

End Times Prophecy (Eschatology) 314: Revelation Chronology



biblestudying.net

Brian K. McPherson and Scott McPherson

Copyright 2012

Revelation Chronology: Sections 0.01-0.02

In the Beginning

In order to discuss the contents and arrangement of this chronology chart, we will divide the entire chronology into smaller, loose, identifiable timeframes comprised of contemporary events. As mentioned above, these smaller timeframes are denoted by the horizontal red, blue, and orange lines in Figure 6. We will start with the earliest timeframes and events and move forward, section by section.

At this point, the obvious question is, where do we begin? There are two ways to approach that question. We could ask what events are being described in Revelation 1:1, the opening passage of the book. Or, we could ask, of all the events described in the book of Revelation, which events are the earliest to occur? Actually, with one exception, the events in chapter 1, verse 1, are the earliest events to unfold in the chronology of Revelation. For that reason, we'll answer the second question first and then return to Revelation 1:1 as a starting point.

Section 0.01 – A Backstory: Chapter 12:1-6

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines a backstory as follows:

<http://www.bartleby.com/61/58/B0015800.html>

“**backstory** – NOUN: **1.** The experiences of a character or the circumstances of an event **that occur before the action or narrative** of a literary, cinematic, or dramatic work: At rehearsal, the actors developed backstories for their characters. **2.** A prequel.” - The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000

It is the first definition, which is informative for our current study. According to definition 1, a backstory is defined as the experiences of characters or the circumstances surrounding an event, which occur *before* the action or setting of a story.

In Revelation, the earliest of all the events to occur, are those described in chapter 12:1-6.

Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

Chapter 12:1-6 is actually what we would call an *Expansion*, providing additional details and connections for elements of the *Series* that follows it in chapter 12:7-17. And, because it actually provides background details for elements in a *Series* that follows it, this *Expansion* can also be considered a backstory for the narrative it precedes. It provides additional details about the experiences of the characters and circumstances surrounding the events, which occur before the action of the narrative in verses 7-17.

Actually, Revelation 12 as a whole has a lot in common structurally with Genesis 2:4-25. Genesis 2:7 informs us that the setting for that passage is on Day 6 of the creation week, just before man was formed. And, although the setting for verses 4-25 is Day 6, verses 5-6 serve to remind the audience that the plant life had already been created by the time this scene begins so that the mention of the Garden of Eden in verse 8 will not seem out of context, sudden, or unexplained. In this way, every item mentioned in the *Series* described in verses 7-25 has its proper identity in connection to other elements. Man's creation is connected to the previously unmentioned garden and the garden is connected to the prior creation of plant life on Day 3. Effectively, verses 5-6 provide the backstory setting the stage for the opening of the entire narrative, which is actually set on Day 6.

Concerning the *Series* of events that follow in Revelation 12:7-17, Revelation 12:1-6 actually serves the same function as verses 5-6 of Genesis 2. Like Genesis 2:5-6, Revelation 12:1-6 provides the backstory for the *Series*, which follows it. In the same way that Genesis 2:8 includes how the creation of man connects to the Garden of Eden, an element that had not been previously mentioned, Revelation 12:7-17 discuss a list of elements that have not been mentioned in Revelation prior to chapter 12. These elements prominently include the woman and the dragon. And, like verses 5-6 of Genesis 2 set the backdrop by connecting the previously unmentioned Garden of Eden to previous events that occur before the setting of Genesis 2:4-25, verses 1-6 of Revelation 12 also provide the backdrop, identifying the woman and the dragon and connecting them to previous events that occur before the *Series*, which is about to be outlined in verses 7-17.

To be specific, verses 1-6 provide an identification for the woman. There are two identifying factors that seem to be in view in this passage. The first is seen in the major theme and terms used here. In these early verses of chapter 12 we are introduced to a woman who has a child who is exalted. There is also a dragon who is depicted as being at enmity with the child. Later, in verse 9, the dragon is identified as “the old serpent.” There is one other passage in the bible that speaks of a woman who bears a child which will be exalted in a struggle with the serpent. That passage is Genesis 3. And, Revelation 12’s qualification of the serpent as “old” seems suited to point us toward the serpent that is presented back in the beginning, in Genesis 3.

In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve sin, God makes several declarations. As he addresses the serpent (v.16), God states that there would be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed, or child, of the woman. But the woman’s seed would bruise the head of the serpent. We find then that the same elements and terms are used in both Genesis 3 and Revelation 12: a woman, her child, the serpent, and the enmity between the serpent and the woman’s child. From this it seems apparent that Revelation 12 is speaking of the fulfillment of God’s description of the woman’s seed back in Genesis 3. According to Revelation 12:5, the woman’s child will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Revelation 19:13-15 identifies this ruler with Jesus Christ, the Word of God. So, Revelation 12 is intending to connect Jesus with God’s prophetic declaration in Genesis 3. Jesus Christ is the seed of the woman which overcame the serpent.

Alongside the reference to Genesis 3 there is a second clue to the identification of the woman. Revelation 12:1 describes the woman as clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and having a crown of twelve stars. This imagery is referential to Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37:9-11. In that passage, the family of Israel is described in Joseph’s dream using the image of the sun, moon, and 12 stars. The text plainly states that the sun represents Joseph’s father, Israel. The moon represents his mother Rachel. And the 11 stars represent Joseph’s eleven brothers, the sons of Israel. Here we have a symbolic depiction of the people of Israel using these same images that are used to describe the woman in Revelation 12.

This makes sense because the prophecy from Genesis 3 of the conquering seed of the woman is inherited by Abraham and his descendents. And God’s covenant remains with the people of Israel starting from his promises and covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the Mosaic Covenant established during the Exodus, and also through the New Covenant established by Christ. Through his covenant people (Israel) God provided a messianic redeemer in fulfillment of the prophetic declaration that is first recorded in Genesis 3. (In the New Covenant, Gentiles become “grafted in” to Israel as adopted children of Abraham through Christ – Romans 1:16, 2:9-29, 10:12, 11:13-32, Ephesians 2:12-22, Galatians 3:16-29, Colossians 3:11. Conversion of Gentiles was provided for under the Mosaic covenant as well by means of accepting the entire Law of Moses, but this

did not occur on the massive scale found under the New Covenant through Christ.)

In this way, Revelation 12 is speaking of the people of Israel by means of imagery which is directly connected to the Patriarchs of Israel. As the account in Revelation 12:7-17 continues, the woman is depicted as fleeing to the wilderness. Because of the timeframe elements in verse 6-17, we know that we are talking about the people of Israel in the end-times, particularly the reference to a period of three and a half years mentioned in Revelation 12:14, which is a period mentioned repeatedly in the Book of Revelation and will be discussed throughout this study. This is contrasted with verses 1-5, which lead up to first century events like Christ's birth and ascension and which therefore are discussing the people of Israel from the Old Testament up to the first century.

The idea of the wilderness as a place of protection also corresponds to the Exodus account. When the Israelites left, God protected them from the Egyptian army which pursued them (Exodus 14). It is also a time when God provided for His people supernaturally by giving them manna to eat (Exodus 16, Numbers 11). And the wilderness was a place between leaving Egypt and entering into the promised inheritance. All of these ideas are alluded to in Revelation 12's description of the wilderness. It is a place of protection from the enemy. It is a place of nourishment and provision (verses 6 and 14). And it is a place between having left Egypt (which Revelation 11:8 metaphorically identifies with Jerusalem) and entering into the promised inheritance, the kingdom of God.

Likewise, verses 1-6 identify the dragon as the adversaries who attempted to destroy Jesus Christ during his first advent but who, after his death and resurrection, ascended or was caught up to the throne of God, where Revelation identifies him as sitting in its opening chapters. Thus, when this dragon is mentioned in the *Series* in verses 7-17, we will be able to further identify who this is by the actions he's performed in the past.

And so, Revelation 12:1-6 is considered an *Expansion* of the *Series* that follows it in verses 7-17, because it provides additional details and connections for some of the elements in that *Series*. Furthermore, Revelation 12:1-6 should be considered to describe the earliest events in the book of Revelation because the emergence of the Patriarchs, the birth of Jesus Christ from Israel, the attempted destruction of Jesus Christ by the adversary, and Jesus' ascension into heaven all occur before any of the other events in the book of Revelation. As we will see, starting in our very next segment and as we continue forward, besides Revelation 12:1-6, the earliest events in the book of Revelation are those pertaining to the giving of the vision itself. Likewise, all the other events described in Revelation pertain to the future, after John receives the vision, particularly the end of the Age, the millennial reign of Christ Jesus, and the ushering in of the eternal state after the Final Judgment.

References for this Section:

1. The woman is Israel (Genesis 37:9-10)
 - a. Israel giving birth to the Messiah (Micah 5:1-3, John 16:19-21)
 - b. given wings of a great eagle to a place in the wilderness (Exodus 19:3-4)

2. The male child is Jesus Christ
 - a. to rule the nations with a rod of iron (Psalms 2:1-12, Revelation 2:26-27, Revelation 19:13-16)
 - b. attempted destruction by satanic adversaries (Matthew 2:7-16, Luke 22:3, John 13:27, and John 10:17-18 in comparison to 14:28-31)
 - c. caught up to the throne of God (Psalm 110:1-2, Luke 20:42-42, Acts 1:9-11, Acts 2:34-35, Hebrews 1:3, 13, Revelation 3:21)

3. The dragon as the seven satanic angels
 - a. as the 7 rulers of 7 great empires ruling Israel (Revelation 17, see our article series, "Prophetic Symbols," particularly the three-part subsection on Daniel 9 and 10 and the six-part subsection on Revelation 17)

Section 0.02 – An Opening Challenge

Before we get farther into the chronology of Revelation, we need to resolve one question that arises immediately in the opening chapter. Although perhaps a minor detail, this question does possess some relevance for the chronological order of events in the book. Once we answer this opening question, we will also add further clarity to the events described in the opening segment of Revelation. After all, if we can't properly identify the what's and who's of the opening chapters, identifying what's going on in the rest of the book will only be more challenging.

So, what is this opening challenge? Essentially, it is a question of how the following 3 simple facts relate to each other.

Fact 1: An Angel as a Go-Between

In the very first verse of the book, Revelation 1:1, we are told that the Revelation of Jesus Christ is sent and shown to John by Jesus' angel.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to **shew (1166)** unto **his servants (1401)** things which must shortly come to pass; and **he sent and signified (4591) it by his angel unto his servant (1401) John.**

1166 deiknuo

a prolonged form of an obsolete primary of the same meaning; TDNT-2:25, *; v AV-show 31; 31

- 1) **to show**, expose to the eyes
- 2) metaph.

- 2a) to give evidence or proof of a thing
- 2b) to show by words or teach

4591 semaino

from sema (a mark, of uncertain derivation); TDNT-7:262,1015; v

AV-signify 6; 6

- 1) to give a sign, to signify, indicate
- 2) to make known

Notice that the Revelation is to be shown to Jesus' servants. The word for servants is the same Greek word used to refer to John as a servant at the end of the verse. The Greek word used to indicate that the vision is to be "shown" to the servants simply means "to show." Likewise, the Greek word used to indicate that the vision is to be "signified" to John simply means "to make known." Clearly, this verse is indicating that John is the first of the servants to whom this Revelation was shown and made known.

And, according to this opening declaration, there is supposed to be an angel showing or making known the vision to John. The precedent for this type of interaction with an angel concerning a vision comes in the book of Daniel, where we similarly find angels interacting with Daniel, facilitating some of his visions, particularly throughout chapter 8, in chapter 9:21-27, throughout chapter 10, and again throughout chapter 12.

However, as we begin to read through chapter 1 of Revelation, we see that it is Jesus himself, not an angel, who speaks to and is seen by John. In verse 10, John describes how he hears someone speaking to him. In verse 12, John turns to see who it is and he sees one "like unto the Son of man," which is a reference to Jesus. In verse 16, he is described as having "a sharp two-edged sword" coming out of his mouth, which is clearly a reference to Jesus Christ as the Word of God. In fact, Revelation 19:11-16 directly confirms that the image of a two-edge sword extending from his mouth is a reference to Jesus Christ. And finally, in verse 18, the voice identifies himself, saying, "I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." This is clearly a reference to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ. And it is Jesus, not an angel, who in verse 11 instructs John to write what he is about to see in a book to send to the churches.

Verse 1 indicates that Jesus sends his angel to John and that this angel will show John the vision. But the rest of the chapter uses language clearly identifying Jesus himself as the one appearing to John and speaking with him. So, where is this angel who is supposed to be making known the vision to John according to chapter 1:1, the very first verse of the book?

Furthermore, chapter 4:1 marks the end of the letters to the churches and the beginning of the actual vision of the Revelation. It is in chapter 4:1 that John witnesses the Father giving Jesus the Revelation and Jesus opening it, revealing its content. However, in chapter 4:1, John specifies that the voice is the same as

the voice which spoke to him as a trumpet in chapter 1:10, which as we have already seen, is Jesus Christ himself.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, **and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,** 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, **What thou seest, write in a book...**

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: **and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.**

So, once again, at this central point when John witnesses the unfolding of the Revelation given by the Father, where is the angel that according to verse 1 was supposed to be present with John and showing him the Revelation? There is still no mention of him. And moreover, once again the text seems to be indicating that Jesus himself is the one bringing John along to witness the vision. So, if Jesus is doing this himself, what need is there for this angel who seems not to be mentioned anyway?

In fact, any mention of the angel described in chapter 1:1 is so hard to find that it is not until chapter 10 that we come across any clear depiction of an angel being involved in delivering the Revelation to John so that John can record it as a book.

In chapter 10, John does describe an angel who comes down to him from heaven and from whom John receives a little book.

Revelation 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2 **And he had in his hand a little book** open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,

In fact, John goes on to inform us that the same voice which he had heard in chapter 1:10 and 4:1 is the one who instructs him to take this book from the angel.

Revelation 10:8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, **Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel** which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

We have already identified this voice as Jesus himself. So, here in chapter 10, we see 2 things. First, we see an angel supposedly acting as a go-between delivering the book to John. And second, we see Jesus instructing John to receive the book from this angel. This parallels chapter 1:1 directly.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John.

Thus, chapter 10 clearly affirms the opening statement in verse 1:1 that this book of Revelation was transmitted from the Father to Jesus and from Jesus *through his angel* to John. Yet despite the fact that there is clearly supposed to be some angel acting as an intermediary, facilitating John's witnessing and writing of this Revelation, we seem to have no mention of this until chapter 10. And more importantly, the descriptions that we do have in chapters 1 and 4 seem to leave out any mention of an angel and instead seem to indicate that John is interacting first-hand with Jesus, seeing and hearing from Jesus directly.

This is the problem of the missing angel as John begins to receive the Revelation.

Fact 2: The Holy Spirit Speaks

As we have shown in the section immediately above, the voice speaking to John in chapter 1:10 is clearly identified as Jesus himself, the Son of Man, who has a two-edged sword extending from his mouth, and who lived, died, and is now alive again forevermore. Verses 13 and 16 of chapter 1 give additional descriptions of Jesus.

Revelation 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 **And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man**, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle...16 **And he had in his right hand seven stars:** and **out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword:** and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

The same Son of Man out of whose mouth precedes a two-edged sword also is described as walking amidst seven candlesticks and having seven stars in his right hand. Given these descriptions, we know that it is also Jesus who speaks and dictates the 7 letters to the churches in chapters 2-3. Notice below that each letter begins with a distinct reference to Jesus as the speaker using similar language as found here at the end of chapter 1.

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of **the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks...**

Revelation 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These **things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;**

Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; **These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;**

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; **These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass;**

Revelation 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; **These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;** I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Revelation 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; **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;

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; **These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;**

Yet despite the fact that these verses clearly identify Jesus as the one dictating these letters to the churches, Jesus himself concludes every letter by telling each church that the remarks to them in the letter are being said *by the Holy Spirit*.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...**

Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...**

Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...**

Revelation 2:29 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

Revelation 3:6 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

Revelation 3:13 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

Revelation 3:22 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

Depending on if you are reading the beginning of each letter or the ending of each letter, you might either conclude that it is Jesus who is dictating the letters or that it is the Holy Spirit dictating them. So, this leads to the obvious question. Exactly when or how is the Holy Spirit stating these things that are written in the 7 letters? Since the beginning of each letter clearly identifies Jesus as the one dictating the letters, is this a case in which Jesus is repeating remarks he has already heard from the Holy Spirit? If so, that would seem contrary to the way Jesus himself describes the relationship between himself and the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak:** and he will shew you things to come.

According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will not speak of himself but will speak only what he hears. This delineates a scenario in which the Holy Spirit should be the one *repeating* to the church *what he hears Jesus saying* rather than Jesus reiterating to the churches what he hears the Holy Spirit telling them. In fact, Jesus statements here seem to rule out any scenario in which the Holy Spirit is doing the initiating of statements to the church rather than simply repeating of them.

To clarify the point, although each letter first identifies that Jesus is speaking when the letters are dictated, there is no place or description anywhere indicating that Jesus ceases to speak or that the Holy Spirit begins. Furthermore, although Jesus informs us that the Holy Spirit has said these things, there is no description in the text of the Holy Spirit speaking. For example, there is not even a simple statement such as “and the Holy Spirit spoke,” such as we see in Acts 8:29, 10:19, or 13:2. Jesus simply tells us that the Holy Spirit says these things without any description in the text of when the Holy Spirit is doing so.

This is the problem of how the Holy Spirit could be speaking the contents of the 7 letters.

Fact 3: My Two Witnesses

As we discussed briefly earlier, in Revelation 10, John states that “the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again.”

Revelation 10:8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

With this one statement, John informs us that this “voice from heaven” is one that he has heard before. But when? As we survey the previous chapters to find out, the only 2 occurrences are found in Revelation 1 and 4 in which we have already identified Jesus as the speaker.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet...

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

Revelation 10:8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, **Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel** which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

The voice in chapter 1:10 is simply described as being “as a trumpet.” Yet, when John describes the voice in chapter 4, he specifically states that it is the same as “the first voice which [he] heard,” the one that was described as being like a trumpet. So, we know that he is referring to the same voice as in chapter 1:10, the voice of Jesus. However, we know that Jesus is in heaven, speaking to John from heaven. This fact is confirmed in chapter 4:2 where we find John in heaven describing what he sees there. And since we know that Jesus is the voice speaking to John from heaven and that he has already done so twice in chapter 1:10 and 4:1, we know that John is likewise referring to Jesus in chapter 10:8 when he states that “the voice which I heard from heaven spake to me again.”

So, we know that Jesus is the voice from heaven in chapter 10. And this is an important fact for the following reason. As stated above, chapter 10 describes an angel from whom John receives a book. This angel talks to John and chapter 10 specifies exactly which lines of dialogue are spoken by this angel.

This conversation between John and the angel begins in chapter 10:9. Note how the passage keeps track of when this angel is speaking, even as the dialogue continues into chapter 11.

Revelation 10:9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. **And he said unto me, Take it,** and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11 **And he said unto me,** Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. 11:1 **And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise,** and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 **But the court which is without the temple leave out,** and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months. 3 **And I will give power unto my two witnesses,** and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

As we follow this dialogue between John and the angel, we notice that verse 1 of chapter 11 specifies that it is still this angel who is talking. In fact, after verse 1 denotes that it is the angel who is speaking, the rest of verse 1-3 records the statements from this angel. He tells John to rise and measure the temple in verse 1. He explains to John not to measure the court outside the Temple in verse 2 because the city will be trampled for 42 months. And then he continues to speak in verse 3, telling John that there will be two witnesses prophesying for the same amount of time. (1,260 days is 42 months of 30 days each.)

But the significant part is that when this angel calls the two witnesses “my two witnesses.” The excerpt below attests this phrase can also be rendered, “the two witnesses of me,” based upon the underlying Greek.

http://www.blueletterbible.org/tmp_dir/c/1119482291-9575.html

“**CHAPTER 11... 3.** I will give power--There is no "power" in the Greek, so that "give" must mean "give commission," or some such word.

my two witnesses--Greek, "the two witnesses of me." The article implies that the two were well known at least to John.” – Jamieson, Fausett & Brown The Revelation of St. John the Divine Commentary by A. R. FAUSSETT

This is also attested to in the *Word Study Greek-English New Testament* edited by Paul R. McReynolds, which is an NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) interlinear New Testament published by the United Bible Societies. For Revelation 11:3, the interlaced English text, which corresponds to the included Greek text, reads as follows.

Revelation 11:3 And (2532) I will give (1325) to **the (015) two (1417) testifiers (3144) of me (1473)** and (2532) they will speak before (4395) days (2250) thousands (5505) two hundred (1250) sixty (1835) having thrown around themselves (4016) sackcloths (4526).

In this interlinear New Testament, the Strong’s Concordance numbers included above also appear interlaced with the English and Greek. The Strong’s No. 015 in the text above denotes one of 24 different Greek forms for the definite article, “the.” In particular, form number 15 denotes the use of “the” conjugated in the dative case, plural, and masculine. (The dative case typically denotes the indirect object of a verb, as in this case where the witnesses are the verb’s indirect object.)

Whether translated “my two witnesses” or “the two witnesses of me,” depending on how the underlying Greek is rendered, the fact remains that this angel is qualifying the two witnesses who stand before God as his two witnesses, the two witnesses of his. So, the question arises, who is this angel that describes the two witnesses as “my two witnesses”?

To put an even finer point on it, aren’t these two witnesses supposed to be witnesses of God, testifying about God? Revelation 11:4 and its precursor in Zechariah 4:14 certainly define these two men in terms of their relationship to God.

Revelation 11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks **standing before the God of the earth.**

Zechariah 4:14 Then said he, These *are* the two anointed ones, **that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.**

In fact, both of these passages indicate that one of the central, identifying traits of the two witnesses is that they stand before God, anointed as his ministers. So,

given that these two men are centrally defined by their relationship to God as his anointed ministers, who is this angel that these two prophets are the witnesses of?

This is the problem of the angel who has two witnesses.

A Simple Solution

In the 3 previous sections, we outlined the following 3 challenges posed by the text of Revelation. Those 3 challenges were: the problem of the missing angel as John begins to receive the Revelation, the problem of how the Holy Spirit could be speaking the contents of the 7 letters, and the problem of the angel who has two witnesses.

Unfortunately, the solution to all 3 is as simple as it is perhaps controversial. The answer is that the angel who is sent to show the vision to John *is* the Holy Spirit. This suggestion solves all three problems.

First, if the angel is the Holy Spirit, then the angel who is supposed to show the Revelation to John is no longer missing in chapters 1 and 4 as John begins to receive the vision. Instead of missing, we would find the text denoting the Holy Spirit's role right at the critical points of John receiving the vision.

By comparing chapter 1:10, 4:1-2, and 10:8, we have already established that Jesus is speaking to John in chapter 1, starting in verse 10 and that he is speaking from heaven. And right before John has the vision of the Lord speaking to him in verse 10, John denotes the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 1:10 I was in (1722) the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet...

As the definition below indicates, the word for "in" in the phrase "in the Spirit" is the Greek word "en," which can also be translated a "with."

1722 en

a primary preposition denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by implication) instrumentality (medially or constructively), i.e. a relation of rest (intermediate between 1519 and 1537); TDNT-2:537,233; prep AV-in 1902, by 163, **with 140**, among 117, at 113, on 62, through 39, misc 265; 2801

1) in, by, **with** etc.

Thus, verse 10 could very easily be saying that John was *with* the Spirit when the vision first began and he started to hear Jesus speaking from heaven. Thus, the Spirit is enabling the vision, making it known to John just as chapter 1:1 states.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

Similarly, chapter 4:1 states that John is *with* the Spirit at the very point in time when John is in heaven to witness the Father giving the Revelation to Jesus and Jesus revealing its contents.

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither,* and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 **And immediately I was in (1722) the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven,** and *one* sat on the throne.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit is present with John, facilitating John seeing and hearing the vision, including John seeing and hearing Jesus speaking to him from heaven.

Second, if the angel is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is with John facilitating his seeing and hearing Jesus in the opening chapters, then this fully explains what Jesus means when, after he himself dictates the letters to the churches, he states that the Holy Spirit is saying the content of the letters. Essentially, the Holy Spirit is facilitating John's hearing the words of Jesus Christ. John then records Jesus' words and ultimately passes them on to the churches who receive the letters.

Furthermore, if this is the case, then the Holy Spirit is acting exactly in the role that Jesus prescribed for him in John 16.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak:** and he will shew you things to come.

If the Holy Spirit is the angel transmitting the words of Jesus in the vision and the vision itself to John, then he is indeed very simply repeating what he hears from Jesus and showing John things to come. Thus, although Jesus dictates the letters to the churches, it is precisely accurate for Jesus to also credit the Holy Spirit as being the one to communicate the content of the letters to John and the churches since after all it is the Holy Spirit transmitting the words of Jesus to John.

And third, if the angel is the Holy Spirit, then this would explain why the angel in chapter 10 and 11, from whom John receives the book of prophecy, refers to the two witnesses as "my two witnesses." Furthermore, it would explain why in chapter 11:3, the angel also indicates that it is he himself who commissions the two witnesses when he states, "And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses." If that angel is the Holy Spirit, it would make perfect sense why the angel can say that he commissioned them and say that they are *his* witnesses. Moreover, this act of the Holy Spirit commissioning and sending these men is parallel to the Holy Spirit commissioning Paul and Barnabas, sending them out "by 2," in Acts 13:2-4.

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, **the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.** 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, **they sent them away.** 4 **So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,** departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

And why should we be surprised that the Holy Spirit should be spoken of as “an angel.” We have already seen John 16 where he clearly acts as a messenger for Jesus. After declaring the Holy Spirit to be the one that he will send to speak his words and show the disciples things to come in John 16, would Revelation then refer to someone else when it states that Jesus sent his angel to show and make known this vision to John and the rest of his servants?

And there are even other reasons not to be surprised at the idea of John referring to the Holy Spirit as an angel. In John’s first epistle, John clearly refers to the Holy Spirit when discussing other spirits, including the spirit behind the antichrist.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not **every spirit (4151)**, but try **the spirits (4151)** whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know ye **the Spirit (4151)** of God: **Every spirit (4151)** that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And **every spirit (4151)** that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and **this is that spirit of antichrist**, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Thus, John is at least speaking of the Holy Spirit in the same category as other spirits, even angels. For, we know that the spirit behind the antichrist is a satanic adversary, who is a fallen angel. And not only John, but Paul also speaks of the Holy Spirit as being in the same category as other spirits in Romans 8:15, 2 Timothy 1:7, and 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Furthermore, we know that angels are by category spirits.

Hebrews 1:13 But to **which of the angels** said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14 **Are they not all ministering spirits (4151)**, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

If angels are spirits, it should not be surprising that when the term “spirit” is generally used it should refer to an angel.

But let’s spell out what we’re talking about. We are fully maintaining that the term “Holy Spirit” still absolutely refers to the third Person of the Trinity. We are simply suggesting, based upon this evidence that the title “Holy Spirit” is intended to denote that the third Person of the Trinity has taken on an angelic nature and operates as an angel. This is extremely important so it’s worth restating. We are not suggesting that the Holy Spirit is merely an angel. Nor are

we suggesting that the Holy Spirit is not God. We are firmly declaring that the Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity, and simply suggesting that the third Person of the trinity took on the nature of an angel.

And this should not surprise us, since we see even Jesus himself before his incarnation referred to as the angel of the Lord. So, we know that the second Person of the Trinity operated in the nature of an angel prior to his incarnation, particularly demonstrated by his Old Testament appearances to men. Why should it surprise us to think of the third Person of the Trinity operating as an angel the entire time?

In addition, this brings clarity to the question of why the third Person of the Trinity is designated with the title “the Holy Spirit” or “the Spirit of God” in the first place. After all, isn’t the entire Godhead understood to be Spirit? So, why is the third Person of the Trinity referred to as “the Spirit of God” and “the Holy Spirit”? Isn’t every Person of the Godhead a Spirit of God and a Holy Spirit? But, if the third Person of the Trinity has taken on the nature of an angel and thereby operates as a spirit in the same category of other spirits, then these designations for him make sense.

First of all, the use of the definite article “the,” the adjective “holy,” and the prepositional phrase “of God” are all clearly meant to distinguish this spirit from other spirits. Thus, the very use of these titles, particularly in combination with such auxiliary identifiers, clearly describes the third Person of the Trinity by placing Him in the category of spirits and angels. Yet, while placing him in the large category of spirits, they also distinguish him from other spirits. Thus, the title “the Holy Spirit” indicates something like “of all the spirits, this is the spirit who is holy” or perhaps even more likely, “the spirit who is the Holy One.”

Likewise, the identifier “the Spirit of God” clearly intends to convey that this spirit has an association with God that is defining and surpassing to all other spirits, including other obedient angels. Thus, the title “the Spirit of God” indicates something like “the Spirit that is God.” And while these titles inherently place Him within and at the same time distinguish him from the category of other spirits or angels, yet they also distinguish Him from the other two Persons of the Godhead, because of the Three He is the one who operates as an angel among angels, a spirit among those other spirits.

Furthermore, there are three other New Testament passages providing supportive evidence that the Holy Spirit is God operating in the nature of an angel. The first two occur in Acts.

Acts 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. **27** And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, **28** Was returning, and

sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 **Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.**

Here in Acts 8:26, Philip is said to be instructed by the angel of the Lord. This angel instructs him where to go so that Philip will be in a position to speak to the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip goes where the angel tells him to go and then Philip is spoken to again concerning the Eunuch. Only this time the text identifies the speaker as the Spirit of the Lord, strongly indicating that the author of Acts understood the term “angel of the Lord” to be an acceptable title for the Holy Spirit. What is more likely, that Philip is first instructed by an angel and then 3 verses later he is instructed by the Holy Spirit himself? Or that it is the Spirit instructing Philip the whole time, directing him to the Eunuch, and the author of Acts simply uses the term “angel” and “Spirit” interchangeably to refer to the Holy Spirit?

Very similarly, in Acts 27:23, Paul refers to the angel of the Lord as him “whose I am, and whom I serve.”

Acts 27:23 For there stood by me this night **the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.**

Is Paul saying that he belongs to a mere, ordinary angel and is the servant of that angel? Is Paul suddenly referring to Jesus Christ as the angel of the Lord? If so that would be problematic because it would involve a return of Jesus to earth simply to stand by Paul on this difficult occasion. The most likely interpretation is that like Acts 8:26-29, here again the author of Acts demonstrates his understanding that the term “angel of God” is an acceptable and interchangeable title for the Holy Spirit.

In fact, a comparison between Acts 27:23 and Acts 13:2-4 proves this interpretation is correct. Looking at Acts 27 side by side with Acts 13 demonstrates plainly demonstrates that the term angel of Lord is synonymous for the Holy Spirit, and consequently that the New Testament authors, including Paul himself, understood that the Holy Spirit was, indeed, an angel (or more specifically, God, the Third Person of the Trinity, having assumed the nature of an angel).

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, **the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.** 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away. 4 **So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,** departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 27:23 For there stood by me this night **the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.**

We can see two explicit correspondences between Acts 13:2-4 and Paul’s statement in Acts 27:23. First, Paul’s statement that he belongs to this angel who

stood by him corresponds directly to the Holy Spirits command for Paul and Barnabas to be separated unto himself in Acts 13:2. Second, Paul's next statement that he serves this angel corresponds directly to the Holy Spirit asserting that Paul and Barnabas will do the work he has appointed them to do.

Furthermore, Paul's statement at the beginning of Acts 27:23 that this angel "stood by" him also proves that Paul knows he is talking about the Holy Spirit. For, in John 14:16, 25:26, 15:26, and 16:7, the term that Jesus used for the Holy Spirit is the Greek word "paracletos," (Strong's No. 3875), which is usually translated into the English words "Comforter" or "Advocate," but which literally means "called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid." Consequently, all three of the components of verse 23 are references to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised would stand beside his disciples. It is the Holy Spirit to whom Paul was separated and so belonged. And it is the Holy Spirit who had commissioned Paul and whom Paul served.

There can be no doubt that in Acts 27:23, Paul is referring to his calling by the Holy Spirit in Acts 13 and in doing so, he is referring to the Holy Spirit as an angel, and specifically by the term "the angel of the Lord." (It would seem that although the title, "angel of the Lord" referred to the pre-incarnate Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, in the Old Testament, after Jesus Christ' first advent, the New Testament understood this role to be filled by the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.)

We have already looked at Acts 13:2-4 a little while earlier when we said that the commissioning of the two witnesses in by the angel in Revelation 10-11 is similar to the Holy Spirit's commissioning of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13. We noted that this similarity greatly helped to make sense of why the two witnesses are referred to by that angel as "my two witnesses" and the fact that the angel also indicates his own role in the commissioning of the two witnesses when he says, "I will give power unto my two witnesses" (Revelation 11:3). In short, we said that the angel in Revelation 10-11 refers to the two witnesses as "his" and states that he himself is responsible for their commission, because that angel is, in fact, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, who commissions these last two prophets just as he did Paul and Barnabas. And this should be no surprise that Revelation 1:1 and chapters 10-11 speak of the Holy Spirit as an angel and as the Lord's angel, since Paul himself referred to the Holy Spirit as "the angel of the Lord" in Acts 27:13. From Acts to Revelation, the picture is consistent.

Finally, we consider the description of the angel in Revelation 10 and 11, who refers to the two witnesses as "the two witnesses of me" and who claims to commission them. The description of this angel is given in Revelation 10:1-3.

Revelation 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was upon his head*, and his face *was as it were the sun*, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2 And he had in his hand a little **book open**: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his left foot* on the earth, 3 And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven

thunders uttered their voices... 10 **And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey:** and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

When we look closely, certain components of the description of this angel are identical to descriptions of God himself in the book of Ezekiel. In fact, there are two particular passages in Ezekiel that come to mind.

Ezekiel 43:2 And, behold, **the glory of the God of Israel** came from the way of the east: and **his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.** 3 And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, *even* according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: **and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar;** and I fell upon my face.

Here in Ezekiel 43, we see the glory of God having a mighty voice and whose appearance causes the earth to shine. Similarly, the angel in Revelation 10 is said to have a voice like a lion roaring and his face is said to shine like the sun. And what does the sun do but illuminate the earth just like the appearance of God in Ezekiel 43.

We should also note from verse 3 that Ezekiel states this vision of the glory of the Lord is like the vision he received by the Chebar River. The vision at the Chebar River is a long vision described in Ezekiel 1-3.

Ezekiel 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as **I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.**

And in that vision we find the following descriptions of this same glory of the Lord, which Ezekiel calls a “vision of God.”

The glory of the Lord is like fire up to his loins and has the appearance of a rainbow about him, just like the angel in Revelation 10.

Ezekiel 1:27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, **from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire,** and it had brightness round about. 28 **As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.** And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Revelation 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow **was upon his head,** and his face *was* as it were the sun, and **his feet as pillars of fire:**

And in Ezekiel 2:9-3:3, the glory of the Lord has a scroll in his hand, which he gives to Ezekiel to eat, which tastes like honey, and after which Ezekiel is sent again to prophesy to his people.

Ezekiel 2:9 And when I looked, behold, **an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;** 10 And he spread it before me; and it *was* written within and without: and *there was* written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. **3:1** Moreover **he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.** 2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; **and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.** 4 And he said unto me, Son of man, **go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.**

Yet in Revelation 10, we see that this same angel whose feet are as fire and who has a rainbow about him, also has a scroll in his hand for John to eat, which tastes like honey, and after which John is to prophesy. The descriptions are clear. The angel in Revelation 10 is the same as the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel 1-3 and 43.

Likewise, the angel in Revelation 18 is likewise depicted using these same particular descriptors.

Revelation 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; **and the earth was lightened with his glory.** 2 **And he cried mightily with a strong voice,** saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

Specifically, this angel in Revelation 18 is described as having a mighty voice and lighting the earth with his glory, just like the descriptions in Revelation 10:1 and Ezekiel 43:2. Given that a longer description of this angel has already been given in chapter 10, which identifies this angel as the “glory of the Lord” from Ezekiel 43 and 1-3, Revelation 18 doesn’t need to repeat the entire description. Instead, it is only necessary for Revelation 18 to provide a brief reference back to these same descriptors in order to identify this as the same angel. Thus, we can conclude that the angel in chapter 18 is also the Holy Spirit.

As we noted earlier, Ezekiel calls the vision by the Chebar River a “vision of God.” The fact that Revelation 10 and 18 describe an angel using the exact same descriptions that Ezekiel uses when he sees God indicates that the angel bearing the same description in Revelation 10 and 18 must be the third Person of the Trinity, who bears the title, “the Holy Spirit of God.”

Thus, Revelation 10 is clearly providing an expanded description letting us know directly that the angel who is sent to John to show him the vision and the book of Revelation from the Father is, in fact, the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ angel, “the angel of the Lord,” who Jesus said would communicate what he hears from Jesus, show his disciples things to come and all that belongs to Jesus.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, **the Spirit of truth**, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.** 14 He shall glorify me: **for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.** 15 **All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.**

Now that we have established that the Holy Spirit, while certainly the third Person of the Trinity, is the angel whom Jesus sends to show the vision to John, we can more easily understand the events in the opening *Series* of Revelation 1-6, including who is speaking and when.

But before we move on, we should note that the Holy Spirit is not the only angel who speaks to John in the Revelation. Other angels speak to him also, but the text is always quick to clarify and denote the other angels with additional descriptors. The most prominent example is Revelation 17:1, which designates that the angel speaking to John at that point is one of the angels who had the seven bowls of wrath. However, as Jesus' foremost messenger and advocate as denoted in John 16, the Holy Spirit is the primary angel communing with John and should be assumed as such except for in passages where the text specifies otherwise.