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Revelation 8-22, the second volume of this commentary, contains four indexes, each of which covers both volumes. These deal with subjects, ancient literature, modern authors, and Scripture.

1

The Prologue of the Apocalypse

The first chapter of the Apocalypse describes how God prepared John to receive subsequent portions of the revelation that were to constitute the book. After John introduces the work in its prologue (1:1-8), he describes a vision of Christ especially designed to direct the prophet's thinking into channels appropriate to what follows in subsequent chapters (1:9-20).

A. PROLOGUE (1:1-8)

These eight verses contain a preface with such things as the book's title, the content of the revelation, and other elements (1:1-3), the book's address and a doxology (1:4-6), and a statement of the book's theme (1:7-8).

1. PREFACE (1:1-3)

Translation

¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His slaves, the things that must happen soon, and He signified [it] by sending through His angel to His slave John, ²who testified the Word of God, even the testimony of Jesus Christ—as many things as he saw. ³Blessed is the one who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things that are written in it, for the time is near.

Exegesis and Exposition

The opening verses of Revelation (1:1-3) fill the all-important role of directing the audience's mind to the topics covered in the book as a whole. The preface (or superscription, as it is sometimes called) of Revelation (1:1-3) effectively fulfills this function by means of an overview of seven broad features. To begin, it states *the title* of the book (v. 1). Then follow words about *the channels* used to communicate the book's contents (v. 1). *The content* is featured next in an expression that shows this to be the climax of a prophetic line of thought rooted in the OT (v. 1). *The time of fulfillment* is said to be near (v. 1). There is some elaboration on *the method of communicating* the message to John (v. 1), who makes a brief allusion to *the prophetic process* (v. 2). A clear statement of the book's *practical purpose* culminates the three-verse preface (v. 3).

1:1 *The title.* The last book of the Bible is a book with its title incorporated into its own text. Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Apokalypsis Iēsou Christou*, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"), the first three words of the book, provides as suitable a name as can be found for the twenty-two chapters that follow: "The Apocalypse (or Revelation) of Jesus Christ." These words tell the story of the whole book in a nutshell.

"Revelation," the title most often given in English translations, is a counterpart of a transliterated name often assigned to this work of John, "the Apocalypse." The latter word serves immediate notice that we are dealing with a category of literature that has come to be referred to as "apocalyptic."¹ The "apocalyptic" mold of thought characterized the outlook of many who were contemporaneous with the NT era. This book displays a number of similarities to such thinking, but distances itself in many respects from all nonbiblical apocalyptic literature of the day.

Apokalypsis, with the combination force of taking "away" (ἀπό [*apo*]) "a cover" (κάλυψις [*kalypsis*]), has a literal sense of "an uncovering" or "a laying bare."² Referring as it does to "a disclosure of what had been concealed,"³ the word implies prior hiddenness and is a convenient vehicle to express the further ideas of "a disclosure of divine truth" or "a manifestation from God."⁴ This more developed

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1. See the more extended discussion of "Prophetic Style of the Apocalypse" in the Introduction.
 2. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), p. 50.
 3. Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 28.
 4. Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon* p. 50.

reference to matters that are derived from God is characteristic of the NT usage of this noun and the related verb ἀποκαλύπτω (*apokalypō*, “I reveal”). The word group takes on this more specialized significance in two ways, each of which has a possible application to Rev. 1:1.

One of the ways is the use of “revelation” as a name for the events connected with the revealing of Jesus Christ at the time of His second advent to the earth (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7). This will be the unveiling of a Person who in His incarnate form has been personally hidden since His first advent. The other way “revelation” is used is in a disclosure of propositional data from God through a human instrument (e.g., Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:26). This understanding involves the use of persons such as apostles and prophets who were inspired by God to write or speak His message (cf. Eph. 3:5).

Obviously both senses of the noun would be appropriate in this book, but their connotations result in significantly different meanings. The former meaning would have the title focus on the personal appearance of Jesus Christ at His second advent, whereas the latter would focus on Jesus Christ as the inspired agent who reveals future happenings. Both are true, but which is the intended meaning of this book’s three-word title *apokalypsis Iēsou Christou*?

Before this question is answered, a further related factor must be brought to bear. This is the meaning of the genitive case of *Iēsou Christou*. Is the genitive objective or subjective? In other words, is Jesus Christ the one revealed, or is He the one doing the revealing? The objective genitive goes with the former meaning of *apokalypsis* cited above, and the subjective genitive goes with the latter.

Favorable to Christ’s being pictured as the revealed one is the mention of the angel as the revealer later in v. 1 (cf. διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου [*dia tou angelou*, “through the angel”]).⁵ Yet this is not decisive because Christ later in the book reveals through angels (cf. 17:1; 21:9).

Some argue against Christ’s being pictured as the revealed one in this title because the words “which must happen soon” in 1:1 preclude a reference to His personal appearance. The series of prophecies in Revelation require a prescribed period of time before His appearance in chapter 19.⁶ To this objection it may be replied that *apokalypsis* in its technical eschatological sense may refer to the whole series of end-time happenings and not just to that phase when Christ returns personally (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7). There is nothing that must

5. J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1909), 1:17.

6. Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), p. 418.

intervene before He returns to begin inflicting wrath during the Tribulation.

Further support for Christ's being the revealed one is derived from NT usage of a genitive following *apokalypsis*. In such cases the genitive is said always to be objective (Rom. 2:5; 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Cor. 12:1; Gal. 1:12; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13).⁷ This conclusion may be debated, however. A good case can be made for a subjective genitive in at least two of the cases (2 Cor. 12:1; Gal. 1:12).⁸

The evidence favoring Christ as the revealer (i.e., subjective genitive) is more impressive. The strongest single consideration on either side of the issue is the plain fact that Christ functions in the role of revealer throughout the book: He addresses the seven churches in chapters 2-3;⁹ He opens the scroll of destiny (5:5, 7) and discloses its contents (6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1).¹⁰ His activity in this respect supports viewing Christ as the revealer in Revelation.

When this is coupled with the plain statement of 1:1 that the revelation is given by Jesus Christ to John as God gave it to Him,¹¹ the case for the subjective genitive is even more convincing. The words "which God gave Him to show His slaves" most naturally convey this meaning.

With the above conclusion we can now determine what John meant by his title to this book: it refers to data that Jesus Christ was inspired by God to reveal to His servants. Part of that revelation, to be sure, will be His own personal advent in chapter 19, but that is only a part. The revelation includes all other happenings prior to and subsequent to His own personal appearance.

Channels of communication for the revelation. After stating the title of his book, John proceeds in 1:1 to clarify some of the features of the revelation contained in the Apocalypse. The relative clause ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός (*hēn edōken autō ho theos*, "which God gave Him") identifies the ultimate source of the matters that Christ reveals. God, presumably God the Father, gave them to Christ with the stipulation that He show them to God's servants (δείξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ [*deixai tois doulois autou*, "to show His slaves"]) (1:1). The aorist tense of

7. E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse or "The Day of the Lord"* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, n.d.), pp. 31-34.

8. Beckwith, p. 418; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 1.

9. William Lee, "The Revelation of St. John," in *The Holy Bible*, ed. F. C. Cook (London: John Murray, 1881), 4:497.

10. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 64.

11. R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols., ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1920), 1:6; Swete, *Apocalypse*, p. 1.

deixai views the mission of Christ as one great showing¹² just as the singular number of *apokalypsis* sees the separate revelations as one great revelation. This is the verb chosen by the author when he wants to describe communication of a divine revelation by means of visions (Charles).

Whether *doulois* refers to Christian prophets or to believers in general is problematic. Consulting Amos 3:7 and other uses in the Apocalypse (10:7; 11:18; 22:6), one might conclude for the former group (Charles). But he would look in vain throughout this book to find more than one prophetic recipient besides the one who at the end of v. 1 is referred to as τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ (*tō doulō autou Iōannē*, “to His slave John”). It is more feasible, therefore, to identify Christians in general as the ultimate destination of the revelation. Admittedly, this is an unusual name for such a group, but it can be paralleled in the early chapters of Acts (2:18; 4:29). Besides this, the seven churches of chapters 2-3 are composed of Christians, and they are the obvious recipients of these words.¹³

Content of the revelation. The data to be shown the churches, that is, the content of the revelation, are described by the highly significant words ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι (*ha dei genesthai*, “things that must happen”) (1:1). They depict a theme of longstanding interest that has its roots in the OT. These “things that must happen” first come into view in Daniel’s description and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the great statue (Dan. 2:28[LXX]; cf. also 2:29, 45). The statue stands for four kingdoms, and a stone cut without hands out of the mountain that destroys the statue stands for an everlasting kingdom that will supersede the other four. The prophet, using the king’s dream as a vehicle, clearly predicts the eventual establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.

On Tuesday of the week He was crucified, Jesus in His Olivet discourse resumes this theme with the identical wording δεῖ γενέσθαι (*dei genesthai*, “they must happen”) (Matt. 24:6; cf. Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9). In the process of teaching His disciples, Jesus points out that these things that “must happen,” spoken of by Daniel, had not yet run their course. They were at that point still future. When discussion of the seal judgments is given in connection with Revelation 6, the close parallelism between Jesus’ Olivet discourse and the symbolism of the seals will be noted. Jesus in His discourse was clearly anticipat-

12. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 28.

13. William Henry Simcox, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Cambridge: U. Press, 1893), p. 40.

ing what He was to show John in much greater detail more than six decades later here on the island of Patmos.

At this point John picks up the baton of this long-awaited series of happenings and develops them in far more detail than ever before. *Ha dei genesthai* is the basis for the framework of this book. The same clause is used in 4:1 at the beginning of the portion of the book that is specifically apocalyptic in nature. It is found again in 22:6 at the conclusion of the main body of the book. Rev. 4:1–22:5 is thereby marked out as comprising “the things that must happen soon.” All that precedes this central section is preliminary, and all that follows it is conclusion.

To these occurrences may be added the closely related ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι (*ha mellei genesthai*, “the things that are about to happen”) of 1:19. This verse, generally acknowledged as furnishing the outline of Revelation, is another way of referring to ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει (*ha dei genesthai en tachei*, “the things that must happen soon”). In 1:19 the expression follows references to two preliminary sections that precede chapter 4.

The revelation contained in this book thus is to bring to a climax an expectation that began at least as early as Daniel 2.¹⁴ This is the ultimate detailed account of events that must (*dei*) transpire in the outworking of God’s program regarding the institution of the everlasting kingdom that will replace other earthly, temporary kingdoms. That this is the goal toward which this book moves is very obvious from a casual review of subsequent passages such as 11:15 (“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ”) and 20:4 (“And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years”).

Time of fulfillment of the revelation. The perspective of the Apocalypse regarding the establishment of this future kingdom differs in one important respect from that of both Daniel and Christ. Daniel placed the fulfillment of these things “in the latter days” (Dan. 2:28) and “after this” (2:29, 45). Jesus says that these things must happen “first” (Luke 21:9) and that the end is “not yet” (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7) or “not immediately” (Luke 21:9). Writing in the closing decade of the first century A.D., John is able to express a new viewpoint regarding these events of the last days. He writes that these are things that must happen ἐν τάχει (*en tachei*, “soon”).

Two meanings have been proposed for this phrase. One makes it descriptive of the speed with which the events will be carried out once they have begun. They will occur in “rapid-fire” sequence or

14. G. K. Beale, “The Influence of Daniel upon the Structure and Theology of John’s Apocalypse,” *JETS* 27, no. 4 (December 1984): 415-16, 420.

“speedily.” The meaning of the phrase in other NT passages is cited in support of this meaning of “suddenly” (cf. Luke 18:8; Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Rom. 16:20),¹⁵ but in at least two of these passages the conclusion is debatable (cf. Luke 18:8; Rom. 16:20). The strongest support for this view is by way of an objection to the other alternative, that the phrase means “soon” and has reference to nearness of fulfillment for the events predicted. The objection is that such an alternative is impossible because a futurist approach to the book would require the events to have taken place close to John’s lifetime. As the matter stands, it has been almost nineteen hundred years since the prediction and much of what the book predicts still has not begun to happen.¹⁶

In spite of the foregoing objection, however, the view that sees *en tachei* meaning “soon” and thereby focuses on the imminence of the predicted events is impressive. A major thrust of Revelation is its emphasis upon the shortness of time before the fulfillment. In the midst of persecution God’s people do not have long to wait for relief to come. To say that the relief will come “suddenly” offers no encouragement, but to say that it will come “soon” does.¹⁷ That fulfillment of the divine purpose will come soon is the consistent expectation of prophecy and apocalyptic (cf. 22:6; Deut. 9:3; Ezek. 29:5[LXX]; Luke 18:8; Rom. 16:20). Throughout apocalyptic literature and the NT the Messianic kingdom with its immediate precursors is viewed as near (Charles; Beckwith).

The meaning of nearness assigned to *en tachei* also derives support from ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς (*ho gar kairos engys*) in 1:3, “for the time is near,” and from the parallel statement of 22:6, “behold, I come soon.”¹⁸ The response of this view to the seeming difficulty raised by the delay of more than nineteen hundred years is not that John was mistaken¹⁹ but that time in the Apocalypse is computed either relatively to the divine apprehension as here and in 22:10 (cf. also 1:3; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20) or absolutely in itself as long or short (cf. 8:1; 20:2).

15. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), p. 35.

16. Alan F. Johnson, “Revelation,” in *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:416; Homer Hailey, *Revelation, an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 96; Mounce, *Revelation*, pp. 64-65.

17. James Moffatt, “The Revelation of St. John the Divine,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 5:335.

18. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1903), 4:545.

19. Contra G. V. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 12.

When measuring time, Scripture has a different standard from ours (cf. 1 John 2:18) (Lee). The purpose of *en tachei* is to teach the imminence of the events foretold, not to set a time limit within which they must occur (Johnson). It must be kept in mind that God is not limited by considerations of time in the same way man is (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8).

The presence of *en tachei* in 1:1 shows that for the first time the events predicted by Daniel and foreseen by Christ stood in readiness to be fulfilled. Therefore, John could speak of them as imminent, but earlier prophets could not.

Method of communicating the revelation. The end of v. 1, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ (*kai esēmanen aposteilas dia tou angelou autou tō doulō autou Iōannē*, “and He signified [it] by sending through His angel to His slave John”), tells the means by which the revelation was passed on. The graphic term *esēmanen* deserves special notice because in nonbiblical literature it already had a usage related to symbolic divine communications with men (Tenney). At other times, however, the notion of symbolism in the word seems to have vanished (cf. John 12:33; 18:32; 21:19; Acts 11:28). Nevertheless, the present instance is more in keeping with the symbolic import in light of the many signs and symbols that make up the apocalyptic portion of this book (cf. 4:1 ff.).

This symbolism must be assigned to the process by which John was inspired to write the book. Sometimes it has mistakenly been used as justification for interpreting the book in a nonliteral fashion.²⁰ It in no way gives license for a departure from the normal grammatical-historical system of hermeneutics. To clarify this point Govett proposes that *esēmanen* be translated “represent.”²¹ The revelation given to John, symbolic though it be, is to be interpreted just as one would interpret the rest of the Bible.

The angelic part in passing on the revelation is carefully noted by διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ (*dia tou angelou autou*, “through His angel”). Though Christ dealt directly with John at times (e.g., 6:9-17), He at other times used angels to reveal (e.g., 17:1; 21:9). It is quite possible that the four living beings and the twenty-four elders who are first encountered in chapter 4 are also included as angelic beings used for disclosing aspects of God’s plan (cf. 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 7:13-17).²²

20. H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Loizeaux, n.d.), p. 13.

21. Robert Govett, *The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture* (London: Charles J. Thynne, 1920), p. 243.

22. Swete, *Apocalypse*, p. 2; Moffatt, “Revelation,” 5:336. Buchanan presents a case for identifying τοῦ ἀγγέλου as a human messenger who brought John a book containing the material incorporated as Rev. 4:1-22:5 (George Wesley Buchanan, “John of Patmos and the Angel of Revelation,” *Proceed-*

A further link in this chain of communication is John, the writer of this book. As clarified by the extended discussion in the introduction, this is traditionally held to be John the apostle, one of the Twelve, and nothing substantial has arisen to show this tradition to be in error (see Introduction to the Commentary). This John outlived the rest of the twelve, dying some time around the turn of the first century A.D. He is called a "slave" (*doulō*), which identifies him with the group earlier in the verse who are called "slaves" (cf. 1:9), but in this case there is justification for placing him on the same plane of authority as the OT prophets (cf. Isa. 49:5; Amos 3:7). As is true with all prophecy, it is important that the prophet's name be given so that the reader may know the credentials of the writer. For this reason, no writing of Scripture that is prophetic in a narrower sense is ever anonymous (Lee).

1:2 *The prophetic process.* John offers a further description of his prophetic activity in v. 2, though this conclusion is not without controversy. He speaks of his testimony (*ἐμαρτύρησεν* [*emartyrēsen*, "he testified"]) in this connection. The aorist tense of *emartyrēsen* has been explained in at least three different ways: as a testimony borne prior to the writing of the Apocalypse, one that had nothing directly to do with this book; as a constative aorist looking back to the writing of Rev. 1:4–22:21, assuming that the superscription (1:1-3) was the last part of the book to be written; and as an epistolary aorist, the past time expressed by the verb being explained by the perspective of the readers (i.e., when they received it, the writing of the whole book would be a thing of the past).

The strongest reason for surmising that this is a reference to a testimony prior to the Apocalypse is a more general sense assigned to τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*ton logon tou theou kai tēn martyrian Iēsou Christou*, "the Word of God, even the testimony of Jesus Christ") on the basis of similar expressions found in Rev. 1:9; 6:9; 12:17; and 20:4 (Moffatt). These make the present expression refer more naturally to what John had written earlier in his gospel and epistles. Other points of coincidence between this book and John's other writings include the reference of Rev. 22:17 to John 7:37 (i.e., the idea of drinking the water provided by Christ) and Rev. 1:2 to 1 John 1:1 (i.e., references to the Word of God and to what John saw) (Lee).

The difficulty of having Rev. 1:2 refer to John's other writings is great, however. Εἶδεν (*Eiden*, "he saw"), as a part of the limiting

ings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies [vol. 1, edited by Avigdor Shinan; Jerusalem: Academic Press, 1977]: 36). His evidence is unconvincing.

phrase “as many things as he saw,” must in the setting of Revelation refer to apocalyptic visions, not to the kinds of material that are found in the gospel of John and the Johannine epistles (Alford; Swete). Furthermore, if John for some strange reason had wanted to refer to his earlier writings at this point, he most probably would have written “who *also* testified” rather than simply “who testified” (Alford).

The need to take *tēn martyrian Iēsou Christou* in the sense, “the testimony borne by Jesus Christ,” as will be pointed out below, makes it compelling to refer *emartyrēsen* to the contents of the book in light of 22:16, 20. These two verses are statements summarizing the contents of the book, and both connect the testimony borne by Jesus with said contents.²³ The question remains, however, as to how the contents are referred to.

One viewpoint is that the aorist tense of *eiden* (1:2) shows that John had already seen the visions and is in the process of prefixing his superscription (or introduction) to a book that is already otherwise complete (Beckwith; Bullinger). In support it is offered that common practice was to write a book’s superscription last in those days and that τὰ . . . γεγραμμένα (*ta . . . gegrammena*, “the things written”) (1:3) shows that the work was completed when John wrote the superscription (Beckwith). To this position it may be replied that *eiden* could be a constative aorist even if *emartyrēsen* is epistolary. John could have seen the visions and written them down at a later time, the same time he wrote the superscription. There is nothing to interrupt the flow of thought from 1:3 to 1:4 to indicate that there was a break of any kind between the two parts. Generally the “title” of such a work, as this superscription has been characterized, would not be the last thing to be added. How would John have known how much space to reserve at the beginning of his papyrus scroll for these words? The idea is impractical. As for the *ta . . . gegrammena* of 1:3, such an articular participle bears the characteristics of a substantive and does not indicate absolute time in the past.

Bullinger’s proposal that all of chapter 1 was written last runs into even greater obstacles (Bullinger). The messages of chapters 2-3 are dependent on the vision of chapter 1 in their characterizations of Christ. John could not have comprehended the messages in their fullness without the background of chapter 1 to precede them.

The best explanation is to understand that John’s testimony as contained in this book was written in the past from his initial readers’ point of view.²⁴ The objection that this is not an epistle and conse-

23. Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, pp. 421, 780.

24. Swete, *Apocalypse*, p. 3; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:7; Moffatt, “Revelation,” 5:336; Simcox, *Revelation*, p. 41; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 46.

quently the epistolary aorist should not be identified here is countered by the observation that the Apocalypse is written in epistolary form (Alford).

John's use of the aorist *emartyrēsen*, then, is best explained by his adoption of the perspective of his readers in regard to his composition of this book. When they received it, his testimony as recorded in its pages would be a thing of the past.

With *emartyrēsen* referring to John's writing of this book, *ton logon tou theou* must be a further characterization of the contents of this book. The expression denotes "any declaration, revelation, or truth coming from God" (Beckwith). More specifically, it is the common idiomatic phrase for a direct prophetic communication, exactly what this book purports to be (Bullinger).

"The Word of God" is elaborated upon by "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 2). Because the genitive following *martyria* is probably always subjective, this must refer specifically to "the testimony borne by Jesus Christ."²⁵ The *kai* that joins *tēn martyrian Iēsou Christou* to *ton logon tou theou* is exegetical, a frequent use of the conjunction in this book. The fuller description of the book's contents is "the Word of God, that is (or 'even'), the testimony borne by Jesus Christ." The testimony given by Jesus Christ in this case is His communication to John of the contents of this book.

John has even more to add to his elaboration on the contents. Another relative clause, ὅσα εἶδεν (*hosa eiden*, "as many things as he saw"), further defines "the Word of God, even the testimony of Jesus Christ." This clause points forward to the frequent use of εἶδον (*eidon*, "I saw") throughout the apocalyptic portion of the book and indicates that the book's general character is that of prophetic vision (Swete). Descriptions of these visions constitute the subject matter of John's testimony to the slaves of God as found in the Apocalypse.

1:3 *The practical purpose of the revelation.* A feature that distinguishes this prophecy from other apocalyptic writings of the time is the blessing pronounced in 1:3. Μακάριος (*Makarios*, "blessed") offers something by way of incentive, which was not found in other similar literature in circulation in that day (Tenney). The writer draws upon Jesus' earlier practice (cf. Matt. 5:3-12) of promising special blessing to the reader and to the ones hearing and complying with the moral

25. Vassiliadis has argued for an objective genitive here, basing his case on a martyrological meaning of μάρτυς and its cognates in Revelation (Petros Vassiliadis, "The Translation of ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ in Revelation," *BT* 36 [1985]: 129-34). The case offered by Mazzaferri for attaching a prophetic rather than a martyrological significance to the word-group is much more convincing, however. This bears out the subjective genitive as correct (Fred Mazzaferri, "ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ Revisited," *BT* 3 [1988]: 114-22).

and ethical standards to be advocated in the following chapters' words. Already the distinctly practical purpose is evident (Beckwith).

The participial expression ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες (*ho anaginōskōn kai hoi akouontes*, "the one who reads and those who hear") reflects the early Christian practice of reading aloud the Scriptures in the services of the church. This, in turn, was a carryover from the procedure followed in the Jewish synagogues where most of the earliest Christians had participated. Because writing materials were expensive and scarce, so were copies of the books that were parts of the biblical canon. As a rule, one copy per Christian assembly was the best that could be hoped for. Public reading was the only means that rank-and-file Christians had for becoming familiar with the contents of these books.

An individual would therefore read aloud for the benefit of the rest of those assembled. It behooved the listeners to pay close attention, a habit in which they had been well-trained. When written resources were unavailable, the memory had to be keen or else the data were lost.²⁶

A good memory was vital not only for the sake of retaining information. Obedience also depended on remembering what was commanded. Listening (*akouontes*) was only the first step in obtaining God's blessing (*makarios*). The other requirement was obedience. Two participles in v. 3 are connected by καὶ and governed by one article οἱ: οἱ ἀκούοντες . . . καὶ τηροῦντες (*hoi akouontes . . . kai tērountes*, "those who hear . . . and keep"). This construction depicts one group, not two. There is not one group of listeners and another group of obedient ones. To inherit the promised blessing, every individual in the group had to combine obedience with hearing.

It has been suggested that *tērountes* be taken in the sense of "remember" or "ponder upon," with no notion of compliance with the things heard (Bullinger). In light of common NT usage of the word and this book's frequent exhortations to repentance, faith, endurance, obedience, and the like, it is much preferred to assign it the sense of "give heed to" or "observe."²⁷ This is a call to be a doer of the word and not a hearer only (cf. James 1:22). Once again, the practical purpose of this book is in the forefront.

The expression τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας (*tous logous tēs prophēteias*)

26. Barr, in commenting on the various clues and memory aids incorporated into Revelation, points out that the ancients had better-trained memories than twentieth-century generations and could keep the whole of the book in mind in perhaps one or, at the most, very few public readings (David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment," *Int* 40, no. 3 [July 1986]: 244).

27. Abbott-Smith, *Lexicon*, p. 445; Alford, *Greek Testament*, 4:548.

ēteias, “the words of the prophecy”) is important in determining the nature of the literary genre of the Apocalypse. Whether it is to be classed as “apocalyptic” or not, its self-claim is that it is prophecy (Alford; Swete). John was endowed with the gift of prophecy (cf. Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; Eph. 4:11), which enabled him to communicate inspired messages from God, including words about the future.²⁸ The Apocalypse begins and ends on this note of authoritative revelation (cf. 22:7, 10, 18, 19).

The reason for the blessing pronounced is introduced by γάρ (*gar*, “for”) (1:3). The reason consists of the nearness of the accomplishment of the things predicted in the book. Compliance with the moral and ethical standards is much more urgent because final accountability for personal behavior is imminent.

Καιρός (*kairos*, “time”) (1:3) frequently has a technical sense in the NT, referring to the end times when the earthly kingdom of Israel will be instituted (cf. Acts 1:7; 3:20; 1 Thess. 5:1). The events of this book are thus identified with the last of the “critical epoch-making periods foreordained of God.”²⁹ From the perspective of prophetic anticipation this period is declared to be ἐγγύς (*engys*, “near”) (1:3) (Beckwith). This declaration echoes and reinforces the ἐν τάχει (*en tachei*, “soon”) of v. 1.

Additional Notes

1:1 Book titles in Greek New Testaments (e.g., Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου) and English Bible translations are separate from the text and have been added subsequent to the initial writing of the books. Though they appeared very early, they are therefore recognized as not having come from the books’ original authors. It is rare for a book to include a title *within* its own text.

The suggestion that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is a possessive genitive (Morris) has little to commend it. It is less precise than the other two possibilities, the objective and subjective genitives. The revelation was His and His alone, either in the sense of His prerogative of being revealed or in the sense of being given to Him so that He might reveal it. In which sense it was His possession needs to be determined.

“Which God gave Him” has been punctuated in two ways. One way is to place a comma after “Him,” in effect making the relative clause parenthetical (*The Greek New Testament*, UBS 3d edition, KJV). This punctuation favors the objective genitive by syntactically sepa-

28. See the Introduction for a comparison between apocalyptic and prophetic as related to the Apocalypse.

29. Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 211; Lenski, *Revelation*, p. 33.

rating δειξαί from ἔδωκεν. In other words, God did not give the revelation to Christ to show. The other possibility omits punctuation after “Him” (NA, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV), which has the effect of making δειξαί the purpose of ἔδωκεν: God gave it Him to show. Because no adequate reason exists for treating this relative clause as parenthetical, the latter punctuation is preferable.

1:2 The failure of some grammarians, including A. T. Robertson, to identify ἐμαρτύρησεν as an epistolary aorist³⁰ may be attributed to oversight inasmuch as Robertson calls this occurrence an epistolary aorist in another of his works.³¹ A grammarian is mistaken, however, if he limits the NT usage of the epistolary aorist so as to exclude such an instance as this.³²

1:3 This verse is one of seven “beatitudes” found in Revelation. The other six are in 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14. As would be expected, all seven “blessings” are for those who comply with this book’s high standards of righteousness. They either declare their blessed estate in an absolute way (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 22:7) or elaborate on their blessing by way of a rich promise for the future (19:9; 20:6; 22:14).

Public reading is a consideration that made the opening words of a book extremely important. Introductory comments had to be chosen carefully so as to alert the listeners’ minds to major themes to be treated in subsequent parts of the book. Earlier comments about the first two verses have shown how well this goal is attained by John in this book.

Another important function of public reading became more evident during the first four centuries of the Christian era. A crucial decision faced by many churches related to which books were to be read in their public services. The reason for this concern was the place accorded such books when read alongside the OT Scriptures. To grant such a recognition was to acknowledge a book’s authority as inspired Scripture. The early church faced hard decisions in separating such books from the many other early writings vying for recognition. For this reason, the obvious intention that the Apocalypse was to be read publicly argued strongly from the start that it be included

30. E.g., Archibald Thomas Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), pp. 845-46; BDF, p. 172, par. 334; Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), pp. 72-73.

31. Cf. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), 6:284.

32. E.g., BDF, p. 172, par. 334.

among those books that eventually would be recognized as part of the NT canon. Only two other NT books contain such direct indications regarding public reading: Colossians and 1 Thessalonians (cf. Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). In addition, there is perhaps an indirect indication regarding the public reading of the gospel of Luke, which is found in 1 Tim. 4:13 and 5:18. If 4:13 is talking about the public reading of Scripture and if the second quotation of 5:18 is taken from Luke and is included under the designation of ἡ γραφή in 5:18, the implication is strong that Paul included at least one NT book as something that should be read publicly.

2. ADDRESS AND DOXOLOGY (1:4-6)

Translation

4John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from the one who is and who was and who is coming and from the seven spirits who are before His throne ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To the one who loves us and loosed us from our sins by His blood—⁶and He made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father— [let] glory and strength [be] to Him forever and ever. Amen.

Exegesis and Exposition

As is true of NT epistles in general, the address of Revelation contains three elements: the writer, the addressees, and the greeting. The writer is Ἰωάννης (*Iōannēs*, “John”), the addressees are noted in ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ (*tais hepta ekklesiiais tais en tē Asiā*, “to the seven churches that are in Asia”), and the greeting is χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη (*charis hymin kai eirēnē*, “grace to you and peace”).

Appended to the greeting are three prepositional phrases at the end of v. 4 and the beginning of v. 5 that name and describe the source of the greeting extended by the writer. From the middle of v. 5 through v. 6 John, by means of a doxology that ascribes glory and strength to Jesus Christ, focuses on the third member of the triune source of the greeting.

1:4 *The address.* *Tais hepta ekklesiiais tais en tē Asiā* are the recipients of this “epistle.” A good bit of discussion has centered on why John chose seven churches and not more. There were certainly churches in more than seven cities in the first-century Roman province of Asia. Though he may have chosen only seven because seven is the number that denotes completeness (Swete), the likelihood is greater that he chose them because they were typical assemblies with

regard to their histories and spiritual states.³³ These adequately represented the various spiritual situations of the surrounding churches at the time. Then too they were probably the ones with which John enjoyed the closest relationship. The possibility of their being representative of consecutive future periods of church history is discussed in Excursus 1 at the end of this volume.

It is well attested by writings from the early centuries of the Christian church that John the apostle spent the last years of his life in this province of Asia, which was in the western part of modern-day Turkey. He apparently left Jerusalem in the late sixties of the first century A.D. while the Jewish people were in rebellion against Rome and went to Asia where he became the recognized leader of the Asian churches.³⁴

Charis hymin kai eirēnē is an epistolary greeting that came into general use among Christians. It is used by Paul in all his epistles except the pastorals (1 and 2 Timothy replace *hymin kai* with ἔλεος [*eleos*, "mercy"] and Titus uses *charis kai eirēnē*, omitting *hymin*). The identical expression is also used in 1 and 2 Peter.

Charis is a "Christianized" form of the more secular χαίρειν (*chairein*, "greeting") that was used widely in earlier Christian writings and in Greek letters of a non-Christian type (cf. Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1). It was transformed from the infinitive *chairein* into the noun *charis*, perhaps by Paul, to reflect the distinctive spiritual benefit that belongs to Christians. The favor of God has been freely bestowed on them, though they deserve the opposite. The grace of God is a highly developed theme in NT epistolary literature.

Eirēnē was a commonly used greeting among the Jews. Its Hebrew counterpart שלום (*šālôm*, "peace") is a familiar greeting in the OT (e.g., Judg. 6:23; 19:20; Isa. 57:19). It is a wish of well-being to the other party, including all aspects of his person. The NT *eirēnē* goes even deeper, however, because of Christ's death and the fulfillment of the OT anticipations accomplished thereby. A person can experience and know he has peace with God through Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 5:1), a peace resulting from the grace of God and the ultimate peace that a person can enjoy. Such a completed meaning lies behind the Christian use of the word.

The source of the greeting. At the end of v. 4 and the beginning of v.

33. William R. Newell, *The Book of Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1935), p. 8.

34. That John would use his own name rather than ascribe his work to a figurehead of antiquity, as was the practice in extrabiblical apocalypses, indicates that he was known to the addressees as a reliable and authoritative figure. In other words, the *ēthos* he had with them even before writing was quite positive (John T. Kirby, "The Rhetorical Situations of Revelation 1-3," *NTS* 34, no. 2 [April 1988]: 199).

5 three prepositional phrases using ἀπό (*apo*, “from”) give the threefold source of the greeting “grace to you and peace.” In Pauline practice it was common to name Deity as the origin of the theological concepts denoted by the terms *charis* and *eirēnē* (cf. Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philem. 3). The assumption must be that such is the source designated here also.

The first part of the threefold source is named by ἀπὸ ὃ ὄν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος (*apo ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos*, “from the one who is and who was and who is coming”). Though one might at first see a reference to Jesus Christ here, such a possibility is excluded by His being named as the third part of the source in 1:5 (Swete). Instead, this refers to God the Father.

This title for the Father is unusual in a number of respects. The nominative case of the article *ho* in the three members of the expression is surprising because the preposition *apo* is usually followed by a genitive inflectional ending. In fact, this has been cited as one of the many examples of alleged grammatical errors in Revelation (Moffatt). As is the case with all such allegations, a satisfactory explanation exists without the need for concluding that the text has errors. *Ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos* is to be regarded as an undeclinable proper name. Proper names were frequently not declined as other nouns were, and so their inflectional endings remained unchanged regardless of their functions in the sentence structure (Swete).

Another rare grammatical phenomenon of this title is the finite verb *ēn* doing duty for a participle (Simcox). It is modified by a definite article and is parallel with participles in the first and third members of the expression. The reason for this peculiarity lies in a limitation of the verb εἰμί (*eimi*, “I am”), which has no participial form to express continuing action in past time. The writer wanted to describe the Father’s being by including His eternal and continuing existence prior to the present moment. The imperfect indicative was the only linguistic device for doing so.

With the first member *ho ōn* speaking of the Father’s continuing existence in the present and the second *ho ēn* of His continuing existence in the past, ὁ ἐσόμενος (*ho esomenos*, “who will be”) could have been expected as the third member of this title. For his own reasons, however, the writer varied from the expected and chose the present participle *ho erchomenos*. Several reasons for this variation may be suggested. For one thing, it corresponds with the keynote of the book in 1:7 (ἐρχεται [*erchetai*, “he is coming”]), the second advent of Christ (Moffatt). Also, the present tense of the participle acquires a future significance through the meaning of the word, i.e., that which is com-

ing is not yet here.³⁵ Such a means of referring to the future also heightens the focus upon the imminence of His coming: He who is already on His way may arrive at any moment.

This is a title that is used several times in Revelation (cf. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5). A notable feature about the last two uses (11:17; 16:5) is the absence of the third member *kai ho erchomenos*. A reasonable explanation for this omission is that by the time these points in the book are reached, the prophetic perspective has reached the time of the second advent and the coming thus can no longer be spoken of as future. A legitimate question is, then, Why is this title not referred to the Son rather than the Father, since it is the Son's advent that is in view in *ho erchomenos*? The answer to the question lies in the close identity of the Son with the Father. Though two separate Persons, they along with the Holy Spirit are nevertheless one God. The Son possesses equal dignity with the Father, and when the Son returns, He will come as the representative of the Father (Lee). So there is a legitimate sense in which it will be the advent of the Father also.

The second part of the threefold source of the greeting "grace to you and peace" is given by the words ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ (*apo tōn hepta pneumatōn ha enōpion tou thronou autou*, "from the seven spirits who are before His throne"). The identification of the seven spirits is problematic. The name occurs again in 3:1; 4:5; 5:6, and these other mentions must figure into efforts to identify the meaning. Two main proposals for identification are that they are angels (i.e., supernatural created beings) or the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

To support the identification of the seven spirits as angels, it is sometimes noted that πνεῦμα (*pneuma*, "spirit") is frequently used for angels, both fallen and unfallen, in the NT (Walvoord). It is also observed that the location of the seven spirits before God's throne shows that they are created beings. This, a position of subordination, is quite inappropriate for a divine being, but angels are regularly positioned in this manner.³⁶ Furthermore, the similarity of the language here to that of Luke 9:26 and 1 Tim. 5:21 (Moffatt) and the prominence of angels in connection with the Tribulation period (cf. Matt. 13:41), which is presumably the period covered by Revelation 6-18 (Smith), are further factors that favor the angelic identification.

Arguing against angels, some have noted that though seven angels are mentioned in 8:2, these angels are never referred to as *pneumata*, and that angels in this book are distinctly called angels and are seen in distinct angelic form whereas the seven spirits are always represented in symbolic form (Alford; Beckwith). Both the singular

35. F. J. A. Hort, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1908), p. 11.

and plural of *pneuma* in this book refer only to the Spirit of God or to demons, with the exception of Rev. 11:11 and 13:5, and neither of these exceptions refers to angels (Lee; Johnson).

The most decisive consideration against a reference to angels is the impossibility that created beings could be seen as a source of an invocation of grace and peace in 1:4-5. This would place them alongside the Father and the Son as equals, and the strict prohibitions against angel worship elsewhere in the book (19:10; 22:9) make it inconceivable that angels would be placed side-by-side with the Father and the Son in such a role (Charles; Beckwith).

It is more satisfying to identify "the seven spirits" as a reference to the Holy Spirit, and thus as an additional *divine* source for the greeting of v. 4. It is improper to associate anyone less than Deity with the Father (1:4) and the Son (1:5) (Swete; Morris; Mounce). Further confirmation is noted in Christ's hold upon the seven spirits (3:1) and in the relationship of the seven spirits to both God and Christ (4:5; 5:6). This is in keeping with NT usage where the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son is taught (e.g., John 15:26). He is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9) (Beckwith).

Against the Holy Spirit identification it has been contended that this passage does not purpose to portray the Trinity, but to designate the high court of heaven as having jurisdiction on earth, with angels as those who assess the situation (Bullinger). It is further argued that nowhere else is the Holy Spirit associated with the Father and the Son in an epistolary salutation (Bullinger). These objections, however, do not appear to be sufficient to counteract the stronger consideration that a reference to angels would indeed be an intrusion of created beings into the Holy Trinity.

It is better, then, to see in "the seven spirits" of 1:4 a reference to the Holy Spirit. But this raises a further question: Why is He referred to in this way? In thirteen or fourteen places in this book He is referred to in a more conventional fashion as "the Spirit" or something comparable (e.g., 19:10). Suggestions have varied. Is it because the churches in which He operates are seven in number?³⁷ This proposal is inadequate because the descriptions of 4:5 and 5:6 relate to what is fundamental and universal, not just to the seven churches (Beckwith).

Another idea is to trace the title to Isa. 11:2 where a supposedly

36. Bullinger, *Apocalypse*, p. 140; J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 1961), pp. 38, 82.

37. Swete, *Apocalypse*, p. 6; H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 274.

sevenfold designation of the Spirit is found (Lenski; Walvoord; Morris; Caird). This notion is inadequate, however, because Isa. 11:2 points out only six, not seven, energies of the Spirit (Alford; Beckwith). The fact that the LXX breaks the poetic parallelism of the three couplets by inserting εὐσέβειας (*eusebeias*, "godliness") to increase the number to seven (Mounce) is not sufficient to carry this view because in the Apocalypse little weight is assigned to the LXX.³⁸

Another approach is to see "seven spirits" as a means for expressing the Spirit's perfection and His sevenfold energies.³⁹ Rationale for this derives from the symbolic use of the number seven to denote completeness (Alford) and from the manifold working of the Spirit indicated in such passages as 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:32; Heb. 2:4; Rev. 22:6.⁴⁰ Though it is true that the Spirit operates in a variety of ways (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4) and that seven can express the fullness and perfection of those operations, an emphasis on such fullness is absent in all four contexts where this title is used for the Holy Spirit (Charles; Beckwith). The uses of the title require a reference to a concrete being, not to abstract energies.

The most satisfactory explanation for the title "the seven spirits" traces its origin to Zech. 4:1-10.⁴¹ Zechariah 4:2, 10 speaks of the seven lamps (cf. Rev. 4:5) that are "the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the whole earth." This has a close similarity to John's "sent out into all the earth" in Rev. 5:6 (Mounce). Because Revelation 4 and 5 carry the same symbolism as Zechariah 4 and the title used in the opening of this book must relate to themes occurring later on, the tracing of the title to this OT passage is an obvious solution (Beckwith). The prominence of the Holy Spirit's activity in the world in Zech. 4:2-10 is established by the words "not by might or power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). John's use of Zechariah 4 furnishes an example of his kaleidoscopic variations on OT imagery (Caird). In deriving the title, John identifies the seven eyes of Zechariah with the seven spirits that belong to the Lord (Zech. 4:10; cf. Rev. 5:6).⁴² The seven lamps of Zechariah (Zech. 4:2) are also synonymous with the seven spirits (Rev. 4:5).

38. Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 6.

39. Seiss, *Apocalypse*, 1:45; John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen, 1954), p. 10; Morris, *Revelation*, p. 48.

40. Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 6; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:11.

41. Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, pp. 426-27; F. F. Bruce, "The Spirit in the Apocalypse," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: U. Press, 1974), p. 336; Caird, p. 15.

42. Charles, *Revelation*, 1:141; cf. also Kenneth L. Barker, "Zechariah," in *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 7:626, 630.

1:5 The third part of the threefold source of greeting is Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Iēsou Christou*, “Jesus Christ”). Usually He is named in second position among the persons of the Holy Trinity, but the writer chooses to name Him last in this case to facilitate an elaboration upon several aspects of His Person and work in the remainder of vv. 5 and 6 (Moffatt).

This is the last time in the Apocalypse that this Person is referred to as “Jesus Christ,” with the exception of the benediction in 22:21 (see also 11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6 where “Christ” is used alone). From this point on “Jesus” is the usual name given to Him. By this means the author emphasizes His glorified humanity.⁴³

Jesus Christ is next characterized by three descriptive titles in v. 5. The first of these, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός (*ho martyrs ho pistos*, “the faithful witness”), is repeated in 3:14. He is also called “faithful” in 19:11. “The faithful witness” is an allusion to Ps. 89:37 where regarding the throne of David it is written, “It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful.” Jesus Christ is of the seed of David and will sit on the Davidic throne that will endure forever as the sun (Ps. 89:36). Psalm 89 in its entirety is an inspired commentary on the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam. 7:8-16.

The next title ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν (*ho prōtotokos tōn nekrōn*, “the first-born from the dead”) also finds its source in Psalm 89. God promises to make David’s seed, His “first-born,” “the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:27). “The first-born from the dead” is almost identical with the title of Christ in Col. 1:18: πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν (*prōtotokos ek tōn nekrōn*, “first-born from the dead”). The two differences in Colossians are the absence of the article before *prōtotokos* and the presence of the preposition *ek* before *tōn nekrōn*. The absence of the article is attributable to the predicate nominative function of the noun in the sentence structure of Col. 1:18. The presence of *ek* reflects the ablatival sense of *tōn nekrōn*: He is the first-born “from among the dead ones” (cf. Acts 4:2). The same function should probably be understood in Rev. 1:5 even though the *ek* is not used (cf. also Acts 26:23; Rom. 1:4). This promised seed who will sit on David’s throne is “the first-born from (among) the dead (ones)” (cf. Acts 2:29-32). Others will be raised from the dead, but Jesus Christ is the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23).

The third title of v. 5 is ὁ ἀρχῶν τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς (*ho archōn tōn basileōn tēs gēs*, “the ruler of the kings of the earth”). John is once again drawing from Psalm 89 where the psalmist notes God’s promise to make David’s seed “the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:27).

43. Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 5.

Here is a clear foreshadowing of Jesus Christ's future role as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). As with the first two titles, this too is by virtue of His Davidic lineage.

The three titles taken together have been variously construed. One defines them as speaking of divine testimony, revelation of the risen Lord, and the forecast of the issues of history.⁴⁴ Another sees the past, present, and future works of Christ in the three (Tenney). The most precise explanation sees all three as referring to Jesus Christ's future dominion over the earth (Bullinger). Some secondary reference may be acknowledged to the faithful witness He has borne in the past, to His present ministry as the resurrected Lord, and to His future role as King of kings, but the origination of all three expressions from Psalm 89 reflects a major authorial intent to direct attention to the fulfillment of the promises made to David regarding an eternal kingdom in 2 Samuel 7.

The doxology. Continuing his elaboration upon the work of Jesus Christ, the author in the middle of v. 5 turns his words to ascribe praise to this second Person of the Holy Trinity. The doxology begun by τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς* (*tō agapōnti hēmas*, "to the one who loves us") culminates at the end of v. 6 with an ascription of glory and strength to Jesus Christ. The durative force of the present participle gains heightened significance in contrast with the aorist participial expression λύσαντι ἡμᾶς* (*lysanti hēmas*, "loosed us"), which follows immediately. Here Christ's love for His own is pictured as continuing in the present. This is the only NT instance where His love is so described. Usually an aorist tense tells of His past love (e.g., Gal. 2:20).

The article τῷ preceding *agapōnti* governs both *agapōnti* and *lysanti*, joining them together to describe one person. The one who "loves" us has also "loosed" us from our sins by means of His blood. The action of Jesus Christ has provided for our release from bondage to sin (ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν [*ek tōn hamartiōn hēmōn*, "from our sins"]). This pictures sins in the role of slave-master in much the same way as Paul sees sin in Rom. 6:12-14. A similar redemption will come to Israel in the future according to Ps. 130:8.

The blood Jesus shed at Calvary was the purchase price to obtain our release. Ἐν in the phrase ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ (*en tō haimati autou*, "by His blood") is instrumental. It was "by means of" His blood that He provided this great benefit for believers.⁴⁵

44. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

45. Another suggestion is that ἐν in imitation of the Hebrew בַּ has the meaning here and in 5:9 of "at the price of" (e.g., Isa. 7:23) (BDF, par. 219[3]; Kenneth G. C. Newport, "Semitic Influence in Revelation: Some Further Evidence," *AUSS* 25, no. 3 [Autumn 1987]: 251-52).

The total participial expression that begins the doxology therefore carries this sense: praise is ascribed “to the one who has an abiding love for believers which is demonstrated by His completed past work of redemption from sins by means of His blood shed for them.”⁴⁶

1:6 As the apostle continues his doxology in v. 6, he varies the construction, changing from a participle in the dative case (*tō agapōnti*, 1:5) to the finite verb ἐποίησεν (*epoiēsen*, “he made”). This verb in the indicative mood marks a sort of parenthetical statement, because the dative construction of 1:5b is resumed by the αὐτῷ (*autō*, “to Him”) in 1:6b.⁴⁷ “Parenthetical” is not to be taken to mean “less emphatic,” however, because the finite verb form *epoiēsen* carries more emphasis than a participle.

The sense of the aorist indicative of the verb is to mark what has been ideally or potentially accomplished in the purpose of God (Beckwith). The completed work of Christ in making believers a kingdom is offered as another evidence of His on-going love expressed in the previous verse.

Βασιλείαν* (*basileian*, “kingdom”) is a collective designation for all believers in Christ. This corporate designation recalls a continuing NT theme traceable to the beginning of Jesus’ parabolic teaching regarding the mysteries of the kingdom (Matt. 13:1-52). This theological entity is noticed from time to time by other NT writers (e.g., Col. 1:13). The present kingdom pales into minor significance in the context of Revelation, however. *Basileia* is the word used most often in the LXX, and the NT to speak of the messianic rule and kingdom,⁴⁸ an emphasis that most vividly carries over into John’s Revelation. It reaches a climax in chapter 20 where the future share of the saints in Christ’s earthly rule is expressly stated (20:4; cf. 5:10; 11:15).

Another evidence of Christ’s on-going love for believers is His appointment of them as priests (ἱερεῖς [*hiereis*, “priests”]). Corporately they are a “kingdom,” but individually they are “priests” (Alford). The priestly office established by the OT law was hereditary, and only members of Aaron’s family were eligible. Jesus Christ has provided a new family relationship by which all believers have a priestly ministry to God (Bullinger). Their opportunity for priestly service is a continuing theme in the remainder of the Apocalypse (5:10; 20:6; cf. Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

The combination *basileian, hiereis* has been identified as a *hen-*

46. Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 7.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

48. Abbott-Smith, *Lexicon*, p. 77.

diadys, a pair of nouns, one of which functions as a superlative adjective (Bullinger). Believers are either “royal priests of the highest order” (Bullinger) or “a kingdom of subjects with direct priestly access to God.” The latter is the more probable sense because of Revelation’s emphasis upon the kingdom and ruling as kings (5:10; 20:4, 6).

The priestly service is directed to “His God and Father” (τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ [*tō theō kai patri autou*]) (1:6). This naming is unlike “our God and Father” used so often in Paul’s writings (e.g., Gal. 1:4, but see elsewhere such as 2 Cor. 1:3), but John 20:17 expresses the common Pauline relationship in addition to the one found here (Bullinger).

With αὐτῷ (*autō*, “to Him”) the writer returns to the dative case with which he began the doxology in v. 5. Without doubt the antecedent is “Jesus Christ,” the same as the antecedent of *autou* at the end of v. 5. He is the object of ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος (*hē doxa kai to kratos*, “glory and strength”). “Glory and strength” are among the tributes to the one who sits upon the throne in the doxology of 5:13. Among John’s later apocalyptic visions the earliest addressed to Jesus is in 5:12.

The sense of some verb such as ἔστω (*estō*, “be”) is to be understood in this doxology: “let glory and strength be to Him.”

The words εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων* (*eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn*, “forever and ever”) express the unending duration of the deserved glory and strength that are attributed to Jesus Christ. This strengthened expression for eternity, literally “to the ages of the ages,” is the rendering of a Hebrew idiom. It was unknown among classical writers. The Hebrew counterpart is עַד-עוֹלָמִי עַד (*‘ad-‘ōlēmē ‘ad*, “for the futurities of perpetuity”) (cf. Isa. 45:17) (Bullinger).

The doxology closes with the word ἀμήν (*amēn*), a common practice with doxologies in the NT (Rom. 1:25; 15:33; Gal. 1:5; 1 Tim. 1:17). Among Jews and Christians this was the customary solemn response to show approval of the words of others, probably including a commitment to what is expressed in those words also. The Greek term comes from the Hebrew word אָמֵן (*‘āmēn*, “be firm”).⁴⁹ That it was a regular part of Christian worship is the indication of 1 Cor. 14:16 where “amen” is the response to a prophetic utterance.⁵⁰ In the synagogue it was the response to the prayers of the leader of the meeting.⁵¹ In this verse it marks the assent and commitment of

49. D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 165.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 327; Swete, *Apocalypse*, p. 9.

51. J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, vol. 38 of AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), p. 379.

the writer to the truthfulness of all the affirmations about Jesus Christ, His identity and accomplishments, but especially His worthiness to receive glory and strength, as expressed in the doxology of vv. 5b-6. *Amēn* is used this way six other times in this book (cf. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12 [twice]; 19:4; 22:20).⁵²

Additional Notes

1:4 A literary style known as “drama” is common to apocalyptic writings of John’s time, but the feature of this work that distinguishes it from all other apocalyptic writings is that it combines the epistolary style of writing with the dramatic.⁵³ The most distinctly epistolary aspects of this book are confined to 1:4-6 and 22:21, but some elements of epistolary style may be detected in chapters 2-3 also.

The three-member title ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος bears a strong resemblance to the OT name of God called the “Tetragrammaton” (יהוה, *YHWH*) (cf. Ex. 3:14).⁵⁴ It focuses upon His eternal being as does the Tetragrammaton, but this title sees Him as the eternal being of the past and present who in addition is to come in future judgment (Lee). Such an allusion to this OT name of God is reminiscent of similar references to the name in John’s gospel by means of ἐγὼ εἰμι (e.g., John 8:58).

The suggestion that “the seven spirits” are a reference to the attributes (or exercise of them) of Christ falters in all the contexts of the phrase except 3:1 where it has been interpreted to refer to His communicating of the spiritual powers of life, His omniscient and heart-searching knowledge, and His unlimited power to punish and reward.⁵⁵ Because of the absence of substantial support for this suggestion, discussion is limited to the possibilities of the spirits being angels or the Holy Spirit.

One effort to support the angelic identity of “the seven spirits” resorts to the seven archangels who were known to Jewish tradition of the time: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraquael, Gabriel, and Remiel (1 Enoch 20:1-8; cf. Tobit 12:15; Esd. 4:1; Dan. 10:13) (Mounce). These originally were astral deities who supposedly were

52. A seventh possible use of ἀμήν (cf. 22:21) involves a questionable textual variant.

53. John Wick Bowman, *The Drama of the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), pp. 2, 11.

54. Alford, *Greek Testament*, 4:548; for a discussion of יהוה see Kenneth L. Barker, “YHWH Sabaoth: ‘The LORD Almighty,’” in *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), pp. 106-9.

55. E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. (New York: Carter, 1852), 1:162.

degraded into angels to protect the monotheism of Judaism (Charles). This suspicious rationale for the angelic identification represents a strange intrusion of Jewish tradition into Christian thought, however (Mounce).

A further consideration to oppose this view of identifying the seven spirits with the Holy Spirit here is derived from 3:1 where the *καί* can be given an ascensive sense (“even”). This in turn identifies the seven spirits with the seven stars who are identified as seven angels in 1:20 (Smith). Although the ascensive use of *καί* is an established characteristic of Revelation, nevertheless there is no contextual basis for understanding it in that sense in 3:1. Just because the seven spirits are grammatically parallel with the seven stars in this verse, it does not necessarily follow that they are placed on the same footing. One expression speaks of a divine Being and the other of created beings.

1:5 The anarthrous Ἰησοῦ is used nine times in the Apocalypse (1:9 [twice]; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10 [twice]; 20:4; 22:16), an unusually great frequency compared to the rest of the NT books. There are only five articular occurrences. Two other Johannine books bear the same characteristic. The gospel of John has 93 anarthrous uses and the first epistle of John has five. This is in great contrast with the epistles of Paul (less than 10) and Peter (no occurrences).⁵⁶

The alleged grammatical error of having nominative inflectional endings *ὁ μάρτυς*, *ὁ πρωτότοκος*, and *ὁ ἄρχων* in apposition with the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is in reality a figure of speech utilized for the sake of rhetorical force. The other alternative of using genitive inflectional forms for these three titles would have resulted in ten consecutive words in the genitive form (sixteen consecutive words if the *καί* is discounted). Such a phenomenon would have obscured the meaning of a text that is quite clear in the form in which we have it.⁵⁷

Some less reliable manuscripts read the aorist *ἀγαπήσαντι* instead of the present participle *ἀγαπῶντι* cited in the discussion above. In addition to enjoying this weaker manuscript support, the aorist participle would have been less difficult for a scribe to copy because Christ’s love for believers is most commonly spoken of in the aorist in the rest of the NT. Some scribes could have assumed that the present participle resulted from an earlier scribal error, because Christ’s love

56. J. H. Moulton and A. S. Geden, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926), pp. 478-85.

57. Apostolos Makrakis, *Interpretation of the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Chicago: Hellenistic Christian Education Society, 1948), p. 17.

is not elsewhere depicted by a present tense, and arbitrarily changed it to an aorist. Hence, the present participle is the preferred reading.

An alternative reading for λύσαντι ἡμᾶς is λούσαντι. This latter reading has some impressive manuscript support, but all things considered, the balance of external evidence is more in support of the former. The figure is that of being loosed by means of Christ's blood rather than being washed or cleansed from impurity in His blood. The picture of washing one's robe and making it white in the blood of the Lamb is found in 7:14.

1:6 The finite verb ἐποίησεν connected to an earlier articular participle (τῷ ἀγαπῶντι) by καί is a Hebraism. Other instances of this construction are in 2:20 (ἡ λέγουσα . . . καὶ διδάσκει) and 7:14 (οἱ ἐρχόμενοι . . . καὶ ἐπλυναν).⁵⁸ The idiom is also found in 1:18; 2:2, 9; 3:9; 14:2-3; 15:3. After using a participle or an infinitive, Hebrew writers often followed with a finite verb.⁵⁹ This construction in the Hebrew OT is occasionally reproduced by the LXX (e.g., Gen. 49:17; Ps. 92:8; Jer. 23:32; Amos 5:7) (Charles). Because of John's frequent employment of this participle-finite verb idiom in Revelation, Charles doubts the parenthetical nature of the expression. Although John's fondness for the construction may be acknowledged, it is still infrequent enough to warrant special attention whenever it occurs. Besides this, he returns to the dative construction of the participles with the αὐτῷ in the middle of v. 6, proving the parenthetical nature of the finite verb clause.

Βασιλείαν has much better MS support than βασιλειον or βασιλεις καί. Βασιλειον would have focused on the priesthood of believers as the primary emphasis of the clause (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9). Βασιλεις καί would have pictured individual believers as kings. The accepted reading βασιλείαν looks at believers corporately and calls them "a kingdom." A few MSS, including one that reads βασιλειον rather than βασιλείαν earlier in v. 6, read ἱεράτευμα (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9) instead of ἱερεῖς. Their witness is so slight, however, that it does not merit serious consideration.

Two strong witnesses (p¹⁸ A) omit τῶν αἰώνων from εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, but the assortment of witnesses favoring its inclusion is sufficient to attest its genuineness. This longer form of the expression is the more common one in Revelation (cf. 1:18; 4:9, 10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5).

58. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 6:353.

59. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), par. 117.

3. THEME (1:7-8)

Translation

**⁷Behold, He comes with the clouds,
and every eye will see Him,
even those who pierced Him,
and all the families of the earth will mourn over Him.
Yes, amen. ⁸I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who
is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty.”**

Exegesis and Exposition

1:7 Without warning, following the address and doxology, the writer inserts the first prophetic oracle of the book (1:7-8). It is characteristic of the Apocalypse that ἰδοῦ (*idou*, “behold”) indicates a special divine intervention. This usage is no exception. Sayings thus introduced are not always oracles in a technical sense, but this one meets the oracular criteria, with John the speaker in v. 7 and God in v. 8.⁶⁰ The only other oracle in the book where God speaks is 21:5-8, a factor that reflects the importance of these two verses in the overall structure of the Apocalypse.⁶¹

The content of v. 7 confirms its important contribution. It tells the topic of the whole book: the coming of Jesus Christ. To do so, it uses a conflation of two OT passages: Dan. 7:13 and Zech. 12:10. Jesus Himself had earlier used the same combination of passages in His Olivet discourse to speak of His second advent (Matt. 24:30) in a statement John had heard with his own ears about sixty-five years before penning these words (cf. Mark 13:4). John’s use of *idou* in the present verse is an added feature, however. Though not an invariable indicator of oracular speech, it is often so used in the OT and NT (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51; Rev. 2:10, 22; 3:8, 9, 20). This writer uses the word twenty-six times. Five of the other uses are in conjunction with the verb ἐρχομαι (*erchomai*, “I come”). Three of the five call special attention to the personal return of Christ as 1:7 does (cf. 16:15; 22:7, 12). In each case the particle fastens the reader’s attention on the importance of the forthcoming announcement.

“The coming one” (ὁ ἐρχόμενος [*ho erchomenos*]) is Christ’s “great name in Old Testament prophecy” (cf. Matt. 11:3) (Lenski). It is therefore no surprise that the understood subject of ἐρχεται (*erchetai*, “He comes”) in v. 7 is “Jesus Christ” (cf. 1:5) who is the object of praise in the doxology of 1:5b-6. This same verb is used directly or indirectly eleven more times in this book in reference to the return of Christ (cf.

60. Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 280, 433 n. 7.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

1:4, 8; 2:5, 16; 3:11; 4:8; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20 [twice]), seven coming from the lips of Christ Himself (2:5, 16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20). The current verse obviously is the theme verse for the whole book (Tenney). Sequentially in the book's development, His personal coming is described in 19:11-16, but the verb also describes preliminary phases of His return for judgment (cf. 2:5, 16).

Though not a precise quotation of Daniel 7:13 in either the Aramaic or its Greek translation in the LXX, the first five words of v. 7 are clearly dependent on it (see also Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). This OT statement tells of Daniel's vision in which he saw the future coming of the Son of Man to assume rule over a worldwide and unending kingdom (Dan. 7:14, 27). Though details of His coming are not developed at this point, the phrase *μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν* (*meta tōn nephelōn*, "with the clouds") indicates that He will come from above. The heavenly origin of His return is made even clearer in 19:11, 14.⁶²

The remainder of v. 7 alludes to Zech. 12:10, 12, 14. The context of Zechariah 12 is the future repentance of the tribes of Israel in the day the Lord restores Jerusalem and the nation to a place of supremacy. In adapting the passage to the Apocalypse, John emphasizes a universality of interest in the advent of the Lord. Such widespread attention is implied in Zechariah 12, but the words *πᾶς ὀφθαλμός* (*pas ophthalmos*, "every eye") in this verse make it quite explicit. It is inevitable that the whole human race witness the return of Christ (Alford).

Clarification of who is intended by "every eye" is offered in the third clause of the verse. The *καὶ* (*kai*, "even") that introduces *καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν* (*kai hoitines auton exequentēsan*, "even those who pierced Him") is one of the frequent ascensive uses of *kai* in this book (cf. 1:2) (Beckwith). Those referred to in this clause are a class within the human race indicated by "every eye" of the previous clause (Beckwith). This prominent class within the larger group is composed of the ones who pierced Him. The smaller group surely includes the Jewish people responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. Zechariah 12:10 indicates their involvement, but so does John 19:37 where John again cites Zech. 12:10 in connection with the crucifixion of Christ. Roman involvement in His execution is also indicated in that gospel context (cf. John 19:31) (Charles). The inclusion of the Romans is likely in the present clause because anti-Romanism is so readily ap-

62. Longman finds a continuation of an OT theme of the Divine Warrior as a "Cloud Rider" in this verse because of its use of Dan. 7:13 (Tremper Longman III, "The Divine Warrior: the New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif," *WTJ* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1982]: 296). The Divine Warrior image is a frequent one in Revelation, especially in 19:11ff. (*ibid.*, pp. 297-300).

parent elsewhere in the Apocalypse (Beckwith). Obviously that earlier generation of Jews and Romans is dead and will not be alive to witness the Lord's return, but a class of people closely akin to them in opposing Christ will be among those future witnesses.

The final clause of v. 7 lends itself to two possible interpretations. The first suggestion is that *πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαί* (*pasai hai phylai*, "all the tribes") refers to the tribes of Israel, *τῆς γῆς* (*tēs gēs*, "the land") refers to the land promised to Abraham, and *κόψονται* (*kopsontai*, "they shall mourn") refers to a mourning of repentance (Hort; Seiss). The merit of this explanation is that it matches the meaning of the OT source passage, Zech. 12:10 ff.⁶³ When the leading role played by the Jews in the crucifixion of Christ is noted (cf. John 19:37; Acts 2:22, 23; 3:14, 15), the case for this explanation of the words is even stronger (Moffatt; Smith). Another supporting consideration is the consistent use of *hai phylai* in the LXX and NT to refer to the tribes of Israel (Johnson). Then too it is well known that the repentance of Israel and her consequent national blessing are associated with the return of Christ that is so prominent in this book as a whole (Bullinger). This first proposal regarding the mourning of v. 7 has much to commend it.

A second way of explaining the last clause of v. 7 is as follows: (1) *pasai hai phylai* refers to "all the families" of the earth, not just to Jewish tribes; (2) *tēs gēs* refers to "the earth" in the sense of the whole world; and (3) *kopsontai* refers to a mourning of despair by a sinful world over the judgment of Christ at His return.⁶⁴ That Jesus uses the same passage to denote a mourning of despair in Matt. 24:30 strongly favors this approach (Lee; Charles). Inasmuch as John's use of these words in Rev. 1:7 agrees more in form with Matt. 24:30 than with Zech. 12:12, the sense of the Olivet Discourse is a more decisive factor (Beckwith; Charles). Probably the strongest evidence favoring this second view is the later context of the book where mourning is generally remorse that accompanies the disclosure of coming divine judgment (cf. 16:9, 11, 21) (Mounce). Here then is an issue where the two diverse explanations both have respectable support.

In weighing the two options, one is impressed that a significant difference between this passage and Matt. 24:30 is the absence of ἐπ' αὐτόν (*ep' auton*, "over Him"), which is found here, but not there. To some this can only be explained by a difference of meaning in the two places, mourning there and repentance here (Beckwith). Yet on the other side, not too much can be made of the limited Jewish scope of

63. Lee, "Revelation," 4:502; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, Pelican, 1979), p. 67; Caird, *Revelation*, p. 18.

64. Richard Chenevix Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia* (London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, 1861), p. 17.

hai phylai in the LXX and the rest of the NT, because the Apocalypse uses the word more broadly to refer to peoples of all nations (cf. 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6).⁶⁵ The weightiest consideration of all appears to be the worldwide scope of the book. "Those who dwell on the earth" (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [twice]; 13:8, 12, 14 [twice]; 17:2, 8) are the objects of the wrath that is pictured in its pages, and evidence points to the multi-ethnic nature of this group. The scope of the judgments of the book is also worldwide, not localized (e.g., 14:6; 15:4). Besides this, the people on whom these judgments fall do not respond by repenting as the first view suggested above might imply (cf. 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11). A weighing of all considerations points to the second option as the correct meaning of this clause. This carries the sense, "All the families of the earth will mourn over Him with remorse because of the severity of punishment inflicted upon them in conjunction with His return." Taken in this sense, the statement provides a grim preview of what lies ahead for the world. The return of Christ is anything but a comfort to those who continue in their rebellion against Him.

Verse 7 ends with a double affirmation of the certainty of fulfillment of the prophetic oracle just given. *Nai* (*Nai*, "yes") is the usual word of affirmation in the Greek language, and it is followed by the Hebrew word of affirmation *amēn* (cf. 1:6). Combined this way, the two words constitute the figure of speech called *synonymia*, whose function is to strengthen the certainty of what has just been prophesied (Bullinger). They are used in a similar way in 22:20 with the effect of saying, "It is so, amen" (Charles). It is absolutely fixed that the coming of Christ will happen as prophesied and will bring with it the resultant effects noted earlier in the verse.

1:8 As though not satisfied that he has made the prophecy's certain fulfillment plain, in v. 8 the prophet adds the emphatic declaration of God the Father as further verification of this fact. The implied thought is that the prophecy of v. 7 is just as sure to be fulfilled as is the credibility of the speaker who identifies Himself in v. 8 by these very significant titles. The sentence can be paraphrased, "I, the Almighty Lord of hosts, the unchangeable God, will accomplish all My will, fulfill all My word, and execute all My judgments" (Bullinger).

65. Johnson, "Revelation," 12:423. The handling of Rev. 1:7 by reconstructionist authors errs badly in limiting the scope of judgment to the land of the Jews, specifically the judgment of A.D. 70 (cf. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* [Fort Worth, Tex: Dominion, 1987], pp. 65-67; Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* [Fort Worth, Tex: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989], pp. 123-32). Not only do they miss the worldwide scope of the book's implications, they also fail to furnish a satisfactory explanation of Christ's non-appearance on that earlier occasion.

The specific identity of the speaker of these words is not immediately clear. Is the spokesman God the Father or God the Son? Persuasive evidence has been advanced in favor of the latter identification. Ἐγὼ εἶμι (*Egō eimi*, “I am”), the words with which the verse begins, is a frequent self-designation appropriated by Jesus in the NT, especially in the gospel of John (e.g., John 8:58) (Caird). Τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὡ (to *Alpha kai to Ō*, “the Alpha and the Omega”) is a self-description by Jesus in Rev. 22:13. It more probably carries the same force in this verse.⁶⁶ Jesus Christ has been the central figure in vv. 1-7. A switch to God the Father in v. 8 is improbable because it is so abrupt (Walvoord). The case is further strengthened by a comparison of this verse with Rev. 1:17-18, where similar titles are without question applied to Christ (Smith). Lastly, because *erchetai* in v. 7 clearly refers to Christ’s coming, the same must be the case with ὁ ἐρχόμενος (*ho erchomenos*, “the coming one”) in v. 8. The evidence in favor of seeing Christ as the speaker is impressive.

Yet so is the evidence favoring the Father. Κύριος ὁ θεός (*kyrios ho theos*, “the Lord God”) is a title of God the Father throughout the OT, beginning in Genesis 2 (Bullinger; Alford). Furthermore, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (*ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos*, “the one who is and who was and who is coming”) is a title for the Father in 1:4, as shown there. It is only plausible that it should have that connotation here also (Smith). In the LXX ὁ παντοκράτωρ (*ho pantokratōr*, “the Almighty”) renders the Hebrew expression for “Lord of hosts,” except in Amos 4:13 where it renders “God of hosts,” and in the book of Job where it is used for the Hebrew “Shaddai” (Bullinger; Alford). Remembering that similar words are spoken by the Father in 21:6 (Mounce), one cannot help being impressed by the strength of the case for seeing God the Father as the speaker in v. 8.

Whichever conclusion is correct, it is clear that a close affinity exists between the Father and the Son in this book. Undoubtedly this results from Christ’s being all the fullness of the Godhead (cf. Col. 2:9) and sharing in all the attributes, deity, and totality of the Father (cf. Heb. 1:3) (Hailey). Still, the above issue of identity must be resolved. A weighing of evidence, especially in light of the OT “flavor” of the expressions and a recollection that the Father in the OT refers to Himself as “I am” (i.e., the Tetragrammaton, Ex. 3:14; cf. Isa. 48:12), tips the balance ever so slightly to the side of concluding that God the Father speaks in v. 8. This is His affirmation to confirm the truthfulness of the prophetic oracle of v. 7.

Τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὡ (to *Alpha kai to Ō*, “the Alpha and the Omega”) is interpreted by ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (*hē archē kai to telos*, “the beginning and the end”) in 21:6 and by ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος (*ho prōtos kai*

66. Swete, *Apocalypse*, p. 11.

ho eschatos, “the first and the last”) in 22:13. The primary addressees of the Apocalypse are Greeks, so the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet are used. There is little doubt, however, that a reference is made to the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet in Jewish literature to indicate the same truth. The expression stands for totality, a fact about God that is stated in Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:12. It expresses not only eternity, but also infinitude, “the boundless life which embraces all while it transcends all.”⁶⁷

Λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός (*Legei kyrios ho theos*, “Says the Lord God”) is frequent in the writing of the OT prophets, particularly Ezekiel (e.g., 6:3, 11; 7:2). By its use here John associates himself with this body of OT spokesmen.⁶⁸

The title “the one who is and who was and who is coming” is fully discussed at v. 4. At this point the eternal Being of the past and present who is to come in judgment adds His affirmation to verify further the certainty of fulfillment of the prophecy of 1:7.

Ὁ παντοκράτωρ (*Ho pantokratōr*, “the Almighty”) is used eight other times in the Apocalypse (4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). It occurs only once more in the NT and this in an OT quotation (2 Cor. 6:18). In the LXX of Job it translates יְהוָה (*šadday*, “Shaddai”), but in the rest of the OT it renders סְבָאוֹת (*šēbā’ōt*, “hosts”). Etymologically, *pantokratōr* is equivalent to ὁ πάντων κρατῶν (*ho pantōn kratōn*, “the one who holds all”) or ὁ πάντων ἐξουσιάζων (*ho pantōn exousiazōn*, “the one who has authority over all”). The term focuses on God’s sovereignty, and with its emphasis on authority might be rendered “all-ruler” as well as “almighty.”⁶⁹

God’s declaration in v. 8 thus ends with a note of authority. The omnipotent one will surely implement what His prophet has predicted by way of future judgment.

Additional Notes

1:7 In each place where ἰδοῦ is used, the one who speaks is either God (21:3, 5), Christ (1:18; 2:10, 22; 3:8, 9, 20; 16:15; 22:7, 12), an angel (5:5), or the prophet John speaking in the spirit (4:1, 2; 6:2, 5, 8; 7:9). The identification mark in each such case is the first person singular used by a divine revealer.⁷⁰

67. Ibid., pp. 10-11. Aune contends that “the Alpha and the Omega” is a title derived from Greek literature, having closest associations with Hellenistic magical revelation (D. E. Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic,” *NTS* 33, no. 4 [Oct 1987]: 489-91). This can hardly be the case, however. The rest of the titles in the verse have too strong an OT flavor, as does the book as a whole, for this to be true.

68. Swete, p. 11.

69. Ibid.; cf. Barker, “YHWH,” pp. 109-10.

70. Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 279-80.

The verb form ἔρχεται is an example of the futuristic use of the present tense, the future connotation being provided by the word's meaning. The idea is that Christ is already on His way, i.e., He is in the process of coming and hence *will* arrive. This use of the present tense enhances emphasis on the imminence of that coming (cf. ἔρχομαι, John 14:3).

In the LXX the prepositional phrase represented here by μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν is ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν. Matthew's wording of the phrase is the same as in the LXX. Mark and Luke differ from the others and from each other. Mark has ἐν νεφέλαις, and Luke uses ἐν νεφέλῃ. John too is distinctive in Rev. 1:7 in his use of μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν ("with the clouds"). No great difference in meaning attaches to the four variations of the expression. They all indicate an upward direction in relation to the earth. The Son of Man will return "upon the clouds of heaven" as the text of Dan. 7:13 points out. His return will be from the direction of the sky above.

The choice of ἐκκεντέω to render the Hebrew קָנַף of Zech. 12:10 in John 19:37 and Rev. 1:7 adds strength to the case that the two books had the same author. Both uses differ from the LXX's obviously erroneous choice of κατορχέω to render the same Hebrew word.

1:8 No conjunction connects v. 8 with v. 7. The impact of this asyndeton heightens further the already emphatic nature of v. 8.