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THE HEAVENLY COURT SCENE OF REVELATION 4-5

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The purpose of this study is to interpret the heavenly court scene of Rev 4-5 through a thematic analysis of the passage. Little detailed study has hitherto been done to demonstrate the significance of the passage in its totality or its significance for the early chapters of Revelation. Scholars have noted parallels between Revelation and the OT, but only recently have they begun to recognize the major impact of the OT concept of covenant on Revelation.

The research approach for this study is thematic in nature, with exegesis as a necessary tool. Chap. 1 establishes Rev 4-5 as a literary and thematic unit, justifies its contextual limits, and provides an overview of the passage to isolate the following five themes: temple theology, ontological cosmic unity; judgment; covenant and royal theology; and involvement of the Trinity in salvation. Chap. 2 provides a biblical overview of these themes to establish their biblical meanings. Chap. 3 examines the themes and motifs of Rev 1-3 which have particular contextual significance for the interpretation of Rev 4-5. Chap. 4 gives an analytical overview of the principal heavenly court scenes in the OT which have parallels in the heavenly court scene of Rev 4-5. Chap. 5 provides an interpretation of Rev 4-5 within the framework of the five themes. Chap. 6 provides a summary, principal conclusions, and the implications for the remainder of Revelation.

It is concluded that the heavenly court scene of Rev 4-5 is portrayed in terms of a cosmic temple that is based upon the temple of the OT covenant. As a heavenly court scene, it describes a divine council in session that, through an investigative-type judgment, decides the worthiness of the

Lamb to receive the covenant inheritance depicted through the imagery of the seven-sealed scroll. The cultic Lamb is portrayed in terms of king and priest who elevates the righteous to the same status. With the Lamb, the Father and the Holy Spirit are united in the restoration of Creation through the redemptive process of the covenant.