

An Overview of Revelation

In the Context of the Sanctuary

Fred Bischoff

Rev. 1 The Revelation of Jesus begins clearly in the setting of the temple in heaven with Christ walking among the candlesticks, which are in the first apartment. The messages to the seven churches (first of four series of sevens described in the book: churches, seals, trumpets, plagues) deals with the issues of church purity and apostasy, of trials and overcoming. The rewards for overcoming are mostly object oriented, with the most stupendous one that for the seventh church (Laodicea = that which is "judged"): to sit with Christ on His throne. From here the setting shifts northward to the throne, at the site of the table of showbread, "in the sides of the north" (Isa. 14:13). Here the series of seven seals speak also of purity and apostasy, of trials and overcoming. The sixth seal speaks of the day of God's wrath, of hiding, and asks who will be able to stand. We next see the forces of turmoil being restrained while a group is prepared to stand, sealed for God and for eternity.

Rev. 2 & 3

Rev. 4

Rev. 5 & 6

Rev. 7

These first two settings thus show the South-North axis of the heavenly sanctuary, the candlesticks and the throne. Here the focus is upon the interaction of the righteous and their God in presence and partaking. Other concepts we see elsewhere in Scripture regarding this realm of the sanctuary include the Holy Spirit with indwelling, light, nourishment, and strength. In this daily ministry of the tabernacle, we see also the activity of inspecting and disciplining.

Rev. 8 In the culmination of the seals in the seventh we see the silence of an awesome event, the ending of the intercession as the censor is cast, and Calvary-like responses to the accomplishment by God of a great feat--voices, thunder, lightning, and an earthquake. And with the reference to the altar of incense, the setting again moves, this time into the East-West axis of the temple. Here the seven trumpets sound in warning to the world, with woes on its inhabitants. The sixth trumpet looses those restrained forces mentioned under the sixth seal, but there is no repentance. In contrast, during this period when time is no more, God has His agents, faithful through disappointment and persecution. The seventh trumpet announces the time of God's wrath, during which the mystery of God is finished. This is the time of judgment, to reward the righteous and to destroy the wicked. And it is here that the setting moves for a final time, with the temple opened to the place of the ark. In this westward move, the focus is in the most holy place, with its awesome, yearly ministry. And again with the location change

Rev. 9

Rev. 10 & 11

occurring under the seventh of the series, the portents of a great event are depicted--lightning, voices, thunder, an earthquake, and hail.

The final two series of seven, being in settings on the East-West axis of the temple, show a connection between and a transition from the first apartment to the second, from the daily to the yearly ministries. Here the focus is more on the interaction of the wicked and God in fire and law, with mercy interposed in intercession for a time. Other concepts from Scripture about this area of the sanctuary include sacrifice, death and ashes, cleansing, Shekinah, consuming, judgment, and confession. In the daily we see prayers ascending with incense, and in the yearly, atonement being made.

Rev. 12 & 13 Before the final series of seven are shown, we have a delineation of the wicked which are to be destroyed. The three great powers of wickedness are outlined--the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, especially in their relation to God's people. Then the people of God are described, with their last day message and their being reaped--the cryptic first mention of the reward proclaimed in the seventh trumpet. The wicked as people are then reaped for wrath. Then follows an outline of the final seven series, the plagues of wrath and judgment, in the setting of the opened temple which is inaccessibly filled with smoke. In the sixth plague the three unclean spirits of devils coming from the three great powers of wickedness gather the world to the final battle. The seventh plague again declares a completion, "It is done". The awful concurring events again are described--voices, thunder, lightning, an earthquake, and hail.

Rev. 14

Rev. 15 & 16

Rev. 17 & 18 In a further view of the outcome of judgment, we see a description with an internal collapse of the powers of evil, corporately named Babylon. In contrast to this spiritual whore, the Lamb's bride is introduced and the marriage supper announced. But first the external obliteration is explained of the three powers of wickedness and the people identified with them. With the eradication of sin in the persons of unrepentant and unrestored rebels, the consequences of sin are likewise incinerated, death and hell. And then is ushered in the glorious scene of the reward of the righteous, the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the intimate oneness of God with His people, face to face. Here, in this city, there is no more need for a temple, for man and God are finally, fully reconciled, judgment and restoration complete.

Rev. 19

Rev. 20

Rev. 21 & 22

"Even so, come Lord Jesus."