

### III. CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE ANDREWS BIBLE COMMENTARY

#### The vision of the Throne in Revelation 4 & 5

Dr. Alberto R. Treiyer

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The most important vision of the book of Revelation is found in Rev 4 and 5. We consider it *central* because the members of the heavenly tribunal reappear in the rest of Revelation, in the first section as well as in the second one, always connected with the end (Rev 4-6; 7; 11:15-19; 14:1-5; 15:7; 19:4). This shows us that the book of Revelation is an open window to both the past and the future, from the perspective of the final judgment by which John was led to see how the heavenly court reviews the kind of testimony left by those who identified with the Word of God.

During the first 60 years of the Adventist Church, the vision of Revelation 4 and 5 did not attract much attention. The pioneers were focused on affirming many other truths they were discovering. However, as the twentieth century started, E. G. White began to receive more definite revelations about that vision and its importance. She exhorted to study these chapters because they were to be of great importance to God's people going through the final events prophesied by the book of Revelation.

“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” (9 T 266-7).

“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).

“After the saints are changed to immortality and caught up together with Jesus..., and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment..., the books are opened—the book of life and the book of death... These books are compared with the statute book, the Bible, and according to that men are judged [see Deut 31:10-11]. The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead... 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).

It is not surprising, then, that early in the twentieth century, beginning with Sara Peck, (secretary of E. G. White), the Adventist interpreters began to locate the vision of Revelation 4 and 5 in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. According to them, if the candelabra was seen in front of the throne, it was because the door was open to the Most Holy Place, as on the Day of Atonement. So, they concluded that this was a vision of judgment corresponding to that of Dan 7, which was to be fulfilled in the time of the end. But beginning in the 1980's, we began to see some theologians make a special effort to deny every possible connection of Revelation 4 and 5 with the judgment scene of Dan 7. Instead, these new theologians sought to locate the vision at the inauguration of Christ's priestly work in the heavenly temple.

What was behind this recent radical change in the focus of that vision? The attempt by some futurist brothers to locate the seals and trumpets as events related to the end of the world. So, in order to combat a mistake, they thought it prudent to confront that error with another mistake. This was unnecessary, because a court has the mission of judging the past and, thus, the opening of the seals is seen as a review of the history of Christianity from the perspective of judgment.

Some evoked E. G. White's statement in the book *The Desire of Ages*, where she mentions the throne and the acclamation of the angels, "Worthy is the Lamb..." in the inaugural context. But they didn't grasp that a song of that nature can be sung in various contexts. And we see this song in other quotations from E. G. White in the context of the judgment and final redemption of the redeemed in heaven, even after the millennium. However, the song "Worthy is the Lamb to take the book..." was always projected for the future, never for an inaugural past. See A. R. Treiyer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 2.

If we return to this topic after having dealt with it extensively in several books (studies that I also share on the internet, and on YouTube), it is because we are sorry that the *Andrews Bible Commentary* is still following this new interpretation that is actually rooted in the 1980's. As we will see in this review, these false teachings undermine our message in terms of our overall mission and also affects each person in their preparation for the final crisis. Since my studies on the subject are available to those who want to study them, we will limit ourselves here to the contradictions of Ranko Stefanovic, the main contributor to that commentary.

## **1. The introductory presumption**

The initial presumption of the commentary on the vision of Revelation 5 is expressed as follows:

"Some Adventist interpreters argue that Revelation 5 describes a judgment scene. The interpretation offered here is based on a close examination of the biblical text in its literary context, the structure of the whole book, and the OT history behind the scene."

That is an unfounded presumption, a literary and theological fabrication of the interpreter who pretends to see things that John does not see, and not to see the things that he sees. He must also ignore the Spirit of Prophecy's more definite statements about several key texts of that vision. "Where there is no prophetic vision, the people cast off restraint" (Prov 29:18). That commentary also forces the literary structure of Revelation to make John say what the interpreter wants him to say, not what Jesus actually says to John through His angel.

There are also translations from the Greek text cited in the commentary, which contradict the same Greek expressions elsewhere in the book of Revelation and in the rest of the New Testament. To make matters worse, such particular translations are practically unique because the oldest and most recent versions of Revelation do not confirm them. That's not all. There is a major underlying problem. And it has to do with a distorted theological approach that cannot be sustained by either the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. This distortion prevents people from grasping the wonderful scene that is taking place right now in heaven, and to prepare to participate in the solemn and impressive ceremony of the investiture of our Lord.

## 2. The parallel vision of Dan 7 in the study of Revelation 4-5 is completely ignored.

**Answer:** It is amazing that the *Andrews Bible Commentary* makes no comparison between the appearance of the *Root of David* before the throne of God in Rev 5, and the appearance of the *Son of Man* in Dan 7. If in the book of Daniel, the vision of the final court of judgment culminating in the investiture of the Son of Man is so important, how is it possible that the book of Revelation, which is focused especially on the scenes of the end, does not give it the same importance? Will the readers of the *Andrews Bible Commentary* conclude that we Seventh-day Adventists are putting an exaggerated emphasis on the investigative judgment (that will invest our Lord as King of His people) because the book of Revelation neglects that vision?

All modern commentaries—even the most recent and extensive commentaries on the book of Revelation—link the two visions of Dan 7 and Rev 4-5. But several theologians of the people whom God raised up to proclaim the vision of judgment try at all costs to dissociate the two visions, to the point of ignoring one of them in this case. What did E. G. White write about the importance of studying Daniel and John’s prophecies together?

“The things revealed to Daniel were afterward *complemented by the revelation made to John* on the Isle of Patmos” (TM 114). “The book of Daniel *is unsealed in the revelation to John*, and carries us forward to the last scenes of this earth’s history... Read Revelation in connection with Daniel” (TM 115). “*Study Revelation in connection with Daniel*” (TM 116). “The books of Daniel and the Revelation should be bound together and published” (TM 117). “It was my idea to have the two books bound together, *Revelation following Daniel, as giving fuller light on the subjects dealt with in Daniel*. The object is to bring these books together, showing that *they both relate to the same subjects*” (TM 117).

And on a same page of the book *The Great Controversy*, chapter 28 about “Facing Life’s Record,” E. G. White quotes the description of the heavenly court in the visions of Dan 7 and Rev 5, to refer to the same heavenly tribunal which will judge God’s people. She first quoted Daniel 7:9-10 from the KJV, “thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” She commented about this text of Daniel saying that the prophet saw “the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth” (GC 479). Then, she quoted Rev 5:11, again from the KJV: “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,’ attend this great tribunal.”

What do the most recent and comprehensive commentaries on the book of Revelation say? David Edward Aune, *Revelation 1- 5*, (1997), 336-338, finds several terminological links between the two visions, corroborated by the Greek version known as the LXX. He believes that the two visions project a same scene of investiture. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, (1999), 314-316, offers an extensive list of comparisons between Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 which prove that both visions possess the same literary structure. But a presumably *Seventh-Day Adventist* commentary like that of the *Andrews Bible Commentary* completely neglects this fact.

## 3. The Andrews Commentary neglects the fact that the vision of the throne in the Most

**Holy Place (Rev 4-5) was to succeed the vision of Jesus in the Holy Place of the heavenly temple (Rev 1-3).**

In an attempt to deny the successive passage from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in John's first two visions, Stefanovic denies that the first vision is given in heaven. He does this despite admitting that Jesus is portrayed in Rev 1 as being dressed in priestly garments, and that the candelabra are a representation of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. These are his words:

“However, this scene does not necessarily describe the heavenly sanctuary as the whole vision is set on earth, not in heaven. The sanctuary imagery is used only to illustrate Jesus's activities on behalf of the churches as the high priest” (p. 1934).

**Answer:** But since Jesus ascended to heaven, He has not returned to earth. He will come “a second time” when He finishes His heavenly intercession and judgment (Heb 9:28). His connection to the earth is through His angel and the work of the Holy Spirit (Rev 1:1; 2:7,11,17, etc.). So, when John sees Jesus among the candelabra in his first vision, he sees Him in heaven, not spiritualized on earth.

**4. The Andrews commentary tries to avoid connecting the open door of Rev 3:7-8 with that of Rev 4:1.**

**Answer:** The door that Jesus closes and the other that opens to the church of Philadelphia, is a reference to the *Day of Atonement* that is fulfilled in the heavenly sanctuary. The door that Jesus closes is that of the Holy Place, before opening the door to the Most Holy Place. Since only on the Day of Atonement the door was open to the Holy of Holies, the poles of the ark could be seen from the Holy Place, but not from the courtyard because that first door had been closed first (see Lev 16:17; 1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chronicles 5:9).

The Andrews's commentary completely ignores that connection. Why? If the author of that commentary acknowledges it, he must also acknowledge that the first vision points to Jesus' work in the heavenly temple, not on earth. He would then also have to admit that the second vision (which is focused on the throne of God) does not refer to a change from earth to heaven, but from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place which happened on the Day of Atonement.

In Solomon's temple—built according to the plans God gave the prophet David (1 Chr 28:19)—the Holy of Holies was six or ten feet higher than the Holy Place. While the entire temple was thirty cubits high, the Holy of Holies was only twenty cubits high (1 Kings 6:2,20). The reason is that the Holy of Holies was built on a higher rock that the Jews today call *Sakhra* (see Isa 6:1; Jer 17:12; Rev 4:1). This has been confirmed by archaeology through topographic analysis of the temple site. (See A. R. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, chapter 4). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to climb a staircase to the Most Holy Place. And this is what we see in the first two visions of the book of Revelation (see also Isa 6:1).

Again, why does the Andrews' commentary strive not to link the open and closed door to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly temple? There is another reason. If it does, it has to admit with E. G. White that the next scene in Rev 4:1 reveals the door open to the Most Holy Place in the court of judgment. Let's first look at what the Andrews commentary says: “Christ

promised to set before them an open door of opportunities that no one could shut (v. 8).”

The Andrews commentary is supposed to be a Seventh-day Adventist commentary. Why, then does it not quote the definite projection of the Spirit of Prophecy to Rev 3:7-8? Because the Andrews commentary doesn't want to admit that in the first vision, Jesus is in the heavenly temple. E. G. White does not refer to that door in vague and indefinite terms as being purely and simply a door of “opportunities.” She refers many times to the doors of the heavenly temple. The obvious deduction is that these new Andrews theologians do not believe in the Spirit of Prophecy, and want us to follow the supposedly exegetical and distorted literary wisdom they propose. Let's see what E. G. White says:

“The application of Revelation 3:7,8 to the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's ministry was entirely new to me. I had never heard the idea advanced by anyone. Now as the subject of the sanctuary is being clearly understood, the application is seen in its force and beauty” (*EW* 86).

“But clearer light came with the investigation of the sanctuary question. Now was seen the application of those words of Christ in the Revelation, addressed to the church at this very time: ‘These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.’ [Rev 3:7,8]. Here an open as well as a shut door is brought to view. At the termination of the 2300 prophetic days in 1844, Christ changed his ministration from the holy to the most holy place...” (*4 SP* 268).

“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)” (*EW* 42).

Again, why does this new commentary of Andrews prefer to ignore the connection of the open door of Revelation 3:8 to the heavenly temple that precedes the seventh “church of judgment” (Laodicea)? Because E. G. White connected the opening of that door to the Holy of Holies to the vision of the open door to the throne of God in Rev 4 and 5. That is something these new interpreters in the Adventist church try to ignore in order to relocate the second vision to the inaugural past. Notice how E. G. White connects these two visions.

“There is One who sees it all, and He says, ‘I have set before thee an open door’ [Rev 3:8]. Through this [door] was shown the throne of God, overshadowed by the rainbow of promise [Rev 4:1-3], the token of the everlasting covenant, showing that mercy and truth are together, and drawing from the beholder praise to the Lord” (*Ms* 27, 1891).

Referring to the door opened in the second vision, Jesus tells John twice that He is going to show him what will happen next. The second vision is not a return to the inaugural past, but a vision that takes place after Jesus' ministry in the Holy Place. The first vision reveals Jesus' ministry amid the candelabra more than 60 years after the inauguration of the heavenly temple. But through the open door of the second vision Jesus is no longer among the candelabra. He is before the throne of God in the Most Holy Place, in the midst of the court of elders, the four living beings, and the millions of angels that surround the throne. Again, the second vision is not a return to the past, but to a subsequent event. From that final perspective of judgment, John can see how the heavenly court views the kind of testimony

left by Christians throughout history until Jesus assumes the kingdom at the end.

### **5. Presumption of seeing an enthronement in Rev 5 to stage an inaugural scene.**

Since at the inauguration of the heavenly priesthood Jesus sat at the right hand of God, as the prophecy announced (Ps 110:1,4; see Heb 5; 8:1), the new interpreters of Andrews likewise want to imagine an enthronement of Christ in the vision of Rev 5.

**Answer:** The truth is that in Rev 5 we do not see an enthronement. Amazingly, the interpreters of the University of Andrews see what John does not see. In order to keep their particular view that forces the Scripture, they have to imagine the sealed book of the kingdom not being in the right hand of the Father, but on his right side. Thus, instead of receiving from the Father that book authorizing Him to be King, (according to this new interpretation), Jesus takes the book from the throne on His own, before He can supposedly sit on that throne. Here's what the commentary says:

“The Greek text *epi ten dexian* clearly shows that the scroll was not ‘in’ the right hand of God, as various Bible translations suggest, but at the right hand of God. The person who would take the scroll was supposed to take His place on the throne.”

Our answer is: No, *epi ten dexian* does not clearly show that “the scroll was not ‘in’ the right hand of God.” Rev 1:17,20 y 2:1 has *dexian*, “right hand,” also without *cheiros*, “hand,” and it means in the “right hand,” not right side. In Matt 6:3; 27:29; Gal 2:9, we clearly see that word referred to again as the hand, although the term *cheiros*, “hand,” does not appear either. Ranko Stefanovic, the principal contributor of the Andrews commentary on the book of Revelation, contradicts himself when he states that in Rev 2:1, Christ “holds the seven stars in His right hand,” even though in that passage—as we have already seen—the term *cheiros* does not appear either (see 1:20: *epi tes dexias*).

The presumption that the Father did not have the book in His hand, but it was at His right side on the throne, is extremely forced. It makes the Son assume the kingdom on His own, without His Father conferring it on Him. It shows again that this new commentary of Andrews does not care at all what the “testimony of Jesus” says through the gift of prophecy. It also proves that an exegesis without correct theology will go astray, as we shall see later in this review.

“There *in His open hand* lay the book...” (12 MR 7), “... the book which John saw *in the hand* of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open” (COL 294). “We read of a book in Revelation that was *in the hand* of One” (Ms 164, 1904).

The most comprehensive and extensive commentary that has been written so far on the book of Revelation is that of D. E. Aune, who states that the fact that “the Lamb takes the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne (5:7), suggests that the scroll ‘in’ the hand of God is described in 5:1.” And he mentions the interpretation of Ranko Stefanovic as being “almost the only one” that favors the interpretation of the right side (339-340). So Ranko’s claim in the commentary of Andrews that the Greek texts “clearly show that the scroll is not ‘in God’s right hand’ is false, and openly denies the testimony of Jesus through the gift of prophecy.

### **6. The presumption that the book is received at the inauguration and opened from that time, in the same throne’s room, until His Second Coming.**

The Andrews commentary literally says: “*The seals are opened in the throne room in chapters 4 and 5.*” “The breaking of the seals began with the enthronement of Christ at Pentecost in A.D. 31 and will end with the Second Coming.”

**Answer:** Why then does the commentary say elsewhere that the scene in Revelation 4-5 “takes place in the throne room of the heavenly temple where the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies are merged into one room”? In another place the commentary also says that “the sanctuary imagery shows that the events in the first half of the book were to occur in the context of Christ’s mediatory ministry in the Holy Place,” to conclude, erroneously, that we must wait for Rev 11:19 to be introduced in the Most Holy Place.

Despite the mention of two rooms in the heavenly sanctuary, we can see that, in the background, the editors of the Andrews commentary on the book of Revelation seem not to believe in the literal nature of that temple. We have found evidence of this in Stefanovic’s views in the commentary on the first vision, where he affirms that “the sanctuary imagery is used only to illustrate Jesus’s activities on behalf of the churches as the high priest,” and therefore, that the vision “does not necessarily describe the heavenly sanctuary” (p. 1934). Should we conclude therefore, that we cannot take seriously John’s description of the heavenly sanctuary?

More evidence of not believing in an actual heavenly sanctuary with two rooms and furnishings, could be seen in our critical review of the Andrews commentary on the trumpets of Revelation. As already seen, Stefanovic believes that we are still living in the time of the sixth trumpet that is framed in the Holy Place (Rev 9:13). But according to Dan 8:14 and Rev 11:19, the ministry of Jesus was expected to be transferred to the Most Holy Place in 1844. This seems to be the reason why they also disconnect the opening of the Most Holy Place from the seventh trumpet in Rev 11:19, which shows the 24 elders acclaiming the final assumption of the kingdom of the earth.

Let us return to Rev 4-5. Are the four living creatures showing John there, the opening of the seals in the same throne room during the whole Christian dispensation? (Rev 6:1,3,5, etc). Of course not! It is obvious that if the literary structure proposed in the Andrews commentary is taken seriously, the opening of the seals cannot take place beyond the inauguration (presumed to be in the Holy and Most Holy Places merged into one room), nor in the Holy Place before the end when the door to the Most Holy place is open since 1844. There is no vision showing the Lamb bringing the book from the Most Holy Place to the Holy Place and then, at the end, taking it back to the Most Holy.

Jesus would not spend His priestly ministry opening the book over the course of the entire Christian dispensation. Opening a sealed book doesn’t take that long, but maybe half an hour or one hour if you open it in a special ceremony. That book is received and opened at the end, “in the day” of judgment. The “Testimony of Jesus” affirms that the decision to crucify Christ and have His blood fall on the Jewish nation:

“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).

That “day” is the same day that Paul referred to in Rom 2:16 and Acts 17:31:

“This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.” “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.”

In a complementary statement, E. G. White wrote:

“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).

Thus, by choosing a heathen ruler, the Jewish nation had withdrawn from the theocracy. They had rejected God as their King. Henceforth they had no deliverer. They had no king but Caesar. The priests and teachers of the Jews had led the people to this suicidal situation. For this, with the fearful results that followed, they were responsible. A nation’s sin and a nation’s ruin were due to the religious leaders.

We can clearly see here that the book was not yet sealed at the inauguration. God was still documenting in the book of inheritance (the Bible) the rejection by the Jewish nation of the covenant God had made with them. At the stoning of Stephen (after the inauguration) they confirmed their rejection of the covenant made with God to be His people. We find there the last message sent by God to the Jewish nation as the prophets used to do in the Old Testament (Acts 7). The divine covenant was then confirmed to the New Israel, the Christian Church. The book is therefore definitely depicted as being unsealed in the final judgment, not from the inauguration.

As already seen, some songs of praise seen in Rev 4 and 5 can be sung in different contexts. The Spirit of Prophecy places them at the inauguration, in the judgment, and in heaven with all the redeemed before the throne of God. But one song found in Rev 5, she applies only toward the future, never to the inaugural past. It is the song which declares that the Lamb is worthy to take and open the sealed book:

“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 our God kings and priests... Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (RH 6-4-95, 6).

### **7. Distorted theology that pretends that Jesus sat on the throne of God like the Davidic kings, after presumably taking the book on His own at the inauguration.**

**Answer:** Andrews’ new interpreters again contradict the Spirit of Prophecy when they claim that Jesus sat at the right hand of God after taking the scroll of the law given to kings descended from David before they were enthroned (2 Kings 11:12). The example they give of King Joash when he receives the book of the law and is proclaimed king is that of an investiture, not that of an enthronement that occurs later. They were to first evict the impostor queen Athaliah before they could enthrone Joash.



Let us keep in mind that the temple and the city of Jerusalem had different thrones: one for the Lord in the Most Holy Place; and another in the city for the Davidic kings. This is the reason why Jesus says in Rev 3:21 that He sat at His Father’s throne in the past, but that the redeemed will be allowed to sit with Him in His throne, that is, the New Jerusalem throne. In 1 King 1:34-35,39-40, we see the story of Solomon’s investiture by a priest who anointed him with oil taken from the Tabernacle, and then he goes to the city to be enthroned.

Regarding the account of the investiture of Joash, the Andrews commentary does not take into account that Joash received the *Testimony* or *Book of the Law* as the sign of authority to become king, in the seventh year, that is, in the seventh month, in the temple (2 Kgs 11). Let us keep in mind that the numbering of months began in the priestly Spring calendar, but the numbering of years began in the royal or civil seventh month, when the years of the kings were reckoned. Let me share the following graphic on the way the Jews reckoned the months and the years:

### Priestly Year and Royal or Civil Year in the Hebrew Calendar



At the inauguration, the *Book of the Law* or *Testimony* was placed beside the ark in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary (Deut 31:26). It was only in the seventh month, at the beginning of the royal calendar, more specifically on the Day of Atonement, when that book could be taken from the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:2,34), in preparation to be read on the Sabbatical Year (Deut 31:9-13). (See “5. Why does John weep before the throne?,” in *Dialogues on the Heavenly Temple in the Book of Revelation*).

[<https://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/Dialogues%20on%20the%20Heavenly%20Temple%20in%20the%20Book%20of%20Revelation.pdf>]

David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (World Bible Commentary, 1997), 336, relates the same fact by saying that in 2 Kings 11:12 and Dan 7 and Rev 5 we see not an enthronement, but an investiture. These are his words:

“The term ‘investiture’ is a more appropriate designation for the narrative in Rev 5 than ‘enthronement,’ since ‘investiture’ refers to the act of establishing someone in office or the ratification of the office...” “The investiture scene in Rev 5 appears to have been adapted from Dan 7:9-14..., which centers on the investiture of ‘one like a son of man,’ not his enthronement.”

Aune finds several terminological links between the two visions, corroborated by the Greek version known as the LXX

What these Andrews theologians don't know is that the kingdoms of the Messiah—priestly like Melchizedek's and royal like David—are successive, not simultaneous. The kingdom that Jesus assumed by sitting at the right hand of God is a priestly kingdom equivalent to that of Melchizedek (Ps 110:1,4; Heb 7). But at the end of His work of mediation Jesus would cease to be a priest to assume His role as king like David, who was not a priest. This will take place at His second coming (Rev 11:15; 19:7-9,15-16; cf. Ps 2:9; Matt 25:31-46; Luke 1:32-33, etc).

Contrary to what the *Andrews Bible Commentary* says, the book of Revelation does not present Jesus as a second Melchizedek, but as a second David. God inspired the Epistle to the Hebrews to speak about the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, with Jesus as a King/Priest, seated at God's right hand (Heb 1:3; 8:1, etc). But the book of Revelation introduces Jesus as a second David. As a matter of fact, the titles conferred to Jesus are not priestly, but royal: "Lion of the tribe of Judah," "Root of David" (Rev 5; see Heb 7:13-14). The title Lamb is not a priestly title, because the people and kings also offered lambs, but not as priests, and the book of Revelation speaks of Christ as being a Lamb even after the redemption was completed, when He would no longer be a priest (Rev 14:1; 17:14).

"'He shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne' [Zech 6:13]. 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 Him the throne of His Father David,' a kingdom of which 'there shall be no end'" [Luke 1:32-33]; GC 416).

"The throne of glory represents the kingdom of glory; and this kingdom is referred to in the Saviour's words: 'When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.' Matthew 25:31-32. This kingdom is yet future. It is not to be set up until the second advent of Christ" (GC 347).

Entering the Holy of Holies in 1844, Jesus says:

"Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself" (EW 55). "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 280).

The *Andrews Bible Commentary* completely ignores the final investiture of the Son of God that the Spirit of Prophecy confirmed. In his book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Ranko Stefanovic, the principal contributor of this new Andrews commentary constantly cites Dan 7:13-14 and Rev 14:14 to prove that Christ's coronation and enthronement took place in the year 31 (*The Revelation...*, 166, 174, 207). But both texts refer to the final judgment at the Second Coming of Christ.

This is amazing! We are living in a time when the world is preparing to worship the antichrist (Rev 13:3-4), in an attempt of the devil to counteract the investiture of the only one worthy to become King. But we are being called by the Lord to "come up here" (Rev 4:1), to look upward to the glorious scene of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah to be invested in heaven as

King of His people, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 4-5; 11:15-19). Will we not be impressed by this marvelous vision?

The Andrews commentary only knows the inaugural coronation of Jesus as the high priest in the year 31, and the coronation of Jesus after the millennium. But it doesn't know that Jesus was to be crowned again in His second coming and before His people. After the millennium all the wicked will have to behold his third and final coronation. Let's look at a few statements of E. G. White in her projection of a future coronation of Christ.

“Christ says...: ‘On my coronation day, you will be a jewel in My crown of rejoicing’” (HP 267). “When the coronation shall take place, and Christ, our Advocate and Redeemer, becomes the king of his redeemed subjects” (HM, 11-01-97, 7)

See a more extensive study on the two successive kingdoms of the Messiah in:  
<https://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/Twosuccessivekingdomessiah-edit.pdf>

On the other hand, the elders did not participate in determining who would be priests, but only God through Moses, who anointed them (Ex 28-29). The same is true of the coronation of Christ in His kingdom of mediation, who received from God alone the designation to be high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:4-6). But David was anointed by the elders (2 Sam 5:3; 1 Chr 11:3), who in turn determined in judgment who would be admitted to the city where those who were persecuted sought refuge (Josh 20:1-5). Therefore, in Rev 5 it is the elders who acclaim the Lamb when He receives the book that will make Him King.

### **8. The new *Andrews Bible Commentary* claims that the 24 elders are resurrected human beings.**

**Answer:** Here again we see that the *Andrews Bible Commentary* contradicts not only the Spirit of Prophecy, but also many modern interpreters. What are the arguments employed in the commentary to claim that the elders are glorified saints, and not angels as the Spirit of Prophecy claims?

#### ***a) The Bible allegedly does not use the term “elders” to refer to angels.***

**Answer:** The vision of judgment in Dan 7 depicts God as “Ancient of Days,” since by their maturity, only elders were considered worthy to judge (Lev 19:32; Isa 3:4). So, the description of the 24 elders does not necessarily require that they be human beings. Rev 4 and 5 represent a court of venerable ones. Jesus anticipated that there would be a heavenly “Sanhedrin” (Matt 5:22: lit. “Sanhedrin”), which again points to angels, not human beings. The Jewish Sanhedrin was composed of courts of 24 elders in each city, and three courts of 24 elders in Jerusalem. Although they often mention 23 elders, and 70 or 71, to avoid a tie in their deliberations, the common denominator was 24. See references in my book, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, 532.

The vision of Revelation 4-5 shows a heavenly replica of David's court being surrounded by elders who sat to judge on thrones along with him (Ps 122:4-5). Jesus anticipated that in the final court, the Son would be glorified and honored as the Father was (John 5:22-23), just as John sees Him again in Rev 4 and 5. These passages are also completely neglected in the new commentary of Andrews, as well as in Stefanovic's books.

The elders of Isa 24:23 have also been understood as a reference to heavenly beings. This is why there is no lack of testimonies in the apocalyptic literature of John's time, which identifies angels as being elders. See Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, in chapter 4. Neither did the Spirit of Prophecy ever refer to the 24 elders of Revelation as glorified human beings, but always as angels. E. G. White did not make the mistake of pretending that the resurrected saints would be seated on thrones and with crowns before the Son was supposedly enthroned and crowned at the inauguration of His heavenly priesthood, according to the views of these new interpreters. Let us share the various quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy that identify "elders" as angels:

"John was distressed at the utter inability of any human being or angelic intelligence to read the words, or even to look thereon. His soul was wrought up to such a point of agony and suspense that *one of the strong angels* had compassion on him, and laying his hand on him assuringly said, 'Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof'" (*Lt* 65, 1898; *2 MR* 296.4; *20 MR* 197.3). According to John, that angel is one of the elders (Rev 5:5).

"*Said the angel*, These are they that have come up through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white" (*HP* 371; *Mar* 329). According to John again, that angel is one of the elders (Rev 7:13-14). "*Said the angel of God to John*, as he beheld the multitudes of the redeemed gathered about the throne: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple'" (*ST*, August 6, 1885, par. 20).

"John beholds an innumerable company, precious, refined, purified, around the throne of the Majesty of Heaven. *The angel inquires of John*, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?' and John answers, 'Sir, thou knowest.' Then *the angel declares*: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them'" (*ST*, December 22, 1887, par. 7; *SAT* 20.2; *1SAT* 35.2).

"As John saw the multitude standing around the throne of God, the question was asked, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?'—'These are they which came out of great tribulation,' *the angel answered*, 'and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'" (*ST*, April 17, 1901, par. 18; *ST*, November 22, 1905 par. 3).

***b) The elders are seated on thrones, dressed in white and wearing crowns, something that would apply, (in the view of the Andrews Commentary), rather to human beings.***

**Answer:** Angels have crowns that they throw at the feet of the Lord as in Rev 4, which shows that, along with sitting on thrones, the crowns they possess are not necessarily of triumph, but of hierarchy (Greek *LXX stephanos*: 1 Chr 20:2; Jer 13:18; Zech 6:11,14; Rev 9:7, etc.). Hence E. G. White considers them "strong angels" [see discussion on different interpretations, in my book *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment...*, 523-547].

Indeed, Greek lexicons claim that the word *stefanos* can also refer to a rank or dignity. Even so, if anyone wants to give the term *stefanos* the connotation of triumph, we must remember that the triumph of others is often assumed by those who love them and worked for them. Let me mention some examples taken from the LXX and from the NT (LXX: *stefanos*: Prov 12:4; 17:6; NT: Philip 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19). The angels who appear sitting as judges would represent, in that case, the future triumph of the redeemed.

Angels dressed in white also appear in Rev 19:14. It makes no sense that those who rose with Christ should already be seated on thrones, before the Lamb who redeemed them appears, if it is an inaugural scene like the one proposed in the commentary. Let's look at another statement of E. G. White, where angels also have crowns, and act as John describes the 24 elders acting.

“Angels offer the smoke of the fragrant incense for the praying saints” (*ChG* 519).

“Then Jesus ceases his intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts his hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done;’ and all the angelic host lay off their crowns...” (*GC* 613).

E. G. White had a vision of Jesus and his Father sitting on a (singular) throne in the Holy Place. But she never saw thrones (plural) there. When Jesus rises and opens the door of the Holy of Holies, and the Father then sits on His throne, in fulfillment of the vision of Dan 7:9-11, she declares that she saw thrones in the Holy of Holies.

“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and his Son Jesus Christ [by the context, in the Holy place]... Then I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming Chariot go *into the Holy of Holies*, within the veil, and did sit. *There I saw thrones that I had never seen before*... There I beheld Jesus, as He was standing before the Father, a great High Priest,” (*To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad*, 4-6-1846; also in *DS*, 3-14-46)

*c) It is suggested that the 24 elders would be represented by the 24 divisions of priests who officiated in shifts in the temple (1Cron 24).*

**Answer:** But these singers never officiated seated or performed together, but in turn.

**9. The Andrews commentary universalizes the heavenly praise by claiming that such praise is timeless.** It literally states that “Revelation 4:8-10 suggests that what John saw in heaven... was not a singular event that took place at a specific point in time.”

**Answer:** It is noteworthy that to prove this gratuitous claim, the commentary cites Is 6:1-3; Ezek 1:22-28 and Dan 7:9-10, all visions of judgment, as confirmed by their context and several times by the Spirit of Prophecy. The truth is that this praise is connected to a specific event that Jesus anticipated for judgment in John 5:22-23. In addition, the four cherubim of Rev 4:8-10 were represented in the temple of Solomon in the Most Holy Place, surrounding the ark of the covenant. Two cherubim were over the ark (Exod 25:22), and two additional cherubim besides the ark (2 Chr 3:10-13). The book of the law was also placed beside the ark in the Most Holy Place (Deut 31:24-26). So, the scene of Rev 4-5 does not represent the whole ministry of Jesus in the Holy Place, but the final court of judgment in the Most Holy Place.

**10. The Andrews commentary universalizes the weeping of John to avoid admitting that it refers to the final judgment.** It states that “his weeping represents the tears of all God’s people, from Adam to the conclusion of the Great Controversy and the end of time.”

**Answer:** But John’s weeping is placed in a specific and defined context: the determination of who is worthy to take the book that will legitimize Him as King of His redeemed people. We see this again in John’s experience in Rev 10, when the apostle is commanded to take the “little book” of Daniel’s prophecy that is sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the womb. John’s disappointment does not represent the disappointment of all mankind from Adam to the time of the end. That disappointment refers to a specific moment relative to the judgment that should not be vanished by universalizing that experience. Something similar happens with John’s weeping in Rev 5, which is placed in a definite context of someone needing to appear, to be invested as the King of His people.

We already note in other critical observations of the new Andrews commentary, the tendency to universalize passages that speak of defined aspects such as being “the name” and the place of the antichrist. It is not about “humanity,” as they claim, because that is not a name. John refers to the name of the Antichrist that is obtained by the numerical meaning of the letters marked by 666, and of his headquarters in Rome, the city of the seven hills (Rev 13:17-18; 17:9).

If John weeps, it is because he is facing a new situation. He knew that Jesus had been enthroned in the temple at the inauguration, because he had received, along with the other apostles, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when Jesus was crowned at the right hand of God in a kingdom of mediation. He had seen Jesus among the candelabra of the Holy Place of the heavenly temple preparing the churches to appear before the heavenly court in the Most Holy Place in the second vision. And John had heard at the conclusion of the message to the churches, that Jesus was expected to be enthroned again, in the end, together with His people, not in the temple where the throne of God is, but in the New Jerusalem city (Rev 3:21). At the peak of being invested, John does not see the new David appear to take the book that consecrates Him as King. And that’s why he weeps.

**11. The Andrews commentary presumes that Rev 4 and 5 recounts the inaugural moment of the redeemed as “kings and priests” in the Christian dispensation.**

**Answer:** But the book of Revelation refers to the kingdom and priesthood of the redeemed after they overcome (Rev 5:10). This was anticipated in the spiritual kingdom of the church (Rev 1:6). The current spiritual priestly kingdom will be materialized in the end, when Christ will be invested as king together with His people (Rev 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5).

**12. The Andrews commentary infers that “the lightning, voices, and thunder” that come from the throne in Rev 4 evoke the Sinai experience when God proclaimed His law and constituted Israel as a priestly kingdom.**

**Answer:** In Heb 12:26 the apostle Paul projects the voice of God that made the mountain tremble at Sinai, to the voice of God who will also shake heaven at the final judgment. “*The terrors of Sinai were to represent to the people the scenes of the judgment*” (PP 339). That is what is seen in the book of Revelation, confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy.

The description of “lightning, voices, and thunder” appears in the conclusion of the final plagues (Rev 16:17-18). That cannot be a reference to the inauguration. The same can be said of the conclusion of the seven trumpets (Rev 11:19). But these new interpretations try at all costs to locate such descriptions in the inauguration. And so, they divide the book of Revelation in a curious and forced way, as when they move Rev 11:19 to the second half of the book, which begins with the story of the conflict between good and evil in heaven, before the creation of the world.

Following the apocalyptic literary scheme of the “lightning, voices and thunder” at the end of the world that come from the throne of God, we can affirm that Revelation 4:5 concludes the message to the seven churches. And in Rev 8:1-5 we also see the conclusion of the seven seals. So does the Spirit of Prophecy.

“A crisis had arrived in the government of God. The earth was filled with transgression. The voices of those who had been sacrificed to human envy and hatred *were crying beneath the altar for retribution* [Rev 6:9-10]. All heaven was prepared at the word of God to move to the help of his elect. One word from him, and the bolts of heaven would have fallen upon the earth, filling it with fire and flame. God had but to speak, and there would have been thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and destruction” (RH, 5-7-17, 1900).

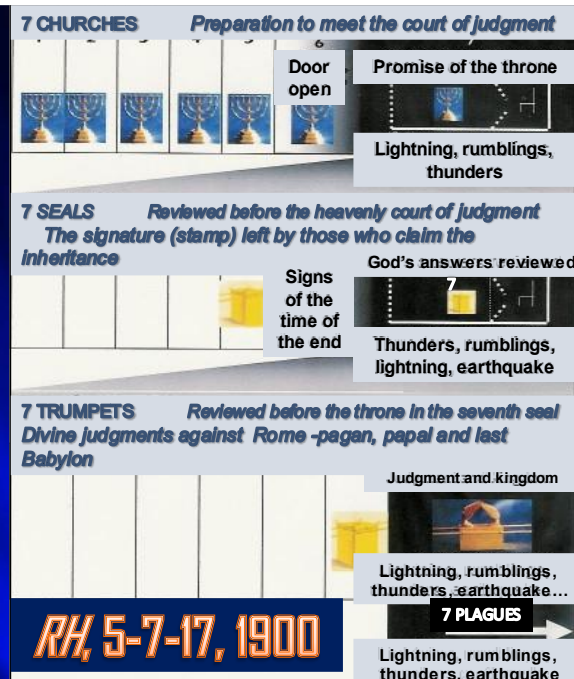
### **13. The Andrews commentary pretends that we have to wait until Rev 11:19 to move on to the Holy of Holies and get to the final events.**

**Answer:** I will not go into detail here because I have already considered in other documents (with graphics) how in all the visions of John, the throne stands out in the Most Holy, at the end of each prophetic series. In the book of Revelation, the throne never appears in motion. If you see a piece of furniture from the Holy Place, it is because the door to the Holy of Holies is open. From Rev 4-5, the prophetic series are viewed *teleologically*, that is, from the perspective of the end. Therefore, the literary division of the book of Revelation into historical and eschatological is forced. Let us summarize why.

In the first part the reader of the book of Revelation is always confronted with the end. The seventh church of Laodicea, by its very name, is the church of judgment. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah receives the kingdom promised to David in Rev 5, that was expected to take place at the end of the judgment. Chapter 6 gives the end-time signs that are fulfilled in the last generation. Chapter 7 highlights the final triumph of the 144,000 and the great final gathering of the great multitude before the throne of God.

In Rev 8:1-5 we see the breaking of the seventh seal which concludes the opening of the book. All the seals are opened in the Most Holy Place, as represented in ancient Israel by the Book of the Law that was required to be placed besides the ark (Deut 31:24-26). That book was not opened then, but deposited there to remain in the Holy of holiest as a witness against the rebels for a future judgment. In the seventh seal, the part that the Lord fulfilled in the covenant with His people is brought to memory before the throne of judgment. The heavenly work of intercession and judgment performed during the Christian dispensation, is reviewed before the throne from a *teleological* perspective, that is, from the perspective of the end. And in chapters 10 and 11 the time of the end and judgment is again highlighted.

**All these septet series conclude with the divine theophany, that is, with convulsions in heaven and on earth before the revelation of the heavenly Majesty, in the conclusion of the heavenly intercession. “Thunders, lightnings, voices, hail and an earthquake”**



In the second part, not everything refers to the end. We see the history of the great conflict that began in heaven in chapter 12, and the struggle that takes place on earth between the dragon and the woman (the church). In chapter 13 we see the story of the beast (the antichrist) and the false prophet. Chapter 17 makes history of the great empires of the world that rebelled against God and His people, who are now portrayed, as in a mockup, in the seven mountains of the city of Rome (Rev 17:9). The historical harlot stands out as being drunk with the blood of the saints, a reference to her history.

There are more issues to bring into consideration in our criticism on the Andrews commentary of the book of Revelation but let us stop here. It is time for a conclusion.

## Conclusion

These critical reviews I have been making of the *Andrews Bible Commentary* in the book of Revelation section will serve only those who are willing to subject their mind and logic to divine revelation. Those who have “itchy ears” will continue to appear with their theories that will separate many from our prophetic legacy (see 2 Tim 4:3), which was confirmed by the *Testimony of Jesus* who is the *Spirit of Prophecy* (Rev 12:17; 19:10). But I would challenge those who read these criticisms with what Joshua said to the people at the end of his life: “Choose today whom to follow...but I and my house will follow the revelation of the Lord” (Joshua 24:15 paraphrased).

The book of Revelation is a wonderful book. Soon the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, will be invested as King of His redeemed subjects. That event is compared to a wedding ceremony before the throne of God. It will be the most extraordinary ceremony in history. All heaven awaits impatiently for that moment to come. And we should be preaching this message with all our strength, with God’s help, imbued by the Spirit of God with that message. Our church needs to grasp that glorious moment, because we need to look beyond the dramatic scenes that we are witnessing happening in this world. It is unfortunate that these new interpretations hinder the people from seeing the great picture of what is happening now in heaven, and its tremendous importance.



Let us also respect *the Testimony of Jesus* which is *the Spirit of Prophecy* (Rev 12:17; 19:10). Otherwise, we will end by reading what these new authors teach as we read any other commentary of the book of Revelation written by those who don't have the message that God gave to the remnant. If we discard the Spirit of Prophecy in these important issues, others will feel free to fabricate their own imaginations and rebel against the *Testimonies* in other issues. Let us repeat the warning of the wise king Solomon: "Where there is no prophetic vision, the people cast off restraint" (Prov 29:18).

Let us go to the book of Revelation keeping in mind the true message of the sanctuary which was represented in the old temple of Israel. And we will not depart from its specific message. The spatial representation of the earthly sanctuary is to be respected in its fulfillment in the heavenly sanctuary. This is necessary to avoid fabrication of literary structures in the book of Revelation with the purpose to adapt the visions to the taste and pleasure of each one.

Again. Let us not force the literary structure of the book of Revelation to make it fit preconceived ideas that are foreign to our prophetic legacy. We need to grasp its specific message, not to speculate with general or universal ideas and imaginations. We are living at the time when our King Jesus will conclude His heavenly priestly ministry and be invested as our King for all eternity. The dragon does not want us to behold that glorious scene that is being taken in heaven, and instead, he wants us to focus our attention on earth where the world is being deceived to worship the antichrist. Let us exalt the Name of our Lord here on earth, to participate beforehand in that glorious ceremony which fills the universe with joyful songs.

For those who want more in-depth discussion on the key topics considered in this review, let me share where to find them, available in my webpage [www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com](http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com), and in Amazon. You will also find other papers in that webpage where I deal with the other subjects that I reviewed in the former two criticisms on the Andrews Bible Commentary.

#### **In Amazon and in my webpage:**

*The Final Crisis in Revelation 4 & 5.*

*The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Heavenly Sanctuary (Seminar 3).*

*The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary (Seminar 4).*

#### **In my webpage:**

*The Two Successive Kingdoms of the Messiah*

<https://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/TwoSuccessiveKingdomMessiah-edit.pdf>

*Dialogues on the Heavenly Temple in the Book of Revelation (YouTube included)*

<https://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/Dialogues%20on%20the%20Heavenly%20Temple%20in%20the%20Book%20of%20Revelation.pdf>