Theophany in Revelation

Vern Sheridan Poythress
Westminster Theological Seminary
Theophany: Basic Points

1. A. God’s glory is reflected in creation
2. B. God’s glory is the source for the plan of Revelation
3. C. Interpret the symbols of Revelation recognizing that God is at the center
Angels Image God

1 24 thrones image one throne (Rev. 4:4).

1 Angels are “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1).

1 They execute God’s decrees (Isa. 6:6-7; Ezek. 9:4; 10:2; Ps. 103:20-21).
God’s Glory Reflected

- light
- kingship
- presence
- beauty
7 Cycles Follow Reflection

1. 5:1; 6:1 God; Lamb
2. 8:2 7 angels in court
3. 12:1-3 cosmic theater
4. 15:5-8 temple
5. 17:1-19:10 church; false church
6. 20:4 reigning saints
7. 19:11 last Adam

II

- God & man
- last Adam
- God; Lamb
- 7 angels in court
- 12:1-3 cosmic theater
- 15:5-8 temple
- church; false church
- reigning saints
- 20:4
God’s Mystery Reflected in Symbols

- God’s Trinitarian nature
- God’s appearing in Rev.
- God’s surroundings
- all of Revelation
A. Theophany in General
Definition of Theophany

1 More than one definition is possible.
1 I want a broad definition.
1 “An encounter with divine presence accompanied by extraordinary manifestation or display mediating that presence.”
1 Include veiled or elusive manifestations.
Theophany in Spiritual Growth

1. Know God as revealed in Rev.
2. 2 Cor. 3:18 applies theophanic language to the heart of Christian experience.

theophany in Christ → transformation of believers in Christ

Inexhaustible.
Theophany in Revelation

Christophany in 1:12-20

Theophany in 4:1-5:14

Empowers judgments 6:1-22:5

1:12-22:5 as a whole
B. Imaging in Theophanies
24 thrones image one throne (Rev. 4:4).

Angels are “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1).

They execute God’s decrees (Isa. 6:6-7; Ezek. 9:4; 10:2; Ps. 103:20-21).
3 Layers in Ezekiel 1

Cloud

Chariot

Man
Fire Imaging in Ezekiel 1

- Fire: 1:4
- Chariot: 1:13-14
- Man: 1:27

meaning:
God's judgment
(Isa. 66:15; Ps. 97:3)
Imaging in Ezekiel 1

1:4 9:3-4
1:7 1:24
1:27; 8:2? 1:25,28

Cloud
Chariot
Man

Bronze
Voice

meaning: firmness of judgment
pronounce judgment
Inner Meaning of Man Theophany

Cloud
Chariot
Man
Attributes
Trinity

depth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes in Human Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ears</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arm</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feet</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Face</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nostrils</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mouth</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attributes and Spirit

- **Face**
  - Ps. 139:7; 51:11; Ezek. 39:29

- **Eyes**
  - Rev. 5:6; 1:4-5.

- **Hand**
  - Ezek. 8:1 vs. 11:5.

- **Finger**

- **Breath**
  - Ps. 18:15; Ezek. 37 (Ps. 104:3)

- **Power**

- **Many**
Attributes and Trinity

Individual attributes ➔ Holy Spirit

Whole human figure ➔ Christ Incarnate
C. Lessons from Theophany
God Centered Universe

- 4 living creatures
- 24 elders
- Myriads of angels
- Every creature in heaven, earth, under the earth, sea
God’s Glory in History

Unstoppable.

spread of glory

all things
God’s Glory Copied

- reality
  - original King
  - copy king

- man-centered thinking
  - literal human king
  - God as merely metaphorical King
God’s Glory Reflected

light  kingship  presence  beauty
God’s Glory Now

1 In redemption, 5:2-6
1 In creation, 4:11
   u Light
   u Cloud
   u Thunder
   u Trees (life)
   u Houses
God’s Mystery Reflected in Symbols

God’s Trinitarian nature

God’s appearing in Rev.

God’s surroundings

all of Revelation
Evangelism from Theophany

1 Don Richardson, *Peace Child*, illustrates the challenges.

1 You may start from general revelation, water, trees, the sun, marriage, power (kingship).
Worship from Theophany

Seeing God in majesty

Praise

4:8

Awe

1:17

Imitation

2 Cor. 3:18
D. Imaging and Spatial Structure
Kingship Reflected

God → angelic court → heaven and earth
image

Adam → other people → Eden, earth
Presence Reflected

God indwelling
1:14

angelic court
4:4

heaven and earth
5:13

image

you
3:20

church
1:12-13

kingdom/temple
11:19
Beauty Reflected

- God: Rev. 4:3; Ezek. 1:16
- angelic court: Ezek. 1:16
- heaven and earth: Rev. 21:19-21

- you: Exod. 28:15-21
- church: Isa. 61:10; 62:3
- kingdom: Rev. 21:19-21
E. Spatial Structures in Revelation
7 Cycles Follow Reflection

1. 5:1; 6:1 God; Lamb
2. 8:2 7 angels in court
3. 12:1-3 cosmic theater
4. 15:5-8 temple
5. 17:1-19:10 church; false church
6. 19:11 last Adam
7. God & man

II

reigning saints

20:4
Final Reflection: New Jerusalem

1. God & man
2. 7 angels in court
3. cosmic theater
4. temple
5. church; false church
6. last Adam
7. reign of saints
8. new Jerusalem

God
H. The Lamb and the Scroll
God’s Scroll

1 Heavenly books contain God’s plans, Dan. 10:21; 12:4, 9; (8:26)

Heavenly scene

Heavenly books

Universal context

Plan for history

sealed = inaccessible

Who can bring God’s plan to realization?
The Lamb’s Ability (5:5-6)

1 Lion, Root of David

1 Lamb

1 Slain

1 With Spirit

Yes!