

Notes on the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse) (one of two)

In the spring of 2000 I completed **Notes on the Psalter** (posted elsewhere on this Home Page), a task which offered an excellent opportunity to increase my acquaintance of the psalms through a closer reading of the Hebrew text. These religious poems express the entire range of human sentiments face to face with divine reality; they are marked by a desire for future restoration or wholeness which the Christian tradition sees as effected through the person of Jesus Christ. While the Psalter certainly deals with the past and present dimensions of time, much of what it expresses is centered upon the not yet realized future. The emphasis upon hope which expects full attainment made me look elsewhere in the Bible for similar themes; the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse was the first that came to mind.

Perhaps the inauguration of a new millennium had an unconscious influence on this project, for at a special time like this people are concerned with “last things.” On the other hand, I hesitated to comment on Revelation because a tendency exists among some Christians to take the images of this book literally. While the Catholic tradition does not subscribe to such a view, Revelation’s vivid images nevertheless can give license to an active—indeed over-active—imagination with regard to the immaterial reality it describes.

Despite hesitations, I decided it would be helpful—not so much for the reader but for myself—to go through the text line by line and jot down some reflections; most observations are based upon both the Old and New Testaments. That is to say, the thoughts and images presented by Revelation have precedents and are intimately related to other parts of the Bible. These are not always evident at first glance, hence the need to look more closely at the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

Scholarly commentaries on the Book of Revelation abound; my intent is neither to duplicate nor to mimic them. I simply wish to offer a series of notes done in the monastic spirit of *lectio divina*, that special slow-paced reading of Scripture which disposes one to be in the presence of God. *Lectio’s* approach is especially helpful for a controversial book as Revelation because the spirit of contemplative prayer it induces has a remarkable way of putting this book into perspective. In many ways, *lectio divina* uncovers—for such is the literal meaning of *apocrypha*—an already existing reality. The obstructions preventing us unable to comprehend the underlying divine truths often stem from our unaided imagination. While most verses and words are examined, I have omitted those which are repetitive and have no direct bearing upon the contemplative dimension of *lectio divina*. The same applies with regard to historical elements; they can be looked up in any suitable commentary.

Greek nouns are generally cited in the nominative and verbs in the first person singular. Unless otherwise noted, nouns are given in the singular. The text of Revelation is the **Revised Standard Version**; all other biblical citations are also from the RSV.

For the sake of convenient reading and downloading, I have divided the Notes into five sections: four pertaining to the Book of Revelation itself and one which contains two appendices. The first appendix deals with Greek words which occur in Revelation. The second appendix deals with the Greek word *kai* which is variously translated in Revelation as *and*, *when*, *then*. *Kai* occurs with remarkable frequency which prompted making this second appendix.

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Chapter One

Vs. 1: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.

The very first word of this book is *apolakupsis* as associated with the person of Jesus Christ (genitive), that is, as both belonging to him and originating from him. It is followed by the dative (“to him”) signifying that God

the Father was initiator of this revelation. The same verse continues with another dative (“to his servants”), intimating that the “to-ness” proper to Christ is shared by his servants. As the Introduction noted, apokalupsis points to an already existing (divine) reality which this Book seeks to delineate.

Taxos or *soon* is connected with the immanent fulfillment of the indefinite “what” which is to *take place*, ginomai. “I tell you, he will vindicate them *speedily*” [Lk 18.8].

The divine apokalupsis is *made known*, semaino, a word designating the impartation of knowledge by a sign with future meaning. “He said this to *show* by what death he was to die” [Jn 12.33]. Semaino is directed to John-as-doulos by means of an *angel* or aggelos; note use of doulos in “to his *servants*” just above. “In the sixth month the *angel* Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph” [Lk 1.26-7]. Also note Mary as doule: “For he has regarded the low estate of his *handmaiden*” [Lk 1.48]. In the verse at hand, God *sends* this angel, apostello, a verb associated with the divine commission of the Apostles and from which this noun is derived. “There was a man *sent* from God, whose name was John (the Baptist, Jn 1.6).”

Vs. 2: who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Here John has a three-fold commission:

- 1) a *witness* (verb: marturein) with respect to the divine logos, reminiscent of “He came for testimony, to *bear witness* to the light, that all might believe through him” [Jn 1.7].
- 2) with respect to the marturia of Jesus Christ, also as in Jn 1.7.
- 3) that which John *saw* (eido), a verb connoting knowledge. “I myself did not *know* him” [Jn 1.26]. Note the connection between eido and apokalupsis.

Vs. 3: Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

The first of seven blessings in Revelation, the others being 14.13, 16.15, 19.9, 20.6, 22.7 & 14. The term here as in vs. 3 is makarios, the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew ‘ashry as in Ps 1.1: “*Happy* is the man who walks in the Law of the Lord.” As pointed out in the **Notes on the Psalter** (elsewhere on this Home Page), ‘ashry connotes forward (continual) advancement. Makarios is used for each of the Beatitudes, Mt 5.3+.

Makarios has three verbs as objects: *reading aloud* (anaginosko), *hearing* (akoueo) and *keeping* (tereo). The first refers to reading in public as opposed to in private. “And when this letter has been *read* among you” [Col 4.16]. The second pertains to those receptive to such anaginosko Lk 11.28: “Blessed rather are those who *hear* the word of God and keep it” [Lk 11.28]! The third, tereo is with regard to the *written* part of prophecy (ta gegrammena) which may be taken in conjunction with the reading aloud.

The verb for *to keep* is tereo, whereas in Lk 11.28 it is phulasso. The former as in Jn 17.11 (“Holy Father, *keep* them in your name” and the latter as in Mt 19.20 (“All these I have *observed*; what do I still lack?”).

The last part of vs. 3 has kairos for *time*; a word pertaining to a special occasion, usually with reference to divine intervention. “My words which will be fulfilled in their *time*” [Lk 1.20]. Note the adjective eggus or *near* which here is almost redundant because a kairos by its very nature is eggus; this adjective is used most likely for emphasis or immanent realization.

Vs. 4: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne.

The number seven represents completion much as the number twelve later in Revelation (cf. 21.14); the original biblical basis of this number rests on the seven days of creation. Since John is addressing seven *churches* (ekkllesia), each one may intimate the creative power of God’s *Spirit*, that is, as if this Ruach were “moving over

the face of the waters" [Gen 1.2] or the face of the new creation by means of the churches. In the verse at hand, it is not so much John speaking to these seven churches as the apokalupsis which "God gave him" [vs. 1].

The apostle wishes *grace* (charis) and *peace* (eirene) to these seven churches. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" [Jn 14.27], that is, not coming from himself but from God (the Father; Christ is mentioned in next vs.) who here is identified with the three features of time, present, past and future. "This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" [Acts 1.11]. Closely associated with God are the seven *spirits* (pneuma) as in Is 11.2: "The *spirit* (ruach) of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." Such spirits are equivalent to the seven churches in Asia. In the verse at hand, note their position, "before his throne," enopion. "As I looked, *thrones* were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat" [Dan 7.9].

Vs. 5: and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

In vs. 4 the implied God the Father is, was and is to come; to him was attributed charis and eirene which in vs. 5 are extended to Jesus Christ. The other three titles John gives him are:

- 1) "faithful *witness*" (martus; cf. related words in vs. 2).
- 2) *first-born* or prototokos as in Rom 8.29: "in order that he might be the *first-born* among many brethren." Also: "I will make him the *first-born*, the highest of the kings of the earth" [Ps 89.27]. In the verse at hand, prototokos is with respect to the dead.
- 3) *ruler* or archon with regard to earthly kings thereby signifying dominion over the temporal sphere. "While he was thus speaking, behold, a *ruler* came in and knelt before him" [Mt 9.18].

The second sentence continues through the next verse where Christ is attributed glory and dominion. It has presents two of three actions which Christ effected:

- 1) "*loves us*:" the verb agapao is used; note the present tense signifying continued agape.
- 2) "*has freed us*:" luo in the sense of loosening *sins* (hamartia); action has already taken place and most likely is associated with Christ's crucifixion by the use of *blood*, aimā. The loosening action of luo and blood intimate mutability or adaptability of divine action.

Vs. 6: and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The third action effected by Jesus Christ which contains two elements:

- 1) *kingdom* or basileia which may be associated with divine rule: "Repent, for the *kingdom* of heaven is at hand" [Mt 3.2].
- 2) *priests* or hierēus (singular): "and you shall be to me a kingdom of *priests* and a holy nation" [Ex 19.6]. Also cf. Rev 5.10. In the verse at hand, note the dative case: "to God" and "to his Father;" here the divinity and Father are separate yet the function of an hierēus is related to both.

The verse concludes with a doxology, again using the dative case ("to him"): *glory* or doxa (connotes the divine kavod of Old Testament revelation) and *dominion* or kratos, the latter also meaning power or the effective use of kingly rule. "His *dominion* is from generation to generation" [Dan 4.3]. Note the familiar *forever and ever* (eis tous aionos, literally, "into eternities"). *Amen* represents acknowledgment by the congregation to what the priest or leader had just uttered.

Vs. 7: Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

This verse contains parts of Dan 7.13 and Zech 12.10 respectively: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with

the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him." "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a first-born."

The verse at hand has Christ coming (present tense) with *clouds* or *nephele* (singular), the inverse of his ascension into heaven: "This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" [Acts 1.11; also cited in vs. 4 above]. Compare this descent with that of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, Acts 2.

Note that with reference to Dn 7.13, the visions take place at night, a time when vision is difficult compounded by the addition of clouds. Situated in the context of Revelation, people will have the ability to see Christ ("Every eye will see him") despite this double obscurity. In addition, those who pierced Christ (cf. Zech 12.10) will behold him as in Jn 19.34, reference to his crucifixion. As a result, blood and water flow out. "There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood" [1 Jn 5.8]. In the larger context of Zech 12.10, God will pour out a spirit of *compassion* (*chen*) and *supplication* (*tachanun*); former implies favor and the latter a cry for mercy as in Ps 6.9: "The Lord has heard my *supplication*."

Despite the fact that those who pierced Christ are few, the earth's tribes "will mourn for him;" note future tense with regard to these witnesses as opposed to the present. Compare the wounds of death with those in Jn 20.27: "Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side." Vs. 7 concludes with a two-fold affirmation *nai* (*even* so) and *amen* indicating that the future coming of Christ is assured.

Vs. 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Here Jesus Christ speaks for the first time as Alpha and Omega as in Is 44.6: "I am the *first* (*ri'shon*) and I am the *last* (*'acharon*); besides me there is no god." Vs. 8 fleshes this out by use of three tenses, present, past and future; the present tense being "in between" Alpha and Omega, as it were, as well as seminally containing these two points. Christ speaks as *Logos* or *Word* and implies himself as being the alphabet in its fulness. Proper to Alpha and Omega as well as the three tenses of verbs is Christ as *Almighty* or *Pantokrator* as used in Rev 4.8, 11.17, 15.3, 16.7 & 17, 19.6 & 15, 21.22. The Old Testament precedent is shady first noted in Gen 17.1: "I am God *Almighty*; walk before me and be blameless" as spoken to Abraham.

Vs. 9: I, John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Here John's identification as *brother* (*adelphos*) with regard to his listeners comes after his lofty calling by an angel (cf. vs. 1). He enhances this identity by *sharing* (*sugkoinonos*; to have something in *common with*, *sug + koinonos*;"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to *share* the richness of the olive tree," Rom 11.17) the following:

-*tribulation* or *thlipsis*. "Then they will deliver you up to *tribulation* and put you to death" [Mt 24.9].
-*kingdom* or *basileia*. "Teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the *kingdom*" Mt 9.35].
-*patient endurance* or *hupomone*. "May you be strengthened...for all *endurance* and patience with joy" [Col 1.11]. This word literally means a "remaining behind" and can connote obstinacy.

John is on Patmos for two divine reasons: the "*word* (*logos*) of God and the "*testimony* (*marturia*) of Jesus." This island was a penal colony in Roman times and implies exile and imprisonment. The preposition *dia* (*on account of*) is used which also means "through," "by means of which." "For this is the *testimony* of God that he has borne witness to his Son" [1 Jn 5.9].

Vs. 10: I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

Two uses of the preposition en (*in*): “*in* the Spirit” and “*on* the Lord’s day.”

Egenomen or *I was*: In vs. 9 the same verb was used with regard to being on Patmos, a physical location; in the verse at hand, this verb is used with regard to being in the *Spirit* or Pneuma, a being-in an immaterial location as it were.

Lord’s day or en te kuriake hemera. The adjective kuriakos is derived from the noun Kurios, *Lord* and refers to Sunday. “When you meet together, it is not the *Lord’s* supper that you eat” [1 Cor 11.20].

Note the position of a voice *behind* (opiso) John. “Then the Spirit lifted me up and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place, I heard *behind* me the sound of a great earthquake” [Ezk 3.12]. Also, “Behold, there he stands *behind* our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice” [Sg 2.9]. Such behind-ness intimates divine transcendence.

The preposition opiso is used in conjunction with a “*loud* voice” where the adjective megas primarily means *great* as in size or dimension. Such a voice is compared to a *trumpet* or salpigx which here connotes the immediate presence of the Last Day. Salpigx may be related to the Hebrew sophar as used with regard to Mt. Sinai: “And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder” [Ex 19.19].

Vs. 11: saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

The *saying* (legouses) agrees with salpigx of vs. 10, as though it were animate. Keeping in mind that the trumpet is behind John, this saying is directed through him, as it were, and then further towards his action of writing. Thus in sum:

(trumpet) *saying*→John→*write*→*send* (to seven churches)

The final command to *send* (pempo) is akin to Christ’s sending of the Apostles though a different verb is used in the latter, usually associated with the impartation of a commission: “As the Father has *sent* (apostello) me, even so I *send* you” [Jn 20.21].

The preposition eis or *into* suggests a putting-fully into the book at hand; biblos is indefinite. While the contents of this book has a direct relationship to the “seven churches,” the image here has John making an exact copy of his vision in this biblos; it is as though there were no temporal gap between the seeing of its contents and its sending without passing through the intermediary of his memory.

Compare “seven” with its use in vs. 4; churches and spirits. In the verse at hand sending has the preposition eis with regard to the seven churches; it may correspond with the putting-fully *into* the book where its contents are equivalent with that of the seven churches.

Vs. 12: Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.

Epistrepho: *to turn* (around) in the sense of looking back in order to *see* (blepo) as used in vs. 11. “You were straying like sheep but have now *returned* to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” [1 Pt 2.25]. Contrast the use of epistrepho in the verse at hand with Moses who was prohibited to see God’s face but only his back: “and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen” [Ex 33.23].

A *voice* (phone) is invisible yet here is visible (blepo) and may be traced to the trumpet.

Epistrepho is used a second time with respect to “seven golden *lampstands*,” this word being reminiscent of the menorah of Ex 25.31: “And you shall make a lampstand of Ex 25.31 designated for use in the tent (and later

temple): “And you shall make a *lampstand* of pure gold.” A Hebrew word for *pure gold* is paz as in Sg 5.11: “His head is the *finest gold*.” Paz is to be distinguished from regular gold in that it solid.

Vs. 13: And in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast.

En meso for *in the midst* in the sense of being at the center of these seven lampstands. Compare Ezk 1.4: “and *in the midst* (tawek) of the fire as it were gleaming bronze.”

The *son of man* (huios anthropou) is a title Jesus used of himself most likely in conjunction with Dan 7.13: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a *son of man*.” Also note that God called the prophet Ezekiel by this title as in Ezk 2.1.

The son of man has two items of clothing:

1) *long robe* or poderes, literally, “reaching to the foot.” For this term used in the LXX, cf. Ezk 9.3: “and with them (men ready to slaughter the guilty) was a man *clothed* in linen, with a writing case at his side.” The Hebrew is bad (singular) which more specifically means *thread* as pertaining to linen garments as worn by the priests: “And you shall make for them *linen* breeches to cover their naked flesh” [Ex 28.42]. Compare poderes/bad with the *long robe with sleeves* or ketoneth pasym. The first word is a kind of tunic or inner garment used by both men and women; the second word (pas, singular) literally means *extremity* in that it reached to the hands and feet. For an parallel word, Cf. 1 Sam 2.19: “And his (Samuel) mother used to make for him a little *robe* and take it to him each year.” Here the term mehyl properly means an upper or exterior garment; it was special to the high priest (cf. Ex 28.31).

2) *golden girdle* or zone chruse. Contrast the other, humbler use of zone as used by John the Baptist: “Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather *girdle* around his waste” [Mt 3.4]. Such a zone was around the son of man’s *breast* (mastos). Note the same John having this vision as in Jn 13.23: “One of his disciples who Jesus loved was lying close to the *breast* of Jesus.” Here the word is kolpos, better, the (hollow) space between two breasts. In the verse at hand, the son of man is *girded* (perizzonnumi) with the zone, a verb used with respect to virtue: “Stand therefore, having *girded* your loins with truth” [Eph 6.14].

Vs. 14: His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire.

Regarding head and hair: another reference from the Book of Daniel, notably 7.9: “his raiment was white as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool.” For precedents signifying the wisdom of old age: “You shall rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God” [Lev 19.32]. Also, “A hoary head is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life” [Prov 16.31].

Parallel to this implied honor due to the son of man are his eyes: “*flame of fire*” (phlox) as in Lk 16.24: “Father Abraham...send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this *flame*.” The threatening nature of phlox thus intimates the future judgement to be described in Revelation; it is one effected primarily by vision (eyes).

Vs. 15: his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters.

Attention now shifts from the son of man’s head to his feet: *burnished bronze* (chalkolibanos) as found in Dan 10.6: “His arms and legs like the gleam of *burnished bronze* (nechosheth).” This term is also noted in 2.18 with respect to the church in Thyatira. Compare the gleam of this metal with that of the bronze altar of 1 Kg 8.64: “The *bronze* altar was too small to receive the burnt offering and the cereal offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings.” Another related word pertains to the throne in Ezk 1.4: “and in the midst of the fire as it were *gleaming bronze* (chashmal).” Such bronze is *refined* (puroo), that is, by fire in a *furnace* (kaminos) which is used to smelter metals or baking bread. “And the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a *kiln* (kivshan; also used for smelting), and the whole mountain (Sinai) quaked greatly” [Ex 19.18].

The son of man's *voice* (phone, cf. vs. 12 as well as 14.2 & 19.6) continues the theme of Mt. Sinai as just noted and finds echo in Ezk 1.24: "I heard the *sound* of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of a host." Also, cf. Ps 104.7: "At the *sound* of your thunder they took to flight." Both the Ezekiel and Psalm references have *qol* for sound, better, *voice*.

Vs. 16: in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Another reference with the number seven; for a precedent, cf. chapter six of Joshua where Israel marches around Jericho seven times as well as many other citations concerning this number. Keep in mind that the son of man is holding seven stars (i.e., possessing them) while standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands (vs. 12); perhaps the stars can represent a natural manifestation of these stands located in the temple. Cf. vs. 20 which explains their meaning.

Two-edged *sword* or romphaia, a large broad weapon as noted in Lk 2.35 with regard to the Virgin Mary: "And a *sword* will pierce through your own soul also that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." In addition to the romphaia being large and unwieldily, it is *two-edged* or distomos, i.e., sharp on both sides to cut this way and that. The two-edged nature of this sword as found in Heb 4.12: "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged *sword* (machaira)." This type of sword is a small type in comparison with the romphaia.

Son of man's *face* (opsis: "Do not judge by *appearances*," Jn 7.24): resembled "full strength" of the sun or literally, "in its *strength* (dunamis)."

Vs. 17: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last."

This verse continues into the next one. A natural response (nekros, *dead*) to divine manifestation; cf. Ex 3.6: "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." In the verse at hand, note the importance of touch (tithemi, *lay*) which is followed by speaking. The words "*fear not*" (phobeomai) bring John back to life, as it were. "Take heart, it is I; have no *fear*" [Mk 6.50].

Such confidence is based upon the son of man claiming to be "*first and last*" or protos and eschatos. Here the precise nature of this beginning and end is not specified and is also mentioned in 2.8 and 22.13 where they are akin to Christ being the Alpha and Omega. Thus Christ is the first and last letter (implied are the letters in between) of the Greek alphabet, that is, Christ as Logos or *Word* of God. Cf. Is 44.6: "I am the *first* and I am the *last*; besides me there is no god." The Hebrew words are rishon and 'acharon. With this in mind, before John beheld this vision it may be said that he had reason to fear because his focus of attention was external to the "alphabet" of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 18: and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

A continuation from vs. 17; by claiming to be the *living one* (zon) Christ is a "living alphabet." Note use of present participle as opposed to the past and future tenses. The son of man spells out this zon by saying that he has died (clearly the past tense). His death sets the stage, as it were, for being *alive* (zon used again). The present participle implies continuation into the unending nature of "Christ-as-alphabet." *Forevermore*: eis tous aionas ton aionon. The preposition eis (*into*) suggests continuous movement into the future. "To the only wise God be glory *forevermore* through Jesus Christ! Amen" [Rom 16.27].

Possession of a *key* (kleis) signifies that Christ can let a person in or out from two places: death and Hades, the former being the act of dying (i.e., getting to Hades) and latter being the abode of those who have died (i.e., those who have arrived there). Compare with Mt 16.19: "I will give you (Peter) the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven." In a sense, Peter's possession of such keys is more important because the kingdom of heaven transcends death and Hades. The keys of vs. 18 and Peter may be seen in context of Chapter One or the seven

churches, an extension of heaven's kingdom.

Vs. 19: Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.

Note the command to *write* (grapho) what John sees, namely, his act of inscribing follows closely Christ-as-alphabet (i.e., as Logos). John does not write what he hears nor anything coming from the other senses. "And we are *writing* this that our joy may be complete" [1 Jn 1.4]. In vs. 1 of the same letter John includes the sense of *touch* (pselaphao), a verb implying groping or feeling as one would do to test the quality of a piece of fruit.

Seeing in vs. 19 contains two "*is-es:*" ha eisin (can apply to Christ as first and last, vs. 17) and that which will happen later; mellei or *about to* which signifies action soon to be effected. The *hereafter* (meta tauta) or those events in chapters 4-22.

Vs. 20: As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

A recapitulation of what John had seen; again note stress throughout Chapter One on the faculty of sight. Seven stars, golden lampstands and churches are perceived as one entity, as different expressions of the same *mystery* or musterion. This word is akin the apokalupsis or "*revelation* of Jesus Christ," words which begin this Book. Musterion suggests invisibility and the need to be initiated in order to perceive its contents. For a passage using both terms: "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the *revelation* of the *mystery* which was kept secret for long ages" [Rom 16.25]. Here the latter is in conjunction with *disclosure* (phanerothentos, vs. 26).

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Chapter Two

Vs. 1: "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

From here through 3.22 are the letters to the seven churches beginning with Ephesus. Note that John does not write directly to each church, rather, to its *angel* (aggelos). This angel in turn may be said to communicate the content of the letter to the particular church. Both John and each of the seven angels have a parallel role: the former makes know the apokalupsis as a whole whereas the latter do it in particular matters.

The first verse centers attention upon the implied son of man or Jesus Christ who has two characteristics (note the other characteristics with regard to the six other angels):

1) seven stars which he holds as in 1.16. Former has the verb krateo which connotes having power and the latter has the verb echo, simply *to have*. In the verse at hand, krateo suggests that the stars point to Christ's lordship and that they are intended for something later on.

2) en meso or *among* as in 1.13, signifying in the midst of something. Here the seven golden lampstands demarcate, as it were, the space in which the son of man is *walking*; peripateo is the verb, present tense or continued walking more in the sense of walking *about* (peri). Note the identity between the lampstands, churches and Jesus Christ which are presented as one reality.

Vs. 2: "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false.

Now the son of man speaks as having *knowledge* (oida, verb) which emanates from the above mentioned peripateo or *walking about*. Contrast his peripateo with Satan's: "The Lord said to Satan, 'Whence have you come?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From *going to and fro* on the earth and from *walking up and down* on it" [Job 1.7]. The first verb is shut and second is halak; former implies a quick running up and down as well,

rowing as well as lashing. It is as though Satan were on a boat wildly beating the sea with the flat part of an oar. The latter verb simply means to go.

Christ's knowledge consists of five elements which may be outlined as follows:

-ergon can apply to any endeavor. "His servants in charge, each with his *work*" [Mk 13.34].

-kopos with regard to that which is specifically wearisome. "I am talking like a madman—with far greater *labors*" [2 Cor 11.23].

-hupomone with regard to steadfastness in suffering. "May you be strengthened...for all *endurance* and patience with joy" [Col 1.11].

-bastazo (*to bear*) as a load or burden, here with respect to evil men. "Whoever does not *bear* his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" [Lk 14.27].

-peirazo (*to test*) persons claiming to be apostles. "This he said to test him" [Jn 6.6]. In the verse at hand, peirazo results in finding such persons to be false but the actual means of achieving this result is unspecified. Note that such men "are not," that is, in the Hebrew sense of not having being which was present among them all along. Such not-ness comes to light by a process of finding them to be *false* or pseudos which implies lying.

Vs. 3: I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

The son of man's *knowing* (oida) extends from the last verse into this one which lacks the words "I know" in the Greek text. Note another mention of hupomene and bastazo, the latter with respect to Christ's *name* (onoma) which has its roots in the Hebrew shem or divine manifestation. "This is my *name* (i.e., YHWH) forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations" [Ex 3.15].

Kopiaio for *to grow weary*; verbal root for the noun kopos in vs. 3 (*toil*).

Vs. 4: But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Kata sou for *against you* in the sense of being at odds with the church of Ephesus. "Was it not the Lord *against* whom we have sinned" [Is 42.24]? The reason Christ taking this stance: that this particular church has *abandoned* (aphiemi: "That the husband should not *divorce* his wife," 1 Cor 7.11) its *love* or agape. This term is well known in the New Testament. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you *have love* for one another" [Jn 13.35]. In the verse under discussion, the noun agape was once present but is now no longer. The adjective protos is used (*at first*); it better translates as "*first agape*."

Vs. 5: Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

A close connection between *remembering* (mnemoneuo) and *repentance* (metanoeo, verb). The faculty of memory played a crucial role among ancient cultures, and here it perhaps is colored by the Platonic concept of recalling one's original nature which had *fallen* (pipto). Pothen (*from what, where*) designates a specific place from which one has departed. The verb mnemoneuo should be taken in conjunction with agape of the previous verse which connotes a specifically Christian "departure" as opposed to a Platonic one. Although pipto clearly refers to a descent and can be associated with the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden, Gen 3.24 has a "horizontal" form of banishment: "Therefore the Lord God *sent him forth* from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken."

The verse at hand states that once the church of Ephesus remembers its pothen...specific place...it naturally leads to metanoia, a theme associated with John the Baptist. "Bear fruits that befit *repentance*" [Lk 3.8]. Metanoia thus is an actualisation of memory. Intimately connected with metanoia is the accomplishment of deeds done at first or in Greek "*first* (protos) deeds." Here doing is third in line after remembering, that is, preceded by metanoia.

The second sentence of vs. 5 contains a threat that the son of man *will come* (erchomai) to the church of

Ephesus. A parallel may be drawn between such coming which connotes a pothen or place-from-which as in the first sentence. It has as a destination the *removal* of Ephesus' lampstand (kineo), a verb which fundamentally means *to shake*, that is, as if to shake the lampstand away from the church. More specifically, we have the shaking of the lampstand from its *place* (topos) which is the mirror image of one of those golden lampstands in vs. 1. Stability (i.e., lack of movement) of this lampstand depends upon metanoia, an act of movement.

Vs. 6: Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans which I also hate.

Nicolaitans: a sect that taught that Christians could eat food offered to idols and to practice immorality (cf. vs. 14). The son of man has a positive statement regarding the church at Ephesus, namely, that it *hates* (miseo) idolatry connected with immoral behavior. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will *hate* the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" [Mt 6.24]. Note the mirror image of hatred vis-a-vis the son of man and church of Ephesus which counters the lampstand image mentioned in vs. 5.

Vs. 7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

The concluding verse with regard to the church of Ephesus, reminiscent of the prophets and of Prov 1.8: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction." Here is a connection between listening and the *Spirit's* (Pneuma) speaking to the churches, that is, not just that of Ephesus but the six other implied churches. Common to all seven is eating of the tree of life, the opposite of idol worship proper to the just mentioned Nicolaitans. Be aware of the clear reference to Gen 2.9: "The *tree of life* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Also cf. Rev 22.2, "on either side of the river, the *tree of life*." Note this tree's location, betok, *in the midst* or the garden's center. Compare this betok with en meso of 1.13: "in the *midst* of the lampstands one like a son of man."

To eat of the tree of life means that one is present at the garden's center which in vs. 7 is the "*paradise* of God," paradeisos, again suggesting Gen 2.9. "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" [Lk 23.43], a statement by Christ *on* the tree of life.

Vs. 8: "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: "The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

Attention now moves from the church of Ephesus to that in Smyrna with the same opening phrase, "to the angel" (as opposed to Smyrna directly). Here we also have *words* or in Greek, "*these* (tade, also as in 2.1) says." The son of man's identity shifts from his holding seven stars and walking among seven golden lampstands to him as protos and eschatos (cf. 1.17). This beginning and end has its complement in death and life; note that the adjective nekros (*dead*) is used. Also contained here is a temporal protos and eschatos as well as its inverse, dead and then coming to life. Implied is Christ's temporal life span and his intemporal life span stretching from death to (eternal) life.

Vs. 9: "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Another use of the verb oida (*I know*) as used with the church of Ephesus above which here refers to three difficulties: *tribulation* (thlipsis), *poverty* (ptocheia) and *slander* (blasphemia; note *blasphemy*, usually used in reference to God). All result from the "synagogue of Satan" (cf. 3.9). Note the identity of Satan and synagogue which implies that this Jewish place of worship is in Satan's hands. Also contrast synagogue with *church* (ekklesia) or the seven Christian assemblies.

Despite this, the son of man says that the church of Smyrna is *rich* (plousios), a term referring to either material or spiritual wealth. "But God who is *rich* in mercy" [Eph 2.4]. The verse at hand does not specify which type of richness Smyrna possesses, most likely the immaterial kind.

Vs. 10: Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

A warning about immanent persecution, *pascho* (the verb *to suffer* is used here). “So Jesus also *suffered* outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” [Heb 13.12]. The son of man associates *pascho* with imprisonment of a few church members by the *devil* (*diabolos*) or the just mentioned Satan; implication is that such affliction will come from the Jews (cf. synagogue of vs. 9). Here *pascho* takes on the more specific form of *tribulation* or *thlipsis*, cf. vs. 9. The period of ten days may not refer to a definite period of time but a lengthy period. “Test your servants for ten days” [Dan 1.12]. Such tribulation occurs in *prison* or *phulake*: “the mystery of Christ, on account of which I (Paul) am in *prison*” [Col 4.2]. Here the verb *deo* is used. *Phulake* also means a *watch*, especially during the night: “He would have *watched* and would not have let his house be broken into” [Mt 24.43].

Being *faithful* (i.e., to be *pistos*) during imprisonment—following the example of Daniel just mentioned—results in a “*crown of life*” (*stephanos*), this term usually signifying kingship; it can also negatively allude to pride (cf. Is 28.1). For a positive sense: “Henceforth there is laid up for me the *crown of righteousness*” [2 Tm 4.8]. Another reference to *stephanos-as-life*: “Blessed is the man who endure trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the *crown of life*” [Jms 1.12]. In this case the person who receives the crown of life is *blessed* (*makarios*), a term used in conjunction with the beatitudes. Note the Hebrew for this adjective, ‘ashry; it connotes an active moving or striving-forward, more dynamic than the static Greek term. For reference, see 1.3.

Vs. 11: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.”

Words similar to 2.7 where mention was made of the “tree of life;” note the singular “ear” and plural “churches.” In the verse at hand, hearing is related to the “*second death*” (*deuteros*) or final condemnation of sinners. “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the *second death*, the lake of fire” [20.14]. Perhaps those who have an ear and listen may be thrown into this burning lake along with everyone else but will not suffer. “And they walked about in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord” [Song of the Three Young Men, Apocrypha, 1.1, inserted between Dan 3.23 & 3.24]. Such is one meaning of *to conquer* (*nikao*) as in 2.7. *Nikao* is used often in Revelation and is integral to an understanding of this book: 2.17, 26, 3.5, 12, 21, 5.5, 6.2, 12.11, 15.2, 17.14, 21.7. *To be hurt* or *adikeo* can also mean acting as a criminal: “If then I *am a wrongdoer*” [Acts 25.11, verb used].

Vs. 12: “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: “The words of him who has the sharp two-edge sword.

Another mention of *romphaia* (cf 1.16), a large type of weapon. *Distomos* is the adjective used to describe this sword, i.e., *two-edged*, again as in 1.16.

Vs. 13: “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you where Satan dwells.

Keep in mind that as with the other churches already mentioned these words are addressed to the angel of this particular congregation. Not only is the church of Pergamum identified with Satan but more specifically, the place of his rule signified by *throne* or *thronos*, a term which signifies judgment as well as political dominion. On the other hand, Pergamum (a noted center for idolatrous worship) has some faithful followers of Christ who are included in these words. *To hold fast* or *krateo* here implies possessiveness, another example being Heb 4.14: “Let us *hold fast* our confession.” In the verse at hand, *krateo* pertains to the divine name, more specifically *Christos* or anointed one as confessed by Peter: “You are the *Christ*, the Son of the living God” [Mt 16.16].

Vs. 13 situates this krato in a specific time, “days of Antipas,” who is equated with being God’s martus (cf. marturia) and pistos; note personal pronoun “my” which indicates a special relationship in the context of this verse which mentions the name of Satan.

Antipas was killed “*among* (para) you,” a preposition signifying here the presence of some members of the Pergamum community. Parallel this among-ness with regard to the accusers of Stephen: “And they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council” [Acts 6.12]. The Greek preposition is eis, *into*, in the sense of being fully within. Perhaps John had in mind this council “where Satan *dwells*,” the verb katoikeo signifying permanent residence. “Then he (unclean spirit) goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and *dwell* there” [Mt 12.45].

Vs. 14: But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality.

Few things: oligo, which connotes smallness in size. Here it refers to Balaam’s teaching which swayed Israel to abandon YHWH in favor of idolatry. “Behold, these caused the people of Israel, by the counsel of *Balaam*, to act treacherously against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord” [Num 31.16]. Such idolatry is viewed as a *stumbling block* (skandalon, occasion for sin): “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men *stumble*, a rock that will make them fall” [Rom 9.33, quoting Is 28.16 & 8.14-15]. It assumes a two-fold guise: 1) eating food sacrificed to *idols* (eidolothuton) and 2) *immorality* (porneuo, more specifically, to act like a prostitute).

The verse at hand situates this oligo within the larger context of “sons of Israel” or the qahal, the nation as a whole. This is brought out by the Num 31.16 verse which deals with Israel’s corporate nature. The complaint mentioned in this letter to the church (the New Testament qahal or ekklesia) is not pervasive but enough to threaten that church’s existence. Note use of ekei or *there*, a more specific localization of idolatry in the church of Pergamum.

Vs. 16: Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Vs. 15 mentioned the Nicolaitans (cf. 2.6), almost in the same breath as idolatry in the preceding verse and as if to equate this faction with it. The verse at hand presents another exhortation to *repent* as noted in 2.5, the verb being metanoeo; here it is associated with the adverb *then*, oun. Implied is that certain persons among the church of Pergamum are guilty of idolatry and are thus addressed.

A two-fold threat awaits for failing to engage in metanoia: 1) the son of man’s coming *soon* (tachy) in the sense of doing it quickly and without hesitation. 2) Making *war* (polemeo), more specifically, with the “*sword* of my mouth,” romphaia being the word, that large two-edged weapon as in vs. 12. Here romphaia is equated with a tongue, that is, the Logos speaking *words* (logoi) instead of wielding this sword as a conventional weapon.

Vs. 17: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.”

The concluding words addressed to the angel of the church of Pergamum begun in 2.12. The first sentence contains the same exhortation to listen used with the earlier churches, namely, to hear the Spirit speaking not so much to the congregation of Pergamum but to the churches as a whole. Furthermore, this hearing depends upon a “having,” that is, a having of ears in the sense of possessing them. Implied is that there are people in the churches who do not “have” ears and are therefore deaf. “But they refused to hearken and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear” [Zech 7.11]. Note that such speaking in vs. 17 comes right after vs. 16’s “romphaia-as-logos of my mouth.”

Also implied in this hearing by certain members of the church is *conquering* or nikao. The object of such

triumph is not especially clear; it is in the present tense—that is, occurring in the here and now—suggesting that nikao is concomitant with having (an ear) and hearing.

Two consequences of nikao:

1) Possession (verb is in the future tense) of “hidden manna,” better, *some* (tou) of it. The passive participle of *krupto* is used here. Reference may be to heavenly food in contrast to the unclean food associated with Balaam (cf. 2.14). “He rained down upon them *manna* to eat and gave them the grain of heaven” [Ps 78.24]. Note that this verse is quoted in Jn 6.31: “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus continues this by identifying himself as this bread, vs. 33. Here emphasis is upon the downward motion of Christ from heaven to earth.

2) The other consequence of nikao: “white *stone*” (*psephos*), white being symbolic of joy and victory. Note its connection with the *hidden* manna, i.e., that which is not yet revealed. *Psephos* often refers to a means of tabulating a vote, of counting. “But when they were put to death I cast my *vote* against them” [Acts 26.10]. Not only is this stone white but has a “new *name*” (*onoma*) as paralleled by Is 65.15: “But his servants he will call by a different *name*.” In the verse at hand there is a close identity between this white stone, the new name and the person who receives it. Contrast this with the mark of the beast which enabled people to purchase goods: “No one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name” [Rev 13.17].

Vs. 18: “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.’

The fourth letter; note the connection between all seven letters by the conjunction *kai* (*and*) which begins the sentence and signifies the close relationship between all seven churches. Here we have for the first time the proper title “the Son of God” (*ho huios tou theou*) as pertaining to Jesus Christ. Thyatira was a well known commercial center renowned for its idolatrous feasts.

Vs. 18 is similar to Dan 10.6: “His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of a multitude.”

Two features of the Son of God: 1) eyes as “*flame of fire*” (*phlox*). “Send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this *flame*” [Lk 16.24]. 2) feet resemble *burnished bronze* (*chalkolibanos*), that is, where the Song of God walks; cf. 1.15. Thus there is a parallel between what he sees (as flame) and where he treads (as burnished bronze).

Vs. 19: “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

A positive statement before offering a criticism. Here is a close identity between five qualities, all which are the object of divine *knowing* (*eido*): *works* (*ergon*), *love* (*agape*), *faith* (*pistis*), *service* (*diakonia*), *patient endurance* (*hupomone*) and *latter works* (*ta erga eschata*). Note the difference between *ergon* and *diakonia*: the former is more generic (“But he who does what is true comes to the light that it may be clearly seen that his *deeds* have been wrought in God,” Jn 3.21), whereas the latter is more specific in the sense of ministry (“Will not the *dispensation* of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor?,” 2 Cor 3.7).

In light of the distinction between *ergon* and *diakonia*, vs. 19 has the former term which is distinguished according to a temporal order, *latter* (*ta eschata*) and *first* (*ton proton*).

Vs. 20: But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Here begins the complaint against the church of Thyatira which continues through vs. 24. Jezebel is a

symbolic name perhaps referring to the Nicolaitians. “What peace can there be, so long as the harlotries and the sorceries of your mother *Jezebel* are so many” [2 Kg 9.22]?

Similar to the historical Jezebel, the one identified with the church of Thyatira is engaged in four harmful actions against the other church members: 1) *teaching* (didasko; opposite to the New Testament function of this word which is equivalent to a rabbi), 2) *beguiling* (planao: “Beware lest you *be carried away* with the error of lawless men,” 2 Pt 3.17), 3) “practice *immorality*” (porneuo, as in 2.14), and 4) eat food sacrificed to *idols* (eidolothuton, again as in 2.14). This activity is directed against the Son of God’s *servants* (doulos, singular). The fate of such a Jezebel is as follows: “In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field” [2 Kg 9.36-7]. Compare with the great harlot of Rev 17.1-6.

Vs. 21: I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality.

I.e., the Son of God gave Jezebel chronos for metanoia (verb used here, metaneo). Such chronos is temporal duration as distinguished from kairos, a divine event transcending space and time. Here metaneo is more poignant due to Jezebel’s *refusal* or failure not to *wish* (thelo) it. Note the further use of porneia, the verb being used in vs. 20; the preposition ek (*from*) heightens this refusal.

Vs. 22: Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation unless they repent of her doings.

More words spoken against Jezebel; the term kline for *sickbed* can refer to an ordinary bed or a couch on which to recline for meals. “I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one *bed*; one will be taken and the other left” [Lk 17.34]. In the verse at hand, Jezebel is *thrown* on this sickbed (ballo), not placed or asked to go upon it.

Note that ballo in the Greek is implied with those persons who *commit adultery* with her (moicheuo). “...everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already *committed adultery* with her in his heart” [Mt 5.28]. The second object of ballo in vs. 22 can mean that adultery was practiced with Jezebel on the sickbed which is equivalent to “great *tribulation*,” thlipsis. Compare this phrase with the same one in 7.14: “These are they who have come out of the great *tribulation*.”

Metaneo (*repent*) is the option available to escape being *thrown*, ballo. Observe the use of ek (*from*), connoting almost a physical withdrawal of Jezebel’s *doings* (ergos, singular).

Vs. 23: And I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

Reference to the followers of Jezebel; the Greek puts it in a forceful way: “I will kill *in death* (en thanato). This is not done for the mere sake of expelling trouble makers from the church of Thyatira but for teaching the other churches about the Son of God, more specifically, that he *searches* (ereunao) *mind* (nephros) and *heart* (kardia), both terms being singular. Such searching is the object of churches’ knowing (future tense). A verse reminiscent of Ps 139.1: “O Lord, you have *searched* me and known me!” The Hebrew verb is chaqar which implies a sense of exploring something new and unfamiliar. Nephros literally means kidney, the inmost thoughts and purposes of the soul; kardia is both the physical heart as well as center of spiritual life. Cf. Jer 17.10 for a use of both terms: “I the Lord search the *mind* and try the *heart*.” The same verb chaqar is used here; the Hebrew terms respectively are lev and kelayoth.

As a result of divine chaqar in vs. 23, the Son of God will reward each person according to his or her *works* (ergos, singular). Note the preposition kata (*according*), signifying direct proportion between ergos and the act of giving.

Vs. 24: But to the rest of you in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching, who have learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden.

The *rest* (loipos, singular) are distinguished from the churches in vs. 23; the *teaching* or didache implies the divine chaqar or *searching* or being the object of discovery by God. Such persons are familiar (ginosko, verb) with the bathus of Satan, referring to the Nicolaitans, a play on 1 Cor 2.10: "For the Spirit searches everything, even the *depths* of God." Here is another use of ereunao; the persons in mind (vs. 24) apply this searching or discovery to Satan. Since Satan traditionally lived under the earth, perhaps use of bathus in the literal sense of something very deep is suggested. For a parallel verse, cf. Ezk 6.13: "under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols," that is, these hidden places are a type of "deep things."

Vs. 24 concludes with a positive note, that is, those who have learned the deep things of Satan are not condemned outrightly but bidden not to inflict persons with "other *burdens*" (baros). Implied is that they already have the baros of putting up with church members involved with the Nicolaitans; this term compares with bathos. Compare with Acts 15.28: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater *burden* than these necessary things."

Vs. 25: only hold fast what you have until I come.

A short sentence concluding the larger one begun in the previous verse. That which the "rest" in Thyatira have is not explicit, most likely correct, orthodox teaching about Jesus Christ in contrast to the Nicolaitans. Such persons already *have* it (echo). There is a direct correspondence here between *holding fast* (krateo), having and the future coming of the Son of Man (cf. Rev 3.11 for a similar verse). Thus krateo equals realization of Christ's presence whether it be in the future or the present.

Vs. 26: He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations.

Reference is to the person (singular) who has not followed Jezebel and therefore the Nicolaitans. Such a one both *conquers* (nikao) and *keeps* (tereo); the former spills over to the second, that is, keeping with regard to the Son of God's *works* (ergos, singular). Both verbs are present participles indicating continuous duration or continuous conquering and keeping. Tereo in the Hebrew is equivalent to observing the divine Torah; for example, several words of keeping are found in Ps 119 which celebrates the Torah. "You have commanded your precepts to be *kept* diligently" [vs. 4]; the common verb is shamar in the sense of protecting a treasure from plunder. An amplified version of tereo is suntereo: "But Mary *kept* all these things, pondering them in her heart" [Lk 2.19]. This temporal extension continues "until the *end*" (telos), a term which can refer to the Son of Man being Omega or the last letter in the Greek alphabet as in Rev 1.8.

A recompense for nikao and tereo: temporal *dominion* (exousia), a term which connotes physical and mental power as well as the liberty of doing as one pleases; the latter definition is as follows: "Nevertheless, we have not made use of this *right*, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" [1Cor 9.12]. For the sense connoted in the verse at hand: "But that you may know that the Song of man has *authority* on earth to forgive sins" [Mt 9.6]. *Nation* or ethnos (singular) can apply to the Hebrew goym, those peoples not belonging to the divine heritage of Israel.

Vs. 27: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father.

A verse reminiscent of Ps 2.8-9: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." In the verse at hand, "them" refers to the enthoi of vs. 26 over which the Son of God will *rule* or poimaino; this term refers more to nourishing, of finding pasture: "*Tend* my sheep" [Jn 21.17]. Vs. 27 contrasts this gentle exercise of authority with a "*rod of iron*" (rabdos) which corresponds directly with the Hebrew shevet of Ps 2.9 as well as Ps 23.4: "Your *rod* and your staff, they comfort me."

This rabdos can be used for shattering earthen *pots* (keramikos, singular); the image is of someone walking

along and smashing them (for example, the nations) at will or at random.

The final words refer to Christ's power from his Father; the English "power" is missing in the Greek text. The preposition *from* or *para* connotes the Father as source; it is used frequently in Jn 13-17 when Christ speaks of his relationship with the Father. Cf. references to *para* elsewhere on this Lectio Divina Home Page.

Vs. 28: and I will give him the morning star.

Proinos: one of two New Testament uses of this word whose meaning is unclear; both occur in Revelation, the second being 22.16: "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright *morning star*." This second reference occurs at the end of Revelation. Note that vs.28 has the Son of God giving (future tense) the person who holds out this proinos. That is to say, the proinos mentioned at Revelation's beginning achieves full radiance at its conclusion. Cf. the heavenly Jerusalem's brightness: "having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like as jasper, clear as crystal" [21.11].

Vs. 29 concludes with the same words regarding the necessity of hearing or listening to the Spirit as he speaks to the seven churches. Presumably these words do not apply to the person who has received the proinos.

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Chapter Three

Vs. 1: "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. 'I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.

The fifth letter to the church of Sardis; as is the case with all seven churches, these words are addressed to angel of this particular church. Sardis was known for its licentiousness. Here Christ (not mentioned specifically) has the "seven *spirits* of God" (pneuma, singular; cf. 1.4 & 16). In addition to these spirits he has "seven *stars*" as in 2.1 (astron, singular).

As with regard to other church, Christ *knows* (oida) the works of Sardis. Such knowledge is bound up with possession of seven spirits and seven stars, a heavenly type of knowledge as it pertains to human affairs. Sardis possesses a *name* (onoma, equivalent to the Hebrew shem), that is, as understood by people as *being alive*, zao. In light of divine oida, Sardis is *dead* (nekros); note the use of the adjective as opposed to the verbal form of zao, a fact which makes the contrast between these two states more striking. The adjective suggests something (death) which has already taken root.

Vs. 2: Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.

Note the connection between the nekros of vs. 1 and the divine command to *awake*, gregoreo. This verb is a key one in several parables of Jesus Christ with the specific meaning of watching (in the sense of staying awake from sleep), for example, Mt 24.43: "*Watch* therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." This command takes place towards the end of Jesus' preaching. The parable is followed by another (foolish and wise maidens): "*Watch* therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" [25.14]. In both instances gregoreo is yoked with a lack of knowledge regarding divine events.

In addition to the injunction to awake, vs. 2 adds another, *strengthen* (sterizo) which connotes the establishment of something. "When the days drew near for him to be received up, he *set* his face to go to Jerusalem" [Lk 9.51]. An Old Testament precedent: "I will *set* my face against that man...and cut him off from the midst of my people" [Ezk 14.8]. In the verse at hand, sterizo is in relation to "what *remains*" (loipos, singular), presumably, faith in God. The diminution of a previous condition has reached such a low point that it is nearly *dead* (apothanein); this death is immanent as indicated by mello, imperfect active indicative.

Through his divine scrutiny of the church of Sardis, Christ did not find this community's *works* (ergos, singular) *perfect* (pleroo). The verb plero signifies completion, of something which has been done thoroughly. "That you may stand mature and *fully assured* in the will of God" [Col 4.12]. Most likely the church of Sardis began auspiciously enough but did not see their intentions carried through.

Such pleroo is perceived "*in the sight of my God*" (enopion). "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses *face to face*, as a man speaks to his friend" [Ex 33.11]. Here the Septuagint uses enopion for the Hebrew panym 'el-panym. In the verse at hand, note the personal pronoun, "my God," which more intensely contrasts the misdeeds of Sardis with the divine presence.

Vs. 3: Remember then what you received and heard; keep that and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

Such *remembering* (mnemoneuo) is akin to the exhortation to be awake in the previous verse, as though sleeping were equivalent with a lack of memory. This verse is in relationship with what the church of Sardis has received and heard; note the order, first receiving and then hearing. Most likely reference is to the Gospel which was received in the person of early disciples whose teaching about Christ the church of Sardis then heard. Compare this sequence of receiving and hearing with 1 Jn 1.2: "The life was made manifest, and we saw it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father." Here the chain of words which delineate the essential Christian Gospel runs as follows: *manifest* (phaneroo), *saw* (horao), *testify* (martureo) and *proclaim* (apaggello).

Vs. 3 says with regard to the sequence of having received and heard that it must be *kept*, tereo; cf. 1.3 for a discussion of this word. Here tereo is bound up with *repentance* (metanoeo, verb); keep in mind that metanoeo has its roots in the exhortation to remember the sequence of receiving and hearing.

Another instance of gregoreo or *awake* as in the previous verse, only used as a threat which reveals the importance of being vigilant. Compare Christ as a *thief* (kleptes) as in Mt 24.42 which also contains the gregoreo: "But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the *thief* was coming, he would have *watched* and would not have let his house be broken into." The Book of Apocalypse is about the coming of Christ in glory, an event which will be evident to everyone. Here (vs. 3) as in the Gospel parable this coming is not fully realized but can be detected by vigilance. Thus the image of a watchman as herald is implied; his task is solitary and isolated but essential to the city's survival.

Note "*upon you*," epi being the preposition used, a kind of hint with respect to Christ's coming from above. It can be seen as a portent of the heavenly city's descent (cf. 21.2).

Vs. 4: Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Name (onoma, singular) is used instead of persons which signifies something greater than an individual. Contrast with 17.8: "and the dwellers on earth whose *names* have not been written in the book of life from foundation of the world." At the end of the previous section (vs. 3) was noted the preposition epi as signifying Christ's coming. Here dwellers are *on* (epi) the earth, that is, firmly rooted *upon* it and not inclined to receive the epi of Christ's coming.

The names in Sardis or those who have kept their *garments* (himation, singular) clean; the verb here is molunao: "and their conscience, being weak, is *defiled*" [1 Cor 8.7]. Molunao indicates a staining; contrast with the fundamental meaning of baptizo (*to baptize*) which is a thorough immersion and the fundamental rite of Christian initiation. This notion of baptizo is reenforced by the use of onoma, for at baptism a Christian receives his or her name.

Peripateo: *to walk*, better, to walk about in the sense of frequenting a place. For an opposite sense: "Many of his disciples drew back and no longer *went about* with him" [Jn 6.66]. Such walking is in *white* (leukos,

singular), that is, the color of their garments, a common symbol of purity heightened by the immorality prevalent in Sardis. Similarly, the adjective *worthy* (*axios*) may be said to have the color of white.

Vs. 5: He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

The garments mentioned in the previous verse are specified as a kind of reward or victory (*to conquer*, *nikao*); for the first mention of this word which is an important one in Revelation, cf. 2.7 where it is in conjunction with the “tree of life.” When Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, the location of this tree, God clothed them in “garments of skins” [Gen 3.21]. The “white garments” signify first abandonment of these other garments as well as restoration; better, transformation of Eden into the heavenly Jerusalem. In the verse at hand, the conquering person will be *clad*, *periballo*, that is, the white garments will be flung around him or her. This verb is in contrast with the Hebrew *lavash* of Genesis.

A parallel between the tree of life is intimated by mention of the “book of life;” the person being thus transformed will not have his onoma *blotted out*, *exaleipho*. “I, I am He who *blots out* your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” [Is 43.25]. As for the “book of life,” cf. Ex 24.7: “Then he (Moses) took the *book* of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people.”

Christ is presented as *confessing* (*homologeō*) the conquering person’s onoma, the complementary gesture of a person with respect to Christ’s name as in Rom 10.9: “If you *confess* with your lips that Jesus is Lord...you will be saved.” For a passage in line with vs. 5 with a fuller meaning and which incorporates the two ways of Christ to people and people to Christ: “Everyone who *acknowledges* me before men I also will *acknowledge* before my Father who is in heaven” [Mt 10.32]. The verse at hand has the preposition *enopion* (*before*, cf. 3.2); the verse from Matthew has the preposition *emprosthen* whose incorporation of another preposition (*pros*) suggests in-the-direction-towards.

The next verse (6) makes more sense in light of this *enopion/emprosthen* comparison with respect to listening to the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 7: “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.”

Philadelphia, a small town which had been weak in its faith (cf. vs. 8). This verse is a quote from Is 22.22. In the verse at hand, Christ is presented as the one who is both *hagios* and *alethinos*, two chief characteristics of the divinity found throughout the Old Testament. In his possession is the “key of David” (*kleis*), that is, lordship over Israel. Compare with the Isaiah source which has this key “on his shoulder,” perhaps signifying that it is very large. Although Christ “has” this key, he is nevertheless the key in the sense of having sprung from David’s lineage as depicted in Matthew’s Gospel.

The act of *opening* (what is opened is not denoted, *anoigo*) can refer to Christ himself being a door: “I am the door of the sheep” [Jn 10.7]. *Anoigo* bears a certain relation to the Book of Revelation, of *apokalupsis*, which no one can *shut* (*kleio*; note this word’s relationship with *key*, *kleis*). “If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture” [Jn 10.9].

Vs. 8: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”

For the relationship between divine knowing and works, cf. 2.2. Vs. 8 continues the theme of that special type of *opening* (*anoigo*) which is a special invitation to the Philadelphia church for encouragement in her weakness. Note that *thura* for *door* is the same term used in Jn 10.7 above. Perhaps the “little *power*” (*dunamis*) refers to faith, the ability to “go in and out” with respect to Christ-as-door.

Despite the weakness of the Philadelphian church, it nevertheless remained faithful as demonstrated by having *kept* (*tereo*, cf. 3.3) the logos of The Logos. Such keeping is synonymous with not *denying* (*arneomai*) Christ’s

name which means Anointed.

Vs. 9: Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and learn that I have loved you.

Idou or *behold* is intended to grab one's attention in preparation for an important utterance. "Synagogue of Satan" was used in conjunction with the church of Smyrna (2.9); as there, contrast the Jewish synagogue or qahal with the Christian ekklesia or church. Most likely these words pertain to certain leaders, not especially the Jews as a whole. "Beware of the scribes...who have the best seats in the *synagogues*" [Mk 12.38-9].

Vs. 9 alludes to their acknowledgment of Christ by having such Jews *bow down* (proskuneo) to the church members at Philadelphia. "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you *worship* the Father" [Jn 4.21]. Such worship has as its object the realization or *learning* (gnosis) of divine agape for the church of Philadelphia.

Vs. 10: Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.

The gnosis and agape of vs. 10 achieve consummation in the act of *keeping* (tereo) Christ's logos, that is, the logos belonging to The Logos which is a reciprocal gesture. This logos is more specific as *patient endurance* or hupomone (cf. 2.19 regarding the church of Thyatira). Tereo is with respect to the "*hour* of trial" (hora), reminiscent of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Behold, the *hour* is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" [Mt 26.45]. In both instances, hora involves the confluence of two types of time, kairos (divine intervention) and chronological (kronos).

The *temptation* or peirasmos is not localized but destined to affect the "*whole world*" (oikoumene), a term signifying the inhabited world as opposed to the kosmos or physical creation. Note that kosmos is used when Christ commissions his disciples to preach the Gospel, implying that they will preach it to creation in its entirety. The "inhabited" notion of oikoumene is reenforced by "those who *dwell* upon the earth," katoikeo being part of the verbal root to oikoumene. The preposition kata (*according* in the sense of belonging to) implies people who have become rooted according to the ways of the world (cf. remarks under vs 4).

Vs. 11: I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

For tachy (*fast*), cf. 2.16 which there is in conjunction with repentance; here it is with Christ's coming which is in response to the church of Philadelphia's loyalty despite her weakness. Krateo for *hold fast* as in 2.25; in vs. 11 it suggests the real though weak faith in Christ. Note the similarities between krato and tereo (*to keep*), this latter verb having been mentioned numerous times thus far.

Krateo may apply to keeping "*your crown*" (stephanos) as in 2.10; note that the Philadelphian church already possessed this crown and is bidden to krato and tereo it against people wishing to *seize* (lambano) it.

Vs. 12: He who conquers I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven, and my own new name.

Another reference to a person who *conquers* (nikao), here resulting in a *pillar* or stulos, the New Testament equivalent for hamud as in Ex 13.22 with its twofold nature of cloud and fire which implies constant visibility: "The *pillar* of cloud by day and the *pillar* of fire by night did not depart from before the people." Vs. 12 locates the stulos in the divine temple, rather, "of my God" which personalizes this *temple* or naos; there are two other references to "my God" in this one verse. Note that the person-as-naos foreshadows the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem which lacks a temple (cf. 21.22).

Once within the temple as a pillar, a person will not require going in and out because he, like the heavenly Jerusalem just mentioned, will be the temple itself. This was foreshadowed by the prophetess Anna: "She did

not depart from the *temple*, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day" [Lk 2.37]. The verse at hand also presages fulfillment of Christ-as-gate in Jn 10.7 where there will no longer be need to exit and enter. Also note: "Do you not know that you are God's *temple* and that God's Spirit dwells in you" [1 Cor 3.16]?

Onoma or *name* which can refer to the divine YHWH. "This is my *name* forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations" [Ex 3.15]. Right after mention of this name comes (presumably) the name of the "new Jerusalem." Here the city comes down (present tense), whereas 21.2 has it descending. Thus the verse at hand shows a relationship between the divine name and this new Jerusalem. Vs. 12 concludes by speaking of "my own new name," that is, Jesus Christ. Cf. the last verse of Ezekiel (48.35): "And the name of the city henceforth shall be the Lord is there."

Vs. 13 has the familiar exhortation to listen, "He who has an ear..."

Vs. 14: "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'

The seventh and final letter, this one to Laodicea, a city known for its wealth. In this concluding letter it is fitting to mention the *Amen* as though this concluding word were attached to a prayer which acknowledged the specific message to each of the seven churches as well as the church as a whole. Jesus Christ as the Amen (which may be taken as the Omega or concluding point of creation, cf. 1.8) is a *witness* or *martus* (cf. 1.5).

It is interesting to see that the divine Amen which is a type of conclusion is here presented as a *beginning* (*arche*); creation present as belonging to God can allude to physical creation but in the context of Revelation, suggests 21.1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Also consider the opening words of Genesis where *arche* corresponds to *bereshyth*, *in the beginning*.

Vs. 16: So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

Chliaros for *lukewarm*, the only reference in the New Testament which is distasteful in Christ's mouth, the reason why he spews the Laodicean church from his mouth. Emeo (*to spew*) connotes strong disgust.

Vss. 17-19 delineate to a greater detail this lukewarmness: rich, prosperity which in Christ's eyes equals to being wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked. Christ advises the Laodicean church to purchase refined gold and white garments along with salve for its eyes. He thus appeals to Laodicea's great wealth as an analogy for spiritual wealth. Vs. 19 states that recognition of this analogy is painful to make because he *reproves* (*elegcho*) and *chastens* (*paideuo*) those whom he *loves* (*phileo*; connotes desire or longing).

-Elegcho: "As for those who persist in sin, *rebuke* them in the presence of all" [1 Tm 5.20].

-Paideuo: "For the Lord *disciplines* him whom he loves" [Heb 12.6].

-Phileo: "Beware of the scribes who *like* to go about in long robes" [Lk 20.46].

Vs. 19 concludes with a wish for *repentance*, *metanoeo*, a theme common to the other six churches as already noted.

Vs. 20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

Another reference to *thura* (*door*, cf. 3.8). "I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh upon the handles of the bolt" [Sg 5.5]. Here the bride opened the door to receive her beloved but he "had turned and went" [vs. 6]. Vs. 20 situates the bridegroom as the one doing the *knocking* (*krouo*). "Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; *knock* and it will be opened to you" [Mt 7.7].

The second part of this verse is reminiscent of Lk 22.30: "That you may eat and drink at my table in my

kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Deipneo for *to eat* usually refers to supper, a time when people came together after work to enjoy a leisurely meal. “I will *come in* to him:” eiserchomai, with the preposition eis (*into*); also note the second preposition, pros (*to*), in the sense of making straight for a person. This double use of prepositions is complemented by a further one, “and he *with* (meta) me.”

Vs. 21: He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

The verb nikao (*to conquer*, cf. 2.26) is used in conjunction with co-rulership in the form of *sitting* (kathemi). “The Lord says to my lord: ‘*Sit* at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool” [Ps 110.1]. Towards the end of vs. 20 the preposition meta was used when Christ will eat *with* a person; here meta is transferred or elevated to a sitting-with Christ on his throne.

The second half of vs. 20 refers to Christ’s act of having *conquered* (nikao again); past tense with regard to him and present tense with regard to the person addressed in the verse. Again, cf. Lk 22.30 as in vs. 20 above. Christian tradition ascribes such nikao to Christ’s passion, death and resurrection. Following this victory, Christ has *sat down* (kathemi again) with his Father. His ascension may be viewed as this sitting: “I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my god and your God” [Jn 20.17]. In the verse at hand is another used of meta, *with* the Father, bringing to completion, as it were the previous two metas.

Vs. 22 concludes with yet another “He who has an ear...” but here has a more solemn ring in that it brings to conclusion the dialogue with the seven churches.

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Chapter Four

Vs. 1: After this I looked and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Here begins the second major division of the Book of Revelation after the introductory words and addresses to the seven churches. These congregations, like every group of people, were imperfect and in need of divine assistance. Despite this, each was an image of the heavenly Jerusalem which is described later in Revelation. For the seven churches (and the Christian church as a whole) to get from here to there, as it were, they must pass from their present limited condition to the heavenly Jerusalem. Hence the words opening chapter four, meta tauta, *after these*.

Eidon (*I saw*): John’s act of seeing signifies the transit from the earthly (churches) to the heavenly realm; here we have no writing as was the case with the angels belonging to the seven churches, just a simple and direct visual perception followed by idou (*lo*). Idou signifies the object of John’s vision or the immediate presence of the “open *door*” (thura). If the sky’s flat surface represents heaven, this door is not vertically situated as with a conventional entrance; instead, it is flat or horizontal with the sky much like a hatch on a ship or an attic on a roof. “And at the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made” [Gen 8.6]. Note a parallel between the seven churches and forty days, two instances of sacred numbers which occur in various forms throughout the Bible. Chalon for *window*: from a Hebrew verbal root meaning *to pierce*. There comes to mind Christ’s side on the cross: “But one of the soldiers *pierced* his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water” [Jn 19.34]. Thura occurred twice before, 3.8 & 20.

“First voice:” cf. 1.10 where it was identified with a trumpet located behind John. This trumpet invites John to “come up *hither*” (hode), a specific place of ascent perhaps allowing him to be “behind” where the original trumpet sounded and which is now visible. “And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain” [Ex 19.20]. Note that Sinai was a neutral place between Moses and God as expressed by vs. 20’s first words: “and the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain.”

“After *this*” (tauta, plural): implies that John is in the same “place” as God and can view the drama about to be unfolded from this divine perspective.

Vs. 2: At once I was in the Spirit and lo, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne!

Eutheos: *at once*; no spacial movement from John’s earlier position on Patmos and on the Lord’s Day (cf. 1.9-10). Mention of Sunday as commemorating both when God rested from creation and Christ’s resurrection may have a relation with the eutheos of vs. 2. That is, this sacred day and time form a kairos event as opposed to a chronos one; by its very nature the former transcends chronological time (and space). The verse at hand situates John in the only way kairo-logical time can be described: “*in the Spirit.*”

Having undergone transformation, John’s first vision was that of a *throne* (thronos) “in heaven;” note use of the preposition *en* again. The throne was the first thing John noticed followed by a person sitting on it. “I saw the Lord sitting upon a *throne*, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple” [Is 6.1]. The Hebrew *shul* for *train* means the flowing skirt of a robe.

Vs. 3: And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

Cf. Ezk 1.26-8: “And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like *sapphire*” [vs. 26]. In both verses the vision was not of blinding light or of darkness (as with Moses on Sinai) but a softer radiance of light as though coming from precious stones. I.e., the light is mediated, not direct. Note *homoios*, an adjective for *appeared* with regard to jasper (the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem, 21.18) and carnelian, pertaining to the sixth foundation of the same city (21.20). Thus what the person (God) on the throne is like is transmitted to this city.

The *rainbow* (*iris*) is *kuklothen* which more precisely means encircling. Usually a rainbow is seen arching from one point to another; here it surrounds the throne. Perhaps this rainbow may be taken as laid out flat on the ground, hence its ability to completely encompass the throne. Viewed from below—that is, earth—this rainbow would be seen as encircling the throne.

The phenomenon of a rainbow was a sign of peace between heaven and earth after the flood: “I set my *bow* (the Hebrew term refers to a weapon commonly perceived) in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth” [Gen 9.13]. Note second use of *homoios*, *looked like*; used in reference to an *emerald* (*smargdinos*) usually associated with a green color and is used as part of the heavenly Jerusalem’s foundation (21.19).

Vs. 4: Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders clad in white garments with golden crowns upon their heads.

These elders are also mentioned in 4.10; 5.8, 9; 11.16, 17; 19.4. Perhaps the number twenty-four corresponds to the twenty-four degrees or orders of priestly rank delineated in 1 Chron 24. Also this number is divisible by twelve which plays a significant part in the arrangement of the heavenly Jerusalem towards the conclusion of Revelation. Note the location of these *elders* (*presbuteros*, singular), “*around* the throne” (*kuklothen*), that is, fully encompassing it with similar thrones. For a parallel verse, cf. Is 24.23: “and before his *elders* he will manifest his glory.” Here the Hebrew *zaqan* is equivalent to *presbuteros*.

The elders are clothed in white *garments* (*himation*, singular), this term referring to an external robe. “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his *garments* became white as light” [Mt 17.2]. In a sense, the three disciples Peter, James and John are a foreshadowing of the twenty-four elders here at Christ’s Transfiguration. For an earlier reference to *crown* (*stephanos*), cf. 2.10 where it is used in conjunction with life.

Vs. 5: From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God.

A verse reminiscent of the theophany to Moses on Mt. Sinai: "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast" [Ex 19.16]. Note the absence in Revelation of *thick cloud*, *hanan kaved*, this adjective being derived from *kavod*, *heavy*; it is also related to *glory*. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa's **Life of Moses** which discusses the meaning of this divine darkness (Gregory of Nyssa Home Page). Another verse paralleling Revelation: "In the midst of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire...and out of the fire went forth lightning" [Ezk 1.13].

In the verse at hand, God's throne in the center of the thrones belonging to the twenty-four elders is the source of lightning which is communicated to them much like spokes from a wheel's center. Two elements radiate from the throne: one visual (lightning) and the other audible (voices, peals of thunder).

Apart from the throne—in the sense of not directly issuing from it—are the "seven *torches* of fire," *lampas* (singular). Compare these seven torches with the seven spirits in 1.4 & 5.6. The LXX uses *lampas* for the Hebrew *lapad* in Ex 20.18: "When all the people perceived the thunderings and the *lightning*...they were afraid and trembled." In Rev 4.5, the torches are located *before* God's throne (*enopion*) as receptacles of the lightning flashes, and thunder and which may be said to pass through the twenty-four elders en route to bestowing the seven torches with fire. Contrast *enopion* with the preposition *ek* ("from the throne"). Vs. 5 identifies the torches with God's seven *spirits*, *pneuma*. Cf. Tobit 12.15: "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One."

Vs. 6: And before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.

A continuation of the previous verse which shows the close relationship between it and what follows (*and*). Another use of the preposition *enopion* (*before*) with respect to God's throne, which more or less situates the "sea of glass" on the same plane as the torches just mentioned (*enopion*). Perhaps the seven torches-divine spirits delineate the separation between God's throne and what lies beyond, not unlike the command to sanctify Mt. Sinai: "Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it" [Ex 19.23].

The "bound" of vs. 6 is the "sea of *glass*" (*hualinos*) resembling *crystal* (*krustallos*), that is to say, a flat, infinite expanse stretching out from the center or divine throne. "And the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as *glass*" [21.20]. Here the heavenly Jerusalem has one street, not many; it is as though the sea of glass flowed right from before the throne down the city's center, thereby illumining it. The reflective capacity of both the sea and the heavenly Jerusalem's only street resemble a mirror to reflect everything within. "For she (wisdom) is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God and an image of his goodness" [Wis 7.26]. The words in vs. 6—*as it were* (*hos*) and *like* (*homoios*)—tend to heighten the distance between God on his throne and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Two prepositions: *en meso* (*round*) and *kuklo* (*on each side*) with respect to God's throne. The former implies the center of something, as though the "four living creatures" resided within the throne itself. The latter suggests four sides to the same throne which concurs with the number of these same creatures. Such a paradoxical situation, of being in two places at the same time, is borne out by the fact that the four creatures have eyes (*gemo*: *to be full*, as though each creature were entirely an eye) looking in two directions: *in front* (*emprosthen*) and *behind* (*opisthen*). That is to say, towards the throne at their backs and away from it towards the sea of glass. "And from the midst of it (throne chariot) came the likeness of four living creatures" [Ezk 1.5].

Vs. 7: The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

Note the words *living creature* (*zoon*), a term which intimates being endowed with physical existence in conjunction with the eternal nature of God. Refer to Ezk 1.10 which mentions a man, lion, ox and eagle; more specifically, these creatures had faces resembling them (also cf. Ezk 10.14). The close association of Revelation's

throne with Ezekiel's chariot vision implies something which moves and is not static. The former specifically mentions *face* (prosopon) only in conjunction with a man, not the other three creatures. Each being connotes that which is strong, swift and noble; they all have eyes "in front" and "behind."

Vs. 8: And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

These four creatures/"eyes" have six *wings* (pterux, singular) which symbolize mobility and well as the ability to conceal themselves. "Above him stood the seraphim; each had six *wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew" [Is 6.3]. Kanaph is the Hebrew equivalent for pterux which can also signify an extremity or summit.

In the verse at hand, the creatures are *full* (gemo; cf. vs. 6) of eyes kuklothen and esothern, *all round* and *within*. Compare these two prepositions with the ones in vs. 6, eprosthen and opisthen, *in front* and *behind*. Those prepositions used in both verses form a four-side "eye nature" of the four creatures, so to speak. Esothern for *within* can denote interior vision of that which is perceived exteriorly. Compare the Hebrew preposition savyv (*round about*) in Ezk 1.18: "The four wheels had rims and they had spokes; and their rims were full of eyes *round about*."

Mention of day and night, the unity forming a twenty-four hour cycle, is an expression of watchfulness or sleeplessness signified by the all-pervasive nature of eyes in vs. 8. This is brought out by the term anapausis, (not) *to cease* which is a noun coupled with the verb *to have*. The object of such constancy is to sing of the three-fold *glory* (hagios, adjective) of God as pantokrator as in 1.8; this hymn is closely related to Isaiah's vision, Is 6.2-3. By way of note, consider the number of creatures (four) who sing this triple hymn of glory.

God as pantokrator is mentioned as having three temporal divisions: past, present and future tenses. Obviously, the four creatures are praising God in the present tense; the first two tenses are simply different forms of the verb *to be*, whereas the third (future) involved the verb *to come*, erchomai. Thus the future coming is a kind of future being or extension into the future of the same (divine) being from the past and present.

Vs. 9: And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever.

And represents continuous movement of John's vision; note the beginning of vss. 6 (which flows from vs. 5) and 8 which show a fluid continuity regarding this particular vision. Vs. 9 at first appears to contradict vs. 8 which had the four creatures constantly ("day and night," "never cease") singing the three-fold hymn to God. That is to say, vs. 9 has *whenever* (hotan) which implies from time to time. On the other hand, vs. 9 specifies this praise in terms of glory, honor and thanks. The phrase "forever and ever" uses aion or *age* signifying unity of that "was," "is" and "is to come" of the previous verse. This familiar New Testament expression uses the preposition eis (*into*) for continuous flow or penetration of divine reality into that which is temporal.

Vs. 10: The twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne singing.

Three uses of prepositions stand out here: enopion (*before*), epi (*on*; better, *upon*), pros-kuneo (*worship*). They all relate to motion-towards-which, a forward attention directed to God on his throne. Cf. Ps 47.8: "God reigns over the nation; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the people gather as the people of the God of Abraham." The Greek text has say (lego) in place of singing. Note that both verbs—cast and saying—are in the present tense which indicates that action is continuous.

Vs. 11: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you did create all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Since the casting and saying of vs. 10 are continuous, the same may be applied to this song. *Axios* or *worthy* is equivalent to the Hebrew *doxa* or *glory*; both imply heaviness, weightiness, and are typical attributes of the divinity. The other divine attributes are glory, honor and power which fill out the fundamental meaning of *axios*. God *receives* them all (*lambano*).

The above mentioned attributes acknowledge God as creator; *ktizo* is the verb used here, reminiscent of the first chapter of Genesis. Note that Genesis begins each day of creation with *Let there be* or *yehy*. Such words are different from the fabrication of an object whether animate or inanimate; *yehy* is more a coming into existence and allowing it to autonomously proceed on its own. As for the Revelation song, *existence* (*eimi, to be*) results from *ktizo/yehy* but specified as a result of God's *will*, *thelema*. Note the second use of *ktizo*, passive aorist, as though the divine will "passively" effected existence of created things. The intent is to emphasize God willing as opposed to fabrication.

Chapter Five

Vs. 1: And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals.

A verse reminiscent of 1 Kg 22:19: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left."

The simple word "and" denotes continuation of the last verse's song into a new chapter. The Greek has *upon* (*epi*) for "on," a more stability of location, as it were. Now attention shifts to God—who is often called the one "seated on the throne" as opposed to outrightly calling him God—or in this instance, a *scroll* (*biblion*; as opposed to a *biblos* or *book*) An example of the latter is Mt 1:1: "The *book* of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Both a scroll and a book are rolled up when not in use, i.e., they are relatively compact and can be stored and carried easily. A scroll implies that its contents can be either Revealed (such is this book's title) and hidden.

The divine person who is *upon* (*epi*) the throne also has a scroll upon his *dexia* (*right hand*). In a sense, the scroll is "upon" the throne there with him. The scroll is specified in three parts:

1) as "written *within*" (*esothēn*); cf. 4:8: "the four living creatures...full of eyes all round and *within*." Such "internal" vision may be likened to a sphere containing an definite number of eyes which gaze both at each and towards the sphere's center. In the verse at hand, this within-ness suggests that the scroll is rolled up, not revealed; when open, the scroll manifests the eyes, as it were, or words written on the parchment.

2) "written on the *back*" (*opisthen*). "Four living creatures full of eyes in front and *behind* (4:9). The verse under consideration has the scroll written on both sides of the rolled-up parchment making it visible even when in this state of un-revelation. Because the prepositions (*front, behind*) apply to the four creatures, they too participate in this alternation between being unmanifest and revealed. Also, the scroll may be said to be living just like the creatures.

3) "sealed with seven *seals*" (*sphragis*). "For you are the *seal* of my apostleship in the Lord" [Rom 9:2]. For anything to be sealed means that it is not manifest; usually a king or someone in high position like him has the authority to set a seal on an official document which can be broken only by designated persons and at specific times. The number seven plays an important role in Revelation as first noted with regard to the seven churches (1:4). Again, this association between a scroll and the churches means that the document is more than something written down but is alive.

Vs. 2: And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

The "*strong* angel" (*ischuros*) is identified only by his power, not by name; also the indefinite is used which

could mean that this angel is a strong one among many. His strength is equivalent to his “*loud voice*” (*megalos*, better, *great*). Use of “and” here as well as beginning 5.1 suggests continued activity stemming from the act of obeisance by the twenty-four elders, vs. 10.

The proclamation in the form of a question has to do with opening the scroll. A certain parallel with its opening can be drawn with a similar “strong” angel in Gen 3.24: “(God) placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.” Thus one serves to keep closed and the other to open. To actually open the scroll means to unroll it, keeping in mind that it is written inside and on back. Only a person who is *worthy*, (*axios*) can unroll the scroll; cf. use of the adjective in 4.11.

First comes the opening followed by *breaking* (*luomai*) its seals, more specifically, loosening them which could mean melting their wax, the usual composition of such seals. *Sphragis* is the word for *seal* here as in vs. 1 where the number is given as seven. Draw a parallel between the shut nature of a seal and the equally shut Jericho which Joshua brought down and where the number seven plays a dominant role such as the number of trumpets, days, etc. In the verse at hand, the strong angel poses a question with regard to opening and breaking which is more or less asked rhetorically.

Vs. 3: And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

An answer to the strong angel’s question just asked, that is, no creature (human or otherwise) can open the scroll. Note the three locations with regards to the earth: *on*, *under* as well as *heaven* where presumably reference is made to angelic beings. The opening pertains to the scroll’s unraveling, of laying it bare for everyone to behold.

Verse four has John in the presence of this scroll along with the strong angel. Although John is present with those not *worthy* (*axios*), he is not specifically mentioned as belonging to this group (“in heaven, on earth, under the earth”). This gives John an occasion to *weep*, *klaio*. “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not *weep* for me but *weep* for yourselves and for your children” [Lk 23.28], that is, for those “in heaven, on earth and under the earth.” The Greek for “look into it” simply has *look*, *blepo*, minus any preposition.

Vs. 5: Then one of the elders said to me, “Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

One of the elders is from among the twenty-four mentioned earlier, that is, from around the throne. This verse is reminiscent of Jn 20.13, “Woman, why are you *weeping*” (*klaio*)? As with Mary, the need to hold back tears stems from Christ’s resurrection which is also celebrated in the Book of Revelation, albeit in its fullest form.

Two titles with Old Testament roots: “Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up” [Gen 49.9]. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots” [Is 11.1]. Both are prophecies, that is, they are not yet fulfilled at the time of their utterance. However, in Revelation these prophecies have come to pass which is perceived in terms of opening the scroll and its seals. That is, Christ can open the seven churches, symbolic of the Church as a whole and see the “new Jerusalem...prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” [21.2].

Vs. 6: And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Another mention of the throne with God the Father suggested as being upon it. Despite this implication, note John’s emphasis upon the throne as opposed to anyone sitting there. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase *in meso* is used pertaining to all three. Now John introduces Christ as *lamb* (*arnion*), a clear reference to his sacrificial death which the unrevealed scroll recounts, better, gives a prophecy. “Like a *lamb* that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth” [Is 53.7]. The Hebrew *seh* denotes the lamb used at Passover: “Every man shall take a *lamb* according to their fathers’

houses" [Ex 12.3]. Certainly this lamb was slaughtered to ward off destruction by God, but the verse at hand has the word *hos*, *as*, which signifies the imitation of a state such as death. Keeping in mind the Exodus injunction, the Lamb (Christ) bore fatal injuries which occurred "in the evening" [vs. 6]; the Hebrew reads "*between* (beyn) the evenings" which has a certain parallel with the *between* of vs. 6, *en meso*.

The Lamb has seven *horns* (*keras*) and seven eyes; the former signifies might as in Daniel 7 & 8. Also cf. Lk 1.69: "He has raised up a *horn* of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." The number seven can once more imply the close affiliation between Christ-as-Lamb and his seven churches; while multiple, their diversity is unified in one head, that of the Lamb. The latter (eyes) is symbolic of watchfulness with regards to these seven churches. "If your *eye* is sound (*aplous*) your whole body will be full of light" [Mt 6.22].

The final part of vs. 6 has the seven spirits being sent "*into* (*eis*) all the earth," that is, full presence-in. This is reminiscent of Christ's commission to his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" [Mt 28.19]. The spirits—keep in mind they have seven horns as well—extend the Lamb's reign through the seven churches. "These *seven* are the *eyes* of the Lord which range through the whole earth" [Zech 4.10]. The Hebrew for *to range* is shut, literally, *to run quickly*, *to row*; intimated is the snap of a whip and therefore a sudden movement. Compare this use of shut with Satan: "From *going to and fro* on the earth and from walking up and down on it" [Job 1.7].

Vs. 7: and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

"And he went:" the Lamb traversed some (physical) distance between himself and the throne, intimating that Christ as having assumed human nature is removed from God the Father. No sign of submission as a subject to a king is implied; he simply took the scroll from the Father. Note that it is his *right hand* (*dexia*): "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my *right hand*'" [Ps 110.1]. Despite the distance, both the Lamb and the one sitting on the throne are equals.

Vs. 8: And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and with golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints.

Again, the Lamb does not give any sign of submission to the one on the throne. This contrasts with the submission of the creatures and elders who *fell down* (*pipto*) not before the throne but before the Lamb. Note that at this point the Lamb does not yet open the scroll; just the act of taking it is significant enough to effect this worship.

Two signs of worship: *harp* (*kithara*) as in 1 Cor 14.7: "If even lifeless instruments such as the flute or the *harp* do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?" Two other Revelation references are 14.2 & 15.2. *Kithara* immediately brings to mind one of the chief instruments in the Psalter, for example: "Awake, O *harp* and lyre! I will awake the dawn" [57.8]! Perhaps those playing this harp in Revelation have in mind the sentiments of praise contained in this book of prayer.

The second sign of worship is *incense* (*thumiama*): "And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of *incense*" [Lk 1.11]. As opposed to such an altar Revelation has "golden *bowls*" (*phiale*) which contrast with those bowls full of divine wrath as frequently mentioned in chapter sixteen. The bowls of incense do not yet seem to have been burned; they are equivalent to *prayers* (*proseuche*, in the sense of entreaties). More specifically such prayers belong to the *saints* (*hagios*), the same term attributed to the *holy one* of 3.7; cf. 8.3 & 4. Saint is a term frequently used by those who acknowledge Jesus Christ: "The *saints* who are also faithful in Christ Jesus" [Eph 1.1]. Perhaps reference to these persons are members of the seven churches discussed earlier.

Vs. 9: and they sang a new song, saying: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed men for God from every tribe and people and nation."

Note the use of "and" which began each verse from 2 and continues through 10 which indicates a continuous,

unbroken chain of events. Here “and” serves to introduce the “new *song*” (ode), an expression taken from the Psalter: “He put a new *song* in my mouth, a song of praise to our God” [40.3]; also cf. Is 42.10. Implied is a “old” song which bespeaks fulfillment of all Old Testament songs, more specifically, those which have as their subject in hidden, unrevealed fashion Christ as Lamb.

Keep in mind that the scroll which Christ takes is written on the back as well as within (cf. 5.1).

Sphazo: *to slay* (with violence) as used in vss. 9 & 12 plus several other places. This terrible death—implying Christ’s crucifixion—is in sharp contrast to him being *axios* (*worthy*). The blood shed by Christ is equivalent to the exchange of currency, of paying *ransom* (verb, *agorazo*). “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a *ransom* for many” [Mk 10.45]. Note dative case *to God*, *to theo*, with the intimation of direction towards—which, an ongoing process. This use of the dative is coupled with *en* to *haimati*, *in* (your) *blood*,” presence-in. In contrast, the *ek* (*from*) signifies departure with regard to tribe, people and nation.

Vs. 10: and has made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.”

An image modeled after that of Israel: *kingdom* (*basileia*) and *priest* (*hiereus*), traditional distinction between temporal and religious spheres. “King of Salem, *priest* of the Most High God” [Heb 7.1]. The interesting thing about vs. 10 is that both elements have their *reign* (*basileuo*) not in heaven but on earth; another reference: 20.6: “but they shall be *priests* of God and of Christ, and they shall *reign* with him a thousand years.”

Vs. 11: Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

The throne is now the silent center of praise (*phone*, *voice*). Note that John’s hearing is preceded by a *looking* (*idomai*); more specifically, the beings are *around* (*kuklos*) the throne presumably in concentric circles: first the living creatures followed by the elders; last come countless numbers of angels.

The purpose of this heavenly assembly is praise of Christ as Lamb which parallels that in vss. 9-10. Again, Christ is called *axios* (*worthy*) to receive seven offerings: power, wealth, wisdom, light, honor, glory and blessing. Again note the number seven.

Vs. 13 continues this seven-fold theme of praise by those in heaven and on earth. Note the use of prepositions: “*in* (*en*) heaven” and “*on* (*epi*) earth.” The latter has two further divisions of lesser importance, if you will: “under the earth” and “in the sea.”

Vs. 14 specifies the (twenty-four) elders as *worshipping* (*proskuneo*) which is bound up with the Hebrew “Amen,” a term frequently used at the conclusion of prayers. It is as though these elders were bringing to completion all the praise that had preceded.

Chapter Six

Vs. 1: Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say as with a voice of thunder, “Come!”

A new phase in Revelation, when the Lamb-Christ *opens* (*anoigo*) the first of seven seals which in this context and mentioned above is technically an unrolling of the scroll. Note that this scroll as well as the other six are not read, that is, the listeners are not hearing spoken words but see...behold...action. Perhaps this process is akin to the ability of ancient peoples to picture and thus bring alive the words that they are hearing. At the same time God the Father is sitting on the throne listening, most likely in the same fashion as the audience around his throne.

One of the four living creature—which can imply one of the four Gospels—invites the vast audience composed of

heavenly and earthly listeners to *come* (erchomai), that is, approach the Lamb as he reads from the first scroll. Such an invitation is not politely given out but with great force, a “voice of *thunder*” (bronte). “Moses spoke and God answered him in *thunder*” [Ex 19:9]. Since it is John the Evangelist who is listening along with this vast multitude, perhaps one of the four living creatures was the eagle (cf. 4:7), the symbol usually attributed to John.

Vs. 2: And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The act of *beholding* (idou) connotes a fuller, more comprehensive seeing. Most likely the *rider* (kathemenos, present middle participle; literally, *one seated*) is Jesus Christ as in 19:11. “The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the *white* ones go after them, and the dappled ones go towards the south country” [Zech 6:6]. The color *white* (leukos) often represents purity; in the verse at hand, the white colored horse may be used as a rallying point for the army, that is, a clearly visible sign in the midst of battle.

Toxos (*bow*): the only mention of this weapon in Revelation. “If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his *bow*” [Ps 7:12].

Stephanos (*crown*): as in 4:10, reference to the twenty-four elders. Note the passive use, edothe, *was given*, presumably by God the Father seated on the throne. Such bestowal of kingship allows Christ to engage in *conquering* (nikao) and to conquer. Note the two forms of the same verb: one a present participle and the other in a hina clause (*in order that*) signifying future activity. Both the present and future are united in the one bestowal of the crown.

Vs. 3: When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”

A second living creature to correspond with the second seal, that is, an ox, traditionally symbolic of St. Matthew’s Gospel. Keep in mind that while this is being done, the first rider has left conquering and to conquer. Erchou for the command, *Come*, which is used for all seven scrolls. Such coming alludes to the unrolling of these scrolls. It is as though the action association with each one proceeded directly from the scroll itself.

Vs. 4: And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.

Red (purros) can symbolize war and bloodshed; more specifically, it pertains to the color of fire, pur being the noun. The Hebrew equivalent is ‘adam from which is derived *man*. This horse advances from the second seal which is not explicitly mentioned.

The rider of this red horse is allowed—note edothe (*was permitted*, as the rider of the white horse regarding a crown)—with respect to his authority to remove *peace* (eirene) from the earth. The preposition ek (*from*) suggests a violent removal. Compare Mt 10:34: “Do not think that I have come to bring *peace* on earth; I have not come to bring *peace* but a sword.” Perhaps the red horse...in the sense of being “adam”...may point to Christ as incarnate among human beings, although this certainly is not the traditional explanation of the color red. Compared with the lack of peace which causes men to slay each other, Christ has a *sword* (machairos), the same term used in vs. 4. This sword of Christ is used to upset the normal course of human relationships, that is, in comparison with himself.

Vs. 5: When he opened the third seal I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I saw and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand.

Another correspondence as with all seven seals between the command “come” and John’s having seen (past tense) and his beholding (present tense). The *black* (melas) horse usually symbolizes famine which often follows war. With regard to vs. 2 above, Zechariah mentions four chariots with four colored horses prepare the messianic judgement of the earth. Note that they all receive the commission to “patrol the earth” [vs. 7];

the black horses go towards the north who “have set my Spirit at rest in the north country” [vs. 8].

The *balance* (zugos; also means *yoke*) implies weighing in the sense of passing judgement. “...all who are under the *yoke* of slavery” [1 Tm 6.1]. In a sense, this rider has the task of submitting people under the yoke of Jesus Christ: “Take my *yoke* upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in hear, and you will find rest for your souls” [Mt 11.29]. Note the “rest” of this verse with that in Zech 6.8 above.

Vs. 6: And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!”

An interjection between the opening of the first three seals and the fourth. John’s “seeming” to hear and the actual words he did hear is not that clear. The voice (singular) could be coming from the four creatures as one; it is *in* their *midst* (en meso) or in their very center as though each creature directed his voice there where it became mingled with the other voices. Perhaps John was uncertain as to which living creature the voice was attributed, hence his “seeming.”

The “quart of wheat” equals a day’s wage, and the denarius equals a day’s pay. Vs. 6 has this amount of wheat being sold for great price, thereby suggesting famine. “After agreeing with the laborers for a *denarius* a day, he sent them into his vineyard” [Mt 20.2]. This parable concludes with the master giving each worker one denarius regardless of what hour they were hired. “So the last will be first, and the first last” [vs. 16].

The command not to *harm* (adikeo) oil and wine further insinuates famine, perhaps a siege. “The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of *oil* shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth” [1 Kg 17.14].

Vs. 8: And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

Vs. 7 has the opening of the fourth seal with the command, “Come” by the fourth living creature. Note that the four living creatures are associated with the first four scrolls only, not the remaining three scrolls.

Chloros or *pale* which is more a yellow-green color signifying illness or death. It can also refer to the color of grass: “Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the *green* grass” [Mk 6.39]. In the verse at hand, *Death* (Thanatos) is personified who has (presumably) another rider behind him (akoloutheo, *to follow*) called *Hades* (Hades), the abode of the dead. Note that 1.18 has Christ having “the keys of Death and Hades,” i.e., he has control over this particular scroll. For another reference to Hades, cf. Mt 16.18: “and the power of *Hades* shall not prevail against it.” The “fourth of the earth” can be read with the traditional division of creation into earth, air, fire and water.

Note the four-fold affliction by this rider: sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts. Romphaia (*sword*) is a very large two-handled weapon, not short and dagger-like. “And a *sword* will pierce through your own soul” [Lk 2.35].

Vs. 9: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

Thusiasterion or *altar* as in Heb 13.10: “We have an *altar* from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” This altar could represent Christ’s cross, i.e., the Lamb who had been slain. In this case those present at the crucifixion—Mary, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and John—can be representative of those souls under the altar (cf. Jn 19.25). However, these witnesses were not slain “for the *word* (logos) of God but foreshadow those who would shed their blood for Christ. The most notable reference to altar in the Old Testament is the one given to Moses on Mount Sinai as described in chapter 27. The important words here are “as it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made” [vs. 8] where there is a direct correlation

between seeing and making. Also note that John was present at the unrolling of these seven scrolls as well as at Calvary; he thus bridges the two poles of redemption.

The souls under the altar were *witnesses* (marturion) for Christ; they too have participated with Moses in the correlation between seeing and making. According to Rev 1.5, Jesus Christ himself is the prime witness: the “*first born* of the dead.” Thus the souls partake of his prototokos which also applies to creation: “He is the image of the invisible God, the *first born* of all creation” [Col 1.15].

Vs. 10: They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?”

Phone megale or *loud voice* as in 1.10 & 5.2, this time directed, to Christ as *Sovereign Lord* (despotes), a term signifying absolute authority as in the LXX of Is 1.24: “The *Lord* of hosts, the Might One of Israel.” Despotes can apply to a corrupt ruler, but in the verse at hand, this term is described as being hagios and althinos. The question, more like a desperate plea (krazo, *to scream*), may be put in the mouths of those under Christ’s cross as noted in the previous verse. “And Isaiah *cries out* concerning Israel” [Rom 9.27]. Heos pote (*how long*) is used with regard to temporal extension. It is used with regard to knowing when Christ will both *judge* (krino) and *avenge* (ekdikeo) “our blood.” “For *judgment* I came into this world” [Jn 9.39]. “*Vengeance* (ekdikesis) is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” [Rom 12.19, quoting Dt 32.35]. Note that this verse uses the verbal root to the noun shalom (shalam) for *repay* which also means *peace* in the sense of making whole or completing an action. Both judgment and vengeance are applied to those *dwelling* (katoikeo) on earth in the sense of persons who have made the earth (as opposed to heaven) their permanent dwelling place, the place where the blood of those under the altar had been shed.

Vs. 11: Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Note the contrast between blood (the color red) and the *robe* or stole (color white), this being a long, regal type of garment (cf. 7.9 & 14). “And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a *white robe*” [Mk 16.9]. In light of this verse, the souls under the heavenly altar may be taken as witnesses to Christ’s resurrection. Their *rest* (anapauo) extends for a “little *longer*” (kronos), this term referring to temporal extension as opposed to an intemporal kairos event. It is as though such persons were waiting behind stage for completion of the main act or until the other scrolls are opened. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*” [Mt 11.28]. Thus there is a direct interdependence between kronos and anapauo.

The rest lasts a specific time: to *complete* (pleroo) the number of *fellow servants* (sundoulos) and *brethren* (adelphos). The former implies service and the latter fellowship or equality. The verb pleroo is often used regarding the fulfillment of scriptural prophecy as in Mt 1.22: “All this took place to *fulfil* what the Lord had spoken.” No specific number is given in the verse under consideration; implied is that persecution will have come to an end since this number reaches fulfillment when Christians *were to be killed* (apokteino). “And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby *bringing* the hostility *to an end*” [Eph 2.16].

Vs. 12: When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood.

This verse is reminiscent of Is 34.4 and Jl 2.31: “All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll.” “The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.” As for the earthquake: “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split” [Mt 27.51]. Also note Ezk 32.7: “When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light.” Despite the horror of such events, they are done for the purpose of making people say, “Truly this was the Son of God” [Mt 27.54]!

The sun having sackcloth connotes penance; that the brightest object in the sky which gives life takes up such penitential garments much like the citizens of Nineveh: "Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands" [Jon 3.8].

Vs. 13: And the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

For the significance of the fig tree, cf. Mt 21.19: "How did the fig tree wither at once?" While not exactly the same as figs falling at *winter* (olunthos, an unripe fig which grows during winter), both point to an immanent coming of God. The Gospel parable occurs shortly before Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

Anemos: *gale* as Mt 7.25: "And the rain fell, and floods came, and the *winds* blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock." Note the second use of seio (*to shake*), the first being in the previous verse as a noun, seismos (*earthquake*).

Vs. 14: The sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Ouranos for *sky*, the realm where the heavenly bodies dwell. It is interesting to see that the sky is like this six scroll. An apt description for *firmament* is found in Gen 1.7: "And God made the *firmament* and separated the waters which were under the *firmament* from the waters which were above the *firmament*." The Hebrew word is raqyah, that which is *spread out*. For the sky to *vanish* (apochorizo; more accurately, to be removed or separated) suggests returning to that state before God made the firmament, namely, "without form and void" [Gen 1.2]. In other words, the verse at hand is a reversal of the divine creative process.

In addition, mountains and islands—the former being symbolic of eternity—are *removed* (kineo) from their *places* (topos). Cf. Rev 16.20 for a similar verse.

Despite the fact that "every mountain and island was removed from its place" vs. 15 has people of every class taking refuge in caves of mountains.

Vs. 16: Calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

A verse taken from Hos 10.8: "And they shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us,' and to the hills, 'Fall upon us.'" Also cf. Lk 23.30 where Christ quotes this verse en route to his crucifixion which foretells the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Compare the sentiments here with 1 Pt 4.18 which quotes Prov 11.31 (LXX): "If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?"

The desire to be covered by what amounts to a rockslide or avalanche is twofold:

1) to avoid beholding the *face* (prosopon) of God the Father on the throne. The seraphim hide their faces but for a different reason, that is, out of reverence. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" [Is 6.3]. If the entire earth is thus full of divine glory, then even the mountains and rocks of vs. 16 contains this same glory.

2) the Lamb's *wrath* (orge; also *revenge*). "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the *wrath* to come" [Mt 3.7]? Also: "He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the *wrath* of God rests upon him" [Jn 3.36]. Note the verb meno (*to remain*) coupled with the preposition epi (*upon*), signifying an abiding presence of such divine orge.

Vs. 17: "For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"

The word *orge* shifts from belonging to the Lamb in vs. 16 to those wishing to flee from him. “For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it” [Jl 2.11]? “Great day” can be taken as another way of saying a *kairos* event. Joel continues in the next verse with the means of enduring this day: “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” This rending is the exact opposite of wishing to have the rocks and mountains fall on those people wishing to escape the Lamb’s wrath. The exhortation *to stand before* it is summed up in the Greek verb *histemi*; the preposition “before” is lacking, just a simple presence before divine wrath is sufficient in the spirit of repentance stated by the prophet Joel.

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Chapter Seven

Vs. 1: After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

“After this,” a phrase which indicates an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. Note the correspondence between the four angels and four corners of the earth. *Gonia* or *corners* which have four parts can represent the four cardinal directions and four elements of earth, air, fire and water; in brief, the sum of physical creation or as indicated more specifically in vs. 1, the source of these elements. *Gonia* also represents a *cornerstone*: “The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the *corner*” [Mt 21.42, quoting Ps 118.23-3]. The Hebrew word here is *pinah* which also means a *battlement*: “Against the fortified cities and against the lofty *battlements*” [Zeph 1.16].

The verse at hand speaks of four *winds* (*anemos*) as in Mt 24.31: “and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four *winds*, from one end of heaven to the other.” Perhaps Christ had in mind the four angels of Revelation. Vs. 1 has the angels restraining (*krateo*) these winds in order not to harm creation. The preposition *epi* (*upon*) is used with respect to earth, sea and trees. Compare this restrain or implied tranquility with 8.1: “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

Vs. 2: Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea.

Compare two similar forms of movement as though both were equivalent: the angel *ascending* (*anabaino*) and the “*rising* (*anatole*) of the sun.” Implied is that the angel precedes sunrise or perhaps foretells it much as twilight before dawn. He may be paralleled with the Magi of Mt 2.1: “Behold, wise men from the *East* came to Jerusalem” inquiring about the birth of Christ. I.e., they came just prior to sunrise or before his birth. Also vs. 2 contains *anatole*: “We have seen his star in the *East*.”

Seal or *sphragis* as in 5.1, the scroll sealed with seven seals, only in vs. 2 it is more specific, as belonging to the “*living God*” (*zao*), that is, God who is actively engaged in what is going on. Such a seal indicates that God has property rights, so to speak, over his creation, but this emblem is not further designated. Perhaps it is more like a standard for all to behold much like the sun as it comes over the horizon. This particular angel transmits the seal, as it were, to the four angels just mentioned, that is, those endowed with the power to *harm* (*adikeo*), a verb which also means to treat unjustly. “For the *wrongdoer* will be paid back for the *wrong* he has done, and there is no partiality” [Col 3.25].

Vs. 3: saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.”

Note the first person plural, “we,” which includes the four angels as well as the angel with the seal in the previous verse. Also, this angel mentions the *servants* (*doulos*) of “our” God: he acknowledges their subjection to God in the same fashion as his fellow angelic beings.

Forehead or metopon: a verse reminiscent of Gen 4.15: "And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him." Although not specified as on Cain's forehead, this *mark* or 'oth is a sign of favor clearly visible to people. Another reference: "It shall be upon Aaron's *forehead*" [Ex 28.38], that is, referring to a signet with the engraving "Holy to the Lord" [vs. 36]. Such a sign is *zontos* or *living* to correspond with the "*living God*" of vs. 2.

Vs. 4: And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.

Note the verb *hear* (akouo)...John did not see this number as he did with regard to four angels and the other angel in vss. 1 & 2. This number (144,000) was already present rolled up, as it were, and is now fully revealed. As vss. 5-8 describe, this number can signify perfection since it is divisible by the number twelve and pertains to each of the twelve tribes of Israel (also cf. 14.1 & 3). The twelve tribes can trace their origins back to Jacob as their father in Gen 49 where he blesses each one. In the context of this story, Joseph plays the most important role in that as virtual king of Egypt, he was responsible for burying his father Jacob not in that country but in Canaan, the future promised land (cf. 50.12).

Vs. 9: After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.

Another use of "after this," "look" and "behold" which connotes temporal extension of John's vision which took place outside the confines of space and time. Cf. back to 1.10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

Ochlos or *crowd* as in Mt 15.33: "Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a *crowd*?" In the verse at hand, such a multitude is beyond counting; three general categories of human society are enumerated: tribe, people and tongue. Note emphasis upon *tribe* (phule), the basic division of Israel as recounted in vss. 5-8. Compare with Acts 2.5: "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven." The next few verses recounts the wide variety of foreigners at Jerusalem who observed the disciples as they spoke after having been filled with the Holy Spirit. The "great multitude" of vs. 9 can be taken as those who were made disciples and baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28.19).

The redeemed are depicted as before the throne, an inverse image of the tower of Babel: "because the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" [Gen 11.9]. Also note the distinction in vs. 9 between throne and Lamb.

"White robes" or stole as in 6.11; here *periballo* is used for *clothed*, more specifically, to be cast about in the color white as though these people were permeated by it. In addition to these garments, they hold *palm branches* or phoenix in their hands. "So they took branches of *palm trees* and went out to meet him, crying, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel'" [Jn 12.13]! Note that this fabulous bird, the phoenix, is the same term, perhaps due to the branches' resemblance to plumage. This mythical bird died in the fire after which it rose, a symbol which can be applied to Jesus Christ in this triumphal procession into Jerusalem.

Vs. 10: and crying with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!"

An exclamation similar to the one noted in the previous verse, that is, Jn 12.13. There the crowd welcomed Christ as he entered Jerusalem; here they acknowledge him as having entered, as it were, for he is by God the Father on the throne. *Soteria* or *salvation* which in Hebrew is *yeshuah*, the proper name and function of *Jesus* Christ. Note here that such *yeshuah* is first attributed to God (the Father) on the throne and then to Jesus the Lamb; i.e., both share in this salvation which is being disclosed as Revelation continues. (Cf. elsewhere on this Home Page for an article entitled "The Name of Yeshuah and the Psalms" which gives a full list of those this word and its verbal root which forms the basis of the name Jesus. It is located under "Part

Four”).

Vs. 11: And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.

Around or *kuklos* as in 5.11. Here the angels form a circle not only around the throne but the elders and four living creatures, that is, forming an outer circumference embracing these other groups. It is as though their praise were directed through the elders and creatures towards the throne, rather *before* (*enopion*) it. They manifest praise by falling on their faces, a common act of submission. “Then Abram *fell* on his face” [Gen 17.3]. Note the two prepositions used in vs. 11: *upon* (*epi*) and *worship* (*proskuneo*), that is on and then towards.

Vs. 12: saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Observe how this verse begins and ends with *Amen*, a term commonly used to conclude a prayer. Its situation at both ends, as it were, shows that praise of God has no beginning nor end. Seven attributes are given to God; all are joined by “and” as if to show that one flows into another.

Vs. 14: I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “these are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In vs. 13 one of the twenty-four elders asks if John knows the identity and source of those persons first mentioned in vs. 9. Most likely this elder acts as an interpreter for much of John’s vision and continues to speak through vs. 17, the conclusion of chapter seven. John defers to the elder who begins to give the source, the *pothen* (*whence*, vs. 13 and *ek*, *from*, vs. 14), which is the “great *tribulation*” (*thlipsis*): “For then there will be great *tribulation* such as not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be” [Mt 24.21]. This verse has its precedent in Dan 12.1 in conjunction with “Michael, the great prince.” Those who destined to be delivered from this cataclysm are “written in the book,” that is, they are rolled up, so to speak, much like the scrolls of Revelation. Cf. vs. 4: “but you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end.” Such rolling up of the scroll/book makes knowledge grow: “Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase.”

Those clothed in white have come *out* (*ek*) of the great *thlipsis*, the location where they had *washed* their robes (*pluno*). This is a special type of washing: whiteness derives from redness, of blood, and is akin to baptism: “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized” [Mk 10.38]?

Vs. 15: Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.

The place of arrival after having experienced the “great tribulation” for those in white robes is “*before* (*enopion*) the throne of God” as in vs. 9. It is these people as opposed to the angelic hosts that gets John’s attention and makes him inquire (vs. 14) about them. *To serve* (*latreuo*) as in Mt 4.10 (taken from Dt 6.13): “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you *serve*.” Thus *latreuo* connotes worship in a priestly sense as in a *temple* (*naos*, better, ‘sanctuary’) as vs. 15 point out. Compare with Lk 2.37: “She (the prophetess Anna) did not depart from the *temple*, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.” Here the word *hieron* is used which means the precincts compared with the inner sanctuary inferred by *naos*. Anna also engages in *latreuo*.

To shelter or *skenoo*: literally, “to live in a tent,” that is, God will “tent” those before the throne. Cf. Jn 1.14: “And the Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us” or pitched his tent among us. The Greek has *en* for *among*, “*in* us.” With this incarnational verse in mind, the verse under discussion can imply that God will make Christ the tent. Note that vs. 15 has “*upon* (*epi*) the throne” and “*upon* (*epi*) them” (in the Greek). “Tenting”

involves presence.

Vs. 16: They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

Skenoo involves physical satisfaction of hunger and thirst as well as protection against the sun's rays. Cf. Sg 2.3 for an expression of this sentiment: "With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." The verse at hand is a quote from Is 49.10 which continues further with "for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them," reminiscent of the words of Ps 23. The Hebrew verb *racham* (*to pity*) is an expression of tender pity and mercy.

Vs. 17: For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Several times Revelation mentions the throne *upon* (*epi*) which God is sitting. Here Christ the Lamb is situated in its *midst* (*ana meson*), which can also mean *between* which if taken literally could imply several thrones. It is as though the Lamb were somehow interpenetrating God *epi* with regards to the throne; it is also as though he were seating on God's lap or even between God and the throne itself. Nevertheless, this image reveals the intimate connection between God the Father and Jesus Christ.

It is from this "midst-ness" that the Lamb will function as *shepherd* (*poimaino*, verb). Note use of future tense for the rest of this verse; action is yet to be completed. "And I will set up over them one *shepherd*, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their *shepherd*" [Ezk 34.23]. There also comes to mind the classic image of Christ as Good Shepherd: "The good *shepherd* lays down his life for the sheep" [Jn 10.11]. The Hebrew noun for this is *roheh*, a rich word from which is also derived *raheyah*, *love*, as found in nine places in the Song of Songs, for instance, 2.10, "Rise up, my *love*, my fair one."

Implied in vs. 17 is that the sheep are thirsty, not hungry, which is why the shepherd will lead his flock not just to water but to "*springs* (*pege*) of living water." I.e., a spring indicates that point at which water wells up from beneath the ground and is the source of water...where one could say that it is most *alive* (*zoes*). Compare such water with that of Ps 23.2: "He leads me beside *still* waters." The Hebrew reads "waters of *quietness*;" *menuchah*, from the verbal root *nuach*, which is related to the verb *na'ah*: "Like cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them *rest*" [Is 63.14].

Tears (*dakruon*) hearkens back to that "great tribulation" of vs. 14. This part of the verse at hand is lifted from Is 25.8: "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord will wipe away *tears* from all faces." Also cf. Rev 21.4 for the same verse.

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Chapter Eight

Vs. 1: When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

The seventh and final seal which caused a temporal pause in heaven in the form of *silence* (*sigē*). While relatively short, this thirty minute chronos-logical interval is significant in the context of Revelation with a sequence of rapidly evolving events. The only other two New Testament references with this word: "And when there was a great *hush*, he (Paul) spoke to them in the Hebrew language" [Acts 21.40]. The verb form: "And they *kept silence* and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen (about Christ's Transfiguration, Lk 9.36). This instance of silence is not unlike that of the verse at hand with its two dramatic events.

Vs. 2: Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

These seven angels may be the ones associated with the seven churches in chapters two and three. If so, then

the seven churches may be included along with the angels standing “before God” (enopion). Compare such standing before God with Rev 1.4: “and from the seven spirits who are *before* his throne.”

“Were given:” aorist passive denotes that an intermediary gave the angels trumpets as opposed to God giving them directly. Perhaps any one or more angels were involved here. Salpix for *trumpet* as in 1.10: “a loud voice like a *trumpet*.” As noted elsewhere, seven of these instruments played a crucial role in bringing down the walls of Jericho (cf. chap. 6). There they preceded the ark of the Lord (cf. vs. 6); thus their location is important as though the Lord transmitted sound from his ark to these trumpets and then against Jericho’s defenses.

Vs. 3: And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne.

“Golden *censer*” (libanotos) as in 1 Chron 9.29 where reference is made to incense, not its container: “Other were appointed over...all the holy utensils, also over the fine flour, wine, oil, *incense* and the spices.” For a related word (libanos): “They (Magi) offered him gifts, gold and *frankincense* and myrrh.” In the verse at hand, the altar (cf. 6.9) is located before the throne and hence within the heavenly tabernacle. Note the angel’s position: “at the altar;” epi also meaning *upon* which here means right at the altar, almost as though the angel were hovering over it.

There is a connection between the amount of *incense* (thumiama) and “*prayers* of all the saints,” proseuche meaning more petitionary prayer or intercession. Thus incense and prayer are one in the same with the implication that both rise like smoke from below to above. In 5.8 the twenty-four elders hold such bowls of incense.

The Greek text lacks “mingle.” The “golden *altar*” (thusiasterion) is a place where sacrifices were made; cf. 6.9 but here altar is specified as being made of gold. Its location is also epi with regard to the throne (cf. paragraph above, epi regarding the altar). “And you shall put the *golden altar* for incense before the ark of the testimony and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle” [Ex 40.5].

Vs. 4: And the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.

Anabaino for *to rise*; here with respect to incense’s smoke and the saints’ prayers, implying that both have been burnt and have assumed a new substance. The angel’s hand acts as a censer (cf. vs. 3), so incense and prayers do not rise from the altar as one would imagine. This angel is situated “before God” (enopion). In a sense, we have here a degree of ascent from small to large starting with incense and prayers, moving to the angel and then to God.

Vs. 5: Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightening and an earthquake.

Two verses come to mind: Lev 16.12: 1) “And he shall take a *censer* full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small; and he shall bring it within the veil.” 2) Ezk 10.2: “Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” Vs. 5 again mentions this *censer* or libanotos in conjunction with *filling* (gemizo) it with the altar’s fire which he then casts on the earth. Note the preposition eis for *on* or *into*, denoting full penetration of earth by this divine fire.

Such fire causes disruption on earth: thunder, noise, lightening and earthquake, which pertain to the divine throne in 4.5. This atmosphere associated with divine revelation is transferred to the physical realm as in Ex 19.16: “On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightening and a thick cloud upon the mountains, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.” In the Leviticus passage above, the incense is brought within the *veil* or paroketh which concealed the Holy of Holies. “And behold, the *curtain* of the temple was torn in tow, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split” [Mt 27.51]. Also: “By the new and living way which he opened for us through the *curtain*,

that is, through his flesh" [Heb 10.20].

Verses 6-13 or through the end of chapter eight, mentions the first of seven angels which may be outlined as follows:

-vs. 6: All seven angels *prepare* (etoimazo) to blow the trumpets which in the context of the Jericho event, is marching around the city (cf. 6.7). Perhaps these angels did the same with regard to the entire earth, that is, they marched all around it. As with the Jericho account, the ark of the Lord preceded the priests and people (cf. vs. 7). Keep in mind the plagues God inflicted on Egypt through Moses. Also note the division of three or a third. Perhaps this division is large enough to inspire awe while at the same time not fully destroying natural resources.

-vs. 7: First angel; result of his trumpet blast is hail and fire mixed with blood. A third of the earth caught fire. Cf. Ex 19.16-19.

-vss. 8-9: Second angel; a mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, killing a third of its living creatures and a third of its ships. Cf. Ex 7.20-1.

-vss. 10-11: Third angel; a large star called *Wormwood* (Apsinthos) fell on a third of earth's rivers and fountains resulting in people dying because of the water. "I will feed this people with *wormwood* and give them poisonous water to drink" [Jer 9.15].

-vs. 12: Fourth angel; third of sun, moon and stars were struck or darkened as well as a third of the night. "For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light" [Is 13.10]. And, "There will be *signs* in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves" [Lk 21.25]. Semeion means *sign* which foreshadows Christ's coming "in a cloud with power and great glory" [vs. 27].

-vs. 13: An *eagle* (aetos); this term can also refer to a vulture. Note its location, *mid-heaven* (mesouranema): cf. 19.17 for another use of this term with regard to birds of prey. He cries out *woe* three times (ouai) as a warning to earth's inhabitants, more specifically, to prepare them for the remaining three trumpets.

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Chapter Nine

The entirety of this chapter deals with the next two angels and may be outlined as follows:

-vs. 1: The fifth angel, vss. 1-12. He begins by a blowing his trumpet causing John the observer to see a star falling to earth which can represent Satan falling to earth: "I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven" [Lk 10.18]. This identity of Satan with a star, more accurately, a shooting star which appears bright for a brief moment and then disappears, is born out by the rest of vs. 1. Note that he fell "*into* (eis) earth." Once there, he was given the key to the "bottomless pit." The words "was given" or the passive indicates that God is in control of events. *Pit* or abussos is the home of the dead: "Who will descend into the *abyss*?, that is, to bring Christ up from the dead" [Rom 10.7]. Here Christ is described as having descended into this pit but does not remain there as is the case with Satan. Compare with Eph 4.8 which quotes Ps 68.18: "When he ascended on high he led a hosts of captives, and he gave gifts to men." Satan is not necessarily present in this pit; rather, he is given the key to it, the opposite of the apostolic privilege: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" [Mt 16.19].

-vs. 2: Here either the fifth angel or the star/Satan (not clear which, most likely the latter) opens the *shaft* (phrear; also means *well*) to this pit resulting in smoke as from a *furnace* (kapnos). "The smoke of the land (referring to Sodom and Gomorrah) went up like the smoke of a *furnace*" [Gen 19.28]. Contrast this image with the offering of incense mentioned earlier.

-vs. 3: From the smoke came locusts, that is, from the bottomless pit, reminiscent of Ex 10.15: "They covered the face of the whole land so that the land was darkened." Such locusts had the capacity (again, "was given," as to indicate ultimate divine authority) to bite like scorpions. "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you" [Lk 10.19]. Note the direct transmission of *power* (exousia) as opposed to the indirect transmission already noted, "was given."

-vs. 4: These locusts/scorpions were commissioned to *harm* (adikeo, as in 2.11 & 6.6) only persons without the "seal of God" (sphragis). Cf. 7.2-3 which mentions this same word but with regard to the "living God." "Go through the city, throughout Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it" [Ezk 9.4]. Perhaps there is a connection between this seal and those belonging to the seven seals, as though persons with it are immune to the seven destructive forces unleashed upon their unrolling. A similar notion is expressed with regard to the seven plagues against Egypt. Although the Egyptians suffered, Israel did not; for example: "Only in the land of Goshen where the people of Israel were, there was no hail" [Ex 9.26].

-vs. 6: As a result of the locusts' sting, men will seek death but not find it: "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'" [Mt 23.30].

-vss. 7-10: A description of the locusts: like horses for battle, crowns of gold, human faces, woman's hair, lion's teeth, scales like iron breastplates, wings sounded like chariots, tails like scorpions, their stings lasted five months. Contrast the locusts' armor with that of faith in Jesus Christ. The italicized terms are those defensives to combat the locusts: "Having girded your loins with *truth* and having put on the *breastplate* of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the *equipment* of the gospel of peace; above all taking the *shield* of faith with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the *helmet* of salvation and the *sword* of the Spirit which is the word of God" [Eph 6.14-17]. In sum we have truth, breastplate, equipment, shield, helmet and sword to counter the locusts.

-vs. 11: King over locusts: the angel of bottomless *pit* (abussos). The Hebrew name is Abaddon (Destruction) and the Greek name is Apollyon (Destroyer). "Sheol is naked before God, and *Abaddon* has no covering" [Job 26.6].

-vs. 13: Introduction of the second angel who also blows his trumpet. He receives instructions from a *voice* (phone) or in the Greek text, "one voice." While certainly attributable to God, it is not expressly mentioned here. The voice's location, however, is enough to associate it with him: "*from* (ek) four horns of the golden altar." While one, this phone is four-fold or from these *horns* (keras). "And you shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and its sides round about and its *horns*" [Ex 30.3]. Note that this altar is one on which incense is to be burned (cf. vs. 1). The location of this incense-altar is "*before* (enopion) God."

-vs. 14: This one/four-fold voice gives a command to release the four angels at the River Euphrates, eastern boarder of the Roman Empire. Note the transference of this one voice to one angel and then to four angels.

-vs. 15: The four angels are held in readiness for a specific time which here is given ascending from the smallest to the greatest division of time in the sense of chronos: hour, day, month and year. Their purpose: to kill a third of mankind.

-vs. 16: Number of troops released by the four angels: twice ten thousand times ten thousand or two hundred million. John hears their number, not necessarily sees it.

-vs. 17: John states that this hearing takes place in the context of a *vision* (horasis). "And your young men shall see *visions*" [Acts 2.17, quoting from Joel]. Refer back to 1.10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Thus the Holy Spirit and Sunday are part of this vision. Vs. 17 continues to describe the horses and riders: breastplates the color of fire, sapphire and sulphur; horse heads like heads of lions with fire, smoke and sulphur issuing from their mouths which slew a third of mankind (vss. 18-19).

-vs. 20: Despite such horrible plagues, the rest of mankind did not *repent* (metanoeo) which here has two parts: 1) their works and worship of demons and 2) murders, sorceries, immorality and theft (vs. 21). “*Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand*” [Mt 3.2]. Perhaps such persons failed to see the role the four angels had in sending these plagues.

Chapter Ten

Vs. 1: Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head and his face was like the sun and his legs like pillars of fire.

Verses 10.1 through 11.13 provide an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. Contrast this “*mighty angel*” (ischuros, in the sense of being strong) with the *little scroll* (biblaridion) in the next verse. He is *descending* (katabaino) from heaven to earth, an action inverse to Christ’s ascension: “This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” [Acts 1.11]. The angel is *wrapped* (periballo) in a cloud, that is, fully surrounded by it much like YHWH on Mount Sinai: “Lo, I am coming to you in a *thick cloud*, that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe you forever” [Ex 19.9]. The Hebrew here is behav hehanan, the former term signifying anything dark.

In addition to this (dark) cloud, the angel has a *rainbow* (iris, cf. 4.3) over his head; most likely this phenomenon signifies that the cloud is full of rain and that the storm has passed. “I set my *bow* in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant (i.e., the ‘little scroll’) which is between me and the earth” [Gen 9.13].

The angel’s face resembled the sun and his legs, pillars of fire. Thus the image is of the angel’s torso being enwrapped in the cloud with the rest of his body endowed with a luminous quality. Stulos for *pillar* (cf. 3.12): “And the Lord went before them by day in a *pillar* of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a *pillar* of fire to give them light” [Ex 13.21]. Thus we have two types of pillars or means of support. Note that both are not stationary but are in the process of moving.

Vs. 2: He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.

Biblaridion for *little scroll* in contrast to 5.1’s (and elsewhere) *scroll* (biblion). The perfect passive participle of anoigo (*to open*) suggests that this book has been opened in heaven before the angel’s descent and will remain so into the future.

Two uses of the preposition epi (*upon*): sea and land. Implied here is that both feet rest upon the surface of each element, not in it as in the sea, symbolic of God’s lordship over the two.

Vs. 3: And called out with a loud voice like a lion roaring; when he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

A continuation from the previous verse where the mighty angel *roars* (mukaomai) like a lion quite different from the one of Ps 22.13: “They open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and *roaring* lion.” However, the angel’s roaring is a threat to those who hide themselves from God as depicted in the last several verses.

“Seven *thunders*” (bronte) as in 6.1 with regard to one of the four living creatures. These thunders are not specified, but again consider the importance of the number seven which was noted earlier. They may correspond to the seven churches and seven angels whose trumpet blasts sound like thunder. Often thunder is used to signify God speaking, and Psalm 27 has the following characteristics of this divine voice: powerful, full of majesty, breaks cedars of Lebanon, makes Lebanon skip like a calf, makes Sirion skip like a young wild ox, shakes the wilderness of Kadesh, makes oaks whirl, strips forests bare. Also note that vs. 7 has this same voice “flash forth flames of fire.” I.e., the invisible voice manifests itself not only by sound but by light.

Vs. 4: And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.”

Here John stands ready to record the sound of the seven thunders but a *voice* (phone) hinders him. Such a voice is not identified, perhaps from God or an angel “*from* (ek) heaven.” This phrase situates John as not being in heaven per se but in a kind of middle ground of “in the Spirit” (1.10) when he started having his vision. Nevertheless, John proceeds not to write but to *seal* (sphragizo) what he heard. In a sense, this action is opposite to that of the “little seal” of vs. 2. Thus John resembles one of the angels by his sealing; he alone is entrusted with knowing the content of this sounding by the seven thunders. “The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told is true; but *seal up* the vision, for it pertains to many days hence” [Dan 8.26].

Vs. 5: And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven.

Such *lifting up* (airo) of one’s hand—in this case an angelic one—can be the sign of a pledge or an oath which follows in the next verse. Both vss. 4 & 5 are taken from Dt 32.40 and Dan 12.7 respectively: “For I (Moses) *lift up* my hand to heaven and swear, as I live forever.” “The man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the stream *raised* his right hand and his left hand toward heaven; and I heard him swear by him who lives forever that it would be for a time...when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished.” Note that the verse under consideration has “*into* (eis) heaven” as though his hand penetrated into its very center.

Vs. 6: and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there should be no more delay.

In the verse above cf. “*into* (eis) heaven” and compare with “*forever* (eis tous aionas) and ever.” It is as though the two prepositions demonstrate a unity between the angel’s swearing an oath and God’s eternity. This “*eis-ness*” is carried over into the three divisions of creation: “what is *in* (en) it.” The *oath* (omnumai) here pertains to a hastening of the fulfillment of God’s plan contained in the little scroll. The word for *delay* here is chronos which also means temporal extension. I.e., that there should be no more time left.

Vs. 7: but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.

Another use of the preposition en (*in*) with respect to “days of the trumpet *call*” (phone), this term implying a personal note to the trumpet’s sound. Again, refer to the number seven as used pertaining to the siege and fall of Jericho where the priests sounded the trumpet (6.8). Hotan (*when*) in the Greek text is used here to show the simultaneity of the days, trumpet call and the angel. It serves to introduce the *fulfillment* (teleo) or completion of temporal extension noted in the last verse by the word chronos. “After this Jesus, knowing that all was now *finished*, said (to *fulfil* the scripture, Ps 69.21), ‘I thirst,’” [Jn 19.28]. Here teleo is used twice, once with regard to the entirety of his mission and second, with regard to a particular Psalm verse.

Musterion or *mystery* connotes a secret, hidden purpose known only to initiates, in this case belonging to God. “...and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the *mystery* which was kept secret for long ages” [Rom 16.25]. In the verse at hand, musterion refers to the prophets: “Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing his *secret* to his servants the prophets” [Am 3.7]. The Hebrew sod has a wider sense as in Ps 24.14: “ Vs. 14: The *friendship* of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. Those who enjoy divine friendship, sod, stem from Jacob/Israel as in vs. 13; it requires that fear of Prov 1.7. Sod also means a *couch, assembly*, therefore an abiding relationship; the notion of reclining may be associated with sharing a meal as Christ with his disciples at the Last Supper. At a sod there is often intimate conversation, reminiscent of Christ’s discourse on his mission and coming of the Holy Spirit, that is, Christ divulged to the disciples his *covenant*, beryth: “for this is my blood of the *covenant*, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” [Mt 26.28].

Vs. 8: Then the voice which I had heard from heaven spoke to me again saying, “Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.”

Note the preposition “to (meta; also means *with*) me,” signifying not so much a command which is present here but a conversation. John’s going implies that he has to move from his place as observer to become an active participant. He takes the *scroll* or *biblion* from the angel mentioned in vs. 2 where the word *biblaridion* (*little scroll*) is used. Both scrolls are open; the latter seems intended for John as opposed to the former which is not. For John to get this *biblion*, he must traverse that in-between space, as it were, because the angel holding it is standing on both sea and land.

Vs. 9: So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, “Take it and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach but sweet as honey in your mouth.”

A verse reminiscent of Ezk 2.8-3.3 where the scroll contains “lamentation and woe.” This scrolls which Ezekiel eats is sweet to the taste; the one John eats is similarly *sweet* (*glukos*) but *bitter* (*pikraino*) in his stomach. Note the use of *biblaridion* or *little scroll* in contrast to the regular *scroll* (*biblion*) in vs. 8. This verse does not mention the angel holding open the former but does not preclude him having it. The sweetness in John’s mouth is transitory despite its comparison with honey; its transference into bitterness is more abiding as it stays in the stomach.

Compare this sweetness and bitterness with Ps 34.8: “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” The Hebrew verb *taham* (*taste*) involves full perception which here immediately results in seeing not the Lord himself but that he is *good* or *tov*.

Vs. 10 restates vs. 9 but from John’s perspective, indicating that he is willing to follow the angel standing on sea and land; cf. remarks under vs. 8 above.

Vs. 11: And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”

The purpose of eating the little scroll, namely, for John to *prophesy* or *propheteuo*. This is in the form of a command, *dei* (*must*), which in Greek is combined with *legousin moi*, *they said to me*. “I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall *prophesy*” [Acts 2.18, citing J1 3.28]. In the verse at hand, John is bidden to prophesy *again* (*palin*) which refers to the second half of Revelation, that is, to its conclusion.

The preposition *epi* (*upon, over*) is used with regard to peoples, nations, tongues and kings, a way of saying that John’s prophecy will be “upon” them or from a position of authority much as God speaks from “above” to that which is “below.” For a correspondence of this *epi*, cf. Jer 1.10: “See, I have set you this day *over* nations and *over* kingdoms.”

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Chapter Eleven

Vs. 1: Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there.

The *rod* (*kalamos*) and *staff* (*rhabdos*) are symbolic of John’s prophecy in that he may be said to be a type of Moses. The passive “was given” is used, most likely by the angel but perhaps to show that these two objects came from God. *Kalamos* fundamentally means a reed. “What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A *reed* shaken by the wind” [Mt 11.7]? Also, “Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates...with nard and saffron, *calamus* and cinnamon” [Sg 4.14]. With the Song verse in mind—the image of a garden enclosed—it may be seen as paralleling the similarly enclosed space of the temple John was bidden to measure. John’s rod was “like a staff,” the same term used in 2.27, “a rod of iron” (cf. that section). For another reference to *rhabdos*: “By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his *staff*” [Heb 11.21].

Another passive verb: “I was told,” the result of which has three parts: *rise* (*egeiro*) in the sense of be awakened

as well as to stand up. Once awoken, John is told to *measure* or *metreo* the temple at Jerusalem as well as its altar. This is similar to Zech 2.2: “Where are you going? And he said to me, ‘To *measure* Jerusalem, to see what is its breadth and what is its length.’” The Hebrew term is *chevel*, something twisted or braided which can be applied to anything inherited in the sense of having been meted out for one’s possession. Another verse: “When he brought me there, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like bronze, with a line of flax and a *measuring* reed in his hand” [Ezk 40.3]. The Hebrew term is *madah* which connotes extension. This second verse introduces a detailed description of temple area through chapter 42 which introduces the next chapter where “behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east.”

The second part to be measured is the *altar* or *thusuasterion* as in 6.9 under which resided the souls of those who had been slain.

The third part to be measured are persons who *worship* (*proskuneo*) in the temple. Usually the act of measuring applies to inanimate objects. Since the temple and altar are intimately related to Israel as a nation, such measuring applies to their act of worship. John was determining the “breadth and length and height and depth” of Christ’s love [Eph 3.18].

Vs. 2: But do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.

Aule for *court* which was reserved for non-Jewish people, in this case *nations* (*ethnos*), the equivalent of *goy*: “I will scatter you among the *nations* and disperse you through the countries, and I will consume your filthiness out of you” [Ezk 22.15]. *Ethnos* is accentuated by the adverb *exothern* (*outside*), and the two are mutually interchangeable. According to the prophetic books, the worst curse for Israel to endure is dispersion among nations, especially being driven from the Jerusalem temple.

John is bidden not to *measure* (*metreo*) *exothern* which is further emphasized the command, *leave that out* or *ekbale exothern*, a second use of this same adverb. *Exballo* is a strong verb meaning to vigorously cast or throw something *out* (*ek*). Here the verb has a sense of permanent abandonment, never to be recovered.

Because the exterior court lacks divine measurement, the nations will *trample* (*pateo*) not only the temple but Jerusalem. “When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this *trampling* of my courts” [Is 1.12]? A temporal duration is set for this *pateo*, forty-two months or three and one-half years. “And I heard him swear by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished” [Dan 12.7].

Vs. 3: And I will grant me two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

The conclusion of the words spoken to John by that voice from heaven (10.8) which here assumes a personal nature, “I.” *Martus* or *witness*, not mentioned but possibly referring to Zerubbabel and Joshua (Zech 3.14) as well as Elijah and Moses (2 Kg 1.10). Regardless of who they are, these witnesses which act as a pair and thus have greater authority, are to *prophesy* (*propheteuo*); cf. 10.11 where John is given this ability with regard to peoples, nations, tongues and kings. In the case at hand, such prophecy has a specific duration, one thousand two hundred and sixty days or the forty-two months as in the previous verse. That is, their prophecy will last the same time as the nations when they trample Jerusalem.

Rev 6.12 has the sun “black as *sackcloth*” (*sakkos*), a sign of mourning. The verse at hand has the verb *periballo* (*clothed*) in the sense of being enveloped. One example is the population of Nineveh: “Let every man and beast be covered with *sackcloth*” [Jon 3.8]. Joshua in Zech 3.3 was clothed with filthy garments, and God exchanged them for “rich apparel” [vs. 4].

Vs. 4: These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth. Comparison of the two unnamed prophets first to *olives trees* (*elaia*) because they provide fuel for the

lampstands (luchnia) which may be compared with the seven in 1.12; they in turn are related to the seven churches to which Revelation is addressed. "I am like a green *olive tree* in the house of the Lord" [Ps 52.8]. Rahnan is the word for *green*. "He is like a tree planted by water...for its leaves remain *green*" [Jer 17.8].

With regard to the lampstands: "You shall make a *lampstand* of pure gold" [Ex 25.31] which is for the altar. Note the singular case as opposed to the plural. It is made "after the pattern which is being shown you on the mountain" [vs. 40] which is not unlike the "mountain" where John is receiving his revelation of these events.

Both prophets as olive trees and lampstands are *before* the Lord, enopion, more specifically, the Lord of "all the earth." That is to say, the two prophets are sent from heaven to earth.

Vs. 5: And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if anyone would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed.

Adikeo for *to harm*, the same verb used, for example, in 2.11; here the verb is in conjunction with thelo (*to wish, would*), the present tense. Because the two prophets witness on God's behalf, they are protected by him. What they behold on earth to which they are sent thereby participates in the son of man's eyes which "were like a flame of *fire* (pur)" [1.14]. In light of this, this divine fire flows from Christ's eyes to the prophets' mouth; note singular as though to signify that they spoke as one man. "Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him" [2 Sam 22.9]. Such words are situated within the context of God at the Red Sea; cf. Ps 18 which is similar to chapter twenty-two. The fire of vs. 5 is for *consuming* (katesthio) foes, the same verb used for the LXX of Is 1.7: "Your country lies desolate, your cities are *burned* with fire."

The verse at hand repeats the same injunction with regard to adikeo where the accompanying same verb (thelo) is now in the aorist active subjunctive, indicating a more vague type of threat. The Greek for "doomed" is dei, *it is necessary*, suggesting predetermination and a sense of binding.

Vs. 6: They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

The two unnamed prophets can prevent rainfall, reminiscent of Elijah to whom God said "there shall be neither dew nor *rain* these years except by my word" [1 Kg 17.1]. Here God's word parallels the prophets' act of *prophesying*, the noun propheteia being used. Note that such prophecy is restricted to days which implies a kairos or special time; according to 11.3 this kairos last 1260 days. Also their prophecy is divinely mandated: exousia or *power*. "Since you have given him *power* over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him" [Jn 17.2].

The second exousia is with respect to waters which here suggests potable water. The two prophets resemble Moses and Aaron: "and all the water that was in the Nile turned to *blood*" [Ex 7.20]. Moses effected this transformation through his rod; while the two prophets of Revelation were not given a rod, John was given a measuring rod (cf. 11.1).

The third exousia is to inflict earth with *plagues* (plege) which are indefinite as opposed to the specific seven plagues of Exodus. The two prophets could do this at *will* (thelo being the verb).

Vs. 7: And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them.

Finished or teleo in the sense of bringing to a completion at the end of their *testimony* (marturia) which lasts 1260 days. This verb connotes attainment of a given time, a kairos, which is either complete in and by itself or sets the stage for something else. For the use of a noun derived from this verb, cf. Heb 7.11: "Now if *perfection* had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, what further need would there have been for another

priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek?”

The finishing mentioned in this verse leads from the kairos of the two prophets' testimony to the kairos of the *beast* or therion which connotes something wild and untamed. It is at this juncture that the beast makes his entry into Revelation. “All you *beasts* of the field, come to devour” [Is 56.9]. He ascends from the *bottomless pit* (abussos) or lowest part of the earth; cf. 9.1 where the fifth angel is given a key to this place. “And four great *beasts* came up out of the sea, different from one another” [Dan 7.3]. Also, “As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them” [vs. 7.21]. Perhaps the number four can be taken as the opposite to the traditional four cardinal directions as well as the four elements of earth, air, fire and water.

The beast's kairos consists in three stages against the two prophets: making war, conquering and then killing them.

Vs. 8: And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt where their Lord was crucified.

The city is Jerusalem, the adjective *great* (megalos) suggesting it being center of Israel's religion centered upon the temple. Note singular *street* (plateia) as well as singular *body* (ptoma, “of them”); cf. vs. 5 with singular mouth and the two prophets. Compare the singular street of this Jerusalem with the equally singular street of the heavenly Jerusalem: “and the *street* of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass” [21.21].

The Greek for *allegorically* is pneumatikos which literally reads *spiritually* as referring to Sodom and Egypt. The former was destroyed because God did not find even ten righteous people in it (cf. Gen 18.32); the latter was the scene of seven plagues and the land which held Israel bondage. “If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah” [Is 1.9].

There seems to be a connection between pneumatikos and hopou (*where*), that is, a direct correspondence between Jerusalem and Christ's crucifixion as well as the two prophets. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you” [Lk 13.34]! Although this Jerusalem has one street as noted above, Christ was crucified outside the city (cf. Mt 27.32-3).

Vs. 9: For three days and a half men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb.

The preposition ek (*from*) is used with people, tribes, tongues and nations to indicate that not everyone from these groups is involved, only an unspecified amount. Such were gathered in Jerusalem and may be contrasted with those who witnessed Pentecost (cf. Acts 2.5-12). The time period during which these peoples *gazed* (blepo) at the two dead prophets is three and a half days. Compare with the comparable time (another kairos) between Christ's death and resurrection: “and when he is killed after three days he will rise” [Mk 9.31].

Mnema is the word for *tomb*. “And laid him in a *tomb* which had been hewn out of the rock” [Mk 15.46]. It is as though the temporal duration of three and one half days is intended for all the people assembled in Jerusalem to behold the slain prophets. Perhaps this seeing has a relevance with the bronze serpent Moses fashioned to cure the people: “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live” [Num 21.9]. In this instance, seeing effects life.

Vs. 10: And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

Those *dwelling on* earth (katoikeo) in the sense of making a permanent home. Such permanency is also associated with Satan: “I know where you *dwell*, where Satan's throne is” [2.13]. Such persons may include the groups of people in the previous verse as well as others who share their earthly permanency. Those who witnessed the prophets' deaths acted as emissaries to proclaim their demise, the opposite of Christ's commission “to make disciples of all nations” [Mt 28.19].

As a result of hearing such “good news,” earthly dwellers express their delight by *rejoicing* (*chairo*), *making merry* (*euphraino*) and *exchange of presents* (*dora pempo*). The Greek adds *allelou* (*one another*) to stress the intensity of this joy. The obvious cause is that their *torment* (*basanizo*, verb) has been apparently cured. Compare with that torment sent by the fifth angel in the form of locusts: “They were allowed to *torture* them for five months but not to kill them, and their *torture* was like the *torture* of a scorpion” [9.5]. It is though the earthly dwellers sought revenge for this fifth plague. Note the second use of *katoikeo*; it and the first one have the preposition *epi* (*upon*) to signify permanence.

Vs. 11: But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

A verse reminiscent of Ezk 37: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live” [vs. 9]. Here *breath* is *ruach*, a term commonly used for the (Holy) Spirit. In the verse at hand note the use of prepositions: “breath of life *from* (*ek*) God *entered* (*eiserchomai*; prefix *eis*, *into*) them.” I.e., a singular “from” effects a double “into,” signifying thorough penetration by the divine *ruach*. Such penetration is signified by the two prophets “standing on their feet:” they are fully and thoroughly alive. The Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *ruach* here is *pneuma*; better, it is associated with *life* (*zoe*).

As a result of this in-breathing people who *saw* (*theoreo*) the two revived prophets were afraid. Note use of the verb which signifies a beholding, not just a simple gaze. The impact of such beholding is enhanced by the fact that the people weren’t simply afraid; rather, fear fell *upon* (*epi*) them...it impacted them with as much thoroughness as the *ruach* which revived the prophets.

Verse 11 may be read in light of the Pentecost event: “and they (onlookers) were amazed and wondered” [Acts 2.7].

Vs. 12: Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up hither!” And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud.

Compare with 4.1, the same command to *ascend* (*anabaino*): “And the first voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘*Come up* hither, and I will show you what must take place after this.’” Once the divine *pneuma/ruach* had entered the two prophets, they do not remain on earth but are summoned *hither* (*hode*) or in a place which is radically different from their previous condition. Here a “loud voice” effects the command; with respect to Christ’s Ascension (*anabasis*), he accomplished this by having been acted upon: “He *was lifted up*, and a cloud took him out of their sight” [Acts 1.9]. Also, cf. Elijah’s ascent: “And Elijah *went up* by a whirlwind into heaven” [2 Kg 2.11].

Addition of the prophets’ foes who beheld this event enhances the dramatic element. Note that the Greek text uses the verb *theoreo* again, *they saw*. Both the above two ascents occur in the sight of disciples as opposed to *foes* (*echthros*).

Vs. 13: And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Hour (*hora*) is the equivalent to a *kairos* event, the book of Revelation forming one with numerous subdivisions. The *kairos* under consideration consists of an *earthquake* (*seismos*) much as at Christ’s crucifixion: “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the *earth shook*, and the rocks were split” [Mt 27.51]. In addition to a relatively small part of Jerusalem being destroyed—the other nine tenths are to remain as witness for further events or *kairoi*—seven thousand people perish. The Greek text reads, “the *names* (*onoma*) of men.” Use of “name” can imply a more thorough destruction, name being synonymous with the essence of a person or thing. “Whose *names* are in the book of life” [Phil 4.3].

The destruction in vs. 13 first causes *terror* (*emphobos*), the prefix *em-* signifying thoroughness. Such terror is

not an end in itself but to cause those so penetrated to give God *glory* (*doxa*). Note the added “of heaven” as to stress the sharp distinction between it and the events taking place on earth.

Vs. 14: The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

A brief statement with regard to the second of seven *woes* or *ouai*. This word is an interjection as well as a noun; cf. 8.13. The adverb *tachu* is used for *soon* which implies quickly. This suddenness may be contrasted with the verb *aperchomai*, *to pass*.

Vs. 15: Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

Cf. 8.2: “Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.” The verse at hand has a direct correspondence between this *trumpet* (*salpizo*, the verb being used) and “*loud* (*megalos*, *great*) voices.” As noted in other places, the number seven suggests the fall of Jericho. There the priests blew the trumpets at Joshua’s command; he also told the Israelites to shout (cf. Jos 6.16), a direct result of the trumpet sound.

Vs. 15 does not specify the source of voices, only their location, heaven. From their position there, such voices proclaim a transference of two locations with one common element, *kingdom* (*basileia*), which suggests a hierarchy and distribution of power. The Greek text brings out the definitive nature of this transference by the word order: *of world* (*tou kosmou*) *of Lord* (*tou kuriou*), *of Christ* (*tou Christou*). Compare with Jn 18.36: “My *kingship* is not of this world.” Here the preposition *ek* (*from*) is used with respect to *kosmos*; Christ’s rule does not emanate *from* the world which is a different sense from vs. 15’s *tou* (*kosmou*).

Vs. 15 clearly states that Christ’s *basileia* has fully assumed the nature of the world by use of *gignomai*, *to become*. Two distinctions are made: “of our Lord” and “of his (God the Father) Christ.” Thus the divine *basileia* is governed from above and from below, the latter in the sense of “our” sharing in this governance. “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” [Mt 16.19].

Vs. 15 concludes with the verb *basileuo* (*to reign*) with respect to Jesus Christ. Note future tense of this verb; the tense implies in completion which remains to be developed in the remaining chapters of Revelation.

Verse 16 mentions the twenty-four elders first introduced in 4.4 which could be taken as Israel’s twelve patriarchs as well as the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Their position on thrones signifies rule much in the sense of *basileia* does in vs. 15. In the verse at hand, such elders *worship* (*proskuneo*, cf. 4.10) God which serves as a preface to hymn of praise in vss. 17-18 which may be outlined as follows:

-vs. 17: the twenty-four elders *give thanks* (*eucharisteo*) to God as *Kurios* and *Pantokrator* which here is equivalent to God being acknowledged in two tenses: “who are” and “who was.” Compare this use of present and past tenses with the future tense of vs. 16 (“and he shall reign forever and ever”). The verb *eucharisteo* often signifies a religious gesture performed before a meal and has liturgical connotations: “He took the seven loaves and the fish, and *having given thanks* he broke them and gave them to the disciples” [Mt 15.36]. Vs. 17 resembles 1.8 with the title *Pantokrator* as well as the two tenses.

-vs. 18: *Orgizo* for *to rage*; compare this verse with Ps 46.6: “The nations *rage*, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.” This psalm verse parallels such raging with an earthquake to symbolize the intense violence by nations. “The king *was angry*, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city” [Mt 22.7]. Here Christ-as-king is the one who is angry to counter that of the *nations*; *ethnos*, the Hebrew term being *goy* as in Ps 46.6. Such is one meaning of divine orge coming in vs. 18.

Concomitant with this orge both by nations and by God is the *time* (*kairos*) for *judgment* (*krino*) with regard to the dead (cf. 20.12+). “For with the *judgment* you pronounce you will be *judged*, and the measure you give will be the measure you get” [Mt 7.2]. Such judgment has two parts: 1) a *reward* (*misthos*) for servants which

are subdivided into prophets and saints along with those fearing God's name who are also subdivided into small and great. "Rejoice and be glad, for your *reward* is great in heaven" [Mt 5.12]; 2) *destroying* those who *destroy* the earth. The same verb *diaphtheiro* is used suggesting a type of ecological destruction.

Vs. 19: Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightening, loud noises, peals of thunder, and earthquake and heavy hail.

An apt conclusion for Chapter Eleven which has the heavenly *temple* (*naos*) opened in heaven, implying that the one in Jerusalem has been closed or destroyed. The same applies to the *ark* (*kibotos*). *Kibotos* also applies to Noah: "until the day when Noah entered the *ark*" [Mt 24.38]. Consider this verse in light of Lk 23.45: "and the curtain of the *temple* was torn in two." The verse at hand does not specify who or what opens the temple; it is as though a self-actuated motion effects this. The same applies to the ark which remains closed and its contents unseen. King Solomon was the one who brought the ark into the temple which replaced the tent: "Then the priests brought the *ark of the covenant* of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary, underneath the wings of the cherubim" [1 Kg 8.6].

The ark contained "nothing except the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb (cf. Dt 10.2), where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt" [1 Kg 8.9]. The use of *nothing* (*eyn*) is interesting as if to negate human curiosity. It also serves to focus attention upon the stone tables given at Horeb, also known as Sinai. God descended upon this mountain God, and the opening of the temple to make the ark visible in vs. 19 may be seen as fulfilling this manifestation. "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightening and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled" [Ex 19.16]. The dramatic elements belonging to the heavenly and earthly manifestations of God may be perceived as a barrier: "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself did charge us saying, 'Set bounds about the mountains and consecrate it'" [Ex 19.23]. Such boundary making harkens back to John at the beginning of Chapter Eleven: "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff and I was told, 'Rise and measure the altar and those who worship there.'"

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Chapter Twelve

Vs. 1: And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

Woman or *gune* appears in Revelation a total of nineteen times, this being the first occasion. She seems symbolic of God's people and/or Israel; Catholic tradition often identifies her with the Virgin Mary. Here *gune* is a *portent* or *semeion*. In light of Jn 4.48, this word can refer to supernatural events: "Jesus therefore said to him, 'Unless you see *signs* and wonders you will not believe.'" In the verse at hand, *semeion* has a specific location, heaven. Several times earlier it was noted that events unfold in a passive way, this being yet another example: *appeared* or *orao* in the sense of having been seen.

Semeion-as-gune may be outlined with three additional features, all of which connote a certain luminosity attributable to the woman:

- 1) sun with which she is *clothed* (*periballo*, cf. 7.9) or fully enveloped. "In them he has set a tent for the *sun*" [Ps 19.4].
- 2) *moon* (*selene*): "Behold...the *moon* and eleven stars were bowing down to me (Joseph, Gen 37.9)." In the verse at hand, the sun is the dominant image; the moon and crown are subordinate.
- 3) *crown* (*stephanos*): compare with 4.4: 'twenty-four elders clad in white garments with golden *crowns* upon their heads.' Note use of *periballo* regarding the woman so clothed with the sun. The "twelve stars" may represent the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve disciples; for the latter, cf. Acts 1.14: "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, with his brothers."

Here Mary is seated with the disciples just before the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Vs. 2: She was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.

Keeping in mind the reference to the Virgin Mary and Pentecost in the last verse, the mother of Jesus may be seen in light of being in “pangs of birth” with respect to the Holy Spirit’s descent. The verse at hand reads “with child” as “having something in (her) *stomach*” (*gaster*).

“Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now you shall go forth from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon” [Mic 4.10]. Here Revelation’s woman clearly parallels Zion about to leave Israel for Babylon, traditional place of exile. This verse is similar to the woman’s *crying out* (*krazo*) and *anguish* (*odino*). For the former: “And Jesus *cried* again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit” [Mt 27.50]. For the latter: “My little children, with whom I am again in *travail* until Christ be formed in you” [Gal 4.19]! Such *forming* or *morphoo* is Paul’s wish for the morphe of Christ be present in his listeners. “Though he was in the *form* of God” [Phil 2.6].

Vs. 3: And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems upon his heads.

Another use of *orao* (*appeared*): note the similar location (heaven, which here as in vs. 2 can be taken as the sky above) of the “great red dragon” identified in vs. 9 as Satan. *Drakon* (*dragon*) is derived from the verb *derkomai*, *to see clearly*, most likely having in mind the way a reptile stares without blinking as is the case with mammals. This Greek word translates the Hebrew *tannin* as found in Ex 7.10: “Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a *serpent*.” This dragon could also have a connection with the serpent of Gen 3.1: “Now the *serpent* was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.” With this verse in mind, we have a clue regarding the dragon’s character, *subtle* or *haram*; the verbal root connotes nakedness or an uncovering, most likely to reveal malevolence. “They lay *crafty plans* against your people” [Ps 83.3]. Note that *therion* is the LXX translation for *wild creature* as found in 11.7: “the *beast* that ascends from the bottomless pit.”

Four characteristics of this dragon:

- 1) *red* or *purros* in the sense of being fiery in color. Cf. 6.4: “And out came another horse, *bright red*.” Also cf. Sg 5.10 where this word is used in the LXX: “My beloved is all radiant and *ruddy*.” The Hebrew adjective is ‘*adom*, closely related to ‘*adam* or *man* and referring to the earth’s color from which he had been formed.
- 2) “seven *heads*” or *kephale*. Frequent reference had been made in these **Notes** with regard to the sacred number seven, mostly in connection with the seven churches and as well as with regard to Jericho. *Kephale* can represent the source of authority, and here is the exact opposite of Jesus Christ’s authority over his church (of which seven were noted in Revelation): “He is the *head* of the body, the church” [Col 1.18].
- 3) “ten *horns*” or *keras*. “A fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong...different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten *horns*” [Dan 7.7]. The Chaldean word *qarnayn* closely resembles the Hebrew *qeren* which connotes strength and power. Horns were also used as part of the altar of sacrifice: “And you shall make *horns* for it on its four corners” [Ex 27.2].
- 4) “seven *diadems*” or *diadema*. Another “anti-seven” number to the seven churches of Revelation. Compare with *stephanos* (*crown*) in 3.11: “so that no one may seize your *crown*.” *Diadema* differs from *stephanos* in the sense that it represents royal authority; the latter can apply to derived authority. In the verse at hand, *diadema* may signify that the beast shared his authority in imitation (in the sense of mockery) of the seven churches. That is, this authority is essentially fractured into “seven heads” with one body of a dragon.

Vs. 4: His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth.

This verse reveals the enormous size of the dragon who apparently is positioned on earth by reason of his proximity to the woman. *Oura* or *tail* is the source of its power. “And the prophet who teaches lies is the *tail*”

[Is 9.15], that is, once the Lord has severed head and tail from Israel (cf. vs. 14).

The dragon brings down one third of the stars to earth; *suro* is the verb used here which implies a dragging. "Saul...dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" [Acts 8.3]. A result of such dragging is a casting of the stars (literally) "*into* (eis) earth," that is, making them fall and impact the earth similar to meteorites. For a comparable reference: The little horn "cast down to the ground some of the host of the *stars* and trampled upon them" [Dan 8.10].

Since the dragon had destroyed part of the firmament, we may assume that this occurred at night. Perhaps this is why he was able to be present when the woman was about to give birth; it was easy for him to sneak up on her. As the verbal root for dragon (*derkomai*) suggests, this beast...with all seven heads...is *staring* at the woman in anticipation of her son's birth. "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before pain came upon her she was delivered of a son" [Is 66.7]. Contrast the dragon and these stars with the Magi and the singular star at Jesus' birth: "For we have seen his *star* in the east and have come to worship him" [Mt 2.2].

Katesthio or *to devour*: the opposite to the Magi's act of worship. "Who *devour* widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation" [Mk 12.40]. King Herod, who inquired about the birth of Jesus Christ from the Magi, is a type of dragon ready to devour him.

Vs. 5: She brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.

Compare this verse to Christ's birth: "And she gave birth to her *first-born* son" [Lk 2.7]. This verse calls Jesus *prototokos* as in Col 1.15: "He is the image of the invisible God, the *first-born* of all creation." *Prototokos* is closely related to Christ as *eikon* (*image*) of God who remains invisible. Such an image mirrors the activity of the invisible God which in the context of vs. 5 is to *rule* or *poimaino*; this verb fundamentally means to shepherd (cf. Lk 17.7). This sense is lacking in the context of vs. 5 which is partly lifted from Ps 2.9: "You shall break them with a *rod* of iron." Here the LXX uses *poimaino* for *to break* which in Hebrew is *raha*. In light of this, consider Ps 23.4: "Your *rod* and your *staff*, they comfort me." Here *rod* or *shevet* can mean *tribe*; *staff* or *mishhan* implies a support of any kind.

In the verse at hand, *rabdos* (*rod*) signifies rule as found in the LXX of Ps 45.6: "Your *royal* scepter is a *scepter* of equity." Its composition of iron shows that such rule is harsh with respect to the *nations* (*ethnos* or *goyim*), traditional foes of Israel.

The verb *arpazo* (*to snatch*) is in the aorist passive, another instance where action is taken with respect to the person or object at hand (here, the male child) to indicate divine intervention. Note the two-fold direction of this snatching: "*to* (pros) God" and "*to* (pros) the throne;" compare with the ascent of Elijah (2 Kg 2.11) and Enoch (Gen 5.24) as well as Christ's ascension (Acts 1.9).

Thronos (*throne*) is the place from which this child will wield his "rod of iron." Cf. Rev 3.21: "He who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on my *throne* as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his *throne*."

Vs. 6: and the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

The woman's flight happens after her son was born, the immediacy of this flight signified by "and" which connects this verse with the previous one. Compare her escape with the Holy Family's descent into Egypt: "And he (Joseph) rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod" [Mt 2.14]. As noted with regard to vs. 4, the action took place at night; the same may apply to the woman which parallels that of the Holy Family.

Eremos or *wilderness* in the sense of an uninhabited region. "I am the voice of one crying in the *wilderness*"

[Jn 1.23], that is, I, John the Baptist am a voice in an uninhabited region. Eremos is comparable to the Hebrew midbar: “that they may serve me in the *wilderness*” [Ex 7.16]. This word is derived from the verbal root *davar*, *to speak*; implied is the wilderness is a place of speaking, where God communicates himself to prophets, etc. In the verse at hand, eremos is a special *place* (topos) “*prepared* (etoimazo) by God” or as this word connotes, a place which stands ready waiting to receive the woman. In conjunction with eremos and John the Baptist, cf. Mt 3.3: “*Prepare* the way of the Lord.”

This prepared place is also one of *nourishing* (trepho), a verb commonly associated with infants. “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father *feeds* them” [Mt 6.26]. Perhaps the woman, like John the Baptist, was nourished in the midbar...the place of speaking...by the voice which was crying in that spot. Such nourishing has a temporal duration, 1260 days, the same amount of time (in the sense of *kairos*, a special event or occasion) as the two witnesses who prophesied, 11.3. Thus the woman shares in this capacity of prophesying, again hearkening back to John the Baptist.

Vs. 7: Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought.

Now or *kai* (*and*) in the sense of continuing the action; as already noted, *kai* is used frequently in Revelation to indicate quick succession of events. Attention shifts to Michael (the only reference in Revelation) who is mentioned in the Book of Daniel several times (10.13, 21; 12.1); the last verse runs as follows: “At that time shall arise *Michael*, the great prince who has charge of your people...but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book.” The LXX translation uses *hora* for *time* as opposed to *kairos*. Cf. 3.10: “I will keep you from the *hour* of trial which is coming on the whole world.”

Polemos (*war*) is situated in heaven; the verb *polemeo* is used twice which specifies the nature of this conflict: Michael allied with his angels against the seven-headed dragon. It seems that this heavenly army has taken the initiative to engage in battle to which the dragon and his angelic host responded. “But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him” [Jude 9].

Vs. 8: but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

Another use of *kai* (*and*) for *but*, signifying continuous action, here the battle which had transpired in heaven. *Ischuo* for *to defeat*; this verb implies one side being stronger than the other. Note another passive use of a verb as if to imply that victory had come about by God through Michael and his angels. Such defeat means banishment from heaven: the dragon and his angels now lacked a *place* or *topos* in heaven. Cf. 2.5: “Remember then from what you have fallen, repent...If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its *place*.” That is, God will banish the church of Ephesus into the same location as the dragon (i.e., to the earth, 12.9).

Vs. 9: And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Another passive use of a verb, *ballo* (*to throw down*), here referring to the dragon who is also identified under four names:

1) “ancient *serpent* (ophis, cf. 20.2).” “I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven” [Lk 10.18]. This verse has Jesus Christ as witness to Satan’s fall, “like *lightening*” (*astrape*), the same comparison with regard to Christ’s coming: “For as the *lightening* comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man” [Mt 24.27]. The former has a downward motion; the latter, a lateral one or from one cardinal point to another. In the verse at hand, the serpent is *ancient* (*archaios*) in the sense of something which has existed from the beginning: “Now the *serpent* was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made” [Gen 3.1]. Note that God is the creator of this serpent. The Hebrew term here is *nachash*, from a verbal root meaning *to whisper*; implied is the practice of enchantment and sorcery.

- 2) *Devil* or Diabolos, proper name used here. “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the *devil* and his angels” [Mt 25.31].
- 3) Satan, who here is the same as the Devil. “I know where you dwell, where *Satan’s* throne is” [Rev 2.13].
- 4) *deceiver* or planao, in the sense of leading astray; here the verb is in a present participle indicating continuous, habitual action. Cf. Genesis, “the eyes of both were opened” [3.7]. While the verb is not used in this context, nevertheless such opening of eyes is a deception; implied is that the eyes of Adam and Eve were not deceived when they were closed. “Take heed that no one *leads you astray*” [Mt 24.4]. In the verse at hand, planao is with respect to “the whole *world* (oikoumene),” more specifically, the inhabited world, another term for the Roman Empire.

Two more (passive) instances of ballo, the insertion of the just noted four names belonging to the dragon serving to intensify this action. The place to which the dragon is cast is “to the earth,” the preposition eis (*into*) suggesting full penetration. Compare ge (*earth*) with oikoumene just noted. Along with the “eis-ness” are the dragon’s angels.

Vs. 10: And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Here John interjects himself as witness, the first time since 11.1 when he was given a measuring rod to measure the temple. The source of this “*loud* (megalos, in the sense of great) voice” is not specified, either coming from God or an angel. Compare this indeterminate voice with the one at Christ’s transfiguration: “and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son” [Mt 17.5].

Five elements which “have come,” that is, after the dragon has been cast down to earth:

- 1) *salvation* (soteria): “For *salvation* is nearer to us now than when we first believed” [Rom 13.11].
- 2) *power* (dunamis) in the sense of might: “You will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of *Power* and coming with the clouds of heaven” [Mk 14.62].
- 3) *kingdom* (basileia): “Receive the *kingdom* of God like a child” [Mk 10.15].
- 4) *authority* (exousia): “For I have not spoken on my own *authority*” [Jn 12.49].

The first three belong to God whereas the fourth belongs to Christ. What effects them is that the “*accuser* (kategor) of our brethren” or the dragon has been *cast down* (ballo, another passive use of a verb). Note the first person plural here as with “our God.” The dragon-as-kategor *accuses* (kategoroo) “our brethren” continuously. He does this “*before* (enopion) God.” “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves *before* the Lord, and Satan also came *among* them” [Job 1.6]. The Hebrew for *among* is betok which signifies being right in the midst of a group. The Hebrew for *before* is hal, literally *on* or right at the presence of someone.

Vs. 11: And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Another use of kai (*and*) to show the immediate connection between this and the previous verse. Those who have *conquered* (nikao) are “our brethren” of vs. 10. “He who *conquers* and who keeps my works until the end” [2.26].

Two parts to this victory:

- 1) the Lamb’s *blood* (haima): “I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain” [5.6]. “He entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the *blood* of goats and calves but his own *blood*” [Heb 9.12]. Christ’s blood present in this *Holy Place* (hagia) enabled “our brethren” of vs. 10 to achieve victory. That is to say, this blood was able to extend from within the hagia to outside its precincts.
- 2) “word of *testimony*” (marturia) signifying martyrdom which is equated with a *word* or logos, that is, their

speech or testimony.

The verb *agapao* (*love*) is applied to “our brethren’s” lives: such persons did not have agape toward their personal biological continuance but with respect to the Lamb. The text reads “the *soul* (*psuche*) of theirs; a singular soul for a multitude of “our brethren.”

Vs. 12: Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath because he knows that his time is short!”

The conclusion of those words from the “loud voice” which John heard in heaven (cf. vs. 10). *Euphraino* (*to rejoice*) in the sense of being happy. “*Rejoice* over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her” [18.20]! Those bidden to rejoice are two fold: *heaven* itself (plural used, *ouranos*) and those who *dwell* there (*skenoo*); this verb connotes living in a tent. “And the Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us” [Jn 1.14]. That is to say, those living in heaven have sent up their tent there because the Word had already tented “*among* (en, in) us.” The plural of dwellers may be paralleled with the plural of heavens.

Ouai or *woe* with respect to earth and sea, the opposite of that rejoicing for heaven and its dwellers. While earth and sea have no intrinsic evil, they stand in contrast to heaven from which later the new Jerusalem will descend. The *devil* (*diabolos*) presumably is situated in heaven (in the sense of being in the firmament) and is destined to *come down* (*katabaino*). Compare the devil’s coming with that of Christ: “and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” [Mt 24.30]. Here as well as in Acts 1.11 Christ does not *katabaino*; rather, he *comes* (*erchomai*) laterally, so to speak.

The devil will descend in “*great wrath*” (*thumos*), a term pertaining to passion, that is, to the spirit panting in the body and the rage with which the person pants. “When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with *wrath*” [Lk 4.28]. The devil knows that his *kairos*, his designated opportunity, is *short* (*oligos*); on the other hand, Jesus Christ does not have this knowledge: “But of that day and hour (i.e., that *kairos*) no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, but the Father only” [Mt 24.36].

Vs. 13: And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child.

Because the dragon had seven heads and thus seven sets of eyes, this *seeing* (*oida*) is a type of *derkomai* (cf. vs. 4, the verbal root of *dragon*) or staring. Vs. 10 expressly states that the dragon had been cast down followed by two verses of rejoicing. It almost seems that the dragon was unaware of his fall which according to Christ’s own words, was like a lightning bolt (cf. Lk 10.18). The thoroughness of his fall is evident by the phrase “*to* (*eis, into*) the earth.”

Once “into the earth” the dragon *pursues* (*dioko*) the woman, this verb connoting that he persecutes her. “Blessed are those who are *persecuted* for righteousness’ sake” [Mk 5.10].

Vs. 14: But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time and times and half a time.

A verse reminiscent of Ps 55.6: “O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.” Here the psalmist gives voice to a two-fold aspiration, that he be endowed with dove’s wings: to *fly away* or *huph*. The psalm’s use of *huph* combines a positive and negative sense: first to escape affliction and then to *rest* or *shakan* which implies a laying down; the latter certainly includes repose from the former but involves a dwelling or abiding presence. “And let them make me a sanctuary that I may *dwell* in their midst” [Ex 25.8].

Vs. 14 is another example of a verb in the passive mode (“was given”) which perhaps happened as abruptly as the dragon had fallen “into the earth” much like lightning as noted with regard to vs. 13. The *eagle* (*aetos*) is symbolic of Israel’s return from exile: “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall

mount up with wings like *eagles* [Is 40.31]. Thus the woman of Revelation “*renews* (chalaph) her strength,” a verb implying change and is reminiscent of 2 Cor 3.18: “being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.” She effects this by flying “*into* (eis) the desert.” Compare this “into-ness” as it was first applied to the dragon’s fall in vs. 13. It is followed by another eis with respect to (literally) “her *place*” (topos). Cf. Ps 18. 19: “He brought me forth into a broad *place*; he delivered me because he delighted in me. Obviously, the *broad place* is the other side of the Red Sea after Israel’s deliverance; it can also refer to the Promised Land. Such merchav is also a *day*, an occasion, worthy of commemoration: “This *day* shall be for you a *memorial day*, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord” [Ex 12.14].

In this two-fold desert/place the woman is *nourished* (trepho) as in vs. 6 which parallels this verse. The duration for such nourishment is three and one half years, kairos being used three times in vs. 14. Cf. Dan 7.25: “He shall think to change the *times* and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a *time*, two *times*, and a half a *time*.”

Vs. 15: The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood.

Note the use of *serpent* (ophis, cf. vs. 9) as opposed to dragon; this beast has one mouth as opposed to seven belonging to the dragon. Contrast the flow of this water as *river* (potamos) with that river which flowed from the Jerusalem temple: “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east” [Ezk 47.1]. The serpent’s attempt to destroy the woman is reminiscent of the Great Flood: “And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered” [Gen 7.19]. Vs. 15 uses the adjective potamophoretos, *swept away*. “He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the air” [Gen 7.23].

Vs. 16: But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth.

Here the *earth* (ge)...*into* (eis) which the dragon had been cast, takes on a personal quality by *helping* the woman, boetheo. “If you can do anything, have pity on us and *help* us” [Mk 9.22]. By opening its mouth, the earth acted as a chasm to *swallow* (katapino) the river spewed by the dragon. “By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were *drowned*” [Heb 11.29]. Thus the woman may symbolize the nation of Israel saved at the Red Sea.

Note that the dragon, not serpent (cf. vs. 15), is mentioned, that is, the beast with seven mouths. Two *mouths* (stoma): that of the dragon and that of the earth, the latter being more formidable in that it could consume water spewed out by the seven mouthed dragon.

Vs. 17: Then the dragon was angry with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Another use of kai (*and, then*) to show continuous action continuing from vs. 13; each subsequent verse began with this word. After such uninterrupted activity, it is fitting that chapter twelve come to a conclusion.

Orgizo: *to become angry*, which shows the dragon’s sentiment at not having caught the woman, similar to Pharaoh at the Red Sea: “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord” [Ex 14.4]. The preposition epi (*with, upon*) shows his thorough infuriation as though such anger rested “upon” the woman.

The dragon expresses his anger now not so much by pursuing her further but by making *war* (polemos) upon her *offspring* (sperma, literally, *seed*). “As I looked, this horn *made war* with the saints and prevailed over them” [Dan 7.21]. His “going off” shows intent at this point in the narrative, to intensify action which will follow in successive chapters. Note *rest* (loipos), implying that the dragon already had waged war which he as “accuser of our brethren” had done (cf. vs. 11).

Offspring is equated with two types of persons (actually, one and the same): *keeping* (tereo) God's commandments. Cf. 1.3: "Blessed are those who hear and who *keep* what is written therein; for the *time* (kairos) is near." Tereo is akin to the Hebrew shamar as often noted in the Psalter with regard to the divine Torah, for example, Ps 119.67: "I went astray, but now I *keep* your word." For an intensification of this verb, cf. Lk 2.19: "But Mary *kept* (suntereo) all these things, pondering them in her heart." Entole for *commandment* is equivalent to the Hebrew mitwah as found often in Ps 119: "I revere your *commandments* which I love" [vs. 48].

The second type of persons against whom the dragon will wage war are those who bear *testimony* (marturia) to Jesus as noted in 11.7. In the verse at hand, such marturia is used with the name Jesus in the genitive case, "of Jesus."

The Greek text has the last sentence of vs. 17 as vs. 18. The sea is symbolic of chaos, a fitting place for the dragon to stand. This dramatic positioning is a kind of interlude for the action which will soon follow.

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