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Manifestations of God: Theophanies in the Hebrew Prophets and the Revelation of John

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MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD:
THEOPHANIES IN THE HEBREW PROPHETS AND THE REVELATION OF JOHN

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Introduction

In Deuteronomy, Moses is presented as the greatest prophet, who lived in the mythic past of Israel.¹ After Moses followed the oral prophets such as Elijah or Nathan, and then the written prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, moving from myth into history. Later the prophetic strain was carried into the apocalyptic books of the Second Temple period such as Daniel and Enoch. After this, the Christian tradition made its contribution to the prophetic tradition with the book of Revelation. Revelation stands with Hebrew prophetic tradition by weaving history with myth to create stunning and memorable visions.²

In this paper, I will look at the way that the book of Revelation recombines the imagery of God from the Hebrew prophets to say new things about God. It also uses this imagery to explain the relationship between God and Christ. Throughout the book, Christ is given angelic descriptions and also imagery that normally is reserved for God. Because of this, Christ seems at times to be equal to God himself, and at other times to be only an angel serving God. These apparently contradictory images of Christ can only be understood through the Hebrew bible, which is the primary source material for the allusions in Revelation.

In the Hebrew bible, there are two opposing currents in the representation of God's relationship to his people. One strain presents a transcendent God who rules over the universe and does not interact with his people. He is not seen or heard, and he cannot be known. The other strain presents an immanent God who interacts with and speaks to

¹ Deuteronomy 34:10-12

² John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 164.

his people. He is viewed as the source of visions and dreams, and he interacts with such figures as Abraham and Moses. He knows his people and his people know him. Authors in the Hebrew bible found different ways to reconcile these two views, some by ignoring one strain, others by using divine figures such as angels to carry out his edicts or to deliver his messages.

In Revelation, this idea of a divine intermediary is applied to Christ. By using imagery that was previously reserved for God, Christ is presented as a special kind of intermediary such as the *kəbôd* or the Angel of Yahweh. This means that in Revelation, Christ is understood to speak and act for God, but to remain distinct from God. This is how Revelation explains a transcendent God interacting with his people in a personal and intimate way. In imagining Christ this way, Revelation attempts to harmonize earlier images of God found in the prophets, notably Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Revelation uses the imagery of these earlier traditions in a fresh way to state a new idea. By using the tradition of Hebrew prophecy, Revelation attempts to define the relationship between God and Christ. Christ as presented in Revelation is both a being distinct from God and a physical manifestation by means of which God is able to interact with his people.

In this paper, I will use textual analysis of theophanies and angelophanies in the Hebrew prophetic writings and those as well as Christophanies in Revelation. Since more than half of the references to the Hebrew bible in Revelation are from Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, I will specifically examine the theophanies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Although Daniel is considered apocalyptic rather than prophetic, the distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic is blurred, as many apocalyptic works adopt prophetic

language. This is especially true in the second temple period.³ Because of this, the author of Revelation likely considered his work to be both prophetic and an apocalypse, and thus drew on both prophecy and apocalypse as one and the same.

In my first chapter, I will examine the image of God presented in the three Hebrew prophets mentioned above. In Isaiah 6, I will analyze the theophany at the commissioning of Isaiah, which will be also compared to the vision of the prophet Micaiah in I Kings. Ezekiel has three theophanies that I will investigate in depth: the inaugural vision in chapter 1, a vision of God leaving the temple in chapters 10-11, and a vision of God's return in chapter 43. In addition to these, there are also two angelophanies connected with the abandonment of and return to the temple in chapters 9 and 40. I will also compare the Ezekiel theophanies with the theophany in Psalm 18. In Daniel I will explicate the vision of the Ancient of Days interacting with the “one like a son of man” in chapter 7, as well as an angelophany of a man dressed in linen in chapters 10-12.

In my second chapter, I will examine the images of God and Christ in Revelation over the course of four visions. In Revelation 1, there is a vision of “one like a son of man,” a christophany where John is commissioned to write the book. In Revelation 4 and 5, John gives a description of the throne room of God, which includes both a theophany and a christophany. In Revelation 10, there is an angelophany showing an angel who is acting as an intermediary. Finally, in Revelation 19, there is an image of the warrior messiah at the final judgement. From there, I will present the relationship of Christ to intermediaries such as the *kəḇôd* and the Angel of Yahweh.

³ John J. Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 56.

Chapter I – God in the Hebrew Bible

This chapter will examine the theophanies and angelophanies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Additionally, it will provide an overview of images of God in the Hebrew bible, prophecy and apocalyptic, and angels in the period of these writing.

Introduction to Hebrew Biblical Literature

Ideas and Images of God

The main distinction between Israel and its neighbors was its concept of deity, especially as it developed during the period of the classical prophets, with whom this chapter is concerned.⁴ The Israelites were barred from worshipping any god but their own God, represented by the four letters of the tetragrammaton (יהוה) transliterated as Yahweh. Similarly no other pantheon in the near east contained Yahweh, indicating a special relationship between the Israelites and their God.⁵ Aside from the singular worship, Yahweh was also viewed as the mysterious and abstract ultimate power in the universe, while the gods of Mesopotamia and Egypt were more physical, limited in their power, and only believed to exist in certain locations. The religions of Mesopotamia and Egypt were concerned primarily with cultic practice and ritual; they viewed morality as simply a matter of keeping the balance of the universe. Yahweh on the other hand had explicit instructions for religious, civil, and moral life, outlined in the Torah, emphasizing

⁴ John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 236.

⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 3-14; In this paper I will use the word God when the word 'elōhîm (אֱלֹהִים) is used in the text and as the standard English name for the Deity. I will use Yahweh when the tetragrammaton is used in the text, or in a context where this personal name is necessary for clarity.

personal piety in addition to or over the cultic practices.⁶

The name *yhwh* (יהוה) is uncertain in its etymology. One likely etymology is from the a causative of the verb to be, the longer name sometimes seen is *yhwh šəbā'ôṭ* (יהוה צבאות) “Yahweh of Hosts” which may in turn come from *yahyeh šəbā'ôṭ* (יהיה צבאות) “He is causing the hosts to be,” pointing to his creative and sustaining power. The attributes of God reflect this role of creator and father of the universe – he is viewed as old, wise, eternal, and compassionate. God is also closely connected with the symbols, names, and characteristics of Canaanite deity El taking on his attributes and roles.⁷ El was the head of the divine council of Canaanite gods. God too is the head of a divine council, but instead of other gods, the other members of the council are angels.⁸ This connection led to God's role of king, which is brought out in the covenant between the Israelites and God. In this covenant, the roles of divine warrior and judge are also elucidated, and play heavily into the Israelite understanding of God.⁹

Physical images of God are forbidden in the Hebrew bible. This prohibition can be found in the Torah in a number of places. In the decalogue, making a carved image to worship is forbidden, whether of God or another divine being.¹⁰ In addition, it is explicit that to see the face of God is to die.¹¹ God is unknown and mysterious to his people, and even his ministering angels cover themselves in his presence in the prophetic literature.

Creating any kind of image, makes God knowable and like the gods of other nations.¹²

⁶ Miller, 13-14; Walton, 236-47.

⁷ Miller, 2-12.

⁸ Miller, 25-27.

⁹ Miller, 5-7.

¹⁰ Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 5:8-9.

¹¹ Exodus 33:20; Judges 13:22 – although this last is not in the Torah.

¹² Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 270.

The prohibition against images of God sets ancient Israelite religion against most of the other religions of the Near East, and was likely an early and central idea.¹³

In most appearances of God, his presence is described by using the word *kəbôd* (כְּבוֹד) “glory.” This word *kəbôd* means glory, splendor, abundance, and honor. It often comes to interact with people because God was viewed as transcendent, having no physical manifestation or image. Usually it is surrounded in clouds and light and loud sounds. This *kəbôd* has greater meaning than simply glory, but should be understood as a manifestation of the attributes of God in a way that can be viewed by humans. Thus, when Moses and the prophets see *kəbôd yhw̄h* (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) “the glory of Yahweh,” they are seeing the physical manifestation of the attributes of God, rather than God himself, allowing them to describe the *kəbôd* without violating the prohibition on images. The highness of God contrasted with his *kəbôd* down below gives at once an image of a transcendent God and an immanent God.¹⁴

There are a few images particularly connected to God and his *kəbôd*. The first of these is the golden calf. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law from God, the Israelites created a golden calf which they worshipped as the God who brought them out of Egypt. In anger, Moses broke the tablets of the Law and destroyed the calf, which broke the law regarding images of God.¹⁵ Later the calf appears as an image of God in the northern kingdom of Israel, where two calves are set up for the people to worship.¹⁶

¹³ Miller, 15-16.

¹⁴ Klaus Koch, *The Prophets Volume One: The Assyrian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 108-09.

¹⁵ Exodus 32; Deuteronomy 9:13-21.

¹⁶ I Kings 12:25-33.

Similarly, the bronze serpent was an image connected with God. At one point in the wilderness God became angry with the Israelites and sent poisonous snakes among them. When Moses pleaded with God for mercy, God told Moses to fashion a bronze serpent, and when people looked to the bronze serpent they would be healed.¹⁷ Later it was set up in the temple and some of the people of Israel made offerings to it before Hezekiah the king smashed it in his reforms of the Israelite cultic practices. From this oblique reference, we can assume that the serpent was connected with both God and his temple.¹⁸

The temple itself often stood as a representative of God. Although it is not strictly an image it was considered to be his place of residence where heaven and earth are blurred together, so speaking about the temple was a way to speak about God.¹⁹ When elements of the temple are described, it can often be understood that God is present, even if not explicitly stated. After the Babylonian conquest, People wondered how God allowed his temple to be destroyed and whether he would cause it to be rebuilt. Many of the prophets of the exilic and post-exilic periods believed that there would not be a new temple, but that God would exist supreme, not contained by any temple. This is especially evident in the final chapter of Isaiah.²⁰ Ezekiel, who believed there would be a new purified temple, is greatly concerned with the relationship between God and the temple, and much of his book is concerned with explaining that relationship.

In addition to the temple, the Ark of the Covenant is the other primary

¹⁷ Numbers 21:4-9.

¹⁸ II Kings 18:1-4.

¹⁹ I Kings 8; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 182.

²⁰ Exodus 66; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 162.

representative of God. The Ark and the *kāḇôḏ* were associated from the earliest times.²¹ The Ark was decorated with a golden throne surrounded by Cherubim facing inward with their wings outspread.²² Upon this throne God was thought to be sitting, invisibly.²³ It was carried into battle, and God was thus thought to be fighting with the Israelites and leading them.²⁴ Later in the Hebrew bible there is a story that it was captured by the Philistines, and the statues of their gods bowed before the Ark. Then the Philistines suffered from plagues before deciding to return the Ark to Israel, at which point the plagues ceased.²⁵ Through these and other references, the Ark was associated with the power of God and was a primary object associated with God's presence until it disappeared during the Babylonian conquest. There is no consensus, either historical or legendary, as to the final fate of the Ark.

Prophecy and Apocalyptic

Primarily, this chapter will focus on the Hebrew prophets depictions of God and the *kāḇôḏ*. The written books of prophets are a progression from earlier prophetic periods in which the prophet typically served the king as an advisor. The written books of the prophets tend to address the whole of society on social and spiritual matters, either with a rebuke or a blessing.²⁶ The prophets had great freedom to rebuke the kingship, in a kind

²¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 18.

²² Exodus 37:1-9.

²³ Miller, 16.

²⁴ Joshua 6.

²⁵ I Samuel 5-6.

²⁶ Walton, 208-09.

of separation of powers.²⁷ The end of the monarchy in turn led to the decline of prophecy.²⁸

There were several different types of prophets.²⁹ There were the court prophets, who had official positions in the king's court, and there were lay prophets, people who received a message from God without being professional prophets. No matter the position of the prophet they were believed to have a duty to share their message. Since there were so many potential prophets, the veracity of the prophet was ascertained by means of a short term prediction, which if true would validate the remaining words of the prophet. The source of these prophecies is typically a vision, although there are many cases where the specific manner of the prophecy is not identified.³⁰

The prophets base their view of the future on the moral actions of the people and God's active part in earthly events, with a desire to return to the older form of their beliefs.³¹ In their writings, they presuppose the traditions of the Torah, even if it did not exist as a distinct text at the time of the prophetic writings.³² They tend to maintain an historic worldview, seeing God's actions through the lens of history. Other writings, such as the Psalms, espouse a mythic world view, seeing God's action through myths and

²⁷ Heschel, 477-79.

²⁸ Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 154.

²⁹ Often the canonical prophets use the term *nābī'* (נָבִיא) "prophet" disparagingly, and none of the four prophetic authors of the eighth century BCE (Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and Hosea) use this term to describe themselves. It is possible that these figures saw themselves as different from and superior to the *nābī'* of the land. (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 9, 71).

³⁰ Walton, 208-12.

³¹ Paul D. Hansen, ed., *Visionaries and Their Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 39-40; Klaus Koch, 2.

³² Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible – A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 458-59.

stories unconnected with the day to day.³³ However, the visions of God draw on historic elements and on the mythic imagery of God's enthronement over all the cosmos.³⁴ Later strains of prophecy connect the mythic past with the historical present and future, upholding the historical view while integrating the mythic elements, bringing these two traditions into closer harmony with one another.³⁵

Following the decline of prophecy, the apocalyptic movement within Judaism began to rise in prominence. The earliest apocalypses are in post-exilic prophecy, especially Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah, so there is not a strictly linear progression from prophecy to apocalypse, nor are prophecy and apocalypse completely distinct.³⁶ Apocalypse uses a story to present a vision given by a supernatural being to a human, which involves both a temporal element, such as the end of time, and a spatial element, such as the world of the supernatural. It is not absolutely necessary for an end times event to be present in order to be apocalyptic, but often it is present.³⁷ In these visions, there is wider use of mythic images from both biblical sources and non-biblical mythologies to form concise word pictures.³⁸ Apocalypse is also more universal in scope than the earlier prophets.³⁹

³³ Paul D. Hansen, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 18.

³⁴ Gottwald, 487.

³⁵ Hansen, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 24-25.

³⁶ Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 56; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 19; Hansen, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 228-29.

³⁷ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 4-8.

³⁸ Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 60-67; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 14-16.

³⁹ Charles, *Religious Development Between the Old and The New Testaments* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 17-18, 32; Hansen, *Visionaries and Their Apocalypse*, 45.

God in Isaiah

Before looking at specific images of God found in Isaiah, it will be helpful to look at some background to the book itself.⁴⁰ Isaiah preached domestic social justice and foreign political neutrality.⁴¹ He rejected the ritual law of Jerusalem that neither recognized God as active in the world, nor carried out justice among the people.⁴² For Isaiah, Judah held a privileged position, but could not avoid just retribution for failure to follow the Law.⁴³ Any hope shown by Isaiah is only following the utter destruction of the existing social and political structures of the time.⁴⁴ He also envisions a God who is still present, no matter what the inhabitants of the land may do, he is intimately a part of the land of Israel and Judah.⁴⁵ Additionally, he envisions a God that can surprise his people. No matter what they may believe about him, he is not bound by it, and he can do what he desires.⁴⁶ The later sections of the book⁴⁷ present a more hopeful picture of the future,

⁴⁰ Isaiah is the earliest prophetic work, written sometime between 701 BCE and 680 BCE. As such it has a major influence on all subsequent prophets, especially Micah and Habakkuk. Its writing is poetic and episodic, but its history is fairly specific and concrete. Its author, Isaiah, was a well known public figure who had access to high members of the court, as well as to the king, especially during periods of national crises. Despite this, Isaiah was not widely believed during his time of writing, but use of his writings by later prophets, in addition to the accuracy of his predictions, led to his enshrinement as the model for the prophets. In his work, Isaiah never presents himself as a *nābî'*, that is to say, he never refers to himself as a prophet. He lived during the reign of the Assyrian empire, which Isaiah views as God's instrument of judgement upon both Israel and Judah. If the prophet can be believed, during this time in Judah the rights of the people were violated and the rulers cared more about wealth and power than their duty to the nation. (Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 106; Gottwald, 377-83; Koch, 105; Brian Peckham, *History and Prophecy: The Development of Late Judean Literary Traditions*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937, 3-15, 133-58).

⁴¹ Gottwald, 379.

⁴² Peckham, 19-20.

⁴³ Peckham, 19-20.

⁴⁴ Gottwald, 377.

⁴⁵ Walther Zimmerli, *The Fiery Throne: The Prophets and Old Testament Theology*, Ed K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 45.

⁴⁶ Peckham, 207.

⁴⁷ Deutero-Isaiah (Chapters 40-55) and Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56-66), which most scholars date as being written in the post-exilic period.

where justice will bring together all the nations of the world, who would worship God together in Jerusalem.⁴⁸ This comes from a general idea that whatever is good for Judah, since it is the will of God, is also good for the people of the nations of the world as a whole.⁴⁹

The Vision in Isaiah 6

The first passage to review in Isaiah is his commissioning, described in chapter 6. This chapter forms the central portion of the first section of Isaiah, called the memoirs, which is bracketed by reminders of Israel's fall and predictions of Judah's fall.⁵⁰ Since his message may have been unpopular, this passage provides a claim of authority for the rest of Isaiah's message. All of his later words of prophecy are legitimized because he has been allowed to witness the divine council, and the words he speak come directly from God's own mouth.⁵¹

¹בְּשִׁנְת־מוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ עֲזַיָּהוּ וְאַרְאָה אֶת־אֲדֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא רָם וְנִשְׂא וְשׁוּלְיוֹ מְלֵאִים אֶת־הַהֵיכָל:
²שָׂרְפִים עֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לִי שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם לְאַחַד בְּשֵׁתַיִם | כִּסֵּה פָנָיו וּבִשְׂתַיִם יִכְסֶה
 רַגְלָיו וּבִשְׂתַיִם עֹזָרָי: ³וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־נְוֵה וְאָמַר
 קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כְּלֵהָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:
⁴וַיִּגְעַו אַמּוֹת הַסָּפִים מִקּוֹל הַקּוֹרָא וְהַבֵּית יִמְלֵא עָשָׂן: ⁵וְאָמַר
 אֲוִי־לִי כִי־נִדְמִיתִי כִּי אִישׁ טְמֵא־שִׁפְתַיִם אָנֹכִי
 וּבַתוֹךְ עִם־טְמֵא שִׁפְתַיִם אָנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב
 כִּי אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינָי:
⁶וַיַּעַף אֵלָי אֶחָד מִן־הַשָּׂרְפִים וּבְיָדוֹ רִצְפָה בְּמִלְקָתָיִם לָקַח מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ⁷וַיַּגַע עַל־פִּי וַיֹּאמֶר
 הִנֵּה נָגַע זֶה עַל־שִׁפְתֶיךָ וְסָר עֲוֹנֶיךָ וְחַטָּאתֶיךָ תִּכְפֹּר:
⁸וַיֹּאשְׁמַע אֶת־קוֹל אֲדֹנָי אֹמֵר אֶת־מִי אֲשַׁלַּח וּמִי יִלְךְ־לְנֹו
 וַאֲמַר הִנְנִי שְׁלֹחְנִי:

⁴⁸ Peckham, 20.

⁴⁹ Gottwald, 379.

⁵⁰ Gottwald, 384-85.

⁵¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 224.

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, being high and lifted up, and the hem of his robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim standing above him, six wings, six wings to each one. With two it covered its face, with two it covered its feet, with two it flew. ³And this called to another and said, “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts, the fullness of the earth is his *kəḇôd*.” ⁴And the thresholds of the doorposts shook from the voice of the one calling, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And I said, “Woe to me, for I am destroyed, for I am a man of unclean lips, and in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell, for my eyes have seen the king, Yahweh of hosts. ⁶And one from the Seraphim flew to me, and in his hand, a glowing coal he took from upon the altar with tongs. ⁷And touched it to my mouth and said, “Behold, I have touched this to your lips; your guilt turns away and your sins you atone for.” ⁸And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom will I send, and who will go for us. And I said, “Here I am, send me (Isaiah 6:1-8).”⁵²

Isaiah makes the bold claim to have looked upon God.⁵³ The image he provides is the tiniest glimpse as the vast hem of God's robe, which fills the temple.⁵⁴ By the immensity of the robe, the power, majesty, and dignity of God are made manifest. These attributes of God are also seen in the fact that he is lifted above all else.⁵⁵ This imagery of a large and exalted king and a comparatively small subject coming before the throne matches with Assyrian imagery of prisoners coming before an Assyrian king.⁵⁶ Through this language of immensity and exaltedness, Isaiah skillfully avoids making any strong claims as to the appearance of God. He is able to have the rhetorical force of claiming to have been in God's presence without violating the prohibition on images of God.⁵⁷

All remaining imagery in this passage describes the inhabitants and environment of the throne room of God. These elements serve primarily to emphasize the holiness and

⁵² Unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.

⁵³ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press: 1972), 74.

⁵⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 224; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 55.

⁵⁵ Kaiser, 74.

⁵⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 224-25.

⁵⁷ I Samuel 4:4; Kaiser, 74.

purity of God, highlighting his supernatural nature. The use of the name “Yahweh of hosts” calls to mind the imagery of the Ark, as well as the temple in which it is housed.⁵⁸ The connections of ritual purity with the temple cult heightens the sense of holiness in this passage.

The purity of Yahweh of hosts is contrasted with the unclean lips of Isaiah.⁵⁹ Isaiah is unable to participate in the divine council, or to hear anything that God is saying to him, until his lips have been purified by the coal from the altar. The incense which rose from the altar was to protect the priests from the presence of God, so it is fitting that a coal from the altar should protect Isaiah.⁶⁰ The purity of God is also contrasted with the Seraphim, who cover both their faces and their feet. The fact that feet here may be a euphemism for genitals⁶¹ only lends strength to the idea of covering impure things in the presence of holiness. The name of the Seraphim also adds to the idea of purity; their name comes from the root שרף, which is used to describe fiery snakes.⁶² Fire is often involved in sacrifices and offerings to purify the people.⁶³ There is also a connection between the Seraphim and the Bronze snake in the temple, which would then add to the association with the altar.⁶⁴

The final idea of God found in this passage is his creative power. The wording of the hymn of praise is significant here. The Text has *mālō' kōl hā'āreṣ kəbôdô* (מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ) which is typically rendered, “The whole earth is filled with his *kəbôd*,”

⁵⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 225.

⁵⁹ Childs, 55-56.

⁶⁰ Kaiser, 81.

⁶¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 224.

⁶² Numbers 21:6, 8; Deuteronomy 8:15. See note 17.

⁶³ Leviticus 1.

⁶⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 225.

however, *malō* (מלא) is a noun, so perhaps it should be rendered as “the fullness of the earth is his *kəbôd*.” All of the earth is a manifestation of God's power, thereby emphasizing his role as a creator; the world is the *kəbôd* of the one who created it, preserves it, and has dominion over it.⁶⁵

The Vision of Micaiah

One vision that finds many parallels to Isaiah's vision in chapter 6 is the vision of Micaiah found in II Kings.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָכֵן שָׁמַע דְּבַר־יְהוָה רְאִיתִי אֶת־יְהוָה יֹשֵׁב עַל־פְּסָאֵו וְכָל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם עֹמְדֵי עָלָיו
 מִיְמִינוֹ וּמִשְׁמָאלָיו: ²⁰וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִי יַפְתֵּהוּ אֶת־אַחָאָב וַיַּעַל וַיִּפֹּל בְּרָמֹת גִּלְעָד וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה בְּכֹה וְנֹה
 אָמַר בְּכֹה: ²¹וַיֵּצֵא הָרוּחַ וַיַּעֲמֵד לְפָנָי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶפְתָּנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּמָה: ²²וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֲצַא וְהִזִּיתִי רוּחַ תְּשֻׁקָר בְּפִי כָּל־נְבִיאָיו וַיֹּאמֶר תַּפְתְּהוּ וְגַם־תוֹכְלֵי צֹא וַעֲשֵׂה־כֵן:

¹⁹And he said to them, “Hear the word of Yahweh, I saw Yahweh sitting upon his throne, and all the hosts of heaven were standing around him to his right and to his left. ²⁰And Yahweh said, 'Who will deceive Ahab, so he will go up and fall in Ramoth-Gilead?' And this one spoke in this way, and this one was speaking in this way. ²¹And the spirit went forth and stood before Yahweh, and he said, 'I will deceive him.' And Yahweh said to him, 'With what?' ²²And he said, 'I will go and become a lying spirit of falsehood in the mouths of all of his prophets.' And he said, 'You will deceive him, and you will also be able to do so. Go and do this (I Kings 22:19-22).”

In both of the visions God is seen upon a throne surrounded by the host of heaven. Then God asks whom he himself will send out. The one sent is commanded to make the people unable to see reason; Isaiah is told to blind the eyes and stop the ears of the people, and the spirit is to give a spirit of falsehood to the many prophets of the king. There is some form of deliberation, as of a divine council.⁶⁶ In Isaiah, this manifests itself in the use of

⁶⁵ Childs, 55; Kaiser, 76-78.

⁶⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 226.

the first person plural in *ûmî yēlāk lānû* (וּמִי יֵלֶךְ לָנוּ) “and who will go for us” as though he were the chief God of a council addressing multiple gods in session. In Micaiah, the deliberation of the divine council is seen in the bickering back and forth and argument among those present after God asks his question. The emissary volunteers for the commission, in comparison with other commissions found in the Prophets, wherein the appointed one needs to be convinced.⁶⁷

The vision in I Kings is shorter than in Isaiah. Missing from the Micaiah account is any discussion of the prophet's worthiness. In Isaiah, the prophet proclaims woe upon himself, since he comes from a people of unclean lips; before he can be commissioned, his lips must be touched with a burning coal, in order to purify them. Furthermore, there is no description of the angels or army of heaven in Micaiah's vision, but in Isaiah a relatively detailed image of six winged seraphim and their singing. Also not found in Micaiah's vision is the full description of God's majesty filling the temple and the power of the divine voice, both of which are manifested as smoke and trembling in the vision of Isaiah.

The I Kings 22 passage appears to be an indictment of prophets who receive their prophecy from a spirit, as opposed to from a vision, possibly hinting at an earlier stage of Israelite prophecy.⁶⁸ Additionally, mercy is shown in the story, since even though God is sending out a spirit to deceive Ahab, he lets Ahab know this as a last chance to repent.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Childs, 52.

⁶⁸ Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 498.

⁶⁹ Terrence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 124

The host mentioned in Micaiah's vision is often associated with the gods of foreign nations, here in a subservient role on the council of God, similar to the council of the Canaanite god El.⁷⁰ There is also interaction and deliberation on this heavenly council, not just an autocratic decision, in contrast with the court of the king, Ahab.⁷¹ God here is the supreme ruler over the spirits, but also a merciful God who listens to those who come before him; this contrasts to Isaiah, where God is mighty and powerful, ruler over all of creation, and holy. This provides but one example of the ways that a very similar passage can be used and tweaked to give a different presentation of the deity. This will also be evident throughout the other prophets as similar images are combined in new ways to give a new idea of who God is.

Conclusion and Summary

The image gained from this passage in Isaiah is a God who is holy and pure, the lord of all creation. He is a king who rules over his subjects absolutely; what he decrees will happen. As he rules over all of creation and the cosmos, he also rules over all of history, he determines the rise and fall of kingdoms, and whatever happens upon earth is by his decree. Micaiah's vision similarly presents a supreme ruler who controls the forces of history. Instead of emphasizing the holiness and purity of God, Micaiah emphasizes God's mercy instead, but the presence of mercy also implies the existence of justice and holiness.

⁷⁰ Cogan, 492.

⁷¹ Fretheim, 124

Angels and the Angel of Yahweh

In the remaining sections, in addition to descriptions of God, there are also some significant descriptions of angels. The term angel in the Hebrew is *mal'āk* (מַלְאָךְ), meaning messenger, rendered as *angelos* (ἄγγελος) “messenger” in the Septuagint. *Mal'āk* is used both of human messengers and divine messengers. However, *mal'āk* is not the only term used to describe angels. Often they are described as *ānāsīm* (אֲנָשִׁים) “men.” Specific types of angels also have their own names – notably the *śarāpīm* (שְׂרָפִים), “seraphim,” in Isaiah 6, and the *kārūbīm* (כְּרֻבִים), “cherubim,” as found in Ezekiel – and are not referred to as *mal'āk*.⁷² Another name occasionally used for angels is *bānē 'elōhīm* (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים), “sons of God.”⁷³ These various names give us some ideas about the conceptions of angels. They served primarily to deliver messages from God to his people – including at times the prophets – acting as mediators between a transcendent God and his people. They can do this because they are distinct from God, shown by devices such as speaking about God in the third person.⁷⁴ However, since they are acting as messengers of God, they will often take on some visual attributes of God – such as lights and sounds typically associated with the *kābōd*, since they are speaking on God's behalf and thus presenting God's words and not their own.⁷⁵

In addition to their descriptive names, there is also information about the

⁷² Camilla Hélena von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord in Jewish Interpretations of Genesis* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2010), 11-12.

⁷³ Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 15.

⁷⁴ Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, & Karin Schöpflin, eds, *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007: Angels, The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2007), 112; von Heijne, 13, 115.

⁷⁵ Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine / Commentary on the English Text* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1964), 66.

functions of various angels. In general angels praise and serve God. They serve by aiding his people, executing his vengeance, and carrying out his judgements. They also fight his wars as a heavenly army. In this military role, they serve as guides and protectors to Israel and sometimes to travelers.⁷⁶ The cherubim served as heavenly guards as well as the bearers of the throne of God. In bearing the throne they can be thought of as the “honor guard” for God, but they have other tasks, such as guarding the Garden of Eden.⁷⁷ The seraphim primarily sing praise to God and stand around his throne.⁷⁸ One angel not present at this stage of angelic development is the individual guardian angel. In the book of Daniel, there are patron angels of nations, and these eventually develop into guardian angels. Patron angels will be explored more fully in the section about Daniel.⁷⁹

One specific angel appears numerous time throughout the corpus of the Hebrew bible, *mal'āk yhwh* (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה) “the Angel of Yahweh.” In many cases, the distinction between this angel and God himself is blurred or even non existent.⁸⁰ In the first appearance of this angel, in the story of Hagar,⁸¹ Hagar speaks as though the angel were Yahweh, and the angel does nothing to correct her. The angel himself speaks for God without the traditional formula, “Thus says Yahweh,” or any other introductory remark. However, the angel goes back and forth between first person declarations as God, and third person declarations about God, both in this story and in the later stories of Jacob.⁸²

Jacob wrestles with a man of whom he later says: *rā'îfî 'elōhîm pānîm 'el pānîm* (רָאִינִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנָיִם אֶל פָּנָיִם)

⁷⁶ Olyan, 15; Reiterer, Nicklas, & Schöpflin, 112, 136, 227, 382; von Heijne, 147.

⁷⁷ Genesis 3:24; Olyan, 31; Reiterer, Nicklas, & Schöpflin, 158.

⁷⁸ Olyan, 32.

⁷⁹ Reiterer, Nicklas, & Schöpflin, 415-17.

⁸⁰ von Heijne, 72.

⁸¹ Genesis 16.

⁸² Genesis 31:11-13; 48:3; von Heijne, 52-55, 66, 95.

אֶל־הַיְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים) “I have seen God face to face.” Although the man is not specifically referred to as an angel, this incident has been included in discussions about the Angel of Yahweh, and has often been taken by scholars and theologians to be another manifestation of that angel.⁸³ In Exodus 23:21, the Angel of Yahweh leads the people and about it God says “*kī šamî baqirbô* (כִּי שָׁמַי בְּקִרְבּוֹ) 'For my name is in its midst,'” showing that this angel in some way shares in the divine power and authority.⁸⁴

Even though the exact nature of the Angel of Yahweh is not clear, the angel is often equated with Yahweh, and so the appearance of this angel is a theophany.⁸⁵ The ambiguity arises because the stories come from a time when God was viewed as closer to his people, later an editor may have placed this figure as an intermediary for reverential reasons, but without fully removing the traces of God's presence.⁸⁶ Some support for this can be found in comparing Hebrew and Greek versions of Exodus 4:24, the Hebrew has *yhwh* (יהוה) “Yahweh”, while the Greek has *Angelos Kyriou* (Ἄγγελος Κυρίου) “Angel of the Lord,”⁸⁷ pointing to two separate phases of editing, when the Hebrew retained Yahweh, and the Greek replaced Yahweh with the Angel of Yahweh.⁸⁸

It may be appropriate to equate the Angel of Yahweh with the *kəbôd* of God, discussed above, since both are physical manifestations of God's presence. Both function

⁸³ von Heijne, 83.

⁸⁴ von Heijne, 97.

⁸⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 523; H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1949), 106.

⁸⁶ W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), 40.

⁸⁷ Here the word *Kyriou*, “Lord,” is likely a translation of the Hebrew *'ădōnāy* (אֲדֹנָי), which was used to replace the divine name. As a result “Angel of the Lord” should here be understood as “Angel of Yahweh.”

⁸⁸ von Heijne, 100.

as a physical manifestation of God with which humans are able to interact. The Angel of Yahweh often appears as a man, and the *kābôd* looks like a man in Ezekiel's opening vision, discussed in more detail later.⁸⁹ In addition to appearing as a man, the Angel of Yahweh sometimes appears as other things, especially fire.⁹⁰ The *kābôd* is also described as a fire.⁹¹ The pillar of cloud and fire that led the people through the wilderness in Exodus is called the *kābôd* of Yahweh, the Angel of Yahweh, and sometimes Yahweh himself.⁹² All this suggests a close relation between the concept of the *kābôd* and the Angel of Yahweh.

God in Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel and its prophecy is concerned with the divine presence, and by extension the divine person.⁹³ Ezekiel was written sometime between 591 BCE and 567 BCE, after the Babylonians had sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and carried off many of the people into exile.⁹⁴ Breaking with the tradition of writing in verse for

⁸⁹ Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents & Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 82.

⁹⁰ Exodus 3:2; Gieschen, 58-59.

⁹¹ Exodus 24:17

⁹² Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19, 24; 40:34; Numbers 16:19; Gieschen, 79.

⁹³ Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 170. The Book itself has a tripartite structure. The chapters 1-24 focus on the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, chapters 25-32 consist of oracles against the nations, and chapters 33-48 show a rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. He begins with a vision which makes sense of what has already happened. He is not predicting, so much as explaining. He does end with a hope for a new beginning. It involves a cosmological overview of divine work at all levels, local, national, international, and cosmically, and attempted to explain divine mysteries, such as death and resurrection. Throughout his book, Ezekiel displays his knowledge of the earlier prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah, as well as other prophets and histories with which he was undoubtedly familiar; often Ezekiel often takes the imagery of the earlier prophets and reenacts it literally (Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 6-7; Peckham, 6-7, 460; Zimmerli, 37, 79.).

⁹⁴ Peckham, 14.

prophecy, Ezekiel wrote in prose, as one would write history.⁹⁵ Ezekiel presents us with the work of a priest who has no more temple, thus creating the space for an apocalyptic mode of writing.⁹⁶ Ezekiel sees the fall of Jerusalem as the destruction of all civilization, and he believes that Israel will arise alone from the ashes.⁹⁷ He is trying to provide a new creation in the midst of the chaos of the exile.⁹⁸ Ezekiel at times speaks with God directly and at times angelic intermediaries instead are used.⁹⁹

The Vision by the Chebar Canal

The first vision in Ezekiel to review is the chariot vision of Chapter 1. Ezekiel sees the chariot of God born by four angelic creatures coming towards him by the river.¹⁰⁰ He then describes all that he sees.

וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה רִיחַ סַעְרָה בָּאָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן עָנָן גָּדוֹל וְאִשׁ מִתְלַקַּחַת וְנִגְהָ לּוֹ סָבִיב וּמִתּוֹכָהּ כְּעִין הַחֹשֶׁמֶל מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ:⁵ וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דְמוֹת אַרְבַּע חַיֹּת וְזֶה מֵרֵאשִׁיתָן דְמוֹת אָדָם לְהִנֵּה:⁶ וְאַרְבַּעַה פְּנֵים לְאַחַת וְאַרְבַּע כְּנָפִים לְאַחַת לָהֶם: ...¹⁰ וְדְמוֹת פְּנֵיהֶם פְּנֵי אָדָם וּפְנֵי אַרְיֵה אֶל־הַיָּמִין לְאַרְבַּעַתָּם וּפְנֵי־שׁוֹר מִהַשְּׂמָאוֹל לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן וּפְנֵי־נִשְׁוֹר לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן: ...¹⁵ וַיֵּרָא הַחַיֹּת וְהִנֵּה אוֹפֵן אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ אֲצֵל הַחַיֹּת לְאַרְבַּעַת פְּנֵיו:¹⁶ מֵרֵאשִׁיתָן הָאוֹפְנִים וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם כְּעִין תְּרִשִׁישׁ וְדְמוֹת אֶחָד לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן וּמֵרֵאשִׁיתָם כַּאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָאוֹפֵן בְּתוֹךְ הָאוֹפֵן: ...¹⁸ וְגִבֵּיתָן וְגִבָּה לָהֶם וַיִּרְאֶה לָהֶם וְגִבְתָּם מִלְּאֵת עֵינַיִם סָבִיב לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן: ...²⁵ וַיְהִי־קוֹל מֵעַל לְרִקְיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֵאשֵׁם בְּעַמֻּדָם תְּרַפִּינָה כְּנִפְיָהֶן:²⁶ וּמִמַּעַל לְרִקְיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֵאשֵׁם כְּמֵרָאָה אֶבְרִסְפִיר דְמוֹת כֶּסֶף

⁹⁵ Carley, 6-7.

⁹⁶ Paul D. Hanson, *Visionaries and Their Apocalypse*, 233.

⁹⁷ Peckham, 20.

⁹⁸ Peckham, 472.

⁹⁹ Oesterley & Robinson, 291.

¹⁰⁰ As foreign lands were considered unclean, and the Israelites would often seek communion with God near places of running water to purify themselves, many prophetic visions, both of Ezekiel and Daniel occur near rivers. The river may also be a place of prayer for the exiles, if this is the case, then Ezekiel, like Isaiah, meets the vision of God in his people's place of worship. It is even possible that the vision of Ezekiel takes place by the river because we are to understand the vision as a reflection in the river, thus adding a layer of insulation between the seer and the divine beings (Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 40-41; Zimmerli, 80).

⁴And I looked, and behold, a wind of a storm coming from the North. A great cloud and fire taking hold of itself, and brightness to it all around. And from its mist like to the appearance of fire in its midst. ⁵And from its midst, the likeness of four living creatures, and their appearance was the likeness of a man. ⁶And each one had four faces, and each one of them had four wings ... ¹⁰And as for the appearance of their faces, they had the face of a man, and to their right the face of a lion, and to their left the face of a bull, and the four of them had the face of an eagle ... ¹⁵And I saw the creatures and, behold, one wheel on the earth beside the creatures, to their four faces. ¹⁶The appearance of the wheels and their work was as the eye of jasper, and the four of them looked the same. And their appearance and work was as a wheel in the midst of a wheel ... ¹⁸And as for their rims, their height and their appearance, the rims were filled with eyes around the four of them. ... ²⁵And there was a sound above the firmament which was upon their heads, when they stood, they let their wings drop. ²⁶And from above the firmament which was upon their head, as the likeness of sapphire stone was the likeness of a throne (Ezekiel 1:4-6, 10, 15-16, 18, 25-26).

This vision is related to the priestly account of God and Isaiah 6.¹⁰¹ Even little details can find their origin in the Pentateuchal narrative, such as the sapphire firmament, which harkens back to the vision granted to Moses and the elders of Israel.¹⁰² This vision gives Ezekiel the impetus for the rest of his prophetic revelation.¹⁰³ The order of the vision goes from sight to sound, lower to upper, motion to stillness.¹⁰⁴

The manifestation of God is described as an oncoming storm coming from the north.¹⁰⁵ In Canaanite myth, the divine assembly and the home of the gods is located in the north. This is not just any storm, it is a storm of divine origin.¹⁰⁶ The whirlwind here

¹⁰¹ Greenberg, 53-54; Peckham, 460-61. Some of the Priestly accounts of God include the story of the flood (Genesis 6-9), the appearance of God in the burning bush to Moses (Exodus 3), many of the plagues (Exodus 7-10), the pillar of cloud and fire leading the people through the wilderness (Exodus 13-14), and the divine theophany on Mount Sinai when the decalogue is given (Exodus 19).

¹⁰² Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 22

¹⁰³ Peckham, 439; Exodus 24:9-10

¹⁰⁴ Greenberg, 52.

¹⁰⁵ Zimmerli, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 20-21

hearkens back to Elijah being taken up.¹⁰⁷ The inside of the storm is described as “fire taking hold of itself,” this phrase is only found one other place, the plague of hail, indicating some type of supernatural flame.¹⁰⁸ This opening connects back to the might and power of God's previous appearances, as well as to his power manifested in the plagues in Egypt, a particularly salient point in light of the Babylonian captivity.

Following this initial description of a storm is a depiction of four (רִיבֹוֹת) “creatures”. I translated this as creatures rather than animals to convey the vagueness, also shown in their varying gender in the Hebrew. The number four given for the living creatures in Ezekiel has connotations of completeness, stemming from the four winds, the four corners of the earth, and the four quadrants of heaven. This symbolizes God's dominance over all of creation, given that later God is seen as enthroned above the four creatures. The living creatures call to mind the cherubim with outspread wings on either end of the Ark of the covenant, which was thought of as the throne of God, or sometimes as his footstool. Similarly in both places the wings are touching each other. In chapter 10 it is confirmed that these creatures are in fact Cherubim. The multiple wings on the Cherubim, compared to the two on the cherubim of the Ark, may have as its antecedent the six wings of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6.¹⁰⁹

The faces of the creatures in Ezekiel are of man and the three noblest beasts and birds.¹¹⁰ These four creatures are the greatest in their respective categories, the man over all creatures, the eagle over birds, the bull over domestic animals, and the lion over wild

¹⁰⁷ II Kings 2:1-12

¹⁰⁸ Greenberg, 43; Exodus 9:24

¹⁰⁹ Carley, 14-15; Greenberg, 43-44, 57.

¹¹⁰ Carley, 15.

beasts. Thus the lords of all creatures bear the throne of God.¹¹¹ This depiction of having four faces results in an absence orientation for the creatures, there is no front or back. The wording of the Hebrew also indicates each has a single leg, which is rounded like a calf's, indicating that there is no front or back for the creatures. Because of their lack of orientation they have no need to turn when they move. This should be understood as a metaphor for omnipotence.¹¹²

The most striking part of this description of the throne is that it has wheels, suggesting mobility, and possibly pointing back to the mobility of the Ark and tabernacle.¹¹³ The wheels are described as a “wheel within a wheel” which may indicate two wheels at right angles to each other or two concentric wheels, like the optical illusion created by a quickly spinning wheel.¹¹⁴ If it is the latter, then this indicates the great speed of movement and the swiftness of God's movement and action. If the former then the bisecting wheels could indicate God's ability to be everywhere, symbolized by wheels that can move easily in all directions. The wheels are also covered with eyes. This indicates a divine omniscience and an active watchfulness over the earth.¹¹⁵

The firmament described is the platform on which the divine throne rests. Both creatures and wheels moved as one because they were all controlled by the same driving impulse.¹¹⁶ They are subject to the driver of the chariot, God, who is seated upon the throne. God is riding through the heavens as a judge or king to save his people and to

¹¹¹ Greenberg, 56.

¹¹² Greenberg, 44-45.

¹¹³ Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 170.

¹¹⁴ Greenberg, 47.

¹¹⁵ Carley, 17-18; Greenberg, 58.

¹¹⁶ Greenberg, 48.

punish their enemies. Compare this to the more stationary image of God found in Isaiah 6.¹¹⁷ That God appears in his majesty apart from the temple speaks to his vitality and action, unconnected to any human-made temple or land.¹¹⁸ This depiction of God is an attempt to combine intimacy with transcendence.¹¹⁹

To look on the face of God meant death, so his presence is often described in terms of light or of fire, with brightness, or as a cloud.¹²⁰ So also Ezekiel, when describing the one seated upon the throne, avoids directly describing even the *kəbôd* by using indirect language.¹²¹ The majority of the description is made up of words of brightness and fire, but it begins saying that he has the likeness, *dəmət* (דְּמֵת) of a man, *ādām* (אָדָם). This is a reversal of Genesis 1 when a man, *ādām*, is made in the likeness, *dəmət*, of God. By doing so, Ezekiel creates a mystical relationship between man and God; they are both in one another's likeness.¹²² Additionally, God has a rainbow around him, which is a symbol of God's covenant with man,¹²³ reminding the reader of both the Sinai Covenant and the earlier covenant he made with Noah after the flood.

God Abandoning the Temple

In Ezekiel 9, six beings, *'ānāšīm*, arrive followed by a scribe. The scribe then goes out to mark the heads of the innocent in the city and the six proceed to destroy those

¹¹⁷ Greenberg, 53.

¹¹⁸ Zimmerli, 80-81.

¹¹⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 19; Greenberg, 54.

¹²⁰ Carley, 18-19.

¹²¹ Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 170.

¹²² Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 22.

¹²³ Carley, 20.

unmarked by the scribe, acting as agents of God's judgement.¹²⁴

וַיְהִי וַיֵּשֶׁה אַנְשִׁים בָּאִים מִדְרֹךְ-שַׁעַר הָעֵלְיוֹן אֲשֶׁר מִפְּנֵי צְפוֹנָה וְאִישׁ כָּלִי מִפְּצוֹ בְּיָדוֹ
 וְאִישׁ-אֶחָד בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְגִישׁ בְּיָדָם וְקֶסֶת הַסֵּפֶר בְּמִתְנַיֵּי וַיִּבְאוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ אֵצֶל מִזְבֵּחַ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת׃³ וַיִּכְבְּדוּ
 אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִעְלָה מֵעַל הַכְּרוֹב אֲשֶׁר הָיָה עֲלָיו אֵל מִפְּתַן הַבַּיִת וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-הָאִישׁ הַלְּבִישׁ
 הַבְּדִים אֲשֶׁר קֶסֶת הַסֵּפֶר בְּמִתְנַיֵּי׃ ם ⁴וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו עֲבֹר בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר בְּתוֹךְ
 יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהִתְוִיֵּת תּוֹ עַל-מִצְחֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים הַנֹּאֲנָחִים וְהַנֹּאֲנָקִים עַל כָּל-הַתּוֹעֲבוֹת הַנַּעֲשׂוֹת
 בְּתוֹכָהּ׃

²And behold, six men coming from the road of the gates of the most high which faced northward, and each had an instrument of shattering in his hand, and one man in their midst was wearing a white linen robe, and the ink pot of a secretary was at his loins, and they came and they stood next to the altar of bronze. ³And the *kāḥôḏ* of the God of Israel was lifted up from upon the Cherub that was upon the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the ink pot of secretary. ⁴And Yahweh said to him, “Cross over in the midst of the city, in the midst of Jerusalem. And place a mark upon the brows of the men, the ones sighing and lamenting over all the abominations being done in its midst (Ezekiel 9:2-4).

The one scribe plus six destroyers make seven, the number of completion.¹²⁵ The linen the scribe wears marks him as a priest, as such, his duty is to distinguish the righteous from the unrighteous.¹²⁶ In addition to priesthood, the white of the linen indicates purity.¹²⁷

Following this destruction of the city comes one of the central events of Ezekiel's book of prophecy. The *kāḥôḏ* abandons the temple and Jerusalem, allowing the city to fall.¹²⁸

וַיֹּאֲרָאָה וַיְהִי אֵל-הַתְּרַקִּיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל-רֹאשׁ הַכְּרֻבִּים כָּאֶבֶן סַפִּיר כְּמִרְאֵה דָמוֹת כֶּסֶף נֹרְאָה
 עָלֵיהֶם׃² וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָאִישׁ לְגִישׁ הַבְּדִים וַיֹּאמֶר בֹּא אֶל-בֵּינֹת לְגִלְגָל אֶל-תַּחַת לְכְרוֹב וּמִלֵּא

¹²⁴ Reiterer, Nicklas, & Schöpflin, 136

¹²⁵ Greenberg, 175.

¹²⁶ Carley, 58; Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Ezekiel*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 104.

¹²⁷ Greenberg, 176.

¹²⁸ Carley, 64, 72; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 160; Peckham, 470.

תִּפְגֹּף גְּחֹלִי־אֵשׁ מִבִּינֹת לְכְרוּבִים וְזָרַק עַל־הָעֵיר וַיָּבֵא לְעֵינַי: ...¹⁸ וַיֵּצֵא כְבוֹד יְהוָה מֵעַל מִפְתַּן הַבַּיִת וַיַּעֲמֵד עַל־הַכְּרוּבִים: ¹⁹ וַיִּשְׂאוּ הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶם וַיִּרְוּמוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ לְעֵינַי בְּצֵאתָם וְהָאוֹפָנִים לְעִמָּתָם וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח שַׁעַר בֵּית־יְהוָה הַקִּדְמוֹנִי וַכְבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלִיהֶם מִלְּמַעְלָה: ²⁰ הִיא הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי תַּחַת אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנְהַר־כְּבָר וְאֵלַע פִּי כְרוּבִים הֵמָּה:

...
²² וַיִּשְׂאוּ הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶם וְהָאוֹפָנִים לְעִמָּתָם וַכְבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלִיהֶם מִלְּמַעְלָה: ²³ וַיַּעַל כְבוֹד יְהוָה מֵעַל תּוֹךְ הָעֵיר וַיַּעֲמֵד עַל־הַהָר אֲשֶׁר מִקְדָּם לְעֵיר:

¹And I looked and behold, upon the expanse which was upon the head of the Cherubim, like the sapphire stone, something like the appearance of the likeness of a throne was seen. ²And he said to the man clothed in linen, “Go among the wheels and beneath the Cherubim, and fill the hollow of your hands with coals of fire and toss them upon the city, and he came to my eyes.” ... ¹⁸And the *kābôd* of Yahweh went forth from the threshold of the house and stood upon the Cherubim. ¹⁹And the Cherubim lifted their wings and raised from the earth to my eye when they went forth, and the wheels with them, it stood at the opening of the eastern gate of the house of Yahweh, and the *kābôd* of Yahweh was above them overhead. ²⁰It was the creature that I saw beneath the God of Israel at the Chebar river, and I knew that they were Cherubim.

...
²²And The Cherubim lifted their wings and they wheels with them, and the *kābôd* of the God of Israel was upon them overhead. ²³And the *kābôd* of Yahweh went up from in the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain that was to the east of the city (Ezekiel 10:1-2, 18-20; 11:22-23).

This passage can only be interpreted in relation to the first vision in chapter 1, and it expands on the earlier image.¹²⁹ It takes the elements of chapter 1 and rearranges them. By placing this vision in Jerusalem, Ezekiel shows that the correct placement of God's throne is in the temple.¹³⁰ However, in this section of Ezekiel, there is an increase in the use of the term *habbāyit* (הַבַּיִת) “the house” in place of *bêt yhwh* (בֵּית יְהוָה) “the house of Yahweh,” signaling God's growing distance from the temple.¹³¹

The chariot from chapter 1, which symbolizes the glory and sovereignty of God,

¹²⁹ David I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1, *Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 315; Peckham, 441.

¹³⁰ Cooke, 111; Peckham, 440, 463.

¹³¹ Block, *Chapters 1-24*, 326.

here provides the means for abandoning the temple and city.¹³² This is important, as it shows that God departs from the temple under his own power, not as a captive; he remains in control despite the victory of the Babylonians.¹³³ This also supports the claim that he is not tied to any city or shrine.¹³⁴ In the vision of chapter one, coals are mentioned but are quickly glossed over and the idea is not expanded. Here their significance is given; they are the instruments of divine judgement.¹³⁵ Ezekiel offers no completion to the journey of the chariot of God. He breaks off the narrative after the *kābôd* rests on the mountain east of the city, leaving readers to speculate about the final destination of God; he either goes to Babylon, among his people, or the true temple of heaven. Later writers assumed the latter to be the case.¹³⁶

God Returning to the Temple

The book ends with a long vision spanning eight chapters in which an angelic man shows a new temple to Ezekiel. This man is described briefly in these angelic terms: “And behold, a man, and his appearance was like the appearance of bronze, and a cord of linen was in his hand and the reed of measurement (Ezekiel 40:3).” This man is not God, but has marks reminiscent of other angels, such as the bronze footed cherubim and the man dressed in linen.¹³⁷ This man is both a guide and surveyor, he is both a part of the vision and the

¹³² Block, *Chapters 1-24*, 327.

¹³³ Block, *Chapters 1-24*, 360.

¹³⁴ Block, *Chapters 1-24*, 360.

¹³⁵ Block, *Chapters 1-24*, 321.

¹³⁶ Block, *Chapters 1-24*, 358.

¹³⁷ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 2, *Chapters 25-48*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 514; Cooke, 430.

explainer of the vision.¹³⁸ He begins to describe the new temple and the climactic moment of this vision comes when the *kābôd* returns to dwell in the temple, bringing to an end the story begun in chapter ten and showing the destination for the chariot in chapter one.¹³⁹

וְהִנֵּה כְבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא מִדְּרֹם הַקְּדָיִם וְקוֹלוֹ כְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים וְהָאֶרֶץ הָאֵיירָה מִכְּבוֹדוֹ:²
 וְכַמְרָאָה הַמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי כַּמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר-רָאִיתִי בְּבֵאֵל לְשַׁחַת אֶת-הָעִיר וּמְרָאוֹת כַּמְרָאָה³
 אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי אֶל-נְהַר-כְּבָר וְאֶפְלֵ אֶל-פְּנֵי: וְכַבֹּד יְהוָה בָּא אֶל-הַבַּיִת דְּרֹם שַׁעַר אֲשֶׁר פְּנֵי דְרֹם
 הַקְּדָיִם:⁴ וְתִשְׁאַנֵּי רוּחַ וְתִבְיֵאֵנִי אֶל-הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִי וְהִנֵּה מְלֵא כְבוֹד-יְהוָה הַבַּיִת:⁵ וְאֲשָׁמַע מִדְּבַר
 אֱלֹהֵי מַהַבַּיִת וְאִישׁ הָיָה עִמָּד אֶצְלִי:⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּנֹ-אָדָם אֶת-מְקוֹם כִּסְאִי וְאֶת-מְקוֹם כַּפּוֹת רַגְלֵי
 אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁפֹּן-שָׁם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם

²And behold, the *kābôd* of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And his voice was like the voice of many waters, and the earth shined from his *kābôd*.
³And like a vision, the vision which I saw was like the vision that I saw when he came¹⁴⁰ to destroy the city, and visions like the vision I saw at upon the Chebar river. ⁴And the *kābôd* of Yahweh came to the house, through the gate which the face of which was toward the east. ⁵And the spirit lifted me and brought me to the inner courtyard, and behold, the *kābôd* of Yahweh filled the house. ⁶And I heard from the speaking to me from the house – and the man was standing next to me – ⁷and he said to me, “Son of man, the place of my throne and the place of the souls of my feet where I will abide is in the midst of the sons of Israel forever (Ezekiel 41:2-7).”

Overall, this section is concerned with the glory of the temple and its connection to God.¹⁴¹ The temple is described in the verses prior to this passage. It is a purified temple which represents the restored community of Israel, among whom God will dwell perpetually.¹⁴² The *kābôd* in this vision is like the earlier visions of the *kābôd*.¹⁴³ The *kābôd* comes and Ezekiel sees it in the temple. God speaks to Ezekiel from the temple,

¹³⁸ Block, *Chapters 25-28*, 514-15.

¹³⁹ Carley, 285; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 160; Peckham, 470.

¹⁴⁰ Literally “when I came,” but several Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts, the Latin Vulgate, and Theodotian’s Greek Text all read “when he came.”

¹⁴¹ Peckham, 446.

¹⁴² Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 160-61; Peckham, 469.

¹⁴³ Cooke, 463.

although God is not named as a show of reverence.¹⁴⁴ God asserts his kingship, entering the temple and claiming it as his palace.¹⁴⁵ Typically in the Hebrew bible, the throne of God is portrayed either as the Ark or situated in heaven. Here the temple is his throne, thus showing that the Ark is no longer necessary and that the dwelling place of God has moved from heaven down to earth. Ezekiel shows God making a statement that he will be among his people, not as a transcendent deity, but inhabiting his temple.¹⁴⁶

The Theophany in Psalm 18

The closest parallel to Ezekiel's vision of God in chapter 1 is found in Psalm 18.¹⁴⁷ The Psalm is composed of four chants, which are sung by a warrior calling on God for aid while surrounded by enemies. The first of these chants describes the divine theophany arranged as a chiasmus. This chiasmus centers on the culmination of God's descent with fire and lightning.¹⁴⁸

6 חִבְלֵי שָׁאוֹל סָבְבוּנִי קִדְמוּנֵי מוֹקֵשֵׁי מוֹת:
 7 בְּצַר־לִי אֶקְרָא יְהוָה וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֵי אֲשׁוּעַ
 יִשְׁמַע מֵהִיבְלֹו קוֹלִי וְשׁוֹעֲתִי לִפְגִּיו תִּבּוֹא בְּאֲזִנָּיו:
 8 וַתִּגְעַשׁ וַתִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ וּמוֹסְדֵי הָרִים יִרְגְּזוּ וְיִתְגַּעְעֲשׂוּ כִּי־תִרָה לּוֹ:
 9 עֲלָה עֲשׂוֹן בְּאָפֹ וְאֲש־מִפִּיו תֵּאֱכַל גְּתִילִים בְּעָרוֹ מִמָּנוֹ:
 10 וַיֵּט שָׁמַיִם וַיִּגְדֹּ וַיַּעֲרֹף לַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו:
 11 וַיִּרְפַּב עַל־כְּרוֹב וַיִּעֲרֹף וַיִּדָּא עַל־כַּנְפֵי־רוּחַ:
 12 יָנֹשֶׁת הַשָּׁדָד סִתְרוֹ סִבִּיבוֹתָיו סִכְתּוֹ חֲשֻׁכַת־מַיִם עָבְרִי שְׁחָקִים:
 13 מִזִּנְגָה לְגִדּוֹ עָבְרִי עָבְרוֹ בְּרֹד וּגְחֹלֵי־אֵשׁ:
 14 וַיִּרְעַם בְּשָׁמַיִם יְהוָה וַעֲלִיוֹן יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ בְּרֹד וּגְחֹלֵי־אֵשׁ:
 15 וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצָצְרוֹ וַיִּפְיֹצֵם וַיִּבְרָקוּם רַב וַיִּהְיֶם:

¹⁴⁴ Cooke, 464.

¹⁴⁵ Block, *Chapters 25-28*, 580.

¹⁴⁶ Block, *Chapters 25-28*, 581; Cooke, 464.

¹⁴⁷ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton's & Company, 2007), 53; Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 193-94.

וַיִּרְאוּ אֶפְיָי מִיָּם וַיִּגְלוּ מִסְדּוֹת תַּבְּלִי¹⁶
 מִצַּעֲרֹתָי יִהְיֶה מִנְּשַׁמַּת רִיחִי אֶפְדֶּה:
 יִשְׁלַח גְּמָרוֹם יִקְנֹנִי יִמְשְׁנֵי מַמַּיִם רַבִּים:¹⁷

⁶The cords of Sheol surrounded me, the snares of Death confront me. ⁷In distress for me, I am calling the LORD, and to my God I am crying for help. He is hearing my voice from his temple, and I am crying out, before him it is coming in his ears. ⁸And the earth quaked and shook, and the foundations of the world are trembling, and they shook back and forth because he was angry. ⁹Smoke has gone up from his in his nose, and fire from his mouth is consuming, coals burned from him. ¹⁰He is bending the heavens and coming down, and a dark cloud is under his feet. ¹¹And he rode upon a Cherub and he flew, and he soared upon the wings of the wind. ¹²He is making darkness his cloak round about him, his booth is the darkness of waters, dark clouds of cloud. ¹³From the brightness dark clouds crossed over before him, hail and coals of fire! ¹⁴And the LORD thundered from the heavens, and the most high gave his voice, hail and coals of fire! ¹⁵He sent his arrows and scattered them, and many lightnings and confused them. ¹⁶And channels of water were seen, and the foundations of the world were uncovered. From your rebuke, LORD, from the breath of the wind of your nose. ¹⁷He is sending from the height, he is taking me, he is drawing me out from many waters. (Psalm 18:6-18)

The theophany here, like the theophany in Ezekiel, recalls the appearance of God at Mount Sinai, reminding the audience of God as a Law giver and bringer of justice. Additionally, the battle with the arrows a cosmic battle between chaos and order, bringing to mind the creation out of chaos in Genesis 1. Together, the audience is made to imagine a God who creates order and justice. The coals and Cherub also connect this poem to the visions of both Isaiah and Ezekiel.¹⁴⁹ The cry of the Psalmist reaches God in his temple – likely the temple in heaven rather than in Jerusalem.¹⁵⁰ Then the earth shakes and quakes in anticipation of God's presence. Following this is the beginning of the theophany proper. God is described like a volcano, with intensification after each line –

¹⁴⁹ J.W. Rogerson and J.W. McKay, *Psalms 1-50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 77-78; Terrien, 195-98.

¹⁵⁰ Rogerson and McKay, 77.

from smoke, to fire, to burning coals shooting out.¹⁵¹

After this God begins to descend. He is riding on clouds, as well as cloaked with clouds. Here Canaanite imagery is especially strong, but changed to fit with Yahwist beliefs. The use of hail and fire, as well as clouds as a chariot, point to Baal. God is thus painted as supreme over natural forces, such as weather. However, the clouds are also used as an obscuring device. By wrapping God in clouds, the psalmist still is able to maintain that God cannot be fully seen or known, thus setting him apart from the Canaanite gods.¹⁵² The name 'Elyôn (עֶלְיֹן) “most high” refers to the Canaanite god El, the king over all the gods. The name also connects to Genesis 14:19 -22 where it is associated with Creation and sovereignty over the earth.¹⁵³ Helping to bolster the connection with Canaanite mythology is Death, the chief enemy of Baal, called Mot in Canaanite mythology, which is the primary danger facing the psalmist from which God comes rescuing. Death is connected with images of water throughout, bringing to mind Yam, Baal's enemy coming out of the sea.¹⁵⁴

So this psalm shows God coming in an earthquake, fire, storm, and tempest, similar to elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,¹⁵⁵ showing God's power and majesty, which terrifies the earth, but the climax reverses expectations by having a tender scene with God and his faithful one, rather than the devastation on earth.¹⁵⁶ It thus creates, like the visions in Ezekiel, a paradoxical God. However, in the psalm the contradiction is not between

¹⁵¹ Alter, 54.

¹⁵² Terrien, 198.

¹⁵³ Rogerson and McKay, 78.

¹⁵⁴ Mitchell S. J. Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms I: 1-50* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 110; Rogerson and McKay, 76-77.

¹⁵⁵ Exodus 19:16-20; I Kings 19:11-12; Job 38:1

¹⁵⁶ Rogerson and McKay, 77-78.

near and far, but between calm and destruction. God is presented as lord of both storm and calm, a comfort to his people and a terror to his enemies. He is shown as both the supreme lord of creation, and a tender caregiver for his chosen people. Again, this shows that the same imagery can be used to create different conceptions of God.

Conclusion and Summary

The God of Ezekiel is an enigma. He transcends both worshippers and temple, not being limited by either; he is willing to abandon the temple until such a time as it could be made pure again.¹⁵⁷ He is born by the lords of all creatures, so he is shown to be lord over all of creation. Despite this transcendence, he will come to live intimately among his people. The temple is his home, even though he abandoned it for a time. And when he will return to live in his temple, his people, like Ezekiel will be able to see him and hear him.

God in Daniel

The last prophetic work to examine is Daniel.¹⁵⁸ There is a large influence from Ezekiel in the writing of Daniel, such as the angelic men and the depiction of God's throne, which finds an antecedent in Ezekiel's description of the chariot of God.¹⁵⁹ In

¹⁵⁷ Gottwald, 482-84.

¹⁵⁸ Daniel was written during the Hellenistic period and revised in the second century. It is the latest work of the Hebrew bible, looking forward to a new national pride for the Jews. Daniel 7-12 is one of the earliest apocalypses. The earlier portions of the book are a collection of court tales. This paper is only focused on the prophetic and apocalyptic sections of Daniel (Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 20.; Peckham, 12-15.).

¹⁵⁹ Raymond Hammer, *The Book of Daniel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 3, 102; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1959), 408-09. Ezekiel 1

addition to Jewish sources, the author draws on various Near Eastern traditions.¹⁶⁰ The vision can only be fully understood by accounting for the influence of all of these sources.¹⁶¹

The view of God in Daniel is that of a transcendent deity, the “God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries,” and “the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end,” rather than an immanent one.¹⁶² As a result of this, angelic interpreters are needed to interpret the visions from God.¹⁶³ Since God is ultimately in control, the fundamental issue raised by Daniel is the relation between religion and politics. Out of this come questions of theodicy and the justice of the current politics powers.¹⁶⁴ All hope found in Daniel comes not from revolutionaries such as the Maccabees, but from a hope that God will ultimately save his people, and resurrect those who died.

The Ancient of Days and the “One Like a Son of Man”

The first passage of import in Daniel is in chapter 7. In this passage, Daniel describes two figures, the Ancient of Days and the “one like a son of man.” The chapter

¹⁶⁰ Use of mythic material does not necessitate that the myth be the same; the author of Daniel is not rewriting other myths, rather he is making use of their imagery to create his own apocalyptic masterpiece. This use of mythic elements from other religions does not even imply a conscious use of the traditions, but rather that the author, exposed to an alternate tradition shaped his vision on a similar outline. He used the raw materials of Babylonian, Canaanite, and Ugaritic myth to construct his own images, framing it wholly within the context of Yahwism (John J. Collins and Peter Flint, ed, *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, Volume 1 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 13, 87; Gardener, 245-52.

¹⁶¹ Collins and Flint, 85.

¹⁶² Daniel 2:47, NRSV; Daniel 6:26-27, NRSV; Collins and Flint, 13; Montgomery, 81-82.

¹⁶³ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 116; Reiterer, Nicklas, & Schöpflin, 116.

¹⁶⁴ John J. Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees with an Excursus on the Apocalyptic Genre* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1989), 5.

begins with beasts arising from the sea, then the Ancient of Days appears with his heavenly court. The beasts are destroyed and dominion is given to the “one like a son of man.” The scene inspires terror, splendor, and awe.¹⁶⁵ The passages describing the Ancient of Days and the “one like a son of man” are given below.

⁹תַּזְנָה הַיּוֹת

עַד דִּי כְרִסְוֹן רָמְיוּ וְעֵתִיק יוֹמִין יִתֵּב
 לְבוּשָׁהּ כְּתֹלַג חֲזָר וּשְׁעָר רֵאשָׁה כְּעֶמֶר נָקֵא
 פְּרִסְיָה שְׂבִיבִין דִּי־נֹר גְּלִגְלוּהִי נֹר דְּלֶק:
¹⁰נְהָר דִּי־נֹר נִגְד וְנִפְל מִן־קַדְמוּהִי
 אֵלֶּה אֵלְפִים אֵלְפִין לְשִׁמְשׁוּנָה וְרָבֹו רָבֹוּן רַבְּבוּ קַדְמוּהִי יְקוּמִין
 דִּיגָא יִתֵּב וְסַפְרִין פְּתִיחוּ:

¹³תַּזְנָה הַיּוֹת בְּחֻזְנִי לִילֵיָא

וְאָרוּ עִם־עֲנַנֵי שְׁמַיָא כְּבָר אֲנָשׁ אֶתְנָה הַגָּה
 וְעַד־עֵתִיק יוֹמִיָא מְטָה וְקַדְמוּהִי הַקְרָבוּהִי:
¹⁴וְלֵה יִהְיֵב שְׁלִטֹן וְיִקְר וּמְלָכוּ
 וְכָל עַמְמַיָא אֲמַיָא וְלִשְׁנַיָא לֵה יִפְלְחוּן
 שְׁלִטְנָה שְׁלִטֹן עַלְמֵ דִי־לָא יַעֲדָה
 וּמְלָכוּתָהּ דִי־לָא תִתְחַבֵּל:

⁹And I was seeing: until thrones have been placed and the Ancient of Days has sat. His garment as snow is white and the hair of his head as pure wool, his throne was flames of fire its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰A river of fire flowed coming forth from before it. A thousand of thousands were ministering to him and a myriad of myriads were standing before him The court sat and the books were opened. ... ¹³and I was seeing in my visions of the night: and I saw with my eyes the heavens one like a son of man was coming and he reached up to the Ancient of Days and he was approaching before him. ¹⁴And to him was given dominion and honor and kingship and all the peoples and the nations and all tongues worshipped him his dominion is a perpetual dominion which will not pass away. And his kingdom which will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14).

The story presented in chapter 7 of Daniel shows marked similarities to a number of other Near Eastern stories, with some key differences. Canaanite, Babylonian and

¹⁶⁵ Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 76.

Hittite stories follow the same pattern: a god fights a being connected to the sea, on behalf of an assembly of gods, over which he is then given sovereignty.¹⁶⁶ However, no one of these stories maps onto every point of the Danielic story, indicating that the author was drawing from a number of sources, not just one of these mythic cycles. Before examining the Ancient of Days and the “one like a son of man,” there are a few points of difference from all stories that are worth noting. In Daniel, the kingdom is handed over after the beast is defeated to one who had no part in defeating the beast, in contrast to the other stories, where the conquerer is granted rule as a reward.¹⁶⁷ Since the Ancient of Days gives the kingdom to the “one like a son of man” for no stated reason, he appears as a king bestowing a gift on his favored servant. This emphasizes his sovereignty.¹⁶⁸ In addition to taking on the champions role, the Ancient of Days is also the head of the divine assembly and the one who offers a solution to the problem, thus taking on roles typically taken by three separate gods.¹⁶⁹

There are several points of congruency between the Near Eastern deities and the Danielic figures. The title “Ancient of Days would remind readers of the aged Canaanite god El.¹⁷⁰ El's title was “father of years,” and he, like the Ancient of Days, had white hair. El also presides over the heavenly council and renders his judgements as a final authority, as the Ancient of Days presides over the myriads. El is also known as the father of gods and men, including Baal. As Baal is subordinate to El, so the “one like a son of man” is

¹⁶⁶ G. R. Beasley-Murray, “The Interpretation of Daniel 7,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (Vol 45, No. 1, 1983), 46.

¹⁶⁷ Collins and Flint, 70-71.

¹⁶⁸ Collins and Flint, 80-82.

¹⁶⁹ Collins and Flint, 86.

¹⁷⁰ Hammer, 77.

subordinate to the Ancient of Days. El confers kingship on his son Baal, just as the Ancient of Days confers kingship on the “one like a son of man.”¹⁷¹ Similarly, the Ancient of Days would be comparable to Anshar, who is the Babylonian supreme god. However, confusingly, the fire coming from the throne is reminiscent instead of Marduk's fire aspect, and the “one like a son of man” is more similar to Marduk.¹⁷² Both Anshar and Marduk, as well as the aforementioned Baal, are shown riding upon the storm, as does God elsewhere in the Hebrew bible.¹⁷³ Although “Son of Man” would be an inappropriate title for any gods of Mesopotamia, the fact that Nintura in the Babylonian myth is the son of Anshar could draw a small point of comparison.¹⁷⁴

The image of the Ancient of Day's throne hearkens back to Ezekiel's description in the first chapter of Ezekiel and the heavenly judgement in chapter 4 of Daniel. The court room is similar to both the Sanhedrin and the Persian court, but since there are thousands present, this must be the heavenly court, described as having thousands elsewhere in the Hebrew bible.¹⁷⁵ The calm ordered image of God presents a contrast to the chaos of the sea. The title “Ancient of Days” is related to the phrase “end of days” found in Daniel 2:28, and the ancient sound of this title contrasts with new or manmade gods, such as the gods of the Greeks. The white robe and hair indicates his age – as with depictions of Zeus in Hellenistic art – purity, and majesty. Finally, the river of fire

¹⁷¹ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Edward Brothers, Inc., 1977), 100-01.

¹⁷² Anne E. Gardener, “Daniel 7,2-14: Another Look at its Mythic Pattern,” *Biblia* 82, no. 2 (2001): 248-50.

¹⁷³ Beasley-Murray, “The Interpretation of Daniel 7,” 46; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 100; Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 77; Anne E. Gardener, 251.

¹⁷⁴ Collins and Flint, 81.

¹⁷⁵ Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:18

coming from the throne shows divine energy and is often connected with the throne of God.¹⁷⁶ The books being opened also show this figure to be the divine judge.¹⁷⁷ This figure can only be God, given his supremacy and similarities to the Ezekiel vision.

Since the Ancient of Days is God, the “one like a son of man” must be some other entity, even though the one riding on clouds is God elsewhere in the Hebrew bible.¹⁷⁸ These clouds connect the “one like a son of man” with the sky, contrasting to the creatures of both water and earth, giving him a divine identification. Despite this divinity, he is clearly subordinate to the Ancient of Days, since the Ancient of Days bestows the kingdom on him.¹⁷⁹ The use of the term “son of man” contrasts the human form with the animal form of the beasts from the sea.¹⁸⁰ One commonly held view is that this figure is the heavenly representation of Israel, shown later in Daniel to be the angel Michael.¹⁸¹ If the “one like a son of man” is Michael, it is the only place in the Hebrew bible where the coming kingdom is not ruled by a messianic figure.¹⁸² Therefore, the “one like a son of man” may refer to a messianic figure, however, there is no other messianic imagery elsewhere in Daniel. He may also be the ideal man or humanity, able to justly rule over the earth, as commanded in Genesis 1:28, with God's authority, or he may instead be an

¹⁷⁶ Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26; 10:1.

¹⁷⁷ Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 76; Collins and Flint, 97; Hammer, 77; Montgomery, 296-99.

¹⁷⁸ Beasley-Murray, 55; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 81; Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 77.

¹⁷⁹ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 100; Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 303.

¹⁸⁰ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 141-42.

¹⁸¹ Daniel Boyarin, “Daniel 7, Intertextuality, and the History of Israel’s Cult,” *Harvard Theological Review* 105, no. 2 (2012): 153; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 124; Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 78-79; Hammer, 77-79.

¹⁸² Collins and Flint, 82.

angelic being, or the man clothed in linen of chapter 10.¹⁸³ It seems likely that Daniel intentionally left this figure enigmatic, since he does not provide clarification while he does identify other figures, such as Gabriel.¹⁸⁴

A Man Dressed in Linen

In chapter 10, an angelic man arrives to describe a heavenly battle to Daniel, showing the heavenly background to human affairs. This ambiguous figure is described in some detail both before and after he reports his vision.

וַאֲשָׁא אֶת־עֵינַי וְאָרָא וְהִנֵּה אִישׁ־אֶתָּד לְבוּשׁ בְּדִים וּמְתַנְּיו חֲגָרִים בְּכֶתֶם אוּפָז: וַיִּגְוֶיתוּ
 כְּתָרְשִׁישׁ וּפְנִיּו כְּמֵרָאָה בְּרַק וְעֵינָיו כְּלַפִּידֵי אֵשׁ וְזַרְעֹתָיו וּמְרַגְלָתָיו כְּעֵין נְחֹשֶׁת קָלֵל וְקוֹל
 דְּבָרָיו כְּקוֹל הַמּוֹן:

...
 וַיִּרְאֵיתִי אֲנִי דְנִיָּאל וְהִנֵּה שְׁנַיִם אַחֲרָיִם עֹמְדִים אֶתָּד הַנֵּה לְשֹׁפֶת הַיָּאָר וְאֶתָּד הַנֵּה לְשֹׁפֶת הַיָּאָר:
 וַיֹּאמֶר לְאִישׁ לְבוּשׁ הַבְּדִים אֲשֶׁר מִמַּעַל לְמִימֵי הַיָּאָר עַד־מַתִּי קֶץ הַפְּלָאוֹת: וַאֲשַׁמְעֵ אֶת־הָאִישׁ
 לְבוּשׁ הַבְּדִים אֲשֶׁר מִמַּעַל לְמִימֵי הַיָּאָר וַיָּרֶם יְמִינוֹ וּשְׂמָאלוֹ אֶל־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּשָּׁבַע בְּחַי הָעוֹלָם כִּי
 לְמוֹעֵד מוֹעֲדִים וְחֻצֵי וּכְכֹלוֹת נַפְץ יִדְעִם־קֹדֶשׁ תִּכְלֶינָה כָּל־אֲלֹהִים:

⁵And I lifted my eyes and I looked and behold one man clothed in linen, and his loins were girded with gold of Uphaz. ⁶And his body was like yellow jasper, and his face like an appearance of lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire, and his arms and legs like a gleam of burnished copper. And the sound of his word was like the sound of the crowd.

...
⁵And I, Daniel, looked and, behold, two others were standing. One of them at the edge of the river and one of them at the other edge of the river. ⁶And he said to the man wearing the white linen who was upon the waters of the river, “How long until the end of these wonders?” ⁷And I heard the man dressed in linen who was upon the waters of the river, and he raised his right hand and his left hand to the heavens and he swore by the life of the world, “For a time, times, and a half, and when the destruction of the power of the holy people is ended, all these things will be complete (Daniel 10:5-6; 12:5-7).”

¹⁸³ Boyarin, 139; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 124; Hammer, 77-79.

¹⁸⁴ Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 79.

The angelic man is often believed to be Gabriel, based on the appearances of Gabriel earlier in the book.¹⁸⁵ But, there is no physical description given of Gabriel earlier, when he is first introduced, so this figure, since he is described, may be intended as a different individual. There may be some significance to Daniel's refusal to identify the being who is speaking and interacting with him, simply describing him “appearing like a man.”¹⁸⁶ But this text seems intentionally vague as to the intended identity of the man, perhaps to intentionally provoke speculation. Alternatively, the author of Daniel does not consider the identity of this man to be important.

One current throughout the interaction with the man is that he is overpowering; the man's speech strikes Daniel dumb, but his touch restores Daniel's speech.¹⁸⁷ The reluctance to provide details about the body of the man, even if details are given about the face, hands, and feet, mirrors the scarcity of details about the body of God in theophanies, probably as a result of reverence.¹⁸⁸ Whether this means the man is to be identified as God or merely a powerful being to whom reverence is due as an agent of God is not certain. The man is described as wearing linen, the traditional clothing of priests and the clothing of the angelic man mentioned in Ezekiel.¹⁸⁹ The fact that the voice sounds like a multitude may mean that to Daniel's unprepared ears, the words of the angelic being sound garbled.¹⁹⁰ The act of touching the lips finds parallels in other prophetic stories, notably Isaiah 6. This action gives to Daniel the power of

¹⁸⁵ Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 99.

¹⁸⁶ Montgomery, 414.

¹⁸⁷ Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 99; Montgomery, 414.

¹⁸⁸ Christopher Rowland, “A Man Clothed in Linen: Daniel 10.6ff. And Jewish Angelology,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 7, no. 24 (1985): 105.

¹⁸⁹ Leviticus 6:10; Ezekiel 9:2-11; 10:2-7

¹⁹⁰ Montgomery, 409.

understanding and relaying the message given him.¹⁹¹

The man then describes a battle between the prince Michael and the prince of Persia. The princes are a variation on the idea that every nation has its own god; now these gods are reinterpreted as patron angels to the nations. Michael is the prince for the Jewish people,¹⁹² and the princes for the other peoples are not given specific names. This mirrors the Persian empire. Just as the Persian emperor rules over all the satraps and their provinces, so God rules over all the angels and their nations. As the angels are fighting amongst themselves, the satraps would at times fight amongst themselves, and when this would get out of hand, the emperor or his personal vizier would intervene. Daniel 10-12 describes how the squabble amongst the angels will be resolved. The man describing the vision to Daniel may be intended as God's personal vizier stepping in to resolve the angelic dispute by helping Michael.¹⁹³

In chapter 12, the man appears as one of the Hellenistic river gods, with the river flowing from under him. This image is also similar to the image of the ideal temple on Mount Zion as found in Isaiah. The word יָאֵר (יָאֵר) most often is used of the Nile, but is also found in Isaiah 33:21 in describing the restored Jerusalem. So this being has association with priests and the temple, as well as with the image of God in the temple. The two others found in Daniel 12 are of a similar type to the man in linen, angelic beings, but they are clearly subordinate to him. Focus is given to the spatial relationship of the three figures, which in turn draws attention to the hierarchical arrangement of the

¹⁹¹ Hammer, 102.

¹⁹² Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees*, 99-101.

¹⁹³ Montgomery, 415.

three.¹⁹⁴ Their presence may also simply be so that there are enough witnesses present to make the oath valid.¹⁹⁵ The presence of these two gives authority to the man in linen by their arrangement around him, as well as by their function as questioners and witnesses.

Conclusion and Summary

In Daniel, we see the image of God presented as an ancient, fatherlike figure, who is greater than all newer, manmade gods. He is the judge who will hand over the kingdom to “one like a son of man.” This figure rules on behalf of Israel, either as the divine representation of the people Israel, that is Michael, or as a messiah. He is divine and fit for rule, unlike the beasts coming from the sea. Additionally, God has an angel which he sends out, this angel acts as a priest, a mediator between God and the seer. This gives us the additional idea of God as a mighty king sending his emissaries to his people.

¹⁹⁴ Janelle Peters, “Hellenistic Imagery and Iconography in Daniel 12:5-13,” *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 19, no. 2 (2009): 128-31.

¹⁹⁵ Montgomery, 475.

Chapter II – The Revelation of John

Conclusions and Summary

While the descriptions in the prophets discussed in the previous chapter focus on the same God – the God of Israel – they each emphasize different aspects of God. Isaiah shows his audience an absolute ruler who is set apart from his creation by his holiness. Ezekiel presents God as a being who exists on the contradiction of simultaneous transcendence and immanence. Daniel describes a complex God who is a father, judge, and king. He also explains the contradiction present in Ezekiel by showing God using intermediaries such as the “one like a son of man” and the man dressed in linen.

In this chapter, I will give an analysis of the theophanic, angelophanic, and christophanic visions found in Revelation to explore how these three different pictures of God are combined to present a new understanding of the image of God and to explain the hierarchical relationship between Christ and God. Before this, however, I will present an overview of angels in the New Testament, a discussion of the use of the Hebrew bible in the New Testament, and a brief introduction to the book of Revelation.

Introduction to the New Testament and Revelation

*Development of Angels in the New Testament*¹⁹⁶

Ideas about angels evolved from the Hebrew Bible to the 1st century CE, during which time the New Testament was written. Most texts of 1st century CE did not use

¹⁹⁶ Although ideas of God also went through some development between the writing of the Hebrew bible and the writing of the New Testament, I will not go into the general developments. Since Revelation is very much focused on the nature of God, this chapter will explore in large part the specific developments of the idea of God in Revelation.

either *mal'āḳ* or *angelos* to mean anything other than the supernatural servants of God, and the term is used broadly as servants of God, not just messengers.¹⁹⁷ In Revelation, some angels worship before the throne. Other angels fulfill the role of messengers to earth. Some are stationed in a spot of trust, often restraining elemental forces or presiding over an aspect of nature.¹⁹⁸ The one who is seated on the throne – that is God – acts on earth only by means of angelic mediators.¹⁹⁹ The Danielic patron angels of nations developed into individual guardian angels, an idea present in both Jewish and Christian texts of the 1st century CE.²⁰⁰ In Revelation, these appear as the guardian angels for the seven churches, which are mentioned in the opening vision in chapter one.²⁰¹ The angels are clearly distinguished from God in Revelation. Although they are the instruments by which the revelation is revealed, they are not its source. They at times have some characteristics of God, but only because they are speaking on behalf of God and presenting his message, as in the Hebrew bible. When John tries to worship the angel, the angel discourages him immediately, reinforcing the distinction between God and angel.²⁰²

Although the Angel of Yahweh is not directly mentioned in Revelation – nor anywhere else in the New Testament²⁰³ – there are some important developments in

¹⁹⁷ von Heijne, 12-13.

¹⁹⁸ Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text With Notes and Indices* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1911), clxix.

¹⁹⁹ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 46.

²⁰⁰ Reiterer, Nicklas, & Schöpflin, 423-29.

²⁰¹ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1992), 68-69.

²⁰² Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9; Bauckham, 59; Farrer, 66.

²⁰³ von Heijne, 139.

beliefs regarding the Angel of Yahweh in the first centuries BCE and CE.

Contemporaneous non-canonical texts, notably the pseudepigrapha and Qumran Documents, generally show the Angel of Yahweh as distinct from God.²⁰⁴ Philo, in *Question and Answers on Genesis* and *Who is the Heir of Divine Things*, also presents Angel of Yahweh as the *logos* (λόγος) “word” or Yahweh. This *logos* is understood as an emanation from God, perhaps comparable with the *kəbôd*. However, while Philo attempts to create a distinction, many of the same ambiguities found in the Hebrew texts still remain. Josephus on the other hand, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, wherein he retells many of the stories from the Hebrew bible, interprets the Angel of Yahweh as a messenger only, and simply removes or rewrites passages that are ambiguous in the Hebrew bible.²⁰⁵ The Angel of Yahweh is viewed as a distinct being, but the nature and extent of that separation is not agreed upon.

Hebrew Bible Use in the New Testament

The Hebrew bible is the primary text underlying the theology of the New Testament. The New Testament authors used the Hebrew bible to teach and defend their beliefs and claims, often by looking for the fulfillment of select Hebrew prophecies.²⁰⁶ There was also a view among New Testament authors, especially Paul, that Hebrew scriptures could not be understood until the New Testament events and writings made it

²⁰⁴ von Heijne, 190.

²⁰⁵ von Heijne, 201-04, 232, 249.

²⁰⁶ Barnabas Lindars, "The Place of the Old Testament in the Formation of New Testament Theology: Prolegomena," *New Testament Studies* 23, no. 01 (1976): 60-64.

clear.²⁰⁷ As a result of these two views, the Hebrew bible was used in a multitude of ways, sometimes to provide an overall structural framework, and other times to bolster an argument. Even where the use of quotation may differ from the original understanding, it appears in line with other first century Jewish methods of interpretation.²⁰⁸

Here are outlined a few of these methods of interpretation, in no specific order. One of is to adduce the passage literally, but in a new context. This is evident especially in I Corinthians 10:1-13 and Romans 12:19-20. The passages quoted here are taken at face value without any further explanation or interpretation. A second method is the *Pesher* method, first known from the dead sea scrolls, whereby a verse is put into a new context and applied to a contemporary situation. This method was later used by New Testament writers, such as is found in the fulfillment citations in Matthew or the passion narratives. In the passion narrative of Matthew, found in chapters 26-27, words and phrases from Psalm 22 are used and given a new meaning by relating them to the events at the crucifixion of Jesus. A third way the text is used is typological. This means that a person, institution, office, event, action, or thing from the Hebrew bible is applied to the New Testament equivalent. For the reference to be considered a typology, there must be some real, non arbitrary point of similarity. So, the church is spoken of typologically as the eschatological Israel, since they are understood as the community of faith at two different historical moments.²⁰⁹ An allegorical method is a fourth method of interpretation

²⁰⁷ Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:6, 11; II Corinthians 3:14-16; Lindars, 64.

²⁰⁸ Steve Moyise, "Scripture in the New Testament: Literary and Theological Perspectives," *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 2 (2008): 306, 324.

²⁰⁹ Piotr Łabuda, "Typological Usage of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *The Person and the Challenges. The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John Paul II* 1, no. 2 (2011): 176, 180; Jack Weir, "Analogous Fulfillment: the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 9, no. 1 (1982): 67-68.

used, where a text was thought to point to some higher meaning. This is more subjective and arbitrary than a typology and is not common in either the New Testament or Rabbinic writings, although it does occasionally occur, such as in Galatians 4:21-31. In this instance, Paul says those under the “Old Covenant” are slaves like Hagar and her descendent, and those under the “New Covenant” are free like Sarah and her descendants. When allegory is used in the New Testament, it is for emphasis and illustration rather than the formation of theology.²¹⁰ A fifth method method of interpretation used at this time although not specifically attested in the New Testament is the Targum, a paraphrase of the original text into the vernacular.²¹¹

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

Before examining the image of God in Revelation, some information about about the book will be helpful. The author of Revelation was likely exactly who he claimed to be, a man named John who was known to the seven churches to which he was writing.²¹² He considered himself a prophet, and he was influenced by the classical prophets of Israel – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others – and was simultaneously grounded in Christian prophetic tradition.²¹³ He was also likely a Jew from Palestine, and his Greek shows definite influence from Hebrew or Aramaic. Despite this unorthodox style of Greek, John shows great skill with language and writes with great depth, leading some to

²¹⁰ Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 34; Weir, 68-69.

²¹¹ Juel, 34-35.

²¹² Frederick Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 36-40.

²¹³ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 49; Murphy, 37.

speculate that his Hebraic style is intentional, as a matter of cultural pride.²¹⁴

Revelation was written in Asia Minor under Roman rule.²¹⁵ The area's theology was heavily influenced by Jewish, Hellenistic, and Pauline or post-Pauline traditions. While Revelation may have been influenced by Paul's writings, Paul shows no influence from Revelation, indicating that the theology of Revelation may not have been fully developed by the time of Paul's writings.²¹⁶ Revelation was written shortly after the passing of the first generation of leaders in the church, notably the apostles. With these figures no longer guiding the church, questions regarding authority within the church began to arise.²¹⁷

As a book of prophecy, Revelation makes use of Hebrew prophetic and apocalyptic traditions. He reads his experiences through the lens of the Hebrew scriptures, and thus interprets the world in those terms; everything he writes must be understood this framework.²¹⁸ He does not quote from the scriptures nor is he simply interpreting the classical prophets, rather he takes the themes and images of previous prophets and combines them in new ways to create a fresh meaning. In this way he uses

²¹⁴ G.B. Caird, *A Commentary on The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 5; Murphy, 42; Yarbrow Collins, 50.

²¹⁵ The gospel was most likely written under the reign of Titus or Trajan, although Iraneus claims it was written in the time of Domitian. Starting during the reign of Nero Christians faced sporadic persecution that was limited in scope. Some of this was related to the Roman Imperial Cult, against which John reacts strongly. Much of the imagery sets John's claims about God against claims that Rome had made about itself, whether political or religious. Even where this comparison to Rome is not at the forefront, it is in the background of all the visions. Additionally, regardless of the actual level of persecution, there is a focus on martyrdom that pervades the book (Caird 1-9; Farrer 32-37; Murphy 1-7).

²¹⁶ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgement* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 151; David Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 12.

²¹⁷ Howard Clark Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 5th ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993), 310.

²¹⁸ Murphy, 28.

Jewish imagery to express his ideas about God, the church, and the world.²¹⁹ When John makes use of an image in this way, he is certainly conscious of the previous use and implications of that image, but this does not mean that he is familiar with every possible historical antecedent of a particular image. That is, if he is using the imagery of Daniel, he will be aware of the meanings of those images as they are used in Daniel, but not necessarily of the earlier Canaanite or Babylonian images from which Daniel is based.²²⁰

As a result of this, descriptions in Revelation should not be decoded piece by piece. The pieces of the image instead create echoes of ideas within the mind of the reader, who at that time would have been familiar with the imagery. Each piece should be understood only as a part of the whole by the associations it creates.²²¹ The closest modern parallel to the apocalyptic mode of presentation is political cartoons. The pictures don't have a quick, easy translation, but instead build a string of ideas in the viewer of the cartoon, the sum of which is greater than the parts. As a result, contradictory pictures in Revelation shouldn't be harmonized together, but rather the ideas behind the images should be understood and related to each other. The purpose of multiple, possibly contradictory, images is to “overwhelm the imagination” with a flood of ideas that go beyond a physical description.²²²

Throughout the book of Revelation, there are many symbols that are reused with the same meaning, especially numbers. For example, seven is taken as a number of completeness. This is due to the seven day creation story and the seven day week. Seven

²¹⁹ Farrer, 30; Fiorenza, 135; Murphy, 4.

²²⁰ Farrer, 54.

²²¹ Beale, 57-58; Caird, 25.

²²² Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 16.

colors in the rainbow also add to the idea of completeness. This is not just a Jewish concept – on the coins of Hadrian and Commodus seven stars are used to show dominion over the whole world. Four is similarly a number of completeness, relating to the four cardinal directions. Twelve also is a number of completeness, hearkening back to the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles, twelve months of a year, and two sets of twelve hours in a day.²²³

This chapter focuses on the theophanies, angelophanies, and christophanies present in Revelation. These visions occur as preludes or interludes to the primary action, showing God as the primary actor and cause of everything in the book.²²⁴ God himself is presented in Revelation as holy, righteous, and true. He is also described with the words Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the being and the was and the coming, the all-powerful (Revelation 1:8).” This presents god as the beginning and end of history as well as ruler of everything in between.²²⁵ God's sovereignty is stressed despite, and indeed directly opposing, Rome's claims to ultimate power and authority.²²⁶

Christ is described in Revelation as the great high priest and lamb of God, sacrificing himself to redeem the people of God. As the pre-existent and divine son of God, he is exalted to the very throne of God. The book stresses that Jesus,²²⁷ as a

²²³ Beale, 58-59.

²²⁴ Beale, 131.

²²⁵ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 59; R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, Volume I* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), cx.

²²⁶ Murphy, 2.

²²⁷ Throughout this paper I will use the name “Jesus” to refer to the physical, historical human and the stories about him presented in the Gospels. All other places I will use the term “Christ.”

historical person, died and then rose from the dead. He is the root of David and the lion of Judah.²²⁸ As such, he is the divine messianic warrior and king. As king he has authority over all the nations and kings of earth. He also is a judge alongside God. Finally, he is the revealer of the entire vision, as stated in the opening verse: Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”²²⁹

Visions in Revelation

“One Like a Son of Man”

The first passage to consider in Revelation is at the beginning of the book. John turns to see a figure like a son of man, and then he describes that figure. Like the vision in Isaiah 6, discussed earlier, this passage provides both John's commission to write the book and the authority on which he bases his words. The pattern used in this section follows the Old Testament and Apocalyptic pattern of initial vision, reaction, interpretation.²³⁰

¹²καὶ ἐπιστρέψας εἶδον ἑπτὰ λυχνίας χρυσαῖς, ¹³καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν λυχνιῶν ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ περιεζωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσαῖν· ¹⁴ἡ δὲ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ αἱ τρίχες λευκαὶ ὡς ἔριον λευκόν, ὡς χιών, καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόξ πυρός, ¹⁵καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ, ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης, καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν, ¹⁶καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἀστέρας ἑπτὰ, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ῥομφαία δίστομος ὁξεῖα ἐκπορευομένη, καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ.

²²⁸ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, cx-cxiv; Fiorenza, 196; Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 197.

²²⁹ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 213; Yarbrow Collins, 143.

²³⁰ Beale, 205.

¹²and turning I saw seven golden lamps, ¹³and in the midst of the lamps one like a son of a man, wearing a long robe and wrapped around his chest was a golden belt, ¹⁴and his head and the hair was white like wool is white, like snow, and his eyes were like a torch of fire, ¹⁵and his feet were like burnished bronze, as if refined in an oven, and his voice was like the sound of many waters, ¹⁶and holding in his right hand seven stars, and from his mouth a sharp double edged sword proceeding, and his face was like the sun shines in its appearance (Revelation 1:12-16).

The primary allusions to Hebrew writings are to Daniel 10, with some interpolation of Daniel 7 and other texts,²³¹ adding to the angelic imagery attributes of God, especially from the vision of the Ancient of Days.²³² In this passage, John uses the Danielic phrase “one like a son of man” rather than the synoptic title “Son of Man.”²³³ The phrase “one like a son of man” is connected with victory and glory in Daniel.²³⁴

The voice that calls to John immediately preceding these verses is described as the voice of a trumpet, evocative of the voice of Yahweh at Mount Sinai²³⁵ as well as other instances when a trumpet is associated with God's presence.²³⁶ This is either the voice of the “one like a son of man,” or the voice of an angel introducing the “one like a son of man.”²³⁷ This phrase could be describing the voice acting as a summons, rather than that it actually sounded like a trumpet. In the same way many of the remaining signs can be

²³¹ Beale, 208.

²³² Murphy, 92.

²³³ Farrer suggests that John may have had access to some synoptic material, particularly some form of the sermon present in Mark 13, based on various parallels within the material (31). John may have had access to a more complete written account of the gospel as well; however, there is not enough evidence to prove this so any connection is speculation. He may also have had access to some of the other writings of the New Testament such as the Epistles to the Thessalonians and the Romans, the First of St. Peter, and the one to the Hebrews. Again, the specifics regarding his written sources is speculation. Regardless of the specific written sources to which John had access, he clearly is familiar with the central story arch of the Gospels – also found in Paul's epistles, such as in I Corinthians 15:3-11 – whether in oral or written form (Caird 1-9; Farrer 30-32; Murphy 27-30).

²³⁴ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 66.

²³⁵ Exodus 19:16-19

²³⁶ Murphy, 87.

²³⁷ Beale, 203.

understood not as a physical description but as a functional description.²³⁸

The long robe finds parallels in Daniel 10:5 and even more directly in Ezekiel 9:2.²³⁹ It is ambiguous; it could be either a high priestly robe or a kingly robe, showing rank and authority.²⁴⁰ The robe associates him with the angels and divinity; this is also true of the gold belt, which goes with the robe as a single image.²⁴¹

The use of white hair sets him apart as a divine judge. Although many beings have white robes, no other being has white hair. This draws on the imagery of Daniel 7 where the Ancient of Days, acting as judge, has white hair.²⁴² Like the white hair, flaming eyes also point to his role as divine judge. They imply the ability to see, and so to correctly judge, all. The sword proceeding from his mouth also points to his role as a divine judge.²⁴³ This combines two images from Isaiah,²⁴⁴ showing the power of his words of judgement.²⁴⁵

While his eyes are ablaze with the fires of judgement, his feet are bronze that has been through fire. This suggests moral purity, as refinement by fire.²⁴⁶ John is presenting a figure who both judges with fire and is judged by fire.²⁴⁷ The bronze of the feet hearkens back to the Cherubim of Ezekiel, which have bronze feet, and the angel in

²³⁸ Farrer, 65.

²³⁹ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 27.

²⁴⁰ Beale, 209; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 66-67; Caird, 25.

²⁴¹ Murphy, 90.

²⁴² Caird, 25; Murphy, 90-91.

²⁴³ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 67; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 28-30; Murphy, 91.

²⁴⁴ Isaiah 11:4; 49:2

²⁴⁵ Beale, 211-12; Murphy, 92.

²⁴⁶ Beale, 209-10.

²⁴⁷ Farrer, 67.

Daniel with bronze feet. The bronze indicates immovability and firmness in his stance.²⁴⁸

The voice like many waters calls to mind God in Ezekiel.²⁴⁹ His shining face is symbolic of righteousness. The imagery of holding stars has significance in a world where astrology is well respected. The seven stars may be a reference to a depiction of the Roman Emperor Domitian, his wife, and his son holding seven stars, which represent the seven planets, implying that the emperors held dominion over the cosmos as gods.²⁵⁰ John replaces Domitian with this “one like a son of man.” That the stars are in the right hand means that they are wholly in his jurisdiction. The seven stars, many waters, and shining sun of this depiction relate the divine majesty to the elements of creation.²⁵¹

After this description is given, John faints with fear, but is quickly revived. He then receives an explanation of the vision by the man, who is shown to be the risen Christ.

¹⁷Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ¹⁸καὶ ὁ ζῶν— καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων— καὶ ἔχω τὰς κλεῖς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ᾄδου. ¹⁹Γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γίνεσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα. ²⁰τὸ μυστήριον τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀστέρων οὓς εἶδες ἐπὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς μου, καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ λυχνίας τὰς χρυσαῖς· οἱ ἑπτὰ ἀστέρες ἄγγελοι τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησιῶν εἰσὶν, καὶ αἱ λυχνίαι αἱ ἑπτὰ ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαι εἰσὶν.

¹⁷I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one— and I was dead and behold I am living to the eternity of eternities— I hold the keys of death and of Hades. ¹⁹Therefore write what you see and what is and what is about to happen after these things. ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars that you see upon my right hand, and the seven golden lamp stand: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and he lamps are the seven churches (Revelation 1:17-20).

²⁴⁸ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 67; Caird, 25; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 29; Murphy, 91-92.

²⁴⁹ Ezekiel 43:2; Daniel 10; Caird, 25.

²⁵⁰ Farrer, 67; also see footnote 215 regarding the Roman context of Revelation.

²⁵¹ Farrer, 67.

By calling himself “first and last,” he is identifying with Yahweh, who claims the same title in Isaiah. The phrase also calls to mind the words spoken by God only a few verses earlier naming himself “Alpha and Omega.”²⁵²

The cycle of living – dead – living, points to the story of Jesus' death and resurrection.²⁵³ The phrase, “lives to eternity of eternities,” is used to describe God in the remainder of the book, and the term “living one” is connected to term “living God,” a title found throughout the Old Testament.²⁵⁴ The “key of death and Hades” is either an object genitive, meaning more or less, “the key to death and Hades,” or a possessive genitive, “the key belonging to death and Hades.” Both of these may have been intended, showing authority over and possession of death and Hades.²⁵⁵

The stars and the lamp stands are here explained as the seven churches and the seven angels of the churches. The use of stars points to Daniel, where the stars are the wise who are resurrected to heavenly glory. Here they are used as the heavenly or angelic counterpart of the earthly churches, similar to the patron angels in Daniel. It is unlikely that this refers to human messengers, since *angelos* by this time refers almost exclusively to heavenly servants of God. The lamp stands represent the physical churches. By standing amidst the lamp stands he indicates his spiritual presence among his church.²⁵⁶

Overall, this vision shows that the “one like a son of man” is Christ, portrayed as eschatological heavenly priest, end-time ruler, and judge. He is placed in these positions

²⁵² Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Revelation 1:8; Beale, 213; Murphy, 93.

²⁵³ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 31.

²⁵⁴ Murphy, 93-94.

²⁵⁵ Beale, 214-15.

²⁵⁶ Beale, 210-11; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 66-69; Caird, 24-25; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 29-30; Murphy, 91.

by virtue of his resurrection, and his rule primarily over the church, which he guards and shelters in his hand.²⁵⁷ By using imagery of both God and angels, John elevates Christ above other angels.

The Throne and the Lamb

In chapters 4 and 5, John presents the heavenly throne room of God and the Lamb to his readers. This passage provides the impetus for the remainder of the book, serving as an introduction to the visions of the end times and statement of John's theology of God and Christ.²⁵⁸ This passage is based on the court of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7, as well as elements from Exodus 19, Isaiah 6, and Ezekiel 1.²⁵⁹ It shows two aspects of God: the creator and the redeemer.²⁶⁰ The imagery used here will set up a contrast between the throne of God and the throne of the Roman Emperor.²⁶¹ The atmosphere is one of peace and assurance; there is a surety of God's power and no temporal cessation of the adoration before his throne.²⁶²

The beginning of John's heavenly vision is the throne, placing God at the center of the vision.²⁶³ Here the throne and the temple are combined into one, setting the temple in heaven with God rather than as an earthly building.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ Beale, 206.

²⁵⁸ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 29; Friesen, 154.

²⁵⁹ Beale, 314-15, 367-69; Hanson, *Visionaries and Their Apocalypse*, 141.

²⁶⁰ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 108-09; Yarbrow Collins, 142.

²⁶¹ Beale, 334-35; Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana: and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 128.

²⁶² Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 102-03.

²⁶³ Beale, 320; Caird, 62.

²⁶⁴ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 111.

²καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος, ³καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ὅμοιος ὀράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ, καὶ ἴρις κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου ὅμοιος ὀράσει σμαραγδίνῳ ... ⁵καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί

²And behold a throne stood in heaven, and upon the throne was one sitting, ³and the one sitting was like the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and a rainbow was surrounding the throne like the appearance of emerald ... ⁵and from the throne lightings and sounds and thunders came forth (Revelation 4:2-5)

The description of God is nearly absent, with only a vague mention of lights and stones, and no anthropomorphic features whatsoever.²⁶⁵ This hearkens back to the prohibition of images of God.²⁶⁶

The throne symbolizes a ruler's seat of judgement. The precious stones described are indicators of the theophany and divine glory. The rainbow surrounding the throne calls to mind God's covenant with Noah, in which God shows both his judgement and his mercy. Together, these images point to a new creation. The stones mentioned are later the foundation of the New Jerusalem, and the rainbow reminds of the new start following the flood.²⁶⁷

The thunder and lighting emanating from the throne call to mind the theophany at Mount Sinai, where God gave the law through Moses.²⁶⁸ It also looks forward to the plagues which are soon to follow.²⁶⁹ It is also reminiscent of the storm clouds accompanying God in Ezekiel 1. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the storm cloud is used

²⁶⁵ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 113; Farrer, 88; Friesen, 169-70.

²⁶⁶ Caird, 290.

²⁶⁷ Beale, 320-21; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 113; Caird, 63; Murphy, 179.

²⁶⁸ Exodus 19; Caird, 68; Murphy, 182.

²⁶⁹ Beale, 326.

for both judgement and salvation.²⁷⁰

After showing God's character as merciful judge and transcendent king, John moves on to the throne room and its other occupants.

⁴καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνοι εἴκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους καθημένους περιβεβλημένους ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς. ⁶... καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ.

Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῶα γέμοντα ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπίσθεν· ⁸... καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα, ἐν καθ' ἐν αὐτῶν ἔχων ἀνά πτέρυγας ἕξ, κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν· καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες,

Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος

κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ,

ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

⁹καὶ ὅταν δώσουσιν τὰ ζῶα δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ εὐχαριστίαν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ¹⁰πεσοῦνται οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι ἐνώπιον τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου, καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, καὶ βαλοῦσιν τοὺς στεφάνους αὐτῶν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, λέγοντες,

¹¹Ἄξιός εἰ, ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν,

λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα,

καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.

⁴And around the throne were twenty four thrones, and upon the thrones twenty four elders were sitting clothed in white robes, and upon their heads were golden crowns. ⁶... and before the throne was something like a sea of glass, like crystal. And between the throne and those around the throne were four creatures filled with eyes before and behind ⁸... and the four creatures, each one of them having six wings, around and within and without filled with eyes; and not stopping, they continued day and night saying, "Holy, holy, holy lord God almighty, the was, the is, and the coming." ⁹And when the creatures give glory and honor and thanksgiving to the one sitting upon the throne, the one living to the eternity of eternities, ¹⁰the twenty four elders fall down before the one sitting upon the throne, and prostrate themselves to the one living to the eternity of eternities, and they throw their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, to have the glory and the honor and the power, for you created all, and through your will it exists and has been created (Revelation 4:4, 6, 8-13)."

²⁷⁰ I Samuel 2:10; Psalm 18; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 115.

The circular configuration places God at the center of the circles of the cosmos.²⁷¹ It is set up like a court of judgement, mirroring the Roman Imperial court.²⁷² Before the throne is something like a sea of glass. This large sea separates God from everything else. Later in Revelation – like in Daniel – the sea is also the chaos from which evils arise.²⁷³ It also is like the uncreated chaos over which the spirit of God hovers in Genesis 1, perhaps to set the stage for the new creation at the books end.²⁷⁴

Around the throne are twenty four elders. The number twenty four may have been used to suggest adding the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles together. As such, these elders may be the heavenly representation of God's people. These elders act as angelic interpreters of the apocalypse. When they later throw down their crowns before the throne, they are following the eastern practice of bowing before kings.²⁷⁵

Between the elders and the throne are four living creatures. The number four, related to the four winds, the four corners of the earth or the four quadrants of heaven, relates these creatures to the entire created order. They also are John's interpretation of the four creatures in Ezekiel and the Seraphim of Isaiah.²⁷⁶ They only have one face each instead of four, additionally they have six wings, as the Seraphim of Isaiah, rather than the four wings of Ezekiel. They do not bear the throne, and they are not accompanied by wheels. They sing praises, like the Seraphim, and they themselves are covered in eyes,

²⁷¹ Beale, 320.

²⁷² Farrer, 89; Murphy, 178-79.

²⁷³ Daniel 7:2-8; Revelation 13:1; Beale, 328; Caird, 65; Murphy, 183.

²⁷⁴ Genesis 1; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 117-18; Murphy, 183.

²⁷⁵ Beale, 322; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 114; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 129-33; Farrer, 89.

²⁷⁶ Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Beale, 328; Caird, 64; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 119-22; Farrer, 92; Murphy, 184.

rather than the wheels.²⁷⁷ The phrase “within and without” likely is meant relative to the circle they form around the throne; they look within towards God and they look without towards his creation, of which they are the chief representatives.²⁷⁸

In addition to these descriptions of the throne room, there are two refrains in worship of God, one sung by the elders, and one sung by the creatures. These refrains provide an explanation for the preceding vision of heaven. The creatures proclaim the essential nature of God, his holiness, power, and existence from beginning to end; the elders praise his glory, the things he created.²⁷⁹ The creatures compare God to the Roman rulers, placing God above the Roman emperors by praising him as worthy. The song of the creatures differs from that of the Seraphim in Isaiah. They do not sing of the earth as his glory, but of his rule over the cosmos and time claiming him as “almighty” and “who was and is and is to come.” The praise of the elders addresses God for his role in creation.²⁸⁰

Finally, the lamb appears in this vision. Since there is a scroll which no one can open, the lamb comes forth as the one worthy to open the scroll. This lamb is Christ, and this vision begins to show the relationship between Christ and God.

²καὶ εἶδον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν κηρύσσοντα ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· Τίς ἄξιός ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον καὶ λῦσαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ; ³καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ οὐδὲ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐδὲ ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό. ⁴καὶ ἐγὼ ἔκλαιον πολὺ ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἄξιός εὗρέθη ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό. ⁵καὶ εἷς ἐκ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων λέγει μοι· Μὴ κλαῖε· ἰδοὺ ἐνίκησεν ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ρίζα Δαβὶδ, ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ.

²⁷⁷ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 116-17; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 118-19.

²⁷⁸ Beale, 330; Farrer, 92.

²⁷⁹ Beale, 332; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 133-34.

²⁸⁰ Beale, 333-35; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 118; Murphy, 185-86.

⁶Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἄρνιον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, ἔχων κέρατα ἑπτὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτὰ, οἳ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀπεσταλμένοι εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν. ⁷καὶ ἦλθεν καὶ εἴληφεν ἐκ τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου. ⁸καὶ ὅτε ἔλαβεν τὸ βιβλίον, τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα καὶ οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἄρνιου ...

¹³καὶ πᾶν κτίσμα ὃ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς πάντα, ἤκουσα λέγοντας,

Τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἄρνιῳ
ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος
εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

¹⁴καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα ἔλεγον· Ἀμήν. καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν καὶ προσεκύνησαν.

²And I saw a mighty angel calling out in a great voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³And no one appeared in heaven nor upon the earth nor under the earth to open the scroll nor to see it. ⁴And I wept greatly that no one was found worthy to open the scroll nor to look at it. ⁵And one from the elders said to me, “Do not weep; behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David conquered, to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four creatures and in the midst of the elders a lamb standing as one slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the world. ⁷And he came and he took from the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne. ⁸And when he took the scroll, the four creatures and the twenty four elders fell before the lamb ... ¹³And all creatures in heaven and upon the earth and underneath the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, “To the one sitting upon the throne, and to the lamb is the praise and the honor and the glory and the might to the eternity of eternities (Revelation 5:2-8, 13).”

The image of the Lion of Judah and the root of David combine to show a messianic conqueror. The slain lamb is related to sacrifices. This can refer to the Passover, the Isaianic suffering servant, and the death of Jesus.²⁸¹ Yet, this slain lamb stands upright and able to approach the throne, symbolizing the resurrection of Jesus. The

²⁸¹ Exodus 12; Isaiah 52:2; Beale, 351; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 124; Caird, 73-74; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 141-43.

seven horns represent complete or absolute power and strength. The seven eyes indicate complete knowledge and omniscience.²⁸²

The lamb approaches the throne, as the Son of Man in Daniel, to receive authority from God. By taking the scroll he is made the master of the end times.²⁸³ Since the creatures and elders fall down to the lamb, it can be understood that he took his place upon the throne.²⁸⁴ The absence of a concrete description of the one on the throne creates a void that can now be filled by the visible lamb.²⁸⁵ The lamb is then worshipped together with the one sitting on the throne.²⁸⁶

In this vision Christ is shown at the side of God. He carried the seven spirits of God to mankind. He is a lamb who was sacrificed for humanity. He is the slain conqueror, and he takes up the authority of God to rule over the earth.²⁸⁷ The creatures worship him together with God, confirming their co-regency, since they are worthy of the same worship.

John places God in this throne room vision at the center of the universe. He is a being that is transcendent and cannot be seen or known. He is surrounded and worshipped by the elders and by creation in the form of the four creatures. He is lauded as the creator and sustainer of the world. He is presented as a ruler worthy of worship, unlike Rome and other temporal authorities. He is joined by the slain conqueror, the lamb

²⁸² Beale, 351-55; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 124; Caird, 75; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 141-43; Farrer, 95.

²⁸³ Beale, 356; Murphy, 176. Beginning in chapter 6, the seals on the scroll are broken to unleash plagues on the world ushering in the end times. Thus, whoever holds the scroll also holds the power to control the end times.

²⁸⁴ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 126.

²⁸⁵ Murphy, 178.

²⁸⁶ Farrer, 96; Friesen, 198-99.

²⁸⁷ Farrer, 45-46; Wengst, 129; Yarbrow Collins, 154.

who redeemed humanity. The lamb makes God visible and allows God to come into the world by means of the spirits, which are the eyes of the lamb. The lamb is then raised to kingship with God.

The Mighty Angel: Revelation 10

The most thorough description of a specific angel in Revelation comes in chapter 10, when an angel announces seven thunders, then gives John a scroll to swallow.

¹Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, καὶ ἡ ἴρις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός, ²καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ἠνεωγμένον. καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ... ⁵καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος, ὃν εἶδον ἐστῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἤρην τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ⁶καὶ ὤμοσεν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται·

¹And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud, and the rainbow upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. ²And he was holding in his hand an unopened little scroll. And he placed his right foot upon the sea, and the left on the earth ... ⁵And the angel, the one I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth, raised his right hand to heaven, ⁶and he swore on the one living to the eternity of of eternities, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth, and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be no more passage of time (Revelation 10:1-2, 5-6).

This mighty angel is modeled on the heavenly man of Daniel 10-12 as well as on the earlier Christophany in chapter 1, both discussed above. The specific elements here are commonly used in describing God or Christ. This indicates something special about either this angel or its message.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Beale, 522-24; Murphy, 250.

The cloud in which the figure is cloaked refers to storm god imagery, similar to that found in Ezekiel and Psalm 18, discussed above. It is also found in the description of the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 and earlier in Revelation. This is the divine cloud that helps to obscure God, who cannot be seen by mere mortals, so its placement on an angel is puzzling. Accompanying this cloud is a rainbow, another sign connected with God. It serves as a reminder of God's mercy in the story of Noah, as well as his faithfulness in keeping his promises. It also recalls the scene from the throne room in chapter 4, where the throne of God is surrounded by a rainbow.²⁸⁹

The face of the angel is like the sun, similar to the lightning-faced angel in Daniel 10 and the sun-faced Christ of Revelation 1. The feet of the angel are pillars of fire, creating an echo of the feet of burnished bronze found in Revelation 1 and the arms and legs of the angel in Daniel 10. The pillar of fire also refers to the story of God guiding his people in the wilderness and triumphing over pharaoh as a pillar of fire. Connected to God's guidance in the wilderness is the scroll offered, reminiscent of the law offered to Moses.²⁹⁰

Mirroring Daniel 12, the angel raises his hand and swears. As he does this his feet are on sea and earth, and his hand is in heaven. He then swears by the one who made heaven, earth, and sea.²⁹¹ His actions form a chiasmus with the creations, which centers the focus on the “one who lives to the eternity of eternities.” This creates the effect of all of creation surrounding God, as the court of a ruler surround the ruler.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Beale, 523-25; Caird, 125.; Austin Farrer, 123-24; Murphy, 251.

²⁹⁰ Beale, 524-25; Caird, 126; Farrer, 123-24; Murphy, 251.

²⁹¹ Farrer, 126.

²⁹² Murphy, 251.

Although this angel has many characteristics of God, it is called “another mighty angel,” not “God.”²⁹³ However, the message it bears is certainly from God. The power of the message sent by God communicates some of the divine imagery to the bearer of the message so that the message is understood to be God's message, and not the words of an angel.²⁹⁴ The angel seems to fill a function similar to the Angel of Yahweh found in the Hebrew bible, but whereas the Angel of Yahweh may be a manifestation of God, this angel is very clearly marked as messenger by leaving out any direct references to God.

The Warrior Messiah

At the end of Revelation, John shows his audience another picture of Christ, this time coming on a white horse to bring about the end times. This particular passage emphasizes Christ as divine judge and warrior.²⁹⁵

¹¹καὶ ἰδοὺ ἵππος λευκός, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πιστὸς καλούμενος καὶ ἀληθινός, καὶ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ. ¹²οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ φλόξ πυρός, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ διαδήματα πολλά, ἔχων ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ αὐτός, ¹³καὶ περιβεβλημένος ἱμάτιον βεβαμμένον αἵματι, καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ. ¹⁴καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐφ’ ἵπποις λευκοῖς, ἐνδεδυμένοι βύσσινον λευκὸν καθαρόν. ¹⁵καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ· καὶ αὐτὸς πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος. ¹⁶καὶ ἔχει ἐπὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν μηρὸν αὐτοῦ ὄνομα γεγραμμένον· Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων.

¹¹And behold, a white horse, and sitting upon it is the one called faithful and true, and he judges in righteousness and makes war. ¹²And his eyes are flames of fire, and upon his head are many crowns, having a name written which no one knows except him, ¹³and wearing a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word

²⁹³ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 170.

²⁹⁴ Farrer, 123.

²⁹⁵ Yarbrow Collins, 149; Beale, 950; Murphy, 386.

of God. ¹⁴And the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses, dressed in pure, white linen. ¹⁵And from his mouth came forth a sharp sword, in order that with it he may strike down the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod; and he tramples the wine press of the wine of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶And upon the robe and his thigh was written a name: King of kings and lord of lords (Revelation 19:11-16).

The white horse of Revelation 19 is connected with purity and the judging of what is pure.²⁹⁶ It also shows Christ as the victorious commander of heaven's armies. The armies of heaven are the angels. However, this army is atypically wearing fine clothing and white linen indicating that they are about to travel to a festive or ritual occasion; they are only witnesses of the battle and are already celebrating their victory. This rider is identified as “faithful and true,” an exegesis on the Hebrew word *'āmēn* (אָמֵן) which is applied to God at the end of Isaiah.²⁹⁷ However, since he has a physical manifestation, this figure should be identified with the “one like a son of man” from the book's opening vision, rather than with God, who is not elsewhere described physically in the book.²⁹⁸

The blood-dipped robe alludes strongly to Isaiah 63. The allusion serves to affirmation Christ's role as divine warrior. Isaiah 63 illustrates God's judgement against evil strongly, presenting a world in which justice has been disrupted and will be restored by God's coming.²⁹⁹ Since the reasons for going to war in this passage are vengeance and

²⁹⁶ G. K. Beale, 950

²⁹⁷ Isaiah 65:16.

²⁹⁸ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 279-81; Caird, 240.

²⁹⁹ Childs, 519; Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 233. In the passage, the nations that oppressed Israel are identified collectively as Edom, and God enacts vengeance upon them in order to redeem Israel. Doing vengeance was about righting a wrong and restoring balance rather than about excessive revenge as it connotes today. It was a contractual obligation necessary for people's protection; a kinsman, or redeemer, was expected to enact vengeance, thus the connection here between redemption and vengeance (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 248-51; Matthew J. Lynch, “Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b-63:6 in Isaiah's Zion Traditions,” *The Catholic Bible Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2008), 257).

redemption, the allusion can be taken to understand that these reasons are here intended as well.³⁰⁰ The blood itself could be his own, indicative of his status as lamb who was slain. It could be that of his enemies trodden in the winepress – another allusion to the Isaiah 63 passage. Either way, this red robe contrasts with the white robes of his followers, marking him out as unique.³⁰¹

Like the “one like a son of man,” eyes of flames of fire indicate his role as judge. Furthermore, they symbolize omniscience and vigilance over his people. The sword, like the eyes, indicates judgement while connecting this vision to the first chapter. The sword is presented alongside two other acts of judgement, the rod from his mouth and treading the winepress. In all of these he is the sole actor. Since Christ achieves victory with this sword, the author is here saying that Christ will conquer by means of his pronouncement alone.³⁰² Again, this relates to the Isaiah 63 poem, which shows God acting without a human agent.³⁰³

The diadems on Christ's head show him as the true king over earth and provide a contrast to the figures of the dragon and beast, who appear earlier in Revelation.³⁰⁴ The multitude of crowns also points to the vastness of Christ's rule compared with the relatively small number of diadems worn by either the dragon or the beast. Also upon his head is a name which is hidden to all but himself. This shows that he is under his own power and beholden to none.³⁰⁵ It also points to the transcendent nature of Christ. Despite

³⁰⁰ Beale, 957; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 280; Murphy, 388-89.

³⁰¹ Caird, 243-44; Murphy, 389.

³⁰² Caird, 245.

³⁰³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 248; Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 233-34.

³⁰⁴ Revelation 12-13

³⁰⁵ Beale, 952-55; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 279.

the descriptions of Christ, John is saying that there is a mystery beyond human understanding.³⁰⁶

Despite the earlier claim that he has a name known only to himself, John also tells his audience two different names for this warrior. The name “Word of God” points to Christ as the living embodiment of God's will; he does what the word of God says. This is similar to the Angel of Yahweh, referred to by Philo as the *logos* of God³⁰⁷ The title King of Kings and Lord of Lords points to his absolute sovereignty over the rulers of earth, in contrast to the claims of Rome.³⁰⁸

In this vision, John presents a conquerer who acts alone. He comes for vengeance and redemption. He is described in terms that point to his role as both judge and ruler. Finally he has many names, he has the name “faithful and true,” he is labeled the “Word of God,” and he has a hidden name, which no one knows except for himself.

Christ, the *Kabôd*, and the Angel of Yahweh

Christ is given many different descriptions throughout Revelation. He is presented as a lamb sitting on the throne of God and receiving a share of worship that is directed to God. He is also described with angelic terms, especially in the inaugural vision of the book. So there is a tension between the angelic appearance and the non-angelic actions, both in what he does and in what is done to him.³⁰⁹ Angelic descriptions combined with

³⁰⁶ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 279-80; Caird, 242; Murphy, 388.

³⁰⁷ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 280.

³⁰⁸ Murphy, 392.

³⁰⁹ Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 128, 147, 174; Gieschen, 247.

the attributes of God points to the Angel of Yahweh. There is a further similarity to the Angel of Yahweh: Christ is the messenger who brings the revelation to John on behalf of God.³¹⁰ This aligns with early Christian writings from outside the corpus of the New Testament about Christ as an angel. The extra-canonical descriptions are largely angelomorphic. Although Christ is not presented as an actual angel, he does have angelic attributes.³¹¹ This association with the Angel of Yahweh is further strengthened by the secret name mentioned in Revelation 19, which points back to the Angel of Yahweh in Exodus about whom God says: “my name is in its midst.”³¹²

Similar to both the *kəḇôd* and the Angel of Yahweh, Christ is presented in Revelation as a physical manifestation by means of which God can interact with his people.³¹³ There still remains a distinction between God as the spiritual and omnipotent one sitting on the throne and the physical manifestation of the *kəḇôd*, seen in the fact that in the throne room vision of chapters 4 and 5 God and the lamb are presented as two distinct beings, one transcendent and sitting on the throne, and one immanent and breaking the seals to interact with the world.³¹⁴ Even if John did not intend his readers to specifically identify Christ with the *kəḇôd* or the Angel of Yahweh, he clearly intends to place Christ in a similar class with both of these, occupying a space of ambiguity as a manifestation of God while distinct from God.

³¹⁰ Farrer, 66-67.

³¹¹ Carrell, 110.

³¹² Exodus 23:21; Carrell, 219; Gieschen, 253.

³¹³ Farrer, 66; Gieschen, 248.

³¹⁴ Farrer, 66.

Conclusion

In the first chapter, the discussion centers on the image of God presented in three Hebrew prophets. Isaiah presents a ruler over the cosmos and over history who is set apart by his holiness and purity. This holiness and purity of God is the dominant theme in the vision of Isaiah, presenting a transcendent God. Ezekiel shows a God who was immanent while retaining the holiness and purity of Isaiah's God. In doing this he made use of the *kəbôd* as a means of imminence, but he also reveals a future where God will live in his temple among his leaders. Daniel more firmly uses intermediaries between the transcendent judge and ruler, whether angels or the “one like a son of man.” The God of Daniel is a God who does not interact with the world directly but by means of angelic intermediaries. All three of these prophets grapple with the question of how a God who could not be seen or imaged can interact with his people.

In the second chapter, the discussion turns to the images of God and Christ in Revelation. God is shown in his throne room at the center of the cosmos. He is without form and is separated from his creation by a glassy sea. This God is transcendent like the God of Daniel. Christ is portrayed in the imagery of both God and angels – at times acting as a judge and ruler, and at times acting as an intermediary. By this mixing of attributes, Christ is shown as an intermediary between God and his creation.

If Christ were presented as an intermediary only, his status would be easy to define; he would be an angel. However, by adding the elements of God to the depictions of Christ, John makes Christ into something more than just another angel. He is a special intermediary, who sits on the throne of God and is worshipped as God. John reimagines

the *kəḥôd* and the Angel of Yahweh as Christ. For John, Christ is functioning as the means by which God can make his will known to people and the means by which God can be among his people. Ultimately, this is John's way of providing an answer to the question of how a transcendent God can interact with his people.

In this way, John maintains the transcendent God of Isaiah. God remains on his throne and although he is the primary mover of the events of the book, he always works through intermediaries. He explains the enigma of the God of Ezekiel. The *kəḥôd* in Ezekiel's vision is presented in Revelation as Christ, a being distinct from God. Because of this God can be completely transcendent, but is able to be among his people by means of his *kəḥôd*/Christ. Furthermore, by connecting Christ to the “one like a son of man” from Daniel, John aligns his depiction of Christ as the *kəḥôd* closely with the picture of God in Daniel.

John, the author of Revelation, stands firmly in the Hebrew prophetic tradition. He takes imagery from earlier traditions and recombines them in a new way to make a new statement. One of his goals in Revelation is to define the relationship between God and Christ, which he does by comparing Christ to the *kəḥôd* and the Angel of Yahweh. In doing this he is maintaining a distinction between Christ and God, but simultaneously making the claim that Christ is a manifestation of God that is able to interact with his people.

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