



interpreted for us by scripture itself, it is still a fairly lengthy study. Not to mention that the symbols were primarily emerging from two books, Daniel and Revelation.

The remaining symbols and imagery in the book of Revelation are far greater in number and variety and occur in a much wider range of both Old and New Testament books. And there are far fewer instances where someone explains for us the meaning of the symbols. Instead, we are expected to scour the pages of scripture ourselves and bring a familiarity with scriptural precedent to the table when we embark upon understanding what Revelation is referring to. And that is what the imagery in the book of Revelation truly is, an exhaustive series of references to previously existing and longstanding themes explained earlier and in more detail elsewhere in scripture.

Given these factors, including the length of our existing “Prophetic Symbols” study, which has a relatively more limited scope, the commentary that follows will be rather substantial. This was necessary in order to adequately address the details of the text and to adequately support the interpretations offered in this study. In the end, we believe one last element weighs strongly in favor of the model, which results from the analysis below. And that is the simple picture that emerges alongside substantial scriptural support at the end of the day when all the work is done.

### *A Background to Chronology*

Perhaps the best way to introduce the chronological model asserted in this study is to first briefly talk about two basic existing theories regarding the chronology in the book of Revelation. Although rendered generically for the purpose of illustration, these two basic alternative models represent opposing sides of the spectrum.

The first basic model is what could be called a “simple” or “singular chronology.” This “simple chronology” model very straightforwardly suggests that the events described in the book of Revelation take place in the order in which they appear in the book. Under this model, from start to finish, events written first occur before events written later all the way through to the end of the book.

The strength of this model is its simplicity. The greatest weakness, however, is the fact that the resulting interpretation is one where seemingly unrepeatable events happen multiple times. By employing this model, you end up with two times in less than a decade when every island and mountain is removed from its place (Revelation 6:14 and again in Revelation 16:20). In addition, there would be a grand total of no less than 4 returns of Christ on the clouds of heaven: one at the seventh and final trumpet in Revelation 11:15 (see 1 Corinthians 15:51-51, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17), one in chapter 14:1 when he is standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000, one later in chapter 14:14, when he appears on the clouds of heaven to harvest the earth, and one again in Revelation 19:11-14 when he returns

with the saints to fight the battle of Armageddon. Not to mention a potential fifth return strongly indicated in Revelation 7:9-14 in which saints enter into heaven from great tribulation, who presumably would have been brought there by Jesus in what would be the very first instance of a rapture in the book of Revelation. And those are just a few of the more prominent examples.

The second basic model is what could be called an “a-chronological” model. The term “a-chronological” is intended to denote the central concept of the model in which the elements of the book are viewed without regard for any chronology. It might be said that the underlying premise to this model is that Revelation was not written or intended to outline or denote a chronology in the first place. And consequently any attempts to decipher or construct such a chronology from the details are misguided to begin with. Given how the “simple chronology” so quickly results in ridiculous repetition, it is easy to see how someone could become convinced that it is impossible to reconcile the details of Revelation into a coherent chronology. So, this approach takes a style-over-substance point of view, centering on the idea that anyone looking too closely at the individual trees and shrubs will automatically lose sight of the forest and miss the point.

The greatest strength of this model is perhaps that it does solve the central problem created by the “simple chronology” approach. It removes the ridiculous repetition. However, there are perhaps two equally significant problems with this model. One has to do with the sheer amount of symbol detail and the other has to do with chronology itself.

The first problem with the “a-chronological” model is that it ends up throwing out the baby with the bathwater, reducing the details of the book to little more than window dressing whose only purpose is to convey an abstract mood, feeling, or concept. Effectively, it gives up on trying to make any tangible or identifiable sense out of what is ultimately quite a lot of information that God clearly intended to record in great detail. What’s the point of all those precise details and references to previous scriptural events and imagery not to mention writing them all down to the tune of 22 chapters if each individual one is not relevant or has no desired meaning for us? Why go through the trouble of including all those peculiar references unless each one possessed a relevance that necessitated its specific inclusion?

And second, the book of Revelation is itself replete with “chronological” language and often goes out of its way to identify how certain events relate to other events chronologically. (See Revelation 20:1-9 for one prominent example.) What is to be done with all these chronological statements and all this effort if the very idea of chronology is to be thrown out the window?

In addition, it might be informative to briefly describe and discuss a few other alternative models. The model proposed by this study below is not the first to attempt to avoid duplicating key events by interlacing difference sequences within the book of Revelation so that seemingly unique or peculiar events line up rather

than repeat multiple times. Again, some generic examples would provide some helpful illustrations for comparison.

In recognizing that Revelation itself contains several prominent series, such as the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls of wrath, one approach has been to chronologically re-order the elements of these series, not according to the order in which they appear in the text, but interlacing them so that they will line up wherever two or more series contain a description of the same event. In this way, even though the seals appear first in the text, followed by the trumpets, and then the bowls, these three series are thought to overlap each other, ending at the same point rather than following one series after the other as the written order of the text might seem to suggest. For example, taking into account the particulars of each event described, it might be suggested that seals 1 through 5 occur, followed by trumpets 1 through 6, then bowls 1-6, and concluding with seals 6 and 7, trumpet 7, and bowl 7 all converging.

The strength of this approach is clearly its ability to remove duplication of unique events, such as the islands and mountains being removed from their place and the return of the Lord. However, its weakness is that, in reality, it lacks any true underlying model as a basis for such an interpretation. The convergence of seemingly like events is directed only by their apparent likeness and by the usefulness or convenience of making them converge. However much sense this makes, without an identifiable underlying model, this approach is somewhat arbitrary and certainly ad hoc. This will become clearer by contrast below as we explain the model proposed by this study in the next section. For the purposes of clarity, we might call this the “loose convergence” model.

Similarly, we might also describe what could be called a “strict convergence” model. Like the “loose convergence” model described immediately above, the “strict convergence” model asserts a chronology in which the main series described in Revelation overlap and converge toward the same end point rather than each series occurring one after the other as they appear in the text. However, the “strict convergence” model recognizes the somewhat arbitrary and ad hoc nature of the “loose convergence” model and seeks to identify a definable governing logic or structure for overlapping Revelation’s prominent series.

An example of this kind of “strict convergence” model at work would be a chronology in which seal 1, trumpet 1, and bowl 1 all occur followed by seal 2, trumpet 2, and bowl 2, etc., until all three series are completed. Here, the underlying logic for convergence is clear and simple. The numbers in each series are assumed to correspond so that each numbered item in one series corresponds in time roughly to the items in the other series, which also bear that same number. The strength of this model is that it has a governing logic and that governing logic is easily identifiable.

The weakness, however, is threefold. First, the governing logic itself seems arbitrary and ad hoc. The numbers in each respective series are assumed to converge largely because they are readily identifiable and convenient for this

purpose. How are we to know if this governing logic is inherent to the structure of the text itself or is instead a logic superimposed onto the text?

Second, the logic of the convergence is so rigid that it may force associations and convergences that are unwarranted and in some cases against the grain of the text itself. For example, if each number in a series corresponds in timing to the same number in the other two series, then when the sixth seal includes the islands and mountains being removed from their place, any additional references to this event in the trumpets or bowls of wrath should also come at number 6 in those series. But instead, we find that it is the seventh bowl of wrath, not the sixth, when the islands and mountains are removed and this is accompanied by thunders, lightning, a plague of hail, and a great earthquake, which also occur at the seventh trumpet. What happens at the sixth number in one series happens at the seventh number in the other two series. Moreover, neither the seventh seal, nor the sixth trumpet and bowl have any mention of these events. The events clearly do not line up simply according to the sequential numbers. In part, discrepancies like these are what have led to the adoption of a “loose convergence” model.

And third, this governing logic is limited, in that it can only explain the chronology within these 3 primary series (the seals, trumpets, and bowls). Events outside those three primary series fall outside of the model’s ability to explain or arrange. Of course, this is a weakness shared by the “loose convergence” model as well.

These four basic models provide some insight into what an appropriate model for chronology should look like. In light of the absurd redundancy of the “simple chronology” model and the reckless abandon of the “a-chronological” model, it becomes apparent that an ideal chronological model should be simple to articulate, be clearly demonstrable from scripture, and remove absurd redundancy without discarding the wealth of deliberate details and overt chronological language, which populate the book. In light of the “loose convergence” and “strict convergence” models, it becomes apparent that a model that simply removes redundancy cannot be considered reliable unless it is based upon an identifiable logic inherent in the structure of the text itself instead of invented in a convenient or ad hoc fashion. All of these criteria are met very efficiently by the following chronological model.

### *The Origin of the Model*

Precedent in scripture is perhaps the strongest support any interpretive model can have. Whenever the meaning or even the structure of a passage seems elusive, being able to connect that passage to another passage in scripture where the meaning or structure is more readily identifiable is invaluable. This is summed up in the axiom, “Let scripture interpret scripture.”

In our article series on “Prophetic Symbols” in which we examine the potential meaning of various imagery used in prophetic texts, we rely heavily upon

precedent to establish symbol meaning. So, it is no surprise that precedent should also work when it comes to identifying the structure and chronology employed in the book of Revelation. And, by connecting the chronological structure of Revelation to an identifiable chronological structure employed elsewhere in scripture, we arrive at a governing logic for reducing redundancy that is inherent to the structure of the text of scripture, rather than arbitrarily conceived of and imposed for the sake of convenience.

When it comes to the question of where the idea for this chronological model came from, the short version of the tale is that the concept emerged after considering potential broad similarities between the first book of the Bible and the last. And after further consideration, it became apparent that the opening chapters of Genesis could provide insight into the way in which Revelation records a story chronologically. Once it was understood that the structure of Revelation might be revealed by other, earlier portions of scripture, texts such as Daniel and even other parts of Genesis began to offer further parallels.

The best way to explain the connection is to think of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 as a simple teaching example provided at the very beginning for how God records a series of events. Millennia later, after God had provided book after book expounding the imagery and particulars of his plan, this same basic chronological structure present in the very first chapters of God's Word was ready to be employed on a much more ambitious, larger scale to describe the closing chapters of God's plan in a way that pulled together all of the imagery that God had progressively revealed over the millennia to convey those final events.

### *Basic Terms and Categories of Text Structure*

As we begin to describe this model, we should first set forth some of the vocabulary that was developed to categorize what we found. The illustrative basis for these categories comes primarily out of three portions of scripture, which will be covered in the next section as we exemplify the model in action. These three teaching texts are Genesis 1-2, Daniel 2, 7-12, and Genesis 17:23-27. Our intention is to describe the terminology and then to show it at work within the body of these teaching texts.

First, we noted that Genesis 1-2 as well as Daniel and Revelation all employ the very basic structure of what we call a *Series*. A *Series* is exactly what it sounds like, a series or sequence of events or elements described in the chronological order in which they occur. *Series* are the basic building blocks of the texts' format.

*Series* seemed to come in two forms, either *Long* or *Short*. *Long Series* provided more detailed descriptions so that we can understand what happens at each point and distinguish it from what happened at points before and after it. The days of Genesis 1 provide an excellent example of this, providing enough detail to distinguish the events on each day from the events on other days while still

keeping each description relatively short. We will describe the format and function of a *Short Series* after we cover a few more vocabulary terms.

But before we move ahead to the next term, it is necessary to take note of the following key trait of a *Series*. The purpose of a *Series* is to reveal the connection of each event in the *Series* to the other events in that *Series*. For this reason, descriptions of events within a *Series* are typically limited and will stop short of following tangents that more fully describe a particular event either in more detail or in terms of other connections that event may have to other events, which are outside that particular *Series*. Consequently, *Series* seemed to be heavily augmented by two types of other devices, which we called *Expansions* and *Parallel Descriptions*.

*Expansions* were defined as segments in which the text zoomed in on a particular element or event within a *Series* and provided additional details about that point in time or event, which are not found within the string of the *Series* itself. As such, the primary function of an *Expansion* is to provide a place to describe an event or element in fuller detail, including any additional connections to other outside events or elements, so that the *Series* doesn't lose focus by including large tangents for every element it contains. In a short while below, we will see how Genesis 1 and 2 provide an excellent example of how a *Series* and an *Expansion* work.

*Series* also seemed to be augmented by segments that we called *Parallel Descriptions*. *Parallel Descriptions* seemed to take one of two related forms. A *Parallel Description* was defined as a segment in which an element from a *Series* was described *using alternate prophetic imagery* or as a segment in which the text provides descriptions of other events or elements that are occurring *side-by-side* with the timeframe of elements in the *Series*. Thus, the events in a *Parallel Description* are contemporary to the events in a *Series*. And, in this way, two *Series* can actually be *Parallel Descriptions* for each other, overlapping each other in time and using different prophetic imagery to describe events. Consequently, the term "parallel" is intended to denote either the *overlapping* nature of the timeframe or *corresponding* nature of the alternate imagery.

Now, at times, an *Expansion* or a *Parallel Description* seemed to actually occur within the body of a *Series*, temporarily interrupting the flow of the *Series*. When this happened, we called it an *Interlude*, which is effectively when the text pauses from the *Series* and takes an aside to depict related details. When the *Expansion Interlude* or *Parallel Description Interlude* was finished, the text returned and completes the remainder of the *Series*.

In addition, because Revelation is broken up by these different segments of separate *Series*, *Expansions*, and *Parallel Descriptions*, there seemed to emerge a structural device that was used to connect elements in one segment to elements or alternate imagery in other segments. We called this a *Short Series*. In contrast to the *Long Series*, which like Genesis 1 do provide some descriptions of the elements they contain, the purpose of a *Short Series* was not to provide

descriptions of the elements but instead to act as the connective tissue between separate segments, quickly arranging the connection between events in one segment to events in another. In this way, *Short Series* helped establish the relationship between different *Long Series*, *Expansions*, and *Parallel Descriptions*.

Finally, there is one last structural category, which we called a *Redundant Summary*. *Redundant Summaries* had two parts, the *Initial Description* and the *Repeating Description*, which together usually comprised only about a half dozen verses. In a *Redundant Summary*, both the *Initial Description* and the *Repeating Description* are fairly short and lacking in elaboration. The purpose appears to be to restate something for emphasis and clarity to make sure elements are not misunderstood or maybe even missed altogether. But although *Redundant Summaries* were perhaps one of the strangest categories of textual structure that we came across, their existence also happened to be one of the most easily demonstrable, as we will see below when we take a look at Genesis 17:23-27 as one prominent example.

This concludes the list of vocabulary terms that were developed for describing the various kinds of structural types found in the book of Revelation and exemplified in earlier scriptural precedent. They include:

*Long Series* – the basic building blocks, providing elements or events in their chronological order and with some description of each.

*Expansions* – occurring either within (*Interlude*) or after a *Series* and focusing in, providing more detail for one or more of the elements in the *Series* and perhaps additional connections to events or elements not described in that particular *Series*.

*Parallel Descriptions* – occurring either within (*Interlude*) or after a *Series* and providing either an alternate description using different prophetic imagery or a description of events or elements that relate to and overlap the timeframe of a particular *Series*.

*Interlude* – an *Expansion* or *Parallel Description* that occurs within the body of a *Series*, temporarily interrupting the flow of the *Series*, to provide additional, related information.

*Short Series* – a few verses providing a short summary list of events in chronological order, usually without details, designed to connect elements from different segments together.

*Redundant Summaries* – comprised of the *Initial Description* and the *Repeating Description*, usually around a half dozen verses total, providing two heavily redundant versions of the same events for the purpose of emphasis and clarity.

Now that we've defined the basic vocabulary and types of structures within the model, its time to see them at work in our teaching texts.

### *Structure in Precedent: Genesis 1-2, Series and Expansion*

As we stated in the previous section, Genesis 1 and 2 provide an eye-opening example of how a *Series* and an *Expansion* work. In Genesis 1:1-2:3 we find a record of the 7 days of Creation. Like the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls of wrath in Revelation, these 7 days are both numbered sequentially in the text itself and contain a brief, non-exhaustive description of the details of that day. This was a text-book example of a *Series*.

But, starting in Genesis 2:4, the text began to include certain key statements that connected to earlier events in the *Series* and could not have followed chronologically from the last day of the *Series*, Day 7. Specifically, man was created on Day 6 of the *Series* as recorded in Genesis 1:26-31, which was followed immediately in Genesis 2:1-3 with the description of Day 7, thus completing the *Series*.

**Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. 29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. 31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.**

However, Genesis 2:7 identifies its own setting as a point in time when man had not yet been created.

**Genesis 2:4** These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, 5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground. 6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. 7 **And the LORD God formed man**

**of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.**

Moreover, Genesis 2:18-25 identifies that its setting is a point in time before woman had been created. Thus, even though Genesis 2:4-25 appears in the text after Day 7, we know that Genesis 2:4-25 begins at a point in time on Day 6, right before the creation of man and woman. Additionally, we can see that the description of both man and woman's creation in Genesis 1:27 is very brief.

**Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.**

As we can see, a single sentence in a single verse asserts the creation of both genders without any description of additional details such as how or what order, etc. By contrast, Genesis 2:7-25 takes 18 verses, includes how man was shaped from the earth, how the spirit of life was breathed into him at the nostrils, how he was at first alone without the woman, and then proceeds to tell us in 8 whole verses about the events that culminated in the creation of the woman. Thus, what Genesis 1:27 tells us in summary without much detail, Genesis 2:7-25 is intended to expand upon in much greater detail, even throwing in some connection to items not included in the *Series* in Genesis 1:1-2:3, such as the Garden of Eden into which man was placed.

Here we find our basic concept of a *Series* and *Expansion*. For, although Genesis 2:4-25 comes after Genesis 1:1-2:3, Genesis 2:4-25 does NOT come chronologically after Genesis 2:3. Instead, the events of Genesis 2:4-25 are contemporary to Genesis 1:27. The chronology is not dictated by the order in which the descriptions appear in the text, but by the underlying structure of *Series* and *Expansion inherent to the way the text was written*. Furthermore, this underlying structure, which is so inherent to the text, is itself revealed by the repetition of peculiar events in separate segments of the text, in this case the duplicate declarations of the creation of man and woman. Rather than assuming that man and woman were each created twice, once on Day 6 and then again sometime after Day 7, *the repetition of these unrepeatable events dictates to us the structure of how the text records chronology*.

So, we are forced to conclude that the unrepeatable event of man's creation occurs only once and then let our understanding of the chronology flow from lining up the occurrence of that event in both Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. And when we line the chapters up according to those unique events, we get the following picture of the true chronology of Genesis 1-2 as depicted in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1.** (In the layout below, the bright red text illustrates the overlap and proper chronological placement of the two separate texts, the *Series* and the *Expansion*. The darker red text illustrates the connective details used to explain the context for new items in the *Expansion* that are not mentioned in the *Series*.)

In short, Genesis 2:7-25 is an *Expansion* of the details surrounding one element of the *Series*, namely the creation of man on Day 6. Verses 4-6 of Genesis 2 can be considered a sort of a connective recall to establish the setting and help place new items, such as the Garden of Eden, within the context of previous events and elements, such as Day 3 of the *Series*.

But most importantly, it must be noted that it is quite impossible to take the text of Genesis 1:1-2:25 as one single, linear chronological sequence from beginning to end. The details of the text, including the unique, unrepeatable events, strictly rule out a simple chronological model. However, the fact that a simple chronology is not at work here does not in any way warrant ruling out any chronology to the text or giving up on reconciling the details to form a coherent chronology. Instead, as we have seen, the internal details of the text work very simply to show us the underlying, inherent chronological structure of the two segments of the text. Consequently, applying any form of a-chronological model to Genesis 1-2 is shown to be excessive, premature, and wholly unjustifiable.

Before we move on to our next teaching text, we should take one last look at the format of the texts in Figure 1 above. Notice that we have simply relocated the text of Genesis 2:4-25 so that it is side-by-side with the briefer description of those same events in Genesis 1:27. Notice that the new arrangement of the two texts was dictated by lining up the redundant mention of the creation of man and woman. Later on, we will discuss how we can similarly reformat the entire book of Revelation by taking into account the structural patterns described in these teaching examples. Although much larger and more detailed than our example here in Genesis 1-2, the rearrangement of Revelation will look basically the same.

### *Tampering With the Text*

Now that we have seen a little bit of how the proposed model works, before we move on to our next teaching text, it is important to comment briefly on how this proposed model relates to a warning presented in Revelation 22.

**Revelation 22:18** For I testify unto every man that heareth **the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:** **19** And if any man shall **take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life,** and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

It is important to note that our rearrangement of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 did NOT in any way detract from or alter the meaning of the text. To the contrary, the inherent details of Genesis 1-2 dictated this rearrangement in order to properly view the chronology of the events described in the two passages. This is important because in the same way, the idea of simply rearranging the various segments of Revelation in order to view the chronology in its proper order does NOT, on its own, constitute tampering with or altering the text. Employing the model of

Genesis 1-2 to Revelation does NOT constitute a violation of Revelation 22's warning unless the rearrangement is NOT inherent to the details and structure of Revelation in the same way that it is in Genesis 1-2. Thus, in order to make the accusation of tampering with the text of Revelation, it is necessary to first demonstrate how the rearrangement itself is not revealed by the details and underlying structure of the book of Revelation.

Moreover, the warning in Revelation 22 particularly pertains to those who would either add to or subtract from portions of the text itself. Obviously, merely rearranging the *existing portions* does not inherently require either removing statements or adding statements. As long as the entire text is included in the rearrangement without additions, there is no violation of Revelation 22's warning. And, to be clear, each and every portion of Revelation was used in our rearrangement. Not a single verse or word was left out and not a single word or phrase or sentence was added. So, in rearranging the text according to the structural models outlined in these teaching texts, we are not violating Revelation 22's warning against adding to or subtracting from the text.

### *Structure in Precedent: Daniel 2, 7, and 8, Parallel Descriptions*

When considering the structural precedent provided by the book of Daniel, we can divide the relevant chapters into two groups. The first group, containing chapters 2, 7, and 8, illustrates the concept of *Parallel Descriptions* using alternate symbolic imagery. The second group, containing chapters 9-12, illustrates *Parallel Descriptions* involving side-by-side descriptions of related events in an overlapping timeframe. We will start with the first group.

Daniel chapter 2, chapter 7, and chapter 8 all contain descriptions of separate visions, which employ symbolic imagery to represent a progression of political rulers and kingdoms. What is clear is that each vision clearly unfolds chronologically. However, the question arises of how the events in each vision relate to each other. Which vision comes first? Does the first vision recorded in the book describe the earliest events? Does the last vision recorded in the book describe the last events to occur? Do they occur back to back so that the events in one vision end and the events in the next vision pick right up where the previous vision left off? Or are there perhaps gaps between them? Or are the visions not back to back at all but overlapping in some way?

Of course, all of these questions relate to the issue of how the written order of the text reflects or does not reflect the chronology of the visions and the events within them. We recall from our examination of Genesis 1-2, that the text of those passages seemed chronological until early on in chapter 2 when we began to find seemingly unique events that would be duplicated if a singular, linear chronology was maintained. Specifically, if a singular, linear chronology was maintained straight through Genesis 1-2, the creation of man and woman would occur twice, once on Day 6 in Genesis 1:27 and then a second time after Day 7 in Genesis 2:7 and 22. Taking this duplication as a cue to the chronology, we deduced that

Genesis 2:4-25 must somehow chronologically overlap the text of Genesis 1:1-2:3.

These 3 visions of Daniel 2, 7, and 8 pose a similar challenge. Like Genesis 1-2, once again all 3 visions contain a seemingly unique, unrepeatably event. In Genesis 1-2, that role was filled by the recurring description of the creation of man. This time the recurring event is the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah, which is contained in all 3 visions.

**Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.** 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that **the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold;** the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

**Daniel 7:9** I beheld till the thrones were cast down, **and the Ancient of days did sit**, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: **I beheld *even* till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.** 12 **As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away:** yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, ***one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.** 14 **And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.**

**Daniel 8:17** So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: **for at the time of the end *shall be* the vision.** 18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end *shall be*. 20 The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia: and the great horn that *is* between his eyes *is* the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. 23 **And in the latter time of their kingdom,** when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the

holy people. 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: **he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.**

All 3 visions describe a succession of kingdoms. But more importantly all 3 visions include the end of those kingdoms at the coming of the Prince of princes, the Messiah, who will establish an everlasting kingdom. And not only do all 3 visions simply include that event, but all 3 visions *end* with that event. Since the coming of the Messiah to establish his eternal kingdom and overthrow the kingdoms of the world is an event that can only happen once, the fact that the events in all 3 visions end at the same point in time inescapably means that all 3 visions contain an overlapping chronology. Thus, like Genesis 1-2, the texts of those visions can be rearranged placed side by side to show their overlapping chronology all ending at the coming of the Messiah's kingdom.

And not only do the endings of all 3 visions overlap, but the rest of the events described in the 3 visions also correspond. We discuss this extensively in our article series "Prophetic Symbols." Because the details and conclusions of that analysis are assumed for this study, we recommend reviewing the specific article titled, "Prophetic Symbols: Daniel 8 (Part 2)," before continuing forward. In that article, by comparing the specific details ascribed to the individual political entities in each vision, we established that all 3 visions actually describe the same four kingdoms.

In summary, although the symbols and imagery differ in each of the 3 visions, the specific details of each symbol correspond both in qualities and in their order of occurrence to the symbols in the other 2 visions. Thus, as we state in the article, based upon these unlikely but clear correspondences, "we can safely conclude that Daniel 7 is merely depicting the same succession of kingdoms that we see depicted in chapters 2 and 8, while simply using other imagery to do so."

Here we find our basic concept of *Parallel Descriptions*. For, although Daniel 7 and 8 come after Daniel 2 in the written text, the events describe in all 3 passages actually are contemporary chronologically while at the same time employing alternate symbolic imagery. And, once again, this chronology is not dictated by the order in which the descriptions appear in the text, but by the underlying structure of *Parallel Descriptions inherent to the way the text was written*. Furthermore, this underlying structure, which is so inherent to the text, is once again itself revealed by the repetition of peculiar events in separate segments of the text, in this case the coming of the Messiah's kingdom and the peculiarities attributed to each symbolic entity.

So, we are forced to conclude that the unrepeatable event wherein the ungodly kingdoms are overthrown by the establishing of the Messiah's never-ending kingdom occurs only once. And then our understanding of the chronology flows from lining up the occurrence of that event in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 as well as lining up all the other corresponding elements in the 3 visions. Once again, *the*

*repetition of these unrepeatable events dictates to us the structure of how the text records chronology.* And when we line the chapters up according to these corresponding events, we get the following picture of the true chronology of the events described in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. See **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2.** (In the layout below, the green text illustrates where the descriptions from the three visions in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 correspond to one another even though each vision uses alternate symbolic imagery.)

In short, Daniel 2, 7, and 8 are all *Parallel Descriptions* of the same succession of kingdoms and their end at the coming of the Messiah's kingdom. The imagery used to describe the succession is different in each vision, but the central theme remains the same. Moreover, the use of different imagery in each vision also allows for each vision to present additional details surrounding particular components of the overall picture.

But most importantly, it must be noted that like Genesis 1-2, it is quite impossible to take the texts of Daniel 2, 7, and 8 as a single, linear chronological sequence from beginning to end. The details of the text, including the unique, unrepeatable events, strictly rule out a simple chronological model. However, the fact that a simple chronology is not at work here does not in any way warrant ruling out any chronology to the text or giving up on reconciling the details to form a coherent chronology. Instead, the internal details of the text work very simply to show us the underlying, inherent chronological structure of the segments of the text, just as in Genesis 1-2. Consequently, applying any form of a-chronological model to Daniel 2, 7, and 8 again is shown to be excessive, premature, and wholly unjustifiable.

Before we move on to our next teaching text, we should take one last look at the format of the texts in Figure 2 above. As we look one last time at the way these *Parallel Descriptions* in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 have been rearranged in Figure 2 above, we can again begin to imagine how our rearranged order of the text of Revelation will eventually look once all the *Parallel Descriptions* are placed side by side.

### *Structure in Precedent: Daniel 9-12, Parallel Descriptions*

As we stated at the beginning of the previous segment, when considering the structural precedent provided by the book of Daniel, we can divide the relevant chapters into two groups. The first group contained chapters 2, 7, and 8 and illustrated the concept of *Parallel Descriptions* using alternate imagery. The second group, which we will now examine, contains chapters 9-12 and illustrates *Parallel Descriptions* involving the side-by-side descriptions of related events in an overlapping timeframe.

In Daniel 2, 7, and 8 we saw how the specific details revealed that the prophecies in those 3 chapters actually overlapped each other chronologically and converged

at multiple points where all 3 visions mention the same element. Similarly, comparing the specific details in Daniel 9-10 also reveals repeated references to a few of the same, peculiar concepts.

Most prominently, Daniel 11 records a single, long prophecy tracing the interaction of two lines of Greek kings. Yet it begins by discussing how the rule of the Persians will be followed by the rule of the Greeks, just as Daniel 2, 7, and 8 all describe. Additionally, Daniel 11 immediately goes on to describe how one great, Greek king, who overcomes the Persians, will be broken and his kingdom divided four ways, two details identically recorded in Daniel 8 concerning Greece. And finally, Daniel 11 goes on to describe how out of one branch of the divided Greek empire will eventually rise a vile ruler, who will stop the daily sacrifices, persecute the saints of God, but eventually be defeated with no one to help him. These descriptions of this vile ruler also have identical counterparts in Daniel 8's description Greece as well as Daniel 7's description of a king who will arise from Byzantine Rome, which is the later, Eastern form of the Roman Empire in the Greek city of Byzantium (also called Thrace). From these uncanny correspondences, we know that Daniel 11 has the same succession of kingdoms in view as well Daniel 2, 7, and 8.

Similarly, although they are smaller passages, Daniel 9 and 11 also contain uncanny corresponding details to the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 11. Daniel 9:20-27 describes the involvement of a Roman prince who shall stop the sacrifice. And likewise, Daniel 12:9-12 describes the length of time the sacrifice will be taken away and does so in conjunction with the statement that this vision concerns "the times of the end," which is a designation also used in Daniel 8:10-17 uses when describing the length of time that the king who arise from a branch of the divided Greek empire will stop the sacrifices. Not surprising, the timeframe for the stopping of the sacrifices in Daniel 12 corresponds to the three and a half year timeframe depicted for the stopping of the sacrifices in Daniel 9. So, once again, the uncanny details reveal that the content and events of the prophecies overlap *by design*. And not only do the prophecies of Daniel 9, 11, and 12 overlap each other, but as we have seen, these 3 chapters also overlap the succession of kingdoms described in Daniel 2, 7, and 8.

And once again, by placing these passages side by side so that the corresponding details in each prophecy line up with their counterparts in the other chapters, a true picture of the chronology of events in all 6 chapters emerges. This correspondence is illustrated in Figure 3 below. Like **Figures 1 and 2**, **Figure 3** continues to give us insight into how the chronology of Revelation will look once the *Parallel Descriptions* are arranged accordingly.

**Figure 3.** (Daniel 2, 7, and 8 appear once again in the layout below, this time placed side by side with the corresponding descriptions in Daniel 9-12 as well. Just as in Figure 2, the green text illustrates where the descriptions from each vision correspond to one another.)

Notice that unlike the *Parallel Descriptions* contained in Daniel 2, 7, and 8, the *Parallel Descriptions* in Daniel 9-12 do not contain alternate symbolic imagery. In fact, they contain no symbols whatsoever but instead simply involve the normal communication and descriptions of events.

Here we find our basic concept of the second kind of *Parallel Description*. For, although Daniel 9-12 definitely overlaps Daniel 2, 7 and 8 chronologically, these latter 4 chapters do not contain alternate symbolic imagery. Nevertheless, they are still *parallel* because the events they describe are contemporary to each other and to Daniel 2, 7, and 8. In fact, not only are the events in Daniel 9-12 contemporaries, but they are also directly related, being interwoven and providing additional details surrounding some of the very same events and elements.

#### *Structure in Precedent: Genesis 17:23-27, Redundant Summaries*

Finally, we arrive at our last teaching example, Genesis 17:23-27. As we said earlier, *Redundant Summaries* were perhaps one of the strangest categories of textual structure that we came across in our examination. However, we also stated that they were one of the most demonstrable. And the closing verses of Genesis 17 provide an ideal example.

In our teaching example of Genesis 1-2 we began by noting that the text of Genesis 1-2 worked chronologically without problems until after the recording of Day 7 in Genesis 2:2-3. However, after Genesis 2:3, we began to notice certain statements that describe unique events that had already occurred on Day 6 and, therefore, could not follow chronologically after Day 7 in chapter 2:2-3. These redundant descriptions were the cue that the text was not written to reflect a single, linear chronology from start to finish in Genesis 1:1-2:25.

Although a far briefer passage, Genesis 17:23-27 contains a miniature version of this same challenge. Below is the text of these key verses.

**Genesis 17:23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.**

Notice that verse 23 includes the following details. It contains a detailed list of persons, specifically including Abraham, Ishmael, all that are born in Abraham's house, all of Abraham's purchased servants, and indeed all the males in Abraham's household. It denotes that these were the persons who were circumcised. And it also denotes that they were all circumcised the same day.

Finally, it concludes by noting the age of Abraham as 99 and the age of Ishmael as 13 when this circumcision occurred. All of these details are recorded in just 3 verses.

What is interesting is that verses 26-27 provide all of the same details a second time. Verses 26-27 contain a second list of the exact same persons, once again including a specific mention of Abraham, Ishmael, and all the males of his house, whether born there or purchased servants. It denotes a second time that these persons were all circumcised. And it denotes a second time that all these circumcisions took place on the same day. In fact, the only items not stated a second time is the age of Abraham and Ishmael at the time of this event. And this time, the entire description takes place within the span of only 2 verses.

So, within just 5 verses we have effectively two descriptions of the same event with both descriptions containing almost entirely the exact same details. Here we have our basic concept of a *Redundant Summary*. Earlier in this study, we defined the *Redundant Summaries*, noting that *Redundant Summaries* seemed to be comprised of two parts, the *Initial Description* and the *Repeating Description*, which together usually comprised only about a half dozen verses. As we can see Genesis 17:23-27 only has 5 verses. We also noted that both the *Initial Description* and the *Repeating Description* are fairly short and lacking in elaboration. As we can see, Genesis 17:23-27 is very concise, giving a very basic, just-the-facts description of simply the who, the what, and the when with no embellishment.

Most importantly concerning the chronology of these 5 verses, it is clear that Abraham and the males of his household are not circumcised twice, first in verses 23-25 and then again in verses 26-27. It is quite clear that the description in verses 26-27 is redundant to the immediately preceding description in verses 23-25. The same event and details are recorded twice, back to back, with only slight modification.

And once again it is clear that the entire 5 verses simply cannot be taken as a single, linear chronology. Instead, if we were to rearrange the text to reflect the chronology of events, we would end up placing verses 26-27 side-by-side with verses 23-25 as seen in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4.** (In the layout below, the lighter blue text illustrates the *Initial Description* found in verse 23 and the darker blue text to the right illustrates the *Repeating Description* found in verses 26-27. The black text in verses 24-25 designates the information contained in the first description, which does not appear in the second description.)

At this time, one further point should be made. Verses 23-25 are clearly intended to be the closing portions of the longer narrative that begins in Genesis 17:1.

**Genesis 17:1** And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before

**me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.** 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. 9 And God said unto Abraham, **Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore,** thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10 **This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.** 11 **And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.** 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed. 13 **He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised:** and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant. 15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name *be*. 16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her. 17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall *a child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! 19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. 22 **And he left off talking with him,** and God went up from Abraham. 23 **And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day,** as God had said unto him. 24 **And Abraham was ninety years old and nine,** when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 **And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old,** when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

In this longer excerpt, we see that this chapter begins with God appearing to Abraham in verses 1-2 and commanding him to walk before him and be perfect and if Abraham does so, God promises to establish his covenant with Abraham and multiply Abraham's offspring. In verse 9, God commands Abraham to keep the covenant and in verse 10-11 God specifically lays out that keeping the

covenant requires circumcision. In verse 13, God further explains that this circumcision is to include all the males of Abraham's house, both those born in the household as well as the purchased servants. In verse 22, God finishes talking and departs. And this is where we arrive at the critical verse 23, in which Abraham follows God's commands exactly as God instructed, circumcising every male in his house, both those born there as well as the purchased servants, all in the same day in the 99<sup>th</sup> year of Abraham's life and the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Ishmael's.

With that, the long version of the account is brought to a close in verse 25. The purpose of the redundancy in verses 26-27 appears to be for emphasis and clarity, to provide a summary in order to make sure that the reader understands all of the essential details and persons involved in the entire, longer version of the story. This is why we call it a *Redundant Summary*.

However, as we close this segment of our examination, we will want to add one last key point to our understanding of *Redundant Summaries*. Specifically, we should note that the *Initial Description* of a *Redundant Summary*, found in verses 23-25 of our example from Genesis 17, functioned as the closing part of a longer narrative. We will look for this feature also as we examine the structure of the book of Revelation.

Finally, as we conclude our examination of this last teaching text, we will want to look one more time at Figure 4 above and take note of how the rearrangement of Genesis 17:23-27 looks, so that we will have that in our memory when we begin to rearrange Revelation according to these same structural models.