

CHAPTER FOUR

The Book Of Revelation And The Day Of Atonement

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Appendices particularly relevant to this chapter:

25. A. Farrer on the Day of Atonement and Dan. 8:14 in Revelation
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Summary of Chapter

Hebrews presented the Cross-Resurrection-Ascension event as the fulfilment of the Day of Atonement.

Revelation presents the Judgment-Advent event as the consummation of the Day of Atonement. The seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, and the seven last plagues abound in *Yom Kippur* imagery.

THE KINGDOM AND JUDGMENT IN FULFILLMENT (The Gospels) AND THE KINGDOM AND JUDGMENT IN CONSUMMATION (The Apocalypse)

The Apocalypse, as with all prior apocalyptic, has for its theme - judgment. But that theme is spelled out with the judgment of the Cross as its background. Everything in this book is related to Christ. Even evil is set forth as a parody of the things of our Lord. As for the kingdom to come, it is represented as but the consummation of the kingdom Jesus had already inaugurated by His life and death.

Judgment and consummation are correlates, and the full significance of Old Testament pictures of the kingdom can only be found in this closing book of the canonical scriptures. While the Old Testament ever fused the two advents as one, after the Christ event the two phases of the kingdom become distinct though not separate.

The events of the consummation are set forth in language reminiscent of words and phrases we find in the Gospels and the Epistles. The “it is done” of Rev. 16:17 echoes the “it is finished” of the Cross. “The former things are passed away,” declares Rev. 21:5, setting its seal to 2 Cor. 5:17, “old things are passed away.” “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5), and “there is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17) are similarly parallel. The “rivers of living water” spoken of by Christ become material in Rev. 22:1, and the light which knows no darkness (Jn. 8:12) also. See Rev. 22:5. **This relationship between fulfilment in the days of the first advent, and consummation with the second is vital for our understanding of the use made of the Day of Atonement in the Atonement.**

The wrath of God, which according to John and Paul, now rests on the unbelieving, becomes a climactic reality in the Apocalypse. Note the following:

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” (John 3:17, 36 NIV)

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. (Rom. 1:18 NIV)

“He, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.” (Rev. 14:10, 11 NIV)

I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues — last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. (Rev. 15:1 NIV)

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.” (Rev. 16:1 NIV)

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.” (Rev. 17:1 NIV)

Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her:
 death, mourning and famine.
 She will be consumed by fire,
 for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. (Rev. 18:8 NIV)
 “For true and just are his judgments.
 He has condemned the great prostitute,
 who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.
 He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (Rev. 19:2, 20, 21 NIV)

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14, 15 NIV)

John’s Gospel affirms a present judgment. “The hour is coming and now is ...” fits both judgment and resurrection. All are judged in the present by their attitude to Christ. The synoptics by the parables are saying the same. Jeremias in his classic on the parables, Dodd, and others have clearly perceived this.

Not only Christ’s words, but His deeds proclaimed the present judgment. His destruction of the fruitless fig-tree, His kingly entrance into Jerusalem, His cleansing of the temple — all speak of the final judgment.¹ W. Stahlin is quoted by Jeremias thus: “The overwhelming number of Jesus’ symbolic actions serve to proclaim the fulfilment of the eschata” (*Parables*, p. 228).

THE DANIEL 9:24-27 ATONEMENT PROPHECY

Fulfilled at the Cross

The key Old Testament book on the *eschaton* is Daniel from which Christ took His title as King and Judge — the “Son of Man,” and to understand the full implications of Christ’s words and acts about judgment, we must attend to the Old Testament prophecy which He was fulfilling. Seventh-day Adventists have always linked the books of Daniel and Revelation. There are excellent grounds for doing so, and some of the best do not appear on the surface. **During the last century many have seen that the Olivet discourse is both a *pesher* [commentary] on the consummation pictures in Daniel, and also the seed-plot of the final Apocalypse.** The repeated echoes of Judgment in Daniel were taken up by Jesus and then by the seer of Patmos. We recall the words of Karl Helm that “at least in its main features Jesus accepts the vision of the future of the world given by Daniel.”² In illustration of the truth of this, observe how our Lord based His second advent sermon on the eschatology of the Old Testament prophet.

Excurses on the Usage of Daniel by the Olivet Discourse

Markan passages compared with parallels in Daniel.

MARK 13	DANIEL
“... when these things are all to be accomplished?” v. 4.	“... all these things would be accomplished.” 12:7.
“... the end ...” vv. 7, 13	“... the time of the end.” 8:17; 9:26; 11:40; 12:4, 13
“... this must take place ...” v. 7.	“... what will be ...” 2:28
“... you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” v. 13.	“... they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days ... to refine and cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end. ...” 11:33, 35. “... your people shall be delivered ...” 12:1.
“... the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be ...” v. 14	“... the transgression that makes desolate ...” 8:13. “... upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate ...” 9:27. “... the abomination that makes desolate.” 11:31. “... the abomination that makes desolate ...” 12:11.
“... let him that readeth understand ...” v. 14.	Daniel uses the thought of understanding over a score of times. See particularly 8:15, 16, 17; 9:2, 22, 23; 10:1; 11:33; 12:8.
“... such tribulation as has not been from from the beginning of the creation which God created until now ...” v. 19	“And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation. ...” 12:1.
“... if the Lord had not shortened the days ...” v. 20	“Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people ...” 9:24.
“False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders ...” v. 22.	“He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers.” 11:37.
“... the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” V. 26.	“... behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man ... And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom. ...” 7:13.
“... these great buildings [the sanctuary].” v. 2.	“... then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful estate.” 8:14. “... shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” 9:26.
“And the gospel must first be published among the nations.” V. 10.	“... they that turn many to righteousness.” 12:3.
“... he shall gather his elect from the four winds.” V. 27.	“Many that sleep ... shall awake, some to everlasting life.” 12:2.

Consummated at the Coming

It is vital to our understanding of Old Testament apocalyptic to see that the prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27, which has usually been applied by us as a church to the first advent of Christ only, was applied by our Lord to His second coming. The above chart should make

that clear. In support, we cite scholars who have recognized the relationship.³ Others have seen that this New Testament enlargement of Dan. 9:24-27 is itself enlarged in the Apocalypse. Note the words of Milligan:

The Apocalypse is moulded by that great discourse of our Lord upon “the last things” which has been preserved for us in the first three gospels. The parallelism between the two is to a certain extent acknowledged by all inquirers, and is indeed in many respects so obvious that it can hardly escape the notice of even the ordinary reader. Let anyone compare, for example, the account of the opening of the sixth seal in Rev. 6:12-17 with the description of the end in Matt. 24:29, 30, and he will see that the one is almost a transcript of the other. Or let the three series of apocalyptic visions, — the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls, be compared with the other parts of the discourse, and it will be found that, speaking generally, they are filled with the same thoughts, — with wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, signs in sun and moon and stars, false teachers doing wonders and trying to deceive the very elect, the elect preserved, angels sent forth to gather them with the great sound of a trumpet, the victorious progress of the Gospel, the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, the final deliverance of the good, and the just judgment of the wicked. These things reveal in a way not to be mistaken a very intimate relation between the last prophecy of Christ and the Revelation of St. John.⁴

Thus Revelation is Dan. 9:24-27 re-interpreted and writ large for this era, especially the “atonement for iniquity” mentioned in verse 24.

SANCTUARY IMAGERY IN REVELATION

Are there new images in Revelation expressing the old theme of Judgment — images not prominent in Daniel and the Olivet discourse? Yes. While both Daniel and Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 revolve around the Sanctuary, they do not draw heavily upon details of the sanctuary ritual, but the opposite is true of Revelation. Both the daily ritual and the yearly are mirrored in the Apocalypse, and frequently in connection with judgment. Such scholars as P. Carrington, D.T. Niles, A. Farrer, and the author of the recent Anchor commentary on Revelation repeatedly stress this fact. **And as Sir Isaac Newton recognized centuries ago, it is the festal complex of the seventh month which is particularly prominent.**

THE LAMB AS JUDGE AND KING

Of course the chief sanctuary image in the Apocalypse is the Passover Lamb. Christ is represented thus twenty-eight times. The Passover represented both redemption and judgment, and so does the Lamb. Though the most prominent symbol of our Lord in this book, outside the Apocalypse the New Testament does not use the lamb symbol frequently. See John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:19; Acts 8:32; 1 Cor. 5:7. These latter passages use *amnos*, probably because the LXX uses it in Isa. 53:7, but it does not appear in Revelation. Nevertheless, the significance of the lamb motif remains the same, plus the additional apocalyptic stress on the lamb as Conqueror or Judge so well known to inter-testamental literature. Possibly the change to *arnion* is in order to indicate the addition. **The Lamb is now a Lamb who judges, and by His wrath eradicates sin and sinners.**

If the central role of Christ in John’s visions differs from that in his gospel, why is Christ set forth in sacrificial symbolism at all? The answer must embrace several facets of truth. All Jesus does subsequent to His sacrifice is done in view of that grand event, and is vitally connected thereto. Christ appears as Judge because Calvary has been despised. Secondly, all that Jesus does subsequent to His death is but the consummation of His prior achievement,

and is in no sense a real contrast. Calvary too was judgment. John 12:31. Thirdly, God would have us remember that Christ is still the same compassionate Son of Man. He who ministers in the heavens is our Saviour, and since we are now justified by His blood, “much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” Rom 5:9, 10. This transition from reconciliation to wrath is the identical transition represented by the passage from the festival of Passover to that of the Day of Atonement.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN REVELATION

The significant thing about the Day of Atonement allusions in Revelation is that they are in the context of judgment and the wrath of God, so far as the Apocalypse is concerned.

These allusions are found particularly in the account of the seventh seal just prior to the description of the blowing of the trumpets of judgment; the seventh trumpet; and in the introduction to the seven last plagues — all three settings having to do with the final eradication of evil by Christ’s closing ministry of judgment.

Then, last of all, the great Assize chapter (Rev. 20), and the picture of the New Jerusalem in chapter 21 as an enlarged Holy of holies, also draw upon the Day of Atonement. See 21:11 for a reference to the Shekinah in antitype.

A city shaped like a cube is difficult to conceive, but the point may be that it corresponds to the cube-shaped Holy of Holies in the temple. According to v. 22 there is to be no temple in the city. All the inhabitants have free access to God. Under the Jewish regime only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and that only once a year; but Christ has destroyed the veil of separation which kept men out and has opened a new and living way by which all are invited to approach. This is one of the main themes of Hebrews and it may be that a similar thought finds pictorial expression here.

The twelve jewels worn by the high priest alone are now the very foundation of the city. The city itself is as sacred as the Holy of Holies and all the inhabitants are ‘named the priests of the Lord’ (Isa. 61:6); cf. Rev. 1:6, 21. John Bunyan in his commentary on this chapter (*The New Jerusalem*) suggested that the paving of pure gold derived from the temple, whose floor was overlaid with gold (1 Kings 6:30).⁵

The allusions to the Day of Atonement in Revelation are not merely incidental but extended. For example, in Rev. 14:20, the expression “without the city” signifies the same as “without the camp” in Heb. 13:11, and like it, points to the Day of Atonement. But this reference belongs to a lengthy chain of symbols about the judgments of God at the last time. Rev. 14:9-11 contains the most fearful warning in all of Scripture about the wrath of God, and itself is the climax of three messages about judgment. Immediately after these verses we have apocalyptic sketches of Christ’s second coming, and the harvest of both the righteous and the wicked. The latter are said to suffer “without the city,” just as the carcass of the slain goat on the Day of Atonement was burned outside the camp.

This destruction of the wicked “outside the city” is followed by the scene of the seven angels, dressed in priestly attire like that of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, emerging from the temple carrying the vials of divine wrath. Then, as if to underline the intent of the whole chapter, the closing words are: “... and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” This also is reminiscent of the Day of Atonement

when no man, not even a priest, could enter the sanctuary while the High Priest performed his closing ministry for the year. See Lev. 16:17.

When we come to Rev. 20 which closes the sequence of “wrath” scenes, there is another parallel to the “without the city” of 14:20. The devil is now chained “without the city” in the desolate wilderness of earth for 1000 years. Commentators have seen in this an allusion to the Azazel ceremony of Leviticus 16.⁶ Thus from chapter 14 to chapter 20 the account of divine judgment is interwoven with allusions to the Day of Atonement.⁷

One writer who has incorporated this theme of the presence of the festal year in the Apocalypse is D.T. Niles. His outline is representative of that of other scholars such as Carrington and Farrer, except that he includes the later ceremonial of the feast of Lights (Dedication). If we ask as to why Niles should include a festivity not found in Lev. 23, the answer is that Niles recognizes in Revelation allusions to the ancient conflict with Antiochus Epiphanes, and also the joyous time of the rededication of the sanctuary which followed that crisis. He is not alone in this recognition. As far back in the era of scientific exegesis as the days of Moses Stuart this position was taken. Because Niles adequately comprehends the views of many in the area of Revelation’s use of the sacred year, we give his summary.

The Jewish festal year represented a continuous movement of the history of Israel from the celebration of its deliverance from Egypt up to the fulfilment of its destiny according to God’s promise to Abraham. God had said to Abraham, “I will bless you, ... so that you will be a blessing ... and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves.”

1. **Passover:** The festive year began with the feast of the Passover. Before the feast itself was a period of preparation, at least a month, in which roads and bridges were repaired for the benefit of pilgrims. Also, on the day before the Passover, a search was made in each house to discover and throw out any leaven that happened to be left. This search was made with lit candles. Then, on the day of Passover itself, was held the Passover meal.

The letters of John to the seven churches was concerned with this period of preparation. The churches must be got ready for the feast. The Lord is now searching out with lamps the leaven in their midst. Soon He will come and knock at the door. “If any man open” He says, “I will come in and sup with him and he with Me.” He will come as both guest and host, He who is also the Passover lamb.

2. **Pentecost:** The period from the Passover to Pentecost, seven weeks afterward, was one season. The chief events of the season were related to the birth of spring and the gathering of first fruits from the fields. The spring of Israel began with their deliverance from Egypt, which act of God Israel celebrated by the paschal lamb. Then came Pentecost, which was a thanksgiving festival for the harvest of first fruits. On this day was also celebrated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

The next section of the book of Revelation opens with the vision of the Paschal Lamb but, as the story proceeds, it is not the Lamb that is slain but His followers. It is their blood which, as in the Passover rite, is poured at the base of the altar. But Passover ends with Pentecost. Moses brought the tablets of the Law, Jesus breaks the seals of the scroll of Life; and when the seals are broken the sons of God are revealed. They are the first fruits of the new age.

3. **New Year:** The people of Israel had a strong and stormy history. They drank the cup of bitterness to its dregs in their exile in Babylon. But they came back, and under Ezra and Nehemiah a new day dawned for them. Ezra read to them the Law of God and they rededicated themselves to Him. The festival of New Year celebrated this new day on the new-moon day of the seventh month. Trumpets sounded on this day in Jerusalem all day long. It was also a memorial of that day when, under Joshua, their fathers took possession of the land of their inheritance, when at the blowing of trumpets the walls of Jericho fell.

The message of the book of Revelation too moves from Pentecost to New Year. The prayer “How long” is heard again, the prayer of the people in exile. But soon the trumpets are sounding, the open scroll is read, Law and prophecy bear witness, and the kingdom comes. “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”

4. **Day of Atonement:** New Year ushered in a period of fasting, on the tenth day of which came the day of Atonement. Israel never forgot that in spite of their dedication to the Law, they had broken it again and again. At Mount Sinai itself, they had worshipped the golden calf, and Moses had to make atonement for their sin. Thus the day of Atonement became the fitting sequel to the feast of the New Year. It also stood between New Year and the feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles celebrated the close of the harvest season, but before the joy of the harvest must come the time of repentance and atonement. The harvest will also be the harvest of tares which is gathered and burned.

So the final section of John’s visions opens with the vision of Him who came to atone. The dragon is out to destroy Him. But though the period when wheat and tares grow together seems long, and those who bear the mark of the Lamb, the harvest certainly comes. Then the wheat is gathered and the tares burned. Also, at the end of the harvest season the grapes are gathered and trodden in the wine press.

5. **Tabernacles:** This feast was the feast of the end of harvest. It announced the great certainty of the future, when Israel shall have completed its journey through the wilderness and the nations of the world would be its harvest fruit unto the Lord. But the feast was celebrated in temporary booths where the people dwelt, for that was still their present situation, as it was their situation on their journey through the wilderness. The Hallel sung at the feast was concerned with the salvation yet to come. “Oh work then now salvation, Jehovah” was what they sang.

“On that day,” wrote the Prophet Zechariah, referring to the feast of Tabernacles, “the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar; ... so that all who sacrifice may come and take them and boil the flesh of the sacrifice in them.” These bowls dominate the events which, at this point of his message, John portrays. The Hallel is heard — the song of Moses and of the Lamb — and then the bowls are emptied over the earth. The last sacrifice is the burning of evil.

6. **Dedication:** So the pilgrimage comes to its end. The wilderness and the exile are left behind. There is a final conflict. And then it is the New Day. When Judas Maccabaeus rededicated the altar after setting his people free, and restored the worship of the Lord in the temple, it did seem that the New Day had dawned. Israel celebrated this day as the feast of Lights. They celebrated it on the day (December 25) when the sun after its long winter sojourn began its return journey in the heavens.

John closes his book too, with the dawn of the New Day. The great hallelujah is heard as the nations are gathered in Zion. The final battle is fought and victory decisively won. The last judgment is over and the eternal city is established.

This Jewish festal year running from Passover to Dedication is fulfilled in the Christian story. At the Dedication, the old temple was restored for worship, at Christmas the new temple was set in the midst of men. God had become flesh. The chief rite in the celebration of the Dedication festival was the lighting of the sevenfold lamp; the opening vision in John's message is the Christ as He stands in the midst of His church. The feast of Dedication closed the Jewish festal year; Christmas begins the festal year for the Christian Church.⁸

Note that in this application of the feasts, Niles sees in the Day of Atonement symbolism of both Calvary and the Judgment harvest. When J. Massyngherde Ford and P. Carrington come to judgment scenes they speak similarly. For example, Carrington writes:

Just as the Seven Trumpets were modelled upon a feature of the Temple ceremonial, so were the Golden Bowls. The first act in the daily sacrifice was to kill the Lamb and catch its blood in a Golden Bowl and dash it against the sides of the Altar; but we have seen that at this point St. John has in his mind the sin-offering made by the High Priest or for the whole nation. We have already had a reference to it in the phrase **Outside the City**, and as the same thought is found in the **Epistle to the Hebrews**, the thought of the death of Jesus as a sin-offering for the nation must have been well established.

The Day of Atonement was the grand example of such a sacrifice. It had three main points:

1. Blood was sprinkled seven times towards the veil of the Holy of Holies.
2. Blood was smeared on the four horns of the Altar.
3. The whole of what remained was poured at the foot of the Altar.

We can see that the pouring out of Seven Bowls is based upon this ritual, though the effect is both simplified and magnified.

It is also reversed; for this Blood, instead of bringing reconciliation, brings rejection and vengeance. Instead of being sprinkled seven times towards the veil, it is poured seven times on the Land. Instead of the appearance of the High Priest with the blood of reconciliation, we have Seven Angels with the Blood of Vengeance.⁹

J.M. Ford concurs with this exposition. The comments of Austin Farrer should also be noticed on the passage of 11:19 where the temple of God is opened in heaven.¹⁰

Let us now consider two typical passages, observing their connection with judgment — judgment reflected by *Yom Kippur* imagery. We draw from our own recent commentary on Revelation:

The heptads of the seals, trumpets, and bowls are each marked by “cancelled conclusions,” say F.F. Bruce and A.M. Farrer. “... the final and irrevocable judgment, which we expect to be executed in the last member of each heptad, is regularly deferred — in confirmation of the Bible’s uniform witness to God’s reluctance to press His ‘strange work’ to a full end.” (F.F. Bruce, “The Rev. to John,” *New Testament Commentary*, 629.)

Thus instead of the kingdom of God being ushered in with glory we meet with silence. The interlude of chapter seven is over, but there is a solemn pause. This is in contrast to the voices and thunders from God's throne (4:5); the songs of the four living creatures and the elders, angels and of all creation (4:11; 5:12, 13); the cry of the martyrs (6:10); the great shout of the redeemed multitude (7:12); and the angel's response (7:12). Says Bruce, "All heaven breathlessly awaits the final act of divine judgment." This silence of expectation (Hab. 2:20) is also the silence of prayer. Revelation constantly alludes to both the daily temple ritual and the yearly sacred calendar.

"The end of the daily sacrifice was signalled by the blowing of trumpets. As soon as the sacrificial lamb was thrown upon the altar of burnt offering, the trumpets were blown. However, the sacrifice could not be made nor the trumpets blown until the assigned priest had offered incense upon the golden altar in the holy place. During the time the priest was in the holy place, the people in the court waited quietly and prayed for the coming of the Messiah. When the priest reappeared the sacrifice proceeded; the trumpets were blown and the sacrifice ended." (Douglas Ezell, *Revelations of Revelation*, 48-49.)

Niles speaks similarly. "Thereupon fell a great silence like the half-hour silence which intervenes between the blood offering and the offering of incense in the daily liturgy." (D.T. Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible*, 63.) Particularly does silence remind us of the Day of Atonement, the only complete sabbath of the year, the most solemn time of judgment prior to the rejoicing of Tabernacles. Isaac Williams says of the "Silence in Heaven," "It is the day of the Atonement, the priest has gone into the holy place, and 'no man in the tabernacle till he come out.'" (I. Williams, *Revelation*, 132.) [sic]

Rev. 8:2-6:

"Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

It is vital that we remember that John records his visions as they came to him in time, and not as he may have understood their historical significance. The literary format of Revelation must be distinguished from its chronological import. The seventh seal unfolds in the seven trumpets (See W. Milligan, *Revelation*, 133.) and the seventh trumpet unfolds in the third woe — the seven last plagues. This does not mean that the seven trumpets in their fulfilment succeed the sixth seal in time. The context shows this to be impossible, for the sixth seal brings to view the end of the world. With the seventh trumpet, and the seven last plagues, the situation is different, for we read that the seventh trumpet encompasses the wrath of God, and the plagues are said to be the fulfilling of that wrath. They are specially marked out as the "last" plagues, while the seven trumpets include earlier judgments. See Rev. 15:1.

Verses 2-6 of this chapter should be compared with 15:5-8. The latter pictures the close of the temple ministry. No man can be in the sanctuary for it is now the time of Judgment, the anti-typical Day of Atonement. Next come the seven last plagues by which the divine wrath is ended. The situation is very similar here at the beginning of

the trumpets, as there at the beginning of the plagues. But note this exception. These judgments invite men to repent, whereas the judgments of the last plagues fall when the time for repentance is over.

In Rev. 8:2, **the golden censer with much incense and the subsequent casting down to earth of the censer with fire is reminiscent of the Day of Atonement.** (Dr. N.H. Young in his unpublished thesis “The Impact of the Jewish Day of Atonement Upon the Thought of the New Testament,” says: “The only day that the specially compounded daily incense was offered in a censer as well as on the golden altar was the Day of Atonement; on no other occasion was it permitted to burn this special incense in a censer. This explains John’s conflation of the altar and censer in the incense offering which he mentions in Rev. 8:3. The reference to trumpets at the introduction of the chapter is a further indication that we are in the midst of Day of Atonement imagery, for trumpets were the means of announcing New Year and the coming judgment of the Day of Atonement. Even more pertinent, on the Day of Atonement itself trumpets proclaimed the Year of Jubilee, the day of release and restoration (cf. the seventh trumpet Rev. 11:15ff). Thus the prayers of the people of God for salvation are answered by an act of divine judgment and deliverance, and this is portrayed by John by means of Day of Atonement symbols.” pp. 367-368.) **To Israel, that day was the close of the year’s probation.** Whoever did not humble himself before the Lord by abstinence from all work, by prayer, penitence, and fasting, was cut off. On this day the believing Israelite was sealed. **The blowing of trumpets at the beginning of the month had called the people to penitence, but at the close of Yom Kippur all was joy. In the year of Jubilee, the trumpets were blown at the end of this judgment day to mark the period of deliverance and rejoicing.**

The symbolism in the seventh seal of the casting down of the censer of fire indicates a cessation of pleading, and the beginning of judgment. Christ said He came to cast fire on the earth. Those who did not respond to His “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden” became recipients of His terrible woes. Matt. 11:20-24; 23:1-39.

Calvary was the Day of Atonement fulfilled. See Heb. 9 and 10, and Rom. 3:25. But Judgment Day is the Day of Atonement consummated. The trumpet judgments are a preview of the final judgment, and thus uses the same imagery as is connected with the plagues in 15:7, 8. Those who reject the Atonement of Christ are required to make their own in that Day. That Atonement is the second death — a separation from God as real as Christ experienced at Golgotha. The four horns of the golden altar mentioned in 9:13 are also an allusion to the Day of Atonement. Compare Ex. 30:10. R. Way, E. Giller, and B. Brinsmead say in their work *The Consummation*: “The prelude to the trumpets comprises of ‘peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightning, and the earthquake’ (8:5), all symbols of the consummative judgment. This awesome display is vitally connected with two other similar demonstrations in history: God’s visit to Sinai (Ex. 19:16-18); and Christ’s crucifixion (Matt. 27:51).” (R. Way, E. Giller, and B. Brinsmead, “*The Consummation*,” an unpublished manuscript, 147, n.d.)

In this passage of Rev. 8:2-6, the prayers of all saints are seen as the force which moves the omnipotence of God. The prayers are those of 6:10, calling for the vindication of righteousness, and the intervention of the righteous Judge.

Rev. 11:19:

“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.”

The parallel between the last part of this verse, and the climax to the seals (6:12ff), and plagues (16:18-21), should be observed. It is obvious that these climaxes point to the same moment — the last signs of judgment at the coming of Christ. The ark is the symbol of God’s justice. It reminds all of that law given at Sinai amid lightning, thunder and earthquake. Its demands are now met in penalty by those who have refused the vicarious sufferings of the Lamb of God.

At Christ’s death, after the shout of victory, an earthquake marked the rending of the temple veil and the revelation of the place once sacred to the ark. Rev. 16:17 points to the repetition of the Calvary cry, “It is finished.” The intercessory ministry based on the merits of the sacrifice of the cross terminates, and the door of mercy is shut just a little while prior to the judgment plagues of the seventh trumpet. We are thus intended to mark the parallel between Christ’s enduring the wrath of God on our behalf, and the fate of the impenitent who must drink that wrath for themselves. Both events are symbolized by Day of Atonement imagery. The ark reminds the universe that righteousness is the Foundation, pillar, and bulwark of all enduring existence. Its mercy seat points to the union of love and mercy with justice, that all the penitent might find forgiveness and transformation.

On the Day of Atonement, the sprinkled blood of the ark’s cover brought a new beginning for each believer, and every fifty years that event marked the beginning of the Jubilee with its freedom for slaves, remission of debts, restoration of property, and universal rejoicing.

How appropriate that the ark which followed the trumpets at the time of the compassing and downfall of Jericho should be seen here as the world topples, and the heavenly Canaan appears. As the blowing of trumpets ushered in the Day of Atonement, the Jubilee, and the opening of Canaan, so now the prophetic trumpet chain leads us to the final disposition of sin, and the consummation of the joys and privileges of the kingdom of God. As with every coronation in Israel, so in this symbolic portrayal, trumpet peals announce the universal revelation of Christ as King of kings. The Day of Atonement belonged to the enthronement festival of Israel.

As Christ, who was the gospel incarnate, drew attention to the Most Holy Place by His death at the close of the Jewish age, so should the church, His body, point to it in these last days. The Most Holy Place, containing the law and the mercy seat with its sprinkled blood, symbolically summarizes the everlasting gospel. That gospel is the glorious solution to the problem of how God could be just, and yet be the justifier of the sinner; how He could reconcile law and mercy. The rent veil [symbolizing the sacrificial body of Christ] and the blood drops answer the “how.” Now because of Christ our Mercy-seat, God can be “faithful and just” in forgiving sin. The law has been honoured, not slighted, by the cross, and the repenting sinner has legal right to forgiveness through the loving provision of Heaven. See Rom. 3:25-26; Heb. 10:19-20; 1 Jn. 1:9. Furthermore, the church of today should point to the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, because it is the place of judgment. On the Day of Atonement, through the ministry of

the High Priest, all Israel experienced the sealing of destiny. *Yom Kippur* meant the parting of the ways for professed believers — the penitent were numbered with Yahweh, but the impenitent with Azazel. Everything depended on the relationship to the blood of the High Priest. And today, before probation's close, the preaching of the everlasting gospel reins all men up before the cross of Christ and all are judged according to their responses to God's unspeakable gift.¹¹

These conclusions were set forth in the *Ministry* journal nearly twenty years ago. They were incorporated years later in a manuscript sent to SPA and subsequently printed. Because the original format of the sixties may still have something to say to us, and as evidence that this resolution of the Hebrews 9 problem is no Johnny-come-lately to meet the recent issues, we offer it in full.¹²

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND 1 ENOCH

Our comments, in the Appendix just referred to, on the imagery of the seal and the mark as reflecting the lots of the Day of Atonement could be considerably enlarged. John either drew from non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writings or the common background of tradition, including Old Testament Scripture, as he set forth Satan as the Azazel judged for eternity.

It is in 1 Enoch 9f that we read of the eschatological crisis issuing in the binding of Azazel and his being cast into the desert. 1 Enoch 55:3ff speaks of demons being consigned into the chasm of the abyss. Comparison of Rev. 20 with 1 Enoch shows many features in common that are linked with the final disposition of sin and Azazel. Both present the last judgment, the abyss sealing, the binding with chains, the inability to deceive the nations, and the final descent of fire which yields a purified earth.

1 Enoch 10:4 unites the motifs of the wilderness and the wilderness demon Azazel thus reflecting Lev. 16. In 1 Enoch 9:20ff it is Azazel who is first judged before being consigned to the fiery abyss. Even record books such as those of Rev. 20:12 are prominent in 1 Enoch. See 47:3; 103:1ff; 104:7; 108:3.

After reviewing the foregoing, N.H. Young writes on the same theme of sealing to which Sir Isaac Newton referred centuries ago:

There is a possibility that behind John's dichotomy — between those who are of the mark of the beast and those who have refused it (those sealed by God), between those of Satan and those of Christ, between those found in the Book of Life and those in the Book of Doom — is again the imagery of the two lots of Lev. 16. This type of exegesis is found in Philo and Origen and, in the apocalyptic key, in Qumran. In an early second century document, which may have originated in Essene circles (*The Apocalypse of Abraham*), we find the imagery again used, and in an apocalyptic form similar to 1 Enoch.

The thought of the faithfulness of God's people in a time of testing is very similar to *Apoc. Ab.* ... In the *Apoc. Ab.* the situation is a complex one: there is Azazel, those allotted to him (predestined), those who leave his portion (by conversion to Judaism), and those who come to him from the Lord's lot (apostasy).¹³

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND REVELATION 13

This eschatological division between those sealed for God and those marked for Satan seems to echo the eschatological crisis of the cross when men had to cast their vote for either Christ

or Barabbas. This latter event has also been linked with the Day of Atonement procedure when one goat was offered in the sacrifice and the other released into the desert.¹⁴ Compare E.G. White's comments on the choice of the Jews for Barabbas.¹⁵

Early in this chapter we noticed that the theme of Revelation is that of judgment, and that this theme was the very hallmark of apocalyptic literature beginning with Daniel. Next we observed that Dan. 9:24-27, which in its prophecy of the cross used the key words of Lev. 16 (see 9:24) as well as terms expressive of judgment (there are at least seven in these four verses — determined, cut off, destroy, decree, etc.), were expanded by Christ in His sermon on the judgment of the world. Then again, we have indicated that commentators have seen in Revelation an expansion of the Olivet discourse as surely as the latter was an expansion of Dan. 9:24-27. Thus Daniel fused into one picture the judgment of the cross and the judgment of the world. The Day of Atonement is the imagery he used to do this. Similarly, Christ took the motifs of His atonement predicted in Dan. 9:26 and applied them to the world's passion at the era of judgment.

THE FUTURE TO RECAPITULATE THE CROSS EVENT—MAKING AN END OF SIN

Hendrikus Berkhof says:

In all synoptic Gospels statements about the future are summarized right before the Passion story. The themes dealt with are watchfulness, oppression, decrease of love, flight, and finally spectacular natural phenomena and the coming of the Son of Man in glory. It is conspicuous that all these themes recur in the following chapters, which deal with Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. . . . The meaning is obviously that the future will show — on a larger, and eventually worldwide scale — a repetition of what has happened in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁶

It is not at all strange therefore that the Day of Atonement should be prominent in the book which has more to say on the end of the world than any other Scripture. In Revelation, Christ atones for sin in the original sense of *kippur*¹⁷ — getting rid of sin by returning it upon the head of its author, in order that His-people might have full joyous covenant union with Him. The judgment scenes of Revelation, climaxing in condemnation and extermination for the beast, the false prophet, the harlot, the dragon and all the wicked represented by them thus present to us the Day of Atonement in consummation. It is “the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.”¹⁸ It is fully true, as Ellen White wrote long ago — we are living in the closing up of the great Day of Atonement.¹⁹

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

¹ In Old Testament times, the experience of the Sanctuary symbolized the state of the Kingdom of God on earth. The destruction of the temple by the Babylonians represented the apparent victory of the heathen over God's kingdom as on previous occasions its pollution spoke of the suspension of Israel's fidelity to God.

Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah all cleansed the temple as the nation rededicated itself to Yahweh. Christ's action in the temple courts both at the beginning and end of His ministry prefigured His work as Judge, and spoke of His mission in eschatological terms. Consider McKelvey's comments:

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is interpreted by all four evangelists as the fulfilment of the eschatological hope of the coming of the Messiah to Zion. Matthew and John actually quote Zech. 9:9; Luke uses the title 'king.' Mark, who is more restrained, also brings out the messianic character of the event. This is clear from the greeting 'Son of David' in his preceding narrative (10:27f), the reference to the Mount of Olives, the prescience of Jesus concerning the whereabouts and borrowing of the colt, the note that the animal was unriden (i.e. new and therefore particularly suited for a special purpose), the act of homage in strewing the garments (cf. 2 Kings 9:13), and the designation 'he who comes' (ὁ ἐρχόμενος), if not also the salutation **hosanna**. Indeed, it is the second evangelist who accords the entry its fullest possible significance inasmuch as he treats it as an event in its own right and not (like Matthew and Luke) as the prelude to the cleansing. He states that Jesus entered Jerusalem, went into the temple, looked around, and then returned to Bethany from which the procession had set out; the temple is not cleansed till the following day. Matthew for his part emphasizes the eschatological nature of the entry by prefacing the words of Zech. 9:9 with a prophecy from Isa. 62:11 concerning the vindication of Jerusalem (21:5).

We shall probably be closest to the mind of Jesus if we say that He meant the entry to be a dramatic affirmation, an acted parable, of the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem is all of a piece with His ministry in Galilee. He is doing now what He has been doing all along; proclaiming the coming of the kingdom and calling upon Israel to repent (Mark 1:14f; Matt. 11:20-4 par.)

After narrating the cleansing Mark returns, obviously by way of explanation, to the incident of the fig-tree, noting that it had withered to its very roots (11:20ff). Finally, he records the question of authority (11:27-33; cf. pars.). Coming after the story of the fig-tree, which goes along with the cleansing, the question can refer only to what Jesus did in the temple (so Mark and Matt.). The parable of the disinheritor and destruction of the unfaithful and wicked husbandmen is probably to be included in the Marcan interpretation of the cleansing since it immediately follows the question on authority, and continues the judgment theme implied by the use of Jer. 7:11 at the cleansing.

Thus Jesus is depicted as cleansing the temple and consecrating it anew, as it were, so that He, the Lord of the temple, may use it. Matthew describes the purged court as the scene of such eschatological actions as the opening of the eyes of the blind and the making of the lame to walk (21:14ff).

The cleansing of the temple is a prophetic act, like the entry into Jerusalem. It points to the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom is correlative to Israel's destiny as the people of God. (R.J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* [London, 1969], 59-60, 61, 63, 66.)

² Karl Helm, *Jesus, The World's Perfecter* (Philadelphia, 1961), 142.

³ See appendix, "Dan. 9:24 and the Olivet Discourse."

⁴ William Milligan, *Lectures on the Apocalypse* (London, 1892), 42-43.

⁵ T.F. Glasson, *The Revelation of John* (Cambridge, 1965), 118.

⁶ See *The Expositor's Greek New Testament* on Rev. 20:1-3.

⁷ We have only referred to obvious instances. Commentators have seen others. For example, the *Anchor Bible* on Rev. 17 comments as follows:

The harlot here has two characteristics. She holds a golden cup (vs. 4) and she has a name of mystery upon her forehead (vs. 5). One recalls that the sacred utensils were made of gold. Simon the high priest is depicted with the cup of libation in Sir 50:14-15; the occasion is probably the Day of Atonement, and the wine is described as "the blood of the grape" (RSV). In the picture of the adulteress what one may have is a parody of the high priest on the Day of Atonement wearing the vestments specially reserved for that occasion and holding the libation offering. However, instead of the sacred name upon his brow the "priest-harlot" bears the name Babylon, mother of harlots and the

abominations of the earth, a title illustrating Ezek. 16:43-45 (RSV), where Yahweh speaks of the lewdness of Jerusalem.

The irony is heightened because the symbol of the high priestly mitre, like the sacrifices, represented the forgiveness of certain sins. (J.M. Ford, Revelation, the *Anchor Bible* (Garden City, 1975), 288.)

⁸ D.T. Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible* (New York, 1961), 109-112.

⁹ P. Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation* (London, 1931), 261-262.

¹⁰ See appendix, "A. Farrer on the Day of Atonement and Dan. 8:14 in Revelation."

¹¹ Desmond Ford, "Commentary on Revelation," unpublished manuscript, 203, 204, 205, 268-270.

¹² See appendix on "The Day of Atonement in the Apocalypse."

¹³ N.H. Young, "The Impact of the Jewish Day of Atonement upon New Testament Thoughts," unpublished PhD thesis (Manchester, 1973), 363, 365.

¹⁴ See H. Koster, *Synoptische Uberlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vatern* (Berlin, 1957), 156.

¹⁵ See *Desire of Ages*, 739; and *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* 5:1105.

¹⁶ H. Berkhof, *Well-founded Hope* (Richmond, 1969), 23, 24.

¹⁷ See *TDNT* 3:302. Originally *kippur* meant to "wipe away" or "eradicate."

¹⁸ *PP* 358.

¹⁹ *5T*, 472.