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THE MILLENNIUM (REV 20.4–6) AS HEAVEN

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Taking the 'first resurrection' (Rev 20.4–6) as 'heaven' accords with early Christian, non-chiliast views of martyrs and other blessed. Exegetical development of this interpretation requires plotting (in line with the literary structure of Rev 4–22) the *convergence* of complementary eschatologies: first, the millennium brings to a climax a series of images expressing 'vertical' eschatology (the life of God's witnesses after death); second, the whole narrative focuses fulfilment of the Creator's scroll ('what must *take place* [γενέσθαι] hereafter') on the very *end* of the end-time (i.e. 'horizontally', on the moment marked by the enthroned's voice in 16.17, γέγονεν, and 21.6, γέγοναν: 'It/They *has/have taken place*'), and on God's victory over those gathered by powers of deception for 'the war' at Armageddon (16.12–16; 19.19–21; 20.7–10). Christ's kingdom in heaven is followed by the advent of God's sacred kingdom on earth.

In John's Apocalypse, those dead who are described as having come to life to reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev 20.4) are identified as a group distinct from the rest of dead persons (v. 5). Their unique state is termed 'the first (or prior) resurrection'. What is more, each one of them who shares this status is called 'blessed and holy', for over these the second death has no power, but they will (continue to) be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him[1] for the[2] thousand years. One might well opt to construe this blessed state as the apocalyptic equivalent of 'heaven'. Indeed, C. E. Hill[3] has shown the prevalence in early Christianity of a non-

[1] The status of being members of the priestly kingdom is already present for those redeemed by Christ (1.5b–6) and is envisioned as lasting into a reign over the earth (5.10). The latter is probably to be regarded as their participation in the New Creation, i.e. in the Heavenly Jerusalem come down to earth (22.3–5), an *everlasting* reign. This status of an *everlasting reward* follows upon infliction of the second death, namely the final judgment of the dead foes of God (20.14–15; 21.8; see 19.20; 20.10) and an *everlasting punishment* (20.10b).

[2] The definite article is more likely authentic (as also in v. 3). If not, the period ([a] thousand years) would nonetheless have to be regarded as 'defined' – as in 20.5, 7.

[3] Charles Evan Hill, *Regnum Caelorum. Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 192 concludes: 'It is important, finally, to realize that the prevalence of this early, non-chiliastic interpretation may have been greater than the relatively few actual citations of Revelation 20 in the literature of our period might lead us to think. Account must be

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chiliast view of the postmortal existence of the martyrs and other blessed. He argues convincingly that it was to this tradition that the interpretations of Rev 20.4–6 to be found in Hippolytus, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, and, in particular, Cyprian belong.[4]

The major aim of this study will be to establish and develop that line of interpretation. The first part (§I) of the analysis will deal with salient features of the imagery, structure, and thematic orientation of Revelation, notably of its major vision (Rev 4–22). The second part (§II) will attend to the narrative progression that focuses the mystery of the sealed scroll ('what must happen [γενέσθαι]') on the 'very end of the end-time', i.e. on the decisive defeat of all the eschatological adversaries and the advent of the New Creation. The meaning of the millennial kingdom can more readily be perceived and controlled by studying the structural orientation and progression of a series of narrated visions.

I. THE IMAGERY OF THE MILLENNIUM IN THE CONTEXT OF A SERIES OF VISIONS

Besides those who view the millennium in Revelation as the heavenly state of the blessed in the kingdom of heaven, three other main lines of interpretation stand out: (1) a temporally-minded ('clock-and-calendar') chiliasm which construes the period as an earthly interregnum between Christ's second coming and the general resurrection;[5] (2) the Augustinian identification of the millennium with the current existence of the Church on earth;[6] and (3) a rather recent tendency to limit the interpretation to a figurative

taken of the primitive and very widely attested belief in the heavenly, divine presence or kingdom as the lot of believers and especially of martyrs between death and the resurrection. This belief shows no indebtedness to the chiliast eschatology but rather, formed the natural framework for the early non-chiliast interpretation (shall we say, for the actual composition of?) Revelation 20:4–6.'

[4] Ibid., 153; cf. 117, 120, 127, 150, 184. Among recent explanations of the millennium as a heavenly state, one should note M. Gourges, 'The Thousand-Year Reign (Rev 20:1–6): Terrestrial or Celestial?', *CBQ* 47 (1985) 676–81.

[5] This interpretation goes back at least to Papias (Eusebius, *E.H.* 3.28.1–5; 29.11–22), who apparently got it from 2 *Bar* and 4 *Ez*, from whose 'mortals' paradise' John essentially differs; see Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 170, 192–3. Hill also finds (ibid., 184–8) that Irenaeus was not originally a chiliast. He used the chiliasm that he had read in Papias and Justin and set it forth sometime during his writing of the fourth book of his *Against Heresies*. He adopted the view in order more effectively to attack gnosticism (by insisting on the reality of physical resurrection). Perhaps his major error was to take resurrection as only a *this*-worldly phenomenon.

[6] Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, 20.7, 9. Most modern Roman Catholic exegetes have followed or tried to adapt his somewhat inconsistent views; see below, n. 8.

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exposition of God's triumph over the power of evil.[7] A major objection against the first view is that there is no evidence for it elsewhere in the NT or even in Revelation. Indeed, it stands at odds with the regular scenario that Christ's parousia coincides with the raising of the dead without any earthly interregnum. Against the second view, one may urge the problem of identifying a group of Christians already martyred and then rewarded as 'blessed and holy' with the Church on earth.[8] The third line of interpretation, like those above, still falls short of accounting for the imagery of the passage *especially as used at this juncture of the narration*. The only way satisfactorily to refute these other positions requires that one analyse interconnected elements in the warp and woof of the *series* of visions in Rev 4.1–22.21.[9] The eschatological dimension of the imagery in question demands prime consideration.

Commentators not infrequently make the false assumption that John's eschatological perspective is only *unilinear*, focused on the parousia and the new creation.[10] Admittedly, this 'horizontal' line of eschatological hope dominates the major vision (Rev 4–22) and the book as a whole. Repeatedly, however, a complementary, 'vertical' eschatology appears that is concerned with the rewards for the faithful upon their deaths. Rev 20.4–6 stands as the final depiction of a state of heavenly reward that begins with the fifth unsealing (6.9–11). It may emerge that the climactic, millennial heavenly bliss is called the '*first/prior* resurrection' to help correlate in terms of the theme of the priestly kingdom both the vertical and the horizontal aspects of the eschatology of Revelation.

The following survey of these texts will alert us to the extent of the evidence of John's 'vertical eschatology'. It will also prepare for a more detailed analysis of each text in the context of the major stages of the narrated vision of 'what must happen next':

6.9–11 souls under the altar voice a prayer of complaint, looking to the time of God's judgment; they are rewarded with white robes and rest and are prom-

[7] For example, Ugo Vanni, 'Il Regno millenario di Cristo e dei suoi (Apoc 20, 1–10)', *Studia Missionalia* 42 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1993) 67–95, 90–95, and the position of 'pure symbolism' listed by Marcus Maxwell, *Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1998) 83.

[8] The dominant view of Augustine, that the first resurrection looked to new life at baptism for those who then included the disembodied saints in heaven as well as those in the Church on earth, was effectively challenged centuries later by Berengaudus, who placed the 'blessed and holy' at the moment of their deaths; see Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 191–2.

[9] As Hill notes: 'Of particular importance is the issue of the sequence, chronological or recapitulative, of 19:19–21 and 20:1–10.' *Regnum Caelorum*, 177 n. 83.

[10] An example of this shortcoming appears in P. A. Rainbow, 'Millennium as Metaphor in John's Apocalypse', *WTJ* 58 (1996) 209–21, 217 n. 19.

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ised that their number will soon be complemented by their brethren and co-servants;

7.9–17 a specifically interpreted, white-robed host has come from the great tribulation;

8.3–5 an incense offering in the interest of the prayers of *all* the saints is conjoined with the casting of fire upon the earth with portents of the Creator's power;

11.1–13 the twinned witnesses are raised and ascend to heaven, bringing about God's judgment on the world-city but also the conversion of the majority of their foes;

11.15 voices in heaven, albeit unidentified, but distinguished from the elders' antiphonal response (11.16–18) targeting the moment of judgment, proclaim the coming into being of the everlasting world-kingdom of their Lord and his anointed;

12.10–12 the 'brethren' spoken of by the loud voice(s) in heaven are those who have been victorious by their testimony as martyrs; they dwell ('tent') in heaven and are secure from the third woe upon the inhabitants of the earth;

13.6 the beast from the sea blasphemes God by blaspheming his name and his dwelling (his tent), namely those dwelling in heaven;

14.1–4 the victorious 144,000 have been rescued from the earth, i.e. from mankind, and are true witnesses, for no lie was found in their mouths;

14.12–13 the holy witnesses who have remained true to God and Christ during the period of persecution have died, and are now blessed with rest;

15.2–4 the victorious throng that has won out over persecutors now hails God's judgments;

18.20 heaven and the saints and apostles and prophets, whose own judgment on Babylon, the world-city, God himself has enacted, are exhorted to be glad;

19.1–4, 6–8 heavenly throng praises God for vindicating the blood of his servants against Babylon and for the coming of the bride of the Lamb;

20.4–6 'souls' of those bloodily slain for their testimony, though placed on thrones – not under the altar (cf. 6.9) – and given the power to exercise judgment,

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undergo a transformation indicated by 'coming to life';[11] their enjoyment of this 'first/prior resurrection' differs from that of another group, namely the remaining dead persons.

Noting the progression and interrelationships of these eschatological texts articulating 'vertical eschatology' demands that one attend to the literary structure and thematic orientation of Revelation. To do this, I must draw on what I have argued elsewhere.[12] For the sake of sweet clarity, and to respect the progression in the series of narrated visions, I shall take up the texts in the order of the three basic stages of the major vision (as given in the accompanying Appendix [pp. 569–70]; see 'second Major Part').

To offer first a brief overview of the three stages, which depict the beginning, the middle, and the end of the working out of God's Holy War:[13] The *first* stage (4.1–8.6) of the major vision deals with the scope of the scroll that belongs to the Creator and Coming One, which can be opened only by the Redeemer because, by his death and resurrection, he has victoriously founded a priestly kingdom that will rule over the earth. The scope of the book is the coming Day of the Lord / Holy War as God's answer to the martyrs' plea for justice. The *second* stage (8.7–15.8) depicts the period of tribulation on the whole world, the end-time in which John and his

[11] Revelation uses the same term, 'come to life, ζῆν', instead of the customary ἐγείρειν or ἀνίστημι of Jesus' own *bodily* resurrection; see D. E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (WBC 52a; Dallas: Word, 1997) 161. The very same verb is also used of the resurrection of the *rest* of the dead (20.5), which is certainly a *bodily* resurrection.

That the millennium entails literally a first/prior *bodily* resurrection is not at odds with previous texts (esp. Rev 6.9–11; 7.9–17). Some argue that other passages in the NT (e.g. 1 Thess 4.14–16; Phil 1.19–26; 1 Cor 15.22–4; and esp. 2 Cor 5.1–5) at least *suggest* a heavenly reward that amounts to full personal beatitude (which is hardly that of a disembodied spirit); cf. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 158–61, 150 b. 12, referring to M. J. Harris, C. F. D. Moule, W. D. Davies, and F. F. Bruce. The suggestion of an *anticipated* bodily resurrection for martyrs and confessors may be one of the most original and telling theological contributions of John's Apocalypse. In a dogmatic and theological tradition that takes seriously the *bodily* presence of Jesus in heaven – and that of his mother as well – it seems likely that those who require no 'purgation' and are judged to enjoy the vision of God and Christ do so as integral persons. The supposition that the very dust or bones of one's physical remains on earth must be what is raised in the flesh or reconstituted on the last day has impeded reflection on the meaning of full, personal immortality in Christ's presence. Those in the millennial kingdom are 'with Christ' in a notable way: they *reign* with him.

[12] C. H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation. The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier / Liturgical, 1991); 'Recapitulation and the Literary Coherence of John's Apocalypse', *CBQ* 56 (1994) 81–95; see also 'Structural and Theological Correlations in the Theology of Revelation 16–22', *Bib* 55 (1974) 497–504; 'Revelation 11.1–13: Its Form, Function, and Contextual Integration', *NTS* 30 (1984) 433–59; and 'From and Before the Throne: Revelation 4:5–6a Integrating the Imagery of Revelation 4–16', *CBQ* 60 (1998) 500–13, 504–6.

[13] See Giblin, 'Recapitulation', 82–93.

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readers are living. A kind of cyclorama of the climactic tribulation appears in a 'septet' of scenes under the seventh trumpet, which articulates the fulfilment of the gospel mystery (10.5–7). The *third* stage (16.1–22.10) concentrates on the *very end* of the end-time. It brings to a single, 'temporal' focus the (simultaneous) defeat of all the eschatological adversaries: Babylon, the Beasts and those they have gathered, Satan and those he has gathered, and Death and the Grave. This picture of God's *ḥêrem* on the wicked provides the context for the major vision's ultimate focus on the advent of the New Creation, the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

In the first stage (4.1–8.6), only the Redeemer can and does open the Creator's sealed book. In line with the opening promise made to John (4.1–2a), the book contains 'what must happen [γενέσθαι] hereafter', a series of events that proceeds ultimately from God enthroned.[14] As the book is unsealed, the scope of its contents is disclosed. After a world-encompassing, ongoing series of mostly dire events (the first four unsealings[15]), souls under the altar (sc., of incense[16]), a *locus* in Revelation for prayer and judgmental action in response to it,[17] pose the precise issue: their concern for a decisive moment of judgment for what they have endured at the hands of the inhabitants of the earth. These souls apparently represent all the just since Abel (for their testimony is not said to be from and/or about Jesus, Rev 6.9b). Although Christians are not necessarily excluded from this group,[18] subsequent attention to specifi-

[14] See Giblin, 'Recapitulation', 83–4; also *idem*, 'From and Before the Throne'.

[15] The four horsemen do *not* represent the end of the end-time. Rather, they look to human experiences that have always taken place on earth. Recalling the horsemen that 'patrol the earth' (Zech 1.9–10), they are called forth by the living beings (which form God's throne and represent creation).

[16] Revelation speaks of only one altar, that for incense. The clearest text is 11.1–2, where John is told to measure 'the sanctuary of God, both (καί) the altar and (καί) those worshipping in it (sc., the sanctuary)'. John is not concerned with the historical temple and its two altars any more than he is with another salient feature of the temple in Jerusalem, namely its many courts. For him, the sanctuary (ναός) is set off from 'the courtyard (αὐλή, sing.) outside the sanctuary'.

[17] Thus, Rev 6.9; 8.3, 5; 9.13; 11.1; 14.18; 16.7. Interestingly, the altar is *not* spoken of earlier, when the elders' incense-bowls representing the prayers of the saints (in the victory song hailing the Lamb) are first mentioned. It appears first with the prayer of the souls seeking justice (6.9), somewhat as the sanctuary (ναός) first appears when the elder identifies for John the innumerable throng of victors who stand before God and the Lamb (7.15).

[18] See J. P. Heil, 'The Fifth Seal (Rev 6.9–11) as a Key to the Book of Revelation', *Bib* 74 (1993) 220–43, 224 n. 13. Note, however, a structured progression from the beginning through the middle and into the very end of the working out of God's plan: the *fifth* in each septenary deals with the lot of those in a region 'below', sc., *not* in the areas which directly affect 'those dwelling on earth'. Contrast the first four elements in every septenary. Thus, under the fifth unsealing, faithful witnesses are rewarded for a little while by being brought 'more fully' into heaven; with the fifth trumpet, a horde from the abyss causes despair – for a limited time – in those not sealed; at the fifth trumpet, the throne of the beast is struck and his realm of blasphemers plunged into gloom.

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cally Christian martyrs (beginning with 7.9–17) supports limiting at least the emphasis in Rev 6.9–11 to pre-Christian witnesses.[19] They have to await the temporal of their number, which must include and indeed highlight those who have borne Jesus' testimony. But each is rewarded for the time being with a white robe and 'rest'. No doubt these souls are no longer crowded 'under the altar' but, in a sense, have been 'raised' to stand in God's throne-room (the heavenly sanctuary).

With the sixth unsealing, the concrete, *earthly* effect of God's response to his witnesses' prayer of complaint is articulated. For the first time since the announcement of the substance of John's vision (4.1) and his transport in the spirit (4.2a), the term γενέσθαι appears, insistently so (thrice at the outset of the oracle, 6.1). What is to 'occur / take place / happen (γενέσθαι)', decreed in the book that is being unsealed, is disclosed as the terrifying Day of Wrath.[20] In the enlargement that follows (7.1–17) – which distinguishes the lot or action of the faithful from that of humankind in general[21] – there are two complementary scenarios. The first is that of the 'Church Militant', the 144,000 who represent the faithful on earth faced with the prospect of this Day. They are protectively sealed with the seal of the living God[22] against the terror of that Day, especially as

[19] Note phrases that help link the rewarded souls in 6.11 with the victorious throng from all peoples that is depicted in 7.9–17: white robe(s) are spoken of as rewards for testimony (6.11; 7.9, 13; cf. 3.4–5) – albeit in 7.17 reference to the Lamb is as conspicuous as it was absent in 6.9–11. In v. 13 the white robes are explained as a reward for coming from the Great Tribulation. The 'little while' of 6.11 fittingly alludes to the Day of the Lord (sixth unsealing), i.e. the Great Tribulation, against the terror of which God's servants on earth (5.3) are sealed and through which the heavenly victors reach God's sanctuary. The 'co-servants and brethren' announced in 6.9 are described and identified in 7.13–17. Indeed, 6.9–11 remains unclear unless it is read in connection with the subsequently narrated unsealing.

[20] The 'oracle' given to enunciate God's intentions in executing the Holy War (see Giblin, *The Book of Revelation*, 26–30) appears specifically in the sixth unsealing, especialy thanks to its exceptional concentration of OT prophetic texts including Joel 2 (MT 3); Hos 10.9.

[21] *Pace* R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. edn, 1998) 154 n. 1, there are *three* such 'enlargements' (that do *not* function as 'interludes') that occur only under the *sixth of each septenary* – that numbered event which depicts the effect on *all* mankind of the coming Day of the Lord. In the second septenary, under the sixth trumpet (= the second woe), the role of the prophets is set in relief. In the second portion (11.1–14) of the enlargement (10.1–11.14), which treats of the twinned witnesses, the repentance effected by the heavenly triumphs of the twinned witnesses stands in sharp contrast to the frustrated purpose of the horde released from beyond the Euphrates; see Giblin, 'Revelation 11.1–13', 443–4, and *The Book of Revelation*, 107–8, 111–17. In the third septenary under the sixth of the last plagues, the 'enlargement', which is very brief (16.15), is sandwiched in between the announcements (of time, then of place) regarding Armageddon. The Lord calls those blessed who will not be found naked (like disgraced prisoners) at his coming (as described, of course, in 19.11–18).

[22] This seal (7.2) on their *foreheads* recurs as the mark which protects the faithful against the terror of despair brought about by the locust plague from the abyss (9.4) and is defined by the image of the *victorious* 144,000 as bearing 'his [the Lamb's] name and the name of his Father' (14.1). The final occurrence, coupled with the vision of God's face (22.4), features a singular

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symbolized by the fig tree 'set quaking by a great *wind*' (6.13; cf. 7.1–3). The second picture (7.9–17) depicts the end result of the Day of Wrath as far as the faithful are concerned. The innumerable host is correlated with the picture of the Church Militant, for example by their parallel beginnings, by the complementary aspects of 'hearing a number' and 'seeing an innumerable throng', and by the counterbalance between 'tribes of the sons of Israel' and human beings 'from every race and tribe and people and tongue'. The heavenly, victorious host represents all those who have passed through the Great Tribulation, i.e. the Day of Wrath or Day of the Lord. Interestingly, their heavenly reward anticipates in some ways features of the New Creation / New Jerusalem. For they are enjoying springs of the waters of life (7.17; cf. 21.6 and 22.1) for having washed their robes (7.13; 22.13), and God wipes every tear from their eyes (7.17b; 21.4). Although theirs is a heavenly state (sc., in God's sanctuary, which does not figure in the New Creation), it seems to *anticipate* that which occurs after the second death, namely the state of bodies raised from the dead.

Upon the seventh unsealing, a dramatic silence (befitting both the coming Day of the Lord and a time for prayer)[23] directs attention to the action of angels. Within the inclusion provided by the seven angels with the seven trumpets (latching the next septenary onto this one), another angel occupies the limelight. He offers incense upwards to God at the golden altar, and from his golden censer casts coals of fire from the altar onto the earth. The two actions are carefully correlated. The incensing 'in the interest of the saints' (*dat. commodi*, 8.3, 4) discloses its intent in the accompanying image regarding the execution of God's judgment on the earth. That 'the saints' here must include those previously indicated as being in God's throne-room (cf. the two preceding unsealings) should be evident from the insistence on '*all*' the saints (8.3). Thus, 'the altar before the throne' in the seventh unsealing helps bind together the petition of the witnesses under the altar and the rejoicing of the proleptically pictured victors in the Great Tribulation. Although it moves the action 'horizontally' towards the actual execution of the Holy War, the seventh unsealing main-

possessive that refers, in the light of v. 3, both to God and to the Lamb. The 'seal', of course, is also implicitly contrasted from 13.16 onwards (notably in 14.9, 11 and 20.4) with the 'brand' of the beast (the beast's name on the foreheads of those who worship this monster).

[23] See David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52b; Thomas Nelson: Naperville, 1998) 508. The '*half*-hour' allows time for the action described, without suggesting that at issue here is the *climax* of the Day of the Lord, sc., destroying God's enemies in a *single hour* (cf. 11.14; 14.7, 15; and esp. 18.10, 17, 19).

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ly elucidates John's 'vertical' eschatology. God's forthcoming judgment upon the earth takes place in response to the prayers of a huge host of (sc., 'all') the saints in heaven (God's sanctuary, including the altar).[24]

The second stage (8.7–15.8) of the major vision proclaims, in effect, the contents of the now unsealed scroll. The whole period covered by the trumpet blasts is surely one of tribulation, although the specification '*Great* Tribulation' (cf. 7.14b) should probably be reserved to the last three trumpets, i.e. the three woes. For only in the latter is the fully trying, *diabolical* assault unleashed and only then, too, are the faithful expressly introduced as escaping, being victimized by, or overcoming named anti-God forces.

The faithful on earth escape the horror and despair of a demonic attack from the abyss (the first woe) because, like the 'marshalled tribes of the sons of Israel' (7.1–8), they have been 'sealed' (9.4). Subsequently, however, it is their *heavenly* status in relation to diabolical agents that particularly interests John.

Under the second woe, one sees that the tribulation itself has further put the faithful in communion with Christ and God. Earlier, the enlargement of the sixth unsealing stated they had whitened their robes in the blood of the Lamb (7.14b). Now, in the enlargement of the sixth trumpet, John exemplifies this triumph by narrating the trial they have overcome as *witnesses*.[25] Thus, the twinned witnesses suffer death under the beast where their Lord was crucified and are then ridiculed by the inhabitants of that world-city. But they are raised to life and ascend to heaven (11.1–12). God's judgment on the fractional remnant[26] and his grace of conversion to the majority of their foes (which was not effected by the plague under the sixth trumpet) strikingly follow their resurrection/ascension. Their *victorious* witness does not take place on earth.

[24] John's attention here centres on what takes place in heaven, to which he has been invited. 'All' the saints must also include, however, those 'earthly' members of the priestly kingdom (1.5a–6) who likewise look forward to the coming of Jesus the Lord, the divine being who is the First and the Last (22.20, 13; 1.8). The *efficacy* of these prayers, however, derives only from what John sees as engineered in and from God in heaven.

[25] The twinned witnesses (cf. Deut 19.15) stand for prophetic witness to the world, from pre-Christian times to the present and to the world's end (the hour of the eschatological earthquake; 11.13); see Giblin, 'Revelation 11.1–13', 438–43. As *typological* figures, they cannot be defined or delimited in clock-and-calendar time to one or other 'historical' event; they represent, analogously, every valid prophetic communication. The twinned witnesses stand for such prophecy from Moses to its completion in the world-city.

[26] The septenary of trumpet-blasts employs throughout '*inverse* remnant typology', notably in 11.13 ('a tenth', 'seven thousand'), but also in the specification of 'one-third' (from 8.5 to 12.4); see Giblin, 'Revelation 11.1–13', 446 and n. 51; *idem*, *Book of Revelation*, 115–16.

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The third woe unfolds in the context of a septet.[27] Like the rest of Rev 4–22, this septet centres on the Day of the Lord spelled out as God's Holy War. It apparently contains five texts referring to the saints in heaven. The first (11.15) does not expressly refer to the saints. Nevertheless, considering its phraseology, it is akin to other texts that at least include the voices of the faithful in heaven.[28] The second (12.10–12), which seems to restate the graphic vision of Michael's defeat of Satan (12.7–9),[29] celebrates the victory in terms of Christians' share in the blood of the Lamb through their witness in totally dedicating their lives to him. They now dwell ('tent') in heaven. The third (14.1–5) depicts the victorious army of the Lamb. These followers of the Lamb comprise more than those slain; for their canticle of victory is grounded in their having blamelessly uttered the truth. This vignette of the Lamb's heavenly triumph forms the central and pivotal element in the whole septet. The septet (11.5–15.8) moves from the declaration of God's cosmic kingdom and the onset of the Holy War (images of active conflict) to its central focus on this heavenly victory of the Lamb and his rescued army. As the firstfruits (ἀπαρχή), this contingent guarantees a complete triumph yet to come. From this point onwards, the septet provides images of the forthcoming judgment upon the earth. The fourth text (14.12–13) – which counterbalan-

[27] For the rationale justifying this classification, see Giblin, *Book of Revelation*, 117–20. The announced 'third woe' is expressed in the septet (§III B, 12.12b) as a universal, earthly catastrophe *contrasted* with rejoicing in heaven. The *entire* septet ('the *days* of the seventh trumpet', 10.7a) spells out the third woe, which also sums up the heart of God's (end-time) evangelical message to his prophets (10.7b). The consequences of the woe, both damning and salutary, form part of its presentation in this well-knit septet.

To clarify the structure of a text (e.g. a chiastic or concentric one), objective method requires disciplined attention to key terms or phrases peculiar to the delimited components of the structure. Appealing primarily and, indeed, solely to 'conceptual correspondences', as Michelle V. Lee does in 'A Call to Martyrdom: Function as Method and Message in Revelation', *NovT* 40 (1998) 164–94, 181, should be abhorred.

Note also the progression apropos of the *seventh* of the three successive septenaries. What is constantly highlighted in the seventh unsealing, trumpet, or bowl is particularly the relationship between God enthroned, sc., in his sanctuary, and events taking place or happening on earth, with emphasis on theophanic events recalling those proceeding from the throne in 4.5–6a, and at least an allusion to the effect of the prayers of the saints in heaven; see Giblin, 'From and Before the Throne', 507–10.

[28] Clearest connections are with 12.10 (a loud voice referring to the reign of God and the power of his anointed), 19.1 (with the responding, final utterance of the elders and four living beings in v. 4), and 19.6. Those 'unidentified' in 12.10 become reasonably discernible in the course of the ongoing narrated visions.

[29] Note the balance between what is seen and what is said (vision and interpretation). Both of these, moreover (12.7–9 plus 12.10–12), fill the major, *central* ('A*B*A') position between scenes featuring the devil's hostility towards the woman and her offspring (12.1–6, 13–18). For it is in this central passage that the opposed signs (or 'standards') of the heavenly conflict are resolved in the victory of Satan's being cast out of heaven.

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ces what is expected of the saints while on earth (13.9–10) – speaks of their heavenly reward as a state of rest and, indeed, of blessedness. These faithful may well qualify as those who were *slain* witnesses, but John's pointing to their labours in observing God's commands and to their persevering faith suggests they comprise a wider group. The last text (15.2–4) in this stage strikingly places victors over the beasts on a 'Red Sea' that recalls the dais of God's throne, the sea of glass (here mixed with fire). In God's immediate presence, they hymn his accomplishments in a New Exodus and look forward to the nations' acknowledging his justice.

With the third stage (16.1–22.11), John introduces into the picture of the heavenly victors the theme of their sharing in God's own final judgment.[30] In the interpretation scene dealing with the fall of Babylon (17.1–19.10), a voice urges heaven, including saints, apostles, and prophets, to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon (18.20) because God has exacted from her in judgment their (own, requested) judgment. They do so in the triple alleluia that soon follows (19.1–4) and prepares for the climactic alleluia of all God's servants (19.6–8, in response to the voice [of Christ] from the throne, 19.5). The latter heralds the wedding of the Lamb (which proves to be the New Creation, the New Jerusalem).

Finally, the climactic scene of a state of heavenly bliss for the faithful combines and develops a number of aspects of the previous images. At the same time, it imparts to them the thematic coherence of a major, recurring theme of the entire book, namely the achievement of the priestly kingdom. The following chart will help recall and classify the images developed:

Persons enjoying the heavenly state

Martyrs and confessors, especially as slain witnesses; cf. 6.1–10; 7.9–17; 11.1–13; 12.10–11; 14.1–4; 14.12–13; 15.2–4; 18.20 (cf. 17.6), expressly called 'holy' (cf. 8.3; 14.12–13; 18.20) and 'blessed' (cf. 14.12–13);[31] rewarded individually (sg., 20.6; cf. 6.11a) as well as together; first introduced as 'souls' (cf. 6.1–10) but then as enjoying a risen state (cf. 6.1–10; 7.9–17; 11.1–13).

Having a sacral function or status ('priests'); cf. liturgical imagery

[30] The devil's being cast down from heaven (12.10–12) is indeed a *victory* shared by those who exercised their witness on account of the blood of the Lamb. It is represented, however, as the ousting of the accuser of the brethren of the heavenly throng rather than as either group's judgment, surely not a judgment that is *final*.

[31] Their blessedness also recalls that of those who are to be spared from the ruin of Armageddon (16.15; the enlargement of the sixth bowl), although in 16.15 Christ directs a warning to those on earth. Both in 14.12–13 and in 16.15, however, blessedness can be construed as avoiding Armageddon and the second death.

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in 7.9–17; 14.1–4; 15.2–4; and having power to judge (cf. 18.20).
Victors over diabolical forces; cf. 7.9–17 (implicit in their coming from the Great Tribulation); 11.1–13; 12.10–12; 14.1–4 (as indicated by the preceding portion of the septet and by the canticle of victory); 15.2–4; 18.20; 19.1–4, 6–8.

Heavenly location (or special place *in relation to God, Christ*)
Allusion to Jerusalem (the beloved city); cf. 14.1–4 (Mt Zion); 15.2–4 (the glass sea/dais, sc., before God's throne); 6.9–11 (in relation to the altar of incense); 7.9–17 (in God's sanctuary); 11.1–13 (the sanctuary with the altar and worshippers; ascension to heaven).
Use of 'tent-imagery' (the encampment); cf. 7.9–17; 12.10–12; 13.6.

Timing
Insofar as the thousand years may represent a period of rest, cf. the theme of 'rest' in 6.9–11; 14.12–13.
After a decisive (but not yet final) defeat of Satan; cf. 12.10–12.

The priestly kingdom in Revelation fulfils the covenant promised in Ex 19.1–5. That covenant is already realized on earth insofar as redemption from sin is concerned. The doxology (1.5b–6) after John's epistolary greeting affirms this. Its present existence is reaffirmed in the heavenly court's acclamation of the Lamb's qualifications to open the sealed scroll (5.8–10). Rev 5.8–10, however, given the context regarding the Lamb's *opening* the book that tells what must happen next, speaks of its universal extent (5.9b) and of the priestly kings' future role as well ('and they shall rule over the earth', v. 10b). The third text (20.4–6) situates at least a representative group of this covenanted people in heaven. The opening scene suggests the thrones for the scene of the worldwide judgment (Dan 7.9, 22). Insofar as the saints exercise judgment and reign with Christ, the fiery defeat of Satan and the hordes he has brought onto 'the broad surface of the earth' may well represent the negative aspect of the start of the priestly kingdom's rule over the earth. The full, positive realization of their reign, however, consists in their *eternal* reign, with their foreheads marked with God's name (probably as the high priest wore the title 'Holy to the Lord') in the New Jerusalem come down from heaven (22.3b–5).[32]

Their heavenly reign in 20.4–6 is directly correlated with the

[32] Although the text of Ex 19.1–5 does not appear in John's image of the New Jerusalem, the theme does. Reasons for the difference may be discerned in the transcending of 'sanctuary imagery' (21.22; 22.3–4) and an escalation of universalism: 'his peoples (λαοί)', 21.3, rather than 'from every people and tribe and tongue . . .'.

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decisive moment in earthly history, namely the defeat of Satan and the nations (Gog and Magog) he has deceived in order to gather them for *the* war, sc., Armageddon (cf. 16.13–14, 16; 19.19).[33] The share of the blessed in Christ's victory goes beyond that of casting Satan from heaven (cf. 12.10–12), an event recast in 20.1–3 as his being bound for a thousand years.[34] They have already served as witnesses and have never worshipped the beast or his image or worn his name on their foreheads and hands. Like the saints of 14.12–13, who are contrasted to that subservient group threatened with eternal torment (14.9–11), their number encompasses a wider group, whom we would call 'confessors' of the faith (20.4). Here, however, emphasis falls not on a distinctive state of rest[35] contrasted with the state of the wicked or even with the endurance of the faithful on earth (13.9–10), but on their risen life (20.4b–6) as an anticipation of the risen bodily existence that will not take place until the Day of Judgment (20.5; cf. 20.11–21.8). The only 'limitation' of the thousand-year reign itself lies precisely in its being

[33] Note the combination of three elements in each case, namely the *gathering* of a host by powers of *deception* for a specific war (*the* war of the Great Day of the Lord Almighty, Armageddon):

(1) in 16.12–15, agents of *deception* (working false *signs*, σημεῖα) who emanate from the mouths of the dragon and each of the two beasts *gather* (συναγαγεῖν, v. 14; συνήγαγεν, v. 16) the kings of the whole inhabited earth for *the war* (τὸν πόλεμον) of God the Almighty at Armageddon; cf. the anarthrous 'wage war', 13.7.

(2) in 19.11–21, which describes that war (cf. v. 15), the beast and the kings of the earth who had been *gathered* (συνηγμένα, v. 19) to wage *the* war (τὸν πόλεμον) meet their end, together with the false prophet who *deceived* them (ἐπλάνησεν) by signs (σημεῖα, v. 20);

(3) in 20.7–10, the remaining agent mentioned earlier (in 16.12–15), namely Satan (the devil, the dragon), who *deceived* (πλανῆσαι, v. 7) the nations at the ends (lower edges) of the earth (ὁ πλανῶν αὐτούς, v. 10) to *gather* (συναγαγεῖν) them for *the* war (τὸν πόλεμον, v. 8) meets the same end as the other members of the unholy triad (v. 10).

[34] Repeated identification in 20.2 of the one bound by the angel must intentionally recall 12.9. In Rev 12.17, Satan's malevolent intentions can be worked out not by his own further action during the time he is cast down from heaven, but only through his surrogates, the beasts from the sea and the earth. In 20.1–10, his being bound, then loosed after a thousand years set in relief the stability of the heavenly triumph of God's witnesses, viz. their thousand-year reign with Christ. Some 'time-period' that represents an enduring heavenly state of blessedness seems appropriate and indeed required if that (non-eternal) state is called a *kingdom* or *reign*.

[35] For an overall analysis of the structure of Rev. 20.1–10 see Giblin, *The Book of Revelation*, 185–90. As for the term 'a thousand years' as applied to the blessed, John may well be alluding to a sabbatical period of rest; see Heinz Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1997) 441–2, although not in any numerical 'calculation' of successive periods. Rather, in the light of *2 Enoch* 33.1–2 (cf. Ps 90.4) it may figure as an eschatological and 'timeless' period, 'neither months nor weeks nor days nor hours'.

The 'thousand years' seems to correspond on a different, heavenly plane to the period of the tribulation on earth, i.e. the third woe as focused on the three-and-a-half years (or the equivalent in months or days) when Satan himself is *hors de combat* (cf. 12.13–18). Then, for the 'little while' he has (according to 12.12b), he must work through his minions (the beasts). The 'little while' he has when released (20.3c) looks to a different, 'post-bestial' aspect of his virulence. It resembles 12.12b only in that it denotes the period of a frustrated anti-God assault.

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ordered to end with the Day of Judgment. That day is marked here as the utter defeat of the last and most formidable adversary in the war at Armageddon (vv. 7–10). An aspect of that final event (punishment in the lake of fire, which is the second death) coincides with the beginning of risen life in the New Creation (21.1–8). Accordingly, the priestly kings should be regarded as destined for all those benefits predicated of the victors in God's sanctuary (7.9–17).

The throne scene in Rev 20.4–6 is situated, in effect, in God's heavenly sanctuary (cf. 7.9–15). This place is elsewhere called 'Mount Zion' (14.1), probably to stress heaven as the present victorious term of the Holy War. Here, in the sense of an embattled target of Satan's 'last attempt' against God's protected people in heaven, it is depicted as the 'encampment' (παρεμβολή) of the saints (20.9) as well as the 'beloved city'. The targeted city reminds one of the object of the beast's blasphemies in 13.6: (God's) name and his dwelling (his tent), those dwelling (tenting) in heaven.[36] Also, *heavenly* encampment embattled and encircled by foes from the underworld demands an 'earthly' depiction of the encounter. This holds especially if these foes are to be devoured by fire from heaven (20.9) and then hurled into the lake of everlasting fire where the other losers of Armageddon suffer. It does not follow, though, that the millennial reign of the saints requires a quantified earthly realm, any more than Mt Zion (14.1) or God's sanctuary (*passim*) do.

II. THE END OF THE END-TIME AS THE CONVERGENCE OF VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL ESCHATOLOGY

Now, even after surveying the developed imagery of a state of heavenly beatitude prior to the resurrection, it remains necessary to eliminate interpreting the millennium as a symbolic or literal *earthly* triumph. One ought to demonstrate that the timing of the 'end of the end' in stage three of the progressive development of Christ's God-given future triumph (Jesus' 'revelation', Rev 1.1) allows no time for an earthly interregnum between Christ's Second Coming and the Last Judgment. Furthermore, one needs also to recognize that a symbolic understanding of the millennium (sc., as

[36] The main function of the beast – worldwide dominance and persecution during the end-time – finds its rationale in this hatred of God and those in heaven. V. 6 lies at the very centre ('*c*') of a well-crafted concentric (*abcb'a'*) structure (vv. 3b–8); see Giblin, *The Book of Revelation*, 133–4.

The image of the 'tent' as ultimately God's own sheltering presence is evident in the apposition of 'his tent' and 'those tenting', an image re-enforced by 7.15 and 21.3; cf. 12.12.

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the existence of the Church on *this* earth – which is elsewhere never pictured as free of woe, except the woe of hopelessness [9.1–12a; cf. 6.12–7. 3]) does not square with John's way of correlating his vertical and horizontal eschatology.

These two eschatological directions converge on the decisive moment of what must happen / occur / take place (γενέσθαι) according to what is contained in the Creator's book (in heaven), which only the Lamb can and does open.[37] A repeatedly amplified series of theophanic features originates with the lightnings, voices, and thunders that 'proceed' from the throne (4.5a). These then 'occur' (aor., ἐγένοντο), with the addition of the 'earthquake' motif (cf. 6.12–14), after the angel's liturgical actions at the opening of the seventh seal (8.1–6), as the trumpeters are ready to begin the actual *engagement* of the Holy War (vv. 5–6). They occur again, with the addition of a great hail, at the beginning of the septet, under the seventh trumpet (11.19), when the sanctuary of God has been opened in heaven and the ark of his covenant has appeared. The third and last time they occur almost ponderously emphasizes the size of the earthquake and the hail. It bonds with the seventh of the liturgically solemnized last plagues (16.17–21). There, after the angel has poured his libation-bowl on the air, a loud voice from the sanctuary – indeed, from the throne itself – declares, 'It has occurred / happened / taken place (pf., γέγονεν)!' What has occurred is the Creator's plan as contained in the book that the Redeemer has unsealed. At this point, however, the decisive aspect of that planned Day of the Lord that has occurred is a negative one, the destruction of Babylon, the world-city that is a whore.

Essentially contrasted with that event, and similarly expressed by the only other use in Revelation of the perfect stem of γίνεσθαι (albeit with the aorist ending -αν rather than the perfect -ασι[38]) is the advent of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb. The one seated on the throne himself declares 'they have taken place (γέγοναν)'.[39] In effect, this positive aspect of the Day of the Lord is correlated with the negative aspect as a single eschatological moment. The intrinsic 'timing' of the two events as one is confirmed by the alleluias (19.1–8) that are sung just before the close of the

[37] In short, this convergence equivalently envisions 'thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven'.

[38] The explanation for this may well lie in an attempt to assimilate the second (and only other) instance of the use of the perfect to the sound of the first.

[39] The plural ending after a neuter plural noun (v. 5a) may be accounted for by the inclusion of 'these *words* (λόγοι) are faithful and true' (v. 5b) as the subject of γέγοναν. Whether or not μοι is to be read at the end of v. 5a, both statements are evidently addressed to John.

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interpretation scene concerning Babylon.

Babylon, however, is only one of the 'eschatological adversaries' to be overcome. She represents the whole evil society that has corrupted the world. There are other 'negative aspects' to be taken care of, namely political and religious institutions dedicated to deception (sc., the two beasts) and the arch-enemy himself, Satan. The announcement of their utter defeat is contained in the sixth of the series of last plagues that culminate in the destruction of Babylon. As indicated above, the unholy triad (the dragon and the two beasts) engineer by deception the gathering of the kings of the earth for the war of the Great Day of God the Almighty at Armageddon. That same war is referred to both in the scene of Christ's parousia (19.11–21, esp. v. 19) and in that of the wiping out of Satan and his horde by fire from heaven (20.7–9). Interestingly, John has employed Ezekiel's depiction of the attack and defeat of Gog and Magog (Ezek 38–39) in *both* these pictures of the final war, but has *transposed* them. He has made use of Ezek *38* in the scene of Satan's attack on the priestly kingdom and Ezek *39* (notably the gory sacrificial feast of the birds) in the scene of Christ's parousia.[40] He seems deliberately to have focused his readers' attention on a single, climactic battle and on a single, climactic Day. There is simply no room, no time, no space on earth for an interregnum!

Finally, John explains the whole series of decisive events in the way he closes each of the last four sections (IV, V, VI, and VII) by noting the fulfilment of God's word: the voice from the sanctuary, from the throne, as the seventh of the last plagues is executed (16.17b); the formal closing of the interpretation scene regarding the whore, Babylon (19.9–10, v. 9b); the conclusion (21.5–8, v. 5b) of the three narratives[41] that refer to the second death for the wicked; and the formal closing of the interpretation scene regarding the bride of the Lamb, the holy city Jerusalem (22.6–11, v. 6). What was written in the Creator's book has been effected in the very end of the end-time, the Great Day of the Wrath of the Enthroned and the Lamb (6.16–17), which is the War of the Great Day of God the Almighty (16.14; cf. 19.15, 19; 20.7). The positive correlative, of course, which is essential to the theme of the Holy War, remains the entry into the promised land and secure dwelling

[40] See Giblin, 'Recapitulation', 82 n. 7, citing R. Fowler White; see also White's later article, 'Making Sense of Rev 20.1–10? Harold Hoehner Versus Recapitulation', *JETS* 37 (1994) 539–51.

[41] No more than three integral narratives should be distinguished within 19.11–21.8; see Giblin, 'Structural and Thematic Correlations', 497–504. Dividing integral narratives merely by the occurrence of 'I saw' is short-sighted here as elsewhere in Revelation. There are larger structural units that call for attention; for instance, the *ABA'* structure in 20.1–3, 4–6, 7–10.

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there. In Revelation, that security is presented 'vertically' as a heavenly state prior to the very end of the end-time (see also 11.1–2, v. 1) and, eventually, in terms of the 'horizontal' eschatology, as the New Creation.[42] For the priestly kingdom of the millennium, their heavenly reign of the thousand years converges with the earthly realization of a New Creation at the moment they bypass the second death and are joined by the rest of the dead who are judged victors (21.6b–7). As of that point, all God's sealed, victorious worshippers, bearing the headband marking their consecrated priesthood, reign not for a thousand years, but forever (22.1, 3b–5).

APPENDIX

AN OUTLINE OF REVELATION. Adapted from C. H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation* (GNS 34; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical/Michael Glazier, 1992) 12–18.

Prologue 1.1–8
First Major Part: John's inaugural vision and the seven proclamations to the churches, 1.9–3.22
Second Major Part: John's heavenly, universal vision of things to come hereafter, 4.1–22.11

Stage One

§I Heavenly acclaim of God (the Creator and the Coming One) and of the divine Redeemer apropos of the mysterious scroll with seven seals, 4.1–5.14

§II The seven unsealings, 6.1–8.6

Stage Two

§III The seven trumpet blasts, 8.7–15.8
The first woe = fifth trumpet blast, 9.1–12
The second woe = sixth trumpet blast and its enlarge-

[42] Even in the seven imperial decrees (Rev 2–3), eschatological rewards suggest both a heavenly state of affairs and enjoyment of the earthly paradise to come. An outstanding example of the former can be found in the promise to the angel of Smyrna: the crown of life (2.10b) and immunity from the second death (2.11b) – guaranteed to the victor by him who became a dead person and then came to life (2.8b). The promise of kingly rule over the nations (2.26) which Christ himself exercises in 19.15 may be illumined by what happens at the end of the thousand-year reign (20.7–10). So, too, being made a pillar in God's sanctuary (which is heaven, not a fixture of the New Jerusalem) and yet being destined for the New Jerusalem (3.12, in the communication to the Philadelphians) makes sense as a reference to a state of heavenly beatitude. Lastly, mention of sharing Christ's throne as he has shared his Father's (the missive to the Laodiceans, 3.21) apparently looks to a heavenly reward even prior to the Lamb's sharing God's throne in the Jerusalem of the new heavens and earth (22.3a; see the placement of the Lamb in 5.6a and the voice from the throne in 19.5 calling for praise of God).

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ment, 9.13–11.14
The third woe = seventh trumpet blast, introducing a septet, 11.15–15.8
§A Canticle about the messianic kingdom; opening of the sanctuary in heaven; the ark is seen, 11.5b–19
§B Two signs in heaven (a great sign; another sign); conflict in heaven; canticle of victory and woe; attack pursued on earth, 12.1–18
§C The beast from the sea; wisdom utterance, 13.1–10
The beast from the earth; wisdom utterance regarding the beast from the sea, 13.11–18
§D The Lamb on Mount Zion with the 144,000 redeemed, whose canticle is noted, not cited, 14.1–5
§C' Three angels heralding the gospel, the fall of Babylon, the judgment; wisdom utterance, 14.6–12
Four angelic figures, two rewarding, two punishing, 14.13–20
§B' A sign in heaven (another, great, marvellous): seven angels with the last plagues, 15.1
§A' Canticle of Moses and the Lamb; the sanctuary of the Tent of Testimony in heaven opened (temporarily inaccessible), 15.2–8

Stage Three

§IV The seven libation bowls of God's final wrath, 16.1–21
§V Angelic interpretation scene (about Babylon), 17.1–19.10
§VI Narrative about other eschatological adversaries and the new creation
§x Armageddon and the defeat of the beasts, 19.11–21
§y The millennium and the defeat of Satan, 20.1–10
§z The judgment, the end of death and the grave, 20.11–21.8
§VII Angelic interpretation scene (about the new Jerusalem), 21.9–22.11
Epilogue 22.7, 12–21

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