

The Gospel According to MATTHEW

The first gospel resists neat genre classification. One might think that the work's title names the genre as "Gospel," but the titles (superscriptions) of such works were not original. Moreover, when titles were first inserted into these ancient manuscripts for the purposes of identification (second century CE), they did not contain the words "The Gospel" only. "According to" Furthermore, the term "Gospel" referring to a literary genre appears nowhere in the NT or surviving Greek and Roman literature. It seems to have appeared as a description of writings in the late second century, perhaps derived from Mark 1.1 ("The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ . . ."), which probably does not refer to the book but to the "good news" (the etymological sense of the Greek word for "gospel") that it contains.

In short, no genre called "Gospel" seems to have existed, but there were types of ancient literature with generic similarities to the Gospel. The most closely related type is the ancient Hellenistic "biography" (Greek *bios*, "life"). This genre praises a hero believed to have had divine and human origins who exercised special gifts such as teaching, recruiting followers, and miracle-working and who sometimes died an unusual death.

Most scholars maintain that the Gospel According to Mark was written first and that the author of Matthew transformed the Markan version of the *bios* further by heightening Israelite ("Jewish") features such as poetic parallelism; scribal argument; an emphasis on the law, religious practice, and piety; symbolic numbers; scriptural quotation; and fulfillment; genealogy; baptism as a rite of entry; a special meal related to Passover; communal discipline; and prayer. In this transformation, Jesus became the authoritative interpreter of Moses, but also the promised messianic king of Israel. In the story he transferred his authority to a prominent disciple, Peter, and then appeared after his death, promising his followers that he would continue to be present with them until the end of the age. These special features of this genre transformation had a profound impact on the developing institutional church. Thus, it is not surprising that the Gospel According to Matthew was placed first in collections of the four Gospels and then in the NT itself.

Authorship and Date

Many church writers claimed that the author of this Gospel, Matthew the tax collector, a disciple of Jesus (10.3; 9.9), collected Jesus' sayings in the Hebrew dialect for others to translate

(Papias, early second century), or wrote the Gospel in the 50s or early 60s (Irenaeus, late second century), or wrote it in Judea in the decades following Jesus' death (Jerome, fifth century).

Various considerations cast serious doubt on those ancient views. First, the Gospel of Matthew contains, but is not itself, a collection of sayings. Second, a Hebrew version of this Gospel exists, but it is medieval, and scholars argue that the Gospel was originally written in Greek; thus it is not a translation. Third, the author of Matthew was almost certainly aware of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE (see 21:41; 22:7, 24:15–16). Fourth, Jesus' main opponents in the story are the Pharisees, whose authority developed predominantly in the first century. Fifth, according to widely held scholarly opinion (the "Two-Source Theory"), the major sources for the author were the Greek Gospel of Mark (late 60s or early 70s) and a sayings source in Greek that has been lost (designated "Q," probably composed pre-70) along with some special traditions ("M," also pre-70). These factors suggest a date after 70, probably between 80 and 90; composition by Jesus' Galilean tax-collecting disciple at mid-century is therefore extremely unlikely. More certain is the probability that it was written by a multilingual man, probably an Israelite, with a rather sophisticated command of Israelite traditions and scribal argumentation (see 13:52) in the late first century.

The Gospel's place of origin is debated. Suggestions include Alexandria in Egypt, Caesarea on the eastern Mediterranean coast, Galilee, southern Syria, and some town east of the Jordan River (19:1, 4:15), but the most common theory places its composition in Antioch of Syria. One good reason is that it was a Hellenistic city with a large Israelite population, which fits the Gospel; a more specific reason is that it was quoted by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch within a generation of its composition (ca. 110).

Since anonymous works in antiquity were often attributed to prominent persons, a plausible conclusion is that an unknown Greek-speaking Israelite male, probably a scribe, composed this Gospel about 80–90 CE. Its place of composition was perhaps Antioch, Syria.

Circumstances of Writing

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW was written by a subject of the Roman Empire, which can be described as a hierarchically ordered, commercialized, advanced agrarian (peasant) society with no middle class. A few powerful men and their families ruled; they were supported by bureaucrats, slaves, official priests, and a sophisticated military establishment. Those at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid were local business-people, artisans, and—the vast majority—peasant farmers and fishermen. There were also a few "expendables," e.g., bandits, beggars, and prostitutes. With few exceptions, women always ranked below men, and children below both. This structure was typical not only of Roman Italy but also of the Roman provinces. Not surprisingly, these social strata appear throughout the Gospel: provincial governors, centurions, "client" kings, priests, local aristocrats, peasant farmers, artisans, fishermen, lepers, bandits, and beggars; Jesus is portrayed as an advocate of the lower strata and thus in tension with the ruling aristocracy subject to Rome. Despite several important stories about women (9:18–26; 15:11–28; 26:6–13; 27:55–56, 61; 28:1–10), the Gospel was written by a man for men (see, e.g., 5:21–32; 18:15; 23:8).

Political resistance to Rome in the Gospel is not overt, but nonetheless suggestively implied. Jesus descends from King David through a long line of kings (1:6b–12) and is the promised Messiah; his name recalls Joshua, "the Savior" (1:21); his birth is marked by a heavenly star

(22); he is a threat to Rome's official ruling Herodian kings (ch. 2); his message is about the kingdom of heaven (4:17), which is in contrast to the "kingdom" of Rome; his predecessor, the scribe John the Baptist, is executed by Rome's appointed representative, Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (14:1–12); he opposes the Jerusalem temple's priestly hierarchy, who must collaborate with Rome; he is condemned by a vacillating Roman governor, Pilate (27:2–26); and, not important, his execution is by crucifixion (27:32–56), a Roman penalty mainly for political rebels. In short, though the Matthew plot is not overtly political, economic and political issues of the larger Roman Empire are not far under the surface and should not be ignored in considering the circumstances of the Gospel's composition.

Other circumstances are more specifically religious. This Gospel expands on the Pharisees as the major Galilean opponents (9:11, 34; 12:2, 27, 62); accuses them of being "hypocrites" (ch. 2), emphasizes a "righteousness" that exceeds theirs (5:17–20), and speaks of "their scribes" (23) and "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35). These attacks suggest that the author represented a group of mainly Israelite messianic believers who were no longer aligned with post-70, Pharisee Israelites (see 21:28–23, 39). At the same time, there is evidence that the Matthew group was disrupted internally. The narrative mentions a mixed body of good and bad (13:24–30, 47–52; 13:14); there are "false prophets," and Christ-believers who want freedom from Jewish audience altogether (7:15–23); and there are some who threaten the faith of others (18:6–7, 10–14). The disciples themselves are characterized by "little faith" (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8), although they evince understanding (13:51). In this connection, only in this Gospel among the four is the word "church" (Greek *ekklesia*), used, first in relation to the transfer of authority to Peter (16:17–19) and later in relation to the assembled group's power to ban errant members (18:17). The Sadducees, who were mainly priests, become the major opponents in Jerusalem, along with the Romans.

Structure and Composition

THE GOSPEL, ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, generally follows the largely geographical outline of Mark from Galilee to Jerusalem, but adds the birth stories at the beginning (chs. 1–2) and the resurrection appearance and final commissioning scene at the end (28:9–20), as well as material from other sources, especially in chs. 5–11. The narrative is marked by temporal statements in 4:17 and 16:21 ("From that time Jesus began . . ."), but its most striking structural feature is a sequence of five major discourses (5:1–7:27; 10:5–42; 13:1–52; 18:1–35; 24:3–25:46), each concluded by a similar formula, "When Jesus had finished saying these things . . ." (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). These discourses may be intended to recall the five books of the Torah, attributed to Moses, since the author seems to have viewed Jesus as a new, more authoritative Moses offering a new Torah that fulfills, yet supersedes, the old (see 2:13–18; 13:52). The Gospel also contains fourteen special "formula quotations" showing that events fulfill the holy scriptures construed as prophecy (see note on 1:22–23).

This Gospel contains subtle anti-Romanism, opposition to a religious establishment, a sharp anti-Pharisaism, moral stringency, and apocalyptic severity. Yet it has a marvelous vision of Jesus as the Moses-like teacher; the compassionate, healing Messiah/Son of David; the royal Son of God; and the apocalyptic Son of Man. It also claims that he is the fulfillment of the Torah and the prophets (5:17–20) and one who calls his followers to spread the good news of the kingdom of heaven to the whole world (28:16–20). [DENNIS C. DULING]

whoever breaks^a one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Concerning Anger

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister^a, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult^b a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court^c with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to

the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Concerning Adultery

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

Concerning Divorce

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity^d, commits adultery. ³³Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

^a Or: annul. ^b Or: a brother, or sister. ^c Or: a brother, or sister. ^d Or: a brother, or sister.

great. For ranking in the kingdom of heaven, see also 11:11; 18:4; cf. also 18:1; 20:26-27; 23:11, 12. ^{5.20} Righteousness. See note on 3:15. Scribes and Pharisees. See notes on 2:4; 3:7; see also 23:2-36. Enter the kingdom, a metaphor with spatial overtones (see notes on 3:16; 4:17; see also 7:13-14, 21; 18:8-9; 19:23-24; 23:13; 25:21, 23). ^{5.21-48} Six antitheses (two sets of three; see notes on 1:2-6a; 4:18-22) contrast Israelite law or interpretations of it (You have heard...) with Jesus’ authoritative teaching altering or radicalizing this law (But I say to you...). The teachings oppose anger, adultery, divorce, swearing oaths, retaliation, and hating one’s enemies. ^{5.21-26} Cf. Lk 12:57-59. ^{5.21} See Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17; see also Ex 21:12; Deut 17:8-13. ^{5.22} Helig, Gehenna (text note e), a valley south of Jerusalem (Valley of Hinnom), site of an ancient Canaanite rite of child sacrifice, later as Jerusalem’s smoldering city dump it became a metaphor for the fires of hell (see 2 Chr 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:30-34; 19:1-15; Mt 5:29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; see also 3:10; 27:3-10; Rev 20:14-15). ^{5.24} Reconciled. See note on 18:15-20. ^{5.26} Truly I tell you. See note on 5:18. ^{Diakata} 1.5. ^{5.27-30} Cf. Mk 9:43-47. ^{5.27} See Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18. ^{5.28} Looks at a woman, a male perspective (adultery?). Heart. See note on 5:8; Job 31.1. ^{5.29-30} The same sayings are given a different application in 18:8-9. Causes... to sin, lit. “causes to stumble.” See note on 13:21. Tear it out, cut it off, hyperboles to dramatize the

need to eliminate the causes of adultery. ^{5.31-32} Cf. Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18. ^{5.31} This verse summarizes Deut 24:1-4 and assumes current Israelite practice that the husband initiates divorce by giving his wife a certificate of divorce (see Deut 24:1; see also Mt 19:7-10-11). This “exception clause” (not in Mk 10:11-12) is an interpretation of an ambiguous expression in Deut 24:1, “something objectionable” (Hebrew: *me’at* *deber*, lit. “naughtiness of a thing”; cf. anything new interpreted it to mean “a disgrace and/or something bad”), thus permitting a man to divorce his wife for almost any reason, even burning the dinner (see Hillel); not being as beautiful as another woman (Rabbi Akiba); cf. *Mishnah* Gittin 9:10; similarly *Leviticus*, *Antiquities* 3:276-77; *Life* 426; *Philo* *On the Virtues* 3:30-31. A more restrictive interpretation was that it referred specifically to her “unchastity” (adultery) (Rabbi Shammai; cf. *Mishnah* Gittin 9:10). The Greek term *porneia* in Matthew means any form of “sexual immorality,” not just adultery; yet, since the author’s single exception (*porneia*) may be meant adultery. In Mk 10:11 there are no exceptions, therefore no grounds for divorce; this was probably the historical Jesus’ view (cf. 1 Cor 7:10; *Justi. for Apology* 15.3). Paul also softened Jesus’ view, allowing non-believers to “separate”; cf. 1 Cor 7:10-16. The

causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Concerning Oaths

Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God; or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; and do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be Yes, Yes, or No, No; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Concerning Retaliation

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁸But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴²Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray

for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁵For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Concerning Almsgiving

⁶“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Concerning Prayer

⁵“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in public places, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father in secret. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

^{20:15; 22:10; 25:21-26}; see also note on 3:12; 5:46. Rewards. See *Rev* 11:2; 19:6; 1-18. Tax collectors, usually native subjects of the Roman Empire, were hated by their compatriots; see 9:9; 11:19; 21:31; 5:47. *Gentiles*. Cf. 10:12-14. The Gospels’ usual positive attitude toward the Gentiles (see, e.g., notes on 1:1; 3:9) is missing here; as also in 6:7; 18:17; see *Diakata* 1.3; 5.48. *Perfect*, whole, complete, mature; see *Lev* 19:2; cf. 1 Cor 14:20; Heb 5:14; *Diakata* 1.4. Perfection for Jesus’ closest disciples also involves voluntary poverty and following Jesus (see 19:21). *Heavenly father*. See note on 6:9; cf. 6.1-18. A contrast between the piety of the hypocrites and the piety rewarded by the Father in heaven; on alms, prayer, and fasting see *Gospel of Thomas* 64-64; 27; 104; for the number three, see note on 1:2-6a. ^{6.1} *Practicing*, *showing*, lit. “doing righteousness”; see note on 3:15; see also 23:5; 6.2. *Alms*, or charitable gifts, were given in synagogues on the sabbath. Hypocrites, frequent charge in Matthew leveled mostly against the Pharisees; see also *vv* 5:16; 7:5; 22:18; 23:13-21; but see note on 7:5. *Truly I tell you*. See note on 5:18. *For other advice on giving* see *Diakata* 1.5-6; 6.4. *Your Father who sees in secret*. See *vv* 6:18; 10:26; *Rom* 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5; 6:5. Adult Israelite males were expected to

whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Forgiveness

21 Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church^a sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?"²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven^b times."

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents^c was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.²⁵ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii;^d and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.'²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they

went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?'³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister^e from your heart."

Teaching about Divorce

19 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there.³ Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?"⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."⁷ They said to him, "What then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?"⁸ He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his

^a Cf. if my brother. ^b Or seventy times seven. ^c A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer. ^d The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer. ^e Cf. brother.

18.33 Mercy. See 9.13, 12.7, 18.35. On the need to forgive, see 6.14-15; 8.21-22.

19.1-20.34 The author rejoins the Markan outline (cf. note on 18.1-35). Jesus, with his disciples and a crowd(s), moves from Galilee to Jerusalem. 19.12 Cf. Mk 10.1-12. 19.19 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there.

19.3 Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" 19.4 He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female, 19.5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' 19.6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

19.7 They said to him, "What then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" 19.8 He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

19.9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery."

19 Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."²⁰ The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?"²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money^a to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."²² When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?"²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

27 Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or

other things and followed me will receive a hundredfold more and will inherit life forever."

The Rich Young Man

When someone came to him and said, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?'¹⁷ And he said to him, 'Why do you ask about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.'¹⁸ He said to him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness;

when someone came to him and said, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?' 17 And he said to him, 'Why do you ask about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' 18 He said to him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness;

19 Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 20 The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these; what do I still lack?'

21 Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' 22 When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, 'Then who can be saved?' 26 But Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.'

27 Then Peter said in reply, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?' 28 Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or

other things and followed me will receive a hundredfold more and will inherit life forever.'

^a Other ancient authorities read *except on the ground of unchastity, whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery*; others add *at the end of the verse and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*.

^b Other ancient authorities add *from my youth*. ^c Cf. *Gladius dei*.

that and mother. Cf. 12.46-50. Neighbor. See notes on 18.15-20; 22.39, 19.21. Perfect. See note on 5.48. Give to the poor. See 26.9-11. Treasure in heaven. See 6.19-21. For social ranking in the Roman Empire, see Introduction. 19.23-26 Cf. Mk 10.23-27; Lk 18.24-27. 19.23 Truly I tell you. See note on 5.18. Hand for a rich person. See 1. Tim. 6.9-10, 17-19; Jas. 5.1-6.

19.24 Camel... through the eye of a needle, hyperbole suggesting virtual impossibility. 19.26 All things are possible. See also Gen. 18.14; Mk. 14.36; Lk. 1.37. 19.27-30 Cf. Mk. 10.28-31; Lk. 13.30; 18.28-30; 22.28-30. 19.27 Peter. See note on 14.28. Followed. See 4.18-22. 19.28 Truly I tell you. See note on 5.18. Renewal, a revitalized creation following the final judgment (see also 2. Pet. 3.10-13; Rev. 21.1-22.5).

Son of Man... on the throne. See note on 8.20; see also 16.27; 25.31-46. Twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes. See note on 10.1; see also 1 Cor. 6.2; Rev. 2.1; 4.4; 19.29 On leaving family and possessions, see 8.20-22; 10.21-23; 37; 12.46-50. The church provides a hundredfold of brothers and sisters (see 12.50).

19.10-29 On leaving family and possessions, see 8.20-22; 10.21-23; 37; 12.46-50. The church provides a hundredfold of brothers and sisters (see 12.50).

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The Gospel According to

JOHN

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED that the Gospel According to John differs significantly from the other Gospels. It has characters and events that the other three do not mention, and it lacks stories that are prominent in them. It uses language rich in symbolism and subtle shades of meaning. Irony and paradox are common in John; people often misunderstand what Jesus says, but in a way that opens up new levels of meaning. Instead of speaking in parables and short sayings about the kingdom of God, Jesus speaks in long, difficult monologues about himself, his relation to God, and the need to believe in him. Since the second century CE, it has been common to think of John as the "spiritual Gospel," more theological than historical. Recent study has, however, shown that John has a certain grounding in history.

Historical Setting

OF ALL THE NT GOSPELS, John presents by far the most hostile picture of relations between Jews and the Jews. Throughout the book Jesus rebukes "the Jews" for their failure to recognize or understand him. For their part, they try to stone him, and people who confess him as the Messiah are put out of the synagogue so that his disciples are "afraid of the Jews" (9:22, 16:2, 20:19). Yet Jesus and his disciples were Jews themselves! It is not likely that Jewish Christians were expelled from synagogues before the 80s, and even then this did not happen everywhere.

It is now widely recognized that this state of affairs reflects the circumstances not of Jesus himself but of a Christian group some years after his death. The Gospel According to John seems to have been written late in the first century in a specific Christian community that was undergoing a painful separation from the Jewish society to which its members had belonged. Their claim that Jesus was the Messiah, and indeed the Son of God, brought disciplinary action from the synagogue authorities (who apparently belonged to the Pharisees; see 7:45-46, 12:42). For some, the punishment only emboldened their confession of belief. Others apparently sought to remain within the synagogue as secret Christians (12:42-43, 19:38).

It is important to remember, then, that when John speaks of "the Jews," it does not refer to the Jewish people as a whole. In some passages (e.g., chs. 7, 11) the translation "Judeans" is possible, perhaps reflecting tensions between Galileans and Judeans in the time of Jesus. Generally, however, the ultimate referent seems to be the synagogue authorities of a particular time and place who were inimical to the Christian movement, although another option might be those

Jews believers whose faith, or their courage in expressing it, fell short in the writer's view. Just probably, the hostile debates between "the Jews" and Jesus in John indicate the intensity of conflict between the synagogue authorities and the Jewish Christian community in which the Gospel was written. (John, though, itself, is a community of Jews who were not Jews.)

Propose

THE STATEMENT OF THE GOSPEL is stated clearly in 20:31: to encourage its readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Given the historical circumstances sketched above, this probably means that the book was intended to inspire members of the community to maintain their faith during a troubled time rather than to convert outsiders. Many things in John have meaning only for those who are Christians already. Yet even nonbelievers who are open to the Christian message may find John's powerful symbolic presentation of Jesus as the Light of the World and the Bread of Life moving and attractive.

Author and Sources

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN is the only one of the four Gospels that is not named after its author. Tradition going back to the second century identifies the author of this Gospel as John the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' disciples. Since the book also speaks of a "disciple whom Jesus loved" and seems to connect him with its writing (19:26, 35; 21:20-24), this "beloved disciple" has often been identified with John. Yet the Gospel itself does not make this identification and other mentions John not names its author. It may be that the author developed the book from traditions about Jesus that had been handed on by one of his disciples. The figure of the beloved disciple may allude to that individual, although the character clearly fulfills some important literary roles, exemplifying the dedication that should characterize an ideal disciple. It has also been suggested that an earlier document focusing on Jesus' miraculous "signs" (2:11) was incorporated into the Gospel. After its first writing, John was evidently further expanded: chs. 17 and 21 seem to have been added later, by the original author or by someone from the same circles.

John is thus a book with a complex history whose origins are not entirely clear to us. Yet what its author can no longer be identified with certainty, its conception of Jesus remains important.

Date and Place of Writing

JOHN HAS ALWAYS BEEN RECOGNIZED as the latest of the four Gospels. Its references to expulsion of Christians from the synagogue and its highly developed theology suggest a date in the last decade of the first century or in the first decades of the second century. Second-century tradition placed the writing of John in Ephesus, and this remains quite possible, though other places have also been suggested.

Theology and Religious Background

JOHN'S THEOLOGY is more explicit than that of any of the other Gospels, so much so that Jesus is presented as being alien to this world (8:23). Such beliefs were the focus of the controversy between the Christian community and the synagogue authorities, which left the community self-perceived alienated from the world. A number of parallels to John's language and thought are found in other ancient religious writings, including the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish writ-

ings, Greco-Roman texts such as the *Corpus hermeticum*, and speculative and esoteric texts from the second century associated with “gnostic” circles. Along with the synagogue conflict, influences from such traditions may have had a part in the development of this Gospel’s distinctive traits. John states quite clearly that the community’s ideas about Jesus changed after Jesus left, and describes this development as the work of the Holy Spirit (12.16; 14.25–26; 16.12–13). By claiming that the divine Son of God truly “became flesh,” i.e., was fully human, John presents the Christian belief that in Jesus God entered into human history to save human beings. Whatever other traditions it may appropriate, this belief is central to the symbolism and paradoxes of this Gospel. [DAVID K. RENSBERGER, revised by HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE]

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.⁴ And that has come into being⁴ in him was life,^a and the life was the light of all people.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true

1.1–18 The prologue introduces the central theme of this Gospel: the divine Savior has come into the world, has been rejected by many, but has given eternal life to those who accepted him. Some hold that at least parts of the prologue (e.g., vv. 1–5, 10–11, 14, 16) were originally a separate poem, adapted for this purpose. In these verses, a word in one clause often leads into the next clause. Also cf. 1 Jn. 1:1–4, which is probably based on this prologue. **1.1** *In the beginning*. See Gen 1.1. *Word*, not simply a spoken word (like God's words of creation in Gen 1), but the *Logos*, in Greek thought the divine principle of reason that gives order to the universe and links the human mind to the mind of God. Jewish traditions about divine Wisdom (Prov 8:22) lie behind this image. The first-century Jewish philosopher Philo identified divine Wisdom and Word, evoking both biblical and Greek traditions. *With God... was God* succinctly expresses the sense of unity and distinction of divine Persons that undergirds classical expressions of Christian theism. **1.2–4** *He, him*, or possibly “it,” i.e., the *Logos*. **1.4** A major part of John's message is that Jesus brought divine life into the world. Here this life is associated with *eternal* life; elsewhere it is described as “eternal life,” the life of resurrection beyond death that is given now to those who believe in Jesus. See 3:16; 5:21–29; 6:32–40; 7:1–58; 11:25–26; 14:6; 17:1–3. **1.5** *Light, darkness*. See Gen 1:3–4, 1 Jn 2:8–11. *Overcome*, or “comprehend.” See also 12:35 (*overtake*). **1.6–8** The contrast with John's

light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.^b

10 He was in the world, and the world came unto being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God. These were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the

a Of **enough** him. And without him not one thing came into being that has come into being. **4b** **in** him was life. **b** **Of** **the** **sun** **the** **true** **light** **that** **enlightens** **everyone** **coming** **into** **the** **world**. **c** **Of** **his** **own** **home**.

the Baptist (also v. 15) links the prologue to the beginning of the story itself (vv. 19–54); see also 2:22–23. The strong insistence in all these places that John was not the Messiah suggests some rivalry between his followers and the Christian community, for which the Gospel was written. 1.9 *Light*. See 3:18–19; 8:12; 9:12–46; 1sa 9:2, 42:6–7; 60:1–3. 1.10 *The world*, metaphorically the natural order, but the human beings who should have known that Creator in the coming of Christ. 1.11 *Did not accept him* foras much as the opposition to Jesus that will run through the Gospel. 1.13 *Born ... of God*. See 3:3–8; 1 Jn 2:9–3:1; 4:7–5:5. 1.14–18 There are references here to events on Mount Sinai, where Moses desired to see God's glory but was veiled to Moses as full of steadfast love and faithful mercy, concepts related to *grace and truth* (see Ex 33:34.8). 1.14 *Word*. See note on 1.1. *Flesh*, i.e., humanity with all the limitations of mortality that this implies. Such a statement about the divine *Logos* would have seemed extraordinary in ancient religious thought, *divine dwelling* us. The or speaks several times of God coming to live among the people of God (e.g., Ex 25:8; Ezek 37:27; Zech 2:10–11), and associates the presence of God with God's glory (Ex 16:10; 24:15–16; 29:43–46; 40:34–38; 1 Kings 8:10–11; Ps 26:8; 63:2; Isa 11:22–23; 44:4). Many of these passages have been taken with the tabernacle or the temple, cf. 2:18–22. Literally, “pitched a tent,” an image used in Sir 24:18.

15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law in-
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The Testimony of John the Baptist

19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." 22 "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 23 Then they said to him, "Who are you? So that we have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said,

am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'

Make straight the way
to the prophet Isaiah said

24) nor they had been sent from the Pharisees.²⁵ They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah,²⁶ nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,²⁷ the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to

untie the thong of his sandal.”²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Lamb of God

29. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." 35

The First Disciples of Jesus

35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are

a. Or the Father's only Son. b. Other ancient authorities read *It is an only Son, God, or It is the only Son*. c. GK *brother*. d. Or the Christ. e. Other ancient authorities read *it is God's chosen one*.
the last days. **1.23** John the Baptist quotes Isa 40.3. Cf. Mt 3.3; Mk 1.3; Lk 3.4. **1.26** *Whom you do not know*. See v. 10; **1.27** *The one . . . coming after me*. See v. 15. **1.28** *Bethany across the Jordan* (i.e., east of the Jordan River). Location unknown. **1.29** *Lamb of God*. = *world*. Cf. 1 Jn 2.2. Why Jesus is called the *Lamb* is not quite clear: Bulls, goats, and sheep were used as sacrifices for sin (see Lev 4–5), but not lambs (John pre-sents Jesus as the Passover lamb (see notes on 19.14, 19.36), but that lamb is not a sacrifice for sin. Arter-ence to Isa 53.7 is possible but uncertain. **1.30** See v. 15. **1.32–34** Unlike in the other Gospels, Jesus' bapt-ism itself is not described, only John's response to it. Cf. Mk 9.13–17; Mt 1.9–11; Lk 3.21–22. The purpose of John's ministry is interpreted in strictly Christian terms: Jesus was not for repentance but that *Jesus might be revealed* (v. 31). **1.35–51** Only John says that Jesus' first disciples came from among the disci-ples of John the Baptist. They seem to increasingly rec-ognize Jesus' special status (vv. 38, 41–45, 49, 51), al-though Jesus finally tells them they will see something unexpected (v. 51). **1.36** *Lamb of God*. See v. 29.

of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." ⁵¹He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. ⁵³So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

⁵⁴Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples.

⁵⁵Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he will not come to the festival, will he?" ⁵⁷Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

Mary Anoints Jesus

12 Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²¹There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made

of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it. ⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

⁹When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well. ¹¹Since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

¹²The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!"

^a GK he ^b GK his feet ^c Three hundred denarii would be nearly a year's wages for a laborer. ^d GK heeds She brought it

governor and the position changed hands frequently. *Caiaphas* in fact held office for eighteen years (18-36/37 CE); see 18.13; Mt 26.3; Lk 3.2; Acts 4.6. The high priest was a political as well as a religious leader; and this headed the Sanhedrin. See also 1.19; Mt 26.3; Lk 22.66; Mk 14.55; Acts 5.17, 21; 23.1-5; 11.50. A cynical political judgment ironically contains a profound theological truth. **11.51** *He prophesied*. The high-priesthood was not generally regarded as carrying prophetic powers. John's point is that Caiaphas prophesied unconsciously; like other opponents of Jesus, he spoke more truly than he knew (see notes on 7.33-36; 19.14). **11.52** *To gather into one*. See also 10.16; 17.21. **11.54-57** Jesus in hiding; see also 7.1, 10; 8.59; 12.36. **11.54** *Ephraim*. Location uncertain. It may be the town mentioned in 2 Sam 13.23; 1 Macc 11.34 (Apharata), perhaps near Bethel. **11.55** *Passover*. See notes on 2.13; 6.4. The last indication of time was in 10.22: *Purify themselves*. Num 9.10-11 requires those who are unclean to celebrate Passover a month late (cf. 18.28). **11.56** Cf. 7.11.

12.1-8 The anointing at Bethany is also found in Mk 14.3-9. A similar story is placed earlier in Jesus' career in Lk 7.37-38. **12.1** *Passover*. See note on 2.13. *Bethany*. See note on 11.1. *Lazarus*. . . raised from the dead. See 11.1-44. **12.2-3** *Martha*. *Mary*. See 11.1. **12.3** *The Roman pound* was about 12 ounces, or 340 grams. *Nard*, a perfumed ointment imported from the Himalayas; see Song 1.12, 4.13-14, 12.4. *Nard* is also used in 13.2, 26-30; 18.2-5. **12.6** *Common purses* actually were in which Jesus and his disciples kept their shared funds.

12.7 This anointing of Jesus may foreshadow his impending death. Jewish burial customs included anointing the body with perfumed oil (see Lk 23.56). **12.11** *Lazarus* is also endangered because Jesus is anointing him. See 11.45-53. **12.9** *Crowd*. See note on 2.13. **12.11** *Disciples*. Or simply "going." **12.12-19** The triumphal entry. See Mt 21.1-11; Mk 11.1-10; Lk 19.28-40; 12.12. *Goat*. See note on 2.13. **12.13** Only John mentions *branches of palm*. The words of the crowd come from Ps 118:25-26 and both palm branches and this psalm were used at the Festival of Booths (see note on 7.2). *Hosanna*. Hebrew for "Save us, we beseech you!" **12.15** *Zech 9.9*. **12.16** *Did not understand*. . . at first. See also 2.17, 22; 20.9. John acknowledges that Christian ideas about Jesus developed after the resurrection. (see also 14.25-26; 16.12-13). *See note on 12.23*. **12.17-18** See 11.45-46. **12.19** Cf. the response to the feeding miracle in 6.26. **12.20** *The world has gone after him*. Cf. 11.48. **12.20-51** Jesus has public dialogue in John, focused on his impending death. **12.20** *Greeks*, perhaps symbolic of the admission of Christianity to the Gentiles (see 7.35-36). **12.21** *Philip*. See note on 1.43. *Andrew*. See notes on 1.43; 12.23. *The hour* when Jesus is to be glorified is the hour of his death, resurrection, and ascension. **12.22** *Who also glorifies God's name* (v. 28) and *glorifies* (v. 26). See v. 16; see also 7.39; 13.1, 31-32; 17.1, 4-5; notes on 4.23; 7.30; 12.24. Cf. 1 Cor 15.36-38. **12.25** See Mt 10.39;

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!"

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it as it was written.

Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. ¹⁷So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. ¹⁸He was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. ¹⁹The Pharisees, then, said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. ²⁷Who serves me, the Father will honor."

Jesus, we beseech you!" **12.15** *Zech 9.9*. **12.16** *Did not understand*. . . at first. See also 2.17, 22; 20.9. John acknowledges that Christian ideas about Jesus developed after the resurrection. (see also 14.25-26; 16.12-13). *See note on 12.23*. **12.17-18** See 11.45-46. **12.19** Cf. the response to the feeding miracle in 6.26. **12.20** *The world has gone after him*. Cf. 11.48. **12.20-51** Jesus has public dialogue in John, focused on his impending death. **12.20** *Greeks*, perhaps symbolic of the admission of Christianity to the Gentiles (see 7.35-36). **12.21** *Philip*. See note on 1.43. *Andrew*. See notes on 1.43; 12.23. *The hour* when Jesus is to be glorified is the hour of his death, resurrection, and ascension. **12.22** *Who also glorifies God's name* (v. 28) and *glorifies* (v. 26). See v. 16; see also 7.39; 13.1, 31-32; 17.1, 4-5; notes on 4.23; 7.30; 12.24. Cf. 1 Cor 15.36-38. **12.25** See Mt 10.39;

Jesus Speaks about His Death

27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say?—Father, save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. ³⁴The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light."

The Unbelief of the People

After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. ³⁷Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

^a Other ancient authorities read with him began to testify that he had called . . . from the dead ^b Other ancient authorities read all things ^c Or the Christ

Mk 8.35; Lk 17.33. **12.26** *Whoever serves . . . follow me*. See also 13.14-16; 15.18-16.4. Cf. Mk 8.34. *There will my servant be also*. See also 14.3; 17.24. **12.27** In the other Gospels, similar words are spoken in the garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus' arrest (e.g., Mk 14.33-36). **12.30** Jesus also explains why things are said in 5.34-11.42. **12.31** *Ruler of this world*, i.e., the devil; see 14.30; 16.11. **12.32** *Lifted up from the earth*, both Jesus' crucifixion (v. 33) and his resurrection and ascension; see 3.14; 8.28 (cf. Isa 52.13). *Draw all people*. Cf. 6.44; 12.20. **12.34** *Lan*. See note on 10.24. *The Messiah remains forever*. See Ps 89.3-4, 19-21; 28-29; 35-37; 110.4; Isa 9.6-7; Ezek 37.24-25; Dan 7.13-14. **12.35** *Light*. See 3.19-21; 8.12; 9.4-5; 11.9-10; 12.46. **12.36b** *Hid*. See also 7.10; 8.59; 11.54. **12.37-43** A reflection on the response to Jesus at the close of his public work. For a similar reflection, see 3.1-36; 12.27. On signs and believing, see note on 2.11. **12.38** The quote-

him, "Feed my lambs."¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Jesus and the Beloved Disciple
20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one threefold: profession of his love parallels his threefold denial (18:15-18, 25-27). The first two times Jesus asks the question, the Greek verb for "love" is *agapao*, used, e.g., in 3:16, 13:34, 15:12. The third time, and in all of Peter's replies, the Greek verb for "love" is *phileo*, sometimes said to represent a lesser type of love. The two may, however, be interchangeable (cf. 11:5, 14:21, 15:9, 21:7 (*agapao*) with 5:20, 11:3, 16:27, 20:2 (*phileo*)). *Feed my lambs*, and the variations on it, refer to Peter's leadership in the early church. 21:15 Simon son of John. See 1:42, 21:18-19. On the prediction of Peter's martyrdom, cf. 13:36-38, 21:18. *Stretch out your hands*, probably in death by crucifixion. 21:19 indicates the kind of

who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will, that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" ²³ The rumor spread in the community that the disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" ²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ But there are also many other things that Jesus did for every one of them which were written down, suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

OK among the brothers b. Other ancient authorities lack *is that to you*. See 12:33, 18:32. *Glorify God*. See note on 12:26. *Follow me*. See also 12:25-26. Mk 10:7, 14:31 apostle John (often identified with the disciple whom Jesus loved) lived to a great age. 21:24-25 The two verses address the writing of the Gospel. 21:24 See 19:35. *Has written*, in Greek not necessarily "wrote with one's own hand." Thus the verse may not only that the beloved disciple was responsible for the tradition on which this written Gospel is based (especially since v. 23 may imply that he was now dead). 21:25 *Many other things that Jesus did*. See also 19:35. On the books that would be written, cf. Eccl 12:12.

THE ACTS

of the Apostles

OPENING WORDS of the Acts of the Apostles ("In the first book") signal its uniqueness in our Bible. Here do we have a companion volume (to the Gospel of Luke) and only Acts contains stories about the early church. The traditional title inaccurately represents the content of Acts since few of the apostles play prominent roles in the story; the most prominent figure is Paul, who is not an apostle by Luke's definition (see 1:21-22). Nevertheless, the title indicates a link in content from Luke's Gospel, which is about Jesus, to Acts, which concerns the life and work of the church as it is brought into being and sustained by God. Acts is designed to be read in connection with the Gospel of Luke, and the two volumes together form a single work. BECAUSE IT DOES CONTAIN STORIES about the church, Acts is often referred to as a book of history. That identification, however, overlooks the number of genres within Acts; as biography, homily, letter, and apology. To think of Acts exclusively as history can also obscure the way in which the author's theological convictions shape the story that unfolds. For these reasons, Acts is best regarded under the general category of theological narrative.

Authorship

THE CHURCH TRADITION ATTRIBUTES the writing of both the Third Gospel and Acts to Luke, physician and associate of Paul (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24). The dedications to Theophilus (Lk 1:3; Acts 1:1), a uniform literary style, and the shared perspectives of the two volumes make the common authorship of Luke and Acts certain. However, neither volume identifies an author, no physician or disciple named Luke appears in Acts, and such medical language as is employed reflects widespread convention rather than technical training. The author remains anonymous, although he will be referred to as "Luke" in deference to traditional indications within the two volumes; it appears that Luke may be a gentle Christian who received a good education and has made careful study of Jewish scriptures.

Intente

THE GOSPEL AND ACTS TOGETHER ADDRESS BOTH VOLUNTARIES to Theophilus (in Greek, "lover of God"), which has led readers to conclude that Acts is written for an individual, perhaps a recent convert asking for instruction or a Roman official whose tolerance the church seeks. Dedicating books was a com-

mon practice, however, even books intended for a wide audience, and Luke may well have deferred the dedication in the hope that Theophilus would support the copying and distribution of the volumes.

Date and Location of Composition

LUKE PROBABLY WROTE BOTH VOLUMES BETWEEN 80 AND 90 CE, although no precision is possible on this question. Acts must have been written after the appointment of Festus as procurator (Acts 24:27), and probably after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 (Lk 19:41-21:20-22). Quotations from and allusions to Acts appear in Christian writings by the middle of the second century, which means it must have been completed before that time. Little in Acts helps to identify its place of composition, although various locations have been suggested, including Achaia, Macedonia, Antioch, Ephesus, Caesarea, and Rome.

Sources

IDENTIFYING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF SOURCES Luke may have used in writing Acts is difficult. The existence of multiple Gospels enables readers to study their extensive similarities and draw tentative conclusions regarding their sources, but Acts stands without such parallels. The evidence that Luke possessed written sources for the composition of his Gospel does not require the assumption that he also had written sources for Acts. The sections of Acts written in the first-person plural ("we") often prompt the suggestion that Luke had a journal (his own or that of another of Paul's companions), but the use of the first-person plural may simply be a stylistic device. Stories about given locales, such as Antioch or Caesarea, have led to the view that Luke had access to written traditions of churches in those cities; the unity of theme and style throughout Acts makes identification of sources impossible, however. Whatever sources Luke used, written or oral, they lie beyond recovery.

Style and Language

GRIPPING INCIDENTS AND VIVID CHARACTERIZATIONS, including the dramatic punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11), the speech of Paul before King Agrippa (26:2-23), and Paul's later adventure on the high seas (27:1-44), make Acts inviting reading. Luke's sophisticated use of the Greek language reflects the literary standards of his day. He also adjusts his style to make it suitable to particular contexts. In chs. 1-2, where he stresses the continuity of the church with Israel, he adopts a style imitative of the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. When describing Paul's speech before the sophisticated Athenians (17:16-31), Luke refers to the pertinent philosophical schools and depicts the citizens in ways his contemporaries would have recognized. He often employs irony, as in his contrast between Peter, locked in prison by King Herod and yet freed by an angel, and Herod, free and yet destroyed by his own intrigues (12:1-25).

Continuity with Luke's Gospel

BECAUSE THE GOSPELS WERE GROUPED together in the canon, Acts stands separate from Luke. Yet readers of Acts will be helped if they bear in mind its many connections with the Third Gospel. Among the most important Lukan themes is the fulfillment of God's promises in the ministry of Jesus and the life of the church. From the annunciation to Mary (Lk 1:35) to the

mission of the church (Acts 1:8) to Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 27:24), Luke underscores the reliable reliability of God's word. Another overriding theme is the work of the Holy Spirit, who plays a prominent role in Jesus' ministry (Lk 4:1), in the empowering of the church (Acts 1:8), and in guiding the church's witness (15:28; 16:6-7). A third connection, between the two volumes is that important figures in Acts duplicate aspects of Jesus' life, as when Peter raises the dead (Acts 9:36-43; cf. Lk 7:11-17) or when Paul's final journey to Jerusalem and Rome echoes that of Jesus to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21; cf. Lk 9:51-52). [BEVERLY ROBERTS GAVENIA]

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.¹ After his suffering, he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.² While staying³ with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father.⁴ "This," he said, "what you have heard from me,⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

The Ascension of Jesus

As when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will re-entire the kingdom to Israel?"⁷ He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit

11-11 Acts opens with instruction of the apostles by Jesus and three promises that precede his ascension: the gift of the Holy Spirit, the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, and the eventual coming of Jesus. 11 Following a formal dedication, Luke gives his work a formal dedication. 12-12 He "loves" of God (see also Lk 1:3). 12-12 He "loves" of God, but also conflicts with the content of Luke's Gospel (Lk 24:44-53). 13 Only here does Luke refer to a period of forty days between the resurrection and the ascension. In the synoptic Gospels, Jesus preaches about the kingdom of God as he comes to reign (see Lk 4:43; 9:27; 13:28) in Acts 1:3, which refers to the content of Christian preaching about Jesus (see e.g., 8:12; 19:8; 28:23; 31). 15 John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus, is mentioned as the one who baptized Jesus in the Jordan. 16 Restore the kingdom to Israel, restore Israel's political independence. 18 On the witness in Jerusalem, see 2:14-36; 3:12-26; in Acts and Samaria, see 8:1, 4-25. It is unclear whether the word of the earth refers to the conversion of Gentiles

has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.¹⁰ While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.¹¹ They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.¹³ When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.¹⁴ All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together

a Or eating. b Or by. c Or the brother of.

(10:1-11:18), the arrival of Paul in Rome (28:16), or some event beyond the scope of Acts. 19 The cloud signifies the presence and activity of God (see Ex 24:15-18; Lk 9:34; 21:27). 19 Two men in white robes, probably to be understood as angels, indicate the importance of this event (see 5:19; Lk 1:11; 19:24-4). 11-26 The apostles and other followers of Jesus return to Jerusalem, as they have been instructed to do (v. 4; Lk 24:48), and there a replacement for Judas is selected. 11-12 The mount called Olivet (the Mount of Olives) is located just east of Jerusalem (cf. Lk 24:50), which places the ascension in Bethany, a village along the eastern side of the mountain. A sabbath day's journey, about a half mile. 13 The list of apostles coincides with the list in Lk 6:14-16 except for the omission of Judas Iscariot. 14 Luke frequently refers to prayer as an activity of the early church (e.g., 2:42; 6:4; 10:9; 13:3; 28:8). This is the last reference to Mary in Luke-Acts. James, one of the brothers of Jesus, appears later in Acts (12:17; 15:13; 21:18), although Luke does not

cause their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.² And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables."³ Therefore, friends,⁴ select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task,⁵ while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word."⁶ What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicetor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.⁷ They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

The Arrest of Stephen

8 Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.⁹ Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians,

ture that allowed women little economic independence, widows, especially those of immigrants, would be among the most disadvantaged. This scene recalls the commands that Israel gave for widow and orphan (Deut 14:28-29; 24:17-21; 26:12-13), as well as the sharp rebuke that follows when widow and orphan are neglected (Isa 10:1-3; Zech 7:10-12). 6,2 Luke only here refers to the apostles as the twelve (but cf. Lk 6:13; 1 Cor 15:5). Although the seven are assigned to wait on tables, Acts nowhere depicts them doing so. 6,5 All of the seven have Greek names, consistent with their identification with the Hellenists. Only Stephen (6:8-8:1) and Philip (8:4-13, 26-40; 21:8) enter the story again. That Nicolaus is identified as a proselyte, or convert, suggests that the others were born into Jewish families. 6,6 For the laying on of hands as a ritual of empowerment, see Num 27:23; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6. 6,7 The word of God continued to spread, one of several statements showing the church's growth in the face of dire threats, internal and external (see 5:14; 9:31; 11:21; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20). Many of the priests, a surprise, given the resistance of the chief priests in 4:5; 5:17. 6,8-15 Stephen's arrest expands the persecution of Christians to include diaspora Jews living in Jerusalem and escalates the actions: beating and imprisonment (5:17-42) to death. 6,8 Luke's emphasis on Stephen's holiness (see also vv. 5, 10, 15; 7:55-60) makes his persecution and death appear

Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen.¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.¹¹ Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."¹² They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes, then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council.¹³ They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law,¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us."¹⁵ And all who sit in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Stephen's Speech to the Council

7 Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?"² And Stephen replied,

"Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived

^a Or keep accounts ^b Gk brothers ^c Or spirit ^d Gk law ^e Gk Men, brothers

more heinous. 6,9 Probably persons from at least two synagogues are involved in the dispute with Stephen, one group of Freedmen (i.e., former slaves) from Africa (Cyrene and Alexandria) and another group from Asia Minor (Cilicia and Asia). This is the first time diaspora Jews have been involved in resistance to Christian preaching. 6,11-14 The charges against Stephen are more specific than earlier charges against the apostles; he stands accused of threatening the temple and Mosaic law (cf. 21:28; 25:8). For similar charges against Jesus, see Mk 14:55-58; cf. Lk 2:19-22. 6,12 For the first time in Acts, the people side with the authorities against the church (cf. 2:57; 4:1-2). 6,15 That Stephen's face appears like the face of an angel confirms his innocence and anticipates the vision of 7:55-56.

7.1-53 Stephen's speech offers little direct response to the high priest's question, although it does deal at length with the topics of Moses and the temple. Rather than defend himself, Stephen recounts Israel's history, focusing on the figures of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, for similar reasons, see Josh 2:2-13; Neh 9:6-37; Ps 78:105; 106:135; 7:2-8. The story of Abraham is here combined to God's actions of call, promise, and covenant, with little attention to the theme of Abraham's obedience and no reference to Sarah. 7.2 The God of glory. See Ps 29:3; cf. the glory of God in his God of glory. See Gen 11:31; Abraham already lived

in Haran,³ and said to him, "Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you."⁴ Then he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God had him move from there to this country in which you are now living.⁵ He did not lengthen any of it as a heritage, not even a possession and to his descendants after him, although he had no child.⁶ And God spoke in these terms, that his descendants would be sojourners in a country belonging to others, who would enslave them, and mistreat them during four hundred years.⁷ But I will judge between you and them, says God, and after that they shall come out and worship me in this land.⁸ Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

9 The patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him to Egypt, but God was with him,¹⁰ and raised him from all his afflictions, and ended him to win favor and to show wisdom abroad before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he stood before him, and he became his attendant, and he brought him out of Egypt, and he appointed him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.¹¹ Now there came a famine throughout Egypt and Canaan, and great suffering, and our ancestors could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there on their first visit.¹² On the second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh.¹³ Then Joseph invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five in all; 13:50 Jacob went down to Egypt. He himself died there, as well as our ancestors,¹⁴ and their bodies were brought back to Shechem and laid in a tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

15 Then when God called him,¹⁶ the quotation is from Gen 12:1. 7.5 See Gen 13:15; 17:8; 48:4; 7:6-7. See also Ex 2:22. 7.8 Isaac and Jacob received attention here as Stephen moves quickly to Joseph (see Gen 21:1-4; 25:26; 29:31-30:24). 7.9-13 With Joseph, Stephen develops the theme of God's use of unlikely instruments for the salvation of Israel and Israel's rejection of those instruments. On Joseph's betrayal by his brothers, see Gen 37:11; 18-36. 14 Seventy-five agrees with the Septuagint text of Gen 46:27 over against the Hebrew text, which reads seventy. 7.16 This account of the burial of the patri-

17 "But as the time drew near for the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to Abraham, our people in Egypt increased and multiplied,¹⁸ until another king who had not known Joseph ruled over Egypt.¹⁹ He dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die.²⁰ At this time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. For three months he was brought up in his father's house,²¹ and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.²² So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds.

23 "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his relatives, the Israelites.²⁴ When he saw one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian.²⁵ He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand.²⁶ The next day he came to some of them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong each other?'²⁷ But the man who was wronging his neighbor pushed Moses aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'²⁹ When he heard this, Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons.

30 "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush.³¹ When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he approached to look, there

^a Gk he ^b Gk they ^c Gk his brothers, the sons of Israel ^d Gk him

arches conflicts at several points with Genesis; see Gen 23:1-20; 25:9; 33:18-19; 50:13-14; Josh 24:32. Stephen may anticipate the inclusion of the Samaritans in 8:4-25, since Shechem was the center of Samaritan territory. 7.17-43 As the servant of God who is rejected by Israel, Moses receives the most detailed attention in Stephen's speech. 7.17-19 See Ex 1:7-10. 7.20-22 See Ex 2:2-10. 7.22 Luke's emphasis on Moses' wisdom, power, and role in God's plan (see v. 25) ties him to John the Baptist and Jesus (see Lk 1:68-80; 2:29-32; 40:52) as well as to Stephen himself (6:5; 8:10). 7.23-29 See Ex 2:11-22, where it is Pharaoh's

Possible Chronology of the Pauline Letters

1 Thessalonians	50-51 CE	If pseudonymous, in the last decades of the first century
2 Thessalonians	[50-51, if authentic]	
Philippians	54-55	This dating assumes that the Letter was sent from Ephesus
Philemon	54-55	If from Caesarea, three to four years later, and if from Rome, six to seven years later
Galatians	50-56	This Letter seems to have been written under the same circumstances as Philippians, and the same uncertainties apply
1 Corinthians	54	Any closer dating depends in part on resolving the question of the location of the addressees
2 Corinthians	55-56	It is likely that different portions of the Letter were written and sent at different times within this period
Romans	56-57	
[Colossians]	[57-61, if authentic]	Earlier in this period if from Caesarea, later if from Rome
[Ephesians]	[80-95]	If pseudonymous, sometime between 70 and 90
[1-2 Timothy, Titus]	[90-110]	Assuming pseudonymity
Brackets indicate that authorship by Paul is in question.		

The Letter of Paul to the ROMANS

THE ROMAN THOUGHT that his mission in the Aegean region was completed (15.23). Now all one thing remained: going to Jerusalem to deliver funds collected from his churches, as agreed at the Jerusalem council a decade before (Gal 2.1-10). Before leaving Greece he dictated his Letter to Tertius (16.22) and probably asked Phoebe, who was about to leave for Rome (16.1-2), to deliver it. He informed the readers that after going to Jerusalem he would stop in Rome on his way to Spain, where he would begin a new mission. Because of his foreboding about his reception in Jerusalem, he asked the recipients to support him with prayer; he also hinted that he would welcome their financial support for his work in Spain (1.8-15; 12.2-3).

The Roman Church

THE ROMANS OF CHRISTIANITY in Rome are obscure, though some evidence suggests that it had started there by 50 CE. The historian Suetonius reports that in 49 the emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because of disturbances over "Christus" (probably a mistake for Christus) or Christ (*Life of Claudius* 25.3). According to Acts 18.1-3, in Corinth Paul met a Christian couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who were among those expelled. After the murder of Claudius in 54 CE, presumably the Jews returned, among them Aquila and Priscilla (as he calls her; see Rom 16.3-4). Acts tells us nothing more about Roman Christianity, except that Christians from Rome met Paul as he heard that city as a prisoner (28.15-16)—the immediate result of going to Jerusalem (Acts 21.17-25.12).

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THOUGH THE LETTER WAS SENT to people mostly still unknown to Paul, it provides clues about Christians in Rome that may indicate something about his purposes in writing. Apparently there were tensions between the Christian Gentiles and the returned Christian Jews—tensions that would inhibit the desired support for the new mission in Spain. In chs. 14-15 he addresses the "weak in faith" (the scrupulous in observing special days and diets) and "the strong" (the lax in such matters), but he does not say that the former are Jews and the latter Gentiles. So the extent to which Paul's counsels have in view the specific situation in Rome is unclear. More serious theologically was the danger that Paul's whole mission was being mis-

interpreted, on the one hand by Christian Jews who may have inferred that in going to Gentiles he was turning his back on his own people (see 10.1), and on the other by Christian Gentiles who apparently inferred that, because most Jews were rejecting the gospel, God had rejected the Jews (see 11.1-6). Thus when Paul sent this Letter, he faced opposite misunderstandings of the gospel: in Jerusalem he needed to defend the validity of his predominantly gentile churches, whose money he was bringing and who did not observe the Jewish law; in Rome he needed to defend the continuing validity of Israel in God's purpose (the current Jewish rejection of the gospel did not imply that Israel's election was now annulled, 11.13-24). His Letter, therefore, insists that there is one gospel for all humanity, albeit "to the Jew first" (1.16).

Character of the Letter

ROMANS—PAUL'S MOST SUSTAINED THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT—is the work of a mature mind. Indeed, it might be the last Letter we have from Paul (assuming Philipians was written earlier and the Pastorals are pseudonymous). Behind it lie over two decades of teaching, preaching, and writing letters to deal with problems that had arisen in the churches he had founded. The Letter to the Galatians is closest to Romans, for it also emphasizes justification by faith, appeals to Abraham, and relies heavily on scripture. But the two Letters treat these topics somewhat differently: in Galatians Paul contends with rival interpretations of the gospel, whereas in Romans he presents the larger rationale of his gospel. Romans is not, however, a summary of Paul's thought. Important themes are either absent (e.g., the Lord's Supper) or mentioned only in passing (e.g., "church" appears only in ch. 16).

The Letter's opening (1.1-7) is followed by the customary paragraph of thanksgiving (1.8-15), which leads into a statement commonly seen as the theological theme (1.16-17). The theological argument (1.18-11.36) has two parts: 1.18-8.39 develops the meaning of God's righteousness, and chs. 9-11 focus on the meaning of Israel. Although chs. 9-11 are a discrete unit, they are neither an excursus nor an appendage, but an integral part of the argument in which Paul's view of God's righteousness is applied to the election of Israel. The admonitions (12-15.13) also have two parts. The first (chs. 12-13) discusses various matters; the second (chs. 14-15.13) addresses the "weak" and the "strong." The rest of ch. 15 reflects on Paul's work and travel plans. Thus the personal matters discussed in 1.1-15 and in 15.14-33 are a frame around the theological and ethical core (1.16-15.13). Ch. 16 consists mostly of greetings and the concluding doxology. Some have argued that the final chapter was a letter originally sent to Ephesus but later attached to Romans. Indeed, shorter editions of Romans did once exist: Rom 15.33 resembles a conclusion, and one manuscript actually has 16.25-27 at this point, while a number of others have it at the end of ch. 14. Rather than being a later addition, however, ch. 16 is more likely an original part of Romans that was omitted when a few manuscripts abbreviated the Letter for general church use (and omitted the reference to Rome in 1.7).

The study of Romans has concentrated on Paul's ideas (e.g., justification, grace, law), but recent work has turned also to his use of ancient rhetoric and to the ways in which the orations in his argument. Just as he uses conventions of ancient letter writing, so he uses Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques and Jewish exegetical methods to develop his argument, which in effect is a discourse intended to be read aloud. What gives Romans its depth and power, however, is the rigor of Paul's own thought, which these conventions help him to express effectively. [LEANDER E. KECK]

Salutation

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, of which I have promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David, according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all who are called to be saints.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, asking that by God's will I may somehow at

1.1-7 To introduce himself, Paul expands the conventional salutation (writer, reader, greeting) with a summary of his gospel (1.1 *Servant* (lit. "slave"). A slave is at the disposition of the owner; here Christ, see also 6.16-22, 12.1-14.18; 16.18; Gal 1.10; Phil 1.1: *apostle*, an emissary; 1.2 *Prophets*, probably generally the writers of the scriptures, which are the OT; 1.3-4 Paul probably quotes a confession, perhaps known in Rome, that viewed Jesus as the Son of David who was installed into the office of Son of God by his resurrection (see Acts 13.35b); others think Paul simply uses traditional ideas; Paul himself believed that God's pre-existing Son became Jesus; see 2 Cor 8.9; Phil 2.6-11; 1.4 *Spirit of holiness* (a phrase found only here in the NT), probably the Holy Spirit (see text note b); 1.5 *Obedience of faith*, obedience grounded in and shaped by faith. See 16.26. On Paul's mission to the Gentiles, see v. 13; 1.13-15; Gal 2.1-10. 1.7 In the NT all Christians, not only outstanding ones, are saints (lit. "holy ones"). A few manuscripts omit "in Rome" (see Introduction); 1.8-15 A paragraph expressing gratitude to God for some aspect of the readers' faith and life is a standard element in Paul's Letters following the salutation. 1.8 *Faith*, here not the readers' personal trust in God, but the presence of Christian faith in Rome. *Throughout the world* should not be taken literally; 1.13 See Acts 19.21-22, 1.14 *Gentiles and*, bar-

last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15—hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

The Power of the Gospel

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith, as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

The Guilt of Humankind

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth that is evident to them. 19 What can be said about them? They are foolish, holding their own wisdom too highly and being proud. 20 They know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve to die, yet they not only do them but also approve of those who do them. 21 Therefore, God will punish them for their disobedience. 22-25

barbarians, a traditional Greek way of classifying people means all people, wise and foolish means the same. The language should not be pressed; Paul is simply establishing rapport with the readers. 1.16-17 The theme of the Letter; 1.16 *I am not ashamed*, probably a stylistic understatement meaning "I am proud of." On the power of God, see v. 20; 9.17-1; Cor 1.18, 2.4; 2.5; 6.14. On the special status of the Jew, see 2.9-10; 3.1-2; chs. 9-11; cf. 3.9. First can refer to either a temporal or a theological priority. 1.17 *The righteousness*, for "justice" of God, a key theme in Romans; see 3.21-26; 10.3; see also Ps 31.1; 35.24; 71.2; Isa 45.8, 21; 46.13 ("deliverance"); 51.8. Here Paul understands it to mean the divine rectitude that rectifies (makes right) the relation between the Creator and the unrighteous person who believes the gospel. *Is revealed*, (lit. "is being revealed"). The passive voice implies that God, not Paul, is doing the revealing. *Faith*, rendered faithfulness in 3.3, so its meaning here is not obvious. Perhaps through faith refers to God's faithfulness and for faith to the human response to it. The quotation (Hab 2.4) does not agree exactly with either the Hebrew or the Greek text; it may be Paul's own rendering (see text note e). 1.18-3.20 In this argument, carefully designed to lead up to the conclusion in 3.20, Paul shows that the gospel, which brings salvation to everyone who be-

“Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”²⁷ “And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”²⁸ As regards the gospel they are enemies of God²⁹ for your sake, but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their ancestors;³⁰ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.³¹ Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy.³² For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.³³ O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord?”³⁵ Or who has been his counselor?³⁶ For he has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return.”³⁷ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.³⁸

The New Life in Christ

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.² Do not be conformed to this world,³ but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God.⁴ Saved on the same basis as Gentiles, i.e., by faith (v. 23). 11.26b-27 See Isa 59:20-21; see also Isa 27:9. Paul’s quotation differs from the Hebrew and Greek of both passages. Some regard the Deliverer as Christ; others as God. *Zion*, a traditional name of Jerusalem. *Ungodliness* (see text note 2), “of the gospel” is also possible. *Ancestors*, i.e., the patriarchs, especially Abraham (see 4:1-25, 11:29). See 9:5. It is the permanence of Israel’s election that Paul defends throughout this. 9-11. 11.32 See 3:19-20; 23:5, 12-21. God’s mercy is as impartial as God’s judgment (29-31). 11.34 See 3:4, 40:13 (Septuagint); 11.35 Based loosely on Job 41:11, 11.36a-b *for many things* a typical Stoic formulation (see Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.23); see also 1 Cor 8:6; 11:36b. The discussion of Israel’s fate closes with a doxology (see 1:25; 9:5, 16:27). 12.1-8 The opening passage of the second part of the Letter (12:1-15:13) concerned with aspects of the Christian life. 12.1 *Bodies*, i.e., not selves (see 6:13, 16

but associate with the lowly;⁹ do not claim to be wiser than you are.¹⁰ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.¹¹ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God;¹² for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.¹³ No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.”¹⁴ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Bring Subject to Authorities

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.² For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval.³ For this God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.⁴ Therefore one must be subject,

not only because of wrath but also because of conscience.⁶ For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Love for One Another

8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.¹¹

An Urgent Appeal

11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;¹² the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light,¹³ let us live honorably as in the day, not

(things). Wiser. See 11:25; this counsel perhaps echoes Prov 3:7. 12.17 *Evil for evil*. See Mt 5:38-39; 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9; cf. Ex 21:23-25. *Noble* in the sight of all. See 2 Cor 8:21. 12.18 *Live peaceably*. See Mk 9:50; 1 Cor 13:11. 1 Thess 5:13; Heb 12:14; see also Ps 34:14. 12.19 *Never avenge yourselves*. See Prov 20:22; 24:29. *The wrath*. See 1:18; 2:5-11; 5:9. The quotations from Dan 3:25; see also Heb 10:30 and the Qumran Rule of the Community (1QS) 10:12-14.20 See Prov 25:21-22; see also Mt 5:44; 23:35; Lk 6:27. 13.1-7 Paul abruptly urges submission to civil authorities; a few scholars think the passage was added to the original Paul wrote. See also 1 Pet 2:13-14; cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2. 13.1 This verse states the basic injunction that we 2-regain and justify. *Governing authorities* most likely government officials and not angelic powers (cf. 8:37-39). 1 Cor 15:24-27; Gal 4:8-11. *Instituted by God*, a concept also expressed in the Jewish wisdom tradition (e.g., Prov 8:15-16; Wis 6:1-3; Sir 10:4-5) as well as in apocalyptic literature (e.g., Dan 2:37-38; 4:17, 25, 32; Gen 4:15-18). 13.4 The sword represents the power to punish ultimately by execution. 13.5 *Wrath*. See note on 1:18. *Conscience* (see 2:15), one’s inner judge of right and wrong. 13.6 *Servants* renders a Greek word used for persons performing public functions; especially cultic activities; Paul uses it of himself in 15:16

13.7 It is not clear whether Paul is alluding here to a teaching of Jesus (see Mk 12:13-17). Taxes, both customs duties or tolls and tribute. 13.8-10 Obeying the commandment to love fulfills the law. 13.8 *Owe* translates the same Greek word as *due* in v. 13.9. The list of *commandments* is drawn from Ex 20:13-17; Deut 5:17-21; see also Rom 2:21-22; Mt 19:18-19; Mk 10:19. *Love*... as yourself is from Lev 19:18, which is cited also by Jesus in Mt 5:43; 19:19 (but not as summary of the law); see also Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8. 13.10 *Love does no wrong*. See 1 Cor 13:4-6. On the fulfilling of the law, see 8:4; Gal 5:14. 13.11-14 Paul reminds the readers of the specifically Christian perspective from which the preceding injunctions must be viewed. 13.11 *Wake*, a term for summoning to moral action in view of the time (from a date but a significant moment). See also Mk 13:35-36; Eph 5:4; 1 Thess 5:6-7. *Salvation is nearer*, an allusion to the future coming of Christ, which is not otherwise mentioned explicitly in Romans. See 1 Cor 15:20-24; 2 Cor 5:4-5; 1 Thess 4:15-18; see also Mk 1:15; 13:28-29. 13.12 The metaphors of *darkness* and *light* suggest moral change from evil deeds to good; see 1 Thess 5:4-11; see also Prov 4:16-19; Wis 17:1-18.4. Changing clothes (here armor) was a common metaphor for replacing vices with virtues; see Job 29:14; Eph 4:22-24; 6:13-17; Col

thing, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.²³ Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters.²⁴ Since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you will serve the Lord Christ.²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality.¹ Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.³ At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison.⁴ So that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.

5 Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

Final Greetings and Benediction

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord.⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts.⁹ He is coming with

3:22-25 Slaves are also admonished in Eph 6:5-8; 1 Tim 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet 2:18-25; cf. 1 Cor 7:21-24. 3:25 On no partiality, see Eph 6:9; see also Rom 2:11; 3:22; 10:12. 4:1 On the just treatment of slaves by their masters, see Lev 25:43-53; Eph 6:9.

4:2-6 Concluding admonitions. 4:2 On prayer, see 1:3, 4:3, 12. On thanksgiving, see 1:12; 2:7, 3:17. 4:3 Mystery of Christ. See 1:27, 2:2. In prison. It is not known which of Paul's many imprisonments is meant here; see vv. 10, 18; see also 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23. 4:5 On making the most of the time, see Eph 5:16. 4:6 If seasoned with salt is an echo of Ex 30:35, then all speech should be a thank offering to God. On answering the

Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him.¹¹ And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills.¹³ For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea.¹⁷ And say to Archippus "See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.^h

^a In Greek the same word is used for master and Lord.
^b Or not for men. ^c Or you are slaves of, or be slaves of.
^d Or opportunity. ^e Or slave. ^f Other authorities read that I may know how you are. ^g Or brothers. ^h Other ancient authorities add Amen.

questions of outsiders, see 1 Pet 3:15. 4:7-18 Greetings and instructions. 4:7 On the commendation of Tychicus, see Eph 6:21-22; see also Acts 20:4. 2 Tim 4:12. Titus 3:12. 4:9 On Onesimus, a Colossian, see Philim 10. 4:10-14 See Philim 23-24 for many of the same names. 4:11 Kingdom of God. Cf. 1:13; Eph 5:5. 4:12 On standing firm, see Eph 6:11-14. On mature status, see note on 1:28. 4:16 Letter from Laodicea, i.e., a letter from Paul to the Laodiceans, sent by them to Colossae; nothing is known of this letter. 4:18 Letters in antiquity were often dictated to a scribe (see Rom 16:22), but the author might append a greeting in his own hand (see 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11).

The First Letter of Paul to the THESSALONIANS

PAUL WROTE THE THESSALONIANS, the oldest book in the NT, to the church in Thessalonica, a port located on the northern shore of the Aegean Sea. This city was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and was devoted to the imperial cult of Rome, but culturally it remained a Greek city governed by Greek law. Its location on the Via Egnatia, which ran from Byzantium to the Adriatic Sea, together with its commerce ensured commercial prosperity.

Circumstances of the Letter

AFTER A BAD EXPERIENCE in Philippi (2:2; Acts 16:11-40), Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy came to Thessalonica. Soon after they founded a church there, intense opposition from the Jewish community forced them to leave (Acts 17:1-10). They went on to Berea, where Silvanus (called "Silas" in Acts) and Timothy stayed while Paul journeyed on to Athens (Acts 17:10-15). When Timothy joined Paul in Athens, Paul immediately sent him back to Thessalonica for information about the church (3:1-2) and then went on to Corinth, where Timothy and Silvanus met him later (Acts 18:1-5). Timothy reported favorably about the life of the community (3:6-7) but also, it seems, brought news of anxiety over Paul's failure to return (2:17-18). Timothy's report stimulated Paul to write 1 Thessalonians from Corinth about 51 CE. In the letter Paul responds to the Thessalonians' anxiety by reviewing his initial reception there (1:2-10) and his ongoing concern for the church (2:1-3, 13). He reinforces his original teaching by describing how Christians should live in the face of the imminent return of Jesus the Lord (4:1-5, 11) and how they should strengthen one another in their life together (5:12-22).

Authenticity and Integrity

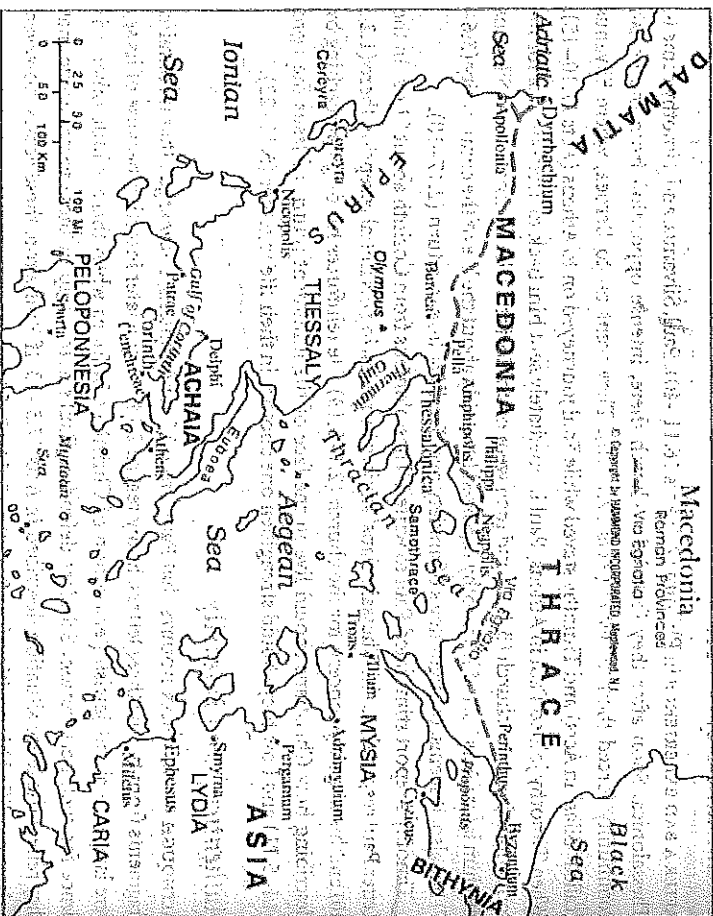
ALTHOUGH NO SCHOLAR DOUBTS that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, a few argue that it contains fragments from two or three letters. Many regard 2:14-16 as a later insertion because of its severe language about Jewish persecution of Christians in Judea when there is little other evidence for such persecution. Scholars defending Paul's authorship of these verses argue that they reflect the tense situation described in Acts 17:5-13. If Paul wrote these verses, however, he later modified his position (see Rom 9:3-5; 11:17-31).

Stylistic Features and Significance

THE LETTER IS PASTORAL, warm in tone, and affectionate throughout. There is no evidence of disunity or theological debate in the community. The praise in 1:6-8 is unequalled in Paul's other Letters. Aware of the Thessalonians' Greek culture, Paul draws on language from Greek philosophy to discuss issues treated by many Greek writers: marriage, community life, engagement in civil life.

Some features are unique to this Letter. Because the Thessalonian converts were not Jewish, Paul does not refer explicitly (except in 2:14-16) to Judaism, to problems affecting Jewish Christians (e.g., Mosaic law), or to any or person, institution, or event (e.g., Abraham, Moses, the temple, or sacrifice). He also does not quote the OT, though it often lies behind his language or thought, for Paul's Jewish heritage shaped him decisively. He names the recipients "Thessalonians," using the term for citizens of the city, a form of address repeated only in 2 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians gives us our earliest insight into Paul's missionary activity and continuing concern for his congregations. It reveals problems early Christians faced living in Greek society and lets us see the inner life of the early church. (BORG M. KRENTZ, *The Conversion and the Community: A Study of the Early Church in the Light of the Thessalonian Letters*, p. 10.)



The first Christian groups established by Paul in Europe were at Philippi and Thessalonica. From there he traveled south through Berea (Acts 17:10-15) to Athens (1 Thess 2:2-3, 1) and finally to Corinth.

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the Thessalonians: in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example.

2 We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.³ For we know, brothers and sisters,⁴ beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;⁵ just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sakes.⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit,⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God

1.1 A typical ancient letter opening with Christian modifications (see Rom 1:1-7). Normally, there are three senders; Paul, however, is the writer as 1 makes clear. Silvanus (Silas in Acts) and Timothy were trusted co-workers (see Acts 16:1-18; 5:2 Cor 1:19).

1.2-1.3 The first major section describes Paul's ongoing concern for the Thessalonians: 1.2-1.10 The Thessalonians' reception of Paul's preaching was ratified by what it produced: their experience of the Spirit and their own joyful proclamation. Paul uses emotional language (theoretical *patheia*), designed to evoke a favorable response from the Thessalonians: 1.2-1.3 Ancient letters often begin with a prayer for the readers' well-being. Paul begins with thanks for the Thessalonians' present activity (see, e.g., Rom 1:8). 1.3 Faith, hope, and love occur together here for the first time in Paul's letters; see also 5:8; Rom 5:1-5; 1 Cor 13:13; Gal 5:5-6. 1.4 *Chosen* implies a special relationship with God, like Israel's (see, e.g., Isa 41:8-10). 1.5 *Omnifariousness* of the gospel is not Paul's own creation but God's effective word that produces faith. *Word*, a philosophical term implying rational account and explanation; see also 6:8-2:5; 1:18. To contrast speech and action was an ancient Greek philosophical convention. *Power*, the Holy Spirit (see also 1:6; 4:6; 5:19), and *full conviction* stress the effect on the Thessalonians of Paul's preaching. 1.6 Paul often uses himself (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1) other Christians (1 Thess 2:14), and the Lord (1 Cor 4:11) as models for imitation. *Persecution*

marked the founding of this church; see 2:2, 14-16; 3:3-4. 1.7 Macedonia (where Thessalonica lies) is northern mainland Greece; Achaia (where Corinth lies) is southern Greece. They are the two Roman provinces in European Greece. 1.8 *Sounded forth* stresses the Thessalonians' witnessing activity; 1:9-1.10 A terse summary of Paul's initial preaching to non-Jews; see also 1 Cor 8:6; 10:14, 19 *Idols*, i.e., statues. See also 1 Cor 8:4-13; 10:14-22.

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has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. 9 For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica.

2 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition.³ For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery,⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.⁵ As you know, and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed;⁶ nor did we seek praise from mortals;⁷ whether from

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you or from others,⁷ though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle⁸ among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.⁹ So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

⁹ You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters,⁹ we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers.¹¹ As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

¹³ We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.¹⁴ For you, brothers and sisters,¹⁴ became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own companions as they did from the Jews,¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets,¹⁵ and drove us out; they displeased God and oppose everyone,¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins, but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.¹⁷

Paul's Desire to Visit the Thessalonians Again

¹⁷ As for us, brothers and sisters,¹⁷ when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being

God is Paul's fundamental moral criterion in this letter (see 2.12; 4.1). ^{2.7} The only explicit reference to Paul's apostleship in the letter: *Gentile... like a nurse*. For more maternal imagery, see Gal 4.19; 2.9. Like many contemporary philosophers, Paul worked to support himself; see Acts 18.3; 1 Cor 9.6-18; 2 Thess 3.7-10. ^{2.12} *Urging and encouraging... and pleading* are the opposite of making demands (v. 7). The three synonymous participles stress the importance of Christian life. ^{2.13-16} The second thanksgiving (see 1.2-3) for the Thessalonians' faith under opposition. ^{2.14-16} The authenticity of these verses is sometimes challenged; see Introduction. ^{2.15} *On fulfilling... the prophets* (the only reference to the OT in the letter); see

separated from you—in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face.¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again—but Satan blocked our way.¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?²⁰ Yes, you are our glory and joy!

³ Therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens,² and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith,³ so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for.⁴ In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know.⁵ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith.⁶ I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor had been in vain.

Timothy's Encouraging Report

⁶ But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us—just as we long to see you.⁷ For this reason, brothers and sisters,⁸ during all our distress and persecution, we have been encouraged about you through your faith.⁸ For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord.⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God

^a Other ancient authorities read *infans*. ^b GK brothers. ^c Other ancient authorities read *their own prophets*. ^d Or *completely or forever*. ^e GK lacks *proclaiming*.

Mt 23.31; Lk 11.49-51; Acts 7.52. ^{2.16} *Filling up the measure of their sins* (see also Dan 8.23; 2 Macc 6.14) reflects the apocalyptic concept that history moves in predetermined stages toward the end, God's wrath. See 1.10. ^{At last, Completely or forever (see text note ^d) is preferable. ^{2.17-3.5} Paul expresses his concern for the Thessalonians while absent from them. ^{2.18} Paul's frustrated attempts to visit the Thessalonians are part of the apocalyptic struggle between God and Satan; see also Rom 16.20; 2 Cor 2.11; 11.14; 12.7. ^{2.19} *Crown of boasting*. The laurel wreath was a symbol of victory or praise. See Phil 2.16; 4.1. ^{3.5} *Tempter*, i.e., Satan (see 2.18). ^{3.6-13} Timothy's report (see v. 2) leads Paul to an exuberant response. ^{3.6} *On faith and love*, see 1.3.}

because of you?¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you.¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you.¹³ And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

A Life Pleasing to God

⁴ Finally, brothers and sisters,⁴ we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more.⁵ For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.⁶ For this is the will of God: your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication;⁷ that each one of you know how to control your own body;⁸ in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister⁹ in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and

Paul reinforces hope in 4.13-18. ^{3.10} *Whatever is lacking in your faith* does not imply a rebuke (see 1.8) but refers to the teaching given in 4.1-5.22. ^{3.11-13} Paul's prayer, answered by later visits (1 Cor 16.5; 2 Cor 12.13-15), repeats motifs found in 1.3-4. ^{3.13} *Saints* (lit. "holiness"), an OT title for God's people (see Ex 19.6; Dan 7.18; *Psalms of Solomon* 17.26) or for angelic beings here either significance makes sense. ^{4.1-5.24} In this second major section of the letter, Paul gives practical instructions about Christian life in a non-Christian city. ^{4.1-12} Marriage, human relationships, and civic life—topics often discussed by philosophers—were significant for Christian life in a Greek city. ^{4.1-2} General introduction to 4.1-5.24. ^{4.1} *Finally*, better "therefore," marks the transition to 4.1-5.24. ^{Urges}, or "encourages," a technical term of ancient ethics, also found in 2.12; 3.2; 4.10; 5.11; 14.5. Some hold that the entire letter is a letter of moral encouragement. ^{4.3} Reference to the will of God anticipates the strong theological emphasis in vv. 6-8. ^{4.3} *Sexual laxity scandalized Jews* (see v. 5). ^{4.3} *Paul often warns against fornication* (see 1 Cor 5.1; 6.13-18; Gal 5.19). ^{4.4} *How to control your own body* (see 1 Cor 7.2). ^{4.4} *How to take a wife for himself* (text note ^b) "the 'how' to possess a vessel or implement" is preferable. Both translations are possible, but Paul is discussing relationships here. *Holiness and honor*. Paul

solemnly warned you.² For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness.³ Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.⁹ Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters,⁴ you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,¹⁰ and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters¹¹ throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved,¹² to do so more and more, ¹¹ to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you,¹² so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.

The Coming of the Lord

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,¹³ about those who have died,¹⁴ so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means

^a GK brothers. ^b Or *how to take a wife for himself*. ^c GK *brother*. ^d GK *fallen asleep*.

evaluates marital sex positively (see also 1 Cor 7.3-6). ^{4.6} *On wrongdoing... a brother or sister*, see Rom 14.13-23; 1 Cor 8.9-13. Paul describes God as an *avenger*, an OT motif (Ps 94.1), to stress the eschatological significance of what he teaches; see also 1.10; Rom 2.16; 12.19. ^{4.8} *Holy Spirit* mentioned in 1.6; 5.19; not as prominent here as in 1 Corinthians and Romans. ^{4.9} *Love of the brothers and sisters* (Greek *philadelphia*) was a virtue in Epicurean philosophy; Paul uses the term only once more (Rom 12.10). *Though by God*, a common Stoic idea. The term is not found elsewhere in the NT. ^{4.11} *Aspire to live quietly* corresponds to the Epicurean maxim "Escape notice as you live." *Mind your own affairs*, an Epicurean attitude that excluded participation in civic affairs (minding the common affairs). *Work with your hands* emphasizes self-sufficiency, a major Stoic goal (see 2.9; 1 Cor 4.12; 2 Thess 3.6-12). ^{4.13-18} Paul describes Jesus' return in angelic and imperial cult and Jewish apocalyptic expectations. ^{4.13} *No hope* reflects a common Greco-Roman view, especially in Epicurean philosophy, that there is no resurrection. ^{4.14} *Latin tomb inscription* reads: "I was not; I was I am not; I care not." ^{4.15} *By the (better "as") word of the Lord*, probably a special revelation from the risen Christ; no such saying of Jesus survives in the Gospels. *We who are alive*. Paul does not expect to die

Paul does not expect to die

precede those who have died.¹⁶ For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the trumpet's call and with the sound of God's dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever!¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words: "The Lord is coming soon."

5. Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you.² For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.³ When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!⁴ But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief.⁵ For you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.⁶ So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober,⁷ for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.⁹ For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

before Jesus' coming (see also 1 Cor 15:51-52). Later, however, he seems to reflect on the possibility of death; see 2 Cor 5:1-5; Phil 1:20-23. *Coming* (Greek *parousia*; see also 2:19, 3:13, 5:23), a technical term for a ruler's state visit. Cf. Mt 24:3-4; Cor 15:23; 4:16. *A cry of command*, a herald's call and a trumpet (see Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zech 9:14) announce the ruler's arrival, or texts and ruler calls both use such language, e.g. 17 Paul identifies Jesus as the Lord (an imperial title) of the universe whom believers will welcome as city officials would meet and welcome a visiting ruler. Note that the Lord is coming to the earth, not going to heaven.
5:1-11 Paul draws out the implications of the hope of Jesus' coming with repeated calls for vigilance.
5:2 *Day of the Lord*, the day of judgment. See Isa 29:19; Am 5:18-20; 5:3 Roman imperial coins used *peace and security* as a propaganda legend; see also Jer 6:14; Ezek 13:10. *Labor pains*. See Isa 13:6-8; 26:17-18; 13:13; Rom 8:22. *5:5 Let us not fall asleep*. 2 Th 5:13; Mk 13:34-37; this exhortation to moral alertness is clear.

Final Exhortations, Greetings, and Benediction

12 But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you.¹³ esteem them very highly in love because of their work.¹⁴ Be at peace among yourselves.¹⁵ And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers; encourage the fainthearted; help the weak; be patient with all of them.¹⁶ See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.¹⁷ Rejoice always,¹⁸ pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit.²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets;²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good;²² abstain from every form of evil.²³

23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound^a and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.
25 Beloved,^b pray for us.
26 Greet all the brothers and sisters^c with holy kiss.²⁷ I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them.
28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.^d

^a Cf. fallen asleep. ^b Cf. brothers. ^c Cf. despite problems. ^d Cf. complete. ^e Cf. brothers. ^f Cf. in all the brothers. ^g Other ancient authorities add Amen.

fixed by keep awake and be sober. 5:8 Imagery of armor (*breastplate, helmet*) underscores the need to struggle; see also Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 10:4; Eph 6:13-17; 2 Pt 1:27-30. *On hope*, see 1:3; note on 3:6. Paul understands *salvation* to be in the future; see Rom 5:9; Phil 2:12; 3:20. 5:10 *Who died for us*, a terse allusion to Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin. See Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:3. Paul returns to his earlier use of sleep as a metaphor for death (see 4:13-15; text note 8). 5:12-24 Exhortations to good relationships within the Christian community. 5:12 *Those who labor among you*, i.e., in an administrative role. Formal clergy did not yet exist. 5:16-21 These commands may reflect a description of early Christian worship; 5:21 *Test everything* i.e., using the *is good* as a criterion (see also Rom 12:2). 5:23-24 Concluding benediction stresses the faithfulness of God. 5:25-28 The conclusion of the letter. 5:26 *Be holy/kiss* was a part of worship; see Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12. 5:27 *The letter* is probably to be read in the recipients' worship assembly.

THESSALONIANS

The Second Letter of Paul to the

THOUGH 2 THESSALONIANS resembles other Letters of the Pauline corpus, especially 1 Thessalonians, questions have been raised about its authorship. The tone seems formal and stilted, especially in contrast to the warmth of 1 Thessalonians, and there are strange hints of irony (2:3-17), which have no parallel in other Pauline Letters. The second letter reproduces the wording and structure of the first to a remarkable extent, yet presents a radically different perspective on the end time. Scholars disagree over how to interpret this. Some assume that Paul wrote the second letter soon after the first to correct some misunderstandings that had arisen and to address a new crisis in the community. Others assume that an unknown author borrowed Paul's name and authority and used the model of 1 Thessalonians to construct a pseudonymous letter.

Question

ONE OF PAUL'S CONCERNS in writing 1 Thessalonians was to reassure his readers that Jesus' Second Coming (Greek *parousia*) could occur at any moment and to urge them to remain vigilant (1 Thess 5:1-11). The situation seems to be one of faltering apocalyptic hope. In 2 Thessalonians the author seeks to refute the view that the day of Jesus' return had already arrived and to remind the church of the numerous events that must precede it (2:1-12). The situation now seems to be one of keen apocalyptic expectations fueled by persecution (1:4). Indeed, the author of 2 Thessalonians (whether Paul or someone else) may have felt that 1 Thessalonians, with its eager anticipation of the Second Coming, had contributed to the new problem.

The author draws on a rich reservoir of apocalyptic traditions to buttress the arguments that the church's present affliction will be reversed on the "day of the Lord" (1:5-10), that that day has not yet arrived (2:1-12), and that therefore actions in the present continue to be important (2:15-3:10).

Date and Place

IF THESSALONIANS WAS WRITTEN BY PAUL, it was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians and to the same church. If not, it is impossible to date it with any precision. [JOYFILL M. BASSLER]

THE REVELATION

TO JOHN

(APOCALYPSE)

THE REVELATION TO JOHN WAS WRITTEN by a person named John (1.1, 4, 9, 22.8), an angelized version of a common ancient Hebrew name, often transliterated *Iohanan*. Early Christian writers assumed that the author of Revelation had also written the Gospel and Letters of John and identified him with John the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles. Both of these assumptions are problematic. The author of Revelation regards the twelve apostles as authoritative figures of the past (21.14) and identifies himself simply as a servant of God (1.1, 1) and a brother who shares the sufferings of those to whom he addresses his book (1.9). On the basis of both literary style and theological emphases it appears unlikely that he wrote either the Gospel or the Letters of John. Although modern critical scholars have generally abandoned the assumption of common authorship for the compositions that make up the Johannine corpus (the Gospel. According to John, the three Letters of John, the Revelation to John), the traditional association of these five compositions with the name John has encouraged the view that all five were produced by various members of a "Johannine community" behind which stood the shadow figure of John the apostle.

Although the specific identity of the author is unknown, Revelation provides some important clues about his general identity. The frequent allusions to the OT (particularly Ezekiel and Daniel) suggest his Jewish origin. The Semitic features of his Greek style indicate that he was a native of Palestine who emigrated to Asia Minor, perhaps in the wake of the first Jewish revolt against Rome (66–73 CE), when many were forced to flee for their lives. By calling his composition a prophetic book (1.3; 22.7, 10, 18, 19), he clearly implies that he is a prophet. His familiarity with the circumstances of the seven Christian communities he addresses further suggests that he was probably a well-known itinerant Christian prophet (22.9).

Date

MANY EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS thought that Revelation had been written toward the end of Domitian's reign (81–96 CE), but a few later writers thought that John had written a generation earlier, during the persecution that occurred in 64 under Nero (54–68 CE). Evidence supporting both dates can be found in the book. In favor of the earlier date, 11.1–3 suggests that the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (destroyed by the Romans in 70) was still standing when the book was written. Further, the code name of the beast in 13.18 is 666, widely thought to symbolize the name Nero Caesar. Other data, however, suggest a date late in the first century. For exam-

ple, there are several allusions (13.3; 17.9–11) to the legend of Nero's return, which circulated throughout the eastern Mediterranean during the two decades following his suicide in 68. Further, Revelation frequently uses "Babylon" as a code name for Rome (14.8; 16.19; 17.5, 18; 18.2, 19, 21), but the evidence suggests that Jews used this code name only *after* the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70. In the light of conflicting evidence for the early and late date of Revelation, it seems likely that the book was actually composed and assembled in stages over many years and was only completed in its present form toward the end of the first or the early second century CE. Though certainty is not possible, the first edition of the book probably consisted of 14–11.4–1–22.5, to which 1.1–3; 1.12–3.22; 22.6–21 were added in a second edition.

Discussion

THE DATE ASSIGNED TO REVELATION has usually been closely connected by both ancient and modern scholars with the situation of persecution reflected in the book (1.9; 2.10; 12.17). This persecution may have involved the execution of several Christians (2.13; 6.9–11, 13, 15; 17.6; 18.24, 20.4; see also 11.7–10). The persecution under Nero in 64 CE, however, only affected Christians in and around Rome. The view that Domitian instigated an official persecution of Christians in Asia Minor has been widely held by ancient and modern scholars, though it has become clear that no historical evidence confirms it. It appears that the persecution of Christians in Asia Minor was not the result of an official Roman policy but rather the result of random outbreaks of hostility between Christians and their pagan and Jewish neighbors. Roman governors were sometimes drawn, though not always willingly, into these conflicts (see Acts 19.34–41). Christian authors such as Eusebius of Caesarea transformed random instances of persecution into an official persecution fomented by Domitian. In the last analysis, it is difficult to determine whether the widespread and apparently systematic persecution, reflected in this book, represents what actually happened or what the author expected would happen.

Genre

REVELATION BELONGS TO THE LITERARY GENRE given the modern label "apocalypse," widely attested in early Judaism and early Christianity. The name of this genre is based on 1.1, where the Greek word *apokalypsis* ("revelation") designates the content of the book as a "revelation of Jesus Christ," which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. An apocalypse, then, is typically regarded as a first-person narrative in which the author (normally using the pen name of some famous ancient biblical figure such as Adam, Abraham, or Enoch) relates one or more visionary visions about the future, the heavenly world, or both. Jewish apocalypses often reflect a sharp distinction between the present evil age and the imminent future age of blessing, the conflict between a righteous minority (Israel or a righteous remnant within Israel) and a wicked majority (hostile foreign powers or a hostile group within Israel) is understood as representing a clash between God and Satan. After a period of intense conflict and great suffering, God, sometimes acting through a messianic agent, will decisively intervene in history to vindicate and reward God's people and punish or eliminate their earthly oppressors. Many Jewish apocalypses use a great deal of symbolism, often quite bizarre (e.g., Dan 7.2–8), and Revelation is no exception. One stock figure of Jewish apocalypses also found in Revelation is the "interpreting angel," a heavenly being who explains the meaning of visions to the seer (1.1; 17.1–18; 19.9–22.5). The only other book-length apocalypse in the Bible is Daniel. [DAVID E. AUNE]

Introduction and Salvation

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus the Christ, even to all that he saw.

3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy; and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it for the time is near.

1.1-2 Following ancient literary conventions, the first sentence functions as a title presenting the essential contents of the composition. **1.1** *Revelation of Jesus Christ* indicates that God himself is the immediate source of John's revelatory visions. The insistence that the events predicted in John's visions must soon take place frames the book (1.3; 22.6, 10). The interpreting angel who mediates revelation (a stock figure in early Jewish and early Christian apocalypses) is mentioned again only in 22.6-9, 16, though two other angelic guides appear in 17.1-18; 21.9-22.5. **1.3** *Blessed introduction* of the first of seven beatitudes (14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7, 14). The fact that a designated person reads

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, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

5 To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom and priests to his Father and to the Father of Jesus Christ.

6 After the introductory three verses Revelation then introduces the features of a typical early Christian letter, designating the sender and receiver and including a salutation (see also 22.21); the formal features of this epistolary introduction seem to reflect Pauline influence (see e.g., 1 Thess 1.1). **1.4** The seven churches listed in v. 11 were located in seven prominent cities in western Asia (modern Turkey) in the Roman province of Asia, all were within one hundred miles of Ephesus. Seven (used fifty-seven times in Revelation) symbolizes the divine pattern evident in both the universe and history. *Him who is and who was and who is to come*, a threefold divine name that alludes to a widespread Hellenistic Jewish name for God based on Ex 31.4, "the one who is." It differs slightly from a popular Greek formula describing God as "the one who is and who was and who will be," by emphasizing the future vision of God. See also 1.8; 11.17; 16.5. Seven spirits, the seven angels who stand before God (3.1; 4.5; 6.8; see also Tob 12.15; 14.19; 1 Enoch 20.1-11); not a metaphor for the Holy Spirit based on Isa 11.2-3 (Septuagint, Latin Vulgate). **1.5** *Faithful witness* (1.2; 9.2; 13.6; 12.11; 17.6). *Firstborn of the dead* (see Col 1.18). *Ruler of the kings of the earth* (17.14; 19.16), three titles of Jesus (corresponding to the threefold title for God, see note on 1.4) that describe three essential aspects of his role: the faithful proclamation of the message of God, which led to his execution; the victory signaled by his resurrection; and his future role as universal sovereign, thus combining a theology of glory with a theology of the cross. **1.5b** The opening doxology (see Gal 1.5) is unusual in the New Testament. It is addressed to Christ (the doxology in 5.13 is addressed to both God and Christ), and is followed by two brief oracles, the first emphasizing the imminent return of Christ and the second emphasizing the sovereignty of God. **1.6** *Made us to be a kingdom*, present tense. See Ex 19.6. **1.7** *Coming with the clouds*, an allusion to Dan 7.13 applied to Jesus as the coming Son of Man (see 1.4; 14; Mk 8.38; 13.26). *People will* because they fear the impending eschatological judgment (see Zech 12.10). **1.8** *Alpha, Omega*, the first and last letters

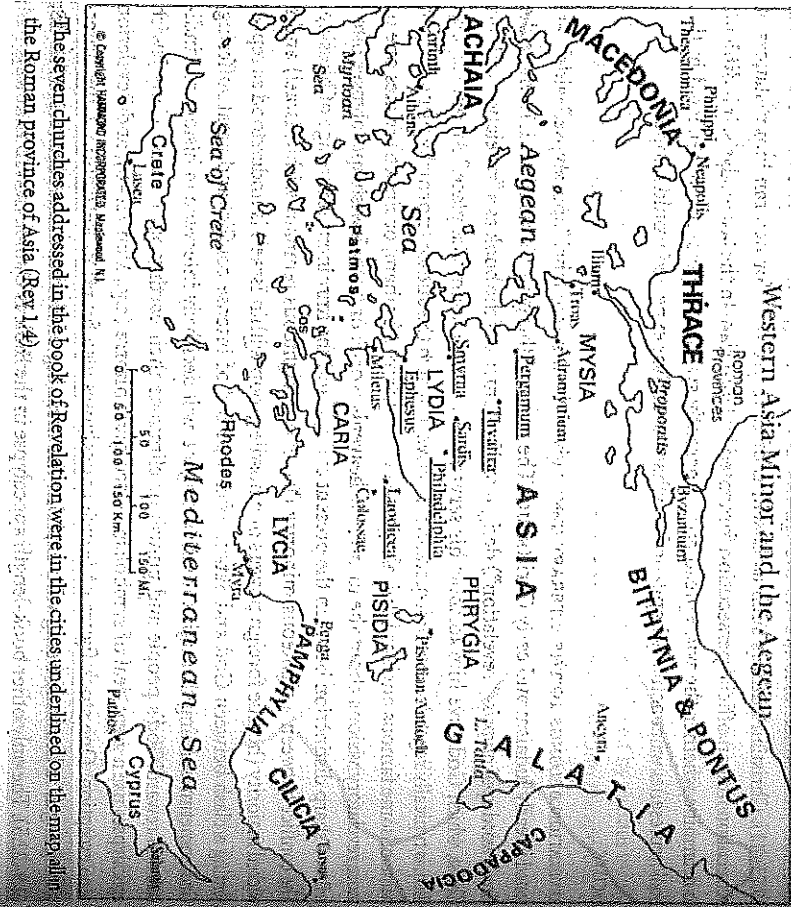
of the Greek alphabet. The title expresses the idea of totality and symbolizes God's sovereignty (21.6; 22.13). It is similar in meaning to the first and the last (1.17; 2.8; 22.13) and the beginning and the end (12.16; 22.13); see note on 1.17. **1.9-20** John's terrifying vision of the exalted Christ provides an introduction to the seven proclamations that follow. **1.9** On the problem of perception as the situation motivating John to write, see Introduction. *Parnos*, a populated island thirty-seven miles southwest of Ephesus. There is no evidence that it was even a Roman penal colony, but John may have been banished from his home territory and forced to go there during the reign of the emperor who banished him. **1.10** *I was in the spirit* means that John experienced a vision trance (4.2; 17.3; 21.10; see also Acts 10.10; 11.5; 22.6-7). *Lord's day* a term used later, and probably also here, for Sunday, the main weekly Christian day of worship (Diacle 14.1; Gospel of Peter 12.50). This usage may derive from the celebration of the Lord's Supper on that day (1 Cor 11.20); the day commemorating Christ's resurrection (Ignatius, *Magnesian* 9.1). **1.12-16** The description of the exalted Christ resembles other epiphanies of divine figures (19.11-16; Dan 10.5-9). **1.12** The seven golden lampstands, representing the seven churches (4.20), are memorials lights that burn continually before God in the sanctuary (Ex 27.20-21; Lev 24.2-4); in ancient Judaism the menorah was a symbol of Judaism. **1.13** *One like the Son of Man*, an allusion to Dan 7.13 (see also Rev 1.7; 14.14), the Greek text has "one like a son of man," lacking the definite article characteristic of the title "the Son of Man" in the Gospels. **1.14** *Hair*, white as white wool characterizes the Ancient of Days (i.e., God) in Dan 7.9 but here is strikingly part of a description of Christ, implicitly equating him with God. **1.16** The sword proceeding from Christ's mouth (see also 2.16; 19.15; 21.2; cf. 2.12) is a metaphor for both the word of God and judgment (see

dom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever Amen. **1.17** *He is coming with the clouds*, a stock phrase in Jewish apocalyptic literature. *Every eye will see him*, a stock phrase in Jewish apocalyptic literature. *Even those who pierced him*, a stock phrase in Jewish apocalyptic literature. *And on his account all the tribes of the earth will wait*, a stock phrase in Jewish apocalyptic literature. **1.18** *Alpha and Omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The title expresses the idea of totality and symbolizes God's sovereignty (21.6; 22.13). It is similar in meaning to the first and the last (1.17; 2.8; 22.13) and the beginning and the end (12.16; 22.13); see note on 1.17. **1.9-20** John's terrifying vision of the exalted Christ provides an introduction to the seven proclamations that follow. **1.9** On the problem of perception as the situation motivating John to write, see Introduction. *Parnos*, a populated island thirty-seven miles southwest of Ephesus. There is no evidence that it was even a Roman penal colony, but John may have been banished from his home territory and forced to go there during the reign of the emperor who banished him. **1.10** *I was in the spirit* means that John experienced a vision trance (4.2; 17.3; 21.10; see also Acts 10.10; 11.5; 22.6-7). *Lord's day* a term used later, and probably also here, for Sunday, the main weekly Christian day of worship (Diacle 14.1; Gospel of Peter 12.50). This usage may derive from the celebration of the Lord's Supper on that day (1 Cor 11.20); the day commemorating Christ's resurrection (Ignatius, *Magnesian* 9.1). **1.12-16** The description of the exalted Christ resembles other epiphanies of divine figures (19.11-16; Dan 10.5-9). **1.12** The seven golden lampstands, representing the seven churches (4.20), are memorials lights that burn continually before God in the sanctuary (Ex 27.20-21; Lev 24.2-4); in ancient Judaism the menorah was a symbol of Judaism. **1.13** *One like the Son of Man*, an allusion to Dan 7.13 (see also Rev 1.7; 14.14), the Greek text has "one like a son of man," lacking the definite article characteristic of the title "the Son of Man" in the Gospels. **1.14** *Hair*, white as white wool characterizes the Ancient of Days (i.e., God) in Dan 7.9 but here is strikingly part of a description of Christ, implicitly equating him with God. **1.16** The sword proceeding from Christ's mouth (see also 2.16; 19.15; 21.2; cf. 2.12) is a metaphor for both the word of God and judgment (see

A Vision of Christ

1.17 John, your brother who share with you in the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice

like a trumpet saying: "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches; to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me; and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. On his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.



The seven churches addressed in the book of Revelation were in the cities underlined on the map, all in the Roman province of Asia (Rev 1.4).

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet: as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades." 18 Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

The Message to Ephesus

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have

found them to be false. 31 also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Yet I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 Let anyone who hears ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

The Message to Smyrna

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life.

9 "I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander

Isa 49:2; Wts. 18:15-16; 2. Thess 2:8; Heb. 4:12). 1.17 *Fell*... as though dead. The fright of the set is a stock motif of epiphanies narrated in vision reports (see Isa 6:5; Ezek 1:28; Dan 8:17; Lk 24:5). *The first and the last*, a divine title derived from Second Isaiah (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12); see note on 1.8. 1.18 *Keys of Death and of Hades*, i.e., the keys to Death and Hades (as to a door), because Christ was dead but is now alive forever; he controls them. In Ananias, in Hellenistic and Roman times, there was a widespread belief that the Greek underworld goddess Hekate possessed the keys to Hades. 1.19 Some have taken this as a three-part general outline of Revelation: what you have seen (1.9-2.0), what is (2.1-3.22), and what is to take place after this (4.1-22.5). Since 4.1-22.5 refers to the past and the future, however, one should see this as a logical division of the subject (not the book) into past, present, and future. 1.20 *Angels of the seven churches*, later referred to individually (2.1; 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14), are the heavenly counterparts of the earthly Christian communities.

2.1-3.22 The messages to the seven churches are not in the form of ancient letters (see 1.4-5a) but rather resemble the edicts and decrees issued by Persian and Greek kings and Roman emperors. Each proclamation consists of eight stereotypical features: (1) destination; (2) the command to write; (3) the archaic "thus says" formula (*these are the words of*); (4) titles of Christ largely based on the vision in 1.9-2.0; (5) the "I know" narrative; (6) admonitions and exhortations; (7) the proclamation formula (*let anyone who hears ear listen*); and (8) the victory formula (*whoever conquers* and similar phrases). Moral exhortation, present implicitly if not explicitly in apocalypses, permeates these proclamations. 2.1 *Ephesus*

largest city of the Roman province of Asia, seat of the proconsul, and an important early Christian center (Acts 18:19-28; 19:1; 20:16-17; 1 Cor 15:2; 1 Tim 1:3). 2.2 *Tested* suggests that visiting missionaries were expected to measure up to certain expectations of teaching and behavior (1. Thess 5:21; 1 Jn 4:1-5; 2 Jn 11). *Apostles*, a general term for itinerant missionaries (Acts 14:4; 14:14; Rom 16:7; 2 Cor 8:23; 12:11-3; 6) rather than a technical term for the twelve apostles. 2.5 *I will*... remove your lampstand (see 1.20), a threat to obliterate the Ephesian church as a Christian community; i.e., a symbolic action carried out in heaven has earthly consequences. 2.6 *Nicolaitans*, an otherwise unknown Christian sect found in Ephesus and Pergamum (see v. 15), possibly identical to the false apostles of v. 2 and with Jewish and Gnostic (though the evidence is slim). 2.7 The content of all seven proclamations is attributed to the Spirit, who speaks through Christ to John, suggesting a prophetic model. *Eat from the tree of life*, a motif for salvation or eternal life (Gen 3:22-24; 1 Enoch 25:4-6; Testament of Levi 18:11). Access to the tree is denied to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:24) but will be available to the righteous (Rev 22:2, 14, 19). The honor term for the garden located in Eden, somewhere on earth (Gen 2:8), was translated *paradise* (in Greek loanword for "garden" or "park") in the Septuagint. Later, *paradise* came to be regarded as the abode of the righteous dead (2 Esd 7:36; Lk 23:43; 1 Enoch 88:4; 2 Enoch 8:1). 2.8 *Smyrna*, a harbor city for the north of Ephesus (modern Izmir) and a center of the imperial cult (i.e., the worship of the Roman emperor). *The first and the last*. See 1.17, 2.9 *Day*

and are part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon, and make war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

The Message to Pergamum

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

13 "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny my faith in me, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols

spiritual poverty, the Smyrnaean Christians are spiritual *standards* by the Jews refers to their denunciation of Christians before Roman officials (see Acts 13:12-17; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2-3), an indication of sharp conflict between the two communities. These polemical statements were not originally as anti-Semitic as they sound today. *Synagogue of Satan*, i.e., "congregation of Belial" in the Dead Sea Scrolls *Thanksgiving Hymns* (1QH 2.22), may refer to Jews who had abandoned their faith but more likely to Christians in 8.44 refers to the devil as the "father" of the Jews. 2.10 *The devil* (Greek *diabolos*, "slanderer," a synonym for Hebrew "Satan"), working through his earthly headmen, will throw them into prison. *Then* symbolizes a short but indefinite period of time. *Wreath of life* (see 1 Cor 9:25; Jas 1:12), an image based on the wreath awarded to winners in ancient competitions and reminiscent of the wreath design found on early Hellenistic tombstones, a metaphor for the reward of eternal life (3.11). 2.11 *Second death* (20.6, 14; 21.8), the eternal punishment of the wicked following physical death. 2.12 *Pergamum*, a city of 180,000, was the seat of government in the Roman province of Asia and a major center of the imperial cult (see note on 2.13). *Satan's throne*, an enigmatic phrase that may refer to the proconsul's judgment seat; to Pergamum as center of the imperial cult, or to the Great Altar of Zeus erected after 220 BCE (ancients often designated Christian executed or lynched in Pergamum. *Witness*

and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon, and make war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

The Message to Thyatira

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

19 "I know your works—you love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. 20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed

from the Greek *marrys*, a word that soon took on the connotation of "martyr" (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.2). 2.14 According to postbiblical Jewish literature, the error of Balaam (see Num 22-24; 31:16; 2 Pet 2:15-16; Jude 11) involved idolatry and sexual immorality. Food sacrificed to idols, sold to the public in pagan temple meat markets, violated the Jewish prohibition of idolatry (Ex 34:15; 4 Macc 5:2), and, because of its connection with pagan worship, was a problem for observant Christians as well (2.20; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:28). 2.15 *Nicolaitans* (see v. 6) repeat the error of Balaam. 2.17 *Manna*, from the Hebrew for "What is it?" is also called "bread from heaven" (see Ex 16:4; Neh 9:15; Jn 6:31-34) and "food from heaven" (Ps 105:40); here it is a metaphor for participation in eternal life. According to Jewish expectation, the miraculous feeding would be repeated in the last days. *White stone*, an amulet on which is inscribed a new name, i.e., the secret name of God or Christ (3.12; 19:12, cf. 7:3), which is a symbol for the permanent protection of the wearer. In the ancient world amulets containing divine names were thought effective in warding off diseases and evil spirits. 2.18 *Thyatira* (modern Akhisar), 170 thirty-five miles inland, between Pergamum and Ephesus. 2.20 *Jezebel*, the Canaanite queen of King Ahab of Israel (1 Kings 18-19; 2 Kings 9), who induced Ahab to worship Canaanite deities. John gives this infamous name to an otherwise unknown Christian prophetess, whose teachings were, in his view, leading Christians astray. Since the weapons of spiritual slander routinely in-

God; and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.⁷ The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

"Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come."

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."

created."

found in theophanies (see Ps. 18:6-16; Isa. 29:6) and are mentioned frequently in Revelation at critical points (8:5; 11:19; 16:8). *Seven spirits of God*: See 1:4, 4:6. *The sea of glass* (see 15:2), an allusion to Ezekiel 1:22, represents the celestial ocean above which the throne of God is located (see Gen 1:7; Ps 29:10; 104:3); it is perhaps symbolized by the enormous bronze basin (called "the sea") associated with Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:23-26). *Four living creatures* (a designation drawn from Ezekiel 1:5-25), cherubim, angelic beings that guard and support the throne of God (Ex 25:17-22; 1 Kings 6:23-28; Ps 18:10; Isa 6:2; Ezekiel 10). *Full of eyes* (an allusion to Ezekiel 1:18-10:12) symbolizes unceasing watchfulness or omnipresence. ^{4,7} Three creatures have animal forms and one has a human face. This description modifies that in Ezekiel 1:10, where each creature has four faces. The four creatures later came to represent the four Evangelists: lion, Mark; ox, Luke; man, Matthew; flying eagle, John (see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3:11.8). ^{4,8} *Holy, holy, holy*: The Trisagion, or "thrice-holy," occurs first in Isa 6:3 and frequently in Jewish and Christian liturgies. ^{4,10} *Cast their crowns before the throne*, an act of homage and worship. *Throne*, here a pious circumlocution for the name of God (7:9; 8:3; see also Heb 4:16; 8:1; 12:2). ^{4,11} *Worthy*, a term applied to God as the creator, also applied to the Lamb in two hymns (5:9, 12).

^{5,1-14} The focus of the vision shifts to a scroll, probably representing God's final plan for the world or perhaps the contents of 8:2-22:5. ^{5,1} The scroll written

The Scroll and the Lamb

⁵ Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed^a with seven seals.² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.⁴ And I began to weep bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne.⁸ When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four el-

^a Or written on the inside, and sealed on the back

on the inside and on the back, technically an opisthograph, is unusual because papyrus rolls were usually used on one side only, though legal rolls could have a summary of the contents on the outside. *Sealed with seven seals*. The number of seals has a magical protective significance, meaning that only a fully authorized person has the power to open it (v. 5). ^{5,2} *Worthy* both able and authorized. ^{5,5} *Lion of the tribe of Judah* (Gen 49:9-10), a metaphor for the king or Messiah expected to come from the royal tribe of Judah, a claim frequently made for Jesus (Heb 7:14). *Root of David* (see also 22:16), meaning stock of David or descendant of David, king of Israel, is a messianic title (see Isa 11:1, 10; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; Rom 15:12). The divine ancestry of Jesus is frequently mentioned in Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8). ^{5,6} The image of Jesus as a Lamb (v. 6; 1:1, 14; 2:4; in 7:42; Acts 2:30-33; 13:22-23; Rom 8:3; 2 Tim 2:8). ^{5,6} The image of Jesus as a Lamb who has been slaughtered is a surprising contrast to his designation as a lion (v. 5), perhaps alluding to the evening sacrifice of a lamb in the temple at Jerusalem (Ex 29:38-42). ^{5,7} *Seven eyes* (an allusion to Zech 4:10) represent divine omnipresence and omniscience (see Jer 18:6; 2 Cor 16:9; Ps 139:16; Prov 15:3). ^{5,8} The harp, or kithara, was used to accompany hymns (15:2-4; Ps 33:3-43:4), while the golden bowls full of incense, represent

ders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.⁹ They sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;¹⁰ you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,¹² singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The Seven Seals

⁶ Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say to the others, "Come and see." I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,¹² singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!"²¹ I looked, and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

³ When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, "Come!"⁴ And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another, and he was given a great sword.

⁵ When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, "Come!"⁶ I looked, and there was a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's pay," and three quarts of barley for a day's pay,⁷ but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!"

⁸ When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, "Come!"⁹ I looked, and there was a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth.

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the

^a Or written on the inside, and sealed on the back

(loosely based on Zech 1:7-11; 6:1-8). ^{6,2} The rider on the white horse represents warfare (see 19:11, where, unlike here, the rider on the white horse represents the Messiah); the bow can be a symbol of divine chastisement (Lam 3:12-13; Hab 3:9), and his crown indicates victory in war. ^{6,4} The bright red horse and rider suggest violence and death in battle. ^{6,5} The black horse and rider represent famine. *Pair of scales*, a tool used by merchants to weigh their products, used as a symbol of justice. ^{6,6} A quart of wheat for a day's pay represents an exorbitant price for wheat, fifteen times higher than normal; shortages were often caused by hoarding for the purpose of profiteering. *Do not damage... wine*, i.e., do not fraudulently withhold oil and wine to extort exorbitant prices. ^{6,8} *Death* and *Hades* are personified together in Revelation (11:18; 20:13-14), as they are in poetic contexts in the OT (Job 18:13; Isa 28:15; Hos 13:14). *Hades*, the Greek world of the dead, Hebrew Sheol. *Sword, famine, and pestilence, and... wild animals*, stereotypical horrors of war (see Deut 32:23-25; Jer 14:12; 15:3; Ezek 5:16-17; 14:21; Psalms of Solomon 13:2-3). ^{6,9} The souls of

testimony they had given; ¹⁰they cried out with a loud voice, "Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" ¹¹They were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number would be complete both of their fellow servants and of their brothers and sisters, ¹²who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed.

¹³When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹⁴and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁵The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁶Then the kings of the earth and the magistrates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁷calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁸for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The 144,000 of Israel Sealed

¹After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind

the martyrs are under the altar, the heavenly altar of incense (8:3, 5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:2); this represents their proximity to God. Those . . . slaughtered, the martyrs. ^{6,10}How long a cry for vengeance by the murdered righteous (see also 2 Rev 4:35-37; 1 Enoch 45:4), modeled, after, petitions for justice, directed to a king (1 Macc 6:22-27) or to God (2 Macc 8:2-4). *The inhabitants of the earth*, a frequent formula in Revelation (e.g., 8:13; 11:10; 13:8), referring to the enemies of God. ^{6,11}White robe, symbol of heavenly existence or worthiness of those wearing it in heaven (see 8:4-6; 7:13). ^{Refr}, metaphor for the repose of death. (14:13; Prov 21:16; Sir 34:17; 38:23), though this text will last only until the final consummation (see 2 Rev 7:75). ¹⁴widespread, ancient tradition affirmed a predetermined number of martyrs known only to God (2 Rev 2:38; 4:36; 1 Enoch 47:4; cf. Rom 11:25; 1 Clement 2:4; 59:1); 6:12-13 The darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars (see 8:10; 9:1-12, 14), cosmic signs of upheaval, are metaphors anticipating the day of the Lord (see Isa 13:10; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:30-31; Am 8:9; Zeph 1:15; Mic 24:29). *Black as sackcloth*, See note on 11:3, 6:14. *The sky*, . . . *up*, a simile used in Isa 34:4 (see also *Sibylline Oracles* 3:82-83; 8:22-23; cf. Heb 1:12), here a preview of the eventual destruction of the

could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ²I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, ³saying, "Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads."

⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel: ⁵From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand

from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand

from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand

from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand

from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand

from the tribe of Manasse twelve thousand

from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand

from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand

from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand

from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand

from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand

from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand

from the tribe of Dan twelve thousand

from the tribe of Nephthali twelve thousand

from the tribe of Manasse twelve thousand

from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand, and sealed.

The Multitude from Every Nation

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

"Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²singing, with harp, "Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said

such as the spiritual Israel (see Rom 9:6-7; 11:17-18; Gal 6:16; Jas 1:1). ^{7,9-17}A heavenly throne-room scene, see note on 4:1-11. The passage may be based in part on symbolism from the festival of Booths (see Zech 1:18-21). ^{7,9}A great multitude, a heavenly assembly that may include but is not identical to the 144,000 Israelites mentioned in vv. 4-8; it represents the spiritualized fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gen 22:17; 32:12; cf. Rom 9:27). Its members are identified in vv. 14 as the martyrs who have gone through the great tribulation. *Throne*, see note on 4:10. *Robed in white*, see note on 6:11. *Palm branches*, symbols of victory (see 1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 14:4). In 12:13, 7:13 One of the elders, functioning in place of the more typical figure of the interpreting angel (1:1; 15:1; 18:2, 9-22; see introduction), provides an explanation of the vision in vv. 14-17. ^{14,15}The great multitude, paradoxical metaphor referring to the forgiveness of sins through the atoning death of Jesus (see Rom 1:25; 5:9-11; Cor 10:16; 1 Pet 1:2). ^{7,15}God, . . . will deliver them, God will be present with them or dwell within them (21:3; see Lev 26:11; Ezek 37:27). ^{7,16}Cessation of hunger, thirst, and intense heat alludes to the state of heavenly conditions described in Isa 49:14 (see also Rev 21:4). ^{7,17}At the center, i.e., of the throne, occupied by both God and the Lamb (3:22; 22:1-3). *Shepherd*, a stock metaphor for a king (see 2 Sam 7:7; Isa 44:28; Jer 3:15) in the ancient world; gent-

to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." ¹⁵For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them; they will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of life, and the water of life will quench their thirst, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

⁸When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

ally and a favorite metaphor for Jesus (Mt 15:24; 25:32; Jn 10:2; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25). *Springs of the water of life*, lit. "springs of living water" (cf. Isa 49:10); here "living water" can mean either flowing water (as opposed to the still water stored in cisterns) or water imbued with (eternal) life, a metaphor for salvation (2d Cor 6:22; 17; see also Jn 4:14; 6:35; 7:37-38). *Wipe away every tear*, indicates the absence of sorrow in the new order (see Isa 25:8). ¹¹Transitional verse. ^{8,11}A transitional verse. The opening of the seventh seal means that the scroll of 5:1 is now ready to be opened; completely, the events narrated in 8:2-22.5 enact the contents of the scroll. After the cosmic destruction caused by the opening of the sixth seal in 6:12-17, the events in this seal issues in an anti-macabean silence in heaven. Silence precedes divine manifestations (see Job 4:6; Zeph 1:7; Zech 2:13), and is maintained during the incense offering (see Rev 8:3-5); 8:2-9:21 See also 11:15-19. The seven trumpets (like the seven bowls of 15:1-16:17) introduce eschatological divine judgments that are loosely based on the ten Egyptian plagues (Ex 7-12), though they are universal rather than local in effect. Several variant traditions of seven Egyptian plagues have been preserved. (Rev 7:8-9:5; 10:5-10:27-36; Am 4:6-11; Mss 11:1-19:9). 8:2-5 Preparatory heavenly throne-room scene; see note on 4:1-11. 8:2 *Seven angels*. See note on 1:4. *Trumpets* can signal the inauguration of the end (see Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1; Mt 24:31; Cor 15:52; 1 Thess

3 Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne.⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.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, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The Seven Trumpets

6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea.⁹ A third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.¹¹ The name of the star is

Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise the night.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew in midheaven, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

9 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit;² he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.³ Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given authority like the authority of scorpions of the earth.⁴ They were told not to damage the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.⁵ They were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion when it stings someone.⁶ And in those days people will seek death but will not

4.16; *Didache* 16.6; 8.3 *The golden altar*, the heavenly counterpart of the incense altar located before the holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple (Ex 30.1-10).

8.4 *The incense offering*, made twice daily in the temple (Lk 1.8-10), lent itself to spiritualization; here it is associated with (but not, as in 5.8, identified with) the prayers of the saints, which, judging by their effect in 8.5, appear to have been prayers for vengeance (see 6.10).

8.5 The throwing of fire from the altar to the earth anticipates the divine judgments that the trumpets will unleash (see Ezek 10.2) and again indicate that events on earth are determined by events in heaven. *Peals of thunder*: See note on 4.5: 8.7-12. The first four trumpets form a group, as did the first four seals (see note on 6.1-8).

8.7 *The hail, fire, and blood* that fall to the earth correspond to the thunder, hail, and fire of the seventh plague (Ex 9.22-26) and to the fourth and seventh bowls in 16.8-9, 19-21. The Romans regarded blood raining from the sky as an omen indicating the anger of the gods. The eschatological destruction of a third of various aspects of the cosmos (based on Ezek 5.2, 12) emphasizes that the destruction is partial, not total (8.9, 10, 11, 12; 9.15, 18).

8.9 *Sea became blood*, an allusion to the Egyptian plague in which the Nile was turned to blood (the first

plague in Ex 7.20-23; the second bowl in Rev 16.3).

8.10-11 There is no counterpart to the third trumpet among the Egyptian plagues. 8.11 *Wormwood*, a plant noted for bitter taste, though not poisonous effects (see Prov 5.4; Lam 3.15).

8.12 *Fourth*, trumpet. The darkening of the heavenly bodies resembles the darkening of the ninth plague (Ex 10.21) and of the fifth bowl (Rev 16.10). 8.13 *Woe, woe, woe*. The three woes become literary devices for designating the last three trumpet plagues in 9.1-12, 13-21; 11.14-19 (see 12.11, 14); the counterparts of blessings, woes frequently introduce divine penalties (Lk 6.24-26) and are used in judgment speeches (Isa 5.18-23; Mt 23.33-32).

9.1-12 The fifth trumpet plague alludes to the locust plague of Ex 10.4-20 and is modeled after Job 2.1-11. 9.1 *Star*, an angelic messenger sent by God to earth (see Ps 107.26; Rom 10.7) and the place where demons (Lk 8.33; 1 Enoc 18-21) and Satan (Rev 20.1-3) are imprisoned. 9.3 *Locusts*, an army of demons (based on the locust plague in Joel 2.1-11). 9.4 *Grass*, any vegetation that is typically devastated by locust plagues. *People who do not have the seal of God* (see 7.2-8) are attacked, but God's people are exempt.

9.5 *Five months* (see also v. 10); the life span of their

find it they will long to die, but death will flee from them.

7 In appearance the locusts were like horses equipped for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces; their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.⁸ They have tails like scorpions, with stingers, and in their tails is their power to harm people for five months.⁹ They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon,¹⁰ and in Greek he is called Apollyon.¹¹

12 The first woe has passed. There are still two woes to come.

13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."¹⁵ So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of humankind.¹⁶ The number of the troops of cavalry was two hundred million; I heard their number.¹⁷ And this was how I saw the horses in my vision: the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire¹⁸ and of sulfur; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their

18.10-11 There is no counterpart to the third trumpet among the Egyptian plagues. 8.11 *Wormwood*, a plant noted for bitter taste, though not poisonous effects (see Prov 5.4; Lam 3.15).

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9.5 *Five months* (see also v. 10); the life span of their

mouths.¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of humankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they inflict harm.

20 The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk.²¹ And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.

The Angel with the Little Scroll

10 And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.² He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,³ he gave a great shout like a lion roaring. And when he shouted, the seven thunders sounded.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."⁵ Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and the land

18.10-11 There is no counterpart to the third trumpet among the Egyptian plagues. 8.11 *Wormwood*, a plant noted for bitter taste, though not poisonous effects (see Prov 5.4; Lam 3.15).

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9.5 *Five months* (see also v. 10); the life span of their

10 raised his right hand to heaven¹ and swore by him who lives forever and ever² and every one who hears his voice³ who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it: "There will be no more delay,⁴ but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets."

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land!" 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."¹⁰ So I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

11 Then they said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

The Two Witnesses

1 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those

who worship there,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.³ And I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth."

4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; anyone who wants to harm them must be killed in this manner.⁶ They have authority to shut the sky so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,⁸ and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.⁹ For three and a half days members of the peoples and tribes and lan-

^a GK shares. ^b Or *allegorically*. ^c *Especially*.

12, 9) means that some divine secrets must not be disclosed (2 Cor 12:4). 10, 5-7 This scene appears to be modeled after Dan 12:6-7. 10, 6 No more delay does not imply a previous postponement, but the imminent end of time and beginning of eschatological events. 10, 7 Mystery of God (see Am 3:2), God's eschatological plan, hidden in or prophetic books (Rom 16:25-26; 1 Cor 2:6-16; Eph 3:9-10; Gal 1:26). His servants the prophets, a frequent designation of or prophets (2 Kings 9:7; 17:13; Jer 7:25; Dan 9:6; see Rev 11:18), which here probably includes Christian prophets as well. 10, 8 Voice that of v. 4. 10, 9-10 Eating the scroll, a symbolic action based on Ezek 2:8-3:3, signifies accepting a prophetic commission. 10, 11 Prophesy again about has the negative meaning "prophesy against," i.e., prophesy judgment (see Jer 25:30; Ezek 25:2). 11, 1-14 A second digression (see note on 10:1-11) describes two mysterious witnesses and their ministry. 11, 1 Measure, a metaphor for preservation (Ezek 40:3-42:20; Zech 2:4-5). Temple of God, here the temple in Jerusalem, not in heaven (see note on 11:19). Altar, i.e., the priests' court, where the altar stood. 11, 2 The trampling or subjugation of Jerusalem by the nations (i.e., Gentiles) is a common eschatological motif (see Isa 63:18; 1 Macc 3:45; Lk 21:24; see also notes on 11:18; 16:14). Forty-two months, i.e., 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), or three and a half years, a metaphorical period of eschatological distress (see Dan 7:25,

11) and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb; and the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange presents because these two prophets had been a torment to the inhabitants of the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified.¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them.¹³ At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were crucified and gave glory to the God of heaven.¹⁴ The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming very soon!

The Seventh Trumpet

1 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 Messiah,² and he will reign forever and ever."

6 Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,⁷ singing, "We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power

from the deceased person (see 1 Kings 14:11; 21:24; Jer 19:14; Tob 2:3-10; Mk 12:8). 11, 11 Breath of life from God. See Gen 2:7. 11, 12 Come up here. See 4:1. In Jewish and Christian tradition *clausis* serves as divine voices (Pss 68:4; 104:7; Jer 19:1; 2 Esd 13:3) and as signs of heavenly ascent (Acts 1:9) and descent (Rev 12:7; 13: Mt 24:30; 26:64). 11, 13 Gave glory to the God of heaven, i.e., were converted (16:9; Dan 4:34; 1 Esd 9:8; Acts 13:48). 11, 14 Woe. See note on 8:13. 11, 15-19 The seventh trumpet introduces yet another apocalyptic scene; see note on 4:1-11. 11, 15 M66-11 Hebrew for "anointed one," used primarily for the king of Israel (who was installed in office by being anointed with oil). "Christ" means "anointed one" in Greek. See Jn 1:41. 11, 18 The nations rage. See Ps 96:10; see also notes on 11:23-16:14. 11, 19 Temple in heaven, the counterpart to the temple in Jerusalem, which represents the presence of God, placed in the holy of holies of the tabernacle and temple (Ex 25:0-22; 1 Kings 8:1-13; Heb 9:4). Flashes of lightning, apocalyptic language; see note on 4:5-7. 12, 1-17 The portent of the woman, the child, and

10 and began to reign, and a voice from heaven said, "The nations rage, but a slight earthquake will come, but your wrath has come, Lord God our God, and the time for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants," the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

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 lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

The Woman and the Dragon

12 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.² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth.³ Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born.⁵ And she gave

the dragon is an adaptation of the myth of Apollo's birth understood by the author to point to the birth of Christ. 12, 1, A great portent, a celestial phenomenon with a deeper symbolic meaning (see v. 3; 15:1). A woman clothed with the sun, a cosmic queen (described much like Isis), used as a symbol for both the Israel from whom the Messiah came (v. 5), and the church (v. 6; 14:17). Widely understood in Catholic thought to symbolize the Blessed Virgin Mary. Twelve stars, the twelve here probably understood in Catholic thought as the twelve tribes of Israel. 12, 3 Dragon, a designation for Satan used nine times in Revelation. The Greek translation of the OT uses the same term for Leviathan, the enemy of God (Job 41:1; Ps 140:25; Ps 74:14; 134:1; Isa 27:1). A dragon with seven heads (see 13:1; 17:3) is a figure in Gnostic mythology; here symbolizes seven successive rulers (cf. 10). Ten horns (see Dan 7:7, 20, 24), metaphors for power, here represent ten subordinate kings or kingdoms (17:12). 12, 4 Swept down a third of the stars, a cosmic upheaval serving as a metaphor for hubris, or excessive pride (see Dan 8:10); 12, 5 Male child, the Davidic Messiah who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron (see Ps 2:8-9), i.e., conquer them.

^a Or *the spirit*. ^b Or *other* ancient authorities read *for*. ^c GK shares. ^d GK shares.

birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule^a all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne,⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days.

Michael Defeats the Dragon

7 And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back,⁸ but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.⁹ 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.

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,

“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Messiah,^b
for the accuser of our comrades^c has been
thrown down,
who accuses them day and night before
our God.
11 But they have conquered him by the
blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they did not cling to life even in the
face of death.

12 Rejoice then, you heavens

mies of Israel (see note on 11.2). *Snatched away*: to mean: *ascended* or *ascension* of Jesus (see Lk 24.51; Acts 2.32-33; 1 Tim 3.16; Heb 8.1; 10.12) is uniquely depicted here as a rescue from Satan (no allusion to the crucifixion is found in this story). 12.6 *Wilderness*, a place of refuge and salvation based on the exodus tradition (see Ps 78.52; Isa 40.3; Jer 31.2). *One thousand two hundred sixty days*. See note on 11.2. 12.7 *War*: in heaven. Nowhere else in Jewish or early Christian literature is a heavenly battle depicted, though Jewish apocalyptic literature preserves the tradition of a revolt in heaven (see Is 14.12-21), the inspiration for Milton's *Paradise Lost*. *Michael*, one of the seven traditional archangels (see note on 1.4; Dan 10.13; 12.1; Jude 9), often presented as the commander of the host of angels (*Apocalypse of Paul* 14) and the intercessor between humans and God. 12.9 *Great dragon*: thrown down. This eschatological expulsion of Satan from heaven (see Lk 10.18; in 12.31) is based on an ancient Jewish expulsion myth (see Isa 14.12-15; 2 Enoch 29.4-5). *Ancient serpent* (Satan) (Gen 3.1-7; 2 Cor 11.3). *Devil*. See note on 2.10.

and those who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
for the devil has come down to you
with great wrath,
because he knows that his time is
short!”

The Dragon Fights Again on Earth

13 So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued^d the woman who had given birth to the male child.¹⁴ But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.¹⁵ Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood.¹⁶ But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.¹⁷ Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

The First Beast

18 Then the dragon took his stand on the sand of the seashore.¹⁹ And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns were ten di-

^a Or: to shepherd. ^b Gk Christ. ^c Gk brothers. ^d Or persecuted. ^e Gk: Then the other ancient authorities read: Then I stood.

His angels, i.e., fallen angels or demons. 12.10 *Satan* means: *accuser* in Hebrew (Job 1.9-11; Zech 3.1). 12.11 *They have conquered him*, paradoxically, like Jesus (3.21; 5.5), by dying. 12.14 *Two wings of the great eagle*. See Ex 19.4; Deut 32.10-14. *Wilderness*. See note on 12.6. *A time, and times, and half a time* (Dan 7.25; 12.7), i.e., three and a half years (see note on 11.2). 12.16 *Earth*: swallowed the river. A personified Earth sometimes swallows the enemies of God (see Ex 15.12; Num 16.32-34). 12.17 *The rest of her children*. Christians whose persecution is orchestrated by Satan (see 13.7).

12.18-13.18 Two beasts that serve the dragon are introduced. 12.18 *The dragon took his stand on the seashore* to await the emergence of the beast. 13.1 *Beast* (see 11.7). John represents both Rome and its emperors as the sea monster Leviathan (Ezek 29.3; 2 Eud 6.47-52; 1 Enoch 60.7-10.24). It rises out of the sea (representing the bottomless pit; see note on 9.1) and is a composite of the four beasts of Dan 7.3-7. *Blasphemous names*, divine titles such as “Lord,” “Savior,” and “Son of God” claimed by Roman emperors. *Ten horns and seven*

adems, and on its heads were blasphemous names.² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority.³ One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed. In amazement the whole earth followed the beast.⁴ They worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast and who can fight against it?”

5 The beast was given a mouth, uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.⁸ It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation,⁹ and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered.¹⁰

9 Let anyone who has an ear listen: If you are to be taken captive, do not go into captivity you go; if you will with the sword, if you kill with the sword, if you must be killed. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

The Second Beast

11 Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it

spoke like a dragon.¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed.¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all.¹⁴ And by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of the earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword; and yet it lives; and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.¹⁵ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead.¹⁶ So that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.¹⁷ This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.

The Lamb and the 144,000

14 Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.² And I heard a

^a Gk the plague of its death. ^b Other ancient authorities lack this sentence. ^c Or: written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered from the foundation of the world. ^d Gk whose plague of its death. ^e Or: they had received the plague of its death. ^f Or spirit. ^g Other ancient authorities read six hundred sixty-six.

13.13 *It performs great signs*, a traditional ploy of the antichrist to deceive people (Mk 16.7-23; 2 Thes 2.9-10; *Didache* 16.4). The motif is derived from Deut 13.1-3. 13.14 *An image for the beast*, cultic statues of the Roman emperors (see Dan 3). 13.15 *Give breath to the image*. In ancient magic the animation of images of the god was a means for securing oracles, an important practice of ancient theurgists (Iamblichus. *On the Mysteries* 5.23). *Speak*, i.e., give oracles. 13.16 *Mortal wound*, i.e., healed or atoned as a mark of ownership and devotion to the beast (antooling was used to identify slaves in the ancient world); this marking is a counterpart to the sealing of Christians with the name of God (see note on 7.2). 13.18 *The number of the beast*, a code name based on the numeric value of letters. Six hundred sixty-six, perhaps the numeric value of the name Nero Caesar in Hebrew and Greek. 13.19 *They will worship the beast*, i.e., as an agent of Satan (see note on 12.3).

voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps,³ and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders.⁴ No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth.⁵ It is these who have not defiled themselves with women; for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb,⁶ and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless.

The Messages of the Three Angels

6 Then I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live^a on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people.⁷ He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

8 Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

9 Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, "Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands,

10 they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger; and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name."

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord." Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them."

Reaping the Earth's Harvest

14 Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.¹⁵ Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."¹⁶ So the one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

^a GK str. ^b Or to their faith in

with eschatological judgment and salvation. 14.1-5 A victory vision of the Lamb and the 144,000. 14.1 *Mount Zion*, i.e., Jerusalem as the center of God's eschatological action. (Ps 2.6; Isa 24.23; 40.9-11; 2 Esd 13.35-40; Heb 12.22-24). *One hundred forty-four thousand*. See note on 7.4. 14.2-3 Preparatory heavenly throne-room scene; see note on 4.1-11. 14.3 *A new song*. See note on 5.9. *No one could learn that song*. Knowledge of heavenly realities is often said to be reserved only for the pure. 14.4 *Virgins*, males who are chaste, though not necessarily sexually inexperienced; ritual impurity was widely thought to follow sexual intercourse (Lev 15.18), and celibacy was a ritual requirement for holy warriors (Deut 23.9-14; 1 Sam 21.5-6). *Follow the Lamb*, a metaphor for discipleship and martyrdom (see Mt 19.28; Lk 9.57-58; Jn 12.26). The word translated *first fruits* actually means "servants devoted to God" and has nothing to do with first fruits as a sacrificial harvest metaphor. Here the term is applied to martyrs as sacrificial victims (cf. Jer 2.3; Rom 16.5; 1 Cor 15.20, 23). 14.6-13 The second vision consists of three angelic messages. 14.6 *An eternal gospel*, not the saving message of Jesus' death and resurrection, but the message referred to in v. 7. 14.7 The eternal message is the ne-

cessity of repentance in light of the imminent judgment (see also Deut 10.12-13; Acts 14.15-17). 14.8 *Babylon the great*, code name for Rome (see introduction; 17.1-5, 18.1-2; 1 Pet 5.13). Rome's future fall is announced as if past (see 16.19; 17.5, 16-18; 18.2). *The wine of the wrath of God*, a metaphor derived from Jer 25.15-17; 51.7 (repeated in Rev 14.10; 17.2-18.3). 14.9 *Use it*. See note on 13.16. 14.10 *White unmixed with water*, was considered extremely potent and was a metaphor for severe judgment (see Ps 73.5; Jer 25.15). 14.13 *Blessed*. See note on 1.3. 14.14-20.5 vision of the gathering of the righteous (vv. 14-16) and the judgment of the wicked (vv. 17-20) based on the grain and grape harvests of Joel 3.13, 14.14 *The white cloud* (see note on 11.12) functions as a throne and is also associated with the figure of the Son of Man (Dan 7.13; see notes on 1.7-1.13), a common title for Jesus in the Gospels; he gathers the elect (Mt 13.30, 39) or, as here, the gathering of the elect (Lk 10.2; Jn 4.35-38), an eschatological event based on the hope of the regathering of the twelve

17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.¹⁸ Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for its grapes are ripe."¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God.²⁰ And the blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.^a

The Angels with the Seven Last Plagues

15 Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

"Great and amazing are your deeds,
Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations!^b

Lord, who will not fear
and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy:
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your judgments have been revealed."

5 After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,⁶ and out of the temple came the seven angels with

the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen,^a with golden sashes across their chests.⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever,⁸ and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

The Bowls of God's Wrath

16 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

2 So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.

3 The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died.

4 The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters say,

"You are just, O Holy One, who are and were,

for you have judged these things;
because they shed the blood of saints and prophets,

you have given them blood to drink.
It is what they deserve!"

7 And I heard the altar respond,
"Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty,
your judgments are true and just!"

8 The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire; they were scorched by the fierce heat, but

tribes of Israel. 14.16 *The angel who has authority over fire*. In Jewish tradition various angels supervised particular aspects of the world, including wind (7.1), water (16.5), fire (Ezek 6.6, 2), and the bottomless pit (9.1); see also 1. Enock 60.11-22. 14.19 *Wine press*, another metaphor for divine judgment (see 19.15; Isa 63.1-3; Lam 1.3-5). 15.1-16.21 The last seven plagues; see note on 8.2-9.21. 15.2-8 Preparatory heavenly throne-room scene (see note on 4.1-11). 15.2 *A sea of glass*, i.e., a sea so smooth that it appears glasslike; see note on 4.6. *Harps of God*. See note on 5.8. 15.3 *Song of Moses*. See Ex

15.1-18; Deut 32.1-47. 15.5 *The tent of witness*, i.e., the heavenly tabernacle (Heb 8.2; 9.11), which was considered the model for the earthly tabernacle (see Ex 25.9, 40; 26.30-27.8). 15.7 *Seven golden bowls*, cultic utensils used for libations (Ex 27.3; 38.3; Num 4.14). 15.8 In the OT, a cloud of smoke can represent the presence or glory of God (see Ex 24.16; Lev 16.2; 1 Kings 8.10-11; Isa 6.4). 16.2 *A foul and painful sore*, reminds us of the sixth plague of Ex 9.8-12. 16.3 See the first plague of Ex 7.14-25 (see also Ps 78.44; 105.29). 16.5 *Angel of the waters*. See note on 14.18. *You are just, O Holy One*, a doxology emphasizing God's just dis-

they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.¹⁰ The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.

12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up in order to prepare the way for the kings from the east.¹³ And I saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet.¹⁴ These are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.¹⁵ ("See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed," not going about naked and exposed to shame.)¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon.¹⁷ The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"¹⁸ And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake.¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered

great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath.²⁰ And every island fled away and no mountains were to be found.²¹ And huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

The Great Whore and the Beast

17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore, who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk." So he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.² The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, and the impurities of her fornication.³ And on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations."⁴ And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus.⁵

penation of judgment (see Neh 9:33; Dan 9:14; Job 3:2). **16.9** They did not repent, a motif from the Exodus plague tradition; see note on 9:20. **16.10** The throne of the beast, the center of imperial power in Rome (13:2). **16.12** Euphrates, the natural boundary between the rival powers of Parthia and Rome (see note on 9:14). Its water was dried up. In antiquity the Euphrates never dried up; this miracle is the antithesis of the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14). Kings from the east, the Parthians and their subordinate kingdoms. **16.13** False prophet, the beast from the land under a new alias (13:11-18). **16.14** To assemble them for battle. The tumult and assault of the Gentiles against Israel is a common eschatological motif (see Ezek 38-39; Zech 12:1-9; see also notes on 11:2; 11:8). The great day of God. See note on 6:17. **16.15** I am coming like a thief! Antisocial saying inserted by the author; see note on 3:3. Blessed. See note on 1:3. **16.16** They, the three demonic spirits, Harmagedon, Hebrew term probably meaning "mountain(s) of Megiddo," a valley in central Palestine that was the site of important ancient battles because of its strategic position (see Judg 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29-30). **16.17** It is done. The wrath of God has

ended (15:1), yet the end is not yet (see 21:6). **16.19** The great city, Babylon, i.e., Rome. God remembered great Babylon. Divine justice is often linked with divine remembrance (see Jer 14:10; Hos 7:2; 8:13); the destruction of Babylon is described in 17:1-18:2. **16.20** No mountains were to be found, a motif found in or theophany and judgment scenes (see Ps 97:5; Isa 40:4; Ezek 38:20). **17.1** The great whore. The metaphor of the prostitutes often used in the OT for godless cities (see Isa 23:16-17; Nah 3:4). Seated on many waters aptly describes the location of historical Babylon (Jer 51:13) just as historical Rome was located on the Tiber. **17.3** He carried me away in the spirit, a vision trance in which the seer is transported to a remote place in the world; see note on 1:30. Scarlet beast, the Roman Empire. Full of blasphemous names with seven heads and ten horns identical to the beast from the sea (8:1). **17.4** Clothed in purple, scarlet, and dressed like a wealthy courtesan (see 18:16). **17.5** On her forehead was written a name suggests the famous form of prostitution, a name slave. **17.6** The spirits, the many Christian martyrs

Alternate Ways of Counting the Roman Emperors Signified in Rev 17.10-11

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Julius Caesar (101-44 BCE)	1	1						
Augustus (31 BCE-14 CE)	2	2	1					
Tiberius (14-37 CE)	3	3	2					
Gaius (37-41)	4	4	3	1				
Claudius (41-54)	5	5	4	2				
Nero (54-68)	6	6	5	3	1			
Galba (June 68-January 69)	7	7	6	4	2	1		
Otho (69)	8	8	7	5	3	2		
Vitellius (69)			8	6	4	3	2	
Vespasian (69-79)				7	5	4	3	
Titus (79-81)				8	6	5	4	
Domitian (81-96)					7	6	5	
[Neronian Antichrist]					8	7	6	
Nerva (96-98)						7	6	

Column A begins with Julius Caesar, following a traditional way of counting the emperors (see Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 34.7; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.32; *Stylite Oracles* 5:12-51).

Column B modifies the sequence of Column A by omitting the three short-lived emperors of 68-69 CE.

Column C reflects another traditional way of counting the emperors and begins with Augustus, the first actually to receive that title (see Virgil, *Aeneid* 6:789-97; Tacitus, *Annals* 1:1).

Column D modifies the sequence of Column C by omitting the three short-lived emperors of 68-69.

Column E reflects the judgment of some modern scholars that the enumeration begins with Gaius, infamous for his treatment of Jews.

Column F reflects the judgment of other modern scholars that the enumeration begins with Gaius, infamous for his treatment of Jews.

Column G represents the scheme of Victorinus of Pettau in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (17.9-11).

Column H shows the first five emperors deified by the Roman senate, followed by Domitian, who claimed divinity while living. The list concludes with a mythical Nero-like adversary of God derived from legends about Nero's return from death (see *Stylite Oracles* 4:138-39; 5:108-10, 214-27).

When I saw her, I was greatly amazed. ⁷But the angel said to me, "Why are you so amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

⁹ "This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; also, they are seven kings. ¹⁰ Of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. ¹² And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. ¹³ These are united in yielding their power and authority to the beast; ¹⁴ they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

¹⁵ And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. ¹⁶ And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by

17.8 *Ascend from the bottomless pit.* See 11.7. *It was and is not and is to come,* a parody of the divine title "who is and who was and who is to come" (see note on 1.4). *Is not, here "has died."* 17.9 *Seven mountains.* That Rome was located on seven hills was first popularized by Varro (116-27 BCE). *Seven kings,* either seven actual emperors (either Julius Caesar or Augustus could be counted as the first) or a symbol for a complete series. 17.11 *An eighth,* the returned Nero (see note on 13.3). 17.12 *Ten kings,* subordinate kings on the eastern borders of the empire. *One horn,* an extremely limited period (18.10, 17, 19). 17.14 *War on the Lamb,* the final end-time battle, see 16.12-16; 19.17-21. *Lord of lords and King of kings,* a title of Persian origin (Ezra 7.12) usually reserved for God (see Dan 4.37, 1 Tim 6.15; 1 Thro 9.4). 17.15 *Waters* (see 17.1), a symbol for the threatening armies (see Isa 6.8-8; Jer 47.2). 17.16 *They will make her desolate and naked.* The returned Nero,

agreeing to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. ¹⁵ The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

The Fall of Babylon

18 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his splendor. ² He called out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons,

a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast."

³ For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,

and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury."

⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

"Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins and so that you do not share in her plagues;

⁵ for her sins are heaped high as heaven,

^a Other ancient authorities lack the words *a haunt of every foul beast* and *and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury*. ^b Other ancient authorities read *she has made all nations drink*. ^c Of nations

with Partian allies, will destroy Rome (see 16.19). *your flesh,* an allusion to the fate of Israel (1 Kings 21.23-24).

18.1-19.10 *Reactions to the fall of Babylon.* 18.2 *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,* a phrase from Isa 21.9 used here to introduce a prophetic taunt against Rome's fall (see also Isa 23-24; Jer 50-51; Ezek 26-27). *A haunt . . . of demons,* i.e., a devastated ruin (see 17.17). 18.3 *Fornication,* metaphor for political and religious subservience to Rome. *Merchants . . . have grown rich,* Wealthy Romans bought expensive products from everywhere (see vv. 11-13). Though Rome is implicitly condemned for economic exploitation, the criticism is softer than one might expect. 18.4 *Come out of her,* prophetic summons to flight (see Isa 48.20-22; Jer 50.8-10; 51.6-10), probably carrying with it the connotation of not participating in the corrupt practices characteristic of pagan society. 18.5 *Sins . . . high as*

and God has remembered her iniquities.

Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.

As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously,

so give her a like measure of torment and grief.

Since in her heart she says,

"I rule as a queen; I am no widow,

and I will never see grief," therefore her plagues will come in a single day—

pestilence and mourning and famine—

and she will be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

⁹ And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; ¹⁰ they will stand far off, afraid of her torment, and say,

"Alas, alas, the great city! Babylon, the mighty city! for in one hour your judgment has come."

¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹² cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, ¹³ cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, slaves—and human lives."

¹⁴ The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your dainties and your splendor and all your dainties and your splendor

have gone. See 51.9. *God has remembered.* See note on 16.9. 18.6 *Render . . . for her deeds* alludes to Jer 50.29; i.e., 18.7. *Twice as a queen.* The fatal pride of Rome is symbolized in this brief hubristic soliloquy. 18.9-10 *Give her double,* adapted from Ezek 27, of things (vv. 9-10) and merchants (vv. 11-17a), and mariners (vv. 17b-18) in an effective poetic way of underscoring the judgment of Babylon/Rome. 18.11 *The merchants . . . weep and wail,* ostensibly for her, but actually for themselves. Rome was the hub of a complex economic system that imported products from China, India, Africa,

are lost to you, never to be found again!"

¹⁵ The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

¹⁶ "Alas, alas, the great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet,

adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!"

¹⁷ For in one hour all this wealth has been laid waste!"

And all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning.

"What city was like the great city?"

¹⁹ And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out,

"Alas, alas, the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth!"

For in one hour she has been laid waste."

²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets! For God has given judgment for you against her.

²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

"With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down,

and will be found no more;

²² and the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters

will be heard in you no more; and an artisan of any trade

will be found in you no more; and the sound of the millstone

will be heard in you no more; and the light of a lamp

²³ and the light of a lamp

and northern Europe. 18.12-13 The list of twenty-nine trade goods alludes to Ezek 16.9-13; 27.5-24. 18.16 *Purple and scarlet,* colors symbolic of royalty and evil. See note on 17.4. 18.18 *What city was like the great city?* The question is asked on Ezek 27.32. 18.19 *They threw dust on their heads,* an act of mourning or sorrow (see Josh 7.6; Job 2.12; Lam 2.10). 18.20 *God has given against her.* The martyrs' prayer of 6.10 is finally answered. 18.21 The millstone thrown into the sea symbolizes Rome's downfall (a symbolic prophetic action adapted from Jer 51.63-64).

will shine in you no more; and you and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more; and you will be for your merchants, were the magnates of the earth; the princes and the nobles and all nations were deceived by your

24 And in you^a was found the blood of
prophets and of saints,^b and
of all who have been slaughtered
on earth.²⁵ You have not

The Rejoicing in Heaven

19 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying,

"Hallelujah and glory and power to our God
Salvation and glory and power to our God."

2 for his judgments are true and just;
he has judged the great whoes, who
who corrupted the earth with her

And he has avenged on her the blood of
his servants."²⁴ And her answer to
him was, "Once more they said, 'Avenge
us, O Lord, our God, for we have
been despised.'"

The smoke goes up from her forever and ever."

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen."

“Amén. Hallelujah!”¹⁷ and then the
5 And from the throne came a voice saying:
“Praise our God, and you who are

all your his servants; ¹⁰ and all who fear him, ¹¹ the small and great." ¹² (1 Samuel 1:10-12)

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters

and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals
crying out,

7 Let us rejoice and exult in you,
O Lord our God, and praise you
as the Almighty reigns above a king.

and give him the glory, now that
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready,
to her it has been granted to be clothed
with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell

down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that; I am a fellow servant^d with you and your comrades^e who hold the testimony of Jesus." Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The Rider on the White Horse
 11. Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and

and his name is called The Word of God
and he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood,
and on his head are many diadems; and he has
a name inscribed that no one knows but him-
self.¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood,

14 And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp

sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he

a Gk her b Gk slaves c Gk he said d Gk slave
e Gk brothers f Or to Jesus g Other ancient authorities read
spinkled with h Or will shepherd

will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

The Beast and Its Armies Defeated

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God,"¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of

horses and their riders—flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great.” 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had deceived the whole world. They were thrown into the lake of fire and burned. And the living were killed. 21 Then I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Then another book was added, and the dead were judged by what was written in the books. 22 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged by what was written in the books. 23 Then the sea and death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 24 And anyone not found in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.²¹ And the rest

They were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

20 Then, I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for

a thousand years; ³ and threw him into the pit, sword. See note on 1.16. *He will rule in iron.* See note

on 12.5. *Wine press*. See note on 14.19, 19.16 *King*.
lords. See note on 17.14. 19.17 *Come, gather for the great*
supper of God, an invitation to birds (parodying ancient

and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more; until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while; but how long I know not.

4 Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw

the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus^a and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life

and reigned with Christ a thousand years.⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be like Christ, who lives.

will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.

will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea.⁹ They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven, and con-

actively high social status (more painful forms of execution for the testimony of Jesus).¹⁶ Other ancient authorities read from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God

tion were reserved for the lower classes. *Not worshipped the beast or its image.* See 13.11–18. *Its mark.* See 13.16–20.5 *The rest of the dead,* all but the martyrs; in the au-

plan. *The first resurrection*, restricted to Christian mat-
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See note on 1.3. *Second death*. See note on 2.11. 20.7-10. The release and second defeat of Satan are unparalleled in Jewish eschatology; 20.8 *Gog and Magog* names for a hostile northern king and his nation (Ezek 38-39) that came to symbolize all of Israel's enemies, rabbis

sources refer to the final war as "the war of Gog and Magog" (see, e.g., *Babylonian Talmud Berakot* 7b; *Sanhedrin* 97b). *Gather them for battle*. See also 1:6-12-16.

19.19. *As the sands of the sea*, a metaphor for an enormous, terrifying army. (see Josh. 11.4; Judg. 7.12).

20.9. *Marched up*. In the biblical idiom one always 'gessed up' (went down to Jerusalem (1st Cor. 3.1-3; 1st Cor. 16.1)) and 'gessed down' (went up to Jerusalem (1st Cor. 3.1-3; 1st Cor. 16.1)).

The camp of the saints implies that the saints constitute an encamped army. *The beloved city*, Jerusalem (see Ps 137:7; 147:2; 148:7; 149:4; 150:1; 151:1; 152:1; 153:1; 154:1; 155:1; 156:1; 157:1; 158:1; 159:1; 160:1; 161:1; 162:1; 163:1; 164:1; 165:1; 166:1; 167:1; 168:1; 169:1; 170:1; 171:1; 172:1; 173:1; 174:1; 175:1; 176:1; 177:1; 178:1; 179:1; 180:1; 181:1; 182:1; 183:1; 184:1; 185:1; 186:1; 187:1; 188:1; 189:1; 190:1; 191:1; 192:1; 193:1; 194:1; 195:1; 196:1; 197:1; 198:1; 199:1; 200:1; 201:1; 202:1; 203:1; 204:1; 205:1; 206:1; 207:1; 208:1; 209:1; 210:1; 211:1; 212:1; 213:1; 214:1; 215:1; 216:1; 217:1; 218:1; 219:1; 220:1; 221:1; 222:1; 223:1; 224:1; 225:1; 226:1; 227:1; 228:1; 229:1; 230:1; 231:1; 232:1; 233:1; 234:1; 235:1; 236:1; 237:1; 238:1; 239:1; 240:1; 241:1; 242:1; 243:1; 244:1; 245:1; 246:1; 247:1; 248:1; 249:1; 250:1; 251:1; 252:1; 253:1; 254:1; 255:1; 256:1; 257:1; 258:1; 259:1; 260:1; 261:1; 262:1; 263:1; 264:1; 265:1; 266:1; 267:1; 268:1; 269:1; 270:1; 271:1; 272:1; 273:1; 274:1; 275:1; 276:1; 277:1; 278:1; 279:1; 280:1; 281:1; 282:1; 283:1; 284:1; 285:1; 286:1; 287:1; 288:1; 289:1; 290:1; 291:1; 292:1; 293:1; 294:1; 295:1; 296:1; 297:1; 298:1; 299:1; 300:1; 301:1; 302:1; 303:1; 304:1; 305:1; 306:1; 307:1; 308:1; 309:1; 310:1; 311:1; 312:1; 313:1; 314:1; 315:1; 316:1; 317:1; 318:1; 319:1; 320:1; 321:1; 322:1; 323:1; 324:1; 325:1; 326:1; 327:1; 328:1; 329:1; 330:1; 331:1; 332:1; 333:1; 334:1; 335:1; 336:1; 337:1; 338:1; 339:1; 340:1; 341:1; 342:1; 343:1; 344:1; 345:1; 346:1; 347:1; 348:1; 349:1; 350:1; 351:1; 352:1; 353:1; 354:1; 355:1; 356:1; 357:1; 358:1; 359:1; 360:1; 361:1; 362:1; 363:1; 364:1; 365:1; 366:1; 367:1; 368:1; 369:1; 370:1; 371:1; 372:1; 373:1; 374:1; 375:1; 376:1; 377:1; 378:1; 379:1; 380:1; 381:1; 382:1; 383:1; 384:1; 385:1; 386:1; 387:1; 388:1; 389:1; 390:1; 391:1; 392:1; 393:1; 394:1; 395:1; 396:1; 397:1; 398:1; 399:1; 400:1; 401:1; 402:1; 403:1; 404:1; 405:1; 406:1; 407:1; 408:1; 409:1; 410:1; 411:1; 412:1; 413:1; 414:1; 415:1; 416:1; 417:1; 418:1; 419:1; 420:1; 421:1; 422:1; 423:1; 424:1; 425:1; 426:1; 427:1; 428:1; 429:1; 430:1; 431:1; 432:1; 433:1; 434:1; 435:1; 436:1; 437:1; 438:1; 439:1; 440:1; 441:1; 442:1; 443:1; 444:1; 445:1; 446:1; 447:1; 448:1; 449:1; 450:1; 451:1; 452:1; 453:1; 454:1; 455:1; 456:1; 457:1; 458:1; 459:1; 460:1; 461:1; 462:1; 463:1; 464:1; 465:1; 466:1; 467:1; 468:1; 469:1; 470:1; 471:1; 472:1; 473:1; 474:1; 475:1; 476:1; 477:1; 478:1; 479:1; 480:1; 481:1; 482:1; 483:1; 484:1; 485:1; 486:1; 487:1; 488:1; 489:1; 490:1; 491:1; 492:1; 493:1; 494:1; 495:1; 496:1; 497:1; 498:1; 499:1; 500:1; 501:1; 502:1; 503:1; 504:1; 505:1; 506:1; 507:1; 508:1; 509:1; 510:1; 511:1; 512:1; 513:1; 514:1; 515:1; 516:1; 517:1; 518:1; 519:1; 520:1; 521:1; 522:1; 523:1; 524:1; 525:1; 526:1; 527:1; 528:1; 529:1; 530:1; 531:1; 532:1; 533:1; 534:1; 535:1; 536:1; 537:1; 538:1; 539:1; 540:1; 541:1; 542:1; 543:1; 544:1; 545:1; 546:1; 547:1; 548:1; 549:1; 550:1; 551:1; 552:1; 553:1; 554:1; 555:1; 556:1; 557:1; 558:1; 559:1; 560:1; 561:1; 562:1; 563:1; 564:1; 565:1; 566:1; 567:1; 568:1; 569:1; 570:1; 571:1; 572:1; 573:1; 574:1; 575:1; 576:1; 577:1; 578:1; 579:1; 580:1; 581:1; 582:1; 583:1; 584:1; 585:1; 586:1; 587:1; 588:1; 589:1; 590:1; 591:1; 592:1; 593:1; 594:1; 595:1; 596:1; 597:1; 598:1; 599:1; 600:1; 601:1; 602:1; 603:1; 604:1; 605:1; 606:1; 607:1; 608:1; 609:1; 610:1; 611:1; 612:1; 613:1; 614:1; 615:1; 616:1; 617:1; 618:1; 619:1; 620:1; 621:1; 622:1; 623:1; 624:1; 625:1; 626:1; 627:1; 628:1; 629:1; 630:1; 631:1; 632:1; 633:1; 634:1; 635:1; 636:1; 637:1; 638:1; 639:1; 640:1; 641:1; 642:1; 643:1; 644:1; 645:1; 646:1; 647:1; 648:1; 649:1; 650:1; 651:1; 652:1; 653:1; 654:1; 655:1; 656:1; 657:1; 658:1; 659:1; 660:1; 661:1; 662:1; 663:1; 664:1; 665:1; 666:1; 667:1; 668:1; 669:1; 670:1; 671:1; 672:1; 673:1; 674:1; 675:1; 676:1; 677:1; 678:1; 679:1; 680:1; 681:1; 682:1; 683:1; 684:1; 685:1; 686:1; 687:1; 688:1; 689:1; 690:1; 691:1; 692:1; 693:1; 694:1; 695:1; 696:1; 697:1; 698:1; 699:1; 700:1; 701:1; 702:1; 703:1; 704:1; 705:1; 706:1; 707:1; 708:1; 709:1; 710:1; 711:1; 712:1; 713:1; 714:1; 715:1; 716:1; 717:1; 718:1; 719:1; 720:1; 721:1; 722:1; 723:1; 724:1; 725:1; 72

sumed them.¹⁰ And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The Dead Are Judged

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them.¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books.¹³ And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done.¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and the sea was no more.² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;⁴

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

20.10 The lake of fire and sulfur. See notes on 9.18; 19.20. 20.11-15 The final judgment embraces the rest of the dead (cf. 20.4-6). 20.11 A great white throne, the judgment seat of God. The earth and the heaven fled from his presence, a metaphor for the awesome theophanic majesty of God (taken literally in 21.1). 20.12 Books were opened (Dan 7.10). The plural suggests two sets of books, one for the righteous, the other for the wicked. Book of life. See note on 3.5; 20.13 The sea, one of the two abodes of the dead. Death and Hades were the abode under the earth. 20.14 Second death. See note on 2.11.

21.1-8 A new heaven and earth replace their earlier counterparts. 21.1 A new heaven and a new earth, an allusion to Isa 65.17; 66.22 (see also *Jubilees* 1.29; 4.26; 1. *Enoch* 91.16), for Judaism the renewal of creation

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.

for the first things have passed away.⁵

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."⁶ Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.⁷ Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Vision of the New Jerusalem

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰ And in the spirit¹ he carried me away to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.¹¹ It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.¹² It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and in the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel;¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.¹⁴ And the wall of the city has

^a GK the intermediate. ^b GK will intermediate. ^c Other ancient authorities read people. ^d Other ancient authorities add and in their God. ^e Or the unleavening. ^f Or in the spirit.

constitutes the final eschatological event. 21.2 The new Jerusalem. Belief in a heavenly counterpart to the earthly Jerusalem was common in early Judaism and early Christianity (see Gal 4.26; Phil 3.20; Heb 12.10; 14-16). 21.3-8 Preparatory heavenly throne-room scene (see note on 4.1-11). 21.3 The home... mortals an allusion to Ezek 37.26. 21.4 Wife every text. See note on 7.17. 21.5 I am making all things new. See Isa 43.19; cf. 2 Cor 5.17. 21.6 I am... Omega (apokalyptically). See note on 1.8. Water of life. See note on 7.10. 21.7 Those who conquer, those faithful unto death (see 2.7, 13; 17.26; 3.5, 12, 21). I will be... my children. The covenant relationship is often defined using the metaphor of adoption (see 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 27.89b-27; Jer 3.19; *Jubilees* 1.24). 21.8 Second death. See note on 2.11.

twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles;¹⁷ its length, and width and height are equal.¹⁸ He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits¹⁹ by human measurement, which the angel was using.²⁰ The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass.²¹ The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,²² the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.²³ And the twelve gates are twelve pearls; each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.² And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.³ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.⁴ Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.⁵ People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.⁶ But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The River of Life

22 Then the angel^a showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing

ing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life^b with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³ Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.⁵ And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.⁶

6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."⁷

7 "See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Epilogue and Benediction

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

^a GK He. ^b GK twelve thousand stadia. ^c That is, almost seventy-five yards. ^d GK he. ^e Or the Lamb. ^f In the middle of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, is the tree of life. ^g GK shows. ^h GK share. ⁱ GK brothers.

21.9-22.7 The final vision: the new Jerusalem. 21.9 Wife of the Lamb. See note on 19.7. 21.10 In the spirit... mountain. See notes on 1.10; 17.3; see also Ezek 40.2. 21.15 The measuring rod is to reveal structure and size to the reader; see note on 11.1. 21.16 The square shape dominates the eschatological temple in Ezek 40-48 and the Dead Sea Scrolls Temple Scroll (11Q19). 21.18-21 On the use of precious stones in the construction of the future temple, a metaphor for magnificence and luxury, see Isa 54.11-12; Tob 13.16-17. 21.23 The glory of God is its light. See Isa 60.19-20. 21.22 Nothing unclean will enter it. It is like a sanctuary in that nothing profane is allowed in. In the Dead Sea Scrolls and the OT, the sanctity of the temple was sometimes extended to the city (see Isa 52.1). The Lamb's

17 Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.^a

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book;^b if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.^c

19 The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon."^d

20 Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.^e

^a Other ancient authorities read *to the commandments*.
^b Other ancient authorities lack *it*; others lack *the writings*; others lack *Amen*.
^c Other ancient authorities lack *it*; others lack *the writings*; others lack *Amen*.
^d Other ancient authorities lack *it*; others lack *the writings*; others lack *Amen*.
^e Other ancient authorities lack *it*; others lack *the writings*; others lack *Amen*.

Quotations of the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament

[illegible]

Genesis		Genesis (cont.)	
126	Jas 3.9	25.23	Rom 9.12
127	Mt 19.4; Mk 10.6	26.3-4	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8, 16
22	Heb 4.4	28.12	Jn 1.51
27	1 Cor 15.45	28.13-14	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8
224	Mt 19.5; Mk 10.7-8; 1 Cor 6.16; Eph 5.31	47.31	Heb 11.21
317-18	Heb 6.8	Exodus	
524	Heb 11.5	1.8	Acts 7.18
121	Acts 7.3	2.11-15	Acts 7.23-29
123	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8	2.14	Acts 7.35
127	Gal 3.16	3.5-10	Acts 7.32-34
1315	Gal 3.16	3.6	Mt 22.32; Mk 12.26;
1417-20	Heb 7.1-2	3.12	Lk 20.37; Acts 3.13
155	Rom 4.18; Heb 11.12	3.15	Acts 7.7
156	Rom 4.3, 9, 22; Gal 3.6		Mt 22.37; Mk 12.26;
	Jas 2.23		Lk 20.37; Acts 3.13; 7.32
1513-14	Acts 7.6-7	9.16	Rom 9.17
175	Rom 4.17	12.46	Jn 19.36
177	Gal 3.16	13.2	Lk 2.23
178	Acts 7.5; Gal 3.16	16.4	Jn 6.31
1810	Rom 9.9	16.18	2 Cor 8.15
1818	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8	19.5-6	1 Pet 2.9
2110	Gal 4.30	19.12-13	Heb 12.20
2112	Rom 9.7; Heb 11.18	20.12-16	Mt 19.18-19; Mk 10.19;
229	Jas 2.21		Lk 18.20
2216-17	Heb 6.13-14	20.12	Mt 15.4; Mk 7.10; Eph
2217	Heb 11.12		6.2-3
2218	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8, 16	20.13-15, 17	Rom 13.9