Revelation (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 109-14; Fossum, Name of God, 327; Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 125-26; and Frederick J. Murphy, Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John, The New Testament in Context, edited by Howard Clark Kee and J. Andrew Overman (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 275-96. See Prigent, Apocalypse 12, 110-19, 128-33, for a discussion about the nature and number of the traditions or sources used by John. Since others have covered this material quite thoroughly, this study will not offer a full discussion of all the issues involved.

43 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 309, 321, 327-29; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 101; Court, Myth and History, 112-13; Fossum, Name of God, 327; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 277.

44 For more on this approach, see Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 298-314; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 101-55; and Court, Myth and History, 107-15.
This loose connection indicates that the heavenly war (Rev. 12:7-9) may have been originally distinct from the story of the woman and the dragon (12:1-6).  

This loose connection reveals itself further when verses 7-12 are removed from the narrative of Revelation 12. The resulting story, with the exception of some repetitions in verses 6 and 14, reads much like the basic combat myths discussed above. In fact, Frederick Murphy notes that "it is common in ancient documents when there is an insertion into the story for the resumption of the story to repeat what happens just before the insertion." Rev. 12:7-12 interrupts the flow of the story and may function as a parenthesis of sorts in chapter 12.

Stylistic indicators present another piece of evidence that Revelation 12 represents the combining of different traditions. The doublet of verses 6 and 14 has already been mentioned, but these verses also contain an unique usage of the combination of ὅπου and ἐκεῖ. Charles notes that the use of ἐκεῖ after ὅπου is contrary to John’s normal usage and

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45 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, lxiii, 306-7, A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 101-2; Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 126-27; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 278-80.

46 The story in Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17 reads as a single unit and includes: (1) the appearance of a pregnant heavenly woman, (2) an attack by a dragon, and (3) the divine rescue of the child and the woman from the dragon. The only element missing is the destruction of the dragon by the child or the champion. Some would argue that the insertion of verses 7-9 is an attempt to rectify this problem by adding an originally primordial story to an eschatological situation, thus making the casting out of the dragon an eschatological, though not final, event. In other words, Michael stands in for the child/champion at this point because the final destruction of the dragon must wait for a later moment in John’s story (Rev. 19:11-20:9). See Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 300, 310-14; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 192-95; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 61-83; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 235; Giblin, Revelation: Open Door of Prophecy, 125; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 279-86.

47 Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 293. See also Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 301, 304, 321.

may reveal a Hebrew or Aramaic origin of the story. Another linguistic indicator is the use of τοῦ with the infinitive πολεμήσαν in Rev. 12:7. This construction is found only in this verse in Revelation, and Charles argues that its use reflects a “literal reproduction of a pure Hebraism” which may be found many times in the Septuagint. The two indicators mentioned here only occur in chapter 12 of Revelation, and they both go against the normal style of John’s writing. Although these stylistic indicators hardly represent an overwhelming body of material, when taken with the other items mentioned above, they indicate at least a significant change in John’s style and the potential use of new sources or traditions.

The hymn of Rev. 12:10-12 represents one final indicator of John’s redactional activity. First, this proclamation seems to act as an interpretation of the events just described. That is, the hymn in 12:10-12 (like many others throughout Revelation) appears to provide information for the audience similar to the way a Greek chorus

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49 Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 1, clviii, 304, 330; and Collins, *Combat Myth*, 103. Collins notes that ὅσου occurs six times elsewhere in Revelation, and not one of those times includes the use of ἐκεί. These six occurrences are found in 2:13 (twice), 11:8, 14:4, 17:9, and 20:10. Charles believes that John edited an existing Greek source which may have been a translation of a Hebrew original. See footnote 1 on clviii for more.


provides insight into a play through song. The problem with the hymn is that the information provided does not seem to match the story just told. In the heavenly war of Rev. 12:7-9, Michael and his angels are the primary agents of the dragon’s defeat, but the hymn ascribes the victory to the Lamb and his followers (12:11). Second, the hymn does not refer to the adversary as the dragon of 12:3-4, rather the identifications found for him in verse 9 (the heavenly war section) are used. In verse 9, the dragon is identified as the ancient serpent, the devil, and Satan (the accuser of the Hebrew traditions, cf. Job 1:6-12; Zech. 3:1). Rev. 12:10 labels him ὁ κατήγορος (a judicial term like the Hebrew “Satan”), while verse 12 calls him “the devil.” So, the hymn has more thematic ties with the heavenly war materials than with the combat myth.

The language of the proclamation in 12:10 shows similarities to other hymns in Revelation as well (e.g., 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 7:10; 10:4; 19:1) and the theology of verse 11 (including the ideas of conquering, the Lamb, and possible martyrdom) is similar to other motifs throughout the book. The themes expressed in 12:10-12 certainly serve as a type of introduction to the narrative to follow, but verse 12 seems to point the current plot back to the story at hand, the heavenly war. In other words, the hymn here serves to prepare the audience for what comes next, but also points them back to what has

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52 James L. Blevins, “The Genre of Revelation,” *Review and Expositor* 77 (Summer 1980): 399-400, 402. Collins (Combat Myth, 112-13), Court (Myth and History, 114), Mounce (Revelation [1977], 242-43), and M. Eugene Boring (Revelation, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching [Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989], 158) take a similar view, though perhaps without the direct reference to Greek drama. For them, the hymn serves as an outburst of praise that offers a heavenly view of recent events in the narrative.


54 Collins, Combat Myth, 112-13; and Court, Myth and History, 114.
happened. As such, it seems reasonable to conclude that Rev. 12:10-12 acts primarily as a bridge between the two stories, i.e., a possible means of tying the heavenly war story back to the narrative about the woman and the dragon.

Although the evidence above is not overwhelming, it points to the conclusion that John drew the stories of Revelation 12 from potentially different streams. At least two stories are present here, and they are tied together by a hymn (presumably from John’s hand). The first story is represented by verses 1-6 and 13-17, while verses 7-9 comprise the second narrative (with the hymn added to connect the two). Now that the two stories have been isolated, something of their Jewish nature and background must be determined.

Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17: A Jewish Combat Myth

The first story in Revelation 12 fits fairly well with the combat myth model. Since this model has already received lengthy discussion, the main focus here will be the nature of the narrative. Although the story fits the model of the combat myth, the background for its symbols is decidedly and uniquely Jewish. There are hints of other myths (Babylonian, Greek, and Egyptian), but the heart of the story is the birth and attempt on the life of Messiah, not the creation of the world as a result of a rebellion among the gods. So, even though this material follows the narrative framework of a combat myth, it actually appears as an eschatological story about the birth of Messiah and

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the persecution of his people. A consideration of the three main characters of this story (the woman, the dragon, and the child) reinforces this conclusion.

The language describing the woman has led many scholars to suppose an astrological background to the story. In Rev. 12:1, the woman is described as “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; . . . .” Rather than postulate an astrological source for this description, perhaps some Jewish antecedents should be considered. Being “clothed with the sun” may be a reference to the inclination to decorate ideal or representative figures with the imagery of heavenly bodies (e.g., Testament of Naphtali 5:1-5; Song of Sol. 6:10). The “twelve stars” could be an allusion to Joseph’s dream in Gen. 37:9, where the twelve sons of Jacob are seen as stars, and in which Jacob (Israel) is the sun and his wife, Rachel, the moon. The woman’s description continues by noting her advanced pregnancy in Rev. 12:2, to the point that she cried out in the midst of labor pains. Many times Israel is depicted in the Bible as a woman in childbirth. Finally, the woman goes off into the wilderness where she is

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57 Court, Myth and History, 108; and Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 197. The Testament of Naphtali passage has Levi clothed in the sun, while Judah becomes like the moon. The Song of Solomon passage describes the Bride in terms of both sun and moon. Perhaps here John is anticipating the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, who is described as having “a brilliance . . . like a very costly stone” in Rev. 21:11. Also, Rev. 1:16 describes Jesus’ face as “shining like the sun in its power.”

protected from the dragon (12:6, 14-16). The wilderness imagery is a frequent and powerful symbol in Jewish thought and Scripture. The wilderness is often the place of refuge where the people of God renew their relationship with Yahweh (e.g., Exod. 15:22-17:7; 1 Kings 19:1-18; and Hos. 2:14-15). The image here is obviously one of God's protective care of Israel in the Exodus and other trials.

In light of the Jewish symbols mentioned above, the likely interpretation of this woman is that she is Mother Zion, a Heavenly Israel, or a representative of ideal Israel (God's community) through whom Messiah comes. This woman, the representative of God's faithful community, gives birth first to Messiah (12:5) and later to other children with whom the dragon continues his war (12:17). For the first century audience, then, this woman is their mother in the faith (i.e., faithful Israel through whom Messiah comes) and one of them as well (inasmuch as she too is persecuted by the dragon). She is both Israel and the Church, the faithful community of God through whose birth pangs the

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4:26). Aus (260) points out that the birth "pangs" of Jerusalem were often taken to refer to Messianic woes, "a well-known eschatological motif in Judaism, primarily signifying for God's people the persecution and oppression to come upon them before their Messiah arrives." This idea may be present in Dan. 12:1, where a "time of trouble" is anticipated. The time of trouble, incidentally, is identified with a time when Michael would arise. Could it be that John read Dan. 12:1 as an indication that Michael had to come before the persecution of God's people would begin?

59 Aune, Revelation 6-16, 690-91; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 285-86, 293-94. The woman's time in the wilderness is "one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (12:6; cf. 12:14). This 3 1/2 year period is a common theme in apocalyptic literature (cf. Dan. 7:25; 12:7) and is variously expressed. In Rev. 11:2, the outer court of the temple is trampled by the nations for 42 months, while the woman escapes the dragon for "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14). This time period usually represents a period of eschatological crisis (cf. Rev. 13:4-5). See Court, Myth and History, 116.

eschatological, messianic age is initiated and against whom the persecution comes. The signal to the first century audience here may be that the "end" has arrived because Messiah has come and his coming resulted in persecution.

The dragon needed little introduction to the first century audience. The dragon often played a prominent role in the primordial combat myths known throughout Asia Minor, but in Revelation 12 his role takes a decidedly eschatological and apocalyptic turn. Certainly the red color of the dragon as well as its seven heads may be traced to ancient Babylonian or Egyptian mythology, but the remaining characteristics apparently come from Jewish apocalyptic literature. The ten horns of the dragon are reminiscent of the apocalyptic vision of the fourth beast in Dan. 7:7, 24. Likewise the reference to the dragon's tail sweeping down a third of the stars sounds suspiciously like the actions of the little horn of Dan. 8:9-10. Finally, the dragon is explicitly identified by John in Rev.

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61 Aus, "Relevance of Isaiah 66:7," 258-61. Aus notes that a tradition of Messianic woes (a result of a combination of the "birth-pangs" imagery of Isa. 66:7 with the "time of trouble" of Dan. 12:1) is a common theme in Jewish and Christian eschatological expectations. He cites 2 Esd. 4:51-5:13; 6:21-24; 2 Baruch 25-30:1; 1QH 3:2-18; Mark 13; Matt. 24; and Luke 21 as evidence. Aus mentions that "woes" are present in Revelation 8-11 just prior to the birth of Messiah to the woman of 12:1. Rev. 12:12 also includes a "woe" for the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to them in anger.

62 For a discussion of dragon imagery in Jewish theological thought, see Prigent, Apocalypse 12, 128-35; Collins, Combat Myth, 61-70, 76-79; Benson, "Revelation 12," 97-101; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 185-98; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 667-70, 683-87. The dragon (or Leviathan or Rahab) as a chaos monster and enemy of God is almost a stock image in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Job 26:12-13; Pss. 74:12-14; 89:8-10; and Isa. 27:1; 51:9-10).

63 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 318-19; Benson, "Revelation 12," 98-102; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 188-89; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 682-83. Benson further notes that "the Old Testament references to the dragon are used to illustrate God's power in either primordial or eschatological context," and he draws special attention to Pss. 74:12-17 and 89:8-10. The eschatological destruction of the dragon is especially prominent in Isaiah 27:1. This eschatological hope of the downfall of the representative of evil is carried over into the intertestamental period, where some apocalyptic texts present the defeat of the dragon as a result of the coming of Messiah (cf. 2 Baruch 29:3-4; 2 Esd., 6:49-52; and Testament of Asher 7:3).

12:9-10. Here the dragon is described in Old Testament terms. He is “the ancient
serpent, the one called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world . . . .” The
imagery here may be traced back to the serpent of Genesis 3, with whom the woman and
her offspring are destined to be at odds (Gen. 3:15). This idea of enmity from Genesis 3
may also be the tradition behind the dragon making war with the other children of Mother
Zion in Rev. 12:17. The serpent terminology is also tied to the dragon concept in Isa.
27:1, where God will punish his ancient foe in an eschatological judgment. Satan’s
accusatory role is often understood in a judicial manner.65

The violent, seven-headed dragon of Revelation 12, then, apparently draws on a
diverse set of traditions. Many of the dragon’s characteristics, however, come from
Jewish apocalyptic literature. In Revelation 12, the dragon is cast in a decidedly
eschatological light, but not without reference to his primordial conflict and defeat. This
dragon attacks the woman (representative of God’s faithful community), tries to devour
Messiah, and then turns his anger towards the other children of the woman. He is the
ancient enemy who brings persecution and whose defeat by God and his Messiah is
certain. The signal to the first century audience would be that their opponent is a
frightening, ancient, powerful enemy, but his defeat is sure because Messiah has come

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65 Zech. 3:1-5; Job 1:6; 1 Chron. 21:1. See Fekkes (Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions, 188) and
Thompson (Revelation, 135) for a full list of references.
and ushered in the final age in which the people of God will emerge victorious, but not without some persecution (cf. *Shepherd of Hermas Similitude* VIII 1:1-3:8).

The third main character of this narrative is the son born to the heavenly woman. Mentioned primarily in Rev. 12:4-5, this child is generally considered to be representative of Messiah due to the reference to Psalm 2.66 This Psalm is an enthronement hymn, most likely composed for the coronation of an Israelite king at the time when he ascended to his throne. The king was traditionally anointed with oil to signify his position, and this anointing is represented in the word “Messiah” (or, “anointed one”). As a result, Psalm 2 was often interpreted as a hymn about Messiah, especially with reference to Messiah’s judicial and martial abilities to remove oppressors in the messianic age.67 The use of Ps. 2:9 in Rev. 12:5, then, would signal to the first century audience that this child was the much anticipated Messiah. But what kind of Messiah was he, and who was he?

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66 Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 1, 320-21; Collins, *Combat Myth*, 104-5; Mounce, *Revelation* (1977), 238-39; Court, *Myth and History*, 109-10; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 199-200; and Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 284. Fekkes (*Isaiah and the Prophetic Tradition*, 183-85) notes the apparent redundancy of calling this messianic offspring both “a son” (uioV) and “male” (dpovV) and concludes that John may have synthesized two layers of tradition in this verse—Isa. 66:7-8 and Ps. 2:7-9. This synthesis follows the symbolic similarities Fekkes finds between Rev. 12 and Isa. 66. A woman, the collective symbol of Zion/Israel, gives birth to a son (Messiah?) and to other children (cf. Isa. 66:7-8; Rev. 12:5, 17). Adding Psalm 2 to the mix identifies the “son” as Messiah, while the Isa. 66 reference to the woman giving birth lends Rev. 12 an “eschatological” aspect in which the end is inaugurated by the birth of Messiah and subsequent destruction of the oppressors. See also, Aus, “Relevance of Isa. 66:7,” 255-56.

67 Caird, *Revelation*, 149-50; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1979), 194, 197; Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 139-40, 391-92; and Aune, *Revelation* 6-16, 688. Note the application of Psalm 2 to the Davidic Messiah in *Psalms of Solomon* 17:21-25. This particular passage includes a reference to the purging of the Temple and Jerusalem, a theme found in Rev. 11:1-3. In fact, the language of *Pss. Solomon* 17 and Rev. 11 is strikingly similar. In *Pss. Solomon* 17:22, the psalmist implores God to purge the city and to remove the “gentiles who trample her (Jerusalem) to destruction,” while Rev. 11:2 describes a section of the Temple that “is given over to the nations (touc eVou, also translated “Gentiles”), and they will trample over the holy city . . . .” At the very least, both the authors expected a kingly Messiah who would usher in the last age and ultimately overthrow the enemies of God’s people.
Psalm 2:9 appears only three times in the New Testament, and all three times are in Revelation (2:26-27; 12:5; and 19:15). In Rev. 2:26-27, Ps. 2:9 is used as a promise to the faithful in the church at Thyatira. In 19:15, Ps. 2:9 is applied to the rider on the white horse, whose description would lead the first century readers/hearers to conclude that the rider was Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Since Rev. 12:5 specifically refers to a singular male child, it seems most likely that John (and his audience) would have had Jesus in mind. John does not explicitly name the child in Rev. 12:5, however, and gives no other indication of his messianic status beyond the use of Ps. 2:9.

The child is “snatched away (ἡρπάσθη) to God and to his throne” after he is born. He evidently makes no effort on his own behalf, he is simply caught up by someone else. Many scholars find in Rev. 12:5 a reference to the ascension of Christ like

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69 Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 1, 308-9; A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 104-5; and Court, *Myth and History*, 109-10. Charles argues that the passive nature of the child gives some evidence of a Jewish source for this story, and he points to several Jewish traditions that present Messiah as born and hidden away. A Christian view would include references to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, according to Charles, and so could not be the source of this passage. Court (110) argues that the Messiah of this passage does not fit well in either a Christian or Jewish purview, but that “it is reasonable to conclude that the birth of Jesus Christ is intended by the birth of the child.”

70 The word ἡρπάσθη is an aorist passive of ἀρπάζω. Other verses using a form of this word include Matt. 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12; 10:28-29; Acts 23:10; and Jude 23. The basic meaning of the word contains the idea of stealing, carrying off, dragging away, and snatching or taking away. The primary connotation seems to be an almost violent removal (see Acts 23:10). The word ἀρπάζω is also used with reference to an ascent to another place or realm (e.g., Acts 8:39; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; 1 Thess. 4:17; cf. Wisd. of Sol. 4:10-11, where the term is used to describe Enoch’s experience of being caught up by God).
that mentioned in Luke 24:52 and Acts 1:7-9. Another possible interpretation is that the child is caught up in the sense of being enthroned or exalted. That is, by being caught up “to God and to his throne,” the child (Jesus) is exalted or enthroned in heaven just as the king ascends to his throne in Psalm 2:7-9. Being “caught up” may be a reference to the kind of ascension in the intertestamental literature in which an ideal Old Testament figure (e.g., Enoch or Abraham) embarks on a kind of heavenly journey.

71 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 320-21; Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), 151; Prigent, Apocalypse 12, 8, 136; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 199-200; Wall, Revelation, 159; Metzger, Breaking the Code, 73; Christopher Rowland, Revelation, Epworth Commentaries (London, England: Epworth Press, 1993), 103-4; and González and González, Revelation, 78-79. Although this interpretation is traditional, David Aune (Revelation 6-16, 689-90) concludes that it is secondary, arguing that the ultimate source for this “seizure motif” is Greek mythology. Aune notes at least two reasons why Jesus’ ascension may not be the topic in Rev. 12:5: (1) Unlike the ascension narratives in Luke and Acts, the “catching up” of the child occurs immediately after his birth (A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 105). (2) The ascension of Jesus is not usually presented as a supernatural “rescue” from Satan (Gollinger, Das „große Zeichen”, 151-57).

72 André Feuillet, “The Messiah and His Mother according to Apocalypse 12,” in Johannine Studies (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965), 257-92; Caird, Revelation, 149-50; Hedrick, “Sources and Use,” 187; and Talbert, Apocalypse, 49. The argument here identifies Rev. 12:5 as a part of an ongoing exposition of Ps. 2:7-9 (begun in Rev. 11:17-18). In Psalm 2, God says to the king, “my son, today have I begotten you,” and then God gives the king authority over all the nations at the king’s ascension to the throne, not at his birth. According to Caird, “Sonship and enthronement belong inseparably together, and therefore the male child is no sooner born than he is snatched away to God and to his throne” (Revelation, 150). This combination is attested to in other Christian Scripture, especially in Acts 2:32-36, 13:33, and Rom. 1:3-4. The problem with this approach is that these passages focus more on Christ’s resurrection than his ascension, and the language of Rev. 12:5 seems particularly focused on an ascension. A similar approach is found in the use of Ps. 110:1 to assert that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, i.e., exalted to the place of honor. See Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Col. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:3, 13; and 1 Pet. 3:22. The problem for Rev. 12 is that there is no apparent allusion to Psalm 110, unless the terminology “to God and to his throne” is meant to refer to the Psalm (see Aune, Revelation 6-16, 689).

73 1 Enoch 14:1-15:1 and Testament of Abraham 10-14. For further discussion, see Mary Dean-Otting, Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature, Judentum und Umwelt Herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Dr. Johann Maier, Band 8 (New York, NY: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), 46-58, 196-209, 262-90; and Martha Himmelfarb, “Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses,” in Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium, edited by John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series, 9 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 81-82, 89. On these journeys the heroes often have an angelic host/interpreter, and sometimes that angel is Michael (Dean-Otting, Heavenly Journeys, 273-74, 278). The problem with this view is that ἀνάβασις is not often used to describe these journeys. Also, unlike the heavenly journeys of Enoch or Abraham, Rev. 12 includes no description of the child’s journey into heaven, it is simply stated as a mere fact.
Although none of these interpretations fits the exact story of Revelation 12, at the very least this passage recognizes that the child is taken to heaven after his birth, and the mode of travel is described as an ascent. In fact, the first two interpretations above hold the most promise since they fit the Christian perspective of the author and most likely that of the first readers/hearers as well. So, the child of Rev. 12:4-5 is described in Jewish and messianic terms, although he is not specifically identified with Jesus. The signals to the first century audience would be that Messiah has come and has been rescued from the dragon (or, has ascended or been exalted?).

In conclusion, Rev. 12:1-6 and 13-17 presents a story steeped in Jewish eschatological traditions. Mother Zion, the ideal faithful community, gives birth to a messianic child, after which she and her child are threatened by the dragon (who is in reality the ancient foe Satan). Both the mother and the child receive some kind of help or rescue (the mother finds refuge in the wilderness, while the child is snatched away to heaven). The dragon continues to wage his unholy war, only he turns his attention to the other children of the woman. The first century audience would understand this story as relating to them and the current crisis in their community of faith. They would no doubt recognize the threats and persecutions suffered by the mother and her children as their own experience under Roman rule. The eschatological framework of the characters

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74 David Aune (Revelation 6-16, 689) notes that the identity of the child is problematic, "especially if the allusion to Psalm 2:9 is regarded as a later addition." Aune notes at least two allusions to Isa. 66:6-14 in Rev. 12:1-5 and offers as a possible interpretation the emergence of a new city, with Zion as the heavenly mother and Jerusalem as the child. See also, Fekkes, Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions, 184-85. Although Aune does not propose this interpretation as standard, it raises the fundamental question of the child’s identity. Murphy (Fallen is Babylon, 284-85) recognizes that such interpretations are possible because "the statement in 12:5, taken only within the verses that deal directly with the woman and the dragon (12:1-6, 13-17), does not adequately express the christology [sic] of Revelation." Could the first century audience understand Rev. 12:5 as a reference to Jerusalem or to their own faithful community? Given their Christian background this approach seems unlikely, but it may be possible.
would perhaps cause the audience to think of the Messianic woes. The rescue of the woman and the child would hold out to the suffering community the hope that God would also rescue them in due time. After all, the child was now safe from the dragon, or was he? The rescue or snatching up of the child leads directly into the war in heaven, the second story of Revelation 12.

_Revelation 12:7-12: Jewish or Christian Eschatological War?_

The second main section of Revelation 12 appears as an intrusive narrative fragment, interrupting the story about the woman, the dragon, and the woman’s children. Since the first narrative gleans its imagery from the harvest of Jewish eschatological and apocalyptic materials, it is reasonable to assume that the second also finds its voice in Jewish traditions. The following investigation will examine the characters in Rev. 12:7-9 in light of a primarily Jewish apocalyptic milieu. John’s attempt at reinterpreting these Jewish materials in a decidedly Christian manner by the addition of the hymn in 12:10-12 will also be investigated.

This section of Revelation starts off with a mere statement of fact—"There was war in heaven" (12:7). No explicit reason for the war is given, but the implied reason is

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75 Most of the traditions referred to in this section were dealt with in chapter 3, especially those dealing with Michael stories. The background of these traditions has already been established as a Jewish apocalyptic milieu. So, this section will be primarily focused on how these traditions informed the reading of Rev. 12:7-12. For more on the Jewish background to Rev. 12:7-9, Prigent, _Apocalypse 12_, 120-35; Charles, _Revelation_, vol. 1, 298-314; Hedrick, "Sources and Use," 168; Collins, _Combat Myth_, 104-16; and Fossum, _Name a God_, 327-28.

76 Heavenly wars are found in some Jewish traditions. See, for example, 2 Macc. 5:1-3; _Sibyllic Oracle_ 3:796-808; 5:512-514. Some apocalyptic materials that include heavenly wars are: Dan. 10:12-14, 18-21; IQM 17:5-8; 11QMelch 2:7-14; and _Testament of Moses_ 10:1-2. With the exception of 11QMelch and _Testament of Moses_, Michael is explicitly identified as a leader of the hosts of heaven in these battles. See Charles, _Revelation_, vol. 1, 323-24.
that the heavenly battle resulted from the dragon’s futile attempt to devour the child.\textsuperscript{77} Whatever the reason, the combatants in the war are clear. Michael and his angels stand in opposition to the dragon and his angels. The dragon’s identity is clearly stated, he is “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan” (Rev. 12:9). The Jewish traditions behind this image have already been mentioned. Michael, on the other hand, is a new character.

Although John most likely drew from many traditions in writing Revelation, the milieu from which the Michael stories originate is distinctively apocalyptic. John introduces Michael with a strange grammatical structure, the articular infinitive τοῦ πολέμησαι.\textsuperscript{78} This odd structure, with Michael as its subject, seems to be an allusion to a similar articular infinitive in Dan. 10:20-21. The sense of this construction is one of necessity, i.e., “Michael and his angels had to make war.”\textsuperscript{79} Michael as a warrior appears often in Jewish apocalyptic materials, especially where he is the protector of God’s people or defender of God’s purposes against evil agents (e.g., 1 Enoch 10:11-16; 90:4; Dan. 10:12-14, 18-21; 12:1; 1QM 17:5-8; Testament of Moses 10:1-2; cf. 11QMelch 2:7-14). Michael’s appearance in these texts takes on a decidedly martial role. Jewish apocalyptic literature also casts Michael in a judicial role, however, in which he defends the righteous from accusations made against them by evil angels or some version of Satan...

\textsuperscript{77} Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 201; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 691.

\textsuperscript{78} Beale, “Solecisms in the Apocalypse,” 431-33. For more on this structure, see footnote 50.

\textsuperscript{79} Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 322; and Beale, “Solecisms in the Apocalypse,” 432.
In these cases, Michael is an advocate, a defense attorney of sorts, standing up for God’s people against the accusations filed against them.

The story continues in 12:8 by stating that the dragon and his angels “did not prevail (or, were not able, strong enough, καὶ οὐκ ἵσχυσεν), and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven (οὐδὲς τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτῶν ἐτέρω τῷ οὐρανῷ).” The first part of this verse (καὶ οὐκ ἵσχυσεν) may be taken as an allusion to Dan. 7:21, where the little horn makes war with the saints and prevails over them. The second part (especially οὐδὲς τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτῶν) is reminiscent of Dan. 2:35 (Theod.) in which the wind blows away the pieces of the devastated statue after it was struck by the stone.81

Revelation 12:8 implies that the dragon and his angels once had a place in heaven, but as a result of this heavenly battle, they no longer have one. This idea is reinforced in 12:9 where the dragon and his angels are thrown down to the earth.82 Some scholars find a primeval myth behind the story of the dragon’s expulsion from heaven. Pointing to

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81 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 324-25; Swete, Apocalypse, 153-54; Beale, “Solecisms in the Apocalypse,” 433; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 695. The second allusion is practically a quote of Dan. 2, but the first allusion seems tenuous. The wording is similar, but the comparison between the horn prevailing and the dragon failing to prevail is difficult to understand (unless John is trying to tie the dragon and his acts to the horn and his acts since both of them attack the stars and prevail). In fact, Rev. 12:17 seems more of an allusion to Dan. 7:21 in that the dragon makes war against the woman’s other children (much like the horn makes war against the saints). Nonetheless, these allusions show that John relied heavily on Daniel for much of his imagery in Revelation 12. As Murphy (Fallen is Babylon, 287) notes, “Revelation 12 and Daniel share the assault on the heaven, the repulsion of that assault which is put in terms of warring angelic forces, the eschatological woes, and a major eschatological role for the archangel Michael.”

82 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 324-25; Swete, Apocalypse, 154; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 201-2; Wall, Revelation, 162-63; Talbert, Apocalypse, 50; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 286-87.
ancient stories such as Isa. 14:12-16, these scholars claim that John inserted a primordial story of the fall of evil angels into an eschatological setting. Rev. 12:7-9 certainly reflects some elements of the typical primordial fall stories. These stories include a war, or more accurately, an assault on the heavens initiated by evil angels (or, in the typical fall story, by the angels who from pride become evil), and an expulsion or judgment of some sort occurs in which the evil angels are thrown out of the heavenly courts. The fall stories are similar to the combat myth in that the dragon launches an assault on other heavenly agents only to be repulsed and judged.

In spite of the similarities with a primordial fall story, Rev. 12:7-9 does not quite fit the mold. First, as a fall story Rev. 12:7-9 seems redundant because verse 3 has already alluded to the fall of the dragon/Satan by reference to his tail sweeping away a third of the stars (a possible allusion to Dan. 8:9-11 and Isa. 14:12-15). Also, 12:9 gives a full description of the dragon, and the names given for him imply that this dragon is the already fallen Satan (cf. Isa. 27:1). That is, his position of accuser and deceiver are evidence that he has already fallen (i.e., at an earlier time). Second, unlike most fall stories, Revelation 12 mentions no final destruction of the dragon and his angels. The dragon and his angels simply lose their status or place in the heavenly court. That is, they are “cast” or “thrown” down, but they are not consigned to destruction nor is there a final eschatological confrontation in which evil is judged and abolished. They are merely cast

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83 Caird, Revelation, 153-54; Hedrick, “Sources and Use,” 189; A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 108-9; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 695-96; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 287-88.

84 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 319-20; Swete, Apocalypse, 149-50; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 198-99; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 685-86. The allusion to Dan. 8:10 in Rev. 12:4 has been variously interpreted. The dragging down of the stars by the dragon/Satan is a story reflected in 1 Enoch 6-11 (the story of the fall of the watchers) and Life of Adam and Eve 12-16 (Satan recounts his own fall).
out of heaven and down to the earth. Third, no reason is given for the dragon's assault on
the woman or her first child. Unlike the combat myths and other fall stories, there is no
prophecy of the child's appointed status as destroyer of the dragon. Finally, Rev. 12:7-9
makes no reference to the arrogance of the dragon. No mention is given of the dragon's
desire to take the place of God or to rule over the heavens. 85

The view that Rev. 12:7-9 is a form of a primordial fall story may actually place
the focus on the wrong character. The dragon plays a pivotal role in the story, but the
focus should perhaps be on Michael and Messiah. 86 In other words, John uses this
intrusive narrative to introduce two themes into his story—(1) the coming of Michael,
and (2) the establishment of Messiah's authority (cf. 12:5; Ps. 2:9). Most of the actors in
Revelation are described symbolically or indirectly. Few characters are explicitly named
or mentioned (outside of the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3). Satan,
God, and Jesus are all explicitly named, as is Michael. The fact that Michael shows up
here may mean that John had in mind a particular use for him or a particular event
involving him. What use or event could that be? Which of Michael's many roles is
prominent in Rev. 12:7?

According to the conceptual grid developed in chapter 3, Michael appears in
several roles at different events. He serves as the leader of an angelic army, often in an

85 Fekkes, Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions, 188-89. After noting the lack of Satan's ambition to
ascend the heavens in this passage, Fekkes adds that "Satan is cast in his typical role as the heavenly
adversary, complete with explicit courtroom imagery" (188). Fekkes also considers it unlikely that John
specifically used Isa. 14 as a background for the war in Rev. 12:7-9.

86 Caird, Revelation, 153-55; Court, Myth and History, 114-15; and Fekkes, Isaiah and Prophetic
Traditions, 186-89. Hedrick ("Sources and Use," 183-84) would tentatively agree with this assessment, but
he adds that Michael is merely a substitute for the child/champion of the combat myth. He gives as a reason
that John intended to portray Christ in leadership in the final battle, thus precluding the involvement of
Messiah in Rev. 12:7-9.
eschatological event (Dan. 10:12-14; 18-21; 12:1; 2 Enoch 22:6; 33:10; 71:28; and 1QM 17:6-7). He also functions as an intercessory angel or in a priestly manner (1 Enoch 68:1-5; 2 Enoch 33:10; 1QM 13:9-14; Test. of Moses 10:1-2; cf. IQ13 2:7-14 and Zech. 3:1-5). Michael is described as the guardian of Israel, the righteous, or the best part of humanity (Latin Life of Adam and Eve 32:3; 1 Enoch 20:1-5; Dan. 12:1). This role as guardian is further particularized in 4QAmram and Jude 9 (cf. Zech. 3:1-5) where the focus is on Michael’s guardianship over an individual (e.g., Amram or Moses) rather than a group.\(^87\) The chronological development of these roles runs from a militaristic, eschatological Michael to later stories of a judicial, particular defender. That is, Michael’s roles move from destroying evil as the leader of the eschatological army to defending the righteous who are falsely accused. By the time of John’s writing of Revelation 12, then, Michael’s role in apocalyptic literature had dramatically evolved from a martial aspect to a more judicial one. This evolution does not mean that Michael could not play both roles, but it reveals a changing focus among Jewish apocalyptic writers.

The first century audience may well have been familiar with these roles for Michael.\(^88\) They may have even expected an eschatological event in which Michael comes to establish righteousness and abolish evil (Dan. 12:1 and 1QM 17:5-8; cf. 11QMelch 2:7-14, where Melchizedek plays a similar role). The event in Rev. 12:7-9 has eschatological implications, but it is not the final battle between good and evil. Could


Michael’s role be a combination of eschatological expectation and judicial defense?
Could Michael be the defender of the messianic child?

The child in Rev. 12:4-5 is attacked by the dragon without provocation, but the
dragon is prevented from injuring the child because the child is “snatched away” (i.e.,
exalted, enthroned, ascends) to God’s throne.\footnote{Charles, \textit{Revelation}, vol. 1, 320-21; Beasley-Murray, \textit{Revelation}, 200; Court, \textit{Myth and History}, 109-10; and Aune, \textit{Revelation 6-16}, 689-90.} The child is passive in his ascent, like
Moses, Amram, and Abraham (\textit{Testament of Moses}, \textit{4QAmram}, and \textit{Testament of
Abraham}). Could the child’s passivity imply a challenge by the dragon to the child’s
rightful inheritance? As in \textit{4QAmram} and the lost ending of the \textit{Testament/Assumption of
Moses}, Satan (the dragon) may challenge the right of the child to ascend to God’s throne.
Of course, this challenge is implied in Revelation 12, but in light of the other traditions in
which a righteous soul ascends to God (often with Michael’s help) and is challenged by
the head of the evil angels, the possibility exists that a similar event is in mind here.
Michael, then, may well be defending the child against the dragon’s accusations (hence
the emphasis on the dragon as an accuser, mentioned in Rev. 12:9-10).

A war occurs in which Michael and his angels are forced to fight the dragon and
his angels. The use of \textit{τοῦ πολέμησαι} with the phrase \textit{μετὰ τοῦ δράκοντος} and
Michael as the subject gives a sense of necessity to the battle that implies that Michael
and his angels “had” to fight.\footnote{Charles, \textit{Revelation}, vol. 1, 322; and Beale, “Solecisms in the Apocalypse,” 432-33.} The reason they had to fight could be that they were
attacked by the dragon for defending the child. The war results in the defeat of the
dragon and his angels so that “there was no longer any place for them in heaven.” The
“no longer” implies that the dragon and his angels once had a place that they now have lost.91 Why did they lose their place in heaven? John explains that in Rev. 12:10-12.

The hymn of Rev. 12:10-12 serves as a sort of bridge between the events in verses 1-3, 13-17 and 7-9. The hymn interprets the events described in both stories. In other words, Rev. 12:10-12 provides new information for the audience.92 As already noted, this material probably originated with John and represents the most Christian element of Revelation 12. In the heavenly war of 12:7-9, Michael and his angels are the primary agents of the dragon’s defeat, but the hymn ascribes the victory to the Lamb and his followers (12:11). The language of the proclamation in 12:10 shows similarities to other hymns in Revelation (e.g., 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 7:10; 10:4; 19:1) and the theology of verse 11 (including the ideas of conquering, the Lamb, and possible martyrdom) is similar to other motifs throughout the book.93 So, the hymn in Rev. 12:10 acts as a bridge between the main events of chapter 12, while at the same time bringing into the story the general thematic thrust of the rest of Revelation.

Among the familiar themes of Revelation found in 12:10-12 is the concept of assigning salvation, power, and a kingdom to God (v. 10; cf. 1:6; 5:10; 7:10; 11:15; and

91 Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 324-25; Swete, Apocalypse, 154; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 201-2; Wall, Revelation, 162-63; Talbert, Apocalypse, 50; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 286-87.

92 Blevins, “Genre of Revelation,” 399-400, 402; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 289-90. See also, A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, 112-13; Court, Myth and History, 114; Mounce, Revelation (1977) 242-43; and Boring, Revelation, 158.

93 For references to the blood of the Lamb, see Rev. 5:12-13; 6:16; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 13:8; and 17:14. For references to making a good testimony and being a faithful witness (martyr?), see Rev. 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 6:9; 11:7; 12:17; 19:10; and 20:4. See also Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 326-27.
19:1). The proclamation in verse 10 reads, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, the one who accuses them before our God day and night." This verse is the only place in Revelation that ἐξουσία ("authority") is explicitly used with reference to Christ. In Rev. 2:26, Christ promises ἐξουσία to the overcoming Christians in Thyatira, but the authority of Christ is implied and not explicitly mentioned. The emphasis on "now" (ἐκτός) in verse 10 is similar to the use of ἐτι in 12:8. These two verses are evidently tied together in that the dragon "no longer" has a place in heaven at the same time that God's kingdom has "now" come. The two events coincide. The dragon's expulsion from heaven is not merely the result of the war, but it results in the authority of Christ being established. Since the dragon's repulsion occurs during the heavenly battle in Rev. 12:7-9, it seems reasonable that the establishment of Christ's authority is also somehow tied to the actions of Michael and his angels. That is, the victory on the part of Messiah's defenders (Michael and his angels) serves to establish the authority of Christ. The enthronement or exaltation of the child causes the war as

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94 Also found elsewhere in Revelation is the idea of a "loud voice" (φωνὴν μεγάλην) issuing proclamations about God or the Lamb (5:2, 11-12; 7:10; 11:15; 14:7; 19:1, 6; and 21:3; cf. 1:10). See also Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 290-91.

95 Elsewhere in early Jewish literature and the New Testament, authority is given by God to Jesus or to other redeemer figures (Matt. 28:18; John 5:26-27; 10:18; 17:1-2; Eph. 1:20-21; Dan. 7:13; 1 Enoch 69:26-27; 1QM 17:5-8; 11QMelch 2:9-11). For more discussion on the various uses of ἐξουσία, see Aune, Revelation 6-16, 700.

96 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 202-4; Boring, Revelation, 158-59; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 290-92; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 699-700.

97 Caird, Revelation, 153-54; Hedrick, "Sources and Use," 180-84; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 291. An interesting reference to Michael and to authority is found in 1QM 17:5-8, where God supports his people by "the power of the majestic angel of the authority of Michael" (cf. Dan. 12:1). Later, God is said to "exalt the authority of Michael among the gods and the dominion of Israel among all flesh." Michael (and his authority) appear to be a harbinger of the eschatological end at which time the righteous
Michael is forced to defend the Messiah against the dragon, but it also in a sense finishes the war. The Messiah is exalted or snatched up to God's throne (12:5) and as a result the dragon/Satan loses his place when Messiah is enthroned (cf. Zech. 3:1-5; Job 1:6).  

While the themes expressed in Rev. 12:10-12 introduce the narrative to follow, verse 12 seems to point the plot back to the story in verses 7-9. In other words, the hymn prepares the audience for what comes next, while also pointing them back to what has happened. As such, it seems reasonable to conclude that Rev. 12:10-12 exists primarily as a means of tying the heavenly war story back to the narrative about the woman and the dragon. Verse 12 especially functions in this manner by referring to the dragon's loss of place in heaven (12:8-9) and to the reason for problems among those on earth (i.e., the dragon is angry because his time is short, cf. 12:13-17). The narrative now moves from the heavens to the events on the earth (and, presumably, in the lives of the first century hearers/readers).

The story in Rev. 12:9-12 borrows heavily from Jewish eschatological and apocalyptic imagery (especially from Daniel), but it also appears to be a Christian reinterpretation of an eschatological event. That is, both Jewish and Christian

will be vindicated and the oppressors defeated and judged. Could John have a similar idea in mind here? He may have recognized Michael's eschatological role and yet assigned the authority to Messiah instead, thus Christianizing the event.

98 Luke 10 reflects a similar idea. In verse 17 the seventy note that "even the demons are subject to us in your name," to which Jesus responds, "I was watching Satan fall as lightning from the heaven" (10:18). The result of this fall gives the followers of Jesus authority over the powers of the evil angels (Luke 10:19). Susan Garrett understands this fall of Satan as a future event tied to Christ's ascension (cf. Luke 22:67-69; 24:44-49; Acts 1:30-35). She sees Luke 10:18 as a prophecy of the ascension because of the use of the word ἐθέσατο, a word that Garrett contends is used in the LXX to convey the idea of a prophetic vision (cf. Daniel 7:2-13). See Susan Garrett, The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 49-53.

99 Collins, Combat Myth, 112-13; and Court, Myth and History, 114.
eschatology figure into the events described in these verses.\footnote{That John relied heavily on Daniel for materials in Rev. 12 has already been shown. See Charles, Revelation, vol.1, lxxv-lxxxvi, Swete, Apocalypse, cxxviii, cliii-clviii; George Wesley Buchanan, The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy, The Mellen Biblical Commentary, New Testament Series, vol. 22 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 11-14, 280-307; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 287. Michael plays an important role in Daniel (especially chapters 10 and 12, in which he is depicted in both a martial and judicial mode). Michael appears at the end of the age according to Dan. 12:1, ushering in a time of trouble and judgment. Could John in Rev. 12:7-9 be reinterpreting Daniel's expectation for Michael? Revelation mirrors the nexus of themes in Dan. 12:1-2, especially the emphasis on resurrection, judgment, deliverance, and a book of judgment, but "it is not Michael who has arisen to effect salvation for the people of God and to be the key figure . . . but Jesus the Lamb." See Peter R. Carrell, Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John, Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series, 95, Richard Bauckham, editor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 208-10. Carrell also notes that John recognized Michael's role in the salvation of God's people, but that he also reinterpreted that role as subservient to Jesus. So, Michael appears to defend against the dragon (Rev. 12:7), but Jesus leads the final assault on evil (19:14).}

The expectation that Michael would come at the end of time is tied to the exaltation of Christ and the establishment of Messianic authority. In other words, John seems to be saying that Michael has ushered in an eschatological age, but it is an age full of Messianic woes rather than the final destruction of evil (which occurs later in Revelation 19 and 20).\footnote{Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 209.}

Like the use of John the Baptist to represent Elijah in the Gospels, Michael's role in eschatological events is reinterpreted.\footnote{For John the Baptist as Elijah, see Matt. 11:7-15; 17:10-13; Luke 7:24-27; Mark 9:11-13; cf. Matt. 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 1:13-17. The early Christian community understood John to be the fulfillment of prophecies in Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 3:1; 4:5. According to Jewish tradition, Mal. 4:5 was interpreted to mean that Elijah the prophet would come before the appearance of Messiah, coinciding with the Day of Yahweh. John the Baptist is explicitly called "Elijah" by the Gospels.}

The resulting message for the first century audience is that Michael has indeed come and has engaged the dragon in battle. The result of the battle is not the destruction of evil, however, but rather the exaltation of Christ to a position of authority and the subsequent persecution of his followers. So, Michael plays both a martial and judicial role in Rev. 12:7-9. He is both the defender of Messiah and the leader of the other angels against the dragon. Now the story of...
Revelation 12 is complete and a reading through the conceptual grid of the first century audience is possible.

*Conclusion—A Reading of Revelation 12*

The first century audience is composed of Christians (possibly both Jew and Gentile) in the provinces of Asia Minor, especially associated with the seven cities in Revelation 2-3 (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea). These Christians come from diverse backgrounds and reflect various levels of education, income, and religious knowledge. For the most part, they would no doubt be familiar with Jewish eschatological thought and messianic ideas. In other words, much of the material discussed in this chapter would have been somewhat familiar to them. How would they understand the story of Revelation 12?

The first century audience would probably be expecting some kind of final judgment in the book after the events of Revelation 11. The death and subsequent resurrection of the two witnesses and the sounding of the seventh trumpet would have caused an expectation of imminent judgment. Especially when Revelation 11 ends with an allusion to Psalm 2 ("the nations raged, but your wrath came") and the references to the judgment of dead and the rewarding of the saints (11:18). The revelation of the ark of the covenant in the heavenly temple and the weather phenomena would have added to this expectation. So, the readers/hearers were probably caught off guard when they heard, "And a great sign appeared in the heaven . . . ." (Rev. 12:1). After being brought up to the brink of an eschatological judgment at least twice before (Rev. 6:12-17 and 8:1), the
audience would no doubt be ready to hear the end of all things is at hand. Instead, they get a brand new story.

In this story, the audience is treated to a whole new set of characters of whom they have not yet heard—a celestial woman, a dangerous dragon, a messianic child, and Michael. They might have understood the story in the following way. The story reads something like a Holy War narrative in that it includes a crisis/threat, a war, and a victory.103 The clues to the woman’s identity impressed upon them the idea of a heavenly Israel or an ideal faithful community from whom both the Messiah and the church are born. The dragon called up the images of the ancient foe of God and Israel from the Old Testament and especially the concepts of the accuser Satan and the deceiving serpent of the garden (Rev. 12:9; cf. Gen. 3:15 and Isa. 27:1). His opposition to the woman is clear, and this opposition represents the first element of threat. The dragon is threatening the mother of the faithful child and of the church.

To this woman a child is born, a child described in the messianic terms of Psalm 2. The second crisis or threat is directed towards the child. The dragon waits to devour the child. The first century audience may have wondered as to the historical antecedents of this event, but most likely they simply recognized that the ancient foe of God would naturally want to destroy his Messiah. The child is rescued, however, and snatched up to God and to his throne. Perhaps here they would have thought of the enthronement or exaltation of the king in Psalm 2, or they may have remembered the ascents of other

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faithful people (Enoch, Abraham, Moses, etc.). At any rate, the child is taken to God’s throne, and a war breaks out in heaven. This event ushers in the second part of the Holy War narrative.

The heavenly war may have been understood at first as an eschatological war in which evil is judged and destroyed. After all, Michael is there and the dragon is defeated, but this war is different than other eschatological battles. Perhaps upon hearing Michael’s name the first century audience remembered the stories in which Michael defends the righteous against the false accusations/attacks of Satan. If so, then they may have understood this war to result from the dragon attacking heaven to make his claim to the child or to the child’s place at God’s throne. Michael then defends the child and prevails over the dragon and his angels. The war is as much a judicial battle as it is a martial one. Both aspects are involved and the dragon loses his place as he is cast down to the earth. The war then concludes with the third part of the Holy War tradition, namely, the victory.

The victory is more elaborately spelled out in Rev. 12:10-12. It included the establishment of the authority of God’s Christ (which seems to include God’s salvation, power, and kingdom). The first century audience may also have understood victory to include both the death of their Messiah (αὐτῷ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ᾦρνίου, i.e., “they overcame him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb”) and their own potential martyrdom (διὰ τοῦ λόγου τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν

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104 Regardless of the kind of “ascent” intended here, the audience would no doubt understand this passage from a messianic perspective. See Caird, Revelation, 149-50; Sweet, Revelation, 96, 194, 197; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 139-40, 391-92.
That is, the establishment of the authority of God’s Christ came at a price. Just as the Lamb had to shed his blood, so also those who “hold to the testimony of Jesus” (12:17) will endure suffering and persecution.

This recognition of potential martyrdom would then be driven home in verses 13-17. A woe pronounced upon the earth in Rev. 12:12 (a messianic woe?) warns that the dragon is angry because his time is short. The first century audience was no doubt intimately familiar with the results of this woe and probably personally identified with the events in Rev. 12:13-17. The woman is attacked again, but (like the child) she obtains a divine means of rescue and a designated time of safety. The dragon, having lost two of his potential victims, turns on the other children of the woman and makes war on them (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 66:7-9). John’s audience would most likely identify with this persecuted band of people who “keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony (martyrdom? τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦν) of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).

The first century readers/hearers then may have understood Michael’s role as a sign of eschatological events. That is, Michael has come as prophesied, and trouble has come to God’s faithful because of Messiah (cf. Dan. 12:1-2). The message to the audience may have been that they have indeed entered the final age, the age of Messiah, because Michael appeared and the dragon lost his place. In the place of the accuser now sits Messiah, and he serves as an advocate for God’s faithful (cf. Rom. 8:31-36; Eph.

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105 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 212-13, 236-37; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 702-3; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 291-92.

1:15-23; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 2:14-18). So, the appearance of Michael signals an eschatological event (i.e., the exaltation of Messiah) that sets into motion persecution and suffering leading to the final judgment and destruction of evil (the Messianic woes). The message to the first century hearers/readers was that God would ultimately rescue them as surely as he rescued the child and the woman, but they must suffer a little while first. 107

This reading is by no means the only possible reading, however, and at least one other should be considered. Perhaps A. Y. Collins is correct and the first century audience would have understood the story of Revelation 12 more in terms of a combat myth than a holy war. If so, then it is also likely that they may have confused the child with Michael since Michael plays the role of champion in the story by defeating the dragon. How could this interpretation occur? In Rev. 1:12-16, Jesus appears in a vision to John and his appearance sounds like the Ancient of Days and “son of man” of Dan. 7:9-14 and the angel of Dan. 10:5. 108 Since the “son of man” materials may refer to Michael, the first century readers/hearers may have understood the vision of the risen

107 Caird, Apocalypse, 156-57; Court, Myth and History, 116, 120-21; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 205-6; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 235-37; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 291-95.

108 John J. Collins (Daniel, 290-91, 301, 311) interprets the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9-10) as a reference to Yahweh, but he notes that in an old Greek reading the ἰδως as was shortened to ἰδοι in Dan. 7:13 causing the Ancient of Days to be confused with the “son of man.” This confusion may explain the use of the imagery of Dan. 7:9-10 in a description of the risen Jesus in Revelation 1. Collins (Daniel, 310, 318-19) further notes that the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 (and later references in Daniel 10) is actually Michael. Using information gleaned from 1 Enoch 82-90 and other intertestamental materials, Collins argues that humans are often referred to as animals and that human characteristics are often given to angelic beings (e.g., the beasts of Daniel 7 are later referred to as human kings). The “one like a son of man” is given dominion and a kingdom. Michael is “one of the chief princes” (Dan. 10:13) and the prince of Israel (Dan. 12:1). Since Michael has such a prominent role, Collins concludes that he is the most likely candidate to be the “one like a son of man.” For more, see Collins, Daniel, 304-10, 318-19; J. J. Collins, “The Son of Man and the Saints of the Most High in the Book of Daniel,” Journal of Biblical Literature 93 (1974): 50-66; Alan F. Segal, Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinc Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, vol. 25, Jacob Neusner, ed. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1977), 200-1; Kobelski, Melchizedek, 133-37; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 246-52.
Jesus to be angelic or even to refer to Michael himself. The appearance of Michael in Rev. 12:7 would encourage this interpretation by identifying the child/champion by the name “Michael.” In other words, the first century audience may have been operating under an angelic Christology by which they identified Messiah with an angel (in this case, Michael). Since this interpretation is a possibility, an investigation of the Christology of Revelation is in order. Chapter 5 will briefly consider John’s Christology in order to determine whether or not Michael could be read as Messiah in Revelation 12.

109 Authentication for a similar conclusion exists among several groups in early Christianity who held to a form of angel Christology. This statement holds true for the author of Shepherd of Hermas (see Similitude V, 4:4; VIII, 1:1-2; 2:1-3; IX, 12:7-8), who seems to equate Michael with Jesus. Also, the Ebionites apparently held to a version of Christ in which he is actually an archangel. For more on the Ebionites and Hermas, see Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicea, Vol. One (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1964), 56-58, 119-25; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 101-9 and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 214-28. J. J. Collins (Daniel, 120) also notes that Martin Luther understood Michael in Dan. 12:1 and Rev. 12:7 as referring to Christ, albeit in a more allegorical manner than Hermas or the Ebionites. A modern day interpretation that equates Michael with Christ is found in the theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.
Christological concepts among the early Christians (and especially Jewish Christians) evolved primarily out of the milieu of Jewish messianic traditions and eschatological hope. As doctrines about Messiah developed into a system of reverence for Jesus as the Christ, Christian viewpoints continued to draw ideological water from the streams of early Judaism. Although some scholars argue that the veneration of Jesus ultimately set Christianity apart from other expressions of Judaism by establishing Jesus as a divine figure, these Christian ideas about Messiah were firmly rooted in a fertile Jewish soil. In other words, Jewish theology provided many interpretive streams from which the Christian reverence for Jesus could flow.

One Jewish stream through which christological ideas were filtered was the appearance of intermediary beings in the Hebrew Scriptures. Chief among these beings was the Angel of the Lord through whom God performed mighty works or enacted his

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plans. Although messianic concepts originated in an expectation of a successor to David's kingdom, the doctrines concerning Messiah grew more eschatological as each generation became further removed from the Jewish monarchy. The evolving eschatological character of Jewish messianic hope allowed the incorporation of angelic characteristics into the doctrine of Messiah, especially in apocalyptic literature. As a result, messianic speculation among the Jews often revolved around figures who were as much angelic as they were human. These figures (prominent in the intertestamental literature of the Jewish pseudepigrapha) became a type of template for early Christian thought with regards to Jesus as God's Messiah.

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The use of Jewish intermediary (especially angelic) figures to forge a concept of Messiah led to a type of “angel” or “angelomorphic” Christology. In fact, during the first four centuries of the Common Era, Christian leaders regularly referred to Christ in angelic terms, often even calling him “Angel.” Early Christian writers, borrowing from Jewish traditions, often described Jesus using Scripture related to angels. Even in the New Testament, Christ is sometimes described in angelomorphic terms. Given John’s familiarity with Jewish apocalyptic materials (a rich source of angelic traditions), it should come as no surprise to find him utilizing some form of angelomorphic language in Revelation. Some scholars even argue that the description of Jesus in Revelation is explicitly angelic. Others view the “angelic” descriptions of Jesus in Revelation as using

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“angelomorphic” language to characterize the person of Messiah. Did the use of angelomorphic language in some way prompt the first century readers/hearers to identify Jesus with Michael in Revelation 12?

This chapter will investigate whether or not the application of angelomorphic terms to Christ could have caused a misreading of Revelation 12. First, the clues pointing to an angelomorphic Christology in Revelation will be examined to determine what relationship, if any, they may have with the traditions relating to Michael. Second, a search will be made for clues that may work against a strictly angelic representation of Christ in Revelation. An overview of the Christology of Revelation will be included with particular emphasis on the characterization of Christ with reference to the angels. Finally, the chapter will close with another reading of Revelation 12 with special emphasis on John’s Christology.

**Clues of Angelomorphic Christology**

Of all the documents within the canon of Christian Scripture, Revelation is most widely acknowledged to have drawn on angel traditions in its depiction of Christ. Some representations of Christ in Revelation draw heavily on angelomorphic language. So, the passages that may serve as clues to Jesus’ relationship to Michael are the ones in which

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Christ is described in an obviously angelic manner. The sections most often discussed are: (1) Rev. 1:12-20; (2) Rev. 10:1-7; (3) Rev. 14:14-16; and (4) Rev. 19:11-16. Each of these passages will be considered individually with special attention to both the streams from which the angelomorphic language originated and the possible relation of this language to the various roles of Michael.

Revelation 1:12-20—The Opening Vision of Jesus

Chapter 1 of Revelation contains the account of John’s commission to write “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). This account is dominated by the description of an exalted figure whose form is described in detail in Rev. 1:13-16. Revelation 1 also contains visionary material of an auditory kind (1:10-12, 17-20), in which an exalted figure identifies himself as the risen Jesus (Rev. 1:18). At the very least, then, this chapter gives an epiphany of the risen Christ to John (sometimes referred to as a Christophany). It is the description of the resurrected Jesus, however, that is of interest to this study.

In Rev. 1:10-11, a voice speaks to John and commissions him to write a book and to send it to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Upon hearing the voice, John turns to see who this person is and encounters a being of heavenly proportions. The description of the

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8 The angelic manner of Jesus is primarily one of form; i.e., he is described using terms most often reserved for angels. In other words, the description of Jesus may follow angelic examples or mimic angelic functions. See Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 110, 147.


risen Christ is dominated with images gleaned from the book of Daniel, particularly Dan. 7:9-14 and 10:5-10 (cf. Ezek. 1:26-28). Daniel 7 presents a vision of the throne of God accompanied by a theophany, while Daniel 10 includes an angelophany.

The risen Christ is said to be ὁμοιὸς ὑίῳ ἀνθρώπου (Rev. 1:13). His physical appearance is described in part as follows: ἐνθαῦτῇ σώματος καὶ αἱ τρίχαις λευκαῖς ἐρυμένος λευκὸς ὀπίσθιμα (1:14). The “son of man” imagery most likely reflects the throne vision of Dan. 7:13, while the description of his head and hair as “white like white wool, like snow” surely references the vision of the Ancient of Days in Dan. 7:9. The first indicator, “like a son of man,” is probably a reference to angelic figures in Daniel, and possibly a reference to Michael. The second indicator comes from a vision of God’s throne, and may simply represent a corruption of the Greek version of Daniel with

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which John was familiar. Nonetheless, the risen Christ appears in Revelation 1 with characteristics attributed to other heavenly beings, highlighting the almost angelic nature of the revelation to John.

The remaining description of the risen Christ focuses primarily on his appearance. He is described as “ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρι καὶ περιεξωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσᾶν ... καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλὸξ πυρὸς. καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὄμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν” (Rev. 1:13-15). In Dan. 10:5-6, the subject of the angelophany is described in similar terms, he is “clothed in linen, . . . girded with gold . . . his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of the multitude.” The angel revealed in Daniel 10 is usually identified as either Michael or Gabriel. So, John’s vision of the risen Christ uses angelomorphic language that is strikingly similar to that found in Daniel 10. On the surface, then, John’s Christophany is very much like an angelophany.

If John’s vision of the risen Christ ended with the similarities to Daniel, then the possible confusion of Michael with Messiah in Rev. 12:5-7 would be understandable.

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15 Some scholars try to find a reference to the deity of the risen Christ in the use of Dan. 7:9, but as others point out, the deity of Christ is shown in other manners. John’s use of these materials may result from a misunderstanding of the Daniel passage or a problem in the Greek translation of Daniel. For more on this issue, see Hurtado One God, 79-80; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 44-49, 155-57; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 214-18; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 249. Other Jewish literature uses language similar to Daniel 7 and Revelation 1 to describe angelic figures rather than God. Apoc. Abraham 11:2 describes the angel Iaoel (one “in the likeness of a man,” 10:4) as having hair like snow. Apoc. Zephaniah 6:11-12 uses the imagery of a face shining like the sun (Rev. 1:16), the golden girdle, and feet like bronze to describe the angel Eremiel. Joseph and Asenath 14:9-10 uses similar imagery in a description of an angel often identified as Michael. In 1 Enoch 106:2-5, similar terminology is used with reference to Lamech’s son.

16 Collins, “Son of Man,” 61-64; Collins, Daniel, 304-10; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 44-49; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 247-48.
The figure in Rev. 1:12-16 is described in obviously angelic (or, at least, heavenly) terminology and identified as Jesus (Rev. 1:18). John’s vision includes other elements that may not be strictly angelomorphic, however, and those elements will be dealt with below. Suffice it to say that John inserted clues into this epiphany that could have pointed the audience in the direction of an angelic understanding of this character.

Revelation 10:1-7—The Mighty Angel and the Scroll

After the sixth angel blows the trumpet in Revelation 9, John records an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This interlude is contained in Rev. 10:1-11:14 and includes two visionary experiences, one pertaining to an angel and the other regarding the two witnesses.¹⁷ In Rev. 10:1-7, John encounters ἀλλος ἄγγελος ἵσχυρον who is regarded by some as another appearance of the angelomorphic Christ, even though the character is explicitly labeled “another strong angel” (10:1). As Charles Gieschen states, “The unique combination of symbols used to describe this angel blurs the lines between calling this an angelophany, a Christophany, or even a theophany.”¹⁸

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¹⁸ Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 256. Gieschen examines the argument in favor of viewing this particular angel as the risen Christ on pages 257-60. Although positive identification of this angelic character with Christ is hardly conclusive, this passage is included here to illustrate how difficult it may be to decipher the “clues” of Revelation with regards to Christology and angelology. At the very least, this angel has characteristics that are attributed to the risen Christ (Rev. 1:12-20) and to the vision of God’s throne (Rev. 4:3), contributing to a possible christological interpretation by the first century audience.
Several characteristics of this angel favor a christological interpretation. First, the rainbow on the head of the angel would remind the readers/hearers of the vision of God’s throne in Rev. 4:3. These references to a rainbow may result from John’s familiarity with Ezek. 1:26-28, where the glory of Yahweh appears as an angelomorphic “man.” Gieschen understands the reference to the rainbow in Rev. 10:1 to be a reference to the divine nature of the angel (i.e., he is a depiction of God’s glory), but the evidence here is not conclusive.

The angel is also depicted with a “face like the sun” and “feet like pillars of fire” (Rev. 10:1, τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἡλιος καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός). These characteristics call to mind the appearance of the risen Christ in Rev. 1:12-20, possibly indicating to the first century audience that this angel and the risen Christ are the same individual. These same features are reminiscent of the angel of Dan. 10:5-6.

Others who see this angel as a reference to Christ include: Gundry, “Angelomorphic Christology,” 662-69; and Beale, Revelation, 522-26. The following scholars view this character as primarily an angel who shares some characteristics with Christ: Caird, Revelation, 125-26; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 170-71; Talbert, Apocalypse, 43-44; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 130-38; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 229-32; David Aune, Revelation 6-16, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B, David Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph Martin, editors (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1998), 556-58; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 251-52.

19 One of the distinguishing characteristics of this “man” is a rainbow (Ezek, 1:28). This individual’s appearance is described as “gleaming bronze, . . . the appearance of fire, . . . and there was a brightness round about him” (Ezek. 1:27). Some of these details are similar to John’s description of the risen Christ in Rev. 1:12-20. See Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 258; and Beale, Revelation, 523-24.

20 Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 258. See also Apoc. Abraham 11:3, where the angel Iaioel is also described as wearing a rainbow for a crown. The presence of the rainbow may indicate the angel’s representation of God as the bearer of God’s glory (like Iaioel), but it does not necessarily label the angel as divine. See Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 130-38 for a counter argument to Gieschen. Simply stated, Carrell sees this passage as an angelophany mixed with elements of Old Testament theophanies. He finds no one component in Revelation 10 that directly corresponds to the Christophany of Rev. 1:12-20 (see Jesus and the Angels, 133, 136-37). See also, Aune, Revelation 6-16, 557.

21 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 170-71; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 229-30; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 135; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 250-51. Aune (Revelation 6-16, 557-58) cites
Verses 1-2 do not reveal all of the aspects of the angel, however, as the vision continues in Rev. 10:4-7.

John’s vision apparently borrows imagery from Daniel’s prophecy. John depicts the angel in Rev. 10:5-6 using language similar to Dan. 12:7, where a “man clothed in linen” lifts his hands and utters an oath to God that the time is drawing near when “all these things would be accomplished” which were revealed to Daniel. Dan. 12:4 contains a command to “seal up the book,” and John receives a similar command in Rev. 10:4. Also, Dan. 12:7 mentions a period of time (i.e., “a time, two times, and half a time”) during which the temple will be desecrated. Similar words are found in Rev. 11:2-3 and 12:6, 14 with reference to trampling of the temple and the holy city and the protection of the woman in the wilderness. The angel in Rev. 10:1 also shows similarities with the angelophany of Dan. 10:5-6, e.g., the brightness of his face and his bronze legs. So, the angel in Revelation 10 shares characteristics with angelophanies in Daniel and the Christophany of Revelation 1.\textsuperscript{22}

One final factor to consider is the episode involving the giving of the little scroll in Rev. 10:8-11. John is commanded to take the scroll held by the angel and to eat it.

\textsuperscript{22} Carrell (\textit{Jesus and the Angels}, 137) concludes that “with the glorious angels of apocalyptic literature in mind, there seems to be no reason to link the angel specifically to Jesus—with respect to the sun-like face and fiery legs the angel is simply a typical glorious angel.” For similar views, see Caird, \textit{Revelation}, 127-29; Robert W. Wall, \textit{Revelation}, New International Biblical Commentary, 18 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 137-39; Aune, \textit{Revelation 6-16}, 563-67; and Murphy, \textit{Fallen is Babylon}, 253-55. Although Carrell and others are quite certain that this angel is a revealing angel sent to John, the fact remains that the angel shares aspects with the angelomorphic Christ of Rev. 1:12-20. Just what John had in mind here is hard to pinpoint, but the first century audience may have identified this angel with Christ. See Christopher Rowland, \textit{The Open Heaven} (London, England: SPCK, 1982), 102; Gieschen, \textit{Angelomorphic Christology}, 259-60; and Beale, \textit{Revelation}, 537-47.
After eating the scroll (which was sweet to the taste but bitter in the stomach), John is told to prophesy again. This passage sounds suspiciously like Ezekiel’s commissioning in Ezek. 2:8-3:11. The main difference is that an angel hands the scroll to John in Revelation, while in Ezekiel it appears to be God or the glory of God. Some have argued that this episode is another indication of an angelomorphic Christ because they tie the “little scroll” of Rev. 10:9 to the scroll that the Lamb unseals in chapters 5-6. John is commissioned to prophesy “again” (Rev. 10:11), which leads some to view the angel as Christ appearing a second time to call John to prophesy (cf. Rev. 1:3-19).

Revelation 10 thus represents something of a conundrum by mixing elements of angelophanies and theophanies in the depiction of the mighty angel. Although the argument for the angel’s identity with Christ is not completely persuasive, the similarities are enough to suppose that the first century audience may have mistaken this angelic

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23 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 174; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 231-32; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 570-72 Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 258; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 255-56; and Beale, Revelation, 550.


25 Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 259. Carrell disagrees with this assessment, however, and claims that this passage has more in common with theophanies than the Christophany of Rev. 1:12-20. Specifically, Carrell argues that the following elements are more in keeping with traditional or apocalyptic theophanies: (1) coming down from heaven, (2) being clothed with a cloud, (3) having a rainbow for a crown, and (4) offering the scroll. That is, these are activities often associated with the arrival or action of God, not Christ. Also, Carrell contends that the similarities with Daniel and Ezekiel indicate that this vision is an angelophany depicted using elements from theophanies. See Jesus and the Angels, 132-36. Again, John’s intention is difficult to pinpoint, and there are elements here which could be interpreted as pertaining to Christ. It may be best to err on the side of skepticism with regards to Rev. 10:1-11.
character for the risen Christ. At the very least, John’s writing left open the possibility that this angel was Jesus, and many ancient commentators arrived at this conclusion.26

Much of the imagery borrowed from Daniel in Revelation 10 apparently refers to Gabriel, who shares many of the same functions with Michael in Jewish thought.27 So, it is possible that the first century audience may have heard a reference to Michael in this passage. Regardless of the angel’s specific identification, however, John left open the possibility that this “mighty angel” could be Christ.28

Revelation 14:14-16—“One Like a Son of Man”

Between the vision of the 144,000 of the Lamb’s faithful followers (Rev. 14:1-5) and the singing of the hymn of triumph in heaven (15:2-4) occurs a series of visions involving six angels (each designated ἄλλος ἀγγέλος, 14:6, 8, 9, 15, 17-18) and “one like a son of man” (Rev. 14:14-16). The activity of the latter, which occurs after the first three angels have announced judgment, seems coordinated with the actions of the last set

26 Gieschen (Angelomorphic Christology, 257) and Carrell (Jesus and the Angels, 136) list some of these ancient authorities, among them Primasius (Comment. in Apocalypsim, Bk. 3), Victorinus (Comment. in Apocalypsim, 88-89), and Augustine (Expositio in Apocalypsim b. Joannis, 2430-2431). For an history of interpretation, see L. Brighton, “The Angel of Revelation: An Angel of God and an Icon of Jesus Christ,” (Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1991), 7-13.


28 Shepherd of Hermas describes Michael in similar terms as a “glorious angel” and a “mighty man,” and even apparently links Michael to Christ (see Similitudes V. 1:7, 4:4; VII, 1-5; VIII, 1:2-2; 3:1-3; IX, 1:1-3 12:7-8). Gabriel is explicitly tied to Christ in Silbyline Oracles 8:456-461.
of three angels who are apparently agents carrying out God’s wrath. The identity of the “one like a son of man” is taken as Jesus by many commentators, while others see the figure primarily as an angel. Are there clues in the text that would help make a positive identification?

The “one like a son of man” in Rev. 14:14 is portrayed as “sitting on a (white) cloud, ... having a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.” The description “one like a son of man” would probably call to mind the Christophany of Rev. 1:13. The possession of a “golden crown” while sitting on a cloud may also have called to mind the portrayal of Jesus as the “ruler over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5, cf. 19:12) who is “coming with the clouds” (1:7). Loren Stuckenbruck adds that the appearance of this individual in the middle of the six angels “with attributes not applied to these angels,” leads to the conclusion that this figure is “cast in a superior role.”

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29 Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 141-45; Talbert, Apocalypse 62; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 285-86; Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 250-51; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 326-28; and Beale, Revelation, 770.


31 Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 187-88; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 840; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 326; and Beale, Revelation, 770.

32 Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 244, emphasis his. Stuckenbruck mentions Ezek. 9:2 as the closest analogy to “the notion of 6 heavenly beings plus 1 superior being.” For more, see Angel Veneration, 226-28. Shepherd of Hermas Vision III 4:1-3 and Similitude IX 6:1-2, 12:6-8 present a similar parallel by
evidence, according to some scholars, leads to the conclusion that the “one like a son of man” is Jesus.

The identification of the “one like a son of man” as Jesus is not without its share of problems. First, the nomenclature applied to the angel in Rev. 14:15 (ἀλλος ἄγγελος, i.e., “another angel”) might be taken to imply that the first individual is also an angel. Second, the use of “one like a son of man” may be a reference to Dan. 7:13-14 or 10:16, which are probably references to angelic beings. Third, he has characteristics similar to other angels. For example, he wears a golden crown like the elders in Rev. 4:4 and he has a “sharp sickle” like the angel in Rev. 14:18. Finally, “the one like a son of man” receives orders from “another angel” in Rev. 14:15. This reference certainly implies that the person in 14:14 is at least angelic in function if not essence. In fact, the “one like a son of man” performs a task analogous to the final angel in Rev. 14:18-19, and both figures are commanded by “another angel” to do their reaping.

depicting the “Son of God” surrounded by six glorious angels. Hermas apparently identifies the Son of God or glorious man with Michael (see Similitude VIII 3:1-3; IX 1:1-3).

33 Fossum, Name of God, 279; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 801; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 251-52. It should be noted that the “one like a son of man” in Dan. 7:13-14 also receives “everlasting dominion” and a “kingdom that shall not be destroyed.” Could the reference to a “golden crown” (Rev. 14:14) be a subtle clue to this person’s identity as an angel? Also, the “one like a son of man” in Dan. 7:13 comes “with the clouds of heaven” like Jesus in Rev. 1:7. Of course, the “son of man” reference in Rev. 14:14 probably results from an allusion to Dan. 7:13 (cf. Rev. 1:7, 13), and as used in Daniel it most likely refers to an angel, possibly Michael. See Collins, “Son of Man,” 63-66; and Collins, Daniel, 304-10. The “son of man” in Rev. 1:13 is clearly Jesus described in angelomorphic terms. Is it possible that John is using Michael imagery to describe Jesus? At the very least, the mixing of these ideas with apparently christological information may have led the audience to think of both Jesus and Michael.

34 Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 183; and Aune, Revelation 6-16, 801, 840-42. The “clouds” may refer to a theophany in which the angel stands in the presence of or represents God (Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 180-81; cf. Exod. 19:9; Ps. 97:2; 104:2-3; Ezek. 1:4). The angelic being in Rev. 10:1 is “wrapped in a cloud,” and his identity is difficult to ascertain. The appearance of clouds may simply be an indicator of God’s presence, either with his angel or through his angel.

35 Morris, Revelation, 178-79; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 243-44; and Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 185-86. Joel 3:13 has been posited as the source for the command to “put in your sickle.” See
The identification of the “one like a son of man” in Rev. 14:14 has strong arguments both for and against his identity as Jesus. Like Rev. 10:1-3, the imagery is certainly angelic, while the use of “son of man” and other clues may call to mind the risen Christ. Peter Carrell argues that Rev. 14:14 is an appearance of Jesus, but it “involves a temporary separation from the divine throne and the temporary assumption of angelic form and function.” That is, the “one like a son of man” is Jesus in the guise and activity of an angel, but he is not essentially an angel. According to this view, Jesus functions as the seventh (and superior) angel in a series of seven angels. Even if Jesus is not the intended figure here, the clues of this passage certainly intermingle christological concepts and angelic imagery in a way that may have led to the conclusion that Jesus is in some sense angelic. Also, the Daniel references may have prompted the audience to consider Michael as the “one like a son of man” in Rev. 14:14. The mix of christological terms and angelic references may have been enough to encourage an angel Christology or at least an angelomorphic Christology among the first recipients of John’s Revelation.

Revelation 19:11-16—The Rider on the White Horse

The vision of Rev. 19:11-16 records the appearance of a character whose attributes are very similar to those of the risen Christ in Rev. 1:12-20. Even though the

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Aune, Revelation 6-16, 843-49; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 326-28. In Joel, God appears to be the one speaking to an unknown harbinger of judgment. The command of Joel 3:13 is split between two characters in Rev. 14. An admonition that the “hour to reap has come” or the “grapes are ripe” is given to both. Only the second character, however, has vineyard imagery like Joel 3. Since the command and timing are similar for the two, could they both be angels of judgment? Bauckham (Climax of Prophecy, 294-95) takes a different approach by viewing both figures as Jesus. Bauckham claims that the “son of man” figure is dependent on Dan. 7:13-14 and does not represent judgment, but rather the receiving of the promised kingdom for Messiah. The last angel figure, then, parallels the judgment in Rev. 19:11-16 (with special emphasis on the “wine press of the wrath of God”, cf. 14:19; 19:15).

36 Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 194, emphasis his.
rider on the white horse is not specifically identified as Jesus, the evidence here is pretty strong.\textsuperscript{37} First, the visual and titular descriptions of the rider link him back to Jesus. For example, he is called “faithful and true” (Rev. 19:11), recalling the description of Jesus as “the faithful witness” (1:5) or “the faithful and true witness” (3:14). Also, both the rider on the white horse and the risen Christ are depicted as having “eyes like a flame of fire” (1:14; 19:12). Another item linking the risen Christ with the rider is the use of Ps. 2:9 in Rev. 2:26-27 and 19:15 (cf. 12:5). In Rev. 2:26-27, Christ gives the authority to rule to his faithful followers, while in 19:15 he is described as ruling with a rod of iron (like 12:5). As a final example, the presence of the sharp sword in the mouth of the rider (19:15) parallels the “sharp two-edged sword” in the mouth of the risen Christ (1:16). So, the imagery used to depict the rider on the white horse would certainly bring to mind elements of the appearance and activity of the risen Christ.\textsuperscript{38}

Second, John says that the rider “has a name inscribed which no one knows except himself” (Rev. 19:12). The use of an unknown name may reflect the traditions regarding the divine name and the Angel of the Lord materials.\textsuperscript{39} That is, the rider on the

\textsuperscript{37} Carrell, \textit{Jesus and the Angels}, 196-98; Gieschen, \textit{Angelomorphic Christology}, 252-56; and Murphy, \textit{Fallen is Babylon}, 386-88.

\textsuperscript{38} Also, the rider is called “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16), an appellation applied to the Lamb as well (17:14, where the Lamb is also presented as defeating the beast’s followers in war). See Murphy, \textit{Fallen is Babylon}, 392; and Beale, \textit{Revelation}, 963-64. It is worth noting here that the vision of Rev. 1:12-20 contains angelomorphic elements. In other words, even though the vision specifies its object as Jesus, the descriptive characteristics of the Christ are borrowed from angelic traditions. The same argument also holds for Rev. 19:11-16.

\textsuperscript{39} Gieschen, \textit{Angelomorphic Christology}, 253. For an overview of these traditions, see Daniélou, \textit{Theology of Jewish Christianity}, 145-63; and Gieschen, \textit{Angelomorphic Christology}, 70-78. Simply stated, among the Jews the tradition of the holiness of God’s name led to an emphasis on its being hidden so that humans might not misuse it and blaspheme God. In Exod. 23:20-21, God tells the Jewish people that he will send his angel ahead of them and “my name is in him.” Later Jewish traditions hypostatized the name into an angelic being, and then identified the angel of Exod. 23 variously (e.g., Michael, \textit{I Enoch} 69:15; and
white horse is the hypostatized Name of God. This correspondence may be supported by other references to the name of God in Revelation (e.g., 3:12, where Christ gives his faithful followers “the name of my God, . . . and my own new name”; and 14:1, where the followers of the Lamb have “his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads”; cf. 22:4). The hidden name, therefore, hints at possible divine, angelic, and christological aspects of the rider on the white horse.

Other aspects of the vision are not so much christological as they are angelic. The mention of the rider’s name as “The Word of God” may make the modern Christian immediately think of the prologue to the Gospel of John, but the underlying concept is more likely angelomorphic. Wisd. of Sol. 18:14-25 depicts the “all powerful word” of God as “a stern warrior” who wields “a sharp sword” and enacts God’s judgment upon the earth. Also, according to Alan Segal, Philo uses the designation “the Word” to

Isaïel, Apoc. Abraham 10:3-8). So, the reference to a hidden name in Rev. 19 may be either a recognition of Christ as the bearer of God’s name or a clue to the angelic background to the vision.

Gieschen (Angelomorphic Christology, 254) views these passages as references to the prominence of Name theology in baptism “where the symbol of the Divine Name was marked on the foreheads of the initiate.” See also Daniélou, Theology of Jewish Christianity, 154-57.

Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 217-18; Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 254; Daniélou, Theology of Jewish Christianity, 119-27, 131-32. Daniélou claims that Shepherd of Hermas represents the Word as an angel, maybe even identifying the Word with Michael, but his arguments are not totally convincing. Hermas apparently equates Michael with the Son of God (Similitudes VIII, 3:1-3; IX, 1:1-3, 12:7-9), but the book does not seem to imply a connection between the “Word of God” and Michael. Jesus is also equated with the angel Gabriel in Sibylline Oracles 8:456-461. For more on the Word as an angelomorphic representation of God, see Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 103-14. Carrell (Jesus and the Angels, 214-16) ties the use of “the Word” in Rev. 19 to the overall theme of faithful testimony found throughout the book. In this sense, then, Jesus is the “Word” in that his followers suffer due to their “testimony” to him. The rider is the “Word” in that the testimony which produced suffering now becomes “the legal testimony which secures the condemnation” of the persecutors of the faithful (Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 214-18; and Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 237). Carrell (Jesus and the Angels, 227) summarizes his understanding of the “Word” in Rev. 19:13 by noting that in Wisdom of Solomon and Philo “the Logos of God was envisaged moving towards God’s people in angelic form. Consequently, if Jesus Christ shares in the being of God yet comes close to his church in angelomorphic form while participating in the process of disclosing the revelation of God’s word, then, . . . we could appropriately characterize the christology [sic] of the Apocalypse as a Logos christology [sic].”
"serve as a simple explanation for all the angelic and human manifestations of the divine in the Old Testament." The "Word" then serves as an angelomorphic representation of the rider who is apparently identified with the risen Christ.

John mentions that "the armies of heaven" follow the rider into battle (Rev. 19:14). This army may be composed of the angelic hosts since they are described as "clothed in fine linens, white and clean" (cf. Mark 8:38; 13:27; Matt. 25:31). This reference may point back to the multitude clothed in white robes in Rev. 6:9-11 and 7:9-17. The mention of white robes, along with the quote of Ps. 2:9, may well have reminded the first century audience of the promises to the faithful community in Rev. 2:26-27 and 3:4-5, 18-22 in which those who overcome receive the authority to rule the nations with Christ and are garbed in white robes. The idea appears to be that this heavenly army is populated with those who were persecuted for the testimony of Jesus. By judging their

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42 Segal, *Two Powers*, 169. See especially *Quis Rerum Divininarum Heres* 205; *De Agricultura* 51; *De Confusione Linguarum* 28, 146; and *De Migratione Abrahami* 173. Gieschen (*Angelomorphic Christology*, 108-9) quotes these passages in their entirety. He also notes that "Conf. 146 attributes the various designations—Word, Angel, Name, Man—to one hypostasis: the Word" (109-10).

43 Beale, *Revelation*, 960-61; Giblin, *Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy*, 181; and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 256. Gieschen states, "This leadership role of a heavenly army is usually held by the Angel of the Lord (Josh. 5:13) or an archangel such as Michael or Gabriel." See also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 124-34. It is worth noting that Michael leads an army of angels against Satan in Rev. 12:7-9. Cf. 2 Enoch 22:6-8, 33:10; *Test. Abraham* 7:8-12, 19:4; *Apoc. Esdras* 4:24, where Michael is designated the "Commander-in-Chief" or ἀρχιστράτηγος. Daniélou (*Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 124) notes that ἀρχιστράτηγος "is applied to the Word by Christians," especially in the writings of Methodius and Eusebius. No references are given, however, to support this claim.

44 Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 2, 135; Mounce, *Revelation* (1977), 346; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1979), 283; and Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 390-91. In support of this view, Rev. 17:14 depicts the Lamb in battle against the beast and his followers. The description of the Lamb is similar to that in Rev. 19:16 in that both individuals are called "King of kings and Lord of lords." Also, the Lamb has an army of sorts in 17:14, "those with him are called and elect and faithful." These words seem to describe the human followers of Jesus rather than an angelic army (Rev. 2:10-13; cf. 1:5; 3:14; and 19:11). See Charles, *Revelation*, vol. 2, 74-75; Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 362-63; and Beale, *Revelation*, 880-81.
persecutors, the rider on the white horse is avenging the blood of the faithful (cf. Rev. 6:10). Once again, John apparently mixes christological elements with angelic traditions.

A final piece of evidence that Rev. 19:11-16 may be grounded in angelomorphic traditions is its relationship to Isa. 63:1-6. Many scholars recognize that this passage provided some of the imagery for the vision of the rider on the white horse. Gieschen points out that the “portrayal of YHWH as a warrior in 63:1-6 could be interpreted as the same figure who is discussed in the verses which immediately follow: YHWH’s ‘Angel of the Presence’ who both protected and punished Israel following the Exodus (Isa. 63:7-14).” In other words, John did not necessarily apply a description of God to Christ, rather he may have adapted imagery already attributed to the Angel of God’s Presence.

Again, the evidence supports the possibility that the first century readers/hearers may have understood an angelic background to the appearance of Messiah in Rev. 19:11-16.

Conclusion

The passages discussed above do not all explicitly refer to the risen Christ, but they all contain elements consistent with John’s representation of Messiah. Each passage


also contains elements gleaned from Jewish angelic traditions. In most cases it seems that John is mixing the angelic and christological elements in his revelation of Christ. Taken by themselves, these passages could give the impression that the risen Christ is an angelic being, perhaps even Michael. In Rev. 12:5-9, John refers to Ps. 2:9 and uses imagery of Michael leading armies in a heavenly battle. This material is also found in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 1:5, 7; 2:26-27) and the revelation of the rider on the white horse (19:14-15). In addition, Dan. 7:13-15, 10:5-6, 13-21, and 12:1-8 depict either an angelic figure or Michael as arriving with the clouds of heaven, receiving a kingdom, being described in exalted terms or as a “son of man” figure, fighting on behalf of God’s people, and appearing at the end to judge. These images appear in Rev. 1:7, 12-15, 10:1-7, 14:14-15, and 19:11-16. In other words, the traditions used to represent the activity and form of Messiah are intimately intertwined with angelomorphic concepts. Given the prominence of Michael in many Jewish angelic traditions and in Rev. 12:7, the first century audience may have viewed him as equal with Jesus Christ. Of course, the angelomorphic visions are not the only depiction of Messiah in Revelation. It is time now to turn to those passages that give clues against a primarily angelomorphic reading of John’s Christology.

Clues Against Angelomorphic Christology

In discussing clues against an angelomorphic Christology in Revelation, it must be kept in mind that the evidence being considered are clues which may have kept the audience from identifying Jesus with angels generally or Michael specifically. That is, these clues do not necessarily negate the evidence that John represents Jesus in angelic
terms, but rather that the first century audience should not have understood Jesus as
primarily an angelic or angelomorphic character. So, the clues of interest in this section
are those which speak of Jesus in decidedly non-angelic terms. Three main areas will be
considered: (1) the warnings against worshipping angels, (2) the worship of Jesus, and
(3) the titles of Christ. Each of these will be considered separately with some discussion
on how the evidence may have influenced the reading of Revelation, especially with
reference to Jesus’ relationship to angels. The goal of this section is to show that a proper
understanding of the Christology of Revelation requires both the angelomorphic and the
non-angelomorphic representations of Jesus.

Warnings Against Angel Worship in Revelation

Angelophanies and theophanies were fairly common occurrences in Jewish and
Christian apocalyptic literature. These apparitions usually caused two types of responses:
(1) extreme fear resulting in an involuntary prostration, or (2) fear (less extreme than the
first type) resulting in a voluntary prostration.47 Revelation presents, in strikingly similar
terms, two instances (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9) in which John voluntary prostrates himself

47 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 121; and Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 78-81. Bauckham
(122) notes that “neither reaction need constitute worship and neither was originally regarded as
reprehensible in apocalyptic literature.” While the act of prostration accompanies many theophanies and
could denote worship of the divine (e.g., Gen. 17:3; Exod. 20:5; 23:24; Deut. 5:9; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 43:3;
44:4; Matt. 4:9-10), it was also the gesture of respect given to someone considered a superior (e.g., Gen.
18:2; 19:1; 23:7, 12; 1 Sam. 28:14; Isa. 45:14; Rev. 3:9). In other words, the gesture itself does not denote
worship such as belongs to God alone. This fact has led some scholars to understand these passages in
Revelation as not so much a warning against the worship of angels (i.e., a cultic veneration of some sort) as
they are a reminder of God’s ultimate superiority. Of course, the warning against prostration to an angel
could include a reaction against the possibility of idolatry through angel worship. For more, see Bauckham,
Climax of Prophecy, 122-24; and Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 80-92.
before an angel who has revealed certain events to him. In each case, John is told "Do not do that! I am a fellow-servant of you and your brothers ... Worship God!" How do these two passages function in John's narrative?

Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9 apparently discourage worship of angels on the grounds that the revealing angel is not superior to John (σύνδουλός σού εἰμι, "I am your fellow-servant") and that God alone should receive worship. Some scholars argue that the inclusion and repetition of these incidents represents John's attempt to counter a tendency to angel worship in the churches of Asia Minor. If that is the case, then it is surprising that this tendency did not merit mention in the letters to the churches. More likely, these incidents are recorded to encourage the first century audience to give their worship to God alone as the true source of revelation and prophecy.

48 Rev. 1:17-18 contains a possible example of involuntary prostration. Other references to angelophanies that result in prohibitions against worshipping angels are: Tobit 12:16-22; Apoc. Zephaniah 6:11-15; Ascension of Isaiah 7:18-23; and Joseph and Aseneth 15:11-12. See Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 124-32; and Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 76-78.


50 Caird, Revelation, 237.

51 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 135-36; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 276; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 384-85; and Beale, Revelation, 946-48.
addressed by these episodes appear to be the delineation of the true source of revelation/prophecy and the manner of the true worship. This conclusion is supported by the role of Rev. 19:10 and 22:8-9 in the structure of the book.

These two encounters act as parallel conclusions to two visions (Rev. 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9) which also have closely parallel beginnings (17:1-3; 21:9-10). The first vision describes the fall of Babylon the harlot, while the second presents Heavenly Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb. In between these two visions (Rev. 19:11-21:8) lies a narrative introducing Christ as the Judge (including judgments of the beast, the false prophet and the dragon). So, the visions of the two women frame the narrative elucidating the final judgment.

The parallel openings and closings of the two visions address the issue of the authority on which John receives and presents his prophetic revelations. In both cases the angel reveals the visions to John while he is in a condition of visionary rapture (ἐν πνεύματι, Rev. 17:3; 21:10). John’s worship of the angel, then, occurs in the context

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52 The structure of these passages and the theological purpose of that structure is discussed in more detail in Charles H. Giblin, “Structural and Thematic Correlations in the Theology of Revelation 16-22,” Biblica 55 (1974): 487-504. Much of what follows is indebted to that article as well as discussions in Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 159-213, and Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 133-36.

53 Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 16-17. Some fascinating parallels exist in this material. First, each vision opens (Rev. 17:1-3; 21:9-10) with an introduction of the revealing angel (“one of the angels who had the seven bowls”) and the ecstatic transportation of John to a place to behold the women (in the case of Babylon he is taken to the wilderness, while he goes to a mountain to view Jerusalem). Then, the angel shows and interprets for John the visions of the women (17:3-18; 21:10-27). The contrast of the two women is striking. Babylon is dressed like a harlot, riding a blasphemous beast, and full of drunkenness (17:3-6), while Jerusalem is pristine and holy (21:10-11). Finally, each vision concludes with an affirmation of the truth of the visions and the warning not to worship the angel (19:9-10; 22:6-9). See also Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 416-17.

54 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 133-34, 150-59. See also Swete, Apocalypse, 214; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 308; Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 160-61; and Beale, Revelation, 860, 1065.
of the revelation of a vision. John is astounded at the visions he sees and offers prostration to the supposed source of these visions. The angel responds to this worship by acknowledging that angels are simply “fellow-servants” with John and his brothers (i.e., those who keep the testimony/witness of Jesus and those who are prophets, Rev. 19:10, 22:9). In Rev. 19:10 the angel adds “For the testimony/witness of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy” (ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας). In other words, the angel is not the source of prophecy or of the vision, but the Spirit of prophecy (i.e., the testimony/witness of Jesus) is the true source. As Richard Bauckham notes, “The divine Spirit who gives John the visionary experience in which he may receive revelation communicates not the teaching of an angel but the witness which Jesus bears.”

The conclusion to the second vision (Rev. 22:6-9) lacks a precise verbal parallel toἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας, but a similar point is made in the epilogue that follows the vision. In the epilogue (Rev. 22:6-21), the authority for revelation is expanded to include all of the Apocalypse, not just the vision immediately preceding the angel’s admonition to worship God. So, the angel’s rejection of worship in the second vision functions to claim the sole authority for the whole book.

55 Swete, Apocalypse, 248; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 341-42; and Beale, Revelation, 946, 1128.

56 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 134. See also Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 384-85, and Beale, Revelation, 436; 947-48, 1128-29. For more detail, see Giblin, “Structural and Thematic,” 496-98.

57 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 134; and Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 213. Both scholars make the point that the conclusion to the vision of the Lamb’s Bride also serves as the beginning of the epilogue of the whole book. The reference to “those who keep the words of this book” in Rev. 22:9 seems to parallel the warning against adding or taking away from John’s prophecy (“the words of the prophecy of this book”, 22:18-19).
for God, not a revealing angel (Rev. 22:18-19).\textsuperscript{58} Also, the epilogue identifies the angel as the one who was sent by Jesus to John to reveal the complete prophetic vision of Revelation (1:1; 22:6, 16).\textsuperscript{59}

Jesus is also considered a source of the revelation when he states, "I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches" (22:16). Jesus becomes responsible for sending the angel to testify as well as being the source of prophecy (19:10). In this way John uses the traditional motif of an angel's refusing worship in order to affirm a divine source for his prophecy and to introduce the influence of Jesus in the revelation of the prophecy. John seems to view Jesus as a source, not an intermediary, of the revelation.\textsuperscript{60} Rev. 1:1 supports this view by showing the progression of the "revelation of Jesus Christ." God "gave"(ἐδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς) this revelation to Jesus, who in turn showed it to his servants by sending his angel to make the revelation known to John (δείξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ . . ., καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ ἰωάννῃ). So, the first century audience should have understood Jesus (like God) as a giver of revelation, while John and the angel were simply servants or instruments by whom the prophecy was delivered. While this position does not necessarily rule out Jesus in the role of an angel, it shows that in John's view Jesus is superior to the angels. The question remains, though, if Jesus is a giver of revelation like God, is he also worshipped as the angel admonishes John to worship God?

\textsuperscript{58} Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 134-35; and Murphy, \textit{Fallen is Babylon}, 434.

\textsuperscript{59} Swete, \textit{Apocalypse}, 309; Mounce, \textit{Revelation} (1977), 394; and Beale, \textit{Revelation}, 1143.

\textsuperscript{60} Giblin, \textit{Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy}, 219-20; Bauckham, \textit{Climax of Prophecy}, 136-38; Stuckenbruck, \textit{Angel Veneration}, 260-61; and Murphy, \textit{Fallen is Babylon}, 438-39.
Worship of Jesus in Revelation

In the worldviews of the early centuries of the Common Era, the gap between deity and humanity was comprised of all sorts of intermediary heavenly beings—angels, exalted human beings, hypostatized divine attributes—and, as discussed above, the early Church and the Apocalypse made use of some of these traditions to explain how they understood Jesus as the Messiah.\(^{61}\) In light of the development of Jewish monotheistic practices, however, sooner or later a firm line had to be drawn between the Creator and the created, and the line which signaled a distinction between God and other heavenly beings was worship. God must be worshipped, but no creature deserved worship.\(^{62}\) Early Christianity professed to remain steadfastly within Jewish monotheism, while at the same time directing worship to Jesus Christ.\(^{63}\) The goal for this section is to determine how the worship of Jesus in Revelation relates to his angelomorphic character.

The presence of so many hymns proves that worship plays a major role in Revelation (4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-18; 15:3-4; 19:1-10). One theme of the book is the distinction between true worship and idolatry.\(^{64}\) In the visions of the two

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\(^{61}\) Knight, *Disciples of the Beloved One*, 113, 123; and Casey, *Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 80.

\(^{62}\) Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 118-19; and Fletcher-Louis *Luke-Acts*, 2-4. See also Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 47-51. As Stuckenbruck (15-21, 42-43) points out, scholars differ on the definitions of “monotheism” and “worship.” See Hurtado, *One God*, 17-39, for a detailed discussion of the issue of divine agency in ancient Jewish monotheism. For purposes of this study, “monotheism” is concerned primarily with the recognition that ultimately Jewish and Christian doctrine understand only one being as God, with slight variations regarding the person or essential nature of that being. “Worship” then is the proper reverence or homage directed toward the divine.


women (17:1-19:10; 21:9-22:9), John chose to make a point about the authority of his prophecy by using a tradition involving worship. Rev. 14:6-7 characterizes the “eternal gospel” by the words, “Fear God and give him glory... worship him who made heaven and earth.” In Revelation, the conflict between God and Satan often manifests itself in terms of worship. For example, humanity is divided into worshippers of the dragon and the beast (Rev. 9:20; 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) and those who will worship God (7:15; 11:1; 14:3; 15:3-4; 22:3). Two of the seven churches, Pergamum and Thyatira, are warned against following those who encourage idolatry and immorality (2:14, 20). The contrast between idolatry and proper worship reaches its climax in the parallel visions of Babylon the Harlot (Rev. 17:1-19:10) and the Bride of the Lamb (21:9-22:9). The message of these two visions as found in their conclusions (19:10; 22:8-9) is the same: Only God is worthy of worship, no other created being (angel, beast, or dragon) deserves worship, regardless of their mighty works or message. God receives worship for two primary reasons: (1) he is holy and the creator of all things (4:8-11), and (2) he is a righteous judge (11:15-18; 15:3-4).

The book of Revelation apparently reserves worship primarily for God, the creator of all things. In this way John’s narrative appears to stand squarely within the stream of

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66 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 135-36; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 276; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 384-85; and Beale, Revelation, 946-48. The portrayal of New Jerusalem (the Bride of the Lamb) includes the imagery of God and the Lamb serving as the temple for true worshippers (21:22-26).
evolving Jewish monotheistic thought. In some places, however, the book of Revelation uses the language of worship (and, in some cases, even the titles of God) with reference to Jesus. An example of the worship of Jesus may be found in John’s inaugural vision (Rev. 1:12-20), in which John reveals his experience with the resurrected Lord. After describing Jesus in angelomorphic terms, John responds to the heavenly apparition by falling “at his feet like a dead person” (1:17). That is, his response to this revelation of Jesus is similar to that of others who were overwhelmed by an angelophany or a theophany (cf. Num. 22:31; Ezek. 1:28-2:1; 3:23; 43:2-3; 44:4; Dan. 8:17-18; 10:9-10). In this particular situation, however, John is not admonished to refrain from his position of worship as he is in the angelophanies of Rev. 19:10 and 22:8-9. Here John is offering a form of worship to the angelomorphic Christ.

The imagery in Rev. 1:12-20 seems to be borrowed from Dan. 7:9-14 and 10:5-6 (in which the Ancient of Days and an angel are revealed to Daniel, cf. Ezek. 1:26-28). Given the prominence of angelic terminology in these passages and Rev. 1:12-20, it could be argued that John operated under some type of “angel Christology.” His explicit representation of Jesus using language descriptive of angels could even lead to that conclusion. That is, the use of language from an angelophany in Daniel may have caused the first century audience to understand Jesus as an angel, perhaps even Michael (a

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68 Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 257-61; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 154; and Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 92-93. Although John is not warned against worshipping the angelomorphic Jesus, there is a further element of an angelophany in this passage. The risen Christ tells John, “Fear not,” which is the message often delivered to a person who falls prostrate or shows fear before an angel (see, Tobit 12:16-22; Judges 6:22-23; Dan. 10:12; Luke 2:9-10). See also Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 123-24.
prominent angel in Daniel).  

If Rev. 1:12-20 presented the only worship scene involving Jesus, then this may well be true.

John offers a sort of doxology to Jesus before the first angelomorphic appearance of Christ. Rev. 1:5-6 offers a brief praise to Jesus Christ, in which he is offered “glory and dominion forever and ever” (αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας αἰώνιον) for his efforts in delivering people from their sins and making them a kingdom and priests to God. The phrase “glory and dominion” appears again in Rev. 5:13 in which all of creation praises God (i.e., the one who sits on the throne) and the Lamb. This hymn follows a song to the Lamb in which heavenly beings worship him for making people a kingdom and priests to God by his death and blood (5:8-10). Here in the first chapter, then, is evidence that John’s churches probably offered worship to Christ comparable to that offered by the angels.

Christ receives worship primarily in the figure of the Lamb which dominates the symbolic, christological scenes of Revelation. The first appearance of the Lamb occurs

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69 The prominence of Michael in Daniel is noted by Charles, Revelation, vol. 1, 27; Collins, “Son of Man,” 61-64; Collins, Daniel, 304-10; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 44-49; Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 247-48; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 89.

70 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 140; Swete, Apocalypse, 9, 84; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 72; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 77. Assigning glory to God occurs frequently in Revelation (4:9, 11; 7:12; 14:7; 19:1, 7; 21:23-26).

71 Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 226; Guthrie, Relevance, 46-47; Mitchell G. Reddish, “Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse,” in The Johannine Writings, The Biblical Seminar 32, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 215; Frank J. Matera, New Testament Christology, 1st edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 200-201. “Lamb” occurs some 28 times in Revelation with reference to Jesus. This fact led Bauckham (Climax of Prophecy, 29-30, 34-35) to conclude that there is a pattern of sorts in John’s christological titles. For example, the 28 occurrences of “Lamb” fits a pattern of 7 x 4 in which the 7 represents the number of completeness and 4 symbolizes the number of the whole earth. Since it is through the Lamb’s victory that God’s rule over creation occurs, Bauckham understands the combination of 7 and 4 to depict the worldwide significance of the Lamb’s influence for God.
in chapter 5, after the throne vision of God in chapter 4. Many scholars see the two chapters as parallel in some manner, and at the very least they represent John’s attempt to bring Christ into the very throne of heaven (and perhaps even into the very being of God). To summarize, chapter 4 presents the glorious presence of God as he rules creation from his throne. In this situation, God is worshipped by the heavenly creatures (24 elders and four living creatures described in details apparently gleaned from Ezek. 1:5-10). God is deemed worthy to receive worship because he “created all things” and they exist by his will (Rev. 4:11).

Revelation 5 opens with a description of a scroll held in the right hand of God. The question is raised, “Who is worthy to open the scroll...?” The disappointing response recorded by John is that “no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, is able to open the scroll or to look into it,” prompting him to weep because “no one was found worthy” (5:2-4). John’s weeping results in one of the elders encouraging him, “Do not weep! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome (ἐνίκησεν) so as to open the scroll” (5:5). John sees this Lion in the midst of the throne


73 Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 47-53; Hurtado, “Rev. 4-5,” 207-8; and Beale, Revelation, 334-37. Beale also notes the influence of Dan. 7:9-27 on the themes and structure of Rev. 4:1-5:14. Dan. 7 is the throne vision of the Ancient of Days and the appearance of the “one like a son of man.” The imagery from Dan. 7 also appears in the first vision of Christ in Rev. 1:12-20. For more on Dan. 7 and Rev. 4-5, see Beale, Revelation, 314-16.

74 The word “overcome” (νικάω) occurs in various forms at least fifteen times in Revelation. Seven of those times are in the letters to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), and at least three other occurrences refer to the faithful ones who follow Jesus and overcome the dragon and the beast (12:11; 15:2; 21:7). Among the other five occurrences is the reference here (5:5) and one other in which the Lamb overcomes the beast and the kings (17:14). The other three appearances occur with regards to the first seal (6:2) and the beast who overcomes the two witnesses and the saints (11:7; 13:7). So, the predominant
as "a Lamb standing, as if slain," and he takes the scroll and is proclaimed "worthy . . . to open its seals" (5:6, 9).75

Not only is the Lamb worthy, but according to Rev. 5:3, no one else besides the Lamb is worthy. In this way John distinguishes the unique role of Christ in distinction to all other actors in Revelation, even the angels. Although angels appear frequently in instrumental roles in John's visions, Christ is portrayed as the divine agent of salvation (5:9-10; 7:14-17; 12:11; 14:4) and judgment (6:16-17; 14:9-10; 17:14; 21:27; cf. 19:11-16), for which the Lamb receives the worship of the heavenly host (5:8-12; cf. 4:9-11).76

Certainly Christ is in a subordinate role to God in that the revelation and the scroll come from God himself (1:1; 5:7), yet the Lamb receives worship that is not permitted for any image of "overcoming" or "conquering" in Revelation is reserved for the faithful ones who follow the conquering Christ. See Reddish, "Martyr Christology," 217-219; Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 73-76; and Beale, Revelation, 269-72, 349-50.

75 The Lion of Judah comes from Gen. 49:9, while the Root of David is from Isa. 11:1, 10. Both of these texts were commonly used with reference to Jewish messianic hopes. For more on the imagery of this conquering Lion/slain Lamb, see Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 174-85; Reddish, "Martyr Christology," 215-22; David Aune, Revelation 1-5, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A, David Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph Martin, editors (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1998), 351-55, 367-73; and Beale, Revelation, 350-55. The juxtaposition of these two images serves several purposes. First, the use of "Lion of Judah" (Gen. 49:8-9) and "Root of David" (Isa. 11:1, 10) clearly identifies this character as Messiah (cf. 1QSb 5:20-29; 4Q175 1:11-12) Second, the Messiah is described as a conqueror or overcomer, a prominent theme in Jewish messianic speculation (cf. Ps. 2:9). Finally, the Lamb imagery indicates how the Messiah overcame or conquered, namely, by means of his death. The slain Lamb is able to take the scroll and is declared worthy to open it. It seems as though John is giving an interpretive clue, such as "Wherever the Old Testament says 'Lion' read 'Lamb.' Wherever the Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or the overthrow of the enemies of God, . . . remember that the gospel recognizes no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the Cross" (Caird, Revelation, 75).

76 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 136; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 126-28; Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 78-79; Aune, Revelation 1-5, 355; and Beale, Revelation, 357-65. For an overview of interpretations regarding the "elders" and "living creatures," see Aune, Revelation 1-5, 287-92, 297-98; and Beale, Revelation, 322-26, 328-31. The twenty four elders are variously interpreted as stars (or astral deities), angels, saints, or angelic representatives of saints. Even if an angelic interpretation of the elders is dismissed, the angelic interpretation of the four living creatures seems certain since the language apparently comes from Ezek. 1:5-10 (in which the four angelic creatures around the throne of God are depicted). Rev. 5:8-14 thus depicts the worship of the Lamb by angelic figures.
other but God (Rev. 14:7; 19:10; 22:9). The worship of the Lamb is thus similar to the worship received by God in Revelation.

Rev. 5:13-14 links God and the Lamb when all of creation offers worship “to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.” Once again, John seems to be sensitive to the issue of monotheism by depicting the Lamb as participating in the glory which belongs to God, not as an alternate object of worship alongside of God. That is, the specific worship of the Lamb leads to a joint worship of God and Christ, in a formula in which God retains the primacy. Further, John suggests that it is not just the heavenly beings who worship Christ, but it is Christians on earth as well (1:5-6). In other words, Jesus receives worship from the angels and the churches in Revelation, thus indicating his superiority to the angels. The first century audience should have understood Christ’s superiority to the angels from the first five chapters of Revelation, and, if so, they should not have confused Michael in Rev. 12:7 with the Messiah. The titles John assigns to Christ also show his superiority to the angels, and these titles link Jesus closely to the being of God.

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77 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 136-37; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 112-14; Aune, Revelation 1-5, 354-55; and Beale, Revelation, 356-57, 365-66.

78 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 139; Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 60; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 113-14; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, 355. Although in some places John represents Christ as sharing God’s throne (3:21; 7:17; 22:1, 3), in the majority of the thirty-five uses of “throne” in Revelation God alone is presented as inhabiting it (e.g., 1:4; 4:2-10; 5:1, 7; 6:16; 7:9-15; 12:5; 19:4-5). Bauckham (Climax of Prophecy, 139-40; and Theology of Revelation, 60-62) further notes that John is careful not to speak of God and Christ together as a plurality (cf. Rev. 6:16-17). In Rev. 11:15, a reference to God and Christ is followed by a singular verb (cf. 21:22), while 22:3-4 uses a singular pronoun when referring to God and the Lamb. Some see these references as describing God alone or as depicting God and Christ “as a unity” (Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 332, cf. 188-89; Swete, Revelation, 142; Mounce, Revelation [1977], 230-31; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 270, 429; and Beale, Revelation, 611, 1113.). John apparently places Jesus on the divine side of the distinction between God and the created order, while at the same time he tries to speak in monotheistic terms about God and his relationship to Christ.
**Titles for Christ**

The worship of Jesus is just one indication of the high regard for Messiah in Revelation. John also portrays Christ with titles reminiscent of those he uses for God.\(^79\) Perhaps the most obvious example occurs near the beginning of Revelation. In Rev. 1:8, God describes himself as “the Alpha and the Omega.” This identification is later repeated in 21:6 where, “the beginning and the end” is added to God’s self description. Rev. 1:17 presents the risen Christ as “the first and the last,” a designation that is repeated later in 22:13 with the addition of Jesus’ self-description as “Alpha and Omega, ... and the beginning and the end.”\(^80\) The placing of the two titles used of God (“Alpha and Omega,” “beginning and end”) around the self-designation used only of Jesus (“first and the last”) may have been intended to align the three titles as equivalent.\(^81\) Also, the title “first and last” occurs in Isa. 44:6 and 48:12 as a divine self-designation in the context of worship (Isa. 44:6 declares that “besides me there is no god”) and creation (Isa. 48:12-13). The use of this description in Rev. 1:17 and 22:13 may carry a similar connotation for the risen Christ.\(^82\)

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\(^82\) Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 25-28, 54-58, 62-63. Carrell (*Jesus and the Angels*, 118) contends that the use of “first and last” in Rev. 22:13 “constitutes a declaration affirming the divinity of Jesus Christ.” In other words, Jesus shares both function and being with God. Murphy (*Fallen is Babylon*, 437-38) however, understands this sharing of titles as essentially a sharing of functions, and “the line between the functions of the Father and the Son are blurred.” Beale (*Revelation*, 199-200, 213-14, 1138) interprets “first and the last” as divine nomenclature indicating that Jesus is a divine figure like God.
As mentioned, the divine descriptions in Isaiah relate predominantly to worship and creation. In Isa. 44:6, God declares himself to be the only God worthy of worship, while in 48:12-13 he expresses himself as “the first and the last” with regards to the creation of the earth and heaven. In other words, God is the creator of all things and as the sovereign Lord of history he will bring all things to an end (cf. Isa. 40:12-28; 41:4). He is the incomparable God and the all encompassing God, which may be the idea behind the designation “Alpha and Omega” in Rev. 1:8 and 21:6. God precedes all things, and he brings all things to their eschatological fulfillment. In Rev. 21:6, the second expression of God as “Alpha and Omega” is preceded by the divine pronouncement “It is done!” The verse concludes with the promise of eschatological fulfillment in which God will give water from the fountain of life to the thirsty.

Revelation depicts Jesus in a similar role of eschatological fulfillment. Like God, Jesus is “the first and the last” (1:17), “Alpha and Omega,” and “beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13). These titles connect Christ to God by delineating their similarities. Rev. 3:14 portrays Jesus as “the beginning (ἐπόρισθον) of God’s creation.” Rev. 1:7 and 22:12 reveal Jesus as the coming one, while 1:8 and 4:8 describe God as the one who “is to come.” At Jesus’ coming the judgment and the wrath of God are enacted (19:11-16; 20:11-15). The verse concludes with the promise of eschatological fulfillment in which God will give water from the fountain of life to the thirsty.

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83 Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 27.


22:12; cf. 6:16-17), and 22:1-5 portrays the Lamb as participating in pouring out the water of life from the throne of God. In other words, John understands Jesus as the originator and fulfillment of all history and creation. So, Jesus shares in God's lordship over creation and in the final eschatological fulfillment of all things.

The use of the concept of "seven spirits" in Revelation indicates another area where Christ and God share similar traits. Rev. 1:4 describes the seven spirits as being before God's throne, an image which is repeated in 4:5. Rev. 3:1 portrays Jesus as the one "who has the seven spirits," while 5:6 gives the Lamb "seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." These spirits are before God's throne and in Christ's possession. The seven spirits that the Lamb sends out belong to God. Just as God gave the revelation to Jesus, who sent it to John by an angel (1:1), so also the seven spirits of God are entrusted into the care and leadership of the Lamb. These spirits are then "sent out into all the earth" as a result of the death of the Lamb (5:6). The seven spirits are effectively the means by which the sacrifice and victory of the Lamb are made known to the world. That is, they represent "the divine power released into the whole world by the victory of Christ's sacrifice." The seven spirits in Revelation then should

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86 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 67-68, 338-39; Guthrie, Relevance, 53-55; Carrell, Jesus and the Angel, 117; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 93; Matera, New Testament Christology, 205; and Beale, Revelation, 213-14, cf. 1138.

87 Some have concluded that the seven spirits are actually seven archangels under Jesus' command. Mounce, Revelation (1977), 69-70; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 68-70; Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 41, 61, 71-72, 77-78; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 262-65. For a thorough analysis of the connection between the seven archangels and the seven spirits, see G. H. Dix, "The Seven Archangels and the Seven Spirits: A Study in the Origin, Development, and Messianic Associations of the Two Themes," Journal of Theological Studies 28 (1926): 233-50. Dix concludes, however, that the "seven spirits" of Revelation "are one Spirit in essential Being . . ., the Spirit of God and of Christ" (250).

88 Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 114. Bauckham (113) also characterizes the seven spirits as "the divine power which is now the Spirit of Christ, the manner of the exalted Christ's presence in the world
be understood as a symbol for the divine Spirit, and Christ and God share in that same Spirit.89

Jesus shares other roles with God in Revelation as well. For example, both God and Christ are characterized as rulers of the world. Rev. 1:5 depicts Jesus as “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” while God is portrayed in 15:3 as “the king of nations.” The Lamb and the rider on the white horse both receive the title “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 17:4; 19:16).90 In 19:6, the great multitude praises God by declaring, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.”91 Further, God’s reign is often and of the present effect of Christ’s past work.” That is, the seven spirits symbolize the Spirit of Christ and carry on the work of redemption begun in the death and resurrection of the Lamb.

89 Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 110; Caird, Revelation, 15, 75; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 54-56, 124-25; Beale, Revelation, 189-90, 326-27, 355-56. John apparently chose this symbol as a result of his exegesis of Zech. 4:1-14. The central message of this passage is Zech. 4:6, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” The vision of Zechariah includes a golden lampstand with seven lamps beside which are two olive trees. Zechariah asks about the seven lamps (4:4) and then about the olive trees (4:11). The lamps are characterized first by the oracle about God’s Spirit in 4:6 (which is expounded further in 4:7-10), and then Zechariah is told that the lamps are “the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the whole world” (4:10). John evidently understood the seven lamps to be the Spirit, i.e., the seven eyes of God. Of course, in Rev. 5:6 the eyes of the Lord become the eyes of the Lamb, thus further identifying Christ with God. For more on the use of Zech. 4:1-14, see Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 162-66.

90 Actually, the Lamb is called “Lord of lords and King of kings,” while the appearance of the Christ of judgment reverses that order (Rev. 17:14 may have been influenced by 1Enoch 9:4 or Dan. 4:37 LXX. See Beale, Revelation, 880-82). Interestingly, both the Lamb and the angelomorphic Christ receive this title in the context of conquering or defeating an enemy while leading an army of sorts (cf. 17:13-14; 19:14-16). See Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 258-59; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 318-19; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 362-63.

91 Although John depicts both God and Jesus as rulers or kings, he reserves some titles for God alone. For example, the term “Almighty” (παντοκράτωρ) appears only with reference to God (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). In this manner John keeps a sense of the Jewish monotheism which formed the foundation of his theology and his Christology. See Giblin, Revelation: Open Book of Prophecy, 42-43; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 33-34, 304; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 116-18; and Aune, Revelation 1-5, 57-58. The phrase Κύριος ὁ Θεός . . . παντοκράτωρ is used regularly in the Septuagint to translate Yahweh Sabaoth (“The Lord God of Hosts”). Giblin understands the imagery here against the background of the Holy War motif, while Aune sees a reference to God’s reign over all of creation. Either way, the use of παντοκράτωρ reveals something of God’s sovereignty, especially since it often appears in the hymnic materials celebrating the coming of God’s kingdom. It also presents a decidedly Jewish background for John’s theology, and its use helps maintain a difference between God and Christ. They share many attributes and functions, yet they remain distinct.
inextricably tied to the reign of Christ (11:15; 12:10). In Rev. 12:10-11, John implies that God’s kingdom came when the dragon was cast down. The dragon’s defeat is brought about by “the blood of the Lamb” (i.e., the death of Christ). So, God’s kingdom originates with Jesus’ death to redeem others (1:5-6; 5:9-10), and that redemption caused Satan to lose his place (12:10-11). In other words, Jesus and God are not simply rulers sharing similar titles, their respective kingdoms are linked by the sacrifice of Christ by which many people become “a kingdom and priests to our God” (5:10). Once again, Christ shares in a characteristic of God, and that fellowship is based primarily on Jesus’ death and resurrection.

One further note regarding Christ’s rule needs to be made. In Rev. 2:26-27, 12:5, and 19:15, John portrays Messiah as ruling “with a rod of iron,” borrowing imagery from Ps. 2:9. In Rev. 2:18, the Messiah who grants his faithful conquerors the “power over the nations” (2:26) is no less than the “Son of God.” This particular title only occurs once in Revelation, but a similar title is applied to those who conquer in 21:7.

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92 Other references to the Lamb’s blood or Christ’s death include 1:5-6; 5:6, 9, 12; 7:14, and 19:13. See M. Eugene Boring, “Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse,” The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 54 (Oct. 1992): 715-16; Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 73-76; Reddish, “Martyr Christology,” 217-19; Beale, Revelation, 658-61, 663-65; and Matera, New Testament Christology, 210-12. John appears to make the martyrdom or sacrifice of Christ the key to victory and redemption in Revelation. That is, the blood of the Lamb redeems humanity and makes of them “a kingdom, priests to God” (1:5; 5:9), while the response of the faithful to the Lamb’s sacrifice is to be like him (7:13-14; 11:7-13; 12:11; 19:14; 20:4; 22:14) in both witness and suffering.

93 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 127-28; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 148-50; Wall, Revelation, 103-5; and Beale, Revelation, 360-65.

94 “Son of God” in Rev. 2:18 probably results from the use of Ps. 2:7, where God declares to the ascendant king, “You are my son, today I have begotten you.” See Beale, “Solecisms,” 439-40. Also, Jesus as God’s Son is implied in the use of Father to describe God’s relationship to Christ (Rev. 1:6; 2:27-28; 3:5, 21; 14:1). See Mounce, Revelation (1977), 101-2; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 133-34; and Matera, New Testament Christology, 209-10. The word “son” appears five times in Revelation: twice with reference to “one like a son of man” (1:13; 14:14), once explicitly as Son of God (2:18), and two other times as simply “a son” (12:5; 21:7).
contains an account in which the “Son of God” promises power to rule to anyone “who keeps my works until the end.” The reference to “the end” may refer to the eschatological end of the messianic age and final redemption and judgment. That is, Jesus encourages the churches to endure until the final judgment, when he will make all things right.

In Rev. 21:6, God declares, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” As noted above, this verse refers to God’s final ordering of events leading up to his redemption of all creation. Rev. 21:7 represents another aspect of this concept when God declares, “The one who overcomes (cf. 2:26) will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Here God promises something to the conqueror, just as Jesus (the Son of God) does in Rev. 2:26. Once again there is a juxtaposition of roles as Jesus and God both grant something to the faithful who conquer. Jesus grants the conquerors the power to rule, while God grants them the privilege of being sons of God.

As the Son of God received his authority to rule from his Father (Rev. 2:27), so also those who overcome receive authority to rule from the Son of God

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95 Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 92-93; Morris, Revelation, 73-74; Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 140-41; and Beale, Revelation, 266-67. Of course, the “ead” could be a reference to the death or martyrdom of the Christian. Rev. 2:25, however, states that the faithful ones should “hold fast . . . until I (i.e., Christ) come,” indicating that the “end” referred to in 2:26 is the time when Christ comes as judge to establish the reign of God. This possibility is also evident in Rev. 19:15, another allusion to Ps. 2:9, where Christ is depicted as a judge over the nations.

96 In a sense, they also share sonship with Jesus in that they are now “sons” of God and inheritors of God’s promises. The promise of Rev. 21:7 reflects the language of 2 Sam. 7:14, in which God promises a perpetual heir to David and says, “I will be his father, and he will be my son” (cf. Ps. 86:26-29). John changes the promise of 2 Sam. 7:14 by removing “father” and inserting “God.” This change may result from John’s desire to keep God’s relationship with Jesus distinct from other relationships. “Father” is only used with reference to God’s relationship to Jesus (Rev. 1:6; 2:28; 3:5; 3:21; and 14:1). Jesus is God’s unique, divine son, but those who faithfully follow him receive the privileges of his sonship. So, Rev. 21:7 (cf. 2:26-27) seems to reflect the idea that those who overcome share in the inheritance of Christ (namely, an eternal reign, see 5:12-13; 11:15; 22:5). That is, Christ’s followers receive the position as “sons” of God and rulers by virtue of the redemption that the Lamb won on their behalf, while Jesus is distinctively God’s son who directly shares in the reign of God’s kingdom. See Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 313-14; Mounce, Revelation (1977), 374; and Beale, Revelation, 1058.
(2:26) and from the Father (21:7). Once again, Jesus participates in an activity allotted to God by giving to those who conquer the ability to rule in God's kingdom, an ability also granted by God to the same people.

The titles of Christ reveal a link between the person of Jesus and the being of God. Like God, he creates the world and brings history to its final chapter. He has the same Spirit as God and rules in much the same way as God. Finally, Jesus is the unique Son of God through whom his faithful followers are enabled to become sons of God and to rule with God and the Lamb. In other words, John's portrayal of the risen Christ gives him an higher position than the angels, namely, a position on par with God. As such, any confusion of Michael with Messiah in Rev. 12:7 would result from a serious misunderstanding of Christ's participation in the roles and the being of God. The first century audience, then, should have understood Jesus as more than an angel. The clues of Revelation should have led them to conclude that in many ways Jesus shared in the divine being and roles of God.97

Conclusion—Overview of the Christology of Revelation

The material discussed above does not conclusively rule out the depiction of the risen Christ as an angel, but the evidence shows that John's view of Messiah includes an understanding of his superior position to the angels. The refusals of the angel to receive worship from John (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9) play up the importance of proper worship directed only to God and not to a created being. The worship of the Lamb and the titles

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that Christ shares with God indicate that John understood Jesus to share in some way in the divine being of God. This fellowship in God’s being included a superior position to the angels. Jesus sends the angels as his messengers (1:1; 22:16; cf. 5:6, he also sends the Spirit of God) and he receives worship that angels later refuse (1:17-18).

John portrays the risen Christ in a variety of ways. He is the angelomorphic Christ who does not refuse worship. Jesus is praised by the Church in the same way that God and the Lamb are praised by the angels. The Lamb is worshipped along with God by all of creation. Jesus shares in the very being, reign, and Spirit of God. The titles he bears and the worship he receives set him off as greater than the angels, yet in some sense still subordinate to God. Although some Jewish traditions portray angels as acting on God’s behalf and sharing in God’s authority at some level, Revelation depicts Jesus as the redeemer of humans who establishes a kingdom and priests for God by his martyrdom (1:5-6; 5:9-10; 7:14-17; 22:12-14). Jesus does not simply establish a work for God, he is the work of God.98 The Lamb who was slain becomes in the end (Rev. 21:22-22:5) the temple, glory, and throne of God through which the people of God properly worship (7:14-17; 20:4-6; 22:3-5), receive illumination (21:22-24; 22:5), and reign with God and with the Lamb forever (22:5). In the final tally, the Lamb becomes the measuring rod by which humanity is judged. Those who wash their robes in his blood are redeemed and receive life. Those who reject the Lamb and his sacrifice are left out of the kingdom of God. (Rev. 22:12-15).

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98 Bauckham, Theology of Revelation, 74-75; Boring, “Narrative Christology,” 719; and Matera, New Testament Christology, 205.
No angel is depicted as giving his life for humanity, at least none of the traditions studied here seems to indicate that type of activity. Although Rev. 12:7 depicts Michael and his angels in warfare against the dragon, Michael is characterized in Jude 9 as not being willing to rebuke Satan directly. In Rev. 12:11, the blood of the Lamb and a proper witness defeat Satan, and Christ openly wars with the beast and others under the dragon’s authority (17:14; 19:15-21). In fact, Christ judges the beast and those who worship him and his authority (19:20-21; 20:11-15). He who has “the keys to Death and Hades” (1:18) now witnesses the destruction of Death and Hades “in the lake of fire” (20:14). The Lamb who keeps a book of life (13:8) now judges all people by that same book (20:12) and renders rewards to each person according to his works (22:12). So, the activity of Jesus in Revelation is superior to the role of Michael.

Surely the first century audience would have understood Christ’s superiority in light of this evidence, yet some among the communities of the Shepherd of Hermas and the Ebionites concluded that the Christ was an angel, perhaps even Michael. As if in

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99 While it is true that angelic and heavenly beings are often depicted in functions that may be considered messianic (e.g., as intercessors, 1 Enoch 68:1-5; 2 Enoch 33:10; 1QM 13:9-14; Jude 9; Ascen. Isa. 9:19-23; as the leader of armies in a final eschatological battle, 11QMelch 2:13-14; 1QM 17:4-9 1 Enoch 10:11-16; 54:6; or as a deliverer, 1QM 13:10; 11QMelch 2:13-14; 1QS 3:20; 4Q177 12-9-16), these figures are not usually referred to as “anointed” or as specifically the Messiah. See John J. Collins, Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 71-72. See also Dunn, Christology in the Making, 151-54; and Horbury, “Messianism,” 426-29.

100 Only a misreading of John’s christological clues could lead to the conclusion that Messiah is Michael. Similarities exist between the two to be sure. Both Michael and Messiah lead a heavenly army, but Michael’s is made up of angels (Rev. 12:7) while Messiah’s army appears to be the saints (17:14; 19:14; cf. 6:11; 7:13-14). They both defeat the dragon and his allies. Michael’s victory, an eschatological event which ushers in the messianic age, occurs under the direction of Christ and comes as a result of the sacrifice of Messiah (12:7-11). Christ’s victory comes in a final eschatological battle which leads to judgment and the establishment of God’s reign (19:11-21). The differences between the two are even more striking, however. Jesus receives worship like God, reigns with God, establishes God’s kingdom, redeems humanity by his own blood, sends out the angels, and receives the same titles as God. None of these things can be said of Michael in Revelation.
answer to that possibility, John overlaps the angelomorphic representations of Christ with non-angelic characterizations. The doxology of Rev. 1:5-6 (where Christ is assigned "glory and dominion" like God and the Lamb in 5:13) introduces the inaugural vision in which the angelomorphic Christ accepts a form of worship from John (1:17). The risen Christ of Rev. 1:12-20 says of himself, "I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore," which is similar to the description of the Lamb who "had been slain" in 5:6-12 (cf. 7:14-17; 12:11; 13:8; 21:27-22:1). John depicts the risen Christ in Rev. 1:12-20 in angelic terms, and he also "has the seven spirits of God" (3:1) like the Lamb (5:6-7). The Lamb, who shares the worship of God in 5:13-14, receives the title "Lord of lords and King of kings" (17:14) similar to the rider on the white horse (19:16). Both images include a conflict with those who would not accept God's reign. Also, the rider on the white horse is described as "Faithful and True" (19:11), calling to mind the terminology of the opening doxology (1:5) in which Christ is called "the faithful witness." Those who are under judgment link the wrath of the Lamb to God in 6:15-17, while Rev. 19:11-21 describes the warfare of the angelomorphic Christ as producing "the fury of the wrath of God" (19:15; cf. 14:14-20). In many cases, the angelomorphic representations of Christ bump up against and sometimes spill over into the non-angelic materials (or vice versa).

Lamb Christology, which presents the divine side of Christ, is an effective counter to any attempt to argue that Jesus is simply an angel (i.e., a created, non-divine, heavenly being), yet angelomorphic Christology cannot be separated completely from Lamb Christology in Revelation.101 As Peter Carrell states, "Angelology has influenced the

101 Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 272-73; Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 226; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 269
Christology of the Apocalypse in such a way that one of its important strands is an angelomorphic Christology which upholds monotheism while providing a means for Jesus to be presented in visible, glorious form to his church. So, the Christology of Revelation describes Christ in angelomorphic terms while portraying him as sharing in the divine being and worship. The appearance of Christ is similar to that of an angel, but he is ultimately superior to them in his work of salvation and in the worship he receives. How then does this Christology relate to a reading of Revelation 12?

Conclusion—Revelation 12 in Light of John’s Christology

John’s audience is primarily composed of Christians (possibly both Jew and Gentile) in the provinces of Asia Minor. These Christians come from diverse backgrounds and reflect various levels of education, income, and religious knowledge. For the most part, they would no doubt be familiar with Jewish eschatological thought and messianic ideas. They would recognize in John’s narrative the use of angelic characteristics in the description of Jesus, and they would understand the various angel traditions (including those regarding Michael) that lay behind the actions and descriptions of the various angels in Revelation. If they catch the christological clues throughout Revelation, the first century audience should understand Jesus as the Messiah, the one who shares in God’s being, worship, and reign. They also should conclude that Jesus is

102 Carrell, Jesus and the Angels, 226. See also Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 118-19, 139-40; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 272-73; and Sweet, “Revelation,” 167-68.

103 For an overview of the Christian population in Asia Minor, see Thompson, Apocalypse and Empire, 116-33.
superior to all the angels, even Michael. How then does this Christology relate to Revelation 12 and Michael's role in the war in heaven?

Since John's concept of Messiah clearly places Jesus above the angels, confusion of Michael with Messiah may occur as a result of a misunderstanding regarding the role of Michael. As stated above in chapter 4, the first century audience may well have expected Michael to assume some kind of eschatological role at the end of the age (Dan. 12:1 and 1QM 17:5-8; Test. Moses 10:1-2; cf. 11QMelch 2:7-14, where Melchizedek plays a similar role). No doubt John was aware of these expectations, and, being a skillful writer, he used them in his story in a creative manner. With that in mind, Michael's appearance in Rev. 12:7 may have been understood as some sort of an eschatological signal. Perhaps John took the expectations regarding Michael and reinterpreted them to fit his own eschatology.

John's reinterpretation of apocalyptic traditions is evident throughout Revelation. He takes the angelic materials from Daniel (7:9-16; 10:2-9; 12:5-7 cf. Ezek. 1:26-28) and applies them to a description of the risen Christ (Rev. 1:12-20; 10:1-7; 14:14). Utilizing imagery from Zech. 4:1-14, the seven lamps and the seven eyes of the Lord become the seven churches and the seven spirits of Revelation (1:4, 12-13, 20; 2:1; 3:1; 5:6-7). The two olive trees of Zech. 4:3, 11 characterize the two witnesses of God in Rev. 11:3-5. John also uses the divine self-designation "the first and the last" (Isa. 44:6; 48:12) as a title for Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). He applies Ps. 2:9 not just to Messiah, but also to those who remain faithful to the testimony of Christ (Rev. 2:26-27; 12:5; cf. 21:7). The description of Messiah's judgment in Rev. 19:13-15 relies on Isa. 63:1-3, a passage
describing the judgment of God.\textsuperscript{104} Given these examples, then, it should not come as a surprise that John takes a familiar tradition regarding Michael and reinterprets it to suit his own unique vision of the messianic age. Could Michael be a clue in John’s narrative that the beginning of the messianic age has come?

The developing traditions of Jewish messianic expectations show evidence of a strong interest in the messianic age and in the activity of God during that age (cf. Isa. 26:1-29:24; 40:1-31; 42:1-44:8; Dan. 12:1-13; Joel 2:28-3:21).\textsuperscript{105} The concept of a messianic age probably grew out of the prophetic expectation of the Day of Yahweh, when God (or his angel) would come to the earth in judgment and redeem his faithful people.\textsuperscript{106} After the judgment, an age of blessing would begin in which all of God’s purposes would be fulfilled and the reign of God would be inaugurated. This reign of God

\textsuperscript{104} For other uses of the Old Testament in Revelation, see Fekkes, \textit{Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions}, 59-103. John relied heavily on apocalyptic materials, especially Ezekiel and Daniel, for imagery regarding theophanies, angelophanies, and christophanies (cf. Rev. 1:12-20; 4:1-5:2; 5:5-6; 19:11-16). He also alludes to portions of the Psalms, Isaiah, Joel, and Zechariah. As Fekkes (101-2) notes, John’s prophetic call is most often related in the language of Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. Christological titles and descriptions seem to come from Isaiah, Daniel, and the Psalms (with some materials from Zechariah and Ezekiel). The depiction of God’s throne borrows from Ezekiel (with allusions to Isaiah and Daniel). So, much of the heavenly imagery of Revelation comes from prophetic and apocalyptic materials.


later became associated with the hope of a messianic heir to David ascending the throne to rule in Israel and to destroy the enemies of God and the Jews (2 Sam. 7:1-29; Ps. 2:1-11; 110:1-7; cf. Gen. 49:10).\textsuperscript{107} Apocalyptic literature utilized this idea of a messianic age and placed it on a cosmic scale in which the reign of God was not limited to the Jews but expanded to the whole universe.\textsuperscript{108} So, the messianic age/kingdom of God becomes the culmination of history in which God's purposes are finally fulfilled through his chosen anointed person.

This final culmination of history is often preceded by signs and wonders of a miraculous nature, as well as calamities, tribulations, wars, increasing natural phenomena (e.g., earthquakes, floods, etc.), and mysterious portents on earth and in the heavens. That is, the great climax of history involves birth pangs that signal the coming of the messianic age.\textsuperscript{109} These birth pangs are sometimes referred to as a “time of trouble” (Dan. 12:1; cf. Jer. 30:7; 1QM 15:1-3; 16:11-12; 1 Macc. 9:27; Test. Moses 8:1; Mark 13:19; Matt. 24:21; and Rev. 16:18) in which the righteous will be persecuted yet ultimately delivered. The angel Michael sometimes appears just before and participates in the judgment (Dan. 10:13).

\textsuperscript{107} Longenecker, \textit{Christology}, 64-66; Horbury, "Messianism," 423-25; and Martínez, \textit{People of DSS}, 160. As stated above, as ideas about this messianic reign of God evolved, the messianic ruler was not limited to David's lineage but was often characterized in almost superhuman ways. See Longenecker, \textit{Christology}, 109-13; Knight, \textit{Disciples of the Beloved One}, 139; Fletcher-Louis, \textit{Luke-Acts}, 3-4, 11-17; Mary R. Huie-Jolly, "Threats Answered by Enthronement," 201; and Horbury, "Messianism," 423-29.

\textsuperscript{108} Longenecker, \textit{Christology}, 112-13; Russell, \textit{Jews from Alexander}, 142; Lawrence H. Schiffman, \textit{Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran} (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 320; and Horbury, "Messianism," 408-10. Schiffman notes that Daniel is one of the first apocalyptic books to combine the Davidic messiah with the cosmic victory of the righteous over evil.

12:1; 1QM 17:4-9; Test. Moses 10:1-3; cf. Shepherd of Hermas Similitude VIII 1:1-3:8).\textsuperscript{110} That is, when Michael comes, judgment often follows.\textsuperscript{111}

Michael, a signal of the end of the age, appears at the enthronement of Messiah in heaven in Rev. 12:5-7. John’s description of the Messiah in Rev. 12 reflects several of the messianic characteristics discussed above. Messiah is a ruler or a king (12:5) by whose authority and blood the rule of God is established (12:10-11). He is a “son” who shares in some way the throne of God (12:5). He is described in the language of Ps. 2:9 as the Davidic Messiah who will “rule the nations with a rod of iron” (Rev. 12:5; cf. 2:26-27; 19:15). The martyrdom of Messiah results in victory for his followers over the dragon (12:11). Christ’s followers are described as those who “hold to the testimony (martyrdom) μαρτυρίαν ‘Ησοῦ) of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17). That is, they are faithful to him who is “the faithful witness” (1:5) and who is called “Faithful and True” (19:11). The Messiah in Rev. 12, then, is the one who John describes as sharing in the reign and being of God throughout the rest of the book. In other words, he is superior to the angels and is the one who sends them to accomplish their appointed tasks (1:1-2; 22:16; cf. 5:6). So, Michael would play a subordinate role to Messiah in this passage.

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. 11QMelch 2:7-25, where Melchizedek plays a role similar to that of Michael in 1QM 17. Carl Davis (\textit{Name and Way}, 44) notes that Melchizedek may be another name for Michael. 4QAmram 2:3 identifies the chief evil angel as Melkiresha’, an opponent to Michael elsewhere at Qumran (1QS 3:20-21; 1QM 13:5-6, 10-16). Also, Melchizedek executes judgment against Belial which is also a function of Michael in 1QM 13:10-12 and 17:5-8. Others who identify Melchizedek with Michael include: Dunn, \textit{Christology in the Making}, 152; Geza Vermes, \textit{The Dead Sea Scrolls in English}. (London, England: Penguin Books, 1987), 300; and Fred L. Horton, Jr., \textit{The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 81-82.

\textsuperscript{111} Cf. 4QAmram 1:10-2:6; Jude 9; and the lost ending of \textit{Test. Moses}. In these texts, Melchizedek or Michael comes to escort the soul of a person to heaven. A dispute ensues, however, with a prince of darkness over the destination of the individual. Michael argues on behalf of the righteous individual and usually wins the right to escort this person’s soul to heaven. These incidents show a judgment of sorts occurring concurrent with the appearance of Michael, with Michael acting in a judicial manner.
After Messiah ascends to heaven, a war breaks out in which Michael and his angels apparently respond to an attack by the dragon. The use of τοῦ πολεμήσαι with the phrase μετὰ τοῦ δράκουντος and Michael as the subject gives a sense of necessity to the battle that implies that Michael and his angels “had” to fight.¹¹² One reason they had to fight could be that they were attacked by the dragon for defending Messiah. As in Jude 9, 4QAmram 1:10-14, and the lost ending of the Testament of Moses, Michael may take on the role of protector or defender of the child, i.e., the Messiah. Since Christ in Revelation has the authority to send out the angels, perhaps Messiah sent his defender Michael against the dragon (much like God sends Michael, the defender of the righteous, against the evil ones in 1QM 17:5-8; Test. Moses 10:1-2; and 1 Enoch 10:11-16). In other words, Michael’s defense of Messiah includes his being sent to repulse the attack of the dragon.

Michael and his angels prevail over the dragon and his angels, resulting in the dragon’s loss of a place in heaven as he is cast down to earth. The dragon’s loss is paralleled with the establishment of the authority of God’s Christ and the coming of God’s salvation, power, and kingdom (Rev. 12:10-12; cf. 11:15). This kingdom and authority is tied to the death of Messiah (αὐτῶν ἐνίκησαν αὐτῶν διὰ τὸ σίμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, i.e., “they overcame him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb”) and the potential martyrdom of his followers (διὰ τῶν λόγων τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου, i.e., “by the word of their testimony and

they did not love their lives even unto death”). Just as the Lamb had to shed his blood, so also those who “hold to the testimony of Jesus” (12:17) will endure suffering and persecution.

After victory is proclaimed (Rev. 12:12), a woe is pronounced upon the earth and a warning rings out that the dragon is angry because his time is short. The woman is attacked again, but (like the child) she obtains a divine means of rescue and a designated time of safety (12:14-16). The dragon, having lost two of his potential victims, turns on the other children of the woman and makes war on them (12:7; cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 66:7-9). The first century audience would most likely identify with this persecuted band of people who “keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17). This time of persecution would no doubt be the period of their potential martyrdom by which they conquer the dragon (12:11).

The first century audience may have understood Michael’s role as the herald of the messianic age. That is, Michael came as prophesied, and trouble has come to God’s faithful because of Messiah (cf. Dan. 12:1-2). The trouble for the faithful community is rooted in Satan’s loss of a place in heaven. In the place of the accuser now sits Messiah, and he serves as an advocate for God’s faithful (cf. Rom. 8:31-36; Eph. 1:15-23;

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113 Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 212-13, 236-37; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 702-3; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 291-92.

114 Aus (“Relevance of Isaiah 66:7,” 260) understands this verse as announcing a messianic woe.

115 Shepherd of Hermas Similitude VIII 1:1-3:8 depicts a judgment scene in which Michael plays the role of Judge, giving rewards to the righteous and punishment to the wicked. Michael is described as the overseer of God’s law (Sim. VIII 3:2-3) and the ones who receive rewards from him are those “who wrestled with the devil and conquered him, . . . who suffered for the law” (Sim. VIII 3:6). Like Rev. 12:7-17, then, Michael appears, the righteous overcome the devil, and the faithful are persecuted for following God’s commandments.
I Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 2:14-18). So, the appearance of Michael signals an eschatological event (i.e., the exaltation of Messiah) that sets into motion persecution and suffering leading to the final judgment and destruction of evil. The first century audience understood that God would ultimately rescue them as surely as he rescued the child and the woman, but they must suffer a little while first.\textsuperscript{116}

John's reinterpretation of Michael moves the angel from the position of a major combatant in the eschatological war to a servant of the enthroned Messiah. That is, Michael no longer leads the heavenly army against evil in the final battle (that role is reserved for Messiah in Rev. 19:11-16), rather Michael now heralds the start of the messianic age by casting Satan out of heaven as Messiah ascends the throne. This activity ushers in the "time of trouble" for God's people and judgment for the whole earth.\textsuperscript{117} This scenario is played out in the subsequent chapters of Revelation. Chapter 13 introduces the beast as the persecutor of the righteous, chapters 14-20 display the victory of the righteous and the judgment of the unrighteous, and chapters 21-22 depict the heavenly inheritance of the faithful community who receives the promises of God. Throughout these chapters, Christ is depicted both as an angelomorphic agent of God's judgment and as the divine Lamb through whom all of history is ordered and redeemed. In other words, angelology has influenced the Christology of Revelation in such a way

\textsuperscript{116} Caird, Apocalypse, 156-57; Court, Myth and History, 116, 120-21; Beasley-Murray, Revelation, 205-6; Bauckham, Climax of Prophecy, 235-37; and Murphy, Fallen is Babylon, 291-95.

\textsuperscript{117} The influence of Dan. 12:1-4 is evidenced not only in the appearance of Michael, the "time of trouble," and the judgment of the wicked, but it is felt in Rev. 13:8-10 where those who fall under the authority (and, hence, judgment) of the beast are those whose names are not written in "the book of life of the Lamb." This book of life parallels the book in Dan. 12:1 in which are written the names of those who will be delivered from the "time of trouble." That is, the righteous who are listed in these books will receive deliverance and justification, while all the other inhabitants of the world receive judgment.
that one of the important strands is an angelomorphic Christology which upholds monotheism while allowing for a contrast and an intermingling with a divine view of Christ.

In Revelation 12 Michael and Messiah both serve as a means for John to focus his audience’s attention on the potential conflict and victory that lay ahead. John reinterprets Michael as a harbinger of the beginning of the messianic age, a period of suffering for the first century audience because of their allegiance to the Lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:6-10; 12:11, 17; 13:5-10; 14:2-5). John presents a sort of passive Messiah in Rev. 12:5 who by his death (12:11) set the example for John’s audience to follow in order to defeat the dragon and his allies. This Messiah, who shares in the nature and reign of God, willingly chose to die so that he could establish his followers (John’s audience) as a “kingdom and priests” to God (1:7; 5:9-10).

The first century Christians would understand that the way of victory is not by means of warfare, but rather by faithfulness to the cause of Christ even to martyrdom (2:25-28; 7:13-17; 12:11; 20:4). Unlike other apocalyptic traditions that depict Michael as the conquering and judging angel, John invites his audience to participate in a victory that finds root in a willingness to sacrifice and suffer. Michael, then, is reinterpreted as a protector or defender who ushers in a time of suffering, while Messiah produces victory by his suffering and judgment. The readers/hearers who understand John’s reinterpretation find themselves faced with a situation which will potentially result in more trouble for them, just as it has for John (1:9).

In closing, Revelation 12 represents a middle point for John’s apocalyptic story of suffering and victory. It forms the hinge upon which the action and theology of
Revelation (and its readers/hearers) are contingent. Here John introduces his audience to the reason for their current problems and the answer for their victory. John informs the audience that their ancestor, Mother Zion, and their Messiah were both attacked by the dragon and were rescued (Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17). The audience must now choose a course of action. If they accept Michael’s reinterpreted role as harbinger of the messianic age, then they will choose to suffer the anger of the dragon (12:11-12, 17). Although this choice promises victory through Messiah’s death (12:11), victory does not come without a personal cost for the readers/hearers (12:17). So, Michael is no longer simply the rescuer; he now becomes the one whose warfare in heaven inaugurates the reign of Messiah. John’s use of Michael in chapter 12 thus focuses the audience back to a central theme of Revelation—the only way to victory is through Messiah’s suffering.
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