

WORSHIP, SABBATH, AND THE CONCEPT OF REST IN THE ESCHATOLOGICAL MATERIAL OF REVELATION

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Abstract:

The Johannine Apocalypse makes it clear that the final stage of the conflict between good and evil revolves around the issue of worship, and this relates intrinsically to the Sabbath. This article pinpoints the role of the Sabbath at the close of earth's history. Moreover, it also emphasizes the expressions and motifs of rest which are used to describe life beyond the second coming of Jesus. The concept of rest in eschatology will be discovered under three dimensions. First, rest is existential, that is in relation to the experience of salvation in Christ. Second, rest is ingrained in the worship on the Sabbath since the latter is symbolic of ceasing and comfort. Third, there is also an eternal dimension of rest, which basically stands in contrast with all the hardships the people of God undergo during the last tribulation before the eschaton.

Keywords: *worship, Sabbath, rest, eschatology, Revelation.*

Introduction

The concept of rest is ingrained in the origin of the human nature and race. According to the Genesis account, the human family was created on the sixth day. The second day of life was the seventh day of the creation week, a day marked by God's refraining from work. This divine rest is reclaimed by the fourth commandment of the decalogue as the reason why human beings should also rest on every seventh day. This law requires more than a weekly conformation to a ritual. It is a relational experience with the Creator. On Sabbath, both humans and God meet. The former finds the original dignity and meaning in relation to God.

The last book of the Bible presents the final eschatological conflict between good and evil as revolving around the issue of worship. Essentially, at the end of earth's history, there will be a conflict between rest (coming from obedience to God) and unrest (resulting from disobedience). The final conflict stirs up principles that go back to the very origin of human race. This study tackles the concept of rest in the book of Revelation, mostly in reference to the role of the Sabbath in the final conflict between good and evil, touching upon the issue of rest in eternity. The main question raised here is what role the Sabbath plays in the end-time events according to the book of Revelation. It will also be asked how the rest is extended as an experience of the saved in eternity. The answer to the question of Sabbath in the end-time events is important for at least three reasons. First, Revelation speaks of an end-time crisis which ends up with decisions that impact each one's destiny. Whatever part the Sabbath plays in this crisis it is not an insignificant issue. Second, the Sabbath is given credit throughout the NT and post-NT eras over against the general assumption that the fourth commandment was abrogated by Christ and His followers. Third, the study will provide that correct attitude in today's relationships between Sabbatarian and Sunday-keeping Christians.

The hypothesis of the study is that the Sabbath plays a prominent role in the end-time events and derives from the assumption that as the Sabbath has impacted salvation history in some of its critical points (primarily protology, giving of the Law, and history of Israel), so it may be at the end of history. Protology came with a test in space (temptation around the tree of knowledge of good and evil) whereas eschatology will come with a test in time.

The methodology is grounded in classical exegesis, to be applied to the main passages in Revelation which tackle issues of worship in end-times crisis. This will be informed by modern linguistics whenever linguistics matter for the analysis and comes to help eventual limitations of exegesis.

Before the analysis begins, it must be stated that the word "Sabbath" does not appear in the book of Revelation. Its presence there is rather implied. This comes from the structure of the book, its main theme, cognate terms, and the overall complexities of the visions found in the center of the book.

Nature of the last conflict

It has been a long time now since the chiasmic structure of Revelation has been visualized and accepted.¹ Whether divided into seven or eight sections/visions scholars see the heart of the chiasmus to be Revelation 11:19-15:4. This middle section reveals the conflict between good and evil, which began in primordial times and will have its resolution at the consummation of all things.

The first three phases set Christ as the target of the dragon's attacks.² The last two phases of the conflict represent the battles of the dragon against the woman-church and the remnant of her seed.³ These last

1 The arrangements and, sometimes, the arguments too are different, but the chiasmic character of Revelation's structure is recognized. See Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation: Or, the Apocalypse*, 1935; repr. New York, Cosimo, 2007, 116. Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Dalton, GA, Covenant, 1955, 27, pp.34-35. Kenneth A. Strand, "Chiasmic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1978): pp. 401-408. Darrell W. Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation*, Vancouver, Regent College, 2004, pp.391-396. A good evaluation of various chiasmic models is found in Hee Youl Lee, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Revelation: A Theological Reflection on the Functional Role of the Holy Spirit in the Narrative*, Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock, 2014, pp. 218-219.

2 The first phase is described in the image of the dragon dragging a third of the stars of heaven and casting them down to earth (Rev 12:4a). A good number of scholars argue that this refers to the angels who rebelled with Satan in the remote past. See Ronald Trail, *An Exegetical Summary of Revelation 12-22*, 2nd ed., Dallas, TX, SIL International, 2008, p.16. The second phase of the conflict is depicted in Rev 12:4-5, as a male child, the would-be ruler, who is snatched up to heaven right before the dragon eats him. This symbolically expresses Christ's victorious earthly life. See Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004, p.385. The third phase refers to the war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels (12:7-10). Ever since Oecumenius (*Commentary on the Apocalypse*, The Fathers of the Church 112, trans. John N. Suggit [Washington, DC: The University of America Press, 2006], p.113), the commentators saw the relationship between this picture and the declaration of Jesus in Luke 10:18 that He saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven. This suggests that the war in Rev 12:7 refers to a conflict in the context of Jesus' sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement. See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, Columbus, OH, Lutheran Book Concern, 1935, p.372.

3 In Rev 12:6, 13-16 the reader sees the attacks of the dragon against the woman, which is a symbol of God's people (cf. Jer 3:1; Hos 2:2, 7, 16; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-32; etc.). The concept of remnant is highly Jewish and in the OT it refers to a minority of Israel which

two phases are briefly described or only alluded to in Rev 12 but developed in fuller terms in Rev 13. The beginning of this chapter displays how the dragon invests the sea-beast with its power and authority.⁴ It is this beast that will assault the woman-church during church history and the remnant of her seed in the end of earth's history. More than that, the sea-beast too will have its pawn in the earth-beast, which will continue the assault against the remnant on behalf of the sea-beast.

During the onslaught of the two beasts it becomes evident that what is at stake is who do people worship.⁵ This is evident first of all from the use of the verb "to worship" (προσκυνεῖν) in Revelation. Out of the 24 occurrences, 9 have God as object, 10 have the beast and/or its image and once the dragon, and one is an instance where the demons and idols are worshiped. In the heart of the chiasmus, there are two radical calls to worship. The one in chapter 13 calls for bowing down before the dragon, sea-beast, and its icon and is introduced in the context of deceit, scarcity, fear, and compromise (vv. 4, 8, 12, 15). The one in chapter 14 while calls for the worship of the Creator God (v. 7) it conspicuously warns against worshipping the beast or its image (vv. 9-11).

The fact that an apparently insignificant worship incident is mentioned in the book strengthens the ideas above. On two separate occasions, under the influence of what was going on in the vision, John falls down in worship before the accompanying angel (19:10; 22:8-9). The act was probably and not necessarily religious.⁶ Or John thought that the angel was more

is faithful and obedient to God especially in times of laxness and apostasy. J. Christopher Garrison, *The Judaism of Jesus: The Messiah's Redemption of the Jews*, Blomington, IN, Westbow, 2014, pp.137-138.

4 It seems that even though the dragon is somehow in the shade of the sea-beast, it is the dragon who receives prominence in the narrative. Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, Library of the New Testament Studies, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p.216.

5 John Paul Heil, *The Book of Revelation: Worship for Life in the Spirit of Prophecy*, Eugene, OR, Cascade, 2014, pp.178-179.

6 The act of making obeisance is of oriental origin and present in other ancient Greek culture also. Of it Herodotus, Aristotle, Sophocles, Euripides, Xenophon, and others testify. Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p.1518. In the LXX, the act of obeisance is present in the experience of Abraham bowing down before the Hittites (Gen 23:7, 12) or of Mordecai refusing to kneel down before Haman (Esth 3:2). This holds true for Hellenistic papyri. See James Hope

than he was.⁷ Yet, each time, John is corrected by the angel not to worship him, but God.⁸ This repeated incident tells the reader that worship is really not immaterial to God, especially in the end-times. No matter whether John simply wanted to pay respect to a higher authority (non-religiously) or to worship because he thought he stands before a divine being (religiously), the fact that he was prompted not to and to reserve this act exclusively for God tells the reader that non-religious worship can be interpreted as religious and that the divine can be confused. Therefore, some clear-cut distinctions inside the experience of worship are made in the book.

The object of worship

In pluralism, the name of the deity is not important. What matters is the category, not the identity.⁹ In Revelation, it is clear that when the gospel is preached, the identity of the divine entity is obviously pinpointed. The inhabitants of the earth are called to fear and glorify the God who created everything (14:6-7; cf. 4:11). Somehow, the quality of creator differentiates the true God from non-divine deities. If this call is the same as the one entrusted symbolically to John in Rev 10:11¹⁰ then, it must be read in the

Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1930, p.549.

7 So Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*, trans. Maria Poggi and Adam Kamesar, Grand Rapids, MI: 2006, p.301.

8 Peter Carrrell debates in his monograph whether angels were worshipped in Judaism. The evidences he puts forward leave one with the conclusion that there was no angelic worship by Jews before the rise of Christianity and, more specifically, the second century. In this context, the genitive phrase θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων in Col 2:18 is probably subjective, not objective, that is, it is the angels who worship, not people worshipping angels. There might have been, however, private deviations from the official monotheism. He then takes the two incidents in Revelation as firing back against an alleged angelic cult in Asia Minor. Peter R. Carrrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, Society for New Testament Studies 95, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.73-75.

9 One of the tendencies in the current religious pluralism is to consider the declaration of the name of God in Ex 3:14 as the "One who will come in new ways." This ultimately means that "God is greater than any single faith community" and supposes that religions are different paths towards and definitions of the fullness of the infinite. See David Ray Griffin, *Deep Religious Pluralism*, Louisville, KY, Westminster, 2005, pp.120-122. See also Livingstone Thompson, *A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Studies in the History of Religious and Political Pluralism 3, Bern, Peter Lang, 2009, pp.4-11.

10 There are certain verbal and thematic parallels that can make this case. The common theme is prophesying or preaching and the target is the same in both texts: people,

context of the trumpets. In this case, “The angel [in 14:7] speaks of the creator in terms which recall the plagues of the first four trumpets.”¹¹ The earth-dwellers are summoned to worship¹² the God who has dominion over the elements that hit the planet by the first four trumpets (earth, sea, springs of waters, and sun, moon, and the stars of heaven).

An apocalyptic background is found in the *Testament of Solomon* 17.4 which reads, “So I said to him: ‘Fear the God of heaven and earth and tell me by what angel you are thwarted.’ He replied, ‘He who is about to return (as) Savior thwarts me. If His mark is written on (one’s) forehead, it thwarts me, and because I am afraid of it, I quickly turn and flee from him.’” This dialogue between Solomon and a demon is placed within an apocalyptic milieu. Fearing the Creator, who is about to come is an obligation for all, and having His mark¹³ on the forehead is a paramount ingredient of protection and triumph.

Since, the label of creator refers in biblical theology to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, in Revelation there no wonder why a satanic triumvirate counterfeits the true Trinity.¹⁴ As Steven Friesen puts it, “The theme of deception appears at crucial junctures in Rev 12-13.”¹⁵ Certain actions of the dragon, sea-beast, and earth-beast are meant to attribute the quality of creator and God to them. For example, the transfer of authority from the dragon to the mortally wounded but then healed sea-beast (13:2, 4) imitates Christ’s reception of the Father’s authority after His death and resurrection (Matt 28:18).¹⁶ The global authority

nations, and tongues. The difference is that in 10:11 kings are used, whereas in 14:6, this category is replaced by “tribes”.

11 J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2008, p.236.

12 The wording in Rev 14:7 does not use the term “worship” but this is implied. “To fear God is to reverence him; to give him glory is to pay him the respect and honor that is his due.” Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1997, p.271.

13 In the *Testament of Solomon*, the mark is the cross, whereas in Revelation, as it will be shown later in the paper, the seal of God is a more complex notion, being rooted in the person of the Godhead.

14 Oral E. Collins, *The Final Prophecy of Jesus: An Introduction, Analysis, and Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock, 2007, pp.327, 329.

15 Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p.203.

16 As Simon Kistemaker and William Hendriksen say, “these words are a parody of Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. The Antichrist seeks to imitate Christ with a sem-

of the sea-beast (13:7) simulates the authority that Christ, named the King of kings and the creative Word of God, will exercise over the nations at the end of time (19:13, 15, 16). The earth-beast, too, displays characteristics of the Creator God when it is described as giving breath to the image of the first beast, which, as a result, comes to life (13:15).

By contrast, the true God is to be identified by the fact that He is the One who created heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water (14:7).¹⁷ He is the uncreated One. The other alleged gods are creations of one way or another. The Creator God is recognized by His commandments, which His people of saints obey (12:17; 14:12). His people is also characterized by having the spirit of the prophecy (19:10; cf. 12:17) and the faith in Jesus (14:12). Thus, the church lives in the world as a representative of the Triune Creator God. He is the only One worthy of worship (cf. 4:11; 5:13).

The attitude of worship

Who is worthy to worship is crucial, but it is not enough to worship the true God. It also matters the motivation of worship. The worship that the earth dwellers offer to the dragon, the sea-beast, and its image comes from deception (13:12-14) and fear (13:15-17), or simply put it, from a lack of conviction. Conviction is critical in biblical theology. God very seldom drew upon miracles to prove that He is the true God.¹⁸ On multiple occasions, Jesus refused to perform supernatural signs in order to prove that He is the Messiah.¹⁹ Scriptures, not miracles, seem to be the last resort for faith.²⁰

blance of fatal wounds and a subsequent revival." Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Commentary 20, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker, 1953–2001, p.389.

17 "The description of God as 'the one who made the heaven and the earth' occurs only here, but creation theology permeates the book (3:14; 4:7, 11; 5:13; 10:6; 12:16)." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2002, p.537.

18 One may refer here to episodes such as the interaction between Moses and the Egyptian authorities by the time of the exodus and the conflict between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, at the time of king Ahab.

19 Cf. Matt 27:42; Mar 8:11-12; Luke 23:8-9; John 2:18-19; 6:30.

20 Cf. 2 Pet 1:19; Luke 16:31.

OT history presents an episode when the supernatural made the difference between the authentic and false God, between YHWH and Baal. It is the scene on Mount Carmel when Elijah received an answer to His prayer to YHWH by fire, which burned the offering (1 Kgs 18). As a result, the witnesses knew who the true God is. Amazingly, Rev 13:13 borrows this image from the OT²¹ when it reads that the earth-beast “performs great signs even to the extent of making fire come down from heaven on earth, before people.”²² It is like John re-writes the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel with a crucial change²³ – the false prophets of Baal are able to cause (i.e. simulate) fire come down on their altar. This would make the mission of Elijah much harder and the decision for the true God almost impossible to take. It is in this context then, that Scriptures and God’s commandments come to the fore. The true God in this setting is the God of Scriptures and the decision for the true God is taken under the conviction based on Scriptures and the commandments therein.

Interestingly, the mark of devotion to the beast is to be placed on people’s “right hand or on their forehead” (13:16; 14:9). Not only that the hand is given priority to the forehead, but, in contrast, God’s sign is to exclusively be placed on the forehead of His people (7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4). This is understood in literature as a contrast between an assumed commitment to God versus a situational-lucrative commitment to the beast.²⁴ This brings the discussion to the kind of worship John speaks of.

21 R. H. Charles finds John resorting upon non-canonical contexts. He speaks about the magic and pseudo-wonders performed by the religious personnel of ancient emperors. Charles states that “All oriental cults had recourse to such deceits.” R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, T&T Clark International, 1920, p.359.

22 Unless otherwise stated, all translations from ancient languages are mine.

23 “The ‘impressive miracles’ performed by the beast from the sea are reminiscent of Elijah’s miracle of fire (1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10; cf. Luke 9:54), on which they may have been intentionally modeled.” David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Word Biblical Commentary 52B, Dallas, TX, Word, 2002, p.759.

24 The mark in itself conveys ideas such as membership, business, and administrative rights. M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Louisville, KY, John Knox, 1989, p.162. “It would be something like a seal, or a brand, that could be stamped on a person’s hand or forehead.” Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series; Helps for Translators, New York, United Bible Societies, 1993, p.204.

The nature of worship

To worship the beast seems a little different than worshipping the divine. The beast stands for a kingdom (Dan 7:17, 23).²⁵ Hence, worshipping a political entity may not necessarily be equivalent to experiencing worship to the full (religious) sense. This is rather worship as subjection and civic obedience or a sort of universal religion.²⁶ In a day-by-day context, God's people is to respect the governmental laws (e.g. Rom 13:1-7). However, in times of crisis when God's law is undermined, disobedience to the state or any other entity is preferable (cf. Acts 4:19-20).

An OT background to the political-civic kind of worship in Rev 13 is found in Daniel 3. In Dan 2, Nebuchadnezzar is shown an image made up of four metals: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. The prophet tells the king that he is represented by the golden head, the other three metals representing other kingdoms to come to prominence in history after Babylon. Immediately in Dan 3, an image entirely covered up with gold is erected and the imperial officials are called to the capital to worship that image. The message was clear. Nebuchadnezzar wanted an unending dominion for Babylon.²⁷ In order to ensure this, he needed the representatives of the empire re-affirm their loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. "All of these government officials were brought out to the plain of Dura, where their loyalty was to be demonstrated to the king by bowing before the colossus."²⁸ Formally,

25 Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary on Chapters 1-9*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2008, p.212. John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary 30, Dallas, TX, Word, 2002, p.173.

26 "Universal worship of the beast will be the ultimate achievement of those seeking one worldwide religion as they withhold from the true God His central place." Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary*, Chicago, IL, Moody, 1995, p.164.

27 The relationship between the image in the dream of Dan 2 and the statue erected in Dan 3 was noticed by both ancient and modern expositors. "Hippolytus attributed the king's decision to make the statue to the dream recorded in chap. 2 and to the fact that Daniel had identified him with the head of gold: "The king being puffed up with this address and elated in heart, made a copy of this image, in order that he might be worshiped by all as a God." Jerome and Chrysostom also accuse the king of desiring to be worshiped through the statue. John Joseph Collins, Frank Moore Cross, and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993, p.181.

28 Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American Commentary 18, Nashville, TN, Broadman & Holman, 2001, p.112.

they are called to bow down before a golden idol, but practically this was an outward religious act with a political and civic significance. In this context, worship does not mean adoration as such, but diplomatic allegiance to Babylon.

Likewise, in Revelation, people worship the beast not necessarily through a real act of worship, but rather through formal submission and religious conformity to the beast's code.²⁹ In the context of the 1st century, "The demand to worship the image, which to the authorities symbolized appropriate loyalty to the state [...] to the Christians would symbolize apostasy."³⁰ In order for this worship to be idolatrous in a Christian sense it must be that obedience to the beast contradicts in some point the obedience to the true God. Or put in different words, the loyalty to the beast requires the breaking of God's commandments. Since the real issue is worship, we are talking here about the first four commandments of the Decalogue.³¹ They are talking about God as the object of worship. As Jon Paulien³² argues, in the last conflict between good and evil, all first four commandments are at stake.

God is replaced with the dragon and the sea-beast, and this deals with the first commandment. The image of the beast is a representation of the sea-beast and this finds its background in the second commandment which says that the true God cannot and should not be encapsulated in a created object. The third commandment is alluded to when the sea-beast

29 Following William Barclay, Leon Morris finds that the reception of the mark of the beast conveys that humanity is enslaved, devoted to the beast and accept its authority and law. It is a sort of certificate to be obtained by recognizing the beast as god, while denying the true Christian faith. Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tynedale New Testament Commentaries 20, Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 1987, p.167.

30 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 1993, electronic ed. (ad locum, Logos 6).

31 This has been observed also by Ranko Stefanović who writes: "According to Revelation 12-14, the issue in the final crisis centers on the relationship with God and proper worship. The two groups at the time of the end are

identified as those who worship God versus those who worship the dragon and the beast (Rev. 14:7,9; cf. 13:8, 12-15). This explains why the sea beast's end-time activities are described as well-planned attacks on these four commandments." Ranko Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Berrien Springs, MI, Andrews University Press, 2002, p.415.

32 Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says about the End-Time*, Hagerstown, MD, Pacific Press, 1994, pp. 147-149.

is depicted as speaking blasphemies and insults against God (Rev 13:5-6). The fourth commandment is not explicitly mentioned, but it should play an important role due to the fact that it is the only commandment which is to be obeyed just because God requires so. The God of the first three commandments could be replaced theoretically by any another exclusivist entity, designated as the supreme being. Likewise, the ethics of the last six commandments is valued even in non-religious and non-Christian backgrounds. But the Creator God of the fourth commandment can only be worshipped on the seventh day, because this is the only day that commemorates the act of creation. These last issues are the ones we now turn to.

The time of worship

The fact that in the throne-room in heaven the Creator is adored and praised unceasingly (cf. Rev 4:8) does not necessarily imply that the day of the week which commemorates the creation is not important anymore. For the creation to worship the Creator in divorce from the Sabbath is incongruent and contradictory. This is simply because the Sabbath is a memorial of creation, it is part of the Creator's profile.

The fourth commandment is not quoted and explicitly mentioned, but there are clear allusions that seem to refer to it. Such is the phrase in Rev 14:7, "and worship the One who made the heaven, the earth, seas and the springs of waters." God and the triplet "heaven, earth, and seas" is found in several places,³³ including the fourth commandment (Ex 20:11).³⁴ The verb "worship" suggests that we should think of contexts where God is not only presented as the Creator, but the reader is left with the obligation to worship Him. "The way to worship God as Creator is to observe His Sabbath in memory of His work of creation (Gen 2:1-3)."³⁵ Therefore, the fourth commandment is a good candidate for this.

Another implicit allusion is that those who worship the beast and its image "do not have rest" (Rev 14:11). Probably, the primary meaning of this

33 E.g., Ps 96:11; 146:6; Acts 4:24; 14:15; cf. Hag 2:6.

34 As Paulien affirms, "when an ancient reader who knew the OT read Rev 14:7, that person would have recognized an allusion to the Sabbath command of Exodus 20." Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God*, Hagerstown, MD, Pacific Press, 2004, p.184.

35 Beatrice Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," in *Symposium on Revelation – Exegetical and General Studies Book I*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Silver Spring, MD, Biblical Research Institute, 1992, pp.245-278 (esp. 256).

phrase is that those who worship the beast do not find spiritual, inward rest or peace. However, in the context of the threefold angelic message (Rev 14:6-12), with clear allusions to creation, it may convey more than that. The term for “rest” (ἀνάπαυσις) is found multiple times in relation to the weekly or annual Sabbaths. For example, the weekly Sabbath is called a “holy rest” (Ex 16:23; 31:15) and every seventh day is a “rest” time (Ex 23:12; 35:2; Lev 23:3). The annual feasts such as the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31), the New Year (Lev 23:24), and Tabernacles (Lev 23:39) are called likewise a “rest”. On the same paradigm, the sabbatical year was a “rest” for the land (Lev 25:4-5) and in looking up towards the jubilee the Jews were to count “seven rests of years” (Lev 25:8) where the term “rest” definitely stands for a Sabbatical year. This may suggest that in Rev 14:11, the worshippers of the beast do not have rest in a deeper sense. They have nothing to do with the Creator of all things, therefore they do not keep the Sabbath day as a holy rest.

The mark of the beast is the last notion that is linked to the issue of the Sabbath. First of all, the term “mark” is only used once outside Revelation and this is in an idolatrous context (Acts 17:29). The mark of the beast is a characteristic of human-made gods, in contrast with the Creator God. The fact that this impress is to be placed on the right hand or on the forehead makes it a counterfeit of anything God asked His people to have in these two places. The first thing meant to be placed on the hand and between eyes (i.e. on the forehead) is the festival of the Passover (Ex 13:16). Since this is a festival, a holy time, the sense is figurative. To have the Passover on the hand and on the forehead means to have it in a position of prominence where it can easily be remembered. The second thing destined to be placed on the hands and between the eyes are the words and commandments that God gave Israel through Moses (Deut 6:6-8; 11:18). Here too, the idea is that the commandments of God are to be close to their heart, a sort of inspiration for the everyday activities.

The beast requires in eschatology what God required in old times, just that the true Passover and the commandments of the true God will be replaced by a forgery. The amazement of the earth-dwellers because the sea-beast recovers from its mortal wound (Rev 13:4; 17:8) may be the picture of a false Passover, in the sense that the sea-beast is the new savior who died and raised up. The mark of the beast may also symbolize a false law of God. It is the commandments of God with slight changes, bearing the beast’s fingerprints.

One must study the mark of the beast in contrast with the sign of God in Scripture. The sign of the covenant between God and His people in scripture is the Sabbath (Ex 31:13, 17; Ezek 20:12, 20). "The 'seal' of God in Revelation is the same as God's 'sign' in the OT; it is the Sabbath appropriately observed as a witness to God's creatorship and as an evidence of His re-creatorship, His role as sanctifier."³⁶ This Sabbath is both a festival (like the Passover) and part of God's commandments. It seems then, that the mark of the beast counterfeits, among others, the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It is probable that it contains the obligation for the inhabitants of the earth to obey the beast's version of the God's commandments. It is a Sabbath that does not highlight the creative power of God, but the creative power of the beast. If the saints keep the commandments of God (Rev 12:17; 14:12) this includes, by necessity, all commandments, including the Sabbath.³⁷ By contrast, receiving the mark of the beast means to receive a new identity, one that disassociates from the Creator God.

At the end of this section, it is worth asking what is so special about the Sabbath to become a part of the central issue in the final crisis? Paulien³⁸ suggest three reasons. The first is that Sabbath keeping is the perfect illustration of the Christian gospel. In essence, the gospel is the rest of the sinner after the finished work of Christ, the Savior. By keeping the Sabbath, humanity would confirm that they are saved by Jesus Christ. Everything else is salvation by works. The second reason is that the Sabbath is the ideal test.³⁹ Most of the Ten Commandments find confirmation in logic,

36 C. Mervyn Maxwell, "The Mark of the Beast," in *Symposium on Revelation – Exegetical and General Studies Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Silver Spring, MD, Biblical Research Institute, 1992, pp. 41-132 (esp. 59).

37 As Paulien remarks: "The issue in the final crisis, therefore, is not limited to the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is an integral part of the issue." Paulien, *What the Bible Says*, p. 153.

38 *Ibidem*, pp.154-157.

39 That the Sabbath is an eschatological test is clear also for William Johnson: "In that final crisis the commandments of God will emerge as a standard of loyalty (12:17; 14:6-12). The Sabbath in particular will be the litmus test; one's relationship to it will disclose his basic relationship to God and His law. [...]. The Sabbath, anciently the 'sign' of the people of God (Exod 31:13; Ezek 20:20), will again come to the fore to show the world those who put God first." William G. Johnson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory Over the Forces of Evil," in *Symposium on Revelation – Exegetical and General Studies Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Silver Spring, MD, Biblical Research Institute, 1992, pp.3-41

psychology, human relations, or human rights. The only commandment which seems overstated is the fourth. And here is why:

The one part of the Ten Commandments that is not logical is the command to worship on Saturday rather than on some other day. Such a command is so lacking in logic and self-interest that secular people find it easy to ignore. After all, no one has been able to scientifically demonstrate a significant difference between Saturday and any other day of the week. The sun shines and the rain falls in the usual amounts. The earth continues to spin and revolve around the sun. The only difference between Saturday and other days is that God Himself made a distinction between them. To keep the Sabbath is to take God at his word in spite of the fact that the five senses can perceive no evidence that to do so is reasonable.⁴⁰

When the divine demand of the fourth commandment is fulfilled with the expense of job, family or one's own life, it will be the perfect proof of loyalty. The third reason is that keeping the Sabbath is part of *imitatio Christi*. Christ was a Sabbath keeper. If the faithful are to follow in His footsteps this would include the conformation to the fourth commandment, just as Jesus did while on earth.

Rest in eternity

Rest is also alluded to in the context of eternity. Speaking about the great multitude of those passing through the great tribulation, John declares that they will hunger and thirst no more, and neither will they be burned by the sun again. The picture of protection from hunger, thirst, scorching of wind or sun and leading by the springs of water echoes the promise of Isaiah with regards to those exiled in Babylon (cf. Isa 49:10).⁴¹ In Revelation, Christ, the Lamb-Shepherd, will lead the oppressed saints to the springs of living waters (Rev 7:16-17). The motif of the shepherd recalls Ps 23:1-2⁴² which presents YHWH as the shepherd who makes sure His people does not lack anything and leads them to "waters of rest".

(esp. 29). See also Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," pp. 257, 271. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 426, 445.

40 Paulien, *What the Bible Says...*, 155.

41 So James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker, 2009, p.140.

42 So Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel și Apocalipsa*, trans. Christian Sălcianu, Pantelimon, Viață și Sănătate, 2013, p. 273.

Another angle from which the reader perceives this eternal rest is found in Rev 14:13 which speaks of the ones who die in the Lord from a certain time onward. “They rest from their labor,” states John. They are in direct contrast with the worshippers of the beast who “have no rest day and night” (Rev 14:11). But there is a more subtle parallel within the Apocalypse, as Richard Bauckham points out. Those worshipping the beast who, as a consequence, have no rest stand in deep antinomy with the four living creatures who are unceasingly (lit. “have no rest”) singing their praise to the Creator (Rev 4:8-11). “This parallel continues the ironic parallel between the worship of God and the worship of the beast which has run through chapter 13. In 14:11 the irony is savage, for behind the formal parallel created by the identity of language lies a material contrast: between the unceasing joy of the worshippers of God and the unceasing torment of the worshippers of the beast.”⁴³

Primarily, the idea that those having died will rest from their labor (14:13) speaks about rest in death until the resurrection (cf. Rev 6:11). Yet, even after resurrection they will experience rest at an existential level. It is a rest in worship typified by the adoration of the four living creatures. They worshipped the Creator on earth, they will worship Him in the age to come. The invitation Jesus made to take His yoke and find rest in Matt 11:29 is now extended beyond this earth. It is an eternal Sabbath.

The Sabbath is present in eternity inasmuch as it is linked to the eschatological fulfillment of Israel’s Sabbatical festivals. For example, the Feast of Tabernacles⁴⁴ seems to be alluded to in Rev 7:15 and 21:3 (Cf. Deut 31:9-13). Stephen Smalley states: “This imagery continues the theme of the Festival of Booths present in verse 9 (q.v.), where – as throughout Rev 7 – the theological notion of protection is much in evidence.”⁴⁵ Both

43 Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993, p.28.

44 “Rev. 7:9–17 may reflect a contemporary Jewish interpretation of Zechariah 14. *Targ. Jon.* Zechariah 14 adds to the MT the following elements: at the end time “spring waters will issue from Jerusalem” (v 8), “the inhabitants of the earth ... will serve before the Lord with one accord” (v 9), and the Lord “will surround the whole land” (v 10). In Zech. 14:16–21 both the MT and the Targum prophesy that “Jerusalem will dwell in security” (v 11) and that Gentiles will believe in the Lord and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the house of the Lord.” G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1999, p.441.

45 Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation of John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 2005, p.199. He goes on highlighting how

verses picture God pitching the tent of His presence over the saved. This is the realization of what the Israelites anticipated at every such Feast – the eternal rest and joy to come.

Implications and conclusions

The concept of rest in eschatology has three dimensions: existential, expression of worship, and eternal. The first one is the rest the saved experience in Christ. There is no rest for the sinner. Rest is the experience of those having solved their sin-problem. Having their clothes washed in the blood of the Lamb, God's people have patience and confidence in the conflict there are thrown. This is a subjective dimension but of so great importance for their denouement in the final conflict.

The second dimension is objective as it relates to an outward manifestation – worship. Indeed, the final conflict between the dragon and the remnant revolves around the issue of worship. First, the object of worship is the Creator. The beast and its image stand like a counterfeit. The book of Revelation envisions a cleavage of the human society into two classes: those worshipping the Creator-God and those worshipping the beast and its image. There will be no third category. Second, God can be worshipped formally but in times of crisis, all those lacking conviction will lay down outward adherence and embrace the worship of the beast. The beast accepts submission and conformity for mercantile reasons. The needed conviction is not to be based on the five senses, but on scripture. This is because, Revelation shows that in the end time great miracles will be performed by the beast. These miracles are described in a language reminiscent of God's miracles in the bible. This suggests that one cannot trust his or her own empirical data for forming views and beliefs about God and the universe. Third, the beast represents a political and religious entity. To worship such an entity may mean subjection to the pretensions and laws of the beast. It is a sort of civic commitment or allegiance.

Fourth, when one tackles the issue of worship the Creator-God in Revelation he or she cannot avoid the issue of time. The time of worship is also an expression of rest. As it was argued in this chapter, to worship the Creator ought not to be divorced from the Sabbath of the fourth com-

the saints rejoice the protection of God throughout their earthly journey and experience "his uninterrupted presence peacefully in eternity."

mandment. This commandment specifically requires humanity to worship God who created the heaven and the earth. Therefore, to worship the Creator in eschatology leads unavoidably to the Sabbath. The seventh day will become an issue in the final conflict. It is the ideal test of loyalty since there is not specific and scientific reason to comply with the fourth commandment except that God requires it in His law.

There is also an eternal dimension of rest in Revelation. Rest is to be experienced as a lack of all sorts of depravations that the people of God goes through during the great final tribulation. They have not been spared from difficulties and hardships, but they will be comforted by the Lamb. This eternal dimension of rest is also reflected in the language symbolic of the Feast of Booths – a festival which anticipated the entrance of God's people in the heavenly Jerusalem. There they rest of their labors.

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