

## **THE DANIELIC BACKGROUND FOR REVELATION 13:18 AND 17:9**

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Most commentators who discuss Revelation 13:18 and 17:9 focus on the problem of identifying the beast, but usually no serious attempt is made to investigate the background and meaning of the combined use of νοῦς and σοφία in the same two texts (*cf.* ὥδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν. ὁ ἔχων νοῦν in Rev. 13:18 and ὥδε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν in Rev. 17:9). However, when such a study is conducted, the book of Daniel may be seen as the most probable influence. Now in Daniel the root שכל (vb., 'understand, have insight'; n., 'understanding, insight') is followed epexegetically five times by the root בין (vb., 'understand, gain insight'; n., 'understanding, insight').<sup>1/</sup>

1. *Cf.* Dan. 1:4,17; 9:22; 11:33; 12:10, Note that חכמה also occurs in the combination in 1:4, 17 and appears with בין in 1:20 and 2:21. שכל occurs with חכמה in Daniel 5:11, 14 (*cf.* further Dan. 5:12; 10:1), The combination of שכל, and בין occurs only rarely elsewhere in the OT, and never in an eschatological or apocalyptic context (*cf.* Dent, 32:29; 1 Chron. 22:12; 2 Chron. 2:11; Meh. 13:k)1; see שכל twice in 2 Chron. 30:22 and שכל with חכם in Deut. 32:29 and 2 Chron. 2:11. However, note also that the root בין is found elsewhere in direct combination with חכם (*cf.* Deut. 4:6; 2 Chron. 2:12; Prov. 4:5, 7; 16:16; Isa. 10:13; 11:2; 29:14; Jer. 9:11; Hos. 14:10 and with ידע (*cf.* I Chron. 12:33; 2 Chron. 2:12; Job 38:4; Pss 82:5; 119:125; Prov. 4:1; 9:10; 19:26; 29:2; Isa. 29:24; 32:4; 44:18; 56:11; Hos. 14:10), although none of these combinations are found in eschatological contexts (*cf.* the possible exception of Jer. 23:20 where בין appears twice). See the interesting combinations in Prov. 1:2. Most of the above limits can also be toned more (generally parallelism elsewhere in the OT, but, again, never in an eschatological context.

In Daniel 1:4, 17 the combination is found with reference to Daniel and his friends, the latter occurrence being directly related to the understanding of 'visions and dreams'. Three of these combinations are used in the same manner as  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$  and  $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$  in Revelation 13:18 and 17:9. In Daniel 9:22-23 (25),/2/ 11:33 and 12:10/3/ the combined words have the same meaning as in Revelation 13:18 and 17:9, since they have the following ideas in common: (1) the requirement to have 'insight and understanding' in order to comprehend (2) eschatological events of tribulation/4/ (3) brought about by an evil king(s), who persecutes the saints and deceives others into acknowledging his absolute sovereignty/5/; (4) further, the need for such understanding is communicated in a vision to a seer (in Daniel 9, 11-12 and Revelation 17 it is an angelic communication)./6/

2. Cf. Dan. 9:22 (להשכילך בינה); 9:23 (. . . . ובין ותדע ותשכל) 9:25 (והבן במראה). These references are significant for both Revelation 13 and 17 since they refer to an exhortation to understand a vision (so verses 23, 25) and the hidden significance of numbers (cf. also Dan. 9:2, 8).
3. Cf. Dan. 11:33 (ומשכילי עם יבינו) 12:10 (והמשכלים יבינו).
4. Daniel 11:33 and 12:10 are very important in relation to Revelation, since they refer to 'insight' which is needed by saints living in the eschatological time.
5. The common elements of deception and apostasy are striking (cf. Dan. 11:32, 34-36; 12:10; Rev. 13:3-4, 8, 12-15; 17:8, 17). Note the element of persecution in 13:7a, 15; 17:6.
6. Cf. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John I* (1920), 364, who sees the idea of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$  in Revelation 13 as comparable with the use of  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in Daniel 1:17 (LXX); 5:31-12 (8); 5:14 ( $\theta$ ); 8:15 (8); 9:22 (8); 10:1 ( $\theta$ ). Four times  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is used in immediate connection with  $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$  (Dan. 1:17; 2:20 (8); 2:21; 5:14; cf. also 1:20 (LXX));  $\sigma\tau\upsilon\iota\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$  also occurs once with  $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$  (Dan. 1:4,  $\theta$ ): In Dan. 1:4 ( $\theta$ )  $\sigma\tau\upsilon\iota\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ , translates a form of  $\text{שכל}$  and  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  renders forms of  $\text{שכל}$  in Daniel 1:17 (LXX), 5:14 ( $\theta$ ) and a form of  $\text{בין}$  in Daniel 2:21 (8). Also,  $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is almost always a translation of  $\text{חכמה}$  in Daniel ( $\theta$ , so 8 times (4 in Dan. 2)). Although combinations of  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and

The presence of such a background in 13:18 and 17:9 is appropriate because of the parallel themes with Daniel 7 and 12, both chapters of which are alluded to in each context.<sup>7/</sup> In chapter 17 an allusion to the 'book' of Daniel 12 directly precedes the combination and has probably given rise to the thought of it (*cf.* also the use of Dan. 12 in 13:8b). It is especially noteworthy in chapter 17 that σοφία is required in order that the μυστήριον of the vision can be comprehended, an association unique to Daniel 2.

In the light of this discussion, we conclude that the idea of eschatological insight in Daniel 2, 9, 11 and 12 is the best background against which to understand Revelation 13:18 and 17:9. The combination of שכל and בִּין stands out most in this background.<sup>8/</sup> This usage indicates that John understands Christians to be the

σοφία occur elsewhere in the LXX, they never appear in eschatological or apocalyptic contexts (the same is true of σοφία in combination with other words for 'understanding'). Another unique feature is the association of the combination with the use of μυστήριον in Daniel 2. This is striking since *vas* (= synonym of σύνεσις) in Revelation 13 and 17 appears with σοφία in association with an eschatological use of μυστήριον.

7. See my Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation (*The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic and in the Revelation of St. John*, pp. 203-237) where I argue that Revelation 13 and 17 are modelled on Daniel 7.
8. Only D. H. Milling, *The Origin and Character of the New Testament Doxology*, unpub. Ph.D. diss. at the University of Cambridge (1972), 216, 266, has seen a 'probable' influence of Daniel in these phrases, but he limits this to σοφία, the background of which he sees to be in Daniel 2:20. Cf. F. Hahn, 'Die Sendschreiben der Johannesapokalypse', in *Tradition und Glaube*, FS K. G. Kuhn, ed. G. Jeremias, H.-W. Kuhn and H. Stegemann (1971), 379-380, 391, who sees Daniel 8:17, 10:11 and, especially, 9:23 as significant for an understanding of the background of Revelation 13:9,18 and other similar *Weckruf* phrases in Revelation and the NT. Charles, *Revelation I*, 364 only hints at a Danielic background for *voũς*. Cf. A. Satake, *Die Gemeindeordnung in der Johannesapokalypse*, WMANT 21 (1966), 217, 219, who sees the use of שכל

fulfilment of the prophesied *maškilîm* in Daniel 11 and 12./9/

That John sees Christians as the Danielic *maškilîm* in 13:18 and 17:9 becomes more understandable in the light of Revelation 2-3, where it is evident that Christians are living in the midst of apostatizers and must be careful *to discern* false from true worship. In Revelation 2-3 John pictures some Christians ('so-called') as apostatizing, as a result of compromising and syncretistic attitudes/10/ with respect to pagan society (*e.g.*, the demands of emperor worship/11/, trade guilds, etc.). Such a situation of compromise is implied from Revelation 2:14 and 3:2-4, 16-17.

In view of this Danielic background, it is attractive to suggest that John associates those who go along with pagan society with 'those who forsake the holy covenant' (Dan. 11:30b) and with 'hypocrites' (Dan. 11:34b). This association may be apparent from Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, where those who threaten the Church of Smyrna and Philadelphia are spoken of as those 'who say they are

(*cf.* 11:35; 12:10) and the use of כִּי in Daniel as having a specific correspondence with the role of 'prophets' in Revelation, but does not mention any association with 13:18 or 17:9. Otherwise some commentators mention Daniel 11:33 or 12:10 only as a parallel for comparison with Revelation 13:18 and 17:9.

9. We see Revelation 13 and 17 as pertaining to instruction for Christians during the whole span of the church age (so W. Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (1940), 134ff; G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (1966), 160ff; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (1979), 206ff).
10. There seems to be general agreement about the background of apostasy and syncretism in early Christianity. See W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (1965), 106ff; Frend, *The Early Church* (1965) 47-48, 55-56; Sweet, *Revelation*, 26-34.
11. For the background see further, E. Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (1955), 205-221; Sweet, *Revelation*, 26-34.

Jews and are not'. Perhaps some of those so-called 'Jews' are Judaizing Christians who felt compelled to identify with a prevalent Jewish attitude/12/ which rejected the apocalyptic attitude of Daniel as subversive and irresponsible. Those who worship the beast in Revelation 13:3-4, 8 and 17:8 may also correspond to Daniel's portrayal of 'hypocritical covenant breakers' who 'go astray'/13/ and give allegiance to the self-deifying king (cf. Dan. 11:30-39).

It may also be that the 'false apostles' (Rev. 2:2) and the false prophetess who 'leads' the saints 'astray' (Rev. 2:20) are linked in John's mind with those in Daniel 'who violate the covenant' and 'seduce with flattery'./14/ In both Daniel 11:32 (θ, LXX), 34 and Revelation 2:2, 14-15, 20 there are portrayed those who apostatize and attempt to lead others astray./15/

The rulers of 'the world system (Rome) also fit into the Danielic scheme in that they represent the deceiving eschatological king of Daniel, who by 'flattery' causes some from true Israel to depart from the covenant (Dan.

12. See Sweet, *Revelation*, 28-30.
13. Cf. Dan. 12:4 (LXX, ἀπομανώσιν οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ πλησθῆ ἡ γῆ ἀδικίας). See L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted. Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series I* (1966), 170-171 for the use of this text in the Synoptic apocalypse.
14. See Dan. 11:32 of the MT, and of the LXX and θ (see *infra*, n. 15).
15. The LXX and Theodotion of Dan. 11:32 have the Jewish apostates as the subject of the 'seducing' rather than the evil king. Since קִלְקַל of Dan. 11:32, 34 is used elsewhere 'of the deceit of false prophets' (cf. Isa. 30:10; Ezek. 12:24), it would serve as an appropriate background for Revelation 2:2, 20 (for further discussion of קִלְקַל see Hartman, *Prophecy*, 170, who discusses the Danielic background in Mark 13 and has made the observation concerning its use elsewhere in the OT with respect to false prophets).

11:30, 32) and to acknowledge him as divine sovereign (Dan. 11:36, 39; 8:25).<sup>16/</sup> This Danielic background is expressed most vividly in Revelation 13, where the beasts are portrayed as arrogant blasphemers who deceive others into false worship.<sup>17/</sup>

Those who do not break the covenant by false worship are to be killed (Rev. 13:15), as is the case with the *maskilim* in Daniel 11:33-35. Now it is against this background that John sees the true saints in 13:18 and 17:9 as the fulfilment of the predicted *maskilim* of Daniel 11:33-35 and 12:3,10. The statements of Revelation 13:9-10 should be viewed as an exhortation to the Christian *maskilim*. Perhaps the reference from Jeremiah 15:2 and 43:11 in 13:10a has been suggested by Daniel 11:33-35, where the 'fall' of the *maskilim* is to occur irrevocably in the eschatological period of testing.<sup>18/</sup> Likewise, the 'perseverance and faith of the saints' in 13:10b may be based on the exhortation of Daniel 12:12 ('How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days'; cf. Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).<sup>19/</sup> The same is probably true of Revelation 14:12 since it also immediately follows discussion of 'those who worship the beast', as do 13:10b and 13:18. Revelation 13:10b; 13:18; 14:12 and 17:9 are also linked together by an introductory ὡδε, a usage unique in the NT, which may be John's way of introducing exhortations to Christians whom he views as the Danielic *maskilim*. ὡδε may even be an introductory formula and, at least, is John's own way of pointing the reader back to the

16. For the Roman background see Stauffer, *Caesars*, 205-221.
17. The second beast is also viewed as a false prophet (Rev. 13:13-14).
18. It may be that חרב and שבי in Daniel 11:33 functioned as catchwords attracting attention to Jeremiah 15:2 and 43:11, which have the same two words. Cf. also the LXX equivalents.
19. Cf. also Revelation 2:2-3 where the Church of Ephesus demonstrates 'perseverance' and 'endurance' by discerning 'false apostles' in their midst. This reflects the role of the *maskilim* in Daniel 11:33-35 and 12:10-11, who have the insight to discern between falsehood and truth, especially with respect to the norms of faith within the true covenant community.

context of Daniel. John's point in exhorting true believers as Danielic *maškilîm* is to impress on them their need to exercise their spiritual insight in order to discern true and false worship./20/

Against this background, Revelation 22:10-11 may also be seen as associated with the *maškilîm* of Daniel 12:(4), 9-10. In both texts the unsealing of a book/21/ is followed by two descriptions of both the wicked and the righteous in the end-time. John is again exhorting Christian saints to persevere/22/ on the basis that, as *maškilîm*, they have special divine insight into the events occurring in their midst.

Therefore, the author of Revelation sees the church of his own day as being in the situation of the loyal Jews of Daniel, who stand in the midst of 'flatterers', and are in danger of being seduced by them. No doubt there of was also a threat of persecution, but the element of theological seduction was just as evident./23/ It is in the light of both of these elements that we are to

20. Cf. 1 Clement 48:5 (Cf. Frend, *Early Church*, 61).
21. Although this is not stated in Daniel, it is clearly implied.
22. Cf. the use of ἀγιάζω in Dan. 12:10a (LXX) and Rev. 22:11b.
23. There was probably a similar *Sitz im Leben* in Qumran, especially since they saw themselves as the Danielic *maškilîm* and *rabbîm* (for the former idea see 1QS 3:13; 9:12-21; 1QH 11:9-10; F. F. Bruce, 'The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community', in *Neotestamentica et Semitica*, FS M. Black, ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (1969), 229; cf. further, 1QS 4:18; 1QH 12:13. For the latter idea, cf. CD 13:7; A. Mertens, *Das Buch Daniel im Lichte der Texte vom Toten Meer. Stuttgarten biblische Monographien* 12 (1971), 70). The *Sitz im Leben* of the other Jewish apocalyptic works may have been similar, but we do not possess enough knowledge about their background to be certain (cf., however, 4 Ezra 11:40-44 and 12:36-38; 2 Baruch 38:1-4 and 41:1-42:3).

understand the *Sitz im Leben* of the churches to which John is writing. No doubt, it is in the same light that we are to see the situation of our present-day church, especially as this pertains to the need for Christians to discern truth in the midst of theological apostasy, syncretism and compromise with the world.