

ALLUSIONS TO THE TABERNACLE IN REVELATION

References to the Sanctuary and its services PERVADE the Book of Revelation. The Sanctuary comes to the surface in the SANCTUARY VISIONS that introduce each of the SERIES OF SEVEN. There are also numerous allusions to the sanctuary and its services throughout its pages.

We will illustrate this by considering several examples of allusions to the Tabernacle in Revelation:

I. THE THRONE

There are approximately 30 references to “the THRONE” in Revelation. In the Sanctuary Vision in Revelation 4 John sees “a throne” (4:2) which is subsequently referred to as “the throne” (4:2, 5; 5:11) or “his throne” (1:4; 3:21). It is occupied –

“One sat on the throne” – 4:2

“He/Him who sat/sits upon the Throne” – 4:9-10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 21:5;

The One who sits upon the throne is identified as God:

Revelation 7:15 (NKJV)

Therefore they are before *the throne of God*, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And *He who sits on the throne* will dwell among them.

“God who sat/sits on the throne,” – 7:10; 19:4

Consequently, there are references to “the throne of God” (14:5).

“the throne of God” – 14:5

So in Revelation we are taken into the THRONE ROOM of God. In fact, the ACTION in Revelation, whether it be in Heaven or on Earth, revolves around this throne. It is CENTRAL to the movement in this Book. We will return to this shortly.

The THRONE ROOM of God in the Old Testament was located in HEAVEN () but also was MANIFEST on EARTH in the TABERNACLE which was constructed as the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people:

Exodus 25:8 (NKJV)

⁸And let them make Me a sanctuary,^[c] that *I may dwell among them*.

It was in the Most Holy Place behind “the veil” that God manifest Himself as the Shekinah above the Mercy Seat:

Exodus 25:22 (NKJV)

²²And there I will meet with you, and *I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim* which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

This is where Yahweh “dwelt”:

Psalm 99:1 (NKJV)

Praise to the LORD for His Holiness

The LORD reigns;

Let the peoples tremble!

He dwells between the cherubim;

Let the earth be moved!

The Hebrew word translated “dwells” is “**yashab**”: “**to sit, remain, dwell**”. There are many references to this in the Old Testament (See Ps. 80:1; Nu.7:89; 1 Sam.4:4; 2 Sam.6:2; 2 Ki.19:15; 1 Ch.13:6; Isa.37:16).

The Mercy Seat was therefore The THRONE of GOD. This is recognized in many of the Paraphrases of Psalm 99:1

“sits on his throne” – GNT, GWT

“sits enthroned” – NHEB, NET Bible, ESV, WEB, NIV

“is enthroned” – CEV, GWT, BSB, BLB, NASB, HCSB, NAS 1977, [JPS Tanakh 1917](#)

The one place in Revelation where this explicitly comes to view at the conclusion of the Seventh Trumpet:

Revelation 11:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and **the ark of ^[1]His covenant** was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

The Mercy Seat formed its lid. Above the Mercy Seat between the two golden Cherubim God manifested Himself.

References to the THRONE in Revelation are allusions to the MERCY SEAT.

Revelation 8:3-5 (NKJV)

³Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was **before the throne**. ⁴And **the smoke of the incense**, with the prayers of the saints, **ascended before God** from the angel’s hand. ⁵**Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth**. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

In response to the prayers of the saints “fire from the altar” is “thrown . . . to the earth”. This results in the Trumpet Plagues that follow (See 8:6ff). So from the Throne of God – from the Mercy Seat flows the WRATH of God (See 6:12ff). There is no inconsistency here for the OBJECTIVE of God’s Wrath under the Trumpets is Repentance:

Revelation 9:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent** of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can

neither see nor hear nor walk. ²¹ And they ***did not repent*** of their murders or their [□]sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

For those who reject their opportunities to repent the Throne of Mercy ultimately becomes the Throne of Wrath. For them it will become an object of FEAR:

Revelation 6:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, [□]the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, ***hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains***, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "***Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne*** and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

But for those who have responded to the invitation of mercy it has become an object of WORSHIP.

In HEAVEN the THRONE is the focus of worship by the **4 Living Creatures and the 24 Elders**:

Revelation 4:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹Whenever ***the living creatures*** give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the **throne**, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰***the twenty-four elders*** fall down before Him who sits on the **throne** and **worship Him** who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the **throne**, saying:

Revelation 19:4 (NKJV)

And ***the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures*** fell down and **worshiped** God who sat on the **throne**, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

Revelation 11:16 (NKJV)

And ***the twenty-four elders*** who sat ***before God*** on their thrones fell on their faces and **worshiped** God,

And the Angels:

Revelation 7:11 (NKJV)

All the angels stood around the **throne** and ***the elders*** and ***the four living creatures***, and fell on their faces before the **throne** and **worshiped God**,

For the redeemed of the EARTH the THRONE is the focus of their worship:

Revelation 7:9 (NKJV)

"a great multitude which no one could number, ***of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues***, standing before the **throne** and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, ***with palm branches*** in their hands"

Revelation 14:3 (NKJV)

They (the 144,000) sang as it were a new song before the **throne**, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred ***and*** forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

They have upheld the JUSTICE of GOD'S LAW (in the Ark) and the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (manifest above the Mercy Seat as the Shekinah) through the Blood of the Lamb see the THRONE as a Throne of Grace.

Footnote: The THRONE of God is also referred to as "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1, 3) who is also the focus of worship. (5:8-14).

II. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE MOST HOLY PLACE WHICH IS THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD ARE REFLECTED IN THE NEW JERUSALEM:

In Revelation the DIMENSIONS of the New Jerusalem are given:

Revelation 21:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶The city is laid out as a square; *its length is as great as its breadth*. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand ^[k]furlongs. *Its length, breadth, and height are equal*.

The dimensions of the Most Holy Place in Solomon's Temple is given:

1 Kings 6:20 (NKJV)

²⁰The inner sanctuary *was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high*. He overlaid it with pure gold, and overlaid the altar of cedar.

Not only are its length and breadth equal, but so is its height. The throne room of God in Solomon's Temple was a CUBE as is the NEW JERUSALEM.

So Revelation 21:16 is portraying the New Jerusalem as the new HOLY OF HOLIES. It is the new THRONE-ROOM of God. Revelation explicitly states this:

Revelation 21:22, 23 (NKJV)

²²But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine ^[i]in it, for *the ^[m]glory of God illuminated it*. The Lamb *is* its light.

The City is illuminated by the LIGHT OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE LAMB, just as the Most Holy Place was illuminated by the SHEKINAH

We do an injustice to the numbers in Revelation when we take them literally and convert them into kilometers or miles. When we do this we miss the beauty of their symbolism.

The lampstand is alluded to in Revelation in a number of ways:

Revelation 1:12, 20 (NKJV)

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw **seven golden lampstands**, ¹³and in the midst of **the seven lampstands** One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band . . . ²⁰The ^[i]mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and **the seven golden lampstands**: The seven stars are the ^[m]angels of the seven churches, and **the seven lampstands** ^[i]which you saw are **the seven churches**.

Revelation 2:1 (NKJV)

“To the ^[a]angel of the church of Ephesus write,
‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of **the seven golden lampstands**:

Revelation 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵And from the throne proceeded lightnings, ^[c]thunderings, and voices. **Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne**, which are **the^[d] seven Spirits of God**.

Revelation 8:3-4 (NKJV)

³Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon **the golden altar which was before the throne**. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.

Revelation 9:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of **the golden altar which is before God**, ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIRECTION “EAST”:

The entrance to the Courtyard of the Tabernacle was located in its EASTERN wall, as was the entrance to the Tabernacle which was located in the western end of the Courtyard.

This was significant.

- a. Those who came to worship in the Sanctuary entered through the EASTERN GATE and therefore faced the Tabernacle at the WESTERN END of the courtyard. They had their backs toward the rising Sun.

Ezekiel in vision saw 25 men with their “**backs toward the temple**” (Eze.8:16) as they faced “**toward the east**”. Thus the Gate lay in front of them and the Temple was behind them.

Ezekiel 8:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with **their backs toward the temple** of the LORD and **their faces toward the east**, and **they were worshipping the sun toward the east**.

These men “were worshipping the sun toward the East.” The East-West axis meant worshippers of Yahweh in the Tabernacle to the East had to turn their backs to the Sun in order to worship Him.

- b. Significance of the East - West orientation of the Sanctuary complex is also to be found in the direction of MOVEMENT within the Sanctuary complex.

Movement of MAN toward GOD was in a westerly direction. For example, the blood of the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement moved from the Altar of Burnt Offering in the Outer Courtyard toward the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies.

Movement of GOD toward MAN was in an EASTERLY DIRECTION.

- c. In vision Ezekiel was shown the New Temple with its gate at the eastern end:

Ezekiel 40:6, 10 (NKJV)

⁶Then he went to ***the gateway which faced east*** . . . ¹⁰In ***the eastern gateway*** were three gate chambers on one side and three on the other . . .

There were also additional gates to the North and South (Ezekiel 40:20-27) YHWH had entered the Temple through the Eastern Gate:

Ezekiel 44:1-2 (NKJV)

Then He brought me back to ***the outer gate*** of the sanctuary which faces ***toward the east***, but it *was* shut. ²And the LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.

In the New Temple this gate was closed because Yahweh Himself had entered through it. Therefore in the New Temple this gate was reserved for HIM. Movement in an easterly direction is now gaining deep significance which becomes evident in Ezekiel 47. In this vision Ezekiel is inside the temple and sees water flowing out of the door to the Holy Place:

Ezekiel 47:1

Then he brought me back to ***the door of the ^[a]temple***; and there was ***water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east***; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.

Ezekiel is taken out via the northern gate and is led around to the east side of the temple:

Ezekiel 47:2, 5

²He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to ***the outer gateway that faces east***; and there was water, running out on the right side. . . ⁵. . . *it was* a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed

This river of water has its source in the holy of holies, is flowing out of the eastern gate, down into the Jordan valley through the wilderness area and into the DEAD SEA:

Ezekiel 47:8

⁸Then he said to me: "This water flows ***toward the eastern region***, goes down ***into the ^[b]valley***, and ***enters the sea***. . .

Ezekiel notes two points of importance. First, along its banks trees are now flourishing

Ezekiel 47:7

⁷When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, *were very many trees on one side and the other.*

Second, the waters of this river that flow out of the Temple from the throne of God in an easterly direction bring healing and life:

Ezekiel 47:8-9

⁸. . . When *it* reaches the sea, *its waters are healed.* ⁹And it shall be *that* every living thing that moves, wherever [Ⓛ]the rivers go, **will live.** There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will **be healed**, and everything **will live** wherever the river goes.

The healing waters emerged from THE EASTERN Gate of the Tabernacle and the Court of Ezekiel's Temple. In Revelation there are ALLUSIONS to this Temple in Chapter 22.

Revelation 22:1-2

And he showed me **a [Ⓛ]pure river of water of life**, clear as crystal, **proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.** ²In the middle of its street, and **on either side of the river, was the tree of life**, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree **were for the healing of the nations.**

So the New Jerusalem is presented in Revelation as the FULFILLMENT of Ezekiel's Vision of the New Temple. Those who look forward to the building of a fourth temple in Jerusalem miss the mark at this point.

In Revelation there are three references to the EAST:

Revelation 7:2 (NKJV)

Then I saw another angel ascending **from the east**, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

"from the east" is a translation of the Greek "from (the) rising of (the) sun". It is variously translated

"from the east" – NIV, NLT, GNT, ISV, GWT, WNT, BSB, NKJV, KJV, NET Bible, WBT, CSB, HCSB,

"from the sunrise" – NHEB, WEB,

"from the sunrising" – ASV, DBT, ERV,

"from the rising of the sun" – YLT, ESV, BLB, NASB, NAS 1977, DRB,

"from the dawning of the Sun" – Aramaic Bible in Plain English

Revelation 16:12 (NKJV)

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the **east** might be prepared.

In light of the Sanctuary context of Revelation the Angel who carries the Seal of the Living God “ascends from the East” and the “Kings from the East” emerge from the presence of God. As the waters of Ezekiel’s vision emerged from the east gate of the Temple so the angel and the kings come “from the east”. “EAST” here marks THE POINT OF ORIGIN rather than THE DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT.

A third reference to the EAST occurs in Revelation 21:

Revelation 21:13 (NKJV)

“three gates on the **east**, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.”

It is of interest to note that the eastern gates come first.

IV. CONCLUSION:

We have illustrated the contribution that an understanding of the Old Testament Tabernacle and the Temples that followed make to an understanding of the text of Revelation. Further contributions will be discussed as the seminar continues.