

A SUMMARY OF THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF JESUS AND ITS RELATION TO REVELATION 4-5 (What E.G. White did and did not say)

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Goldsboro, November 29, 2006

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One of the most difficult visions to understand concerning the history of Christianity is that of Rev 4 and 5. This difficulty follows in part because the divine style of revelation is not systematic. God does not reveal everything to just one person. Even to one person He reveals His message little by little. He gives here and there, at different times and places, a more complete view of a particular truth.

Over and above the matter of how God opens things to the minds of His prophets and to those who want to hear or read His revelation, we may sense the desire of heaven to open the way for those who are not prophets—like us who study God’s Word—so that they may research what has been revealed and study diligently the truths of revelation.

“To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?” (Isa 28:9: ESV). To those who make a real effort to know the will of God, His Word. God chose to give us His revelation “precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (v. 10). His people could improve their knowledge through efforts in gathering all those parts, and thus obtain a wider understanding of the divine will (v. 13).

The same happens with the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy that God raised up for these last times in the life and work of E. G. White. The harmony found in her writings is impressive when we compare them with all her statements during her more than half a century of prophetic ministry, and even more when we compare them with the statements of the Bible. This is the reason why she was required, toward the end of her life: “*Gather up the fragments, let nothing be lost.*”¹

Since the manuscripts of E. G. White that had not been formerly published have recently been released, we now have a more complete account of what she said, especially on Rev 4-5. We published and commented on a collection of these statements in the second chapter of our book, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4 & 5*. Since some base their convictions on a few isolated statements from her pen, we will show the full spectrum of what she wrote over the years, and especially toward the end of her life, which survive in manuscripts that, for the most part, were not published before.

In some cases we will give the reference of the page and of the statement that we documented in the above book, so that the reader may obtain an easy access to the entire statement. We clearly state here that we do not presume to be comprehensive in this summary. The one who wants to have a broader understanding of these subjects must go to our former works which deal with the same topics.

I. Inauguration in the Most Holy

Over time more than one interpretation has been raised in the Seventh-day Adventist Church relating to the place where Jesus went when He ascended to heaven, whether to the holy or to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Since E. G. White wrote that the door to the most holy had been not opened before the investigative judgment at the time of the end (*EW*, 42),² and she saw Jesus seated at the right hand of God in the holy place before that final event (*EW*, 54-55), some have deduced that when Jesus ascended to heaven He sat down at the right hand of God on a throne in the holy place.

A more careful study on the biblical typology led to a *second interpretation*. Moses anointed the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary, and the prophecy of Dan 9:24 announced likewise an anointing of the most holy place in the antitypical sanctuary of the new covenant. Taking this fact into account, on what basis could we

¹ A. L. White, *Ellen G. White: V. IV. The Australian Years. 1891-1900* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, DC, 1983), 451.

² “This door was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the holy place of the sanctuary in 1844” (*EW*, 42).

deny that the most holy must be consecrated at the inauguration of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary? On the contrary, other later statements of E. G. White seem to confirm the dedication of that inner place of the sanctuary in affirming that the door of the most holy was opened when Jesus died at the cross of Calvary (*SDABC V*, 1109).

When would Jesus pass to the holy place to fulfill His priestly role foretold through biblical typology? After concluding the inaugural acts that seated Him at the right hand of God in the most holy. How long would He officiate at His Father's right hand in the holy place? Until the final judgment, when the thrones of judgment would be set, and the scenes anticipated in both apartments of the heavenly sanctuary would take place. In other words, the door to the most holy, according to what E. G. White was given to understand, would not have been opened during His long priestly ministry in the holy place until that final moment of judgment. And this, without denying that prior to starting His priestly ministry in the holy place, the door to the most holy had been opened.

A more recent and *third interpretation* proposes that Jesus ascended directly into the most holy to be anointed by His Father on the same day He arose from the dead (John 20:17). At that precise time He would have been seated at the right hand of God upon His throne in the most holy. However—according to this view—Jesus would have ascended to heaven at Pentecost, fifty days later, into the holy place, not the most holy. This interpretation is based on the statement of E. G. White that “thither [the first apartment] the faith of Christ's disciples followed Him as He ascended from their sight”. In this context she applied Heb 6:19-20 as referring to that place (*GC*, 421).

This third interpretation is founded on an interesting deduction, though some facts might seem to weaken it.

a) Neither E. G. White nor the Bible meant that Jesus sat down at the right hand of God that morning of resurrection. The only enthronement spoken of by the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy is connected with the Pentecost, which took place fifty days later³ (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:32-33; see Rev 3:21).

b) The statement “thither” may be a reference to the holy place where Jesus went after being enthroned in the most holy during the feast of the Pentecost. During the whole first century the apostles followed the Lord there by faith (into the holy place), where He would remain for 1,800 years (Rom 8:33-34; Col 3:1; 1 Pet 3:22).

c) The application of E. G. White of Heb 6:19-20 and 9:12 is not restrained to the holy place,⁴ but may also involve the most holy.⁵ This may be better understood when we compare those texts with the expression found in Num 18:7, “within the veil,” in reference to all the sanctuary ministry that included both apartments. Thus, the expression “within the veil” in Heb 6 is a reference to the heavenly sanctuary and all its ministry which, at different times, may be applied to the holy place or the most holy.

d) In the inaugural acts that lasted about two weeks (see Exod 29; Lev 9; Num 7) Aaron and Moses entered the most holy more than once, before and after the sacrifice (Exod 40; Lev 9:22-23). The inaugural acts concluded when the glory of God appeared within the most holy place (Lev 9:23-24). In this context we have to admit that the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary and the ministry of Christ were not completed until Jesus, “the glory” (John 1:14), was enthroned at the right hand of God (*AA*, 38).⁶ The entrance of the divine glory into

³ “When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity” (*AA*, 38-39). “His enthronement at God's right hand was signalized by the outpouring of the Spirit upon His disciples” (*Ed*, 95). “He sits at the right hand of God and receives supreme honor as God, the glory He had before the world was. He distributes His gifts to all who by faith shall claim them” (21 *MR*, 391). “The same Jesus had now gone to share His Father's throne” (*DA*, 832).

⁴ “Thither the faith of Christ's disciples followed Him as He ascended from their sight. Here their hopes centered, ‘which hope we have,’ said Paul, ‘as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever.’ ‘Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.’ Hebrews 6:19, 20; 9:12” (*GC*, 421).

⁵ “I saw that Jesus ministered in both apartments of the heavenly Sanctuary. He entered into the heavenly Sanctuary by the offering of his own blood” (1 *SG*, 160).

⁶ “The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people... When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples” (*AA*, 38).

the most holy place was confirmed in the courtyard of the sanctuary of the new covenant, i.e., the earth (Rev 11:2),⁷ by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which also happened in the tabernacle of the wilderness (Acts 2; see Lev 9:23-24) and in the temple of Solomon (2 Chr 7:1-3).

e) The reference of E. G. White to the “uplifted gates” through which Jesus passed when He was crowned in the year 31, seems to point to the most holy place, which in the temple of Solomon was found at a higher level than the ground of the holy place (*PUR*, 10).⁸

f) She stated emphatically that the mercy seat over the ark was beneath the throne of Rev 4-5.⁹

g) The reference of E. G. White to the heavenly council, that met at the inauguration before the throne of God with the rainbow around it (*DA*, 834),¹⁰ applies to the heavenly council that meets in the most holy during the investigative judgment. This fact leads us to conclude that both events occur in the same place. Similarly, taking into account that at the inauguration as well as at the final judgment of the world the door to the most holy place is opened,¹¹ we may conclude that the enthronement at Pentecost took place in the most holy. These councils, with the representatives of all the worlds, were not in operation during the entire Christian era. They are convened only on special occasions in the conflict between evil and good.¹²

Regardless, we must admit that E. G. White never claims to have seen “thrones” in her visions of the inauguration of the heavenly temple. Instead, this is something that was shown to her—as we will see below—only in connection with the final judgment in agreement with Dan 7 and Rev 4-5. We can say the same in relation to other elements of the vision of Rev 4-5, which she linked exclusively with the final judgment.

II. Priestly ministry in the holy place

Other interpretations have been proposed concerning the ministry of Jesus in the holy place. Some critics within Adventism have pointed out that during the year, the priest in ancient Israel was separated from God on His throne by a veil or door until the Day of Atonement at the end of the year. These critics felt it was unlikely that the Son would be separated by a door from the Father during most of the Christian dispensation until the final judgment. Their solution was, therefore, a Helleno-Philonic conception of the sanctuary which eliminates doors and veils altogether. How shall we answer this challenge? Our church has never taught that the Son was separated from the Father by a door during His ministry in the holy place. On the other hand, the adoption of

⁷ “Jesus is our Advocate, our High Priest, our Intercessor. Our present position therefore is like that of the Israelites, standing in the outer court [of the temple], waiting and looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (*SDABC*, VII, 913).

⁸ “Through the *uplifted gates* He entered heaven as our representative...” (*PUR*, 10). See A. R. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, Seminar III, lesson 4.

⁹ Look “to the throne of God. What will you see there?—The rainbow of the covenant, the living promise of God. Beneath it is the mercy seat” (*ST*, 05-02-95, 7; see also *ST*, 10-10-92, 1). “Go to the Throne of Grace. You will be answered from the Seat of Mercy... The rainbow above the Throne is a token that God through Christ binds Himself to save all who believe on Him. The covenant is as sure as the throne” (*IMR*, 109).

¹⁰ “There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commanders of the angel hosts, the sons of God, *the representatives of the unfallen worlds*, are assembled. *The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms* over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion—all are there to welcome the Redeemer (*DA*, 834). In both the inaugural and final councils the Lamb is praised with the same words (Apoc 5:12). See n. 12.

¹¹ “The mercy seat, upon which the glory of God rested in the holiest of all, is opened to all who accept Christ as the propitiation for sin, and through its medium, they are brought into fellowship with God. The veil is rent...” (*SDABC* V, 1109). “Type had met antitype in the death of God’s Son. The Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, is dead. The way into the Holiest of all is laid open. A new and living way, which has no veil between, is offered to all” (*12 MR*, 416). “By the rending of the veil of the temple, God said, I can no longer reveal My presence in the most holy place. A new and living Way, before which there hangs no veil, is offered to all” (*SDABC* V, 1109). These statements may be also interpreted as referring to the entire Christian dispensation, without denying veils that would be opened and closed till the end, in the different steps of the Lord as our High Priest. See A. R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, 515.

¹² “In His teachings, Christ sought to impress men with the certainty of the coming judgment, and with its publicity... *It is to be held in the presence of other worlds...* There will be no lack of glory and honor” (*Mar*, 341). See n. 10.

Greek (pagan) philosophical postulates goes against the Hebrew biblical pattern of revelation (see 1 Cor 1:21-24).

E. G. White, as well as other pioneers, believed that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God in the holy place until 1844, when He transferred His ministry to the most holy place (Dan 8:14; 12; Rev 11:15,19). And yet the Son was not separated from the Father for 1,800 years. Do these facts not misrepresent biblical typology? How shall we explain such contrasts between the Old and the New Testaments?

A recent suggestion is that we study the furnishings of the earthly sanctuary to see if something in the holy place might possibly represent a throne. Since the book of Revelation does not mention the table of the showbread, it was thought that the throne occupied that role (Rev 4:2). In this way, it was suggested that the two rows of bread represent the Father and the Son seated together. Since the candelabrum seen by John before the throne (Rev 4:5) was in the earthly sanctuary on the south side of the room, and the table with two rows of bread on the north, some have thought that the vision of Rev 4-5 reflected the holy place of the heavenly temple. For support they turned to the vision of Ezek 1, which shows God coming on a throne to Jerusalem. Thus the place of the throne could change according to different circumstances.

Others have strongly resisted this interpretation for several reasons. We mention some of them here:

a) E. G. White never spoke of the table of showbread as a symbol of the throne of God.

b) She never specified that the throne of Rev 4-5 was in the holy place. On the contrary, as we will see below again, her statements placed it in the most holy place in connection with the ark.

c) A table is not an appropriate symbol for a chair. (Only bad mannered people sit on tables.)

d) The table of showbread was not at the center of the holy place, but off to one side. Since the name of the tabernacle and of the ark was derived from the divine testimony or Decalogue, a place for a throne at one side of the room would distort biblical typology.¹³ Also what shall we do with the ten tables that Solomon placed in his temple, following the plans God gave his father David (1 Chr 28:15-16,19; 2 Chr 4:7-8,19)?

e) The mobile throne that transferred first the Father, and then the Son to the most holy in 1844, according to the vision of E. G. White, is not the same as the one she saw in the holy place, or in the most holy (*EW*, 54-55).

f) The throne of God in Rev 4-5 is not a mobile throne. Nor is the throne portrayed in Isa 6 linked to the holy place. Instead Ellen White identifies it with the most holy and with the final work of judgment that would take place in the heavenly sanctuary (never with its inauguration).¹⁴

g) Ellen White never applied the vision of the mobile throne of Ezek 1 to the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Ezek 1 is a vision of judgment that reveals the coming or "visitation" of the Lord from the heavenly sanctuary (Ezek 1:4; cf. Ps 48:2; Isa 14:13) to the earthly sanctuary. The four cherubim are not linked to the holy place, but to the most holy, as seen in the temple of Solomon where two sculptured cherubim in that place were added to the two cherubim that were on the ark (2 Chr 3:10-13). One could say that the movement takes place there from the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to the most holy place of the earthly.¹⁵

h) If in Rev 4 we see a candelabrum before the throne, it may be because at this one moment of history the two apartments could be seen together, for the door to the most holy is open, temporarily allowing both apartments to be seen at the same time. It may not have anything to do with the fact that the candlesticks were directly opposite the table of the presence.

¹³ For more on the difficulties of integrating this concept with the typological biblical projection and the Spirit of Prophecy, see A. R. Treiyeer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, 476-479; *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 3.

¹⁴ *SDABC* IV, 1139.

¹⁵ For more details see A. R. Treiyeer, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, lesson 4.

A foretold change. We have to ask here about the need of resorting to the furnishings of the holy place to explain the vision of E. G. White with the Father and the Son officiating together in that place. The Bible and the writings of E. G. White do not deny a change in the new order. Why then, should we try to find furniture in the holy place to represent the throne of God? On the other hand, the argument that God moved in Ezek 1 seated on a throne seems to reflect a similar attempt to prove that there would be no real change in the new order.

Let us go to the Bible and the writings of E. G. White to understand how the prophets solved any apparent contradictions between the old order of the earthly sanctuary, and the new order of the heavenly sanctuary. The apostle Paul found similar problems when he tried to show his Jewish compatriots the purpose of the earthly sanctuary. There were similarities between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries, but also differences.

Paul found that God had prophetically anticipated some changes, because the “shadow” or “symbol” of the earthly sanctuary was deficient. It could not completely represent the heavenly reality (Heb 7:18; 8:5-7; 9:9-10). What would indicate that the prophets foresaw some changes? Psalm 40 foretold that instead of animal sacrifices, the Messiah Son of God would be sacrificed (Heb 10:1-10). King David foretold that the high priest of the new covenant would not come from Levi or Aaron, but from David (Heb 7; cf. Ps 110:1,4). Because the earthly priests were “weak men” and sinners who died (Heb 7:23,27-28), they could not officiate regularly before the glory of God without a veil or door (Lev 16:1-2). But the picture was to change when the promised Messiah would come with a “perfect” and “immutable priesthood” (Heb 7:24,28). He could officiate regularly at the right hand of God as foretold by David (Ps 110:4), and Zechariah (6:12-13), without veils or doors separating them.

Where is the prophecy which says that instead of officiating in the holy place, the Son would always officiate in the most holy? There is no such prophecy. This should keep us from imagining changes that would better suite our culture or particular ideas about how things take place in heaven. We must accept the constraints imposed by divine revelation concerning what is the same and what is different between the old order and the new.

Instead of a prophecy announcing a change where no veils or doors exist in the new order, the apostles Paul and John spoke of veils and doors in the heavenly temple (Heb 6:19; 9:1-12; 10:20). These must be opened and closed in various contexts (Rev 3:7-8; 4:1; 11:19; 15:5). Actually, if the Father and the Son had not been seated in the holy place, in a “mediatorial kingdom” as E. G. White referred to it, how could we explain the fact that when the final judgment comes, there is movement, and God seats down upon His throne (Dan 7:9-10,13-14)? Similarly, how could we explain the fact that the door to the most holy is opened during the seventh trumpet, which has to do with the final judgment, and not during any of the earlier trumpets? (Rev 11:15,19; see 9:13). This is only possible when we accept that the “continuous” priestly ministry of the Son at the right hand of the Father occurred in the holy place, without any need to look for furniture representing it there.¹⁶

III. FINAL JUDGMENT IN THE MOST HOLY PLACE

No one denies that in Adventism E. G. White and the pioneers linked the final judgment with the most holy place, in agreement with the typology offered by the apostles Paul in Hebrews (Heb 9:23,27-28) and John in Revelation (Rev 11:18-19). The discussion turns on what place and occasion are portrayed in Rev 4-5, i.e., on whether this scene refers to an inauguration or to the final judgment. The moment when the Lamb comes to the throne and takes the book from the hand of Him who is seated there cannot be linked to His entire heavenly ministry, but to either an inauguration before or the final judgment after.

We have discussed this matter in depth elsewhere,¹⁷ answering objections from within Adventism and outside it. Therefore we focus below only on what Ellen White said about the judgment. The fact that in a very extensive and well-known book like *The Desire of Ages* the author mentions the throne of God and the rainbow surrounding it as in Rev 4, in addition to the acclamation of the angels with the words of Rev 5:12,¹⁸ has led some to suppose that the vision of Rev 4-5 had to do with the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, and more specifically with the events of the day of Pentecost. They do not realize that she placed the same song in

¹⁶ See A. R. Treiyer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 3.

¹⁷ *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment. From the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs, Creation Enterprises International, 1992); *The Glorious Fulfillments of the Sanctuary* (1996); *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5* (1998); *The Seals and the Trumpets* (2005); and *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary* (2007).

¹⁸ *DA*, 834. See n. 10.

different contexts. A song may be sung more than once.¹⁹ On the other hand, the mention at different times of the throne of God and the rainbow that surrounds it may show that the two events occur in the same location (according to what we saw above). As a matter of fact, she linked both the throne and the rainbow of Rev 4-5 to the final judgment (as we will see below).

In order to settle the question of what E. G. White understood this vision to mean, let us consider what she said and did not say, especially in regard to the songs of Rev 4-5 that she identified with the most holy place in the final judgment and which she never linked with an inauguration. We have dealt with this matter more comprehensively in earlier works, so here we will only deal with certain relevant points.

a) E. G. White never identified the “open door” before the throne of God in Rev 4 with the door that separated the holy place from the courtyard. As already seen, attempts to do this have lacked a sound foundation. On the contrary, we have clear testimonies from E. G. White identifying that door with the most holy place in connection with Rev 3:7-8, which she also relates to the final judgment.²⁰ No wonder that Sara Peck, her secretary and compiler of manuscripts for several years in Australia and the United States, seems to be the first Adventist who linked the door of Rev 4:1 with the most holy place in the investigative judgment.²¹ If the candelabrum was before the throne, she said, it was because the door separating the holy from the most holy was open (Rev 4:1).

b) E. G. White never saw “thrones” in the inauguration of the heavenly temple, or in the priestly ministry of Jesus seated at the right hand of God in the holy place. On the contrary, she implicitly denied the existence of thrones in the holy place when, after portraying the ministry in the holy place, she saw at the end through the door of the most holy “*thrones that I had never seen before*”.²² In other words, she depicted the thrones only and exclusively in relation to the final judgment in the most holy place. This is in perfect agreement with her references to Dan 7:9-10 and Rev 4-5, which she applied to the final court of judgment (see below). These are the only references that portray the thrones of those who participate in God’s work of judgment in connection with the end of the world.

c) She placed the throne of God in Rev 4:2-3 above the mercy seat that covered the ark of the covenant, and under the rainbow that surround it, again in reference to the most holy place and the final judgment.²³

d) She quoted Rev 5:11 to portray the angels of God in the final judgment.²⁴

¹⁹ See references in A. R. Treiyer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, 64-69.

²⁰ “He says, I have set before thee an open door [Rev 3:7]. Through this [door] was shown the throne of God, overshadowed by the rainbow of promise” [Rev 4:1-3] (2 *SAT*, 97). “I saw that Jesus had shut the door of the holy place, and no man can open it; and that He had opened the door into the most holy, and no man can shut it (Rev 3:7,8); and that since Jesus has opened the door into the most holy place, which contains the ark, the commandments have been shining out to God’s people” (*EW*, 42).

²¹ S. A. Peck, *God’s Great Plan* (PPPA, Mountain View, CA, reviewed in 1926 and 1940; 385ff; *ibid*, *The Path to the Throne of God* (Educational Felt Aids, inc., Angwin, CA, w.d.), 150 (recently reprinted). In general, the pioneers did not pay attention to the vision of Rev 4-5. That vision was never studied in depth before and after E. G. White, perhaps because no one knew how to approach that study, as it happened with the rest of Christianity.

²² *To the Little Remnant...*, 4-6-1846.

²³ “Are you filled with sorrow today? Fasten your eyes on the Sun of Righteousness. Do not try to adjust all the difficulties; but *turn your face to the light, to the throne of God. What will you see there? The rainbow of the covenant, the living promise of God. Beneath it is the mercy seat*, and whosoever avails himself of the provisions of mercy that have been made, and appropriates the merits of the life and death of Christ, has *in the rainbow of the covenant a blessed assurance of the acceptance with the Father as long as the throne of God endures*” (*Ms* 66, 1895). “Angels, cherubim, and seraphim bow in holy reverence before God. ‘Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands’ of angels are round about the throne [see Rev 5:11], and are sent to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. *The ruling principles of God’s throne are justice and mercy. It is called the throne of grace. Would you have divine enlightenment?—Go to the throne of grace. You will be answered from the mercy seat... The rainbow above the throne is a token that God through Christ binds himself to save all who believe in him... Whenever we come to the throne of God to ask his mercy, we may look up, and behold the rainbow of promise, and find in it assurance that our prayers shall be answered,*” in *ST*, 10-10-1892. See n. 26.

²⁴ “It is He, the source of all being, and the fountain of all law, that is to preside in the judgment. And holy angels as ministers and witnesses, in number ‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,’ [Rev 5:11] attend this great tribunal” (*GC*, 479). This quotation of Rev 5:11 appears after citing Dan 7:9-10. “Thus was presented to the prophet’s vision the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered ‘according to his works.’ The Ancient of days is God the Father... It is He, the source of all being, and the fountain of all law, that is to

e) She called for us to study Rev 5 in the context of the investigative judgment when the books are opened to judge the people of God, in direct relation to the events of the final judgment²⁵ (something that may be better understood if we take into account that the reception of the book and the opening of its seals are related to the possession of the kingdom of David by the Lamb).

f) She was consistent in depicting Jesus as *standing* in the most holy place before the throne in the final judgment, as in Rev 5:6, with the throne depicted in the same way as in Rev 4:2-3, and in contrast to Christ's former position *seated* at the right hand of God in the holy place.²⁶

g) The reception of the book as well as the opening of its seals in Rev 5²⁷ are associated by the Spirit of Prophecy only and exclusively with the final judgment.²⁸

h) Ellen White applies the song that the four living creatures and the 24 elders sing when the Lamb takes the book only and exclusively to the conclusion of the judgment,²⁹ never to his ordination as high priest at the right

preside in the judgment. And holy angels, as ministers and witnesses, in number 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands' (Rev. 5:11), attend this great tribunal" (*FLB*, 209).

²⁵ She insisted in studying Rev 5 in relation to other visions of judgment like Ezek 1 and 2, 9; Zech 5, etc. "... *What will such a one do in the day that the books are opened, and every man is judged according to the things written in the books? The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days. There are some who are deceived. They do not realize what is coming on the earth. Those who have permitted their minds to become beclouded in regard to what constitutes sin are fearfully deceived. Unless they make a decided change, they will be found wanting when God pronounces judgment upon the children of men. They have transgressed the law and broken the everlasting covenant, and they will receive according to their works*" (*Ms* 37a, 1909). This statement has been often misinterpreted to avoid the connection of Rev 5 with the final judgment. See the complete statement commented, in my book *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, as well as other statements in this study.

²⁶ "The One who has stood as our intercessor; who hears all penitential prayers and confessions; who is represented with a rainbow [see Rev 4:3], the symbol of grace and love, encircling his head, is soon to cease his work in the heavenly sanctuary. Grace and mercy will then descend from the throne, and justice will take their place. He for whom his people have looked will assume his right—the office of Supreme Judge. 'The Father... hath committed all judgment unto the Son... And he hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man'" (*RH*, 1-1-89, 1). "In heaven the semblance of a rainbow encircles the throne and overarches the head of Christ... The revelator declares, 'Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne... There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald,' *Rev 4:2,3*" (*PP*, 97).

²⁷ "John writes, 'I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne' [Rev 5:11]. *Angels were united in the work of Him who had broken the seals and taken the book. Four mighty angels hold back the powers of this earth till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads*" (*Lt* 79, 1900). No concern is revealed in this statement for the order of events that have to take place in the time of the end. For instance, the author deals with the breaking of the seals before considering the taking of the book, which shows also that both events take place in the same ceremony. The context is clear, the time of the end and of the judgment. See the complete statement in A. R. Treiyeer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 2, statement 44.

²⁸ "Is it a principle that is found in the Word of God, which every one will have to meet in the day of final accounts, when every case is to be brought in review before God, and every case is to be decided? By what? Well, we read of a book in Revelation that was in the hand of One. There it was seen, and no one could open the book. And there was great mourning and weeping and agony because they could not open the book. But one says, 'Here is One, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He can open the book.' He takes the book, and then O what rejoicing there was! The book was opened, and now it can be read, and every case will be decided according to the things that are written in the book" (*Ms* 164, 1904).

"If you are ready for judgment, if your name is in that book that is sealed, if it is such that will commend your course of action, then Christ will say, 'Have a seat on My throne'" (*Ms* 164, 1904. Sermon). This statement seems to refer to the stamp or seal of adherence that every one leaves on the Word of God (see Neh 9:38; John 3:33), which appears in the seals in salient features revealing the testimony left by the church along the history of the people of the new covenant. For details, see A. R. Treiyeer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 2, statements 27 and 41.

In relation to the official resignation of the covenant of the old people of Israel, that was registered in the great original in heaven for the people of the new covenant (see Matth 21:42-43), she stated this: "Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision is registered in the book, which John saw..., which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in *the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah*" (*Ms* 23, 1900). "Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in *the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah*" (*COL*, 294). "Looking upon the smitten Lamb of God, the Jews had cried, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' That awful cry ascended to the throne of God. That sentence, pronounced upon themselves, was written in heaven. That prayer was heard... *Terribly will that prayer be fulfilled in the great judgment day...*" (*DA*, 739-740). See Acts 17:31; Rom 2:16.

²⁹ "The time will come when all will praise him..., 'saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto

hand of God in the year 31. This agrees with the fact that a copy of the book of the law was given to each new king on the day of his coronation (Deut 17:18; 2 Kgs 11:12), and that Jesus would not be made king over the New Jerusalem before concluding the judgment which will determine who are worthy to live in that city.³⁰

Conclusion

The fear seen among Adventists in recent years about the vision of Rev 4-5 as referring to the final judgment, was caused by a futurist trend shown by some in their interpretation of the seals and the trumpets of Revelation. Let us not accept one error while rejecting another. That concern is unnecessary when we keep in mind that a judgment reviews what is past. It does not judge the future or remain exclusively focused on those who live in the end time.³¹

Like the prophets of the Old Testament who in the smaller judgments of their days recalled the outstanding events of the history of the people of the old covenant (Am 1-2; Ezek 16,23, etc), so also the angels of God bring to mind the much greater final judgment now and, more specifically the conclusion of the judgment, the outstanding events of the history of the new covenant. This is what we see again at the conclusion of the millennial judgment. There is a panoramic review of the outstanding events of the plan of salvation and of the struggle between good and evil that takes place before the final coronation of the Lord and the definitive destruction of the wicked.³² In the case of the seals, the heavenly intelligences and all the universe need to see that, despite the false appropriation of the book of the law or God's Word (the Bible) by the Roman antichrist, that Word fulfilled the divine purpose. The Word of God does not return to Him "empty" in His judgment (Isa 55:10-11), as seemed to happen at a certain time during the deepening apostasy seen in the second, third and fourth seals (Rev 6:3-8). The martyrs of Jesus during the fifth seal kept it, and the seal of divine vindication was

our God kings and priests... Worthy is the Lamb..."(RH, 6-4-95, 6). "As they look upon the very souls they sought to win to Jesus Christ, and see them saved, eternally saved, as monuments of God's mercy, and of a Redeemer's love, there rings through the arches of heaven shouts of praise and thanks-giving! 'And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof...'" (Rev 5:9-14 quoted). (Lt 80a, 1895). With this they mean that the redeemed will unite in the acclamation of the angels in the court of heaven when He is crowned. That event is portrayed, sometimes, in a unified manner, like His coronation at the end of the judgment, just before coming to seek His people.

"On His coronation day, Christ will not acknowledge as His any who bear spot or wrinkle. But to His faithful ones He will give crowns of immortal glory" (*Signs of the Times*, 21 de Nov., 1906, 7). "Christ says...: *On My coronation day, you will be a jewel in My crown of rejoicing*" (HP, 267). "The humblest can have a share in the work, and a share in the reward *when the coronation shall take place, and Christ, our Advocate and Redeemer, becomes the king of his redeemed subjects*" (HM, 11-01-97, 7).

³⁰ This is the point which we develop in our third seminar on the sanctuary entitled, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*. "This will not take place until Jesus has finished His priestly office in the heavenly sanctuary, and lays off His priestly attire, and puts on His most kingly robes, and crown, to ride forth on a cloudy chariot, to 'thresh the heathen in anger,' and deliver His people" (Ellen G. White, *The Early Years*, I, 125-6). "Not now 'upon the throne of His glory,' the kingdom of glory has not yet been ushered in. *Not until His work as a mediator shall be ended will God 'give unto Him the throne of His father David,' a kingdom of which 'there shall be no end.'* Luke 1:32,33)" (GC, 416). "Then I saw Jesus lay off His priestly attire and clothe Himself with His most kingly robes. Upon His head were many crowns, a crown within a crown. Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven" (EW, 281).

³¹ Although in some cases E. G. White applied the content of some seals to a final event which would repeat the Middle Ages history, she was clear enough to relate the tribulation of the fifth seal to the martyrs of the Middle Ages. Even so, no one may deny that the white robes granted to them at the time of reviewing their commitment to the Word of God in the judgment, may be applied also to the martyrs of all ages (Rev 6:9-11; see 7:14).

"When the fifth seal was opened, John the Revelator saw beneath the altar the company that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. *After this came the scenes described in the eighteenth of Revelation, when those who are faithful and true are called out from Babylon*" (Ms 39, 1906). "Babylon the great' was 'drunken with the blood of the saints.' *The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried to God for vengeance upon that apostate power*" (GC, 59-60). See more statements in A. R. Treiyeer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 2, commentaries to the statement 25.

³² "In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven *the final coronation of the Son of God takes place...* As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness... Like a panoramic view appear the [most outstanding] scenes" of the plan of salvation and of the struggle between good and evil from the beginning to the end (GC, 666ff).

We may summarize thus, the relation of the book with every act of coronation of the Son of God. First when the Son is crowned on a mediatorial kingdom similar to that of Melchizedek at the conclusion of His earthly redemption, and the book is deposited at the right hand of God besides the ark in the most holy (see Heb 9:15-20). Again, after concluding the final judgment of the righteous, the book is shown this time to take it from the throne when the Son is crown as the new David of the New Jerusalem. This act takes place before the angels of God and, immediately after, before the redeemed in the New Jerusalem. Finally the Lord is crown by the last time before the wicked at the conclusion of the millennial judgment that is based on the open book of the law (the heavenly original Bible), when each one is given an opportunity to answer for his deeds before the heavenly King, just prior to the final destruction.

put on those for whom the Word of God was fulfilled during the sixth seal (Rev 6). Only when that seal is placed on the followers of the Lamb at the time of the end could the Lord come to recognize them as His.

The book of Revelation does not tell us when the book of the law was placed in the most holy place. It only refers to the moment when it is given to the newly recognized king to rule the New Jerusalem. We may draw from this that the book was placed in the most holy at the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, as foretold by the typological outline of the Old Testament (Deut 31:24-26; see Heb 9:15-20). However, we know from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that the moment to take it from the most holy is the investigative judgment represented by the Day of Atonement, especially in connection with the Sabbatical Year or the Jubilee (Lev 25:9-10; Deut 31:9-12). This is what was revealed to us by the Spirit of Prophecy. But, will we be judged by that book during the millennium? Will it be used only in connection with the lost?

What the court considers today is the sincerity of our confession when we invoke the blood of the Lamb to cleanse our souls. That blood wipes out our sins from the heavenly records (Acts 3:19).³³ During the millennium, however, we will be judged by the Word of God and fully vindicated because our sins will have been erased earlier in the judgment. The angels in the courts of heaven and the redeemed will see our righteous deeds. These will not be erased, but will adorn the city of God (Rev 19:8).³⁴ In the case of the wicked, the Book of the Law (the Bible) will only bring about their condemnation, because there will be no available blood to cleanse their records.³⁵

During the Sabbatical year the divine education that could not be completed during the former years of work was to be achieved (Deut 31:13-14). This will happen at the end as well. Those who were faithful with even a little light will be completely instructed in the law of the Lord (see Isa 2:3-4; Mic 4:1-4; Dan 12:2-3).³⁶ Then we will be amazed at the simplicity of the things which once seemed so obscure and difficult to understand.³⁷

³³ “There must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement” (*GC*, 421). “Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out” (*GC*, 620). “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, confessed in penitence, and forsaken, and they go beforehand to judgment. Pardon is written over against the names of these men. But other men’s sins follow after, and are not put away by repentance and confession, and these sins will stand registered against them in the books of heaven” (*MS* 1a, 1890). See 1 Tim 5:24. “All sin unrepented of and unconfessed will remain upon the books of record. It will not be blotted out, it will not go beforehand to judgment, to be canceled by the atoning blood of Jesus. The accumulated sins of every individual will be written with absolute accuracy, and the penetrating light of God’s law will try every secret of darkness. In proportion to the light, to the opportunities, and the knowledge of God’s claims upon them will be the condemnation of the rejecters of God’s mercy” (*TMK*, 359).

³⁴ “After the saints are changed to immortality and caught up together with Jesus, after they receive their harps, their robes, and their crowns, and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment. The books are opened—the book of life and the book of death. The book of life contains *the good deeds of the saints*; and the book of death contains *the evil deeds of the wicked*. These books are compared with *the statute book, the Bible, and according to that men are judged*” (*EW*, 52).

³⁵ “The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead. ‘Behold ye,’ said the angel, ‘the saints, in unison with Jesus, sit in judgment, and mete out to the wicked according to the deeds done in the body, and that which they must receive at the execution of the judgment is set off against their names.’ This, I saw, was the work of the saints with Jesus through the one thousand years in the Holy City before it descends to the earth...” (*EW*, 52). “‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.’ It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, ‘the saints shall judge the world.’ In unison with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and his people” (*SW*, 03-14-1905, 10).

³⁶ “Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God... How surprised and gladdened will be the lowly among the nations, and among the heathen, to hear from the lips of the Saviour, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me!’ How glad will be the heart of Infinite Love as His followers look up with surprise and joy at His words of approval!” (*DA*, 637-638). See Dan 12:2-3; Rom 2:14-16.

³⁷ “In the new earth Christ will lead us by the side of the living waters and explain the dark passages of Scripture that we have never been able to understand. All His providences will then be made plain” (*Ms* 102, 1904. Sermon). “When in the redeemed family above we follow him whithersoever he goeth, he will open to us the mysteries of His word... He will show us the beauty and loveliness of his word, which now we do not half understand. Then we shall cast our glittering crowns at his feet, and touching our golden harps, fill all heaven with rich music, singing, ‘Worthy, worthy is the Lamb, who died, and who lives again, a triumphant conqueror’” (*GCB*, 4-25-01, 40). “The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity—ever progressing, never completed... In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended,” in *MH*, 466.