

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 366

Revelation 4, Part 1

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Episode Summary

Revelation 4 is the well know scene of the Lamb of God, the heavenly throne, and the 24 elders. Less well known is the fact that this scene and its elements have a specific Old Testament context: the covenant lawsuit genre. There is a strong scholarly consensus about the covenant lawsuit elements, and its use in divine council scenes in the Old Testament. Once such scene is Daniel 7:9-28, where the text specifically describes multiple thrones in a heavenly council (“court”), assembled to render judgment (Dan 7:9-10). Revelation 4 has more than a dozen parallels to Daniel 7, presented in the same order. This episode introduces us to the covenant lawsuit genre as the backdrop to Revelation 4.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 366: Revelation 4, Part 1. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What’s going on?

MH: You know, I guess you guys... Are you still getting any kind of cold weather? I mean, a few weeks ago it was like the arctic there. We didn’t get that. It just feels like I moved at the right time, I guess.

TS: You did.

MH: But how is everybody doing?

TS: Texas was colder than parts of Alaska there for a little bit. But where I’m at, we got almost 15 inches of snow in one day! And yes, I *am* in Texas. West Texas. So we got...

MH: Boy. Hopefully there won’t be another one.

TS: Yeah. Knock on wood. But us Texans, we made it through. Now it’s March and it’s warm, and I’m ready to work on my tan.

MH: You're going to have to... Yeah, but you'll probably spend most of the year suffering through all that talk about what caused it and what to do and all that kind of stuff. So you guys'll be the focus for a while. I'm just glad to be in Florida. What can I say?

TS: Yeah, I'm jealy.

MH: What can I say?

TS: Have you gotten in your pool yet?

MH: No, but Calvin has. The pugs have (Norman did, anyway). He just makes us nervous. When he sees Calvin going in, it's like, "Ohhh! Okay. Maybe I'm *not* scared." [laughter] Mori could care less. He's just like, "Where's the location of my next nap?"

TS: Yeah. He [Calvin] knows how to float? I know he didn't learn it from you.

MH: Yeah. Well, it's only between five and six feet at the deep end, so yeah, he can stand in it. Ironically, we had all the kids do swimming lessons. So they should be okay.

TS: That's good. That's an important life skill, Mike. Everybody should learn how to swim.

MH: That's what I hear. [laughs]

TS: You need to learn how to swim. Maybe you can get them to teach you how to swim. And then please film that for all of us to watch, because that would be gold.

MH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I'll get right on that. Yeah, I know what I'm doing this weekend... not. [laughter]

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, hey, we had a nice two-week break from Revelation.

MH: Yeah. Today we're going to do Revelation 4. It's only Part 1. You know, we're going to hit stretches like this, too, where there's just something that's sort of lurking behind the backdrop of a chapter or that we have to sort of cover first, and that's going to set up some of the drill down stuff. So today, we're going to look at Revelation 4 and get our feet wet there. And again, what we're doing in this series is it's all about the use (the repurposing) of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. And today we're going to see how John repurposes an Old Testament genre, and that is called (in Old Testament scholarship) "the covenant lawsuit genre." It's also known as "the covenant lawsuit treaty." So there's a lot of scholarship behind this. There's a pretty solid consensus of scholarship, in fact,

that Revelation 4-5 is a Divine Council scene that utilizes features of the covenant lawsuit genre from the Old Testament.

So today, we want to be talking about what that genre is, what are the elements. And once we go through the elements, you're going to kind of see, if you think about Revelation 4-5, that, "yeah, the chapter does kind of unfold in this particular way." And that's going to inform certain items in these chapters— basically, how to read them, or "this is the Old Testament bigger picture and here's what the passage is accomplishing." And then there's this other thing over here that's a little more nuanced, or we'll drill down into a specific passage that John might use or repurpose in Part 2. So this episode is going to be fairly broad.

5:00 Now we've had on the show before Alan Bandy. And I'm going to be interacting with (using) three sources here. They're all dissertations and they've all been since (I'm sure) revised in some way and published into expensive books. So I'm going to be using the dissertations. I've uploaded all three of these dissertations into the protected folder for the podcast. So if you want to get ahold of the original dissertation, and not the published book, you can do that. And so any page number I refer to here is going to be about the dissertation, not the book. But Bandy's dissertation is one of these. And again, we've had Alan Bandy before to talk about his work. And so we're going to revisit parts of that. And then I'm going to add a few other things from some other sources. So Bandy's dissertation was entitled *The Prophetic Lawsuit in the Book of Revelation*. This is his PhD dissertation from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2007. He is going to reference an older dissertation. He references a number of works. But one of them is a dissertation by R. Dean Davis. And the title of that one was *The Heavenly Court Scene of Revelation 4-5*. This was a PhD dissertation done at Andrews University in 1987. And the third source that I'll draw on is Meira Z. Kensky. Her dissertation was *Trying Man, Trying God: The Divine Courtroom in Early Jewish and Christian Literature*. This was her University of Chicago dissertation from 2009. And I should add that her work actually includes a chapter on rabbinic literature, too, even though the title doesn't make that completely evident. Because when you see "Early Jewish" you think Second Temple Judaism, not Rabbinics, but she actually has a chapter on Rabbinics as well.

So I'm going to be interacting with all three of these to sort of explain, "What is the covenant lawsuit genre and how does it show up in Revelation 4-5?" And to be honest with you, there are scholars that would argue that the whole book of Revelation draws on this genre in a number of respects. We'll drift off into that a little bit. But we're going to maintain our focus here on these two chapters.

So I want to start with Bandy's dissertation. He is going to, as the title indicates (*The Prophetic Lawsuit in the book of Revelation*)... His dissertation's not isolated to chapters 4 and 5. So in his dissertation he's going to show how the prophetic lawsuit (this covenant lawsuit genre) is utilized and repurposed in

various places in the book of Revelation. So what he does in his dissertation is he begins with discussing all the literature that has gone before (the work that has been put into the prophetic lawsuit genre) and then noting specifically writers as well that dip into the book of Revelation for this here and there. And then his work's really going to expand on the theme and really give it concerted attention, specifically in the book of Revelation. So he goes through in his introduction lots of different approaches to this.

So it's very evident that there's some kind of covenant or treaty or lawsuit background. When you hear "lawsuit," think a courtroom scene. Bandy points out, scholars have noticed this for a very long time. The only question is, "Which genre or which ancient Near Eastern genre or examples are the best ones to really understand what's going on here?" So he goes through all these different options in his early chapter and he notes strengths and weaknesses of a bunch of them. For instance, when he veers into Revelation, he refers to David Chilton's work. Chilton is (or was—I presume he's still living)... His book that Bandy spends a lot of time on is *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, which was 1987, so it's not that old. But anyway, Chilton is sort of in the Christian theological arena. Eschatologically, he's a preterist. In that arena (Christians who do eschatology), he's one of the few that really spent a lot of time on this covenant framework for the book of Revelation. So Bandy spends a lot of time talking about Chilton (strengths and weaknesses, some critiques here and there). One of his critiques of Chilton is that he depends a lot on Meredith Kline's articulation of covenant elements that we should be paying attention to. And you know, Kline wrote earlier than the 1980s and so some of that work is going to suffer because it hasn't been brought up to date. This is just a chronological issue. But to be more specific, on page 38, Bandy writes this:

10:00

The five points of the covenant structure [MH: according to Chilton] include (1) a preamble to identify the king; (2) a historical prologue; (3) ethical stipulations (i.e., the terms of the covenant); (4) sanctions (outlining blessings and cursings); and (5) succession arrangements dealing with future generations.

And so when he talks about how Chilton views the backdrop of the book of Revelation as essentially a lawsuit against Israel (against Jerusalem), that's going to lead him in a certain direction in interpreting the book that fits really nicely in the preterist camp. Bandy writes:

Chilton views the covenant lawsuit describing the "last days of the covenantal nation of Israel," which was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

And then he writes [on page 40]:

Chilton's approach, however, differs from most scholars in that he arrives at the lawsuit through his covenant framework for Revelation instead of through the

occurrences of juridical language and imagery. This results, in part, from the fact that his commentary is an exposition of the English text rather than the Greek. Likewise, Chilton argues that Revelation does not contain a prophetic lawsuit, but that it is a lawsuit based on the five point structure of an Ancient Near Eastern Covenant [MH: he gets that from Kline]. The problem with his thesis is that he overstates his case for the covenant framework serving as the structure for Revelation.

Then elsewhere, he says:

To say that the entire Book of Revelation intentionally follows the structure of ANE vassal treaties proves difficult to validate.

Let me just stop there. So what Bandy's going to do is say, "Look, there's a better option than what Kline was doing. Not all the book of Revelation is a covenant or belongs in a covenant structure. But various parts of the book of Revelation *do* construct scenes like they're lawsuit scenes (courtroom scenes)." Revelation 4-5 is the most prominent of these. So he's going to say, "An approach like Chilton's is a bit exaggerated."

So I bring up Chilton because he is in the Christian orbit. We're going to have listeners who are familiar with Chilton. And they're going to think that covenant lawsuit backdrop to the book of Revelation is Chilton. That's not really the case. What Chilton was doing is something a little bit different. And again, Bandy's going through a whole bunch of people, but I picked Chilton because he's going to be familiar to a lot of people in the audience. So pluses and minuses, just like everything else. One of the things he likes about Chilton is that, for instance:

[His] insight that the four series of seven judgments [in the book of Revelation are] based on Leviticus 26 warrants serious consideration.

That's going to show up later in the book in some of the specific things we see in the book of Revelation. So again, there are important things here that a writer like Chilton and those who follow him are going to be tracking on. But that is not what we're going to do today. That is not what we mean by the covenant lawsuit genre. It's bigger than what Meredith Kline wrote. It's bigger than what Chilton wrote. And it's also different in some respects. So the observation... Let's just take as our point of departure here the four series of seven judgments based on Leviticus 26. That's going to factor into Bandy's own contribution, that the various sections of the book of Revelation are framed by this prophetic courtroom—this prophetic drama—scene. If you think back to Leviticus 26 and passages like Deuteronomy 28-29, God lays out basically the stipulations for blessing and then if those are violated, then you're cursed. Those passages (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28-29) are often used in the Old Testament in other places as the basis for the prosecution. In other words, God is upset at Israel's apostasy. And

then a prophet will put Israel in a courtroom scene and God begins to build a case against his people Israel. And this is going to in part explain “why the Assyrians are going to come and conquer you,” or “why the Babylonians are going to come and conquer you.” So these cursings come from these earlier chapters—these violations of the covenant. I mean, Leviticus 26 is Torah. Deuteronomy 28-29 is Torah. Okay? It’s part of the covenant God makes with Israel. These violations are going to become the basis for God’s judgment. And articulating the case against Israel is going to be part of the covenant lawsuit genre. So all that’s legit.

15:00 Where Bandy would say Chilton goes too far is to try to make the whole book of Revelation somehow following these covenantal structures and whatnot. Again, it’s an exaggeration of the case. But the case itself in parts of the book is legit. And Revelation 4-5 is a big place where this is very evident. Plus it takes place in the divine courtroom, so it’s a Divine Council scene. Now Bandy summarizes all of this and he gets to the part of his dissertation where he gets into R. Dean Davis’ dissertation, which is one of the three sources I mentioned at the beginning. So part of Davis’ dissertation deals with the Divine Council specifically as a deliberative body. Think of a courtroom. Sort of like God is judge, and the Council is the jury (or at least the participating jurors) in concert with God, who in many cases is also the jury. He’s the judge and the jury, and the prosecutor in some of these scenes. And Bandy writes of Davis’ study, here’s how he summarizes it:

[Davis’s thematic analysis] of Revelation 4-5 attempts to portray (1) a covenant context with a temple setting [MH: think of God’s throne room here]; (2) a heavenly court scene involving a divine council; and (3) an investigative-type judgment of the Lamb in corporate solidarity with his people. He [Davis] isolates five themes evident in chapters 4-5 which include (a) temple theology; (b) ontological cosmic unity; (c) judgment; (d) covenant and royal theology; and (e) Trinitarian involvement in salvation. The subsequent chapters attempt to explicate these themes as they relate to the OT and Revelation.

Now some of that language, especially investigative judgment, is going to sound like Seventh Day Adventist theological stuff. And that’s correct, because Davis is an Adventist. [laughs] Andrews University where he did his dissertation is an Adventist school. And Bandy’s well aware of this, and so he’s going to push back on some of that kind of content. But the important thing about Davis’ work (for us, and really for what Bandy’s doing) is bringing the Divine Council front-and-center into this. And so he writes elsewhere about Davis:

A major corollary to [Davis’s] analysis of the heavenly courtroom scene is the presence of the divine council. In chapter 4, Davis reviews 1 Kings 22, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1-11, and Daniel 7 as significant OT passages for interpreting the role of the divine council [MH: the heavenly beings] in Revelation 4 -5. After a summary

of each passage he provides an analysis of what those passages reveal about the divine council. Davis also discusses the terms, location, members, and decisions of the divine council in an integrative summary. He argues that in the covenant lawsuit Yahweh functions as both the prosecutor and judge. Whereas a member of the divine council functions (i.e., the Son of Man) as a witness (Job 16:19), a vindicator (Job 19:25), a mediator (Job 33:23-24), an intercessor (Isa 53:11-12; Heb 7:25), and an advocate before God (Dan 7:13, 27). In these OT passages the council convenes before divine actions are taken, suggesting that its primary function is executive/judicial decision-making. The council passes judgment within the context of the covenant and on that basis a verdict is followed by subsequent actions.

I'll just stop there. Again, we've talked before, and I talk about this in *Unseen Realm*, about how there are certainly some passages where you see Divine Council participation in the decision-making process of God. In other places it's nuanced a different way, that the council carries out a decision made. In 1 Kings 22:19-23 (again, this is a classic text) it's time for Ahab to die. God has already decreed that Ahab needs to go. And so the council is called together and God says, "Hey, how are we going to do that? Let's hear what you propose." So he lets them participate. And then the spirits go back and forth and the spirit steps forward and says, "I've got a great idea. I'll be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." And God says, "Yep, that'll work. I know Ahab pretty well. He's going to be toast when you try that on him." So there's this participatory element.

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So I wanted to read that paragraph specifically (even though it's a summary—it doesn't get into the nuts and bolts) so that... Again, this audience knows that when you hear this kind of stuff about a Divine Council and participating in God's judgment and working for God, and God allowing them some input (this kind of thing), it's not just crazy Mike. It's not that Heiser guy. This is just mainstream scholarship. This is Old Testament scholarship. I'm just letting you know it's there. And again, this is what I do in *Unseen Realm*, is try to make biblical scholarship about the flow of biblical theology decipherable and digestible to normal people—people who aren't going to go out and get degrees, but they already know that the way scholars talk and think about the Scriptures is a lot different than what you hear at church. So we're filling in lots of gaps here and I'm exposing you. My views on things are not idiosyncratic. This is why I clutter my books with resource references (footnotes). I do that for a reason, because I want you to know this other work is out there; you just didn't know it was out there. Here's where to find it. Buy the book, get the journal article, whatever it is, and away you go. I want to sort of empower the audience to do the research.

So I wanted to include that passage about Dean's [Davis] study here. What Dean does from that point on is he has, like, a mini-commentary on Revelation 4-5 in his dissertation, from the Divine Council perspective. So let's just move on a little bit here. Davis (R. Dean Davis) is the one that focuses on council a lot. And also

the third dissertation source (Kensky's dissertation)... They have chapters in their respective dissertations overviewing how the heavenly court or the heavenly council works. And again, some of it's speculative. Kensky takes a... How can I describe her? She's a... I mean, Bandy's an evangelical. Davis is in the Adventist context. Kensky is Jewish, but I think her writing's a little bit more cynical, too. But it's still really good stuff—lots of good data. But every writer goes off in trajectories and speculates here and there about how the council would actually work or not. But Davis and Kensky both attempt to do this. And I'm going to give you a little sample of what Kensky says here and try to read between the lines a little bit because I actually kind of like what she does in the beginning of her dissertation here. She says:

Throughout the Hebrew Bible there are images of God holding trial and acting in a judicial capacity. Sometimes these images appear in narrative presentation, such as the visions of Micaiah bar Imlah (1 Kgs 22), Zechariah 3, and the prologue to Job. At other points, as in Psalm 50, the framework is poetic, leaving the reader to fill out the narrative setting. Still other texts are legal in nature, and imagine God's courtroom not only as occurring in some heavenly realm, but as intersecting with the human courtroom on the ground. All these texts bear witness to the flexibility of this scene for different rhetorical and religious purposes. Sometimes the courtroom imagery is found for purposes of consolation, comfort, hope. At other points the courtroom framework is used to provoke shame, regret, and repentance. Often these reasons coincide, as more than one is intended at any given moment...

The divine courtroom in the Hebrew Bible is not always visible to the naked eye. Often the texts which become most central to later interpreters, even later interpreters within the canon itself, are not *prima facie* instances of the divine courtroom. Only an understanding of the divine courtroom as a deeply ingrained feature of the religious imagination of ancient Israel can reveal the importance of these texts. One such example occurs on Mount Sinai. Having displayed extraordinary boldness before God, advocating for Israel after the Golden Calf, Moses insists that God show him his ways, so that he may know him (Ex 33:13). The request to know "your ways" is nothing less than a desire to penetrate the workings of the divine mind, to understand the process of divine decision making, to perceive how God functions...

25:00

And she goes on and talks about God's response to Moses and whatnot. Again, I use the word cynical (maybe she's a little bit cynical in places) because I think she... Well, let me put it this way. I'll just summarize my thought here. On one hand it's true that God's decisions and actions can be perceived by the reader as being unjust or a bit nasty. Okay, that's true on the surface. But in the context of covenant violation, it's really hard to me to say that God is being unjust, because essentially they had fair warning here, you know? So she riffs on that sometimes,

and I think a little bit too negatively. Again, she drifts into what she perceives as some moral ambiguities about God's decision-making and so on and so forth. Again, it's kind of a... I don't want to call it a secular reading, because she's Jewish. And I can't make any other assumptions beyond that. But maybe she's filtering a little bit of this through the Jewish experience and whatnot. I don't know. It's a good dissertation. There's a lot of good material here—good data. And it's wonderful that she's paying attention to this whole theme. But if you read all three of these, hers is going to feel a little bit different because of the way she takes certain things about what God is doing, or God's behavior, so to speak, in the courtroom—stacking the deck against the one under trial. Well, okay. If God really knows the heart, well then is that the proper way to characterize God, as stacking the deck? God either knows or he doesn't. His knowledge of the person or the people is not going to be fallible.

So anyway, I just thought I'd throw that in in case we have people go out and read either hers or all three of them. This one's going to feel a little bit different, but it's pretty thorough in terms of the passages that pertain and what I just read there. She says, "Look, if you know the court setting, if you know how ingrained this was in the religious and cultural understanding of people in ancient Israel, you're going to read other passages where a courtroom setting is not spelled out, and you'll just sense that that's what's going on." So her dissertation I think is pretty thorough and well worth having as a resource. She has sections on God as judge, handing down decisions. She gets into covenants there. For instance (this is unique to her, you're not going to find this in the other two), she has commentary about the use of divination and mediators (like the Urim and the Thummim and the high priest, how they function in God's decision-making capacities). She talks about how there's a hope of individuals in certain passages that are on trial, whether it's the Israelites or something specific person, that they hope that God will not be impartial. They don't want God to be impartial. They want him to favor Israel versus the nations, for example. So she'll say, "Well, is that really fair?" Well, yeah, it *is* fair. [laughs] Based upon all the history that's gone before this. She has a lot of these little rabbit trails that are just kind of interesting. She has a section on how God is to be approached. And here she gets into Abraham and Moses about how they negotiate with God in regard to a decision. She sees... In these scenes (let's just use Abraham and Moses as an example) she sees not only what's happening on the ground. This is God's divine decision-making, and Moses and Abraham are allowed to dicker with God and negotiate and whatnot. But she will say, "By analogy, this also happens in the Divine Council." Or you actually have here, because you also have two other witnesses (these two angels in the scene with Abraham, anyway). And you could argue by extension the one with Moses... It's not just the burning bush. It's the whole scene at Sinai, where the law is given by the hand of angels. I mean, there are other witnesses here. But she's saying, "When Moses has these conversations with God and when Abraham has these conversations with God, they're actually part of the courtroom scene. They're actually part of the council decision." (Looping humans in.)

Again, that's unique to her dissertation. So this is why I say it's pretty thorough. It's very interesting. But again, it's going to be different than the other two. So anyway, on page 37, she gets into what (this is Hebrew terminology)—the *rib* (but you pronounce it reeve, like it's R-I-V) pattern. *Rib* is the word for dispute or lawsuit or quarrel—any one of those. This is the covenant lawsuit idea: the *rib* pattern, the *rib* genre. And she writes this:

30:00

One of the most important ways in which the divine courtroom appears in the Hebrew Bible is through its invocation in the so-called “prophetic lawsuit,” or “*rib*-pattern” form of prophetic speech. Throughout the prophetic literature, the prophets indict the people of Israel for various crimes against God, all of which ultimately lead up to breach of covenant. For the prophets, this justifies God’s intention to punish the people for their misdeeds. This form of prophetic address, therefore, is an explanation of why God’s actions are just. The prophets use the legal language as a means of expressing God’s formal complaints and rights as a litigant, an injured party, and show through the mechanisms of human justice how God’s actions are themselves functions of divine justice, even though on the surface they may not seem so.

Now she uses as a template example Micah 6:1-8. Now I’m not going to read it because I’m just going to give you the bullet points here. You’ll get some translation here. I’m not sure if this is Kensky’s own translation or if she’s using maybe the JPS Torah translation. I don’t know. But she’s going to go through Micah 6:8, where Micah indicts the southern kingdom of Judah for social injustice and ethical improprieties. This isn’t a Divine Council scene, but this gives you the elements of a typical courtroom scene, where God is putting Israel on trial (in this case, putting the southern kingdom of Judah on trial) and sort of how these scenes function. So this is pages 37-38 in her dissertation.

**Hear what YHWH is saying,
Arise, contend with the mountains...**

Now the word contend there is *rib*, so it’s a legal term. So when you see that as an Israelite—as a Hebrew reader—you know, “This is a lawsuit. This is lawsuit terminology. God’s going to bring a case here.”

**Arise, contend with the mountains (רִיב אֶת־הַחַרְמִים), and let the hills hear your voice.
Hear, mountains, the case (רִיב) of YHWH, and everlasting foundations of the earth.**

For YHWH has a case against his people (ריב עם-עמו) [MH: “he has as *rib*,” there it is again], and he will reprove his people.

My people, what have I done to you, and with what have I wearied you – answer me.

For I brought you out from the land of Egypt, and from the house of slavery I redeemed you.

And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

My people, remember what Balak, the King of Moab devised, and what Balaam son of Beor answered him,

From Shittim to Gilgal, in order to know the justices of YHWH.

How shall I come before YHWH, bow down before the God of heights?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings [MH: this is the prophet’s voice now], with year-old calves?

Will YHWH be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, the fruit of my belly for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, Man, what is good, and what does YHWH seek from you, but to do justice, to love *hesed*, and humbly walk with your God?

So we have a case. There are charges given by Yahweh against the people. Like, “I haven’t done bad things to you. And I’ve done all these good things to you.” Again, in the context of Micah 6, we have all these abuses happening in Judah. And so it’s like, “What does God really want? What does God consider just? What’s he really after here? Does he want you to bring sacrifices and bow down with calves and your firstborn and rams?” No, what he wants... He’s told you what to do, what is good: to do justice, to love *hesed* (this loving loyalty idea) and to walk humbly with your God.”

So Micah 6:1-8 lays out this case against the people. It’s done with legal language. So the language used in here in the Israelite context, this was courtroom jargon. And you’ve seen court cases on TV, whether it’s fictional portrayals or something else. You know that how things get discussed in a court of law are different than just a normal conversation. Well, when you hit the terminology used here, the reader will instantly know that Judah’s on trial. And the point here is that this language and the trappings of the scene (the prosecutorial stance, the witness is called to bear witness against whoever’s the defendant for their crimes, and all this stuff)... Sometimes these sorts of settings occur specifically in Divine Council scenes, where God is enthroned in his heavenly temple, his house. This is where the Divine Council meets. All that stuff. So these elements play out in a lot of these scenes where God is prosecutor and

judge, in some cases even jury. The Divine Council members play different roles. I'm going to go back to Davis here. Davis summarizes some of this. He says:

35:00

An examination of the activities of the members of the divine council reveals that they fulfill several different functions, including some specific individual roles. They surround the head of the council as attendants (1 Kgs 22:19; Ezek 1:12-14, 20-21; Dan 7:10).

Daniel 7 is a big deal here. And I want you to hold onto that from this point forward, because Daniel 7 is going to be the backdrop (specifically *the* passage) that John uses when he writes Revelation 4-5. Daniel 7 is a Divine Council scene. Daniel 7:9-13. That's why Revelation 4-5 is very clearly a Divine Council courtroom scene. Back to Dean [Davis]. It says these council members support the divine throne, for the head of the council. He gives various references. I'm not going to list out all the references here.

They praise and adore the head of the council (Job 38:7 [MH: is a classic]; Ps 29:1-2; 89:5(6); Isa 6:3)...

This is all Divine Council stuff.

They participate in the council proceedings (1 Kgs 22:20; Isa 6 :8) and give counsel (Isa 44:26). They are [MH: there] to promote Justice among peoples (Ps 82:2-4) [MH: that's what they're *supposed* to be doing] and serve as guardians or watchers (Dan 4:13(10), 17(14), 23(20)). After the council decision has been made and announced, they serve as messengers [MH: of the decision] (Exod 14:19; Num 22:31; 1 Kgs 22:21-22;... Isa 6:8-9). Individually, Gabriel appears to be a specially named messenger [MH: in some of these contexts] (Dan 8:16...) A special role appears to be taken by one who is an "intercessor," "witness," or "advocate" for the faithful on earth before the head of the council [MH: he brings up Psalm 89 here, which we've talked about before on the podcast]... In Dan 7:13-14, the "one like a son of man" appears to serve as the witness or intercessor in behalf of the "saints [MH: the holy ones] of the Most High" and "the people of the saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:25, 27).

From that point on, Dean quotes Mullen's classic study of the Divine Council. This is from Mullen's book, page 228. It's very hard to find this, but you can still find it in pdf here and there. Theodore Mullen writes:

In Hebrew thought, Yahweh functions as both prosecutor and judge when a negative judgment is rendered in the frequent Old Testament divine *rib* [MH: lawsuit contexts]...

Again, Mullen's all over the same set of information. I'm not going to read it because it's repetitious. Davis goes through Mullen's work and then he observes that in all the major council scenes (all the big ones, the ones that are most familiar: 1 Kings 22, Isa 6, Ezek 1-11; Daniel 7) all of them have the head of the council seated on a throne. God the king-judge is attended to by various members of the heavenly host. And sometimes those members (at least some of them) are also seated. (Daniel 7, "the thrones" were placed—plural.) Isaiah and Ezekiel situate the throne inside the temple, so there is a temple setting implied for these judgment scenes. The temple, of course, is where God abides and the place from which he rules, so that makes sense. There is evidence (Daniel 4, Daniel 7, 1 Kings 22) of participation in decision-making in the council, so on and so forth.

Now what Bandy's going to do... And again, he goes through Dean's work and some of this other stuff and so on and so forth. What Bandy is going to do is say, "Okay, if you have all that in your head, and you look at Revelation 4-5, you're going to notice some things right away. He summarizes the parallels. And so I'm going to use his summary to sort of head towards setting up the next episode here for us. This is pages 44-45 if you go get his dissertation. He says:

First, God is described as the head of the divine council in terms drawn directly from the OT [MH: you look at how God is described in Revelation 4-5, it's going to come out of the Old Testament and these scenes]. Second, the twenty-four elders function in a capacity similar to the divine council in the OT [MH: and he cites Isaiah 24:23, Yahweh among his elders]. In Israel, elders traditionally served as community leaders or royal officials who participated in council sessions and sat as judges. Third, Davis contends that other beings like the seven Spirits of God, the four living creatures, John, a strong angel, the Lamb, the myriad of Angels [MH: all these characters], and every creature in the cosmos could all be classified as members of the divine council [MH: in these scenes]. Fourth, the issue before the council is the worthiness of the Lamb to open the sealed scroll. The final evidence that Davis cites is that of the judicial nature of the scroll [MH: itself]. He states that the seals were used to provide legal validity to the document that Davis maintains is the Lamb's book of life.

40:00 Now that's Davis' interpretation of the scroll. But again, you get this courtroom trapping sort of feel, this context. Bandy is very positive about what Davis is writing. He tweaks it here and there. Because what he's going to do in his own work is sort of improve the council elements here. The fourth chapter of Bandy's dissertation is entitled, "An Exegetical Survey of the Prophetic Lawsuit in the Second Vision (Rev 4:1-16:21)." So he takes it all the way to chapter 16—

chapters 4 through 16. We're only focused here (at least at this point) on Revelation 4-5. So I want to get into some of the things in 4-5 here just to set up. But I can't exclude what Bandy writes about the first three chapters. We've already been through the first three chapters and we've done this drill down thing. But now that we're at chapters 4-5, there's stuff in Revelation 1-3 that contributes to or is in some way involved with this covenant lawsuit/Divine Council courtroom thing that you're going to get hit in the face with when you get out of chapter 3 and into chapter 4. So Bandy summarizes it this way. He says:

... the letters to the seven churches constitute lawsuit speeches whereby Jesus conducts a forensic examination of his covenant people.

I mean, just think about the content of Revelation 1-3, these letters to the churches. Back to Bandy:

The form of the letters generally distinguishes them as prophetic oracles similar to the OT prophets, and more specifically as covenant lawsuit speeches. As such, the Book of Revelation follows the pattern of the OT prophetic lawsuit that begins with the people of God. The judgments and promises announced for the churches in the seven letters remain contingent upon what they do in response to these oracles. In this sense the remaining vision, especially the interludes, relates to how the churches respond (i.e., faithfully endure as witnesses) during the heightened state of persecution. Once the Lord deals with his people he turns his attention to the surrounding nations with oracles of judgment. This pattern is established by the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 [MH: there's Deuteronomy 32 again] in that once the covenant people repent and obey Yahweh promises to exact vengeance on Israel's pagan enemies...

That's actually a reference to Deuteronomy 32:43. If you read through Deuteronomy 32, we get verses 8-9, which this audience knows well, the disinheritance of the nations and then Yahweh takes Israel as his own. Then you keep reading all the way up to verse 17, when they worship the *shedim* ("demons"), "gods that they had not known." Deuteronomy 32 shifts from the Babel event to an indictment of Israel for apostasy as you keep reading. What Bandy's saying is, "Look, this notion of... Like, in the book of Revelation, you get these oracles, these letters to the churches, where the people of God are being evaluated and judged and in some cases commended. And that's going to carry all the way through the rest of the book of Revelation." How do God's people respond to what happens in the first three chapters (these letters)? Do they hold fast under persecution? Do they refuse to be disloyal to Yahweh? All these different themes. And then once God's people get dealt with, then all of a sudden

the attention in the book of Revelation shifts to the judgment of the nations. And of course, at the end, the nations are going to be... God is going to... There's going to be healing of the nations ultimately. So if you know the whole flow here and if you go to Deuteronomy 32 again, it begins with... Here's the way the situation was with Israel. And then Israel apostatized. And then God deals with Israel. And then eventually you get to verse 43 in Deuteronomy 32 where God is taking revenge against the gods of the nations. So on and so forth. So Bandy's saying, "You know, this is the pattern of Deuteronomy 32. This is the lawsuit of Deuteronomy 32 and it's tracked on in the book of Revelation." So back to Bandy. He says:

The Book of Revelation, likewise, sounds a [MH: similar] note of judgment pertaining to the churches but then the remaining contents of the vision pertains to the judgment of the nations. Significantly the judgment of the nations is closely tied to the theme of vengeance for their treatment of the saints.

45:00 (Which is Deuteronomy 32:43.) So I would summarize it this way. In essence, Revelation 1-3 is both a lawsuit dealing with followers of Jesus (they get warnings and in some cases, indictment, and they get commended as well)... It's a lawsuit (kind of a courtroom drama, a courtroom evaluation) of the followers of Jesus. But at the same time, it's also building a case against the nations, because some of the churches that are the recipients of the letters have been faithful. They have endured under persecution and they're suffering at the hands of the nations. So it's both evaluative... And all of that testimony is going to be used later to indict the nations. Now Beale and Carson... If you think, "Ah, I don't know. I'm not sure about Revelation 4-5 and all of this Divine Council stuff." Okay, let's go to some familiar evangelical voices here, other than me. Beale and Carson's commentary on the Old Testament used in the New Testament lays this out in 14 steps. [laughs] Okay? They lay it out. They lay out the courtroom setting of Revelation 4-5 really nicely. Basically, they move from the Divine Council/courtroom scene in Daniel 7 over to Revelation 4-5. So here's what they write:

An overview of the two chapters together [MH: Revelation 4-5] reveals that they exhibit a unified structure that corresponds more to the structure of Dan. 7 than to any other vision in the OT. If we begin with Dan. 7:9-28 and observe the elements [MH: in that passage] and order of their presentation [MH: in that passage]...

If we look at all that and say, "Well, what about Daniel 7:9-28 is in common with Revelation 4-5?" These are their words: "A striking resemblance is discernible." I'm just going to go through the list.

1. Introductory vision phraseology [MH: align Daniel 7:9 (and they loop in verses 2, 6, and 7) with Revelation 4:1 -- it's going to look a lot alike]
2. The setting of a throne(s) in heaven (Dan. 7:9a; Rev. 4:2a [cf. 4:4a])
3. God sitting on a throne (Dan. 7:9b; Rev. 4:2b)
4. The description of God's appearance on the throne [MH: John even borrows the description] (Dan. 7:9c; Rev. 4:3a)
5. Fire before the throne (Dan. 7:9d–10a; Rev. 4:5)
6. Heavenly servants surrounding the throne (Dan. 7:10b; Rev. 4:4b, 6b–10; 5:8, 11, 14)
7. Book(s) before the throne (Dan. 7:10c; Rev. 5:1–7)
8. The "opening" of the book(s) (Dan. 7:10d; Rev. 5:2–5, 9)
9. A divine (messianic) figure approaches God's throne in order to receive authority to reign forever over a "kingdom" (Dan. 7:13–14a; Rev. 5:5b–7, 9a, 12–13)
10. This "kingdom" includes "all peoples, nations, and tongues" (Dan. 7:14a MT; Rev. 5:9b)
11. The seer's emotional distress on account of the vision (Dan. 7:15; Rev. 5:4)
12. The seer's reception of heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one among the heavenly throne servants (Dan. 7:16; Rev. 5:5a)
13. The saints are also given divine authority to reign over a kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27a; Rev. 5:10)
14. A concluding mention of God's eternal reign (Dan. 7:27b; Rev. 5:13–14)

So there are 14 specific parallels between Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-5, and they're in the same order. It's completely obvious A) that Daniel 7 is a Divine Council scene, and B) John is riffing off of it in Revelation 4-5. He could not be any more explicit and detailed and thorough in the alignment. And Daniel 7, again, is a courtroom scene. It is part of this covenant lawsuit thing going on. In Daniel 7's case, of course, the four beasts (the nations) are going to be judged. They're the ones sitting under indictment in that scene. Daniel 7 also loops in the people of God, too. But here you're going to have (I'll just pull out #10 here from Beale and Carson) a reference to the "kingdom," which includes "all peoples, nations, and tongues." It's not just Israel. Okay? So again, it's this full-orbed thing. The kingdom that is talked about in Daniel isn't just the kingdom of Israel. The Son of Man is Lord of the nations. And over in Revelation 4-5, the nations are going to be in view too. You're going to have both believers (are they enduring, are they holding up, are they sustaining their belief—their faith?)... and what about the nations? We are nearing, we are approaching, we're really in the process of the nations now coming under judgment. So you get the whole mix. It's very deliberate tracking between Revelation 4-5 and Daniel 7. Just on and on and on it goes.

I think that's actually a good place to stop. It's a good set-up for Part 2 (our next episode). We can just conclude it this way. There's a solid consensus of

50:00 scholarship, and there is an indisputable relationship between Revelation 4-5 and Daniel 7. And Daniel 7 is firmly part of what we would call the covenant lawsuit genre in the Old Testament—this divine (and even more specifically, Divine Council) lawsuit scene. Daniel 7 is right smack-dab in the middle of that. It is a classic example. And Revelation 4-5 uses it—fourteen points, even in order. It's *unmistakable*. So there's a solid consensus of scholarship and data here that utilize all of this stuff. Again, this is the Old Testament context for the larger picture of Revelation 4-5.

And with that as a backdrop, when we return in the next episode, we're going to start to drill down. I may be able to cover Revelation 4 in one more episode. We'll see, once I get my head into the material. Maybe we'll have a Part 3. I don't know yet. But we're going to be reading Revelation 4 against the backdrop of a Divine Council courtroom. And then within that, John is going to be bringing in other Old Testament data to article specific things—specific points—and illustrate specific things—specific points. So John has set the table. His readers know, if they know Daniel 7, which is a really fundamentally important passage... If they know Daniel 7, they know just what the scene is in Revelation 4-5. And they're going to be reading with John this court proceeding. And as John goes through the courtroom drama, he's going to be drawing in other things to make the case and explain what's going on (or the things that are and the things that are going to happen and so on and so forth). So that's, I think, a good place to stop and set up the next episode. So lots of Old Testament stuff going on here, both at the macro level and then (as we'll see next time) in very specific ways.

TS: It's amazing how much Old Testament is in Revelation.

MH: Yep.

TS: You know, there are some other books out there people... I don't have any off the top of my head as far as Old Testament in Revelation.

MH: Yeah, in our first episode (I think the introductory episode) I referenced three or four of these. There's one by Beale; there's one by Steve Moyise (I don't even know if I'm pronouncing his name correctly). Those are two surveys. And then Beale and Carson's commentary is specifically aimed at Old Testament repurposing in the New Testament. Of course, they go through the whole book of Revelation there, too. But if they go back to the introductory episode, people can get these titles. And they can look at the transcripts, too. But again, they're academic works, but I would think a lot of the people in our audience (most of our audience) could handle a lot of that content.

TS: Well, we'll be looking forward to next week. And with that, Mike, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.