

“The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic– Part Two”

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Introduction

In Part One of this article I addressed significant issues related to historicism and its application to biblical apocalyptic.¹ Historicism, as a method for interpreting biblical apocalyptic, sees in books like Daniel and Revelation sequences of history moving from the prophet’s time to the end of history.² This way of reading biblical apocalyptic, widely practiced up until the 19th Century, has not only been marginalized in current scholarship,³ it is being increasingly challenged in one of its remaining bastions, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁴

Recent scholarship, however, has exhibited a renewed interest in ancient apocalyptic, both inside and outside of the Bible. Significant work has been done to define apocalyptic as a

¹Jon Paulien, “The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic– Part One,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 14/2 (Autumn, 2003), 15-43. For a definition of historicism as applied to apocalyptic see Reimar Vetne, “A Definition and Short History of Historicism as a Method for Interpreting Daniel and Revelation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 14/2 (Autumn, 2003), 1-14.

²Paulien, 15.

³Ibid., 16-17.

genre of literature produced in the context of ancient apocalyptic eschatology.⁵ This research has come to recognize that apocalyptic literature does not come in a single, crisply-defined form. Instead there are at least two major types of apocalyptic, the historical and the mystical.⁶

The historical type of apocalyptic, characteristic of Daniel, gives an overview of a large sweep of history, often divided into periods, and leading up to the end of history and the final judgment. It tends to be highly symbolic, with the symbols referring to heavenly and earthly beings and events.⁷

The mystical type of apocalyptic, on the other hand, describes the ascent of the prophet through the heavens. While symbolism may be used, there is a greater degree of reality in this type, the visionary ascends to a real place, where actions occur that affect the lives of the readers on earth. Both types of apocalyptic can occur in a single work.⁸

In reflecting on these definitions, a couple of things stand out to me. First of all, while the distinction between historical and mystical apocalyptic seems a helpful one, the definitions are very minimal and interpreters will have a difficult time distinguishing between them in many apocalyptic texts. For example, to what degree are these categories appropriate to the study of Revelation? Current scholarship does not seem to offer clear answers to this question.

Second, the presence of both types of apocalyptic in a single work raises the question

⁴Ibid., 17-21.

⁵Ibid., 21-24.

⁶Ibid., 24-26.

⁷Ibid., 24.

whether applying these distinctions to whole works like Daniel and Revelation is truly helpful. Assignments of genre may be more accurate and helpful if made on a passage by passage basis.

Recent Adventist scholarship on apocalyptic has tended to operate in a vacuum in relation to the developments in the wider arena. But the Adventist distinction between general and apocalyptic prophecy has awakened Adventist interpreters to the importance of genre.⁹ Here too, careful attention to genre on a text by text basis seems advisable.

I conclude in Part One, therefore, that neither Daniel nor Revelation is a consistent example of apocalyptic genre. In addition to apocalyptic visions, Daniel contains court narratives, prayers and poetry.¹⁰ And while most scholars see apocalyptic elements in Revelation, it also has elements of classical prophecy, poetry and song, epistle, and perhaps even straightforward narrative.¹¹ So neither work can be comfortably labeled “apocalyptic” as a whole, especially Revelation. If that is so, merely assuming, as many Adventists have done, that the whole book is to be read as “historical apocalyptic” is not an adequate approach for scholars.

In light of the above, I echoed Ramsey Michaels’ call to give greater attention to the genre of the various parts of Daniel and Revelation.¹² Adventist interpreters who wish to revive historicist interpretation of Revelation will need to pursue a thorough-going examination of the

⁸Ibid., 25.

⁹Ibid., 27-29.

¹⁰Ibid., 32.

¹¹Ibid., 34-36.

¹²Ibid., 38-39; cf. J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, vol. 7, *Guides to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 29-33.

genre of Revelation's visions on a passage-by-passage basis. The presence of historical apocalyptic in Daniel and other Jewish apocalyptic books can form the basis for discovering the kinds of markers in the text that are characteristic of historical apocalyptic. If portions of Revelation exhibit the characteristics of historical apocalyptic, a historicist approach may be indicated by the text itself.¹³

In this article I examine two of Daniel's apocalyptic visions, in chapters 2 and 7, to expose the textual characteristics most typical of historical apocalyptic. I combine this information with literary observations from Revelation to determine whether a selected test passage, Revelation 12, meets the criteria of historical apocalyptic observed in Daniel. I conclude, with some qualification, that it does.¹⁴

Historical Apocalyptic in Daniel

Daniel 2

Overview of the Visionary Portion

The visionary portion of Daniel chapter 2 has many characteristics of historical

¹³Paulien, 39, 41-42.

¹⁴My purpose here is not a "mindless" defense of the kind of historicism seen in Elliott (Edward B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticæ*, fifth edition, 4 volumes [London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1862]) and others, or in the extremes of some Seventh-day Adventist and evangelical apologetics (such as Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970]). I am interested in a serious reading of the text in light of its original intention to the degree that can be determined.

apocalyptic.¹⁵ It contains a revelation delivered in a narrative framework, and that revelation is given directly by God (an otherworldly being) to Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, the human recipients. The vision and its interpretation disclose a transcendent temporal reality regarding eschatological salvation, and reveal the spatial reality of God's will and purposes in the supernatural world. However one understands the metals of the statue and Daniel's interpretation of them, the vision portrays a chain of kingdoms, beginning with the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and continuing to an everlasting kingdom at the eschatological climax.¹⁶

The story of Daniel 2 begins with a sleepless night for King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:1). He is worried about the future and God gives him dreams which unpack that future (Dan 2:29). After futile attempts to get help from his closest advisors, Nebuchadnezzar hears out Daniel, the Hebrew prophet. Daniel testifies that the future is unknown to human beings, no matter how intelligent nor how connected to the occult (Dan 2:27). There is a God in heaven, however, who is fully able to reveal what will happen in days to come, including the final events of history

¹⁵I recognize, of course, that the chapter as a whole is a court conflict tale. A Judean exile succeeds where the Babylonian sages fail and is, therefore, rewarded with riches and power. The ultimate purpose of the narrative is not a sequence of history, but the message that God is in control of events and that history has a goal and a purpose, which He will achieve. See the discussion in Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 77-79.

It is the visionary part of the court tale that is told in the form of historical apocalyptic. See Douglas Bennett, "The Stone Kingdom of Daniel 2," in *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2, edited by Frank B. Holbrook (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 346.

¹⁶John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia— a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 166-171.

(בְּאַחֲרֵי יוֹמֵי אֵל) -- “at the end of days,” Dan 2:28 [my translation]).¹⁷

The dream is about a large statue made from a succession of metals, declining in value (from gold to iron) but increasing in strength from the head to the foot of the image (2:31-33).¹⁸ The feet of the statue are made of a mixture of iron and clay (2:33). At the end of the dream a supernatural rock smashes into the feet of the image, breaking the whole image to pieces (2:34). The pieces are then swept away by the wind, while the rock grows into a mountain that fills the whole earth (2:35).

While the vision of the statue carries Nebuchadnezzar to the end of earth’s history, the explanation of the vision by Daniel is firmly grounded in the time and place of Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹ The interpretation begins with a straightforward, unambiguous assertion, “You are that head of gold.”²⁰ That the head of gold is not limited to Nebuchadnezzar personally, but represents his whole kingdom becomes clear in that all the succeeding metals represent

¹⁷Bennett, 347-351.

¹⁸Collins, *Daniel*, 170; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 94; William H. Shea, *Daniel 1-7: Prophecy as History*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 139.

¹⁹Dieter Bauer, *Das Buch Daniel*, Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar– Altes Testament, vol. 22 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996), 87; Robert J. M. Gurney, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7,” *Themelios* 2 (2, 1977): 41; Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 80; Miller, 93; W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel*, Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Preaching and Teaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 35..

²⁰2:38-- אַנְתְּ-הוּא רֹאשׁוֹ דֵּי כְּהָבָא.

whole kingdoms, not just a series of kings.²¹ Nebuchadnezzar is addressed as the representative of his kingdom. The comment that the fourth kingdom will be “strong as iron” suggests that the various metals were designed to portray specific characteristics of each of the kingdoms.²²

The next stage in the prophecy is also clear. “After you (בְּתֵרֶךְ), another (אֲחֵרִי) kingdom will arise, inferior to yours” (2:39, NIV).²³ This second kingdom clearly comes on the stage after the time of Nebuchadnezzar. While the text does not explicitly state that this kingdom is represented by the silver of the statue, the inferior nature of the kingdom is appropriate to the move from gold to silver.²⁴ The transition between Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom and the following one is marked by the story in Daniel 5. Babylon is followed by Medo-Persia.²⁵

“Next (אֲחֵרִי— “another”), a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth” (2:39, NIV). Daniel’s explanation again uses an Aramaic term of sequencing, this time making it clear that the third kingdom corresponds to the third metal on the statue, bronze. In Daniel 8, the

²¹Collins, *Daniel*, 169; Miller, 93; Paul L. Redditt, *Daniel*, New Century Bible Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 59; Shea, *Daniel 1-7*, 139-140.

²²Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 14.

²³Collins notes that there is no direct reference to the dream in the explanation of the second, third and fourth kingdoms. The text doesn’t say, “The breast and arms of silver are another kingdom.” See Collins, *Daniel*, 165. See also Bauer, 87.

²⁴Bauer, 87; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Book of Daniel*, The Mellen Biblical Commentary, Old Testament Series, vol. 25 (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1999), 66; Longman, 81.

²⁵Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville:

kingdom that replaces Medo-Persia is Greece.²⁶

“Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others” (2:40, NIV). The “finally” here is supplied by the translators of the NIV. The Aramaic term is the simple conjunctive (ו). But “finally” is not an inappropriate translation, as the movement to the fourth and final kingdom in the series is explicit in the passage. The association of this fourth kingdom with iron also makes the correlation between the metals on the statue and the sequence of historical kingdoms clear.²⁷

The move to the fifth stage of iron and clay again lacks a sequencing term, but by this stage in the vision the progression is clear enough without continual repetition. “Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay” (2:41, NIV). Interestingly, the transition to the fifth stage differs from the others in that the fourth kingdom is not replaced by a more powerful one, but seems to disintegrate into a divided

Abingdon Press, 2001), 119; Miller, 93; Towner, 118-119.

²⁶Bauer, 176; Buchanan, 251-252; Gowan, 119; Longman, 206; Miller, 95; Towner, 118-120. I am well aware that among Daniel scholars who respect biblical authority there has been a recent trend toward accepting the view that the second and third kingdoms are Media and Persia. These identifications are not critical to my point in this article, but at this stage of the discussion I find the traditional evangelical position (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome) more convincing. See Robert J. M. Gurney, John E. Goldingay, and Gordon J. Wenham, “Approaching Daniel: Three Studies, *Themelios* 2 (2, 1977): 39-51; John H. Walton, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29/1 (March 1986): 25-36; John Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989).

²⁷Miller, 95.

and weakened condition.²⁸

The climax of the vision and its interpretation comes in Dan 2:44, “In the time of those kings (NIV– literally “in the days of those kings” [וּבְיָמֵיהֶוֶן הַיְיָ מֶלְכָא אֲנוּן]), the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. . . .” The coming of the stone kingdom is the final event of the vision, the one that brings the whole course of history to an end.

The vision of Daniel 2, then, is an apocalyptic prophecy with a clear historical sequence running from the time of the prophet down to the end of earth’s history, the establishment of the kingdom of God. The explanation, grounded in the language, time and place of Nebuchadnezzar, clearly marks out the sequence of events that moves the reader from the time when the prophecy was given to the time when history comes to its end. In Daniel 2, therefore, the basic characteristics of historical apocalyptic are visible.

Summary and Conclusion

It doesn’t take an exegete to see that Daniel 2 portrays a series of kingdoms running from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the time of the stone kingdom, which presumably comes at the end of history. A careful look at the passage, however, helps us to discern some general principles that can be the starting point of a taxonomy of historical apocalyptic. The following observations can then be confirmed or disconfirmed by comparison with Daniel 7.

1) *Textual sequence markers*. There are a number of words in the Aramaic text that

²⁸Cf. Redditt, 58; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections*, The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 55.

indicate the kingdoms represented by the various metals of the statue appear in sequence, one after the other. These words are found in the explanation of the vision given by Daniel. The words are translated in the NIV “after you. . . another” (Dan 2:39—אֲחֵרֵי . . . אַחֲרָי), “next” (Dan 2:39—אֲחֵרֵי . . . אַחֲרָי), and “in the time of those kings” (Dan 2:44—וּבְיָמֵיהֶן דְּי מְלָכֵיָא אֲנִין).

2) *A consistent sequence of symbols and explanation.* In parts of the vision interpretation (Dan 2:36-45) the verbal markers of sequence are absent or unclear (Dan 2:41-43). In this part of the explanation, however, the sense of sequence remains because the explanation follows the sequence in which the metals of the vision are described (Dan 2:32-34). So the consistent sequence of materials in the image grounds the explanation in a similar sequence, sometimes marked by words of sequence and sometimes not.

3) *A comprehensive sweep of events.* The vision and explanation of Daniel 2 is clearly grounded in the time and place of Nebuchadnezzar and moves forward to the apparent close of history. So historical apocalyptic portrays a sequence of events running from the time (or implied time) of the visionary to the end of the world. It is also clear that the vision concerns a series of world-dominating kingdoms (Dan 2:39-45), it is not simply concerned with local and immediate events, as is the case with general prophecy. The events of the vision are global in significance and cover long ages.

We turn now to Daniel 7 in order to see if these observations can be confirmed and if further marks of historical apocalyptic can be discerned.

Daniel 7

Exegetical Overview

Daniel 7 marks some important transitions within the book. It is tied to the narratives that precede by the use of the Aramaic language (Hebrew is used in chapters 8-12). It is equally tied to chapter 2 by the vision formula (Dan 7:1, cf. 2:28)²⁹ and other connections we will note below. At the same time, Daniel 7 is tied to the visions in the following chapters by its subject matter and by close parallels with chapter 8.³⁰ The focus of the book shifts from stories *about* Daniel to accounts *by* Daniel of his visionary experiences.³¹ So Daniel 7 is in many ways the center point of the book of Daniel.³² Unlike Daniel 2 this vision is a unit in itself and is not part of a larger narrative.³³

As was the case with the vision of Daniel 2, the apocalyptic prophecy of Dan 7 is divided into two parts; a description of the vision, in which the prophet can be transported through time and space (Dan 7:2-14), and an explanation of the vision, given in the language, time and place

²⁹Collins, *Daniel*, 294. The Aramaic portions of Daniel (chapters 2-7) seem to fall easily into an inverse parallelism. Chapters 2 and 7 contain visions of four earthly kingdoms, chapters 3 and 6 contain stories about Jews being faithful in the face of death, and chapters 4 and 5 are stories of royal arrogance. See Lucas, 68, 195.

³⁰John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, Forms of the Old Testament Literature, 20 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 80; idem, *Daniel*, 277. Lucas (194-195) notes that the date formula in 7:1 breaks with the chronological sequence that has run throughout chapters 1-6. The narrative time of chapter 7 moves back to somewhere between chapters 4 and 5. A new sequence starts in chapter 7 and moves on through the rest of the book.

³¹Lucas (195) points out that the court tales have a positive perspective on the experience of Jews in Babylon, the visions take up a much more negative perspective.

³²Doukhan, 2-7.

³³Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia), 277.

of the prophet (Dan 7:15-27).³⁴ In Daniel 2 the prophet is Nebuchadnezzar and the explanation is given by Daniel himself.³⁵ In Daniel 7, Daniel is the prophet and the explanation is given by an angelic attendant in the vision.³⁶

It may seem unfortunate, at first, that the vision of Daniel 7 and its interpretation fails to name any of the kingdoms symbolized in the chapter. This is in contrast to what happens in the visions of Daniel 2 (“You are the head of gold”-- 2:38, NIV) and Daniel 8 (The “ram represents the kings of Media and Persia, the . . . goat is the king of Greece”-- 8:20-21, NIV). The most natural explanation is that the vision of Daniel 7 is simply restating and expanding on the earlier vision,³⁷ but this time couched in the language of the Torah, rather than Babylonian symbolism.³⁸

³⁴More accurately, perhaps, the “explanation” part of Daniel 7 can be divided into an initial explanation (17-18), a supplementary vision (19-22) and a detailed interpretation (23-27). See Lucas, 165-166.

³⁵The vision formula of Dan 7:1 is identical to that of 2:28 in Aramaic. Whatever it was that Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel experienced, the dreams/visions of the two chapters are described in the same way. The formula is essentially repeated in 4:13, where Nebuchadnezzar experiences the dream/vision of the great tree.

³⁶Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia), 277. The concept of “dream” in this and other passages has to do with something “seen” during the sleeping hours of the night. The concept of “vision” is broader. A vision can happen any time, including the waking hours of the day, see Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 186. Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar had similar night-time visionary experiences.

³⁷Buchanan, 68; Gowan, 103; Jürgen-Christian Lebram, *Das Buch Daniel*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare: Altes Testament, 23 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich), 83-84; Norman Porteous, *Daniel*, second, revised edition (London: SCM Press, 1979), 103; Towner, 93-94; Walton, 25.

³⁸Doukhan, 17; Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *Future Glory: The 8 Greatest End-time Prophecies in the Bible* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 22.

The vision of Daniel 8, on the other hand, introduces new material and requires specific re-identification. This explanation is confirmed by the many parallels between Daniel's vision in chapter 7 and the earlier one given to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2.

Susan Niditch points out the strong formal parallels between Daniel 7 and Daniel 2.³⁹ In both chapters there is a symbolic dream/vision, introduced by a common formula, both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar show a great desire to understand the dream, both visionaries are "disturbed" by the vision (2:1-3; 7:15, my translation), and both dreams/visions occur at night. In both dreams/visions the symbols are interrelated into a narrative drama.⁴⁰ In Daniel 2, however, the story of how the dream comes to be interpreted is central to the chapter, while in Daniel 7, the narrative context is virtually non-existent.

Both passages deal with four kingdoms (Dan 2:37-40; 7:17).⁴¹ The four animals in Dan 7 parallel the four metals of the great statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw (Dan 7:3-7, cf. 2:31-33).⁴² Both visions concern four items, many of which are numbered, "first," "fourth," etc. (Dan 2:39-40; 7:4,5,7)⁴³ In both visions, special authority is given to the third kingdom.⁴⁴ In both visions,

³⁹Niditch, 188; see also Towner, 93-94.

⁴⁰This is strikingly different from the vision/interpretation of Zech 4, for example, where the symbols are related thematically, but each symbol is static and self-contained. Niditch, 200.

⁴¹The motif of beasts coming out of the sea could be understood in terms of the biblical tradition of dragons or monsters in the sea (Isa 27:1; 51:9-11). Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia), 295. Collins notes further (299) that Israel's enemies were portrayed as wild animals in Ezekiel 34 and the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch 85-90.

⁴²Niditch, 203.

⁴³This sequencing language is further heightened in Daniel 7 by the use of "And behold"

the fourth element is numbered (2:40; 7:7), involves iron, and uses the language of crushing.⁴⁵

According to Dan 7:23 (NRSV), “There shall be a fourth kingdom on earth (תְּהוּא בְּאַרְעָא (מִלְכוּ רַבִּיעִיא).” In both visions, the figure of the fourth kingdom is followed by symbols of division (2:43; 7:24).

In both visions there is progressive degeneration; from gold to iron, and from the kings of beast and bird (lion/eagle) to a nameless monster.⁴⁶ Both visions climax with a kingdom that lasts forever (Dan 2:44; 7:26-27).⁴⁷ Both visions cover a period that leads to the final establishment of God’s kingdom. I conclude that the vision of Daniel 7, therefore, concerns the same four kingdoms symbolized by metals in Daniel 2.⁴⁸ The purpose of Daniel 7 is to expand

(וְאָרְו) at every point in the vision where there is chronological progression (Dan 7:5,6,7,8 [twice], and 13). See Doukhan, 21.

⁴⁴Dan 2:39: (NRSV) “Which shall rule over the whole earth,” 7:6: (NRSV) “And dominion was given to it.” Cf. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia), 298.

⁴⁵Lucas, 180.

⁴⁶James. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Scribner, 1927), 283.

⁴⁷Niditch, 210-211.

⁴⁸While scholars disagree on the identification of the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7, Niditch states that they generally agree the interpretation of four kingdoms should be the same for both visions. Niditch, 203. Cf. H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), 60-66; Montgomery, 283.

From an SDA perspective, Shea points out that the fourth kingdom is never identified by name anywhere in the book of Daniel. He then offers significant evidence for the Adventist identification of the fourth kingdom with Rome (William H. Shea, *Daniel 7-12: Prophecies of the End Time*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996], 132-137). This identification was also made by the early Church Fathers Irenaeus, Hippolytus and possibly

further on the issues raised by Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2.⁴⁹

On the other hand, a new element in this vision is the little horn power that plucks up three horns and speaks boastful things (Dan 7:8). Unlike the first three beasts, which have humanizing characteristics,⁵⁰ the fourth beast seems totally out of control and, therefore,

Barnabas (see Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, vol. 1 [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950], 210, 244-246, 272-273).

⁴⁹John J. Collins argues to the contrary (*Daniel* (Hermeneia), 323). He does this by highlighting the differences between the two accounts (34-35). The vision of Daniel 2 is embedded in a court narrative, in Daniel 7 the vision stands alone. The vision of Daniel 2 concerns metals in a statue, the vision of Daniel 7 concerns a succession of beasts. There is no judgment scene in Daniel 2 to parallel the one in Dan 7:9-14. And, finally, the son of man (Dan 7:13-14) is to be interpreted differently from the stone (pages 304-310).

While Collins does not state his own understanding of the "stone" in Dan 2:45 (he lists several opinions of others, page 171), he may have assumed that the obvious reference is the everlasting kingdom of 2:44 which crushes all the other kingdoms. On the other hand, he appears to hold the position that the Son of Man of Dan 7:13-14 is a "mythic-realistic" being in the heavenly realm (305). He later identifies this individual with Michael the "great prince" of Dan 10:13 and 12:1 (310).

This contrary position appears weak to me in comparison with the evidence cited in the main text above. The presence of a court narrative in Daniel 2 does not preclude a strong visionary parallel with Daniel 7. The contrast between metals and beasts is easily explained by the different recipients of the two visions. Nebuchadnezzar, the heathen king, sees a picture of future world empires in the form of an idol ("statue" in NIV of Dan 2:31-32-- Aramaic: ܡܢܘܫܐ). Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, sees (I believe) echos of creation. The symbolism of each vision differs, but the content is similar. A judgment scene could be added in the second vision to expand on the basic themes of the earlier one. And, finally, I agree with Collins' definitions of both the stone and the Son of Man. But the Son of Man's kingdom in 7:13-14 is expanded to include the "saints" in 7:27. The kingdom of the saints is an everlasting kingdom that supplants all the other kingdoms, a situation parallel with Dan 2:44. The single reference to a kingdom in chapter 2 is doubled in chapter 7.

⁵⁰The lion stands "like a man" (Dan 7:4, NIV) and has a human heart, the bear can respond to human speech, and the leopard's authority is derived, presumably from God.

different from the others.⁵¹ An additional new element is the heavenly judgment scene (7:9-14), with its books, its Ancient of Days and its son of man. The vision of Daniel 2 is essentially repeated but with two additional elements. In comparing the two visions we are moving from the simple to the complex and from the clear to the somewhat less clear. So in interpreting Daniel 7 we must not forget the things we have learned from Daniel 2. The pattern of apocalyptic, historical sequences continues to be followed. Note the following chart:⁵²

Daniel 2	Daniel 7
Gold	Lion
Silver	Bear
Bronze	Leopard
Iron	Iron
feet and toes	horns
-	Little horn
-	Judgment
God's Kingdom	God's Kingdom

There are two sets of linguistic cues in the vision of Daniel 7 that mark off its different parts: The vision formula, “In my vision at night I looked” (NIV– **וַיִּרְאֶה דָּנִיֵּאל בְּחִזְוֵי לַיְלָא**), which occurs at crucial transition points in verses 2, 7, and 13; and a formula, found in verses 5, 6, 7, 8 (twice) and 13, that is always associated with chronological progression in the chapter (**וַיָּאָרֶוּ** or

⁵¹Lucas, 198.

⁵²Compare with Towner, 93-95.

וַאֲלֵי).⁵³ Combining these two linguistic cues leads to the following structure for the vision:

<p>Scene 1: (7:2-6) Beasts from the Sea V. 4: Lion V. 5: Bear V. 6: Leopard</p> <p>Scene 2: (7:7-12) Fourth Beast and Judgment V. 7: Nondescript Beast V. 8: Ten horns V. 8: Little horn Judgment scene (9-10) Judgment verdict (11-12)</p> <p>Scene 3: (7:13-14) Son of Man V. 13: Son of man approaches throne Receives dominion (14)</p>
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Surprisingly, this arrangement ties the fourth kingdom more closely to the heavenly court scene than to the three kingdoms that precede it in verses 4-6. The immediate context of the seating of the heavenly judgment in 7:9-14 is the little horn’s boastful speaking in verse 8. The absence in verse 9 of the typical sequencing term (וַאֲלֵי or וַאֲרִי— “behold” in KJV) found seven times in the vision (Dan 7:5,6,7,8 [twice], 13)⁵⁴ is further evidence that the judgment begins at precisely that point in history where the little horn is doing its human thing and speaking

⁵³Careful attention to Aramaic sequence markers in Daniel 7 can be found in the dissertation by Kenneth Orville Freer, “A Study of Vision Reports in Biblical Literature” (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1975), 32-34; see also Doukhan, 21; Lucas, 164-165, 180.

⁵⁴It is true that עַרְיָ, a sequencing phrase in Aramaic, appears early in verse 9. It occurs also in verses 11 and 22. But its primary function in verse 9 is not to separate the action from verse 8, but to provide a specific link (along with verse 11) to the explanation of the vision in verse 22.

boastfully (elaborated in 7:21,25).

A portion of the vision formula of 2, 7 and 13 is also found at the conclusion of verse 11, further tying the descriptions of verses 7 and 8 with the opening of the judgment in 9 and 10.⁵⁵ The allusion to the destruction of the beast that carried the little horn in verse 11 implies that the judgment comes into session to deal with the actions of that beast, and of the ten horns and the little horn that followed it in the course of history.⁵⁶ This implication is confirmed in Dan 7:21-22. The time, times and half a time in which the saints are oppressed last “until (עַד יְדֵי) the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High” (7:22, NIV). So the judgment comes at the end of the little horn’s time of oppressing the saints.

The end result of that judgment is “His power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His [the son of man of 7:13-14] kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him” (Dan 7:26-27, NIV).

The little horn power of Daniel 7, therefore, is not separate from the fourth beast.⁵⁷ It arises directly from among the ten horns that are part of the fourth beast (Dan 7:7, NIV: “It had

⁵⁵John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 76. Dan 7:7: literally: “I kept looking”-- הָרָאָה הַגִּיִת; Dan 7:11: “I kept looking”-- הָרָאָה הַגִּיִת.

⁵⁶Buchanan, 181; Porteous, 107-109.

⁵⁷Buchanan, 228.

ten horns”-- (וְקַרְנֵי עֶשֶׂר לָהּ).⁵⁸ This point is underlined again in Dan 7:19-20, NIV, where Daniel himself is described as saying, “Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, . . . I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up. . . .”⁵⁹ But while rooted in the fourth beast, the little horn comes up after the ten horns⁶⁰ which themselves come up after the fourth kingdom is established (Dan 7:24).⁶¹

There is sequencing, therefore, taking place in relation to the imagery of the fourth beast. Since the little horn arises after the fourth kingdom and in the context of the ten horns it would seem to be operating in the time of the divided kingdom of Daniel 2. Just as the mixed kingdom of iron and clay was connected to the fourth by the image of iron (Dan 2:41-42), so the little horn is connected to the fourth kingdom, having grown from its symbolic head (Dan 7:8).

Summary and Conclusion

The vision of Daniel 7, therefore, is not so much adding new elements to the earlier vision as it is elaborating on the later stages of it, the times after the fourth kingdom and before

⁵⁸Dan 7:8 states, “While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them (סִלְקַת בִּינִיהוּן). . . .”

⁵⁹Note the Aramaic of verse 20: וְעַל-קַרְנֵי עֶשֶׂר הֵי בְּרֵאשֵׁהּ וְאַחֲרֵי הֵי סִלְקַת – literally: “And concerning the ten horns which (were) on its head and another which came up.”

⁶⁰Dan 7:24 NRSV (explaining the shift of attention in Dan 7:7-8 from the ten horns to the little horn): “And another shall arise after them. This one shall be different from the former ones. . . .” (וְאַחֲרָן יָקוּם אַחֲרֵיהוּן וְהוּא יִשְׁנָא מִן-קַרְנֵי). See Shea, vol. 2, 138.

⁶¹Dan 7:24 NRSV: “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise. . . .” (וְקַרְנֵי עֶשֶׂר מִנְּהָ מַלְכוּתָהּ עֲשָׂרָה מַלְכִין יִקְמוּן).

the setting up of God's eternal kingdom. In Daniel 2 and 7, therefore, we find a pair of apocalyptic prophecies which review the same basic historical sequence, running from the time of the respective prophets until the establishment of God's kingdom at the end of history.

The vision and explanation of Daniel 7 has several features we noticed already in Daniel 2. 1) There are a number of sequence markers in the text. 2) The series of beasts in the first part of the vision is reminiscent of the series of metals in Nebuchadnezzar's statue.⁶² 3) While it is less clear here that the starting point of the vision is Babylon, the parallels with Daniel 2 clearly leave that impression.⁶³ So this vision begins and ends more or less where the vision of Daniel 2 did. And there is the comprehensive sweep of world-dominating kingdoms that was seen in the previous vision (Dan 7:17-18; 2:39-45).

There is one additional feature, however, that may prove useful to a taxonomy of historical apocalyptic. 4) *Parallels with earlier historical apocalyptic*. The evident parallels between Daniel 7 and the preceding vision of Daniel 2 suggest that one way to detect historical apocalyptic is intentional allusion to previous examples of historical apocalyptic. In Revelation, for example, when allusions to Daniel 7 occur in a passage which has marks of historical sequence, there is an increased likelihood that the genre of the passage is in fact historical apocalyptic.

⁶²Buchanan (168) notes that this is not a casual parallel, the mixture of beasts and the mixture of metals are each characteristic of the respective visions.

⁶³Bauer, 147; John E. Goldingay, "The Book of Daniel: Three Issues," *Themelios* 2 (2, 1977): 46; Gurney, 42; Longman, 184-185; Miller, 196-197; Towner, 93.

Indicators of Historical Apocalyptic

- 1) Textual sequence markers
- 2) A consistent sequence of symbols and explanation
- 3) A comprehensive sweep of events
- 4) Parallels with earlier historical apocalyptic

Historical Apocalyptic in Revelation

No passage in Revelation is more critical to Adventist self-understanding than Rev 12-13. I will, therefore, examine one of these chapters for evidence of whether it reflects the sequencing of historical apocalyptic or some other genre. It is not appropriate to force a text into the historicist mode if that was not the intention of the text. We must allow the characteristics and purposes of each text to emerge out of the text. Only then can we accurately determine whether the chapter has the marks of historical apocalyptic or not.

Preliminary Considerations

Before we take up the analysis of chapter 12, I would like to note once more the four characteristics of historical apocalyptic that were detected in Daniel 2 and 7. They are 1) *textual sequence markers*, 2) *a consistent sequence of symbols and explanation*, 3) *a comprehensive sweep of events*, and 4) *parallels with earlier historical apocalyptic*. Before we turn to an examination of Revelation 12, I would like to point out a couple of literary strategies that the author of Revelation used to indicate sequence in visions.

Character Introduction

I call the first literary strategy “character introduction.” Consistently throughout the book, the author of Revelation introduces characters in general terms before describing their actions at the time of the vision. In other words, when a character appears in the book for the first time, there is a general description of the character’s appearance and prior actions (on one occasion even a future action— Rev 12:5), followed by a description of the actions the character takes in the context of the vision’s own time and place setting. These character introduction passages, therefore, normally offer clear markers of sequence.

When Jesus is introduced to John in chapter 1, for example, the historical setting is John’s location on the Island of Patmos (Rev 1:9). John goes into vision and sees one like a son of man. This is the first visible appearance of Jesus in the book, although He and His works are mentioned earlier (1:1,4-7). John’s experience of Jesus in chapter one (Rev 1:12-20)⁶⁴ clearly precedes the messages to the seven churches in chapters two and three.⁶⁵ The “character introduction” of 1:12-16 sets the stage for the “letters” (2:1-3:22). There is, therefore, a clear sequence between chapter one and the two chapters that follow.

A word of caution is in order at this point. While there is sequencing going on in this passage (Rev 1:9-3:22) it meets few of the other criteria of historical apocalyptic. Sequencing

⁶⁴He first hears the one like a son of man speaking with a voice like a trumpet (Rev 1:9-11), then he sees and describes Jesus (1:12-16), then he experiences His comforting and explanatory words (1:17-20).

⁶⁵On possible further indicator of time sequencing in the passage is the fact that the opening character identification scene (1:12-20) is in the aorist tense (Rev 1:12-- ἐπέστρεψα, . . . ἐπιστρέψας εἶδον; Rev 1:17-- Καὶ ὅτε εἶδον αὐτόν, ἔπεσα, . . . καὶ ἔθηκην), while the messages of

alone is no indicator of historical apocalyptic, *it is the accumulated evidence of multiple criteria that demonstrates the genre*. What I wish to demonstrate at the moment is simply that Revelation has some unique ways of exhibiting sequence.

The concept of character introduction occurs also in chapter 11. The two witnesses are introduced with a description of their appearance and an overall description of their characteristics and their actions in the present (11:4-6)⁶⁶ and in the future tense (11:3). The entire character introduction passage (11:3-6), occurs prior to the visionary description that follows (11:7-13).⁶⁷ When characters are introduced for the first time in Revelation, the introduction is normally made up of characteristics and actions that precede the time of the vision.

Old Testament Roots

Another special feature of the Book of Revelation is its extensive use of the Old

the seven churches are in the present indicative.

⁶⁶Note the present indicative tenses in Rev 11:4-6: οὗτοί *είσιν* αἱ δύο ἐλαῖαι καὶ αἱ δύο λυχνίαι αἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῆς γῆς ἐστῶτες. καὶ εἴ τις αὐτοὺς *θέλει* ἀδικῆσαι πῦρ *ἐκπορεύεται* ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῶν καὶ *κατεσθίει* τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτῶν· καὶ εἴ τις θελήσῃ αὐτοὺς ἀδικῆσαι, οὕτως *δεῖ* αὐτὸν ἀποκτανθῆναι. οὗτοι *ἔχουσιν* τὴν ἐξουσίαν κλεῖσαι τὸν οὐρανόν, ἵνα μὴ ὑετὸς βρέχῃ τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς προφητείας αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐξουσίαν *ἔχουσιν* ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων στρέφειν αὐτὰ εἰς αἶμα καὶ πατάξαι τὴν γῆν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ ὅσακις ἐὰν θελήσωσιν.

⁶⁷This is clear from Rev 11:7: καὶ ὅταν τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν. The testimony of the two witnesses (cf. verse 3-- also referred to as prophesying or prophecy in verses 3 and 6) is to occur for a period of 1260 days in John's future. That is all part of the introduction to the actions in verses 7-12. When the two witnesses have finished their testimony (the 1260 days are closed), the actions of verses 7ff. begin; cf. David Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 616.

Testament. No book of the New Testament is as saturated with the Old as this one is.⁶⁸ But while it is not difficult to recognize the central place of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation, it is difficult to determine exactly how it is being used there. A reader acquainted with the Old Testament quickly notices that Revelation never directly quotes the Old Testament, rather it alludes to it with a word here, a phrase there, or a concept in another place.⁶⁹ Careful and consistent application of method is essential to recognizing the Old Testament subtext to the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation.⁷⁰

The importance of the Old Testament in Revelation can be seen by a second look at Revelation 1. The vision in which Jesus is physically introduced to the reader (Rev 1:12-16) is based on a variety of Old Testament texts. The golden lampstands are a reminder of the lampstand in the Old Testament sanctuary (Exod 25:31-40) and the vision of Zechariah (Zech 4:2,10). Jesus' dress recalls the dress of the High Priest in the same sanctuary (Exod 28:4,31). The voice like rushing waters reminds the reader of the appearance of Almighty God in the book

⁶⁸Pierre Lestringant (*Essai sur l'unité de la révélation biblique* [Paris: Editions "Je Sers," 1942], 148) suggests that one-seventh of the substance of the Apocalypse is drawn from the words of the OT.

⁶⁹While a handful of scholars argue for anywhere from one to eleven "quotations" of the OT in the book of Revelation, (see, for example, Robert G. Bratcher, ed., *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* [London: United Bible Societies, 1967], 74-76) the overwhelming majority of scholars conclude that there are none.

⁷⁰See Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 155-194; see also Paulien, "Criteria and the Assessment of Allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, edited by Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 113-129; and (in a more popular form) idem, *The Deep Things of God*

of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:24; 43:2). The two-edged sword coming from Jesus' mouth is reminiscent of Yahweh's judgments through His messianic Servant in Isaiah (Isa 11:4; 49:2). The reader's appreciation and understanding of Revelation's apocalyptic-style symbolism is greatly enhanced by following up a veritable mosaic of Old Testament allusions.⁷¹

But what ties all these Old Testament allusions together is a reference to two characters in the book of Daniel, the Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14) and Daniel's mysterious visitor in 10:5-6.⁷² Virtually every detail of the description in 1:12-16 is found in those two passages. The same Jesus who walked and talked with ordinary people here on earth is described in terms of the mighty acts of Yahweh and of His heavenly and earthly messengers in the Old Testament. The parallels to the Old Testament lend much meaning to what otherwise would be a bewildering and incomprehensible description. So Jesus is depicted in this introduction as a heavenly priest, cosmic ruler, and divine judge.⁷³ In 1:17-18 he exercises his priesthood in his merciful gentleness to John, 1:19-20 makes clear that his royal rule will be exercised in judgment, both positive and negative, toward the churches.⁷⁴ This passage right at the beginning of the book of Revelation

(Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004).

⁷¹William Milligan, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1892), 72.

⁷²G. K. Beale, *Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 208.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 206.

⁷⁴In this He is a model for the churches, who are a "kingdom and priests" (Rev 1:5-6, NIV).

emphasizes its strong ties to the apocalyptic book of Daniel.⁷⁵

In Daniel 7, the parallels to Daniel 2 enhanced its apocalyptic character. Similar connections with those chapters would increase the likelihood of historical apocalyptic in Revelation. But it is clear, from the allusions to Daniel 7 in Revelation 1, that such parallels, by themselves, are no guarantee of historical apocalyptic. In Revelation 1, the use of Daniel 7 seems more along the lines of realized eschatology than historical apocalyptic. The allusions to Daniel 7 emphasize the parts of that chapter that indicate God's mighty action at the End, rather than an ongoing sequence. In the New Testament, such mighty acts of God are often interpreted as present realities in light of the kingdom introduced by Jesus.

Exegetical Overview of Revelation 12

Not only is Revelation 12 important to Adventist self-understanding, it is widely seen as a center and key to the entire book.⁷⁶ So I have chosen it as a test passage for this project. The goal is to determine whether it reflects the historical sequences of apocalyptic prophecy, or whether it should be interpreted along the lines of classical prophecy or some other genre.

First of all, chapter 12 does have a couple of the textual markers that indicate passage of

⁷⁵G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 154-177. Beale goes so far as to suggest that Rev 1 offers an intentional "midrash" on Daniel 7 (173-176). See the contrary viewpoint in David Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), 93-94.

⁷⁶Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse 12: histoire de l'exegèse* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Karl Siebeck], 1959), 1; William H. Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23 (1, 1985): 37-38..

time. In Rev 12:6 the woman is taken care of by God in the desert for 1260 days. In Rev 12:14 she is taken care of for a time, times and half a time, presumably the same period as 12:6.⁷⁷ So Revelation 12 is not describing a single event, but a considerable period of time.⁷⁸

A second observation about the chapter is that the cryptic phrase “a time, times, and half a time” (Rev 12:14, NIV) is drawn from a couple of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel (Dan 7:25; 12:7).⁷⁹ Further observation indicates that Revelation 12 builds on Daniel throughout. The dragon of Rev 12:3-4 has a number of the characteristics of the beasts of Daniel 7 and of the little horn (Dan 7:7,24; 8:10).⁸⁰ The war in heaven of 12:7-9 makes several allusions to Daniel (Dan 2:35; 10:13,20-21; 12:1).⁸¹ This broad utilization of Daniel’s apocalyptic prophecies enhances the impression that Rev 12 should be interpreted along similar lines.

⁷⁷Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 706; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 668-669.

⁷⁸Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina vol. 16 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), 131; Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 379, 384, 391.

⁷⁹Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 706; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 669; Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 93 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 179; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 482; Stefanovic, 384, 391.

⁸⁰Fekkes, 179.

⁸¹See the listings of allusions in the back of Nestle (Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland et al, editors, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th revised edition [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993]), in the margins of the UBS text (Kurt Aland et al, editors, *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd edition [New York: United Bible Societies, 1975]), and at the back of Westcott and Hort (Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, editors, *The New*

Finally, Revelation 12 contains a number of character identifications with their typical time sequences. First, a woman appears in heaven, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head (12:1). 12:1-2 is based on the Old Testament image of a virtuous woman as a symbol of faithful Israel (Isa 26:16-27; 54:5; 66:7-14; Hos 2:14-20), anticipating the arrival of the messianic age.⁸² So the woman of Rev 12 has a “pedigree” that carries back well into Old Testament prophecy. According to Isa 66:7, she is the faithful Israel that longed to give birth to the Lord’s salvation.⁸³ But in verse 5 she acts in the context of the vision, giving birth to a male child who is generally recognized to represent Jesus.⁸⁴

The woman’s character and actions as described in 12:1-2 are clearly prior to her actions in verse 5 and the actions of verse 5 are prior to the actions of verse 6. After she gives birth to the child (12:5) she is seen fleeing into the desert for a lengthy period (12:6). So the experience of

Testament in the Original Greek [London: MacMillan and Co., 1898]).

⁸²Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 80-81; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 237; Osborne, 456; Stefanovic, 381-382. Contra Harrington, who believes that “for John this woman is the heavenly Israel.” See Harrington, 130.

⁸³Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 682, 687; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 640-641.

⁸⁴Fiorenza (*Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 81) considers this identification “without question.” See also Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 687-689; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 639; Harrington, 130; Mounce, 238-239; Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John*, The New Testament in Context (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 284; Osborne, 457, 462; Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 161; Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 49; Leonard L. Thompson, *Revelation*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 134.

the woman in Rev 12:1-6 is actually depicted in three stages; 1) the time of her appearance and pregnancy, 2) the time of giving birth, and 3) the time of fleeing into the desert.

The second character introduced in this chapter is the dragon (Rev 12:3-4), also called the ancient serpent, the devil, and Satan (Rev 12:9). The dragon's initial action in the context of the vision is described in 12:4, where he waits before the woman, seeking to devour her child as soon as it is born. Scholars widely recognize that the dragon's attack on the male child in Rev 12:5 represents Herod's attempt to destroy the Christ child by killing all the babies in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-18).⁸⁵ But the description of the dragon, as it was with the woman, carries back to a time before the events of the vision.

The dragon's pedigree is seen in the heads and the horns of Daniel 7 (Rev 12:3), it is the embodiment of the kingdoms of the world in service of Satan.⁸⁶ His pedigree, in fact, goes all the way back to Eden ("that ancient serpent"— Rev 12:9,15, NIV). And prior to his attack on the

⁸⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 639; Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 331; Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentaries, edited by Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 209; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, edited by Grant R. Osborne (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 147; James Moffat, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, The Expositor's Greek Testament, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 5:425; Mounce, 238; Osborne, 462; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), 196-197.

⁸⁶William G. Johnsson, "The Saints' End-time Victory Over the Forces of Evil," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book 2*, DARCOM Series vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 17; Rodriguez, 93.

woman, his tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to earth (Rev 12:4).⁸⁷

But the dragon isn't finished when the male child gets away in verse 5. The dragon pursues the woman into the desert (12:13-16) and eventually makes war with the remnant of her seed (Rev 12:17). So the dragon in chapter 12 is actually described in terms of four successive stages,⁸⁸ 1) his attack on a third of the stars (12:4), 2) his attack on the male child (12:4-5), 3) his attack against the woman herself (12:13-16), and finally 4) his war against the remnant. The character and actions of both the woman and the dragon suggest the successive periods of a historical apocalypse.

I would conclude this initial reading of Revelation 12 by noting that the chapter clearly meets two of the four criteria for a historical apocalypse. These are 1) indicators that the chapter contains sequences of events and 2) strong parallels to the historical sequences in Daniel 7. I would now like to turn to the third criterion, whether or not the material in Revelation 12 exhibits the comprehensive sweep of history that we have found in the visions of Daniel.

The Vision's Big Picture

The Time of Jesus and John

The third character to be introduced in this chapter is the male child, the woman's son. The scene is reminiscent of Gen 3:15, where the seed of the woman is the one who will crush the

⁸⁷An allusion to Dan 8:10, according to Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 635-636.

⁸⁸Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 663-664.

serpent's head.⁸⁹ This character introduction is unique in the sense that instead of describing a pedigree or prior action on the part of this male child, the introduction focuses instead on action beyond the time of the vision. Using the future tense, He is described as the one who “will rule (μέλλει ποιμαίνειν) all the nations with an iron scepter” (Rev 12:5, NIV). This allusion to Psalm 2:9 describes Jesus' judgment role at the end of time.⁹⁰ The very next phrase reverts to the visionary past, “her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” In 12:5 reference is made, then, to the birth, the ascension, and the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ.⁹¹ The death of Christ on the cross is only brought into play in verses 10-12.

The result of the dragon's attack in 12:4-5 is to split up the woman and the child. The child is snatched up to heaven and the woman flees into the desert, under God's protection but still on earth (Rev 12:6). When the male child reaches heaven war breaks out there, with the result that the dragon and his angels lose their place in heaven and are hurled down (ἐβλήθη) to earth (12:7-9). When did this casting out take place? Verse 10 clearly addresses the same point in time as the war of 7-9.⁹² “Now (ἄρτι) have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down (ἐβλήθη).”⁹³

⁸⁹Rodriguez, 94.

⁹⁰See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 688.

⁹¹See footnote 85 for a listing of selected scholars who have supported this conclusion.

⁹²Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 699-700; Rodriguez, 95.

⁹³In Greek Rev 12:10 reads as follows: καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ

The time of the war in heaven is the time when the kingdom of God and the authority of Christ were clearly established (12:10). In the book of Revelation, this took place at the enthronement of the Lamb as a result of His overcoming at the cross (Rev 5:5-6, cf. 3:21).⁹⁴ Throughout the New Testament the Kingdom of God was seen as a present reality in the person of Jesus (Matt 12:28; Luke 17:20-21, etc.) and was established in force at His ascension when He joined His Father on the heavenly throne (cf. Heb 8:1-2, etc.).

The above evidence indicates that the vision of Revelation 12 begins with events associated with the birth, death, resurrection and enthronement of Jesus, events in the immediate context of John and the churches of Asia Minor. Like Daniel 2 and 7, therefore, the vision of Revelation 12 has its beginning point within the experience of the seer.

The Final Attack on the Remnant

Rev 12:17, on the other hand, serves as a summary introduction to Revelation's portrayal of a great final crisis at the conclusion of earth's history. It indicates that there are two sides in the final conflict, represented by the dragon, on the one hand, and the remnant on the other. But the dragon does not immediately act on his anger. Instead he "went away" to make war.⁹⁵ Why? Because he was frustrated by repeated failures in the course of apocalyptic history. He was not

λέγουσαν, Ἔτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐβλήθη ὁ κατήγωρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.

⁹⁴See the detailed argument in Ranko Stefanovic, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 22 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996).

strong enough to last in heaven (Rev 12:4,8), he failed to destroy the man-child of the woman (Rev 12:3-5), and he failed to destroy the woman herself (Rev 12:16). Because of his repeated failures he realizes he doesn't have the strength to defeat God's purposes by himself, so he decides to enter the final conflict with allies, a beast from the sea and a beast from the earth (Rev 13:1-18). The rest of the book of Revelation elaborates on the summary introduction in Rev 12:17.⁹⁶ Rev 13, for example, outlines in more detail the dragon's war against the remnant of the woman's seed (Rev 12:17).⁹⁷ Revelation 14 focuses on the remnant's side of the conflict. Then in Rev 16:13-16, the counterfeit trinity (dragon, beast and false prophet) uses demonic spirits that look like frogs to gather the kings of earth for the final battle.

Revelation 12, therefore, not only begins with the time of Jesus and John, it ends with a summary introduction of the eschatological climax in 12:17. Rev 12:17 functions as a nutshell summary of the eschatological war detailed in chapters 13-18. The chapter meets the third criterion for historical apocalyptic, beginning in the time of the prophet and continuing until the consummation at the end of history. The period spanning from the beginning of the vision to the end is covered in Rev 12:6, 12-16.

The Central Period

Rev 12:12 marks the transition between the experience of Jesus, in his various symbolic

⁹⁵Rev 12:17: ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον.

⁹⁶This next section is elaborated in more detail in Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 109-138.

representations, and the vision's renewed focus on the woman back on earth. Her exile into the desert was introduced in 12:6 and now becomes the focus of the devil/dragon, who was angered by his casting out and by the knowledge that "his time is short."⁹⁸ He, therefore, pursues the woman into the desert (12:13). The language of 12:13-16 is reminiscent of several accounts in the Old Testament, the vision of Daniel 7, the Exodus from Egypt, and the temptation and fall in the Garden of Eden.

The language of "a time, times and half a time" recalls Dan 7:25,⁹⁹ as do the seven heads and the ten horns of the dragon who pursues the woman. The mouth of the serpent (Rev 12:15) reminds the reader of the deceptive words of the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3). The flooding waters that attack the woman in the desert, therefore, imply deceptive and persuasive words as much as persecuting force. The woman fleeing into the desert on the two wings of a great eagle (Rev 12:14) reminds the reader of the Exodus experience, where God carried the tribes of Israel "on eagle's wings" out of Egypt (Exod 19:4).¹⁰⁰

The evidence of the previous paragraph is significant. While nowhere in Revelation 12

⁹⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 680.

⁹⁸Note the evidence in Shea ("The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," 40-41) for a close correspondence between 12:6 and 12:14, both appear to be referring to the same event.

⁹⁹Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 706; Osborne, 482; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 384, 391.

¹⁰⁰Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 705; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 673-675; Fekkes, 179; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of all things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 124; Osborne, 482; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 393; Thompson, 136.

are any of the characters explicitly identified with world-dominating kingdoms like Rome,¹⁰¹ the references to Satan, the Garden of Eden and the Exodus certainly leave the impression that the events of this chapter are comprehensive in their scope. We are not simply dealing with a local and immediate perspective. This chapter is the prelude to the cosmic end of history.

In Rev 12:16 the “earth” helped the woman. This is a further allusion to the Exodus and Israel’s experience in the desert.¹⁰² The desert protected Israel from the “flooding waters” of both the Red Sea and the Egyptian army. Once again the dragon is frustrated in his designs against the woman and her offspring. During that period of calm, however, he prepares for his final attack (Rev 12:17).

So the experience of the woman, who represents the people of God, is built on the language of Old Testament Israel, both before and after the time of Jesus. The experiences of Old Testament Israel and those of the Church are closely entwined in the book of Revelation. The material concerning the woman in the desert provides the centerpiece of a three-part apocalyptic drama.

Conclusion

Revelation 12, therefore, clearly demonstrates the successive stages of prophetic history

¹⁰¹Although many commentators see a strong allusion to the actions of Herod in Rev 12:4-5.

¹⁰²Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 675-6; Jan Dockhorn, “Und die Erde tat ihren Mund auf: Ein Exodusmotiv in Apc 12,16,” in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 88 (1997), 140-142; Harrington, 131; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 394. Dockhorn notes that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exod 15:12 speaks of a debate between earth and sea as to

that are characteristic of the historical type of apocalyptic found in Daniel 2 and 7. Observing carefully the markers in the text, the author's use of character introductions and way the Old Testament is utilized, we have detected three stages of Christian history running from the time of Jesus and John to the end of all things. When we note that at least two of the main characters in the chapter were active in the time before the birth of Jesus (which we will call below Stage Zero), there are a total of four successive stages of apocalyptic history.¹⁰³ This conclusion is not out of harmony with traditional Adventist exegesis of the chapter. The four stages can be summarized as follows:

which will "swallow up" the Egyptians. The earth eventually does so.

¹⁰³It is most interesting that Aune has also identified four sequential moves in this chapter, with the first being an "introduction of the dramatis personae" (Rev 12:1-4a). For Aune, the introductory actions are followed by the birth and escape of the child (4-6), the expulsion of the dragon from heaven (7-12) and the pursuit of the woman and her offspring (13-17). See Aune, *Revelation* 6-16, 663-664. Shea ("The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," 39-42) has drawn attention to the three successive conflicts between the dragon and the woman, 12:1-5, 12:6, 13-16, and 12:17. Although he approaches matters differently than I do here, there are significant similarities in the conclusions, as is the case with Aune. Shea gives more attention to textual markers of sequence than most commentators on the chapter do.

- 1) Stage Zero: Before the Time of the Vision (12:1-4)
 - The original war in heaven (4)
 - The dragon embodies the kingdoms of the earth (3)
 - The woman represents OT Israel (1-2)
- 2) Stage One: The Time of Jesus and John (12:5,7-12)
 - The woman gives birth to the male child (5)
 - He is snatched up to heaven (5)
 - War in heaven (7-9)
 - Enthronement and victory (10-11)
 - Transition (12)
- 3) Stage Two: The Serpent Attacks the Woman (12:6,13-16)
 - The dragon pursues the woman (13)
 - She flees into the desert and is protected 1260 days (6,14)
 - The serpent spews water to sweep her away (15)
 - The earth helps the woman (16)
- 4) Stage Three: The Dragon and the Remnant, (Rev 12:17, etc.)
 - The dragon is angry and goes away to make war (12:17)
 - He calls up allies for the conflict (13:1-18)
 - The remnant responds (14:1-13)
 - The Battle of Armageddon (16:13-16)

Overall Summary and Conclusion

In the previous article I noted that current scholarship divides the genre apocalyptic into two sub-categories, historical and mystical apocalyptic, although the characteristics of these sub-categories are not clearly defined. I also noted a trend toward analyzing the genre of smaller passages rather than simply books or documents as a whole. Further work is needed to understand the characteristics of historical apocalyptic so that ambiguous texts like the Book of Revelation can be more helpfully classified.

In the first half of this article I examined Daniel 2 and 7 to discover characteristics that give those visions the flavor of historical apocalyptic. There appear to be four. These are 1) textual markers that indicate historical sequence, 2) a consistent sequence of symbols and explanation, 3) a comprehensive sweep of events, and 4) parallels with clear examples of historical apocalyptic.

Revelation 12 clearly meets the first, third, and fourth criteria. There are abundant textual markers of historical sequence and clear parallels with apocalyptic portions of Daniel 7. The vision also has a cosmic scope, running roughly from John's day to the consummation,¹⁰⁴ and saturated with references to Satan, heaven, Eden and the Exodus.

¹⁰⁴I use the term "roughly" because the beginning period includes events in John's past, such as the birth and ascension of Jesus and the ending point itself (Rev 12:17) does not contain the consummation, but summarizes the eschatological war that leads to the consummation.

The second criterion, a consistent sequence of symbols and explanation, is the one least exhibited in Revelation 12. In Daniel 2 the materials of the image are the common ground in the sequence of empires. In Daniel 7 various beasts provide the common ground. In both visions, however, the images of earthly empire are in contrast to the images of God's kingdom, the stone and the mountain of Daniel 2 and the son of man and saints in Daniel 7. In Revelation 12 the key images are dragon, woman, male-child and remnant, which together don't exhibit the consistency of Nebuchadnezzar's image or the sequence of beasts in Daniel 7.

Having said this, the images of woman, male-child and remnant are not out of line with the positive side of the imagery in Daniel 7 (son of man, saints). And the dragon and its activity is the constant of all three stages of the chapter.¹⁰⁵ So while the flavor of Revelation 12 is somewhat different than that of the two examples from Daniel, there is more consistency than might appear

¹⁰⁵All four stages if you include the Stage Zero of events before the time of the vision.

upon a surface reading.¹⁰⁶

There are enough differences between Revelation 12 and the historical apocalyptic of Daniel to make the conclusion that they are different genres understandable. The chapter, does, however, track very closely with the criteria for historical apocalyptic developed from Daniel. I would suggest, therefore, that the genre of Revelation 12 needs to be, at the least, an open question in the scholarly community.

Historicism as a method for interpreting Revelation has been marginalized and, at times, even ridiculed in the scholarly process. Nevertheless, a careful examination of Revelation 12 in light of Daniel 2 and 7 suggests that a historicist reading of Revelation 12 is defensible from an exegetical perspective. As the work of Steve Moyise has demonstrated,¹⁰⁷ the Apocalypse is a multivalent work that transcends the either/or options which are so easily read into it. There is much about Revelation's meaning that has never been fully explored. The research laid out in this article and its predecessor indicates that a Seventh-day Adventist approach to Revelation can contribute important insights to the evangelical study of this fascinating book.

¹⁰⁶In any case, comparison with non-biblical examples of Jewish Apocalyptic may weaken the importance of this criterion.

¹⁰⁷Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series, vol. 115, Stanley E. Porter, executive editor (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).