

Literary and Theological Parallels Between Revelation 14–15 and Exodus 19–24

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The more commentaries written on the book of Revelation, the more literary allusions to the Old Testament discovered there. Thus the list of allusions to the Old Testament found in the phraseology of Revelation becomes longer and longer. A recent example of this is the excellent and detailed study by Jon Paulien on the section of Revelation dealing with the trumpets.¹ After carefully analyzing the question of what constitutes an allusion and how previous interpreters have handled them, Paulien came to the conclusion that Revelation 8:7–12 contains thirty reasonably direct allusions to or echoes of the Old Testament, a higher count than all but one of the previous interpreters had found.²

With this ongoing study of Revelation through Old Testament eyes, it is inevitable that more and more connections of this type will be found. That is the point of this study. The passages of Revelation covered in this search are chapters 14 and 15, especially the instruction given there known as the three angels' messages (Rev 14:6–11). A sizeable body of information from the OT relating to this passage and its context remains largely untapped. The purpose of this study is to utilize those details in coming to a better understanding of this passage in Revelation.

We are not dealing here with only occasional words or phrases that are taken over into Revelation, though there are some examples of that kind of use. We are dealing here with a more comprehensive scheme in which a connected series of passages in one book are paralleled by another series of texts in the other. The parallels between these blocks of text may consist in lexical relations, in historical experiences, in theophanic aspects of revelation, or in theological relations. All of these features operate at one time or another in connecting these two extended narratives.

¹ *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series, No. 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1987).

² *Ibid.*, 303.

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The major lines of the prophecies in the book of Revelation can be divided off through their introductory scenes. This has been demonstrated by Kenneth Strand, who has emphasized that each line of prophecy in the book of Revelation is introduced by a “Victorious Vision” scene is set in the heavenly sanctuary.³ These show the nature of God’s activities taking place there while the succeeding prophecies are fulfilled in earthly events. The scene introducing the central prophecy of the book (chapters 12–14) is found in Revelation 11:19. There the heavenly sanctuary is opened and the ark of the covenant is seen inside it. The next major prophetic series of Revelation is divided off by the sanctuary scene occurring in Revelation 15:5–8. There the seven angels with the plague bowls come out of the heavenly sanctuary, and no one is permitted to go into it until they have finished their work on the earth. This describes a final phase to take place in the work of judgment. Thus the sanctuary scenes of 11:19 and 15:5–8 enclose the narrative with which we are concerned, showing scenes of the opening and closing of judgment.

We are not concerned here with all of the central prophecy of Revelation 12–14. For our present purposes chapters 12 and 13 have been laid aside, and this study begins with chapter 14. Chapters 12 and 13 are both self-contained prophecies. They are related to each other and to chapter 14, but they also go through their own complete cycles. I have elaborated this point in chapter 12 in a previous study.⁴ Revelation 13 is also a self-contained unit, even though it has relations with what precedes it and what follows it. The sea beast in the first half of the chapter is a major opponent to God and His people at the beginning of and during the Christian age, while the land beast in the second half of the chapter is their major opponent at the end of the age. Chapter 14 starts a new section with a new scene that is not of the same nature as the two scenes in chapter 13, although they are related. The victors seen at the beginning of chapter 14 have gained the victory over the beast shown in the preceding chapter.

In particular, the message of the third angel of chapter 14 refers back to events in chapter 13, for it warns against the image of the beast and its mark, which are described there.

Externally, the two sanctuary scenes of 11:19 and 15:5–8 divide off the central section of Revelation from the rest of the book. Internally, this central section consists of three main prophecies, found in chapters 12, 13, and 14, respectively. Only the third of these three is under consideration here. It covers all of Revelation 14 and includes the first four verses of chapter 15. The chapter division does not coincide with the division between these prophecies. This

³ “The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS*, 25 (1987): 107–122; idem, “The ‘Victorious–Introduction’ Scenes in the Visions of the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS*, 25 (1987): 267–288.

⁴ “The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20,” *AUSS*, 23 (1985): 37–54.

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is indicated by the succeeding introductory sanctuary scene, which brings up the next major line of prophecy—the seven last plagues.

From these introductory observations we proceed to the heart of the exposition, a section by section comparison between the two major passages for study from Exodus and Revelation.

A. Exodus 19 and Revelation 14:1–5: Introduction and Setting

The most convenient way of presenting these comparisons is through two parallel lists:

Exodus 19	Revelation 14:1–5
1. Location: Mount Sinai (v. 2)	1. Location: Mount Sion (v. 1)
2. Location: at the foot of the mount (v. 23)	2. Location: on the mount (v. 1)
3. People present: 12 Israelite tribes (vs. 1, 3, 6)	3. People present: the 144,000, made up of 12 Israelite tribes (v. 1)
4. A voice from heaven: thunder and a musical instrument—the trumpet (v. 16)	4. A voice from heaven: thunder and musical instruments—harps (v. 2)
5. Origin of the people—redeemed from Egypt (v. 4)	5. Origin of the people—redeemed from the earth (v. 3)
6. Purity of the people: “do not go near a woman” (v. 15)	6. Purity of the people—“not defiled themselves with women” (v. 4)
7. Purity of the people: Moses consecrated the people and “they washed their garments” (v. 13)	7. Purity of the people: “they are spotless” (v. 5)
8. Words of the people: “all that the Lord has spoken we will do” (v. 8)	8. Words of the people: “in their mouth no lie was found” (v. 5)

The sequence of the text in Revelation 14:1—15:4 raises a basic question. Why does it start with this episode? It begins with what might be considered a conclusion, showing the 144,000 victorious upon Mount Sion with the Lamb. This should come at the end of the line, after the three angels’ messages and the depiction of the Second Coming. Historically and chronologically that is where it belongs. Revelation 15:2–4 deals with the same scene and subject, and it is a continuation of the introductory scene in 14:1–5. Once the parallels with Exodus are recognized, however, a reason for this introductory scene is evident, because it parallels the picture of the people as they arrived at Mount Sinai. They were victorious over the beast of Egypt, just as this new spiritual Israel will be victorious over the beast of their own time. But that victory and their state in victory is also preliminary to what follows.

The victory of the 144,000 will be more complete and final than was the status of ancient Israel at Mount Sinai, hence some of the elements in the narrative have been transformed. Ancient Israel could not come up on the Mount because they were not holy enough, even with the most elaborate ceremonial preparations. The 144,000, however, may join the Lamb up on the mount. A close similarity between the names of these mounts can be seen (Sinai and

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Sion), and this is the only place in Revelation that Sion appears. The twelve tribes are present in both settings, but now in Revelation they are spiritual or symbolic tribes (chapter 7). The conditions of purity have also been transformed. In the Old Testament setting there was a striving for ceremonial purity, but now in the new setting that has become spiritual and moral purity. The temporary prohibition against sexual intercourse now comes to represent spiritual intercourse with a worldly church (Rev 17), from which these modern saints have abstained. Ceremonial purity of garments has been transformed into a picture of being covered with garments of the righteousness of Christ. In the Old Testament setting the people said they would do all that the Lord commanded, but they failed soon thereafter (Exod 32). In the New Testament scene no such failure is mentioned, for the people have faithfully kept their word (cf. Rev 12:11).

B. Exodus 20–22 and Revelation 14:6–11:

Giving of the Law and Giving of the Three Angels' Messages

All three of the angels' messages in Revelation 14 come in different forms. The first message, Rev 14:6–7, is given as a direct command, in the imperative: “*Fear* God and *give* Him glory . . . and *worship* Him.” The technical term for this kind of command in studies on biblical law is apodictic law.⁵ It was virtually unique to ancient Israel, and even there is found mainly in the Ten Commandments given at Sinai. This is the very passage appearing in parallel here.

The second angel's message, on the other hand, contains no commands. It is a historical description. It tells about the fall of Babylon and the state that led it to its fall (Rev 14:8). The third angel's message is also different. It is legal in nature and contains a command, but it is an indirect type of command. It is a command that first cites the case and then cites the penalty for those who participate in the wrong. This requires the use of an “if . . . then” sequence of clauses. This type of legislation is known as casuistic or case law. The “if” clause, known as the *protasis*, sets up the conditions. The “then” clause, known as the *apodosis*, explains the penalty for those who violated the conditions. That is why apodictic law is known as such, for it describes the direct command without setting up the conditions found in the *protasis*.⁶

These two types of law are found in Rev 14:6–11, and they are also found in Exod 20–22. In Exodus there is a midrash or commentary upon the law which follows after the giving of the Ten Commandments. This is known as the Covenant Code. The explanation or application of the law comes in various

⁵ The primary study on biblical law that opened up a new chapter in the examination of law and covenant is that of G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955). This was reprinted from *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954): 26–46, 49–76.

⁶ Full treatments of both apodictic and casuistic law and the *protasis* and *apodosis* of casuistic law can be found in Mendenhall.

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forms that derive from the original commandments. The Ten Commandments are given as apodictic law or commands, while the Covenant Code is given as casuistic law, covering some of the cases to which the earlier commands have been applied. A similar pattern is found in Revelation 14. The first angel's command is given as apodictic law, while the third angel's message is given as case law. A brief historical description intervenes between these legislative passages, and this is known as the second angel's message. In Exodus this type of historical description is found in 20:18–20. There the response of the people is given. These parallels emphasize the identity of the second angel's message as a response of the people to the content of the first angel's message. These parallels can be set out in corresponding columns of text:

Exodus 20:1–17	Revelation 14:6–11
<p>Ten Commandments: Apodictic Law (examples) You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.</p>	<p>First Angel's Message: Apodictic Law Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water. (v.7)</p>
<p>Exodus 20:11–20 Historical Interlude of Response Now when all the people perceived the thunderings and lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."</p>	<p>Second Angel's Message Historical Interlude of Response Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink of the wine of her impure passion. (v.8)</p>
<p>Exodus 21–22 Covenant Code: Casuistic Law (Example explaining eighth commandment) <i>If</i> a man delivers to his neighbor money or goods to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, <i>then</i>, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. (22:7)</p>	<p>Third Angel's Message: Casuistic Law If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, (then) he shall drink the wine of God's wrath . . . (vs. 9–10)</p>

Some general relations are present in the sections of apodictic law. In Rev 14:6–7, three verbs and two dependant clauses are used to express those commands. In a general sense they bear a relation to the commandments of the first table of the law. They can be compared as follows:

The Ten Commandments	The First Angel's Message
I. You shall have no other gods before me.	Fear (the true) god.
II. You shall not make for yourself a	Give glory to Him (and not to false

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graven image . . . you shall not bow down to them or serve them.	gods).
III. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.	For the hour of His judgment is come (when He will no longer allow people to go guiltless).
IV. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.	Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water.

The relations here are general in terms of phraseology, except in the case of the fourth commandment. There the modifying clause makes the connection quite specific in terms of the identity of the Creator God who is to be worshipped and whose day is to be remembered and observed. The use of the verb for worship here is significant in relation to its frequent use in the preceding chapter. Worship will be a major issue with the beasts, and this subject comes up again in the third angel’s message. Thus these two references to worship point in opposite directions; the call to worship in the first angel’s message points in the positive direction and the warning against false worship in the third angel’s message points in the negative direction, to the opposite pole of the same issue.

The historical interludes between the legislation in these two narratives also show a general relationship, as a connection between belief and action is involved in each case. At Mount Sinai the people do not want to hear the voice of God because of their fear. They temporarily turn away from Him until Moses brings them back to a right relationship with Him, to fear Him in the right way, with reverential awe (Exod 20:19–20). In like manner, the spiritual harlot Babylon has been tested by God and been found wanting. She continues to indulge in her sins and does not demonstrate a fear of God. She also leads others into the same conduct. The momentary response of the Israelites at the foot of Sinai is remediable, but the case of Babylon in Revelation 14:8 is irre-remediable, so judgment is pronounced upon her.

Parallels in the case laws are more complex. The covenant code takes up this type of law in Exodus 21:1. Two other laws precede that main section, however. The first deals with idol worship (Exod 20:23). Then come special laws dealing with the cult, how to build an altar for sacrifice to God in the right way (v. 24a). These initial laws make good parallels to what is found at the outset of the third angel’s message: “if any one worships the beast and his image” (Rev 14:9). Worship is what happened upon the altar described in Exodus, and the image proscribed here parallels the proscription of gods of gold and silver in Exodus.

What follows next in Revelation is a reference to the mark of the beast on the forehead or on the hand (v. 9b). What follows next in Exodus is the body of the Covenant Code proper. The very first laws found there deal with Hebrew

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household slaves (Exod 21:1–6). In one special case (if the slave had married and had children and wished to remain with his master), he is marked by having a hole bored through his ear lobe, “and he shall serve him for life” (Exod 21:6). Thus, three elements found in the third angel’s message have parallels back in the Covenant Code legislation of Exodus:

Covenant Code of Exodus	Third Angel’s Message of Revelation
No gods of gold or silver (20:23)	No beast or his image (14:9b)
Worship at this altar (20:24)	No worship of them (14:9a)
Mark on the ear (21:6)	No mark on forehead or hand (14:9c)

These phrases in the *protasis* of the third angel’s message express its conditions; the *apodosis* gives its penalty. The penalty is destruction by fire. This is expressed in four linked phrases. A survey of the Covenant Code for penalties of this degree of severity reveals that there are only two places where the death penalty is taken up, once toward the beginning of the Code (21:12–17) and once toward the end of the Code (22:18–24). It may be a coincidence, but it is interesting to note that in each case, as with the third angel’s message, the death penalty is pronounced in precisely four cases in both passages, just as it is stated four times over in Rev 14:10–11. While the cases are obviously not the same, their fourfold nature will be outlined in parallel:

Exodus	Exodus	Revelation
1. Murder (21:12–14)	Sorceress (22:18)	Drink wrath (14:10)
2. Abuse parents (21:15)	Bestiality (22:19)	Torment by fire (14:10)
3. Mantheft (21:16)	Idolatry (22:20)	Smoke ascends (14:11)
4. Curse parents (21:17)	Oppression (22:21–24)	No rest (14:11)

The laws in the Covenant Code were given as an explanation of the laws found in the Ten Commandments. Each case can be traced back to the commandment from which these developed. A similar relationship can be seen between the first and third angels’ messages. The first angel’s message gives a law of command, and the third angel’s message gives a case law. Both of them involve worship, and both of them use the word for worship. They should, therefore, stem from the same command of God. The third angel is warning against, in negative terms, what the first angel is talking about in positive terms, just as case law explains the nature of and delimits the commands expressed in apodictic law.

C. The Witness: Exodus 23:1–8 and Revelation 14:12–13

After the three angels’ messages are given, the text of Revelation follows with references to two groups: living saints and dead saints. Why are these two groups referred to at this point in the narrative? What function do they serve here in this flow of events? The latter portion of the Covenant Code presents laws that deal with witnesses. Once that parallel to Revelation is noted, the

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function of the saints in Revelation becomes more apparent. They serve a similar function, one of witness. The laws dealing with the witnesses in the Covenant Code serve a more limited purpose: the witnesses there were restricted to testifying in court. The witnesses in Revelation, however, have a more broadly addressed witness. Their witness is to the world addressed by the three angels. Their moral and spiritual witness is to the world at large, which needs to both hear these messages and see them lived out in the lives of the saints. Two groups of people are present in Revelation, and two sections of law are presented in Exodus:

Exodus	Revelation
A. You shall not utter a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man, to be a malicious witness. You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; nor shall you bear witness in a suit, turning aside after a multitude, so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to a poor man in your suit. (21:1–3)	A'. Here is the call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (14:12)
B. You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his suit. Keep far from a false charge, and do not slay the innocent and the righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are the right. (Exod 23:6–9)	B'. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Blessed indeed, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them. (Rev 14:13)

The second section of Revelation (v. 13) concerns the dead, and their deeds follow them. That is, their deeds for God live on after they die, so they continue to give witness, just as the living saints do. It is in the second of these legislative passages about witnesses in Exodus that the matter of death is brought up. Here it refers to the death of an unjustly accused person. That same situation may apply to those mentioned in Revelation, for they too may have died from an unjust persecution.

D. Exodus 23:10–17 and Revelation 14:14–20: The Harvest

Following the three angels' messages and the testimony to them by the witness of the living and dead saints, Revelation turns to the grand finale, the second coming of Christ. This is described in Revelation 14:14–20. There the Son of man is depicted as coming on a cloud with a sickle in His hand with which to reap the earth. At the call of an angel, the earth is reaped of the righteous first, represented by the grain harvest. Then another angel reaps the earth of the fruit or grapes in the harvest of the wicked (vs. 17–20). The grapes are crushed and pressed as the defeated wicked are destroyed.

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There is an unusual aspect to this symbolism in Revelation. In the agricultural calendar these two harvests are separated by a number of months. The grain harvest occurred in April and May, its conclusion celebrated by the Festival of Weeks or Pentecost. Then came the fruit harvest at the end of the summer, celebrated by the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. Here in Revelation, however, these two figures have been drawn together as two aspects of the same harvest event. The question is why? While it is certain that all people living on earth will be dealt with one way or another when Christ comes, why use this particular pair of agricultural figures to express that idea?

It may not be the only reason for such use, but the parallels present in the Covenant Code of Exodus provide one very direct connection. At the end of that explanatory legislation, the text turns to the subject of festivals and sabbatical years. The legislation about the sabbatical years comes first, and it mentions the sowing and reaping of the land during the six years preceding the sabbatical year (Exod 23:10). It also mentions the parallel activity “with your vineyard and with your olive orchard” (Exod 23:11). Both the grain harvest and the fruit harvest are mentioned together in this legislation, even though they actually occurred at different times of the agricultural year.

After repeating the instruction about the weekly Sabbath (Exod 23:12) and giving a further injunction against idolatry (v. 13), the laws turn to the subject of the three festivals during the year at which the adult males are to appear before the Lord (vs. 14–17). After mention of the feast of unleavened bread (vs. 14–15) the text turns to Pentecost: “You shall keep the feast of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field” (v. 16a). Then comes the Feast of Ingathering, Tabernacles. This is the time when “you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor” (v. 16b). As with the sabbatical years, the grain harvest and the fruit harvest are mentioned together. Legislatively this occurs because these laws affect both the grain and fruit harvests through their festivals and in the sabbatical years.

In terms of the order of the text and parallels, the picture of the harvest of the world at the Second Coming occurs where the parallel passage in Exodus describes the legislation that deals with the spring and fall harvests. While those harvests occur at different times, they come together when they are referred to in these laws. The same thing occurs in Revelation, where the figures from these two different harvests have been brought together in one grand event: the Second Coming. This may not be the only explanation for that use in Revelation, but the connection in Exodus does provide another example of a similar sort of parallel on a literary and thematic basis.

E. Exodus 23:20–33 and Revelation 15:1: The Covenant Curses

The final section of the Covenant Code brings up the blessings and curses of the covenant. This was standard procedure for ancient covenants both in and

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outside of the Bible.⁷ The same sort of thing is found in Deuteronomy, for example, which also follows the covenant formulary. That book ends with the blessings and curses of the covenant first in prose (Deut 27–31) and then in poetry (Deut 32–33). This order of the text in Exodus provides a potential explanation for a seeming divergence from the natural order of events in Revelation. Revelation 15:1 brings up the subject of the seven last plagues, but only through a brief mention. Why not leave that subject until the next narrative, where the plagues form the body of the text (Rev 16), after they are introduced by another sanctuary scene (Rev 15:5–8)?

When the order of the parallel text in Exodus is noted, however, it seems quite logical to mention the plagues at this juncture in Revelation 15:1. They serve the same function that the covenant curses do in Exodus 23:20–33. While this passage in Exodus does include both blessings and curses, it emphasizes one central point: The curse upon your enemies shall be a blessing to you. This theme is found in Exodus 23:22: “I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.” The rest of the passage spells out in more details just how this will happen. God will send terror and confusion before the Israelites as they come into the land, and through this and other means He promises to drive their enemies out before them. The different afflictions and curses God is to send upon them can be looked at as parallel to the plagues.

This is the work of angels, both in Exodus and Revelation. The angel of the Lord is referred to three times in Exodus 23:20–23. In verse 20 God promises to send His angel before the Israelites and instructs them to harken to his voice. In verse 22 they are again urged to harken to his voice, but the word for “angel” is not used there. In verse 23 the angel is mentioned again, this time in terms of his actions against their enemies, not in terms of what he says. All three of these references are to the same angel; the word “angel” is used twice and his voice is referred to twice.

The harvest scene of Revelation 14:17–20 also refers to the work of God’s angels against the wicked. While the Son of man harvests the righteous with His sickle, the wicked are harvested by an angel who comes out of the temple. He acts upon the instruction of another angel, the one at the altar. The word “angel” occurs three times in this passage, referring to two angels, and the voice of the second is referred to once. Numerically, the correspondence with Exodus 23:20–23 is not exact, but the focus is the same: the actions of God’s angels by word and deed against the enemies of His people.

The number of the plagues is stated in Revelation 15:1 as seven. Parallel to this, the covenant curses of Exodus 23:20–33 fall upon seven nations. The Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites are mentioned in verse 23, and the Philistines are mentioned in verse 31. In Exodus, the afflictions or plagues are sent upon seven enemies of the people of God, whereas in

⁷ See the section on blessings and curses of covenants in Mendenhall.

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Revelation it is the plagues that are seven in number, and they are sent upon all the enemies of the people of God.

**F. Exodus 24 and Revelation 15:2–4:
The Second Scene of Glorious Result**

In Revelation 14–15 this line of prophecy ends with a second view of the 144,000. This time they do not appear upon Mount Zion, but are seen in heaven itself. They stand upon the sea of glass before the throne of God, singing their song of victory, the Song of Moses and the Lamb.

A second scene of theophany or divine revelation also occurs back in Exodus (24:1–2, 9–18). More people were permitted to come up on the mountain with Moses: Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders go up on the mountain with him (vs. 1, 9). Before the giving of the law the people only see indirect manifestations of the glory of God: lightning, thunder, the thick cloud, and the sound of the trumpet (19:16). On this occasion, after the law has been pronounced, the special group of people permitted to go up on the mountain have a closer view of His person, “and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness” (Exod 24:10).

The same type of thing is seen in the new scene in Revelation (15:2). There the firmament stretched out before God is referred to as the “sea of glass.” The phraseology is not exactly the same, but the idea and the object referred to certainly are (cf. Rev 4:6; Ezek 1:22). Using anthropomorphic terminology, Exodus tells us that the feet of God rest upon the firmament at Mount Sinai. Revelation develops this picture dynamically, for it is no longer the feet of God which rest upon it, but the feet of the 144,000 which rest “upon” (Gr. *epi*) it. God is now seated upon His throne at the head of this great expanse, and the saints gather before Him upon it.

Another feature of this scene bears some similarity to the one in Exodus, and that is the added description of the sea of glass being “mingled with fire” (Rev 15:2). In the earlier description in Exodus, it is stated that the glory of God that manifested upon the mount has an “appearance like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain and in the sight of the people of Israel” (Exod 24:17). Now, in Revelation, that glory which appears like fire is manifested before the twelve tribes of the 144,000 as they stand upon the sea of glass. Its appearance is mingled with fire because the glory that radiates from God’s person reflects upon that sea.

**Exodus 25–27 and Revelation 15:5–8:
Postscript—Sanctuary Construction**

Revelation 15:5–8 is the opening of the next line of prophecy in the book. It conveys another view of activity in the heavenly sanctuary, in this case the conclusion of the work there. Even though it belongs to the succeeding line of

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prophecy in the book, there is some overlap with the prophecy that precedes it in terms of Old Testament parallels. The episodes connected with the giving of the law in Exodus 19–24 described above continue with further instruction in Exodus 25–30. The particular instruction given there has to do with the construction of the sanctuary. The theme for this section is announced in Exodus 25:8: “Let them build me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.” Then the instructions on how to build that sanctuary are given in the chapters that follow.

The particular connection between Revelation and Exodus here has to do with the terminology used for the sanctuary. In Revelation 15:5 it is called “the temple of the tent of witness in heaven.” This kind of language has direct parallels in the sanctuary construction section of Exodus. First, it should be noted that there was not just the sanctuary or tabernacle, but there was also a tent placed over it. The hangings for the tabernacle are described in Exodus 26:1–6, while the skins for the tent over the tabernacle are described in Exodus 26:7–14.

The word used in Hebrew for “tabernacle” is *miškan*, while the word for the “tent” which extended over it as its cover is *ohel*, the standard Hebrew word for “tent.” The LXX treats the word for “tabernacle” here and elsewhere with the Greek word *skēne*. In Exodus 26:7 the LXX has the word *skepen* for the “tent” or covering over the tabernacle, and this was composed of the *katalumma* for the skins underneath and the *epikalumma* for the outer skins. Another word of importance here is the one used for the Ten Commandments as they were deposited in the Ark of the Covenant. This is referred to in Exodus 25:16, 21, and 22 as the Ark of the Testimony. The Hebrew word used for “testimony” is *‘edūt*, which was translated by the LXX as *maturia*, “testimony, witness.”

In the phraseology of Revelation 15:5 there is reference to “the temple [*naos*] of the tabernacle [*tēs skēnēs*] of the testimony [*tou marturiou*] in heaven.” Once the background of this phraseology in Exodus is realized, it becomes quite evident what is being referred to here:

Exodus:	Tent	Tabernacle	Testimony
Revelation:	Temple	Tabernacle	Testimony

There is only one difference in this terminology. Since the tent covering of the tabernacle with its animal skins does not exist in heaven, the tabernacle is located in the temple. The temple has taken its place, just as it also did on earth in Solomonic times. The Ten Commandments or the Words of the Covenant are within the inner shrine, which is in turn covered by the outer shrine—the tent in one case and the temple in the other. The only element which appears to be missing is the Ark, described in detail in Exodus but is not mentioned in Revelation 15. But it is mentioned in Revelation 11:19. There the Ark of the Covenant is seen when the temple (*naos*) of God is opened in heaven.

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These two sanctuary scenes form an inclusio around this central section of Revelation (12–14). At the beginning of this section the Ark is seen when the sanctuary is opened, and at the end of this section and the beginning of the next, the reverse takes place: the sanctuary of the Ten Commandments, the testimony in the Ark, is closed for ministration until the plagues have passed. In one case that place is opened for a special work, and in the other case that special place is closed up after that work is over. The phenomena of theophany that accompanies that opening and the events which follow its close indicate that this special work involves judgment.

The parallels between the opening and the closing of the work in the sanctuary can be extended back into the parallel passages in Exodus. The close of the sanctuary work in Revelation 15:5 employs terminology for that sanctuary that has parallels from the construction of the initial earthly sanctuary in Exodus. This phraseology comes out of Exodus 25–27, especially from its Greek form in the LXX. That is the occasion when the first earthly sanctuary is constructed. Following its construction, it goes into operation for the first time after its anointing, or inauguration, in Exodus 40. That too has a polar opposite, a reverse parallel, with Revelation. The work of the heavenly sanctuary closes in Revelation 15, while the work of the first earthly sanctuary opens in Exodus 25–40. The beginning of ministry in one is related to the end of ministry in the other. The link between the two is shown by employing the same terminology for both.

Other similar features here which cannot be dealt with in detail are the use of golden bowls in Exodus 25:29 for libations which are poured out and in Revelation 15:7 for the plagues which are poured out. The angels in the heavenly scene have their parallel in the angels embroidered on the hangings of the sanctuary (Exod 26:1, 31), and their garments parallel the materials used for the hangings of the sanctuary (Exod 26:1, 31) and the vestments of the priests (Exod 28).

There is a sense in which the making of the covenant at Sinai (Exod 19–24) prepares Israel for the making of the covenant building and its furniture (Exod 25–29). In like manner, in Revelation the passages parallel to the covenant making prepare for the sanctuary and its ministry, with Revelation 14:1–15:4 leading up to the preparing for Revelation 15:5–8 and chapter 16.

Summary

This review of the parallels between Exodus and Revelation has covered five or six chapters in the earlier book and two chapters in the second. The extent to which these parallels have been drawn accurately demonstrate that the connections here are not random and isolated, but comprehensive and detailed in scope. We are dealing here with broad ranging relations that operate on several levels—those of terms, themes, and theology. The scope of these parallels may be presented in the following summary outline:

SHEA: REVELATION 14–15 AND EXODUS 19–24

	I. Introduction	
Exodus 19 12 Tribes at Sinai Language of Theophany Ceremonial Cleansing		Revelation 14:1–5 12 Tribes on Sion Language of Theophany Spiritual Cleansing
	II. Body of the Message	
Exodus 20–22 Ten Commandments People’s Response Covenant Code	Apodictic Law Historical Interlude Casuistic Law	Revelation 14:6–11 1st Angel’s Message 2nd Angel’s Message 3rd Angel’s Message
	III. The Witnesses	
Exodus 23A First Law of Witness Second Law of Witness		Revelation 14:12–13 Witness of Living Saints Witness of Dead Saints
	IV. The Harvest	
Exodus 23B Sabbatical Law of Har- vests Festival Law of Harvests		Revelation 14:14–20 Harvest of the Right- eous Grain Harvest of the Wicked Fruit
	V. The Curses	
Exodus 23c Upon the 7 enemies of God’s people		Revelation 15:1 7 plagues upon the enemies of God’s peo- ple
	VI. The Result	
Exodus 24b Caught up in the cloud on the mountain They see God upon the fiery firmament		Revelation 15:2–4 Caught up to heaven itself They themselves stand on fiery firmament
	VII. The Commission	
Exodus 25–29 Build and commence the sanctuary The tent of tabernacle of testimony		Revelation 15:5–8 Finish and leave the sanctuary The temple of taberna- cle of testimony

Conclusion

If the parallels presented here have been worked out accurately, then there is clearly a structural intent operating behind them. An overall scheme has been manifested, and it has meaning and importance. What is that meaning and importance? In broad terms it may be stated that the giving of the three angels’ messages and the events surrounding them relate directly to what happened at Sinai. Sion of Revelation and Sinai of Exodus are, in essence, one and the same; they partake of the same phenomena and convey similar meanings. This

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speaks to the nature of the final controversy at the end of earth's history, as described in Revelation 14.

The call of the first angel's message is a call to worship. It is a call to worship God as Creator. The creator language found in the first angel's message harks directly back to the fourth commandment given at Sinai. The parallels elaborated here add two more lines of support to that interpretation. Now it can be seen that the setting of the giving of the law and the giving of the three angels' messages are described in very similar terms. The context is essentially the same, therefore, and the message of the context points in the same direction. The connection to the Ten Commandments, especially the fourth, is thus reinforced. The second point emphasized is the fact that both of these major episodes have to do with law. This is self-evident in Exodus, and it is now more evident in Revelation, through its connections with the law-giving in Exodus. Thus, it is all the more clear that the three angels' messages have to do with God's law.

In these connections the second and third angels' messages are involved. In the parallel location in the order of the text, where the Israelites' historical response to the giving of the commandments is found, the second angel's message appears. Since it tells us about the response of a body of people, it can be seen in the same light. The third angel's message is given in the form of case law, and it revolves around an issue of worship, just as the first angel's message does. Thus it may be seen as a midrash or commentary on the commandment in the message given by the earlier angel. The first angel gives his command in the positive or apodictic form, while the third angel gives a related message in the negative or casuistic form, just as the laws in the Covenant Code constitute a commentary on the Ten Commandments given previously. Thus, the case law given by the third angel should be taken as commentary on the same commandment with which the first angel dealt. Since that has been identified above as dealing especially with the fourth commandment, the third angel's message should be taken as dealing with that commandment, too, in the negative form of its antithesis.

One final point should be stressed, and that is the place the Son of man and the Lamb occupy in this narrative in Revelation. The section begins with the Lamb on Mount Zion with the saints joining Him there (Rev 14:1). It ends with the saints on the sea of glass singing a song of praise to the Lamb. The call here is not to a form of righteousness by works. It is a call to follow the Lamb wherever He leads. If His call leads the saints into conflict with the powers of earth, the saints can but persevere and follow their Saviour. He is the Lamb that was slain, and He is worthy to receive their worship because He has redeemed them by His blood (Rev 5:9). The same point is made at the foot of Mount Sinai when the blood of the covenant is sprinkled over the Israelites (Exod 24:4-8). This point is made in both of these passages. The Lamb leads at the foot of Mount Sinai in the Old Testament, and He will lead up on the Mount Zion of

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Revelation, as He leads His people on to the city of God, the New Jerusalem (Rev 21–22).

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