

“The Divine Council in Second Temple Judaism
and the New Testament”

Chapter 5 of:

VISIONS OF THE DIVINE COUNCIL IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

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Visions of the Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible

— Thesis Conclusions —

This thesis has documented the existence and importance of the divine council in the Hebrew Bible. It has done so by analyzing terminology and imagery that depict God as an enthroned King surrounded by powerful supernatural creatures. Study of actual council sessions, or throne visions, focused on specific features such as YHVH's status and authority, the decision-making processes of heaven, the nature of the heavenly attendants, and the identity of those who witnessed the sessions. The fact that council terminology and imagery occur throughout the Bible verifies its enduring place within Israel's faith. There is no doubt she believed in the reality of God's assembly. Indeed, she probably viewed it as representing an even higher order of reality than its mere material existence. The chair upon which God sat was secondary to the kingship he exercised from it.

Chapter 1 demonstrated that the ancient world believed in a heavenly cosmic government, and that the gods communicated with select priests, prophets, and kings. Against this backdrop, Israel's concept of a divine assembly is not unique. Its uniqueness lay in her perception of its constituency and its spirit toward humankind.

Chapter 2 analyzed the terminology and imagery of the biblical divine council. It concluded that the concept of a heavenly assembly expressed Israel's understanding of God's various relationships to mankind and how he administered his creation through a large contingent of semi-divine beings. YHVH's throneroom housed a monarchy, not a pantheon. Only one true God was present. The numerous designations for God's servants suggest that the beings did not have only one form or function, but became what they *needed* to become in order to fulfill his purposes. They might be warriors or bailiffs or spies or witnesses or temple choirs or throne-bearers or winds or clouds or fire or even the spirit of false prophecy. But they were not mere metaphors for the forces of nature or for invisible inner human processes. They had personality and will and devotion to their Creator. They were the powers or representatives of the divine government, the world of Elohim.

Chapters 3 and 4 analyzed six biblical throne visions. The data indicate that the names of God and the descriptions and names of the angels were specifically, theologically appropriate to the historical circumstances

during which the visions were granted to the human witnesses. Of enormous significance was that God admitted certain people into his throneroom. Though these men entered via visions, rather than physical ascent, they were certain that they had actually seen and heard the council and counsel of YHVH. After auditing the court sessions they returned to their human community as messengers of God. The expression “Thus says YHVH” signified that the prophet had heard the message in God’s throneroom. Beyond being couriers, they had authority, during the proceedings, to affect the actions of the assembly. Their wishes (prayers?) had influence. Thus the world of Elohim was not closed. The gap between the Creator and creation was bridged from both sides: council members descended to earth and prophets ascended in spirit to heaven.

The door, however, was not open to everyone. No one could self-induce ecstasy and enter the council uninvited or sneak window-peaks unobserved. The door was opened when and to whom God willed. In some throne visions, individual leaders appeared before God to receive their investiture or commission. The significance of their presence lay in the fact that God chose them as leaders. He was not indifferent to what transpired among his people, but influenced the course of human history as he planned it.

— [Paul B. Sumner](#)

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Chapter 5

“The Divine Council in Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament”

Trajectories into Post-Biblical Judaism

To project beyond the thesis limits of this paper, the question arises:

If the concept and imagery of YHVH’s council were so important to biblical Jews and if throne visions were so powerful a method of conveying theological truth, were they also vital to later generations in Israel? This final chapter will suggest a tentative affirmative answer to this question. It must be “tentative” because a complete study of the materials is not possible here. What does follow is an annotated listing of several works that contain related imagery showing development of the biblical materials analyzed in this paper.

Jewish literature is often apocalyptic in nature in the post-biblical period.¹ Visions and heavenly journeys and complex symbolic universes frequently appear in works from the 3d century BCE down to the end of the 1st century CE.² Interestingly, however, allusions to the divine council or interest in throne visions and similar “apocalyptic” subjects occur rarely in the Apocrypha. As discussed in chapter 4, one feature of apocalyptic writing is its tendency to bring back old theology and language in order to re-establish ties to the ancient faith. Apocalyptic language is primarily the expressive symbolic language of poetry used to articulate a sense or feeling about the world. Especially in times of crumbling worlds, the language affirmed the consoling reality of “a transcendent world” of divine mysteries above the

¹ I am aware that 1 En 1-36 and 91-108 probably antedate the final form of Daniel, thus overlapping the “biblical” and “post-biblical” eras.

² The Apocrypha, however, shows little interest in apocalyptic subjects and has only a few allusions to the divine council. In its one apocalyptic book, *4 Ezra* (or *2 Esdras*), the “transcendent world” descends to Ezra in the form of the angelic guide Uriel. Ezra prays to God, whose throne is “beyond measure” and is surrounded by “hosts of angels” (8:20-22), but Ezra gets no direct vision of the throneroom himself; he assumes its existence.

earthly chaos.³ Secondly, the language sought to exhort, persuade, and “commission” people to pursue a “revolution in the imagination.” It challenged them to view the present world in radically different ways and to live with the knowledge that this deficient world was not the end, that another world (from God) was the final inheritance of the righteous.⁴

One of the ancient symbols revived by the apocalypticists was that of the divine council, and one prophetic “convention” they brought back to convey theological messages was the throne vision. The council and armies of God testified to his powerful presence in the world. The throne visions proved that human destinies were being discussed by their heavenly Lord. Such visions also frequently contained honored figures from Israel’s past, standing before God as models of righteousness.⁵ The visions of Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel were influential on many Jewish writings, for identical terminology and imagery can be seen in later works. Some of the documents apparently seek to identify *Bar Enash*, who was left unnamed in Daniel 7. (For example, *1 Enoch* 48:10 says the “son of man” is the Messiah.) Following are brief discussions of several representative works showing developed angelology and/or throne visions or heavenly ascents.⁶

³ J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 214.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 215. But see L. L. Grabbe, who argues that apocalyptic works are not necessarily the product of crisis-times, “The Social Setting of Early Jewish Apocalypticism,” *JSP* 4 (1989): 27-47.

⁵ See a discussion in S. Niditch, “The Visionary,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and J. J. Collins; Missoula: Scholars Press), 153-79.

⁶ For survey articles, see B. Otzen, “Heavenly Visions in Early Judaism: Origin and Function,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon (Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature)* (FS: G. W. Ahlström; ed., W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer; JSOT Sup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 199-215, and C. Rowland, “The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature,” *JSJ* 10 (1979): 137-54.

Apocalyptic Works: 3d—1st centuries BCE ⁷

The *Book of the Watchers* portion of *1 Enoch* (chaps. 1-36) is now dated to the 3d century, and is (along with *The Astronomical Book* [1 En 72-82]) the oldest extra-biblical Jewish religious literature.⁸ It contains a report of the patriarch Enoch's ascent into heaven, where he is commissioned by God to indict and intercede for the fallen angels ("watchers").⁹ Following his vision of the Great Glory and the chariot-throne (chaps. 14-16), Enoch is taken on several angel-guided tours of the cosmos. The work contains much biblical council imagery, but it provides more detail about the architecture of heaven than is found in the HB.¹⁰ It also introduces hitherto unknown names of

⁷ Lists of various Jewish apocalyptic works are found in: J. H. Charlesworth, *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (ATLA Bibliography Series 17; Metuchen, NJ; London: American Theological Library and Scarecrow Press, 1987), 21; J. J. Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypses," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, *Semeia* 14 (1979): 28; M. E. Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2,II; ed. M. E. Stone; Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 394-427. For background discussions of specific documents, see J. H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research, With Supplement* [hereafter: *Pseudepigrapha*] (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 7; No city: Scholars Press, 1981); G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* [hereafter: *Jewish Literature*] (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); M. E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* [hereafter: *Jewish Writings*].

⁸ M. E. Stone, "The Book of Enoch and Judaism in the Third Century B.C.E.," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 479-92, esp. 484. For English texts of 1 Enoch 1-36, see M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (SVTP 7; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985); R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, orig. 1913, rpt. 1964) [hereafter: APOT], 2.188-208; J. H. Charlesworth, ed. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983, 1985) [hereafter: OTP], 1.13-29. For discussions of 1 En 1-36, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 98-103; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 48-55; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 90-95, 395-406.

⁹ On the role of Enoch as intercessor, see J. P. Sisson, "Intercession and the Denial of Peace in 1 Enoch 12-16," *Hebrew Annual Review* 11 (1987): 371- 86.

¹⁰ Whereas the HB emphasizes the *theological* aspects of heavenly cosmology (structure and dynamics depicted in the divine council), 1 En 1-36 and other pseudepigraphal works tend to focus on *physical* cosmology, the actual structures of God's world. But see C. A. Newsom, "The Development of 1 Enoch 6-19: Cosmology and Judgment," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 310-29, and A. J. McNicol, "The Heavenly Sanctuary in Judaism: A Model for Tracing the Origin of an Apocalypse," *JRS* 13 (1987): 66-94.

The inner "palaces" of the divine House became a favorite topic of mystics. Scholars believe that 1 Enoch was the fountain-head of this kind of speculative mysticism. The *Book of 3 Enoch* (OTP 1.223-315) indicates how far some mystics took their speculations. 3 En is referred to in Jewish literature as *Sefer Heikhalot*, or the Book of the Palaces (see OTP 1.224). On the development of the subject, see P. Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," *JSJ* 14 (1983): 172-81; G. Scholem, under art. "Kabbalah," *EncJud*

several archangels. For example, in addition to Michael and Gabriel, it refers to Semyaz and his band of fallen watchers, as well as to holy angels such as Surafel, Asuryal, Raphael, Uriel, Suru'el, Raguel, Ura'el, and Rufael. The frequently used title "Lord of Spirits" apparently is equivalent to the HB "Lord of hosts."¹¹ As in biblical throne visions, the actual entry of Enoch into God's presence seems to be important for validating his authority as a messenger and for verifying the worth of the mysteries he unfolds.

Such is also the case in the 3d century drama called *Exagoge*, written by a Jewish poet named Ezekiel, probably from Alexandria.¹² This work, based on the biblical exodus from Egypt, is distinguished for several reasons. Not only is it the earliest extant Jewish play in history, it contains one of the earliest post-biblical *merkavah* or chariot visions as well as "the earliest instance of the idea of a vice-regent or plenipotentiary of God."¹³ In the play, Moses has a vision in which he sees an enormous throne occupied by "a certain noble man," presumably God. The Man hands his scepter and "royal diadem" to Moses and beckons him to ascend. As Moses complies, the Man descends from the throne. A "multitude of heavenly bodies" then gathers before Moses and bows to him. Whether the imagery intends to set forth the divine kingship of Moses is debatable. There is, however, no doubt that he is in the place of God. For Moses to be symbolically enthroned this way was theologically powerful, but in the Alexandrian milieu, such exaltation of Moses was not uncommon. For example, Philo describes Moses as "god and king of the whole nation," as one "who entered into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things."¹⁴

10.500-06; idem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 14-21.

¹¹ J. Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Ebinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 271. Cf. 2 Macc 3:24.

¹² For texts see C. R. Holladay, ed., *Fragments From Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, (Vol. 2: Poets; SBL Texts and Translations 30; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 363-65, and P. W. van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," *JJS* 34 (1983): 21-29. For a discussion, see Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 125-30.

¹³ van der Horst, *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴ *On the Life of Moses* I.158 (Loeb Classical Library; tr. F. H. Colson; London: Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, orig. 1935, rpt. 1959), 6.357-58. See also E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1935), 289-91; W. A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity* (FS: E. R. Goodenough; Studies in the History of Religions 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 354-

The throne vision in the *Testament of Levi* vindicates Levi as a priest and son of God.¹⁵ Following the genre of testamentary literature, this 2d century work portrays the third son of Jacob as telling his gathered children how the heavens opened and an angel beckoned him to enter (2:4-7). As Levi ascends through two lower heavens, he sees angelic spirits waiting to punish mankind and the evil spirits of Beliar (3:1-3). In the third and highest heaven dwells the Great Glory or the Holy Most High with all his archangels, messengers, thrones and authorities (3:4-8; 5:1). In a second vision, Levi undergoes a symbolic clothing change and investiture ceremony at the hands of seven men in white (8:1-10), very much on the model of Zechariah's vision of Joshua the high priest (Zech 3).

71.

In the *Wisdom of Solomon*, an Alexandrian work from the mid-1st century BCE, the personified figure Wisdom, who is a pre-existent emanation of God (7:25), sits next to God on his throne (9:4). In the book of *Sirach* (Ecclesiastes), a Palestinian work from 180 BCE, Wisdom is said to occupy a throne in "in the assembly [ἐκκλησία] of the Most High" which is in "the highest heavens" (24:2, 4).

¹⁵ For texts of TLevi see: *APOT* 2.304-15; *OTP* 1.788-95. For discussions, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 211-20; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 231-41; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 331-44.

Qumran

In the extant Qumran scrolls, throne visions are not narrated, but interest in the divine council is profound. References to angelic beings are so numerous they cannot be fairly cited.¹⁶ Most of their titles are biblical: *elim* or *elohim* (gods), sons of heaven, mighty ones, holy angels, holy ones, spirits, hosts, glorious ones, princes, and so on. Unlike the HB, the scrolls provide great detail on angelic ranking. The heavenly army observes a strict chain of command. One of God's archangels, Michael, is especially popular in the scrolls. He is the Prince of Light or Angel/Spirit of Truth. Against him is arrayed Belial (or Mastema), the Prince of Darkness and his armies. In biblical fashion, God's angels act as his heavenly retinue: praising him in the assembly, delivering his messages to men, interceding and interpreting on behalf of mankind, and fighting in the final eschatological war against evil spirits and humans.

In the fragmentary *Targum of Job* from Cave 11, the angels are even the instruments of creation ("by them He makes. . ."), and administrators for God: "He has put them in charge of all He has created."¹⁷ This attribution of cosmic responsibility is significant.

In the so-called *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (mid-1st cent. BCE), the main source of inspiration is Ezekiel's throne-chariot and his depiction of the heavenly temple (chaps. 40-48).¹⁸ These thirteen liturgical compositions

¹⁶ Texts especially rich in angelic references include the Manual of Discipline (1QS), the War Scroll (1QM), and the Hymn Scroll (1QH). On Qumran angelology, see T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (3d ed.; New York: Doubleday Anchor Press, 1976), 564-67; M. Mansoor, *The Thanksgiving Hymns* (Studies on Texts of the Desert of Judah 3; Leiden: E. J. Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 77-84; H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (tr. E. T. Sander; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 81-93; A. E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran* (SBL Dissertation Series 110; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness* (tr. B. & C. Rabin; Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), 229-42. For complete lists of the published DSS and secondary literature, see J. A. Fitzmyer's recent *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study* (SBL Resources for Biblical Study 20; rev. ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 121-26.

¹⁷ For the text and notes, see W. H. Brownlee, "The Cosmic Role of Angels in the 11Q Targum of Job," *JSJ* 8 (1977): 83-84.

¹⁸ For the *editio princeps* of the entire cycle of Songs, see C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1985). One of the songs was early published by J. Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran—4Q Serek Sirot Olat Hassabbat," in *Congress Volume 7* (VTSup; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 318-45. For

command angelic praise of God, describe a seven-fold division of angel-priests of the inner sanctum, and outline the worship to be performed on successive Sabbaths in the heavenly sanctuary. Elaborate reports of the temple design and its furniture occur throughout. On the 7th Sabbath (the central song), the cherubim, ophanim (“wheels”), and even the holy chariots (plural) “give praise together . . . and bless wondrously” the King of glory.¹⁹ Oddly enough, no visionary image of God himself is ever depicted. The closest the Songs come is to say: “The *image* of the chariot throne do they bless.”²⁰ The Songs unswervingly focus on the spirits and the glorious surroundings in the temple of the King.²¹ While these texts are manifestly visionary or mystical, they are not ascribed to a prophet who entered heaven. They do not explain how the writer knows what goes on there. Because of the preoccupation with the chariot and the angelic songs, scholars believe that this document and Qumran itself are the well-spring of Merkavah Mysticism.²² Ascensions to heaven involving the Chariot-Throne were the goal of Jewish mystics in later centuries. So pervasive was the obsession with the Merkavah that the rabbis of the Mishnah (c. 200 CE) forbade speculations about it and even restricted the private reading of Ezekiel’s chariot vision.²³

A final work from Qumran shows how biblical council imagery was employed in an eschatological text about God’s co-regent. The *Melchizedek Pesher* (11QMelch) is a chain of biblical passages concerning the Tenth or

translations and notes on the “Angelic Liturgy,” see Gaster, *Dead Sea Scriptures*, 289-91; G. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 210-12.

¹⁹ 4Q403 1 ii; Newsom, *ibid.* 229.

²⁰ 4Q405 20-21-22, 8; Newsom, 306. On the development of such songs in later Jewish mystical literature, see I. Gruenwald, “Song, Angelic,” *EncJud* 15.144.

²¹ The “bricks” of the heavenly temple appear to be related to the throne platform mentioned in Exod 24:10. See M. S. Smith, “Biblical and Canaanite Notes to the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* from Qumran,” *RevQ* 12 (1987): 585-88.

²² Cf. J. M. Baumgarten, “The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and Rabbinic Merkavah Traditions,” *RevQ* 13 (1988): 199-213; C. Newsom, “Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot,” *JJS* 38 (1987): 11-30; L. H. Schiffman, “Merkavah Speculation at Qumran: The 4Q Serekh Shirot Olat ha-Shabbat,” in *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians* (FS: A. Altmann; ed. J. Reinharz and D. Swetschinski; Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1982), 15-47.

²³ B. Hagigah 11b (re: M. Hag. 2:1) forbids expounding on “the Chariot in the presence of one, unless he is a sage and understands of his own knowledge.”

Final Jubilee, an event of liberation.²⁴ When the pesher quotes Isaiah 61:2, mentioning the agent who brings in the expected “favorable year of the Lord,” it makes a startling change in the MT. In place of “favorable year of YHVH,” the pesher reads: “the acceptable year of *Melchizedek* . . . and the holy ones of God” (l. 9). The substitution of “Melchizedek” for the divine name is unmistakable in the Hebrew text. To further amplify its idea, the pesher then quotes Psalm 82:1: “Elohim has taken his stand in the assembly of El.” The juxtaposition of Isaiah 61:2 with this verse from Psalm 82 strongly suggests that the writer was implicitly substituting “Elohim” with “Melchizedek,” the one who will “exact the vengeance of the judgments of God,” with the help of “all the gods . . . all the sons of might” (ll. 13-14). The biblical imagery of YHVH standing in his assembly has been transferred to his eschatological agent of judgment, the mysterious priest without genealogy.

Apocalyptic Works: 1st century CE

Pseudepigrapha

The Roman occupation of Israel, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Jewish Revolt of 66-73, and the Fall of Jerusalem were major events of this century that made profound impacts on Jews. Evidently because of the chaos and the sense of anticipation and promise, several works attempted to exhort faithfulness to God and console during tribulation. The use of divine council imagery and throne visions increased. In *4 Maccabees* (c. 20-54 CE), for example, the narrator tells a retrospective story of a devout Jewish woman whose seven sons were martyred one-by-one by Antiochus IV. After the last son perishes, she jumps into the fire to join them. Whereupon the narrator bursts into a panegyric on the mother. He says that she and they “now stand

²⁴ This work dates to the mid-1st cent. BCE. For the text and notes on 11QMelch, see J. A. Fitzmyer, “Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11,” in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Sources for Biblical Study 5; n.p.: Scholars Press, 1974), 245-67, and M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, “11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament,” *NTS* 12 (1966): 301-26. See also D. Flusser, “Melchizedek and the Son of Man,” in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 186-92, and M. P. Miller, “The Function of Isa 61:1-2 in 11Q Melchizedek,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 467-69. For full bibliography see Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 521-22.

before the divine throne and live through blessed eternity” (17:18). To be in the throneroom and obtain a “divine inheritance” is their reward (18:3).

The *Parables* or *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37-71) is one the most significant works of the era.²⁵ References to throne visions and to God’s co-regent abound, even though it apparently shows no “Christian influence.”²⁶ Like the *Book of the Watchers* (1 *En* 1-36), the *Parables* focus on Enoch, the traveler to heavenly realms. In chapters 46-49, 60-62, and 71, Enoch ascends to the divine throne where he sees the white-haired “Head of days” or “Antecedent of Time” or “Lord of the Spirits” sitting on his throne of glory surrounded by angels. He also sees “another individual” in the throneroom, known variously as God’s Elect (61:5), the Messiah (48:10), the Chosen (48:6), and the Son of Man (46:3; 48:2; 62:7; etc.). The Son of Man sits enthroned beside God (46:1) as the spirit-filled eschatological judge of evil angels and mankind (46:4-5; 61:8). However, he is not always at center stage. For example, at the end of time, God will have praise from “all the forces of the heavens, and all the holy ones above, and the forces of the Lord—the cherubim, seraphim, ophanim, all the angels of governance, *the Elect One*, and the other forces on earth (and) over the water” (61:10-11). In chapters 70-71, Enoch ascends again to “the heaven of heavens,” to a throneroom in a crystal cathedral filled with all the divine council members (71:7-9). There sits the “Antecedent of Time” who dispatches an angel to tell Enoch that he will inherit everlasting peace with the “Son of Man” (71:17).²⁷ Some have suggested that this passage hints at Enoch’s exaltation to become that Son of Man, but the text is not so explicit.²⁸

In the book of *2 Enoch*, Enoch’s exaltation to heavenly status is clearly

²⁵ The dating of the *Parables* has occupied scholars for decades. This portion of the Enochean corpus was not included in the mss. found at Qumran, so some scholars interpreted this to mean that the *Parables* were composed after the destruction of the settlement in 70 CE. Others said that the Qumran community simply was not aware of this portion. The tentative view today affixes composition prior to 70 CE. E.g., Collins says: “The Similitudes . . . should be dated to the early or mid first century C.E.” (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 143). For further discussion, see Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 395-403.

²⁶ For texts of 1 *En* 37-71, see *APOT* 2.208-37; *OTP* 1.29-50. For discussions, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 98-103, 278-83; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 214-23.

²⁷ For a discussion of the “Son of Man,” see Black, *1 Enoch*, 188-93.

²⁸ See a discussion in Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 147-53.

described. Shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 70, a Jewish writer (perhaps in Alexandria) wrote an apocalypse in testamentary form. Like most portions of *1 Enoch*, this lengthy work also features the Antediluvian's ascents into heaven.²⁹ In this document, Enoch sees God on his high throne in the tenth heaven, where he is surrounded by phoenixes, cherubim, six-winged beings, fiery armies of the incorporeal ones, archangels, (mere) angels, and shining *otanim* stations, all assembled according to rank (19:6-20:3, Res. A). The throne vision in chapter 22 reveals that God's appearance is less than amicable: "His face was strong and very glorious and terrible" (v. 1, A). He exudes a spirit of judgment among his "many-eyed ones" (spies?). At God's command, Enoch himself is lifted up to the throne, where his earthly clothes are exchanged for "clothes of glory," and he is anointed with sun-bright "delightful oil" (22:8-9, A). Enoch gazes at himself and exclaims: "I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference" (v. 10). Once Enoch belongs to the heavenly company, the archangel Vereveil tutors him in heavenly secrets from "the books" for a month. Enoch records his lessons in 360 books (23:6, A), which he later uses to instruct humans after descending back to earth (chaps. 35-68). Significantly, he is not called a "prophet," although he had visited the divine council. He is more an *interpreter* of the books of heaven, perhaps as Daniel "B" interpreted the books of the prophets before him.

The *Testament of Abraham* (c. 75 CE) contains no throne vision of God, but during a chariot tour of heaven Abraham sees primeval Adam sitting on a golden throne (11:4a).³⁰ The great Father's appearance "was terrifying, like the Master's" (v. 4b). When the "first-formed Adam" watches countless sinners passing through "the broad gate" of destruction, he falls off the throne, crying and wailing (v. 11). Next Abraham sees "a wondrous man, bright as the sun, like unto a son of God" sitting on a terrifying crystal throne (12:4-5). Using a nine-foot-thick book, this man judges the souls of men (vv. 7, 11). Upon inquiry, Abraham learns that this "all-wondrous judge" is none other

²⁹ For texts of 2 En, see *APOT* 2.425-69; *OTP* 1.102-213. For discussions, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 103-06; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 185-88; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 406-08.

³⁰ For a text of TAb, see *OTP* 1.882-902. For discussions, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 70-72; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 248-53; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 60-64, 420-21.

than Adam's son, Abel (13:1-2). It is not clear if the text views Abel as the righteous successor to his father, who vacated the chair of authority when his "sins" passed before him. In any case, Abel will "judge the entire creation" until God's "great and glorious Parousia" (v. 4).

In *The Life of Adam and Eve*, Adam is taken to heaven on a chariot of wind and fire.³¹ In paradise, he sees thousands of angels around the holy chariot of the Lord. As in *2 Enoch* 22, God's appearance radiates "unbearable fire" (25:3), i. e. it is full of judgment. Indeed, God strongly rebukes Adam for listening to Eve and condemns him to die (26:1-2). Though Adam repents and pleads for grace (chaps. 27-28), Michael ejects him from heaven and escorts him home (chap. 29). Before dying, Adam tells his story to his children in testamentary fashion. Embedded in the book of the *Life of Adam and Eve* is a separate but related document giving Eve's side of the story of the Fall. It is called the *Apocalypse of Moses*. While no throne visions are reported, it does refer to God's "chariot of cherubim" (22:3) and a "chariot of light" drawn by four radiant eagles (33:2). Other beings also transport people to the heavenly realms. For example, six-winged seraphim "came and carried Adam off to the Lake of Acheron and washed him three times in the presence of God" (37:3). (In Isaiah 6, seraphim sing God's praise and purify the prophet with an altar coal.) God then picks him up and hands him to Michael, who takes Adam away to die (37:5-6).

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the ancient patriarch rehearses his life-story.³² At his initial call while still in Ur, God speaks to him "from the heavens in a stream of fire" (8:1) and promises to reveal secrets of creation and the future (9:9-10). Abraham sees the fabulous angel Yael [i.e. Yahweh + El], whose body was like sapphire [cf. Exod 24:10], a face like chrysolite, and hair like snow [cf. Dan 7:9].³³ His headdress or turban was like a rainbow, his

³¹ For texts of LAE, see *APOT* 2.123-54; *OTP* 2.258-95. For discussions see, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 74-75; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 256-57; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 113-18.

³² For a text of ApAbr, see *OTP* 1.689-705. For discussions, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 68-69; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature* 294-99; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 415-18.

³³ Compare the angel who appears to Aseneth: "His face was like lightning, and his eyes like sunshine, and the hairs of his head like a flame of fire of a burning torch, and hands and feet like iron shining forth from a fire, and sparks shot forth from his hands and

clothing of purple, and in his right hand a golden staff (11:1-3). Yaeol leads Abraham on a 40-day wilderness trek to Horeb (Sinai), where he offers sacrifice in the presence of angels (chap. 12). Later Abraham ascends to heaven on the right wing of a pigeon (chap. 15). There, he sees a throne similar to Ezekiel's chariot-throne, but never describes an image of God (chap. 18-19).

Summary

Heavenly ascents *in* or *to* the presence of the Chariot were a dominant feature of several 1st century works. Given the circumstances of the times, this is not surprising. For, according to Samson Levey, the whole purpose of Merkavah Mysticism was to provide “a surrogate for the demolished sanctuary,” in just the way that Ezekiel's chariot vision had delivered “the Jewish people from total oblivion” by stressing that the throne of YHVH was beyond the reach of Babylonian might—i. e. in heaven.³⁴ One of the first post-70 works to reflect this chariot emphasis was the *Targum of Ezekiel*. Levey credits Johanan ben Zakkai, a leader at Yavneh, with the first redaction of the targum. In it, ben Zakkai sought to protect his followers from further despair by suppressing messianic aspirations and substituting merkavah mysticism for messianic activism. Evidently thinking it was no longer a viable doctrine, ben Zakkai ignores the subject of the Messiah.³⁵ Ironically, within another century, the Mishnaic rabbis had to suppress these chariot speculations, as being spiritually (and socially?) dangerous. At the same time, they followed ben Zakkai and downplayed messianic speculation. As time went on, rabbinic Judaism continued to drive mystical movements and apocalyptic writings underground. Generally, prophets and throne visions were replaced by scholars and rational expositions of the Torah.³⁶ Below the surface, however, interest in God's throneroom continued. Even the Talmud reports that four

feet” (*Joseph and Aseneth* 14:9, *OTP* 2.225). For date and discussion of *JosAsen*, see R. D. Chesnutt, “The Social Setting and Purpose of *Joseph and Aseneth*,” *JSP* 2 (1988): 21-48.

³⁴ S. H. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel* (Aramaic Bible 13; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶ On the Mishnaic suppression of the Messianic idea, see J. Neusner, “Mishnah and Messiah,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs* (ed. J. Neusner, W. S. Green; E. Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 265-82.

renowned 2d century rabbis had ascended to heaven,³⁷ and another rabbi reportedly witnessed the enthronement of King David (Messiah) in the heavenlies.³⁸

The New Testament

Several passages in the New Testament—which of course belongs to the category of “Jewish Literature”—suggest a deep and widespread awareness of the Hebrew divine council. Though the apocalyptic book of Revelation (not surprisingly) contains many of these texts, divine council imagery is also common in the gospels and letters. Pertinent examples are grouped below in categories corresponding to the terminology and imagery of the Hebrew Bible.

Throneroom Imagery. What is immediately evident in the NT are the echoes of the Davidic theological image of two kings—God and David—seated together on one throne. For example:

To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory. (Rev 5:13)

Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb. (Rev 7:10)

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. (Rev 21:22)

Many verbal parallels exist between the coronation of Solomon and the throne scenes in Revelation.³⁹ Frequent use is made of imagery from Psalm 110, especially to express Jesus’ post-resurrection status at God’s right hand as Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:34-36; Matt 22:41-45; 1 Cor 15:23-28; Eph 1:20). Other passages employ the same psalm to depict Jesus’ role as heavenly High

³⁷ The four Palestinian rabbis were Ben Zoma, Ben Azzai, Aqiba, Elisha B. Abuya (b. Hag 14b; t. Hag 2:1-6; y. Hag 2, 77a). The most extensive single text in classical rabbinics on the Merkavah is b. Hagigah 11b-16a. Cited by Alexander, *OTP* 1.230.

³⁸ This was Rabbi Ishmael, as reported in the Hekhalot text *Merkavah Rabbah*. Cf. D. Flusser, “Messianic Blessings,” in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 295-99.

³⁹ Cf. 1 Chr 29:10-13 with Rev 4:11a and 5:12, 14; and 1 Chr 29:22 with Rev 19:9 and Exod 24:11.

Priest and Mediator-Intercessor (Rom 8:33-34; Heb 1:3-4; 7:15-25; 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1).⁴⁰

In John 10, Jesus discusses with the Jewish authorities their charge that he calls himself “God” (a false accusation, since he calls himself “Son of God”). Quoting Psalm 82:6—“I said, you are gods [*elohim*]”—he points out that “those to whom the word of God came were called ‘gods’ (Jn 10:35).” The parallel line in Psalm 82:6b equates the “gods” with “the children [or sons] of the Most High.” Therefore it would not be illegitimate for him to say “I am God’s Son” (v. 36). Jewish midrashic interpretations identify these “gods/sons,” not as angels, but as judges or the people of Israel standing below Sinai.⁴¹ While Jesus may have accepted popular views of the passage, he may also have intended to point to the more literal meanings of the term *elohim*, and suggest to his audience that he could be called “Son of God” (*ben elohim*) because he was (before his descent) a member of that council.⁴²

The Johannine writings seem to depict an interplay between two courts: the earthly Sanhedrin and the heavenly divine council. The words and works of Jesus are being scrutinized by both, and Jesus knows it. He frequently cites his heavenly Witness in defense of what he is doing and who he is:

There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony is true. (John 5:32)

Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going. . . . I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf. (John 8:14, 18)

⁴⁰ For a thorough study on Ps 110 in the NT, see D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBL Monographs 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973). Hay says the psalm was popular because its imagery “affirmed supreme exaltation without calling into question the glory and sovereignty of God the Father. Jesus’ unique elevation was thereby defined in terms of unique proximity to God, and Father and Son were carefully distinguished. . . . [T]his image intrinsically affirmed a continuing relationship between the exalted Christ and God, precluding any possibility of conceiving Christ as a new deity dethroning an older one” (159-60).

⁴¹ Cf. J. H. Neyrey, “I Said ‘You Are Gods’: Psalm 82:6 and John 10,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 647-63; S. L. Homcy, “‘You Are Gods’? Spirituality and a Difficult Text,” *JETS* 32 (1989): 485-91.

⁴² Hebrews 1-2, however, argues strenuously that Jesus was not merely an angel, one of the *elohim*, but unique son of God. Cf. “only one” in John 1:14, 18; 3:16.

Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? (John 8:46) ⁴³

Heavenly council texts in the HB normally depict God enthroned among his servants, but with Daniel 7 the pattern becomes three: God, Co-regent, and Angels. A similar pattern emerges in the NT. Paul urges Timothy to action by invoking the heavenly throneeroom: “In the presence of *God* and of *Christ Jesus* and of the *elect angels* I charge you to keep these rules” (1 Tim 5:21; cf. 1 Tim 6:13; 2 Tim 4:1). The exalted Jesus himself promises the faithful follower: “I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels” (Rev 3:5). On the other hand, unbelievers will be denied “before the angels of God” (Luke 12:9); “they shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb” (Rev 14:10).⁴⁴

Although it is not an actual throne vision, the writer of Hebrews creates in the mind of his readers a vision of the true Mount Zion, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”. Employing a similar triadic pattern, he tells them that they will draw near to “innumerable *angels* in festal gathering . . . to *God* the judge of all . . . and to *Jesus*, the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb 12:22-24).

⁴³ Cf. 1 John 5:9: “If we receive human testimony the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God, that he has testified to his Son.”

⁴⁴ NT “binitarian” imagery (i.e. God and Messiah) is the subject of L. W. Hurtado’s *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). The text of 1 Cor 8:6 reflects the early NT binitarian view: “For us there is one God, the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ.” Some late mss. add “and one Holy Spirit.” On rabbinic evidence that the early Jewish followers of Jesus taught a “binitarian theology,” see A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977); idem, *Rebecca’s Children (Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World)* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 151-58.

Trinitarian imagery is the subject of a study by Jane Schaberg, *The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: The Triadic Phrase in Matthew 28:19b* (SBL Dissertations 61; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982). Schaberg thinks the Matthean triad of Father, Son, and Spirit is a midrashic interpretation of Daniel’s Ancient One, Son of Man, and Angels (chap. 7). That the “Spirit” of God can represent the “Spirits” of God, or vice versa, is suggested in John’s salutation in Rev 1:4: “Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ.” The “seven spirits” are elsewhere mentioned in Rev. 3:1, 4:5, and 5:6; in 8:2 they are called “seven angels who stand before God.” The “Holy Spirit” is never included in NT descriptions of the heavenly council.

Throne Liturgy. Several of the “Royal Psalms” from the HB are quoted by NT writers. Originally, these psalms gave honor to the Davidic king. Psalm 110 is actually the most frequently quoted HB passage in the NT. It depicts YHVH as giving to the יְהוָה at his right hand victory over his earthly enemies. Psalm 2 is also popular (Matt 3:17; 17:5; par.), but especially in the book of Revelation.⁴⁵ The “Enthronement Psalms” (Pss 47, 93, 96-99), which originally praised YHVH as king, are also repeatedly used in Revelation.⁴⁶ From the throne vision in Isaiah 6 the famous *Kedushah* is sung by the living creatures in the throne vision in Revelation 4: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (v. 8). The use of such temple-related materials suggests that Revelation, in this case, is seeking to establish theological links with the HB.

Throne Visions. The NT contains two throne visions. The first is in the historical book of Acts. There Stephen is being tried by the Sanhedrin for preaching about Jesus in Jerusalem. Knowing he is about to be executed by the court, Stephen has a vision of God’s throneroom: “He gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’” (Acts 7:55-56).⁴⁷ Though he mentions no angelic beings, Stephen’s vision echoes Daniel 7: he sees YHVH and his Co-regent, God and the Son of Man.

The second vision comprises two chapters in Revelation (i.e. 4-5).⁴⁸ In

⁴⁵ Compare: Ps 2:1—Rev 11:18; Ps 2:2—Rev 11:15; Ps 2:6—Rev 14:1; Ps 2:8—Rev 12:5; Ps 2:9—Rev 12:5, 19:15a; Ps 2:10-11—Rev 14:7. Interestingly, Revelation never quotes Ps 110.

⁴⁶ Compare: Ps 47:8—Rev 4:2; Ps 47:9—Rev 4:10; Ps 93:1, 97:1, 99:1—Rev 19:6; Ps 96:1, 98:1—Rev 5:9, 14:3; Ps 96:13, 98:9—Rev 19:11.

⁴⁷ On Stephen’s throne vision, see F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 154-57.

⁴⁸ On this throne vision, see L. W. Hurtado, “Revelation 4-5 in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies,” *JSNT* 25 (1985): 105-24; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, orig. 1920, rpt. 1985), 1.102-53; R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 131-50. D. Halperin treats the book of Revelation “as Jewish” and analyzes chaps. 4-5 in light of Merkavah Mysticism (*The Faces of the Chariot*, 87-96. Cf. C. Rowland, “The Vision of the Risen Christ in Rev. i. 13ff: The Debt of an Early Christology to an Aspect of Jewish Angelology,” *JTS* 31 (1980): 1-11.

typical apocalyptic language, John is invited to “Come up here” (4:1), where he enters heaven “in the spirit” (v. 2). Immediately, he sees “One seated on a throne” (v. 2). In a traditional Hebrew mindset, John is reluctant to say more about God, but quickly focuses on the creatures surrounding his throne. These include “familiar” council members. Main attention, however, eventually turns to the exalted Jesus, symbolized by a lion and a lamb (5:5-6). Together with his Father, the Lamb receives praise and worship from other council members gathered near the throne (5:11-14). By the end of the book, Jesus sits beside God on one throne (22:1, 3).⁴⁹

Visionary Experiences. At Jesus’ baptism, “the heavens were opened to him” and “a voice from heaven said. . . .” (Matt 3:16; cf. Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22). The rending of the heavens and the revelation of a word from God were typical motifs in Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus is portrayed as the one who *descended* from heaven, then *ascended* after his resurrection, and who will *descend* again one last time (Jn 3:13 [cf. Eph 4:9-10]; Jn 20:17; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:16).⁵¹

Similarly, Paul ascends into the “third heaven” or is “caught up into Paradise” where he “heard things that are not to be told, and no mortal is permitted to repeat (2 Cor 12:2-4).⁵² In Acts 8:39, Peter is snatched away and

⁴⁹ It is significant that John never refers to a *chariot* in the throneroom. He clearly knows about Ezekiel’s vision, for he quotes from it. Does this omission suggest that John saw no need for a portable throne carried by heavenly beings, since the Messiah had sat down beside God, having ended the need for persecuted saints to know that the Throne was safe? Or is it possible that John was aware of the efforts of his contemporary Johanan ben Zakkai to substitute Merkavah speculation for the Messiah? Was John indirectly trying to affirm that the Lamb of God was the true comfort for Israel, that “Messianism” was very much alive? Ironically, John throughout portrays Jesus as primarily a victorious *lamb*, not revolutionary lion, and discourages the saints from military actions by encouraging them to “wait” (Rev 6:10-11). Ben Zakkai also advocated patient endurance.

M. Barker notes: “Those who see Jesus achieve what others had achieved only by the vision of the throne, the vision of God: they are transformed by the experience and become angelic” (*The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Christianity* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1988] 57).

⁵⁰ Cf. J. H. Charlesworth, “The Jewish Roots of Christianity: The Discovery of the Hypostatic Voice,” *SJT* 39 (1986): 19-41.

⁵¹ Ascension in Early Judaism quite often implied martyrdom. See A. F. Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment,” *ANRW* 2.23.2 (1980), esp. 1369-77.

⁵² Cf. J. W. Bowker, “Merkabah’ Visions and the Visions of Paul,” *JSS* 16 (1971):

transported to another locale by “the Spirit of the Lord” (cf. Elijah [1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 1:3, 2:16] and Ezekiel [Ezek 3:14; 8:3]).

Heavenly Powers. In his letters, Paul often alludes to angels, heavenly authorities, cosmic rulers, dominions, families, powers, rulers, and thrones. Significantly, nowhere does he ever suggest that these powers are “gods” or “sons of God” on par with Jesus the Son of God. Nor Paul he recognize them as patron angels over human kingdoms. With the exaltation of Jesus as the universal Lord, all dominion and protection flows from him. What these heavenly authorities actually are responsible for is unclear.⁵³ Throughout the NT is the thought that the Divine Warrior Jesus has defeated haSatan and his enemy cosmic forces (e.g., John 12:31, 16:11; 1 John 3:8b). 1 Peter 3 states that when Jesus is at the right hand of God, all the angels, authorities and powers are subject to him (v. 22; cf. Rev 3:1).⁵⁴

Divine Warrior. In the book of Revelation, the term “Almighty” (παντοκράτωρ) is a common designation for God. It is the Greek equivalent to יהוה-צבאות, “YHVH of hosts.”⁵⁵ In the HB this was God’s special temple name, conveying the imagery and theology of the Divine Warrior who protected his city Jerusalem with his divine armies.⁵⁶ Much of this imagery is also

157-73; P. Schäfer, “New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and in Merkavah Mysticism,” *JJS* 35 (1984): 18-35; J. D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul’s Ascent in Paradise* (Lanham: Univ. Press of America, 1986), 57-111. For bibliography on ascents, see Segal (previous footnote) and J. D. Tabor, “Returning to the Divinity,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 225-26 n. 2.

⁵³ Paul mentions the heavenly powers in: Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21, 3:10, 15, 6:12; Col 1:16, 2:10, 15; cf. 1 Pet 3:22, 2 Pet 2:10, Jude 8.

On the subject of the heavenly powers in Paul, see W. Carr, *Angels and Principalities (The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase hai archai kai hai exousiai)* (SNTS Monographs 42; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981). See also M. Barth, “Principalities, Powers, and all Things,” in *Ephesians I* (AB 34, Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 170-83, 413-14; J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A; Waco: Word, 1988), 498-99; E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Hermeneia; tr. W. R. Poehlman & R. J. Karris; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 46-58; P. T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco: Word, 1982) bibliography, 31-32, 42-53.

⁵⁴ On Satan in the NT, see D. P. Fuller, “Satan,” *ISBE* 4.341-44; W. Foerster, “σατανᾶς,” *TDNT* 7.151-63. Cf. N. Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and The Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), 107-23.

⁵⁵ The word παντοκράτωρ occurs in Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22; and 2 Cor 6:18. Cf. *TDNT* 3.914-15.

⁵⁶ Elements of HB “Zion Theology” are echoed in the book of Revelation (*IDBSup*

applied to Jesus, who is also depicted as a conquering divine warrior. For example, he will “descend from heaven” with “a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet” and destroy his enemy, Satan, “with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming” (1 Thess 5:16; 2 Thess 2:8; cf. Isa 11:4). As the terrible rider on the white horse, Jesus “judges and makes war” on his enemies. At that time, “his eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems. . . . he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood. . . . And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses” (Rev 19:11-14; cf. Isa 63:1-6).⁵⁷

Eschatological Judge. The NT term “Son of Man” is frequently associated with eschatological passages depicting Jesus as the heavenly warrior and co-regent of God returning in the glory of his Father and the angels. Such imagery clearly draws from Daniel 7:13-14.⁵⁸ Also apparently drawn from Daniel 7 is the close tie of the exalted “son of man” with the loyal ones of Israel (in Dan 7 = “holy ones”).

Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt 19:28) ⁵⁹

Conclusion

What all these images and verbal allusions suggest is that Jesus and the New Testament writers conceived of the universe in categories deeply rooted in Hebrew ideology. From that Hebraic world, the NT conveys its

985). Its main features are: (1) God’s Holy Mountain, (2) River of Paradise, (3) Conquest of Chaos, (4) Defeat of Gentile Nations, (5) Pilgrimage of Nations to Zion. All five points may be seen: (1) Rev 22:10, (2) 22:1, (3) 20:2, (4) 19:15, 20:89, (5) 21:24. This suggests that John interpreted Jesus as a *Davidic* Messiah, not merely cosmic Lord.

⁵⁷ Cf. B. A. Stevens, “Jesus as the Divine Warrior,” *ExpTim* 94 (1983): 326-29; R. J. Bauckham, “The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll,” *Neotestamentica* 22 (1988): 17-40 with bibliography.

⁵⁸ Texts mentioning the Son of Man coming with or on the clouds in judgment include: Matt 16:27 (= Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26); Matt 24:30 (= Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27); 25:31 (no par.); Matt 26:64 (= Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69).

⁵⁹ Cf. Rev 3:21: “To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

understanding of who Jesus was. It particularly concentrates on the symbolism of *Bar Enash* in Daniel 7. The imagery of God, his Messiah, and a congregation of angelic beings appears frequently as a representation of the heavenly throneroom. However, the earthly ἐκκλησία of righteous believers in some ways replaces the angelic host as the extension of “messianic government.”⁶⁰

By the end of the NT canon, no essential change in the biblical symbolism occurs. Describing Jesus at the right hand of God appears to be an important feature of NT theology.⁶¹ The NT does not become “Christocentric” in the sense that God, the Father of Jesus, is eclipsed by his Son and Lord. Even with its “exalted christology,” Revelation does not depict Jesus as a Son of God who usurps the throne of his Father (contrast El and Baal).⁶² Evidently, the council images were important for conveying Jesus’ exalted position and his authority as God’s eschatological Agent of redemption. They also provided highly expressive, powerful language to encourage those suffering disciples who could barely envision any evidence for the “throne” of God and his Messiah in the world.

Much more research can be done on all these areas of post-biblical Jewish literature. Viewing the literature with knowledge of the Hebrew divine council allows us to notice one more colorful thread in the great tapestry of Israel’s faith.

— Paul B. Sumner

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⁶⁰ Cf. Eph 3:10: “. . . so that through the ἐκκλησία the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”

⁶¹ Cf. D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 155-62.

⁶² “A survey of the full data for the christology of the Apocalypse shows clearly that the writer does not confuse the person of Christ with the person of God. There are passages in which the element of subordination occurs. . . ,” D. Guthrie, *The Relevance of John’s Apocalypse* (Devon, UK: Paternoster Press/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 55. On Revelation’s christology, see R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.cx-xiv; R. H. Mounce, “The Christology of the Apocalypse,” *Foundations* 11 (1968): 42-51. See also R. Bauckham, “The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Literature,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 322-41; M. Eugene Boring, “The Theology of Revelation: ‘The Lord Our God the Almighty Reigns,’” *Int* 49 (1986): 257-69.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AEL	<i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i> (3 vols., ed. M. Lichtheim)
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANEP	<i>The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> (3d ed., 1969)
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BCE	Before the Common Era
BDB	Brown-Driver-Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BKAT	<i>Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament</i>
BZAW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CE	Common Era
CRINT	<i>Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum</i>
EncJud	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> (1971)
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
FS	Festschrift
GKC	Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> (2d ed.)
HB	Hebrew Bible
Hor	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HSM	<i>Harvard Semitic Monographs</i>
HSS	<i>Harvard Semitic Studies</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IB	<i>Interpreters Bible</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible</i>
IDBSup	<i>Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (rev. ed. 1979—1988)
ITC	<i>International Theological Commentary</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>

<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KB	Koehler-Baumgartner, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros</i> (1958)
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
<i>NERT</i>	<i>Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
NCB	New Century Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NICNT	<i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
NICOT	<i>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NJV	New Jewish Version [<i>Tanakh</i> , Jewish Publication Society, 1985]
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	<i>Old Testament Library</i>
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (2 vols., ed. J. Charlesworth)
OTS	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>SBT</i>	<i>Studia Biblica et Theologica</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTS	<i>Society for New Testament Studies</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>