

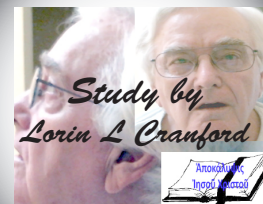


# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 02

Text: 1:4-8

All rights reserved ©



1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀρνίου ἡν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς ἐκκλησίαις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γένοιθαι ἐν τῷ ἔτι, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἃ δεῖ γένοιθαι διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ, 2 ἡν μαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ βιβλίου καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀρνίου ὅσα εἶδεν. 3 Μακάριος ὁ ἀκούων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ γεγραμμένα, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς.

### QUICK LINKS

#### 1. What the text meant.

##### Historical Aspects:

External History

Internal History

##### Literary Aspects:

Genre

Literary Setting

Literary Structure

#### Exegesis of the Text:

A. Header A

B. Header B

C. Header C

#### 2. What the text means.

### Greek NT

4 Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ἦν καὶ τοῦ ἐρχόμενου καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ 5 καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ μάρτυρος, τοῦ πιστοῦ, τοῦ πρωτότοκου τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ τοῦ ἀρχῶν τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, 6 καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων]: ἀμήν.

7 Ἴδου ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἰφύλαι τῆς γῆς. ναί, ἀμήν.

8 Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

### Gute Nachricht Bibel

4 Johannes schreibt an die sieben Gemeinden in der Provinz Asien\*. Gnade und Frieden\* sei mit euch von Gott – von ihm, der ist und der war und der kommt – und von den sieben Geistern vor seinem Thron 5 und von Jesus Christus, dem treuen Zeugen, der als erster von allen Toten zu neuem Leben geboren worden ist und über die Könige der Erde herrscht. Ihm, der uns liebt, ihm, der sein Blut\* für uns vergossen hat, um uns von unseren Sünden freizukaufen, 6 der uns zu Königen gemacht hat und zu Priestern, die seinem Gott und Vater dienen dürfen: Ihm gehört die Herrlichkeit\* und Macht für alle Ewigkeit! Amen.

7 Gebt Acht, er kommt mit den Wolken! Alle werden ihn sehen, auch die, die ihn durchbohrt haben. Alle Völker der Erde werden seinetwegen jammern und klagen; das ist gewiss. Amen\*!

8 »Ich bin das A und das O – der ist und der war und der kommt, der Herrscher der ganzen Welt«, sagt Gott, der Herr.

### NRSV

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, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7 Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

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

### NLT

4 This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia. Grace and peace from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the seven-fold Spirit before his throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the commander of all the rulers of the world. All praise to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. 6 He has made us his Kingdom and his priests who serve before God his Father. Give to him everlasting glory! He rules forever and ever! Amen!

7 Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him -- even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will weep because of him. Yes! Amen!

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega -- the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One."

## INTRODUCTION

This second pericope at the beginning of the doc-

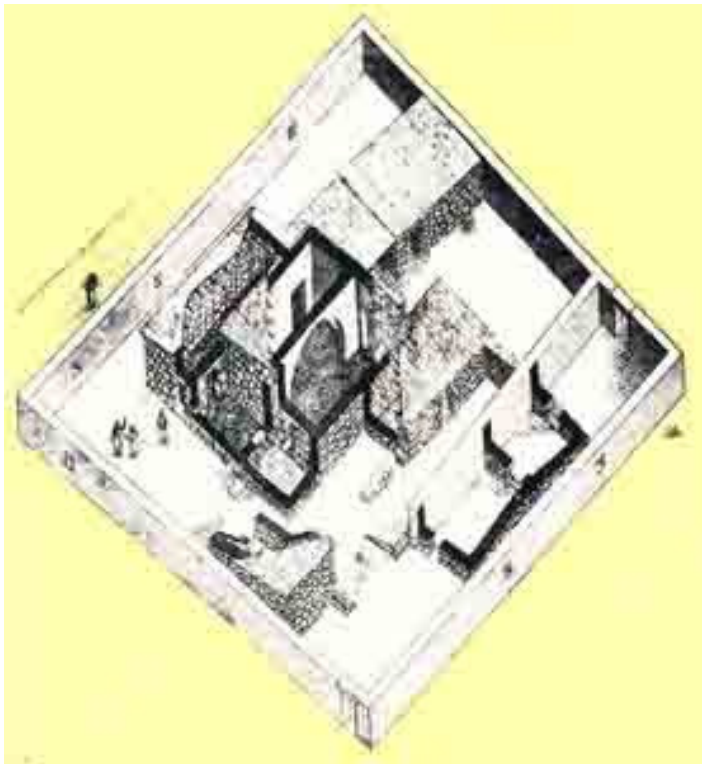
ument continues the formal Prologue with more introductory materials. The scope narrows to center on the

seven churches as the targeted recipients of this document. Excitement and spiritual rapture characterize the tone of these words as John reaches out with a Doxology of praise to Christ. This initial portrait of Christ paints the Lord in majestic tones as witness and ruler who will triumph over the forces of evil. The subsequent vision of Christ in vv. 9-20 shifts over into the apocalyptic style of portrait painting with similar emphases but in dramatically different strokes than here.

The section begins as a letter *Praescriptio* with the standard *Superscriptio* (v. 1a, ἰωάννης), *Adscriptio* (v. 4b, ταῖς ἐπτά ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ), and a lengthy *Salutatio* (vv. 4c-5a). But John quickly moves into a formal Doxology of praise (vv. 5b-6). Then two formal affirmations of the Lord are tacked on in vv. 7-8. The standard use of ἀμήν at the end of verses six and seven give the Doxology and the first affirmation the tone of a temple liturgy of praise with the congregational response of ἀμήν.

What this communicates to John's readers -- and hopefully that includes us as well -- is the great joy he feels upon reflecting on the Christ who is revealing himself to the aged apostle. As we work our way through the details of the scripture text, may this joy and sense of overwhelming awe overwhelm us as it did John.

## 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?



Quite clearly these verses communicated to an ancient audience in powerful tones. Imagine yourself as a part of a couple of dozen or so believers gathered together in a private home to find encouragement from one another to remain faithful in the midst of a growing at-

mosphere of hostility and persecution across the city from the government leaders and other citizens. News has spread among the various house church groups meeting across the city that a special writing from the beloved apostle John has arrived and is being systematically read in each of the groups across the city, even as hand copies of the document are also being made.

Now it is the turn of your group to have the document read before the assembled group of believers. With great anticipation you wait for the designated reader to begin reading the text. When the reader calls out these verses, the entire group senses the excitement of the apostle and joins spontaneously as a group in the standard doxology response of ἀμήν to these words of praise. Wonderful, amazing words of praise and encouragement to the entire group pour out of this text.

### Historical Aspects:

In examining the historical aspects of 1:4-8, the focus on the external history will be on the copying of this passage, with some exploration of possible sources utilized by John. The literary forms in this passage minimize greatly time and place markers, thus limiting the treatment of the internal history side.

**External History.** First, the matter of sources for this material. Unquestionably standard, widely used literary forms surface in 1:4-8. These forms are quite common elsewhere in the New Testament, as the discussion below on **Genre** highlights. Thus John reaches out to established Christian tradition for the vehicles of expressing his ideas about God and Christ. Although the content of these expressions is rather unique to this book inside the New Testament, clearly John has picked up on several phrases from the Old Testament to present his depiction of the Heavenly Father especially.

The threefold depiction of God, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, comes clearly out of Exod. 3:14 (LXX):<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“The complete threefold clause is a reflection of Exod. 3:14 together with twofold and threefold temporal descriptions of God in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:12), which themselves may be developed reflections on the divine name in Exod. 3:14. The name in Exod. 3:14 was also expanded in twofold and threefold manners in later Jewish tradition: ‘I am he who is and who will be’ (Targ. Ps.-J. Exod. 3:14); ‘I am now what I always was and always will be’ (Midr. Rab. Exod. 3.6; Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba; likewise Midr. Ps. 72.1); ‘I am he who is and who was, and I am he who will be’ (Targ. Ps.-J. Deut. 32:39; see likewise the gloss to Targ. Neof. Exod. 3:14). In Mekilta Shirata 4.25–32; Baḥodesh 5.25–31, a similar threefold formula is used of the God of the Exodus in direct linkage with Deut. 32:39 (the *Shirata* reference is also linked to a like threefold formula based on Isa. 41:4; note the threefold formula based on Isa. 44:6 in Midr. Rab. Gen. 81.2; Midr. Rab. Deut. 1.10; and Midr. Rab. Song 1.9§1; for a similar threefold formula for God without reference to a precise OT text see Josephus,

The Jewish heritage of John comes through brightly here.

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωυσῆν Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὦν· καὶ εἶπεν Οὕτως ἔρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ Ὁ ὦν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Second comes the unusual depiction of the Holy Spirit: καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ. Possibly the background of 1 Enoch 20:1-8 stands behind this image.<sup>2</sup> But this is not likely. Some think these seven spirits are the seven angels of the trumpets (Rev. 8:2) and the bowls (Rev. 15:1, 6-8). But again this is also unlikely. The contextual use of πνεῦμα here in conjunction with God the Father and the Son points strongly toward πνεῦμα as Holy Spirit, consistent with a uniform pattern throughout the New Testament. Rev. 4:5 additionally points this direction where the 'seven flaming torches' are defined as ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ, which are **the seven spirits of God**. Regarding sources for this image, John seems to be influenced by Zech. 4:2-7, where the seven lamps whose role was to reveal the Word of the Lord to the prophet.<sup>3</sup> Another additional possible source for John

Ap.2.190; Ant.8.280; Aristobulus, fragment 4.5; Sib. Or.3.16; cf. Rom. 11:36)." [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 187-88.]

<sup>2</sup>1 Enoch 20:1-8, 1 These are the names of the angels who watch. 2 Uriel, one of the holy angels, who presides over clamor and terror. 3 Raphael, one of the holy angels, who presides over the spirits of men. 4 Raguel, one of the holy angels, who inflicts punishment on the world and the luminaries. 5 Michael, one of the holy angels, who, presiding over human virtue, commands the nations. 6 Sarakiel, one of the holy angels, who presides over the spirits of the children of men that transgress. 7 Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who presides over Iksat,<sup>31</sup> over paradise, and over the cherubim.

<sup>3</sup>Zech. 4:1-7. 1 The angel who talked with me came again, and wakened me, as one is wakened from sleep. 2 He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it; **there are seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it.** 3 And by it there are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." 4 I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 6 He said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts. 7 What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; and he shall bring out the top stone amid shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"

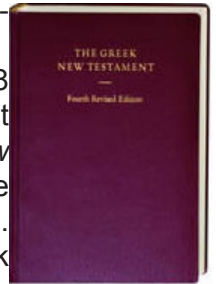
4:1 Καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐξήγειρέν με ὄν τρόπον ὅταν ἐξεγερθῇ ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὕπνου αὐτοῦ· 2 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Τί σὺ βλέπεις; καὶ εἶπα Ἐώρακα καὶ ἰδοὺ λυχνία χρυσοῦ ὅλη, καὶ τὸ λαμπαδεῖον ἐπάνω αὐτῆς, καὶ ἑπτὰ λύχνοι ἐπάνω

here is Isa. 11:2, καὶ ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ' αὐτὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ, πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως, πνεῦμα βουλής καὶ ἰσχύος, πνεῦμα γνώσεως καὶ εὐσεβείας· The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. This becomes likely with the subsequent use of Isaiah 11 in Rev. 5:5 and 1:16. Further, the lengthy exposition of the seven spirits of God in 1 Enoch 61:1-62:4 points this same direction.

The very graphic depiction of Jesus Christ as ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός,<sup>4</sup> ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς, the martyr, the faithful one, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth, also reflects terminology found elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus as the ὁ μάρτυς, the martyr, is repeated in 3:14, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός, the martyr faithful and true. Strong similarities with Psalm 89 point to it as the source for this language. All of these images surface in vv. 19-32 of the LXX translation (chap. 88). In Jewish tradition this psalm was understood as messianic, portraying the coming Messiah in idealized terms of the reign of King David.

What we are beginning to see with the text of Revelation is a heavy dependence on the language and imagery of both the Old Testament and the intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic writings. Although not a single verse from the OT is directly quoted in the book, Revelation will contain more allusions to the ideas of the OT than any other single document of the New Testament. A major factor in this is John's dependency on the Jewish apocalyptic heritage of intertestamental Judaism.

Regarding the copying of vv. 4-8 has not produced many significant variations of wording. *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev ed.) lists three places where variations take place. These are in vv. 5, 6, and 8. Let's look



αὐτῆς, καὶ ἑπτὰ ἐπαρυστρίδες τοῖς λύχνοις τοῖς ἐπάνω αὐτῆς· 3 καὶ δύο ἐλαῖαι ἐπάνω αὐτῆς, μία ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ λαμπαδεῖου καὶ μία ἐξ εὐωνύμων· 4 καὶ ἐπρωτόησα καὶ εἶπον πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον τὸν λαλοῦντα ἐν ἐμοὶ λέγων Τί ἐστὶν ταῦτα, κύριε; 5 καὶ ἀπεκρίθη ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Οὐ γινώσκεις τί ἐστὶν ταῦτα; καὶ εἶπα Οὐχί, κύριε· 6 καὶ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με λέγων Οὗτος ὁ λόγος κυρίου πρὸς Ζοροβαβελ λέγων Οὐκ ἐν δυνάμει μεγάλη οὐδὲ ἐν ἰσχύϊ, ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν πνεύματί μου, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ· 7 τίς εἶ σὺ, τὸ ὄρος τὸ μέγα, πρὸ προσώπου Ζοροβαβελ τοῦ κατορθῶσαι; καὶ ἐξοίσω τὸν λίθον τῆς κληρονομίας ἰσότητα χάριτος χάριτα αὐτῆς·

<sup>4</sup>One uncertainty, which generates alternative translations, relates to the presence or absence of a comma ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός. With a comma, the translation becomes, the martyr, the faithful one. But without a comma the translation is the faithful martyr. The similar construction in 3:14, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός, the faithful and true witness, could be taken in favor of the second alternative in 1:4.

at each one:

In verse 5, the participle λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ, *to the one having loosed us from...* is replaced with λούσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ, *to the one having washed us from...*<sup>5</sup> This alternative reading is from much later manuscripts with less importance. Thus the weight of evidence favors strongly the text reading of λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ.<sup>6</sup>

In verse 6, the text reading εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων], *unto the ages of the ages*, is shortened to read εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, *unto the ages*.<sup>7</sup> No difference in meaning is present, but the longer form is standard throughout the New Testament, as well as in eleven other places of the book of Revelation. Probably it should be understood here as well, although the evidence is rather evenly balanced between the two.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>{A} λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ P<sup>18</sup> κ<sup>2</sup> A C 2050 2329 it<sup>h</sup> Andrew; Victorinus-Pettau Primasius // λύσαντι ἐκ κ<sup>\*</sup> 1611 2344<sup>vid</sup> (arm) // λούσαντι ἡμᾶς ἀπό 2351 (eth) // λούσαντι ἡμᾶς ἀπό 205 209 1006 1841 (1854 2053 2062 ἐκ for ἀπό) Byz [P 046c (046\* *homoio-teleuton*)] it<sup>(ar)</sup>. g<sup>ig</sup>. t<sup>1</sup> vg cop<sup>bo</sup> Apringius Beatus

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>6</sup>“Instead of λύσαντι, the *Textus Receptus*, in agreement with the later uncials, most of the minuscules, and several early versions, reads λούσαντι (to the one having washed). The reading λύσαντι is to be preferred because it has superior manuscript support; because it agrees with OT imagery (for example, Isa 40:2 LXX); and because it suits better the idea expressed in v. 6a. The expression “to free someone from sin” is a metaphor that implies that individuals are held captive by their sins and that release from this captivity has been secured by Christ. In effect, λύειν ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν means ‘to forgive sins’” (Aune, Revelation 1–5, p. 47).

“The reading λούσαντι, which sometimes may have been pronounced like λύσαντι, seems to have arisen ‘due to failure to understand the Hebraic use of ἐν to denote a price ... and a natural misapplication of 7:14’ (Hort, “Notes on Select Readings,” p. 136). With the verb λούειν (to wash), the preposition ἀπό (from) is naturally more appropriate than ἐκ; the early versions translated both prepositions the same. NJB follows the variant reading: ‘He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood’.”

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 526.]

<sup>7</sup>{C} εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων κ<sup>2</sup> (κ<sup>\*</sup> τὸν αἰῶνα) C 205 209 1006 1611 1841 1854 2053 2062 2329 2351 Byz [046] it<sup>ar</sup>. g<sup>ig</sup>. h. t<sup>1</sup> vg syr<sup>ph</sup>. h (arm) eth Didymus Andrew; Apringius Beatus // εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας P<sup>18</sup> A P 2050 cop<sup>bo</sup> // omit including ἀμήν 2344

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>8</sup>“The words τῶν αἰώνων are absent from a number of manuscripts. It is difficult to decide whether the shorter text arose accidentally through a copyist’s oversight, or whether copyists added the words in agreement with the customary liturgical formula. Since the fuller form occurs eleven other times in Revelation (1:18;

In verse 8, in some manuscripts τὸ Ὡ, *the Omega*, is followed by the explanatory phrase ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος, *the beginning and the end*.<sup>9</sup> The weight of evidence both externally and internally strongly favors the shorter reading without the explanatory phrase.<sup>10</sup>

In the more inclusive apparatus of the Nestle-Aland 27th revised edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, some eighteen variations in reading surface in these verses, none of which signifi-



4:9, 10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5), it may be original here also. On the other hand, since copyists tended to expand such formulas of praise, these words have been put in brackets to indicate uncertainty regarding the original text. REB appears to follow the variant reading: ‘to him be glory and dominion for ever!’ The Greek renders a Semitic expression meaning ‘for all time to come’ or ‘for all eternity.’ Since receptor languages may have an idiomatic way of expressing this, and since the variant readings have the same meaning, this variant reading is not very significant for translation.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 526-27.]

<sup>9</sup>{A} Ὡ κ<sup>1</sup> A C 1006 1611 1841 2053 2062 Byz [P 046] it<sup>h</sup> syr<sup>ph</sup>. h arm eth Epiphanius; Ambrose Varimadum Primasius // Ὡ, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος (see 21.6) κ<sup>\*</sup>, <sup>2</sup> 205 209 1854 2050 (2329 ἢ ἀρχὴ and τὸ τέλος) (2344 τὸ τέλος) 2351 it<sup>ar</sup>. g<sup>ig</sup>. t<sup>1</sup> vg cop<sup>bo</sup> Andrew; Apringius Beatus

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>10</sup>“After Ω, the *Textus Receptus*, in agreement with a few manuscripts and versions, adds ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος (beginning and end), and twenty other minuscules add ἢ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (the beginning and the end). If the longer text were original, no good reason can be found to account for the shorter text. The presence of the longer expression in 21:6 obviously led some copyists to expand the text here.

“A literal translation, such as ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega’ (RSV), will have no clear meaning in many languages where the Greek alphabet is unknown. Aune (Revelation 1–5, p. 57) clearly expresses the sense: ‘Since alpha and omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet, this divine title emphasizes the sovereignty of God in a way similar to the titles ‘the beginning and the end’ (21:6; 22:13; see 3:14) and ‘the first and the last’ (1:17; 2:8; 22:13).’ TEV attempts to make the meaning clear by rendering ‘I am the first and the last.’ FC translates literally, and then explains in a footnote that ‘Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters in the Greek alphabet. As in 21:6 and 22:13, the expression means the first and the last, or the beginning and the end.’ A third approach toward making the meaning clear is taken by ITCL, which says ‘I am the First and the Last’ in the text and then states in a footnote that this is the meaning of the Greek expression the Alpha and the Omega.”

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 527.]

cantly alter the meaning of the text.<sup>11</sup> But upon careful examination, almost all of the variations reflect either stylistic efforts to update the language or careless mistakes in failing to see the word -- or mostly to hear the word being read -- correctly in the copying process.<sup>12</sup>

The consequence of this analysis is that we can

#### **11 Offenbarung 1,4**

\* θεου *M* (ar) t; Vic Prim (θεοῦ is added before ὁ ὢν)

| txt P<sup>18(vid)</sup> & A C P 2050 al lat sy co; Apr

\* τῶν & A pc (τῶν is added before ἂ)

| α εστιν 2053 *M*<sup>A</sup>

#### **Offenbarung 1,5**

\* εκ *M*<sup>A</sup> (ἐκ is added after πρωτότοκος)

\* bis &\* (Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς και λύσαντι ἡμᾶς is omitted)

\* -πῆσαντι 2053. 2062 *M*<sup>A</sup> (ἀγαπῶντι is replaced with ἀγαπήσαντι)

\* λουσάντι P 1006. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2062 *M*<sup>K</sup> lat bo (λύσαντι is replaced with λούσαντι)

| txt P18 & A C 1611. 2050. 2329. 2351 *M*<sup>A</sup> h sy; Prim

\*<sup>1</sup> απο P 1006. 1841. 2351 *M*<sup>K</sup> (ἐκ is replaced with ἀπό)

\*<sup>1</sup> A 1 al (ἡμῶν is omitted after τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν)

#### **Offenbarung 1,6**

\* ποιῆσαντι 046. 1854 pc (ἐποίησεν is replaced by ποιήσαντι)

\* ἡμῖν A 1678. 1854. 2053. 2062. 2080. 2344 pc (ἡμᾶς is replaced with either ἡμῖν or ἡμῶν)

| ἡμῶν C 1611. 2329 h t vg

| txt & *M* ar gig vg<sup>cl</sup>; Tert Vic Prim

\*<sup>1</sup> -λειον 046. 1854. 2050. 2351 pc (βασιλείαν is replaced either with βασιλείον or βασιλείς και)

| -λεις και *M*<sup>A</sup>

\*<sup>2</sup> ιερατευμα 2351 pc vgms (ιερεῖς is replace with ιεράτευμα)

\* P<sup>18</sup> A P 2050. (2344) pc bo (τῶν αἰῶνων is omitted)

| txt & C *M* latt sy; Did

#### **Offenbarung 1,7**

\* επι C 2053 pc sa (μετὰ is replace with ἐπι)

\* οψονται & 1611. 2351 al sy bo (ὄψεται is replaced with ὄψονται)

\* &\* (αὐτὸν after οἵτινες is omitted)

\* αυτον &\* 2050. 2344. 2351 pc h; Prim (ἐπ' αὐτὸν is replaced with αὐτὸν)

| - 1 pc

#### **Offenbarung 1,8**

\* αρχη και τελος &\*<sup>2</sup> 1854. 2050. (2329). 2351 *M*<sup>A</sup> lat bo (ἀρχὴ και τέλος are added after τὸ ὄ)

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 632-33.]

<sup>12</sup>Although in copying the text of the New Testament the monks sometimes were visually looking at an existing text when copying, most of the time several scribes were writing down simultaneously what another scribe orally read to the group. Given shifting pronunciation patterns of letters and words over time etc. numerous errors crept into the text of their copies. These usually are very easy to spot simply because they create a nonsensical expression in Greek with obviously wrong grammar. As an illustration, if you were reading a formal document that had a text that read "I has no time...." you would immediately recognize the incorrect grammar. Remember that little or no proofing of copies ever occurred in the ancient world. The only exception was the work of copying the Hebrew text of the OT by highly trained Jewish scribes.



confidently exegete the existing text of 1:4-8 as the original wording of the scripture text.

**Internal History.** The key place reference in these verses is the specification of the seven churches being located ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, in Asia (1:4). This term specified the Roman province called Asia at the end of the first Christian century. Although referred to some 18 times in the New Testament -- mostly in Acts -- this is the only reference to it in Revelation.<sup>13</sup> From the available Roman sources this province during the Flavian era of the 70s through the 90s was a period of unrivaled prosperity and growth.<sup>14</sup> The province was second only to

<sup>13</sup>Clarification of possibly confusing terms. In English, one will come across three labels: Asia, Asia Minor, and Anatolia. Although the terms can be used interchangeably, they are not really synonymous. The biblical term Ἀσία literally is *Asia* in English. But the term "Asia Minor" is often used in order to distinguish this Asia from the far eastern continent also named Asia. The term Anatolia is commonly used to refer to the entire region of western Turkey that includes Asia, but also other provinces as well. Neither Asia Minor nor Anatolia are used in the Bible.

<sup>14</sup>"Vespasian's reign was marked by a continuation of the trend toward centralization and his efforts to ensure the allegiance and contentment of the cities of Asia seem to have met with success. There is little evidence of cruelty by Domitian in Asia, and his administration of the provinces seems to have been marked by intelligence and vigor. In fact, the Flavian period was a time of urban growth and architectural development in the cities of Asia.

"Thus, the peace in Asia that began with the reign of Augustus lasted throughout the 1st cent. ce, and indeed continued throughout the 2nd cent. The establishment of the Pax Romana, and the spirit of confidence that peace engendered, along with improvements throughout the empire, made it possible for the extensive natural resources of Asia to be greatly developed and this introduced an era of stability and prosperity, such as the area had never known. This becomes most apparent in the commencement of building work undertaken in the cities. In the 1st cent. ce the increase in building work, financed primarily by municipal funds and private gifts, gives the impression that a gradual and sound recovery had taken place, a recovery that laid the foundation for the wide expansion of urban life and culture."

[Paul Trebilco, "Asia," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of* Page 5



the Italian peninsula in influence and affluence during this period in the Roman empire. The interior of the province were blessed with abundant natural resources which were exploited extensively for trade and commerce. The massive trade going west to Rome from the eastern Mediterranean world largely traveled overland through this region. Major sea ports were located along the southern and western coasts with Ephesus being one of the most important ones. The economic foundations of the empire were built on developing trade and bringing goods and services into Rome from the various parts of the empire. Consequently a massive network of excellent roads were constructed for overland trade, along with extensive fleets of ships for sea trade. Both the geographical location of Asia, along with its abundant natural resources, made it a center of commerce and trade for the empire.

Christianity first came to the province through the ministry of the apostle Paul, although Jewish pilgrims from Asia were a part of those who converted to Christianity on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem in 30 AD (cf. Acts 2:9-10). Luke describes Paul's initial contact with the city of Ephesus in Acts 18:19-21 on the second missionary journey in the mid first century. From this time forward Christianity began spreading rapidly in the province with the result of numerous Christian communities being in existence all over the province by the end of the first century. Judaism, however, had a long and deeply entrenched footing in the province that reached back two centuries before Christ. Thus several hundred thousand Jews were residents of the region during the first Christian century. Thus Christianity and Judaism existed along side numerous other religious groups, some native to the area but many as 'imports' from other parts of the empire. In the polytheistic atmosphere of that time, religions were tolerated as long as they did not undermine Roman culture and authority. But toward the later 90s this would change

with the unleashing of a vicious persecution of religions perceived to be 'un-Roman' by Domitian, and then by Nerva. Christianity would be caught up in persecution from this ultra-nationalistic movement by the emperor.

### Literary Aspects:

Literary questions play an especially important role here. Not only are very distinct literary forms used by John, but their use in the broader apocalyptic genre contributes to the unusual, and sometimes, illogical use of different literary forms inside this broad genre.

**Genre:** As a continuation of the formal Prologue in 1:4-8, these verses take several unusual twists genre wise into very distinct directions.

The first sub-genre unit is found in vv. 4-5a and stand as an epistolary *Praescriptio* with the standard internal elements of *Superscriptio*, *Adscriptio*, and *Salutatio*. From them we gain understanding of the sender of this document (Ἰωάννης), the recipients (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ), and the typical early Christian greeting (χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη).

The *Superscriptio* designation of Ἰωάννης, John, only gives us a personal name. No title -- as often is the case with the letters in the New Testament -- is provided. To be sure, this is somewhat addressed in the formal introduction to the vision that follows in 1:9-20, although the focus there is more on the historical situation of John's encounter with the risen Christ while on the island of Patmos.

The *Adscriptio* specifies that the document is addressed to ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, the seven churches. We don't yet know who these churches are, but if you had been sitting in one of the meetings of a house church group in one of these seven cities, you would not be wondering about this matter nearly as much as we do today. But even our curiosity is satisfied in v. 11 as the names of the seven cities is given. What we do receive from the *Adscriptio* is an important expansion element that identifies the Roman province where these seven churches are located: ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, to those in Asia.

It is the *Salutatio* that proves to be the most interesting part of this *Praescriptio*. The core elements are very typical of NT patterns: χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη, grace to you and peace. In fact, the pattern exactly follows Gal. 1:3a; 1 Thess. 1:c; 2 Thess. 1:2a; 1 Cor. 1:3a; 2 Cor. 1:2a; Rom. 1:7a; Philm. 1:3a; Col. 1:2b; Eph. 1:2a; Phil. 1:2a; Tit. 1:4b; 1 Pet. 1:2c; 2 Pet. 1:2a. Interestingly, the only Johannine letter with a *Salutatio* (2 Jhn. 1:3a) follows a different pattern that is closer to Jude (1:2) and 2 Tim. 1:2a.

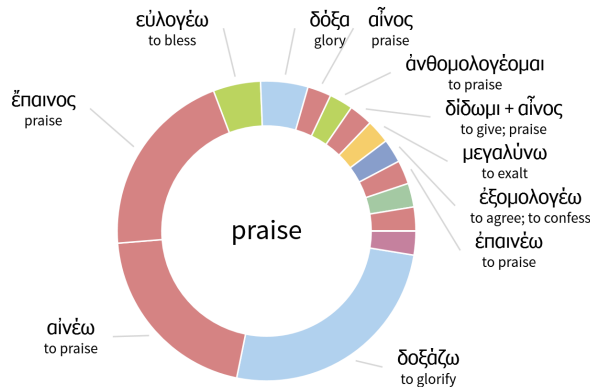
The very distinctive aspect here are the expansion elements in 1:4b-5a:

...ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς.

...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.

The source of the greeting is typically from both God and Christ. But the depiction of them is uniquely different from what one finds in the letters of the New Testament. The eternal existence of God who reigns from a throne as well as the multi-faceted ministry of Christ are stressed. The eloquence of these expansion elements set up the reader for the *Doxology* that follows in 1:5b-6.



The *Doxology*<sup>15</sup> of praise comes next, and reflects a standardized structuring of such expressions in the Bible both in Hebrew and Greek.<sup>16</sup> This literary genre centered on the idea of praise. Notice also the subsequent use of this form in Rev. 5:13 and 7:12. As the above chart illustrates the vocabulary of praise encompasses numerous expressions in ancient Greek. As a literary genre, an identifiable form surfaces and is generally followed by the biblical writers in both Hebrew and Greek.<sup>17</sup> In the letters of the New Testament,

<sup>15</sup>The English word ‘doxology’ first shows up in the seventeenth century and is comes through medieval Latin from the Greek doxologia (δοξολογία). In English usage it refers to “a liturgical formula of praise to God.” [Soanes, Catherine and Angus Stevenson. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. 11th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. S.V., “Doxology.”]

<sup>16</sup>For a listing of these see my “Doxologies in the New Testament,” cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/DoxologiesIn-TheNT.pdf>. Both Greek and Hebrew texts from the OT are listed along with English translations, but with major emphasis on the NT expressions.

<sup>17</sup>“A short poetic statement of praise to God, often expressed in parallel or balanced lines; Rev 4:8 b and 4:11 are good examples. Doxologies (from doxa [δόξα] ‘glory’) often seem to end or to divide longer sections of other material. For instance, Amos 4:13 interjects a word of praise to God at the conclusion of a series of oracles of doom against Israel and just before another one begins; whether original to the design of Amos or added by a compiler, the doxology lightens the gloom of Amos’ words by focusing on saving aspects of God’s power. Ephesians 3:20-21 marks the transition

these doxologies mainly surface in the Praescriptio and Conclusio sections, but not always. One of the characteristic signals of this genre is the beginning phrase Τῷ... that does not contain a main clause verb. It is very distinctive in the Greek, although English translations tend to greatly diminish the formal structure in favor of clearly expressing the idea found in the formula type expression. It stands distinct from a benediction in the Jewish heritage.<sup>18</sup>

The very formal -- and somewhat disjointed -- expressions in vv. 4-8 have suggested to several modern commentators that a highly liturgical structure has been put in place to signal the formal beginning of an early Christian worship service.<sup>19</sup> Although reflecting some-

to the more instructional part of the letter, and 2 Cor 9:15 ends the ‘collection’ section. Doxologies probably also invited the congregation to join in the praise to God, especially if (as many think) the biblical doxologies mirror prayers said by the people. Some of the psalms, for example, have repeated doxological lines, ideally suited as unison responses to the intervening stanzas; Ps 136 repeats “for his steadfast love endures forever” after every statement (see also Pss 104:1 a, 35b; 107:1, 15, 21, 31). In the oldest manuscripts, Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer ends with “deliver us from evil” (Matt 6:9-13), but early Christians added various doxologies to it. Many NT letters conclude with a doxology (Phil 4:20; 2 Tim 4:18 b; 2 Pet 3:18 b; Jude 25), and this may indicate the author’s wish to be included with the congregation’s worship, even if only through the written text.” [Richard B. Vinson, “Doxology,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, online]

<sup>18</sup>“A doxology is formally distinct from a benediction, or *berakah*, which is typically introduced by the term ברוך or εὐλογητός, ‘blessed’ (see Pss 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48; Tob 13:18; 1 Enoch 84:1-4). Yet there are instances in which the forms are mixed; see 1 Enoch 90:40, ‘I woke up and blessed the Lord of righteousness and ascribed glory to him.’ Doxologies are rare in Judaism but occur frequently in early Christian texts; on the other hand, benedictions occur frequently in early Judaism but are rare in early Christian texts (Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 40-43). If a doxology is strictly defined as a formula that includes the term δόξα or כבוד *kābōd* (both meaning ‘glory’), there are no synagogue prayers that can be properly designated doxologies (A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy* [London, 1958] 67). However, the term doxology can be understood in a broader sense that includes Jewish *berakah*, ‘blessing,’ formulas as well as Christian doxologies (Heiler, *Prayer*, 333). Werner (HUCA 19 [1945-46] 276-77; id. *Sacred Bridge*, 273-74), however, does not think that the formal presence or absence of the terms gloria, δόξα, or כבוד *kābōd* can be used as an essential criterion for defining a doxology (2 Cor 1:20, which contains the term δόξα, is not a doxology, while 1 Tim 6:16 is a doxology though the term δόξα is missing). According to Wieder (HUCA 19 [1945-46] 276-81), only two features are characteristic of the doxology: (1) it must contain a proclamation of God’s praise; (2) it must affirm the eternity of God. There are no benedictions in Revelation.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 43-44.]

<sup>19</sup>“Some scholars have proposed that the salutations in which many NT letters begin, following the general pattern ‘Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’ (e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2

thing of a modern tone, the proposal of the French commentator Vanni in *L'Apocalisse* is quite interesting:

**Lector** (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων):

4b 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,

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

**Assembly** (οἱ ἀκούοντες):

To him who loves us  
and has freed us by his blood,

6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father.  
To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

**Lector:**

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds  
and every eye will see him,  
every one who pierced him;  
and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

**Assembly:**

Even so. Amen.

**Lector:**

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
—says the Lord God—  
who is and who was and who is to come,  
the Almighty.<sup>20</sup>

The obvious disjointedness of these literary forms certainly finds a plausible explanation in this liturgical proposal, which would clearly echo some of the ways the Psalms were used in both temple especially and synagogue practice among the Jews during the first century.

Following this in vv. 5b-6 are a pair of **Prophetic Oracles** with little content connection to one another in vv. 7-8.<sup>21</sup> These reflect the prophecy character of the

Thess 1:2; cf. Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 1:2) are derived from the introductory greeting that began Christian services of worship, a 'formula of introduction' to the service (Delling, *Worship*, 48–50; Cullmann, *Worship*, 23; Schlier, *Galater*, 30). Vanni goes further by proposing that Rev 1:4–8 reflects a liturgical dialogue (Bib 57 [1976] 453–67; id., *L'Apocalisse*, 101–13; see Kavanagh, *Liturgical Dialogue*, 117–21)." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 28.]

<sup>20</sup>"The schema that Vanni finds is the following (Bib 57 [1976] 460–61; id., *L'Apocalisse*, 107–8):....

"Vanni argues that recognizing this passage as a liturgical dialogue solves the problem of the apparent lack of unity in this section. Rev 1:3 has revealed the existence of a reader or lector and a group of listeners, the assembly. The two amens (vv 6, 7) lend a clear liturgical flavor to the passage. An abrupt change of person occurs in the passage between 1:4–5a (χάρις ὑμῖν, 'grace to you,' a second person plural pronoun) and 1:5b–6 (τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ... καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς, 'to the one who loved us, and washed us ... and made us,' three first-person plural pronouns)."

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 28–29.]

<sup>21</sup>"Rev 1:7–8 consists of two discrete units with no intrinsic literary connections, which are linked together only by virtue of the

document and will stand as the first of several pairs of such oracles in the remainder of the book: 13:9; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 21:5–8; 22:12–15, 18–20. Numerous other individual oracles also surface in the book as well.

What a 'duke's mixture' of literary forms in the space of five verses! The blending of these very diverse forms would have indeed been strange to any other kind of writing in early Christianity, but in the apocalyptic style such odd patterns are more the norm than the exception.

**Literary Setting:** Standing as the second part of the Prologue (vv. 1–8) these verses continue the process of setting up the reader/listener to be prepared to hear the contents of this book as different from the usual early Christian writing. The first segment in vv. 1–3 places on the table the nature and orientation of this document that John has written. Verses 9–20 will paint a standard apocalyptic picture of Christ in dramatic and weird symbolic expression.

Thus verses 4–8 stand sandwiched between these two patterns with standard epistolary Praescriptio elements combined with a doxology and a pair of prophetic oracles. Conceptual connections to both what precedes and to what follows are clearly expressed in the content of the verses. This, even though the genre elements have very little logical connection to one another.

In one sense vv. 4–8 move the reader/listener a step forward from the introductory ideas in vv. 1–3 to the more fully apocalyptic expression in vv. 9–20. Signals of major segments in the book comes with the epistolary segments in 1:4–5a, and the prophet oracles<sup>22</sup> in vv. 7–8 anticipate major emphases in the book. These provide

fact that they are sandwiched between two carefully defined textual units, the doxology in 1:5b–6 and John's vision and commission in 1:9–3:22. The author regularly places two oracles together at various points in his narrative, with the second often amplifying the first (e.g. 13:9; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 21:5–8; 22:12–15, 18–20; see Aune, *Prophecy*, 327). These and other prophetic oracles that the author has inserted in various contexts throughout his work provide evidence for the author's prophetic activity, which must have been exercised for many years previously. Revelation itself is a kind of *magnum opus* in which the author's previous work (some of which was formulated as much as twenty to thirty years earlier, i.e. in the 60s and 70s of the first century A.D.) was incorporated into a new and more comprehensive context." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 51–52.]

<sup>22</sup>One should not forget the important role that 'prophetic oracles' played in the various streams of the Greco-Roman religious heritage. Although very different in many ways, this substantial body of literature proposed to communicate the will of the gods to the people through designated priests and priestesses. Those non-Jewish believers in the communities of faith would identify these 'prophetic oracles' with their background in paganism, while their Jewish brothers and sisters in the faith would connect them up to the Old Testament.





very clearly the standardized pattern commonly found especially in the letters of Paul inside the New Testament. The standard three sub-forms of *Superscriptio*, *Adscriptio*, and *Salutatio* are included in the *Praescriptio*. Yet this *Praescriptio* is not located at the very beginning of the document, as would be the case were this document intended purely as a letter. Rather it comes after the rather formalized introduction in vv. 1-3.

Also one should note that the book of Revelation is the only apocalypse either Jewish or Christian in the ancient world that has letter elements framing it: the *Praescriptio* in 1:4-5a and the *Benedictio* of a *Conclusio* in 22:21. This adds a distinctiveness to the document giving it a flavor not found elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

The *Praescriptio* is followed by a *Doxology* in vv. 5b-6. The formulation of the internal structure is very typical of this genre form in the rest of the New Testament. But unlike Gal. 1:5 which injects a doxology expression into the letter *Praescriptio*,<sup>25</sup> here the insertion of the *Doxology* is disjointed and doesn't flow naturally in the Greek. Although rather typical for the way the book of Revelation is written as an apocalypse, elsewhere a more natural grammar connection is set up expressing a normal flow of ideas.

This second form is then followed by two distinct expressions of a *Prophet Oracle* in vv. 7-8. They have no inherent inner connectedness to one another. But they do signal a pattern that will surface repeatedly inside the document from this point on; two oracles are commonly paired together numerous times, 13:9; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 21:5-8; 22:12-15, 18-20.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>“Revelation is the only Jewish or Christian apocalypse that is framed as a letter, with the epistolary prescript in 1:4-5a and a concluding postscript in 22:21. The main part of the work, however, contains no explicitly epistolary features. Hellenistic epistolary prescriptions typically consisted of three elements, the superscription (sender), the adscription (addressee), and the salutation. ‘Grace to you and peace’ is a distinctively Christian salutation that first appears in Paul’s letters (see 1 Thess 1:1). It is often expanded to make the divine source of grace and peace explicit: ‘Grace to you and peace from God our/the Father and our/ the Lord Jesus Christ’ (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2). The elaborate salutation in Rev 1:4-5a is a distinctively Johannine expansion of the traditional Pauline salutation.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 40.]

<sup>25</sup>**Gal. 1:3-5.** 3 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ 4 τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ὅπως ἐξέλθῃται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν, 5 ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>26</sup>“Rev 1:7-8 consists of two discrete units with no intrinsic lit-

The first oracle in v. 7 seems to be a combining of ideas from Dan. 7:13 and Zech. 12:10-14, following the similar pattern found in Matt. 24:30.<sup>27</sup> The *ναί, ἀμήν*, *yes, amen*, marks the division between the two oracles. The second oracle in v. 8 utilizes language from the Old Testament in the qualifies of κύριος ὁ θεός, *the Lord God*, which are ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, *the One who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty*. The direct statement, Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, *I am the Alpha and the Omega*, interestingly make a play off the Hebrew word for ‘truth.’<sup>28</sup> But

erary connections, which are linked together only by virtue of the fact that they are sandwiched between two carefully defined textual units, the doxology in 1:5b-6 and John’s vision and commission in 1:9-3:22. The author regularly places two oracles together at various points in his narrative, with the second often amplifying the first (e.g. 13:9; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 21:5-8; 22:12-15, 18-20; see Aune, *Prophecy*, 327). These and other prophetic oracles that the author has inserted in various contexts throughout his work provide evidence for the author’s prophetic activity, which must have been exercised for many years previously. Revelation itself is a kind of *magnum opus* in which the author’s previous work (some of which was formulated as much as twenty to thirty years earlier, i.e. in the 60s and 70s of the first century A.D.) was incorporated into a new and more comprehensive context.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 51-52.]

<sup>27</sup>“The first oracle (v 7), which is unattributed, is introduced by the particle ἰδοῦ, ‘behold,’ and concludes with *ναί, ἀμήν* ‘yes, amen,’ both characteristic of early Christian prophetic speech. The oracle in v 7 is formed by the conflation of two allusions to the OT Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10-14, a combination also found in Matt 24:30 (see Stendahl, *School*, 212-15; Yarbro Collins, “‘Son of Man,’” 536-47). The similarities between Matt 24:30 and Rev 1:7 make it highly probable that there is some kind of traditional link between the two, while the differences indicate that neither text is directly dependent upon the other (Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 60-71). In the Aramaic text of Dan 7:13, the verbal clause *תתהוה* *.ātēh hāwā* consists of the participle *תתהוה* *.ātēh* (from *תתהוה* *.ātā*, ‘come’), together with the perfect verb *הוה* *hāwā*, ‘to be, become,’ in a periphrastic construction meaning ‘came.’ The LXX version translated this periphrasis with the imperfect ἤρχετο, ‘came’ (J. Ziegler, ed. *Daniel*, 169-70), while in Theodotion it is rendered with the present participle ἐρχόμενος, ‘coming.’ The text of Rev 1:7a is also similar to Theodotion in that the preposition *μετά* is used in both. In Rev 1:7, on the other hand, the verb is changed from the past to the present (i.e. futuristic present) verb *ἔρχεται*, changing the allusion to Dan 7:13 to an oracle referring to a future rather than a past event (Yarbro Collins, “‘Son of Man,’” 541). The striking feature of the first oracle is that it does not explicitly mention ‘the one like a son of man’ found in Dan 7:13.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 52.]

<sup>28</sup>“Since alpha and omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet, this divine title emphasizes the sovereignty of God in a way similar to the titles ‘the beginning and the end’ (21:6; 22:13; see 3:14) and ‘the first and the last’ (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). In Jewish alphabet symbolism, the Hebrew word *אמת* *emet*, ‘truth,’ was understood as a way of designating God as beginning, middle, and end, because *א* was the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *מ*

these two oracles represent creations of John that are intended to set the tone for much of the remainder of the document.

### Exegesis of the Text:

The above three fold analysis of structure provides the basis for outlining the passage in our exegesis section. The outline will attempt to give full credence to the disjointedness of the passage along with providing some sense of the intended thought flow by John.

## I. The **Praescriptio** identify for the document, vv. 4-5a.

4 Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ἦν καὶ τοῦ ἐρχόμενου καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπτὰ πνευμάτων τῶν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ 5 καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ μάρτυρος, τοῦ πιστοῦ, τοῦ πρωτότοκου τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ τοῦ ἀρχῶν τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς.

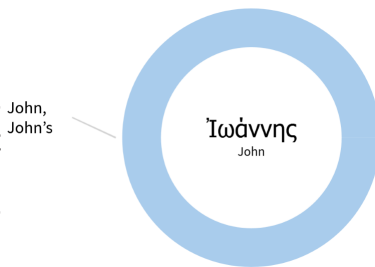
4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

In this first unit we encounter a standardized letter introduction very much in the pattern of the letters of Paul in the New Testament. The one missing element is the title after the personal name Ἰωάννης. But, of course, that has already been given in verse one as τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ, to His servant John. Thus, the apostle felt no need to repeat it here.

The simplest way to get into this text is by taking each of the component elements of the letter *Praescriptio* separately.

### **Superscriptio**,

Ἰωάννης. The name in Greek for John surfaces 135 times, making it one of the most common names in the New Testament. There are five and possibly six different individuals with this name in the New Testament.<sup>29</sup> This



the middle letter, and η the last letter.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 57.

<sup>29</sup>Ἰωάν(ν)ης, ου, ὁ (on the spelling s. W-S. §5, 26c; FBlass, *Philology of the Gospels* 1898, 75f; 81; B-D-F §40; 55, 1c; Mlt-H. 102; Rob. 194; 214; GRudberg, *Ntl. Text u. Nomina sacra* 1915, 13f.—The name is also found 1 Macc 2:1f; 9:36, 38; 13:53; 1 Esdr 8:38; 9:29; ApcEsdr 1:19 p. 25, 13 Tdf. [Christian addition]; Ep-Arist 47; 49; 50 and in Joseph. and Just.) John.

1. the **Baptizer/Baptist** (Jos., Ant. 18, 116–19; Just.) **Mt 3:1, 4, 13; 4:12 al.; Mk** (s. JStarr, *JBL* 51, '32, 227–37) **1:4, 6, 9, 14;**

name shows up four times in the book of Revelation, all

**2:18; 6:14, 16ff; 8:28; 11:30, 32; Lk 1:13, 60, 63; 3:2, 15f, 20 al.; J 1:6, 15, 19, 26, 28, 32, 35 al.; Ac 1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24f; 18:25; 19:3f; GEB 13, 74 and 77f; 18, 36 and 38f; PEg3 67; ISm 1:1.—Schürer II 345–48; JThomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie* '35; MDibelius, *Die urchr. Überlieferung von Joh. d. Täufer* 1911; CBernoulli, *J. der Täufer und die Urgemeinde* 1918; CBowen: *Studies in Early Christianity*, ed. SCase (Porter-Bacon Festschr.) 1928, 127–47; E Parsons: *ibid.* 149–70; WMichaelis, *Täufer, Jesus, Urgemeinde* 1928; MGoguel, *Jean-Baptiste* 1928; ELohmeyer, *Joh. d. T. '32*; WHoward, *J. the Bapt. and Jesus: Amicitiae Corolla*, '33, 118–32; PGuénin, *Y a-t-il conflit entre Jean B. et Jésus?* '33; GMacgregor, *John the Bapt. and the Origins of Christianity: ET* 46, '35, 355–62; CKraeling, *John the Bapt. '51*; WWink, *John the Bapt. in the Gosp. Trad. '68*; JRife, *The Standing of the Baptist: Gingrich Festschr.*, 205–8. JBecker, *Joh. d. T. u. Jesus v. Nazareth '72.—HWindisch, D. Notiz üb. Tracht u. Speise d. Täuf. Joh.:* *ZNW* 32, '33, 65–87; PJoüon, *Le costume d'Élie et celui de J. Bapt.:* *Biblica* 16, '35, 74–81. Esp. on his baptism: JJeremias, *ZNW* 28, 1929, 312–20; KAland, *Z. Vorgeschichte d. christlichen Taufe, Neutest. Entwürfe '79*, 183–97; his death: HWindisch, *ZNW* 18, 1918, 73–81; PZondervan, *NThT* 7, 1918, 131–53; 8, 1919, 205–40; 10, 1921, 206–17; DVölter, *ibid.* 10, 1921, 11–27; his disciples: HOort, *TT* 42, 1908, 299–333; WMichaelis, *NKZ* 38, 1927, 717–36.—JDoeve, *NedTTs* 9, '55, 137–57; DFlusser, *Johannes d. Täufer '64*; AGEyser, *The Youth of J. the Bapt., NovT* 1, '56, 70–75; CScobie, *John the Bapt. '64*; JMeier, *John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel: JBL* 99, '80, 383–405.—HBraun, *Qumran u. d. NT '66*, II, 1–29. On the Mandaeans s. RGG3 IV '60. 709–12 (lit.).**

2. **son of Zebedee, one of the 12 disciples, brother of James** (s. Ἰάκωβος 1) **Mt 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mk 1:19, 29; 3:17; 5:37; 9:2, 38; 10:35, 41; 13:3; 14:33; Lk 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:28, 49, 54; 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3:1, 3f, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14; 12:2; Gal 2:9; GEB 34, 60; Papias (1:4; 2:17; 3:1; 7:11f).** Title of the Fourth Gospel κατὰ Ἰωάννην.—WThomas, *The Apostle John '46*; cp. JKügler, *Der Jünger den Jesus liebte '88*.

3. **Tradition equates J., son of Zebedee (2), w. the John of Rv 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8** (Just., D. 81, 4).—On 2 and 3 cp. the comm. on the Johannine wr., also Zahn, *RE IX* 272ff, *Forsch. VI* 1900, 175–217; Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristl. Lit.* 1897, 320–81; ESchwartz, *Über d. Tod der Söhne Zebedäi* 1904; WHeitmüller, *ZNW* 15, 1914, 189–209; BBacon, *ibid.* 26, 1927, 187–202.—S. survey of lit. HThyen, in *TRu* 39, '75 (other installments 43, '78; 44, '79); also in *EDNT II* 211.

4. **father of Peter J 1:42; 21:15–17; Judaicon 158, 74** (s. Ἰωνᾶς 2 and cp. 1 Esdr 9:23 with its v.l.).

5. **an otherw. unknown member of the high council Ac 4:6** (v.l. Ἰωνάθας). Schürer II 233f.

6. **surnamed Mark, son of Mary.** His mother was a prominent member of the church at Jerusalem. He was a cousin of Barnabas and accompanied Paul and Barn. on the first missionary journey **Ac 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37**; s. Μάρκος and BHolmes, *Luke's Description of John Mark: JBL* 54, '35, 63–72.

7. **Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος** Ἰ., Aristion and John the Elder Pa (2:4) distinguished from the sons of Zebedee Eus. HE 3, 39, 5ff.—M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 485–86.]

in the first and last chapters: 1:1, 4, 9, and 22:8. Those in chapter one come at appropriate points of introducing the source of the document. The final occurrence in 22:8 also signals the beginning of an Epilogue where John affirms by name the validity of what has been composed. Between these two terminus points the author steps into the background in the sense of calling attention to himself. The focus centers on receiving the visions given to him from God, rather than on the producing of the document.

**Adscriptio**, ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, to the seven church in Asia.<sup>30</sup> This specific designation of the recipients of this document clarifies the broader reference δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, in order to show His servants, in verse one. This comes mid-way between the broad specification in verse one and the most detailed specification in verse eleven in which the seven churches are named by their city location. Thus a progressive identification of the targeted readers is introduced here in chapter one.

There are seven churches who were to first receive this document. Why just seven churches? Ancient Christian records -- both Acts and several church fathers -- clearly suggest that many more than seven churches were scattered across the Roman province of Asia by the end of the first century.

The number seven plays a significant role throughout the book of Revelation and does so here. As a symbol of completeness it reminds the readers from these seven churches that what he will say about each one has significance for all the others as well. To all seven churches collectively comes the complete message of God with relevance to each one.<sup>31</sup> No single

<sup>30</sup>“In the phrase ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, ‘to the seven churches,’ the definite article anticipates v 11, where the churches are specifically named. ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις is a dative of indirect object in this elliptical epistolary formula, which omits a verb and object (such as ἔγραψε ταῦτα, ‘wrote these things’). This is the *adscriptio*, or address of the letter, and is remarkable for the fact that, like the *superscriptio*, it is unadorned and unexpanded (for an example of an amplified *adscriptio*, see Ign Eph. praef.; Rom. Praef.)” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 29.]

<sup>31</sup>“In view of the prominence and symbolic significance of the number seven in Revelation (it occurs fifty-four times), the fact that seven churches are addressed is significant. The number is not chosen to symbolize the universal Church, a notion found in the Canon Muratori 171–72, where the seven churches addressed by Paul are thought to symbolize all the churches (since ‘seven’ does not symbolize ‘completeness,’ a view justly criticized by A. Yarbro Collins, “Numerical Symbolism,” 1276–78). Rather, the number seven emphasizes the divine origin and authority of the message of John, since seven is primarily a number with cosmic significance and is therefore associated with heavenly realities.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 29.]



group could look down in disdain on any of the others to say, “We sure don’t have their problems! So John isn’t talking to us.”

The geographical location likely played a major role in referring to just seven churches, as well as prior personal contact. As displayed on the above map, a trip to each of the seven in the order of their subsequent listing creates a circle reflecting completeness.<sup>32</sup>

The idea of Darby in the seventeen hundreds that somehow these seven churches paint a history of Christianity from the second century to the second coming of Christ is utterly baseless and a classic example of false eisegesis of the text.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>“We do not know on what principle the seven were selected. There were certainly more than seven churches in the region by the time this book was written (Acts 20:5ff.; Col. 1:2; 4:13). John may have had a special relationship with these seven. Again, if the seven named in verse 11 were visited in order, one would traverse a rough circle.” [Leon Morris, vol. 20, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 53.]

<sup>33</sup>Several reasons for rejecting this false understanding exist. 1) such a view completely ignores the obvious literary function of this reference as an epistolary *Adscriptio* specifying the targeted readership of the document; 2) it requires a hugely false reading of Christian history that is wrongly divided up into ‘seven dispensations.’ No honest reading of the primary documents of Christian history from the second century to the present could ever make such conclusions. 3) It imposes a rationalistic based line of reasoning that always puts the present (at least the past two to three hundred years) into the Age of Laodicea, the age of complacency for Christianity. This very conveniently allows preachers to lambast contemporary Christianity as their favorite ‘whipping boy.’ This opens the door for the false teachers like Hal Lindsey to dupe naive readers with unbiblical predictions of the second coming of Christ in the near future. 4) It completely fails to understand the symbolism of the number seven by wrongly attributing to it a chronologi-

What the expansion element in the *Adscriptio* does is identify the Roman province where these seven congregations were located: ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ. As treated above in the **Internal History** section, Patmos was the location of the composition of the document and these seven churches in the same Roman province formed the collective destination of the document. The use of the epistolary form here puts strong emphasis on this point. What is not clear is whether a single copy of the document was composed on Patmos -- rather likely -- and then taken one by one to these seven churches where each one made their own copy before the original was carried to the next congregation. Or, whether seven copies were originally made on Patmos -- less likely -- with seven different couriers taking their copy to the individual cities.

**Salutatio**, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη..., **grace and peace to you...** What I find absolutely fascinating is how Pauline this greeting is.<sup>34</sup> The core element is unusually close to the overwhelming pattern Paul used in his letters.

This combination of 'grace' and 'peace' represented a merging of the standard Greek and Jewish oral greetings in the first century world. The oral greeting χαίρειν and χάρις come from the same root stem, even though the English translations of 'to rejoice' and 'grace' appear to have little direct connection to one another. The religious background of χάρις in early Christian teaching provided the distinctively Christian way to greet one another with a reminder of God's grace as foundational to one's life. The Greek εἰρήνη in translation of the standard Hebrew oral greeting, שָׁלוֹם, **shalom**, for 'peace' with its Hebrew meaning of wholeness and completeness<sup>35</sup> served to complement the Greek χάρις. The sense then becomes "May you enjoy God's favor which brings wholeness to your life!"

The uniquely Johannine element of the *Adscriptio* is found in the expansion elements, with its trinitarian formulation.

First comes the designation from God: ἀπὸ ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος, **from the One who is and who was and who is coming**. For students of Greek, immediately the incorrect Greek grammar shines out like a sore thumb. Universally in ancient Greek the preposition ἀπὸ always requires either the Genitive case (5 cal scheme. No where in the seventy odd uses of the number seven in the book is there a chronological assumption about the number. It is a religious number rather than a 'historical' number!

<sup>34</sup>For more details see the above Genre discussion under **Salutatio**. Also my article in Cranfordville on the epistolary *Praescriptio*.

<sup>35</sup>“שָׁלוֹם **shalom** (1022d); from 7999a; completeness, soundness, welfare, peace.” [Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anahem: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).]

case system) or the Ablative case (8 case system). It is not grammatically possible to use the nominative case form, as is done here, with this preposition. Also present is the use of a regular verb form ἦν, he was, in parallel expression to two present tense participles, ὃ ὢν, **the one being**, and ὃ ἐρχόμενος, **the one coming**. This will be the first instance of a long list of incorrect grammar constructions encountered in the text of Revelation.

Why does John do this? One part of the general answer is that Jewish apocalyptic writings, produced in times of persecution, tended to deliberately use wrong grammar as a part of their 'encoding' system to fool the censors of their conquerors who had to pass on the documents before allowing them to be sent out.

In this particular usage of ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος, John seems to either have turned it himself into a fixed form formula style name for God based on the LXX of the Old Testament, or else picked it up as such from early Christian and perhaps Jewish tradition. It will be repeated in exact form in verse eight. The same form along with ὃ παντοκράτωρ, **the Almighty**, in 4:8. In 11:17, it is partially repeated as ὃ παντοκράτωρ, ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν after ὃ θεός. This partial repeating of ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν surfaces again in 16:5. Only in 1:4, 8, and 4:8 is the third segment καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος, **the One coming**, found.

All of this mainly stems from Exod. 3:14-15 in the Old Testament.<sup>36</sup> This Greek paraphrase of the sacred name of God in Hebrew, YHWH (יהוה), broached this name only to be spoken by the high priest inside the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement festival once a year. The expansion of past, present, and future time frames only gathers up the implicit Hebrew meaning of the perpetual existence of God across all instances of time.<sup>37</sup> Thus to the former Diaspora Jews who are now

<sup>36</sup>Exod. 3:14-15. 14 God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘**I AM** has sent me to you.’” 15 God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

**LXX.** 14 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν **Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὃ ὢν** καὶ εἶπεν Οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ **Ὁ ὢν** ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.† 15 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πάλιν πρὸς Μωϋσῆν Οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ Κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν, θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ θεὸς Ἰακώβ, ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς· τοῦτό μού ἐστιν ὄνομα αἰώνιον καὶ μνημόσυνον γενεῶν γενεαῖς.†

<sup>37</sup>“In Revelation, John refers to God only as ‘my/his [Jesus] Father’ (1:6; 2:27; 3:5, 21; 14:1), but here, perhaps intentionally, he omits the designation ‘Father’ from the greeting. In fact, he transforms this part of the traditional Christian salutation by referring to God using this very elaborate set of three clauses, each of which functions as a divine rifle. Though unattested elsewhere in early Christian literature, this distinctive phrase occurs three times in Revelation (here; 1:8; 4:8). There is some variation in word order. In 1:4; 1:8, the phrase is ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος, while

believers John reaches out from their shared Jewish heritage to point them to God. But interestingly enough, this phrase and ones similar to it are found in the Greek literature referring to Zeus<sup>38</sup> and other Greco-Roman

in 4:8, ὁ ἦν and ὁ ὄν are transposed. A shorter, bipartite formula, perhaps a more traditional form that John expanded, is ὁ ὄν καὶ ὁ ἦν, 'who is and who was,' which occurs twice (11:17; 16:5). This bipartite formula is expanded to a tripartite formula in 16:5 through the addition of the predicate ὁ ὁσιος, 'the holy one.' ὁ ὄν, 'the one who is' (a substantival participle from the verb εἶμι, 'to be'), was, among Greek-speaking Jews, a popular name for God ultimately derived from the phrase ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ὄν, 'I am the one who is,' in the LXX translation of the Hebrew phrase, אהיה אשר אהיה, *hyeh .āšer .ehyeh*, 'I am who I am,' in Exod 3:14. Josephus places the phrase ὁ ὄν on the lips of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:10 (Ant. 8.350) but omits it from his version of Exod 3:14 (Ant. 2.276). Philo often uses the phrase ὁ ὄν of God, sometimes in combination with θεός, 'God' (e.g., ὁ ὄν θεός, 'the God who is'; ὁ ὄντως ὄν θεός, 'the God who truly is'). The phrase ὁ ὄν is used at least eight times as a divine name, with the asterisks marking passages that allude to Exod 3:14 (Mos. 1.75; Som. 1.231; Mut. 11; Det. 160; Quod Deus 110; Opif. 172; Leg. 3.181; Abr. 121); see J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysic* [Amsterdam, 1964] 83 n. 213). Presumably the popularity of ὁ ὄν as the name for God among Greek-speaking Jews influenced the later insertion of the phrase in the LXX text of Jeremiah, where the phrase ὁ ὄν occurs four times, always in the context of prayer (1:6; 4:10; 14:13; 39:17). The title was familiar to Jews in Asia Minor as attested by an inscription on an altar from Pergamon that reads θεὸς κύριος ὁ ὄν εἰς αἰεῖ, 'God, the Lord who exists forever.' Despite the objection of Delling (*Worship*, 78–79), this is very probably an allusion to the LXX version of Exod 3:14 (Nilsson, *Eranos* 54 [1956] 169–70; Bickerman, "Altars of Gentiles," 341–42), for even though the expression εἰς αἰεῖ, 'forever,' is not found in direct connection with ὁ ὄν, Exod 3:15 does describe the name of God as a ὄνομα αἰώνιον, 'an eternal name,' a feature emphasized by Philo (Mut. 12; cf. Mos. 1.74f–75)." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 30.

<sup>38</sup>"A similar threefold temporal description of divinity is widespread in Greco-Roman literature beginning with Homer (F. Büchsel, TDNT 2:399). In a reference to a hymn to Zeus that has perished, Menander Rhetor (1.342) mentions that 'Zeus was before all things [Ζεὺς πρὸ πάντων ἐγένετο]' but that this statement contradicted other elements in the hymn. Plato Timaeus 37E preserves the traditional formula λέγομεν γὰρ δὴ ὡς ἦν ἔστιν τε καὶ ἔσται, 'For we say that it [Eternal Being] was and is and will be' (see Plato Leges 4.715e). Empedocles (frag. 14, line 9 in M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1981] 100–101 [text], 177–79 [translation and commentary]): ἐκ τῶν πάνθ' ὅσα τ' ἦν ὅσα τ' ἔστι καὶ ἔσται ὀπίσσω, 'From them [fire, air, water] comes all that was and is and will be hereafter.' Here, however, this time formula is used not of divinity but of aspects of the material world. Plutarch preserves an inscription from the base of a statue of Athena, whom the Egyptians identified with Isis: 'I am all that has been, and is, and shall be [ἐγὼ εἶμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὄν καὶ ἐσόμενον], and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered' (De Iside et Osiride 354C [tr. LCL]; cf. 352a; 372f–373ah). A similar passage is found in Pausanias 10.12.10: 'Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus shall be; O mighty Zeus [Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἔστιν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται· ὃ μέγαλε Ζεῦ].' The setting of this hexameter line is important, for Pausanias attributes it to the Peliades ("Doves"), the female

deities.<sup>39</sup> One strong potential implication from the pagan and the Jewish mystical background use of this phraseology on amulets worn as head bands or arm bands is the belief that this special name of deity would

priestesses of Zeus who were cult officials at the oracle of Zeus at Dodona; the setting therefore connects Zeus with prophecy since the tripartite prophecy formula is also based on the three moments of past, present, and future. In Asclepius 14.17–18 (Nock-Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste* 2:313): *deus aeternus ... hoc est, hoc fuit, hoc erit semper*, 'he eternal God ... is the one who is, the one who was, and the one who will always be.' In Asclepius 29.5–7 (Nock-Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste* 2:337): *si enim animal mundus uiuensque semper et fuit et est et erit, nihil in mundo mortale est*, 'if the world itself is a living being and was and is and will be, nothing in the world is mortal.' Finally in Asclepius 134.25–26 (Nock-Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste* 2:344): *et sine hoc nec fuit aliquid nec est nec erit*, 'and without whom nothing was, nothing is, nothing will be' (see John 1:3). The last two passages from Asclepius, however, concern not divinity but the world and material reality." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 31–32.]

<sup>39</sup>"Numenius, a second-century A.D. Middle Platonic philosopher, refers to the supreme being as ὁ ὄν (frag. 12, in É. des Places, *Numenius: Fragments* [Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1973] 55–56; see brief commentary on p. 108). Normally, Numenius uses the term τὸ ὄν, "Being, Existence" (frags. 2.23; 3.1, 8, 9; 4a.7, 9, 12; 5.5, 6, 14, 18 [bis]; 6.7, 8, 15; 7.2, 13, 14; 8.2). The Greek magical papyri, many of which exhibit clear Jewish influence (ISBE, rev. ed., 3:219, s.v. "magic"), reflect the popularity of divine names borrowed from Judaism and also use ὁ ὄν as a divine name, often in connection with Ἰάω, "Iao," a divine name with close associations with the Hebrew divine name YHWH (often vocalized as Yahweh and shortened in ancient texts as Yahu). PGM LXXI.3–4, for example, has several points of contact with Rev 1:8 (the divine names ὁ ὄν, κύριος and παντοκράτωρ): and 'The God who is, Iao, Lord Almighty [ὁ θεὸς ὄν ὁ Ἰάω, κύριος παντοκράτωρ].' For other magical texts containing the divine predicate ὁ ὄν, see PGM XII.111; XIII.1020, 1048. The title ὁ ὄν also occurs on several amulets. A bloodstone amulet in the British Museum depicts Helios and Selene, with the inscription 'Iaō, Sabaōth, Abrasax, the Existent One [ὁ ὄν]' on the reverse (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* 2:259; vol. 3 fig. 1116). One amulet, apparently of Jewish origin, has the inscription 'One God in the heavens [ἐν οὐρανοῖς] who exists [ὁ ὄν] and who existed before [προῶν], the one greater than all, who dominates all beings in midheaven' (Dellatte-Derchain, *Les intailles magiques*, 266, no. 381; cf. Peterson, *Ἐἷς Θεός*, 260–61); the plural form οὐρανοῖς is either a Semitism or reflects an elevated hymnic style, and ὁ προῶν is a more literary grammatical choice than ὁ ἦν in Rev 1:4. On another amulet (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 108–9, no. 151), the words ἐγὼ and ὁ ὄν, 'I am the one who is,' are found on either side of a mummy, an allusion to LXX Exod 3:14. A Christian amulet (British Museum, 56473), of uncertain date, has the divine names Iaōth Sabath Adōnaei on the obverse with ὁ ὄν on the reverse (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 225). A Christian amulet of uncertain date has ὁ ὄν on the reverse, with one crux potens at the top and another at the bottom, while the obverse reads 'Iaōth Sabath Adonaei,' with one crux potens above and three below (C. Bonner, "Amulets Chiefly in the British Museum," *Hesperia* 120 [1951] 333–34, no. 46)."

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 30–31.]

protect one against evil if worn properly on some part of the body.<sup>40</sup> Some of John's listeners with this religious background in the churches of Asia where paganism was very extensive would have picked up on the image of awesome power by God as a source of encouragement.

Contextually the use of this very unusual designation of God's name here in vv. 4 and 8 seems to be driven mostly by the example of Moses who in Exod. 3:14-15 was instructed to give this name to the Hebrews in Egypt as the authentication of Moses' words to them.<sup>41</sup> John affirms early on that this grace and peace come from the Lord God, as well as all of what will be said in this book.<sup>42</sup>

The second source of this grace and peace is καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ, and from the seven spirits which are before His throne. As touched on above under the discussion of sources used under **External History**, this unusual expression points toward the Holy Spirit in symbolic designation. Similar depictions surface in 4:5<sup>43</sup> and 5:6<sup>44</sup> clearly defining the seven spirits as the Spirit of

<sup>40</sup>The much later counter part to this in Roman Catholic Christianity is the use of icons of patron saints located in homes, cars etc. for protection against harm.

<sup>41</sup>"Instead of the phrase ὁ ἐρχόμενος, 'the one who will come,' one fully expects the temporal expression ὁ ἐσόμενος, 'the one who will be' (Kraft, 31). This expression is found in Clement of Alexandria (Strom. 5.6), who claims that the name of God is pronounced Ἰαουέ, which he interprets as 'the one who is and who will be [ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐσόμενος]'. " [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 32.]

<sup>42</sup>"John uses the phrase ὁ ὢν four times (1:4, 8; 11:17; 16:5), twice in the context of prayer (11:17; 16:5), like the LXX variants in Jeremiah. He is the first Christian author to use this divine name; it rarely occurs among later Christian authors (see LPGL, 418). Why does John use this divine name twice in the opening sections of his book (vv 4, 8)? Just as Moses was told by God to accredit his message by telling the people that ὁ ὢν had sent him, so John appears to be authenticating his prophetic book by claiming that its actual source is none other than ὁ ὢν. ὁ ὢν is understood by Philo as the divine name that Moses, as a prophet, used to authenticate his message (Mos. 1.75; Mut. 11)." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 31.]

<sup>43</sup>**Rev. 4:5.** Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;

Καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ, καὶ ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καίόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ,

<sup>44</sup>**Rev. 5:6.** 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.

Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἄρνιον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον ἔχων

God, representing the complete presence of God in the world. The symbolism of the number seven comes into the image asserting the full expression of God's spiritual presence. This divine presence imminates from the throne of God and extends out to completely cover all the earth.

This core idea has been understood a several different ways down through the centuries of interpretive history, as Aune (*WBC*, pp 33-35) points out three major options.<sup>45</sup> The heart of the issue is the plural form τὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ. Does this refer directly back to the Holy Spirit, or does it indirectly get back to the Holy Spirit by referring to the angels of God? In the Jewish literature heavily influenced by Greek thought such as several of the Jewish apocalypses like First Enoch (e.g., 21:3-6) as well as by the Qumran literature (e.g., 1QM 9:12-15) a great deal of emphasis is placed on the divine presence of God through His Spirit being expressed by angels. In the very latest writings of the Old Testament during the Babylonian exile period and beyond, the influence of Babylonian religious thought on angels expressing divine presence begins surfacing in some of these OT writings such as Esther 1:14 and Ezra 7:14.

The uncertainty about this connection comes primarily because the typical NT expressions "the Holy Spirit" (τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα) and "the Spirit of God" (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ) are never used inside the book of Revelation. The perspective on the divine spirit from inside the book of Revelation seems to be significantly different from that in the rest of the NT, and especially from that of the fourth gospel. This necessitates caution when the attempt is made to connect up the concept inside Revelation to the rest of the NT.

The perspective in the book of Revelation is com-

---

κέρατα ἑπτὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτὰ οἳ εἰσὶν τὰ [ἑπτὰ] πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεσταλμένοι εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν.

<sup>45</sup>(1) *A widespread and ancient Christian view that this is a way of representing the Holy Spirit in its fullness* (Cowley, *Apocalypse*, 186: "He said 'seven,' referring to the completeness of his gift.") appears to have originated in the LXX version of Isa 11:2-3, which describes seven benefits of the Spirit of God to be enjoyed by the future Davidic king: "The Spirit of God will rest upon him, a spirit of [1] wisdom and [2] understanding, a spirit of [3] counsel and [4] might, a spirit of [5] knowledge and [6] godliness; the Spirit will fill him with [7] the fear of the Lord" (only six benefits are found in the MT; six are mentioned in 4Q161 = 4QIsaiah Peshera 8-10 iii 11-13; and six are mentioned in rabbinic literature: cf. b. Sanh. 93ab; Num. Rab. 13.11; Gen. Rab. 2.4.97; Ruth Rab. 7.2)....

"(2) *A second important view, in my opinion certainly the correct one, understands the seven spirits as the seven principal angels of God....*

"(3) *A third major interpretation understands the seven spirits in terms of ancient Near Eastern groups of seven astral deities.*"

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 33-35.]

plex, but Aune's proposal of this being largely due to successful revisions of the document is unpersuasive.<sup>46</sup> The modern tendency to see the disjointedness present in the document as reflecting successive layers of editing of the document ignores the ancient reflections of intentional disjointedness inserted in these documents by the original writers.<sup>47</sup>

Within the heritage of both OT prophetic writings and especially the Jewish apocalyptic traditions of defining the divine presence via the vehicle of πνεύματα, *spirits*, I believe that these point back to the presence of God on the earth in a way that dramatical underscores that Presence coming out of the very throne of God in Heaven. The conceptualization here, apocalyptic clearly as it stands, points the reader ultimately back to the same spiritual reality expressed elsewhere in the New Testament in terms of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the divine favor (χάρις) and divinely produced wholeness in life (εἰρήνη) come to the readers and hearers of this book (ὑμῖν) in part from the manifestation of God's overpowering Presence on earth through His Spirit.

The third source of this grace and peace comes καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς, *from Jesus Christ, the martyr, the faithful one, the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*<sup>48</sup>

Once more we encounter both familiar and unique language about Jesus Christ. One textual issue already noted above but needing to be re-affirmed here refers to the punctuation of ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός. The Nestle-Aland 28th edition Greek text inserts a comma between the noun and the adjective. This pattern reaches back

<sup>46</sup>“The analysis of the Spirit in Revelation is complex because of the composition history of Revelation, which exhibits changing conceptions of the Spirit.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 36.]

<sup>47</sup>Consequently Aune's conclusions that reject any connecting link between the seven spirits of God in Revelation and the Holy Spirit in the rest of the NT fail to be convincing, despite his contentions to the contrary:

“While many scholars have maintained that the seven spirits of God, particularly those mentioned in 1:4, refer to the Holy Spirit (Beckwith, 426–27; Bruce, “Spirit,” 333–37) or to the fullness of the one Spirit of God (de Smidt, *Neot 28* [1994] 241), that equation does not hold up to scrutiny (see Comment on 1:4).”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 36.]

<sup>48</sup>One should note this additional misuse of Greek grammar here. For ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς to properly stand either as a modifier or in apposition to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ the core nouns should be changed to the genitive case form rather than the nominative forms as presently used. Thus a grammatically correct rendering would be ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ μάρτυρος, τοῦ πιστοῦ, τοῦ πρωτοτόκου τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ τοῦ ἄρχοντος τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς.

several editions in both the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the United Bible Societies The Greek New Testament. The translation impact is “the martyr, the faithful one” rather than “the faithful martyr” with the comma removed.<sup>49</sup> One needs to remember that in the original composition of the document and throughout the first several centuries of copying of it no punctuation marks such as commas existed in the Greek language, as well as spacing between words. So the issue of whether to insert a comma or not is more a modern editorial question growing out of perceived meanings of the alternatives.<sup>50</sup>

The difficulty here is not decisively settled by subsequent uses of identical or similar terms in the document. See ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, *my witness, my faithful one* (2:13), ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός, *my faithful and true witness* (3:14), οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί, *those with Him are called and chosen and faithful* (17:14), ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ' αὐτὸν [καλούμενος] πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός, *the one sitting up it (the horse) is called faithful and true* (19:11), οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν, *these words are faithful and true* (21:5), οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ, *these words are faithful and true* (22:6).

Although the recent printed Greek text perspective is ‘the witness, the faithful one’, overwhelmingly both Bible translators and commentators adopt the alternative ‘the faithful witness’ understanding. The essence of the difference between these two patterns is whether ‘faithfulness’ covers just the witness of Christ or His entire being. Most understand, from contextual considerations, that in this instance the emphasis is upon the witness given by Christ being trustworthy.

<sup>49</sup>The grammar construction ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός could easily move either direction with ὁ πιστός without the comma being taken as an articular attributive adjective, but ὁ πιστός with the comma as a substantival adjective.

<sup>50</sup>Note the translation patterns adopted:

**English:** *the faithful witness* (ASV, NASB, NKJV, 21stCent-KJV, RSV, RSVCE, NRSV, NRSVUK, NRSVCE, CEB, CEV, DRA1899, ESV, ESVUK, GNT, HCSB, Phillips, Knox, LEB, Mounce, NCV, NET Bible, NIV, NIVUK); *that faithful witness* (Geneva 1599); *a faithful witness* (WYC); *Loyal Witness* (Message); *What Jesus gives witness to can always be trusted* (NIRV); *Who is faithful in telling the truth* (NLV); *the Witness who is true and faithful* (Voice); *What he says is true* (WE).

**Spanish:** *el testigo fiel* (LBLA, NBLH, NTV, NVI, CST, BLP, BLPH, RVC, RVR1960, RVR1995, RVA); *testigo fiel* (DHH); *quien es el testigo fiel* (PDT).

**German:** *dem treuen Zeugen* (SCH1951, SCH2000, GNB, Menge; ZB, EB); *dem treuen Zeugen dieser Dinge* (NLB); *welcher ist der treue Zeuge* (LUTHER1545, LUTHER1984); *der uns zuverlässig Gottes Wahrheit bezeugt* (HOF); *dem vertrauenswürdigen Zeugen 'für die Wahrheit'* (NGU-DE); *er ist der treue Zeuge* (EUB).

**French:** *le témoin fidèle* (LSG, NEG1979, SG21); *le témoin digne de foi* (BDS).



Most translations underscore ὁ μάρτυς as witness rather than as martyr. But one must understand that the same Greek word μάρτυς means both English ideas. A μάρτυς gives witness or testimony, and in the ultimate expression by sacrificing his/her life in giving that witness. Elsewhere in Revelation the giving of a witness is associated with dying for that witness: 2:13, 11:3; 17:6.

This raises a secondary but important question. Is this the historical Jesus giving witness or the risen Christ giving witness? Most likely the emphasis in Revelation is on the exalted Christ actively working in witness etc.

In Revelation Jesus is mentioned in a variety of ways: ὁ Ἰησοῦς (1:9 twice, 12:17, 14:12, 17:6, 19:10 twice, 20:4, 22:16); Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (1:1, 2, 5), Χριστός (11:15, 12:20, 20:4, 6), κύριος (11:8, 17:14, 19:16),<sup>51</sup> κύριος Ἰησοῦς (22:20, 21). Although one should be cautious about pressing much distinction between the historical Jesus and the risen Christ, the perspective in Revelation is dominantly on Christ in Heaven working in coordination with God to move events on earth according to the divine plan. Thus it is from the risen Christ that we have received grace and peace as well. His affirmation of the reliability of that grace and peace come out of Him having sacrificed His own life in order to affirm it to believers as the risen Christ. This sacrifice guarantees His witness.

But He is also ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν, **the first born of the dead.**<sup>52</sup> Clearly a reference to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, this label underscores the central role of that resurrection for that of believers following Christ. Christ stands at the head of the line of God's children who anticipate resurrection in their own life. That hope is exclusively based on the reality of Christ's resurrection. He is, in one sense, our older brother who went ahead of us and now paves the way for us to follow. This grace and peace affirmed to us comes from this resurrected Christ waiting for us as the gates of Heaven.

Thirdly, Christ is καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς, **the ruler of the kings of the earth.** Clearly the picture

<sup>51</sup>Although κύριος is used some 22 times in Revelation, it only refers to Christ in five (maybe 6 if 14:13 is included) instances (17:14, 22:20, 21). Elsewhere it refers to God in the pattern of OT expression.

<sup>52</sup>With this phrase occurring elsewhere only in Col. 1:18 as a part of an early Christian hymn incorporated into this letter of Paul to the churches of the Lycus Valley that included Laodicea some 40 or so years before, the expression most likely had wide circulation in the province of Asia which enabled John easily to pick it up here as a helpful point of communication.

**Col. 1:18. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.**

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὃς ἐστιν ἀρχή, **πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν**, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,

is that Christ is the supreme authority in all the earth. Ultimately every political ruler in all of human history will be accountable to Him on the day of judgment. No one has the power to challenge Him! This wording only surfaces here, but the idea is also found in 17:14 and 19:16:

**Rev. 17:14. 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.**

οὗτοι μετὰ τοῦ ἀρνίου πολεμήσουσιν καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον νικήσει αὐτούς, ὅτι **κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων** καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί.

**Rev. 19:16. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, "King of kings and Lord of lords."**

καὶ ἔχει ἐπὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν μηρὸν αὐτοῦ ὄνομα γεγραμμένον· **Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων.**

Throughout Revelation a lot is said about the rules of the earth and their hostility to Christ and His people.<sup>53</sup> A few of the terms easily alluded to the Roman emperor, whom John was subtly attacking. To his Christian readers, the point was clear. Christ reigns supremely over all human rules with unchallengeable power and authority.

Where did John get these labels? The role of Psalm 89 (LXX 88) for these Christological titles should not be overlooked.

27 αὐτὸς ἐπικαλέσεται με Πατήρ μου εἶ σύ, θεὸς μου καὶ ἀντιλήμπτωρ τῆς σωτηρίας μου·† 28 κάγω

<sup>53</sup>Though this title occurs only here in Revelation, it is a functional equivalent to 'king of kings,' which is applied to Jesus in Rev 17:14 and 19:16 (see Comment on 17:14). The phrase 'kings of the earth' occurs seven times elsewhere in Revelation (6:15; 17:2, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19; 21:24), while the parallel phrase 'the kings of the whole world' occurs in 16:14; these phrases are consistently used in a negative sense in Revelation. A relatively close though antithetical parallel to Rev 1:5 is 17:18, where the Harlot is identified as ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη ἡ ἔχουσα βασιλείαν ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς, 'the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.' Another relatively close parallel occurs in T. Mos. 8:1: 'a king of the kings of the earth [*rex regum terrae*].'; The Latin Vulgate translates the phrase 'ruler of the kings of the earth' with *princeps regnum terrae*, a title with significant political ramifications since it could designate the Roman emperor. ὁ ἄρχων (found only here in Revelation), the substantival participle of the verb ἄρχω, was one of several terms used to translate *princeps* from Latin into Greek (Mason, *Greek Terms*, 27, 198; it does not however occur in official *imperial titulature*, 113); others relevant to the political imagery of Revelation include βασιλεὺς (15:3; 17:14; 19:16), δεσπότης (Rev 6:10), and κύριος (17:14; 19:16). In addition to inscriptional evidence, many Greek authors used ἄρχων of the Roman *princeps* (Aelius Aristides 19.5; 20.15; 25.56; 26.23, 107; Dio Chrysostom 32.60; 37.34; Marcus Aurelius 3.5.1; Philostratus *Vita Apoll.* 7.1). Latin Christian authors frequently referred to Christ as *imperator* (Tertullian De exhort, cast. 12; De fuga in pers. 10; Cyprian Ep. 15.1; 3.5; *Ps.-Cyprian De mont. Sina et Sion* 8; *Acts Scill.* 2). [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 40.]

**πρωτότοκον** θήσομαι αὐτόν, ὑψηλὸν **παρὰ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν τῆς γῆς**.† 29 εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα φυλάξω αὐτῷ τὸ ἔλεός μου, καὶ ἡ διαθήκη μου πιστὴ αὐτῷ.† . . .

38 καὶ ὡς ἡ σελήνη κατηρτισμένη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα· καὶ **ὁ μάρτυς** ἐν οὐρανῷ **πιστός**. διάψαλμα.†

27 I will make him **the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth**. 28 Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm. 29 I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure. . . .

37 It shall be established forever like the moon, **an enduring witness** in the skies.” (Selah)<sup>54</sup>

This mostly likely reflects early Christian interpretive use of this Psalm, which John draws from.<sup>55</sup> Out of this rich OT heritage then comes the eloquent exaltation of the triune God as the source of grace and peace to the believing readers and listeners to this document.

Although the sequence of God, Spirit, and Son is different from other similar references inside the NT, and clearly later in church tradition, of Father, Son, and Spirit, John picks up on this developing Christian perspective of the profound nature of our God. The shifting of the Son to the final listing opens the opportunity for the Doxology that follows.

This *Salutatio* expresses in profoundly rich manner the blessing of God upon those to whom this document is addressed. As both a greeting and a prayer wish John reaches out to his targeted readers in a marvelous manner.

## II. The Doxology praise to Christ, vv. 5b-6

5b Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, 6 καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρι αὐτοῦ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων]· ἀμήν.

5b To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>54</sup>“The three christological titles found in vv 5a–c may be derived from Ps 89:38, 28 (LXX 88:38, 28): (1) LXX Ps 89:38b, καὶ ὁ μάρτυς ἐν οὐρανῷ πιστός, ‘the faithful witness in heaven [i.e. ‘the moon’]’ = ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, ‘the faithful witness’; (2) LXX Ps 89:28a, κἀγὼ πρωτότοκον θήσομαι αὐτόν, ‘and I will make him the firstborn’ = ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν, ‘the firstborn of the dead’; (3) LXX Ps 89:28b, ὑψηλὸν παρὰ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν τῆς γῆς, ‘the most exalted among the kings of the earth’ = καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς, ‘the ruler of the kings of the earth’ (see also Prov 14:5; Jer 42:5; Isa 8:2; 43:10; 55:4).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 37.]

<sup>55</sup>“Fiorenza suggests that together with Psalm 89 there is also an allusion to Isa. 55:4: ‘I have made him [David] a testimony (μαρτύριον) . . . a prince (ἄρχοντα) and a commander to the Gentiles.’<sup>541</sup>” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 192.]

John next inserts a *Doxology* of praise to Christ upon providing the rich depiction of Him in the *Salutatio*. The grammatical construction follows a typical pattern to the other doxologies found elsewhere inside the New Testament.<sup>56</sup> In 5:13-14, 7:12, and 19:1 we find three additional doxologies.<sup>57</sup> Rev. 5:13 follows the form of 1:6 closer, but all stand as a part of



<sup>56</sup>“Doxologies generally consist of four stereotypical elements: (1) Mention is first made of the one to whom some attribute is ascribed (usually in the dative case, less frequently in the genitive). (2) Mention is then made of the specific attribute(s), of which δόξα, ‘glory,’ is the most common (usually in the nominative). (3) A formula is used describing the unending extent of time during which the one praised will possess this attribute or these attributes, usually ‘forever’ or ‘for ever and ever,’ or ‘to all generations’ (Eph 3:21) or ‘from generation to generation’ (Mart. Pol. 21), followed by (4) a concluding ‘amen.’ Including 1:6, five doxologies are found in Revelation (4:9 [a peculiar text since it refers to the reiterated recitation of a doxology]; 5:13–14; 7:12; 19:1).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 44.]

<sup>57</sup>Rev. 5:13-14. 13Then 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.

13 καὶ πᾶν κτίσμα ὃ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς πάντα ἤκουσα λέγοντας·

**τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.**

14 καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα ἔλεγον· ἀμήν. καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν καὶ προσεκύνησαν.

Rev. 7:12. 12 singing,

**“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”**

λέγοντες·

**ἀμήν, ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ σοφία καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἰσχύς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.**

Rev. 19:1. After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying,

“Hallelujah!

**Salvation and glory and power to our God,**

Μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λεγόντων·

ἁλληλουϊά·

**ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν,**

Heavenly praise lifted to God. In 4:9 not a doxology per se but the description of doxologies being given to God is depicted.<sup>58</sup> Across the spectrum of ancient Jewish and Christian writings doxologies served several functions in written texts.<sup>59</sup> This doxology in 1:5b-6 functions as a part of the opening epistolary segment, here as an extension of the *Salutatio*.<sup>60</sup> The others in Revelation serve as a segment of a liturgy of prayer and/or worship.

In typical fashion the *Doxology* is directed to Christ as God.<sup>61</sup> Again the grammar structure is somewhat

<sup>58</sup>Rev. 4:9. 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, . . .

Καὶ ὅταν δώσουσιν τὰ ζῶα δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ εὐχαριστίαν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων,

<sup>59</sup>“Doxologies have several functions when they occur in written texts. (1) *They can be used to conclude a religious text, with the text functioning as a surrogate for a service of worship* (4 Macc 18:24; cf. Tobit 14:15 [var. lect. MS S]; 3 Macc 7:23; 1 Clem 64:2; 2 Clem 20:5; Acts Carpus [Greek rec.] 47; Acts Carpus [Latin rec.] 7; Acts Justin [rec. A, B, and C] 6; Mart. Apollonius 47; Mart. Perpetua 11; Mart. Pionius 23; Mart. Fruct. 7.2; Mart. Conon 6; Mart. Marian 13.5; Mart. Julius 4.5; Mart. Dasius 12.2; Mart. Agape 7.2; Mart. Irenaeus 6; Mart. Crispina 4.2; Test. Forty Martyrs 3). Similarly, doxologies can be used to conclude a section of a religious text (Rom 11:36; 1 Tim 1:17; 1 Pet 4:11; 1 Clem 20:12; 32:4; 38:4; 43:6; 45:7; 50:7; 58:2; 61:3; Mart. Perpetua 1).

“(2) *Doxologies may have a special epistolary function either in the opening* (Gal 1:5; Rev 1:6) *or concluding* (Rom 16:25–27; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 6:16; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet 5:11) *portions of letters.*

“(3) *Doxologies can be used in direct discourse to introduce a prayer* (1 Chr 29:11) *or, more frequently, to conclude a liturgy narrated within a text* (Rev 4:9; 5:13–14; 7:12; 19:1; Tob 14:15 [var. lect. MS S]; 1 Enoch 39:10, 13; Did. 8:2; 9:2, 3, 4; 10:2; 10:4, 5).

“(4) *Doxologies can be referred to in indirect discourse* (Rev 4:9). The benedictions in 1 Enoch are frequently referred to in this way (25:7; 27:5; 36:4; 39:9; 81:3; 83:11).”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 44.]

<sup>60</sup>“This type of doxology occurs just three other times in the NT: Rom 16:25–27, τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ . . . μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ . . . ᾧ ἡ δόξα . . .; Eph 3:20–21, τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ . . . αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα . . .; Jude 24–25, τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ . . . μόνῳ θεῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν . . . δόξα μεγαλωσύνη κράτος καὶ ἐξουσία. . .” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 45.]

<sup>61</sup>“Doxologies can be addressed to God in either the third person singular or the second person singular. Doxologies in the third person singular frequently use the relative pronoun ᾧ or the intensive pronoun αὐτῷ, both in the dative of indirect object or the dative of advantage (dativus commodi) or the dative of possession. Doxologies in the second person singular are comparatively rare (none occur in the NT and only seven in the Apostolic Fathers). Some are introduced with σου, a pronoun in the genitive of possession, e.g. Did. 8:2: ‘Yours is the power and the glory for ever’ (see also Did. 9:4; 10:5), while more commonly they are introduced with σοί, a pronoun in the dative of advantage, e.g. Did. 9:2: ‘To

convoluted. The designation of the object of praise is defined by αὐτῷ, *to Him*, in v. 6. This personal pronoun goes back most immediately to the implied subject of the regular verb ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς, *He made us*. But with greater detail it also reaches back to τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς, *To the one who loves us and freed us*, at the beginning of the sentence. These two participles stand in antecedent apposition to αὐτῷ. Once more we are seeing the sometimes strange Greek grammar used in the document.

The delineation of the specifics of Christ as the object of praise define why ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, *glory and dominion*, belong to Him. These are:

τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, *To the One who loves us and freed us from our sins by His blood*. First, the matter of an alternative reading needs our attention. Already discussed in detail above, we need only to remind you of the issue here.<sup>62</sup> Some uncertainty about the second pronoun ἡμᾶς, *us*, and the preposition ἐκ, *from*, exists but without altering the meaning of the expression. The main variation is the replacing of λύσαντι, *having freed*, with the alternative λούσαντι, *having washed*. This is done only in the much later manuscripts and then is followed by the Textus Receptus.<sup>63</sup> Thus it will show up in the early English Bibles through the King James Version.

you is the glory for ever’ (see also Did. 9:3; 10:2, 4; 1 Clem 61:3).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 44–45.]

<sup>62</sup>{A} λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ P<sup>18</sup> κ<sup>2</sup> A C 2050 2329 it<sup>h</sup> Andrew; Victorinus-Pettau Primasius // λύσαντι ἐκ κ<sup>\*</sup> 1611 2344<sup>vid</sup> (arm) // λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἀπό 2351 (eth) // λούσαντι ἡμᾶς ἀπό 205 209 1006 1841 (1854 2053 2062 ἐκ for ἀπό) Byz [P 046c (046\* homoioteleuton)] it<sup>(ar)</sup>. sig.<sup>1</sup> vg copbo Apringius Beatus

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>63</sup>“Instead of λύσαντι the Textus Receptus, following the later uncials (P 046), most of the minuscules, and several early versions (it<sup>sig</sup> vg cop<sup>bo</sup> eth), reads λούσαντι. The reading λύσαντι is to be preferred because it has superior manuscript support (P<sup>18</sup> κ<sup>2</sup> A C 1611 it<sup>h</sup> syr<sup>ph</sup>.<sup>h</sup> arm al); because it is in accord with Old Testament imagery (e. g. Is 40:2 LXX); and because it suits better the idea expressed in ver. 6a. The reading λούσαντι, which sometimes may have been pronounced like λύσαντι, seems to have arisen ‘due to failure to understand the Hebraic use of ἐν to denote a price . . . and a natural misapplication of 7:14’ (Hort, “Notes on Select Readings,” ad loc.).

“With the verb λούειν the preposition ἀπό is naturally more appropriate than ἐκ; the early versions cannot discriminate between the two prepositions.”

[Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 662.]

The grammatical construction is very picturesque with the present tense and the Aorist tense participles linked together here. Christ ‘loves’ us and has ‘set us free’ in the combination of ongoing love demonstrated most clearly on the cross where our liberation from sin was accomplished. The true nature of His love is seen in this sacrificial offering up of Himself (ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, *by His blood*).<sup>64</sup> Here we get the first glimpse into one of John’s favorite portrayals of Christ as the Lamb of God.<sup>65</sup> The verb λύω when used with the prepositions, either ἀπό (most common) or ἐκ, meaning ‘from’ or ‘out of’ underscores a spiritual liberation from whatever has us captive. In this text, our captor is τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, *our sins*.<sup>66</sup> The phrase found here does

<sup>64</sup>“The two motifs joined in this passage are those of the love of Jesus for humanity and the expression of that love through voluntary death that frees certain beneficiaries. This combination of motive plus action has a traditional ring, for there are a number of formulaic statements that contain the motif of the voluntary self-sacrifice of Christ (Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 112–13). In Gal 2:20, Paul speaks of ‘the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me [τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ],’ just as in Eph 5:2 ‘Christ loved us and gave himself up for us [ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν]’ (see Eph 5:25, ‘Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her’). These formulaic passages all coordinate the two motifs of love and death, though death is referred to under the metaphors of ‘giving’ and ‘freeing.’ The voluntary, sacrificial nature of the death of Christ and the salvific benefits of that death are central features of early Christian catechesis: Mark 10:45 = Matt 20:28 (‘The Son of Man came ... to give his life as a ransom for many’), John 10:11 (‘the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’; cf. John 10:15, 17), Gal 1:4 (‘Who gave himself for our sins’), Titus 2:14 (‘Who gave himself for us’), 1 Tim 2:6 (‘Who gave himself as a ransom for all’), 1 John 3:16 (‘he laid down his life for us’). The willingness of Christ to die, however, is not invariably mentioned: 1 Cor 15:3 (‘Christ died for our sins’), 1 Pet 3:18 (‘Christ also died for sins once for all’); see also Rom 5:8; 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11; 1 Thess 5:9–10. The love of God for his people is mentioned frequently in early Christian literature (John 3:16; Rom 9:13; 2 Cor 9:7; Eph 2:4; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13, 16; Heb 12:6; 1 John 4:10; 1 Clem 56:4; Barn. 1:1; Ign. Trall. inscr. Rom. inscr.). ‘Jesus,’ however, is only occasionally the subject of the verb ἀγαπᾶν, and then in passages that are predominantly Johannine [John 11:5; 13:1, 23, 34; 14:21; 15:9, 12; 19:26; 21:7; Eph 5:2, 25; Rev 3:9].” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 46–47.]

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Rev. 5:6; 7:17; 14:10; 15:3; 19:9; 21:23; 22:1, 3.

<sup>66</sup>A good commentary on this statement is **Heb. 9:9–14. 11** But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), 12 he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, although the general idea is common.<sup>67</sup> Thus with this beginning image of being released from the prison of our sins we begin to understand the works of the Lamb which led to songs of praise and celebration throughout the document.

καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, *and He made us a kingdom, priests to God and His Father*. Here more grammar challenges confront us, with the use of a regular verb ἐποίησεν when the Aorist participle, ποιήσαντι, would have been the correct grammar structure, thus creating the correct flow of Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι...καὶ λύσαντι... καὶ ποιήσαντι.

In this sacrificial death of the Lamb, we sinners are turned from slaves to sin into a king and a priest to God. We move from being ruled (by sin) to ruling over sin. And we become dedicated forever to the service of

11 Χριστὸς δὲ παραγενόμενος ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως, 12 οὐδὲ δι’ αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσηλθὼν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὐράμενος. 13 εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἶμα τράγων καὶ ταύρων καὶ σποδὸς δαμάλεως ῥαντίζουσα τοὺς κεκοινωμένους ἀγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα, 14 πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ αἶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ, καθαρῶς τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι.

<sup>67</sup>“The phrase λύειν τινὰ ἐκ/ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, ‘to free someone from sin,’ occurs only here in the NT and in the Apostolic Fathers. λύειν means ‘to release, rescue’ in the literal sense of setting free from being tied up, chained, or imprisoned (Louw-Nida, § 18.18) and, in figurative extensions, to set free from political domination, sickness, as in Luke 13:16, or sin, as in Rev 1:5 (Louw-Nida, § 37.127). Thus, ‘to free someone from sin’ is a metaphor that implies that individuals are held captive by their sins and that release from this captivity has been secured by Christ. In effect, λύειν ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν means ‘to forgive sins,’ and this meaning (though not using this idiom) occurs in later Christian literature (Ps.-Clement Ep. James 2, 6; Ps.-Clement Hom. 54.2; cf. LPGL 817). In the final edition of Revelation, since people are ‘ransomed for God by the blood’ (ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματι) of the Lamb (5:9), i.e. God is the new owner, λύειν and ἀγοράζειν are virtually synonymous (see Holtz, *Christologie*, 65–68). The language of new ownership of those ransomed is also found in Rev 14:4, which refers to the 144,000 who have been ‘redeemed [ἠγοράσθησαν] from humanity as the firstfruits for God and the Lamb.’ The redemption metaphor occurs in Paul (Gal 3:13; 4:5; 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; cf. 1 Pet 1:18; 2 Pet 2:1), and it is possible that the metaphor originated with him (Holtz, *Christologie*, 67). According to Rev 7:14, those who came through the great tribulation ‘washed their robes and made them white by the blood [ἐν τῷ αἵματι] of the Lamb’ (on the verb ‘wash,’ see the variant λούσαντι in Note 1:5d.d.). There are parallels in pagan literature, as in Ps.-Hippocrates Morb. sacr. 4, where it said (speaking of the ritual procedures of Greek public cults) that ‘the Divine cleanses, sanctifies, and purifies [καθαίρον καὶ ἀγνίζον καὶ ῥύμμα] us from the greatest and most wicked of our sins [ἁμαρτημάτων].”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 47.]

God in His temple. John's choice of grammar here is due in part to taking this idea from Exodus 19:6.<sup>68</sup> Out of the sacrifice of the Lamb with His blood is coming a people over whom God reigns as supreme. And these people function as priests in His temple. This dualistic understanding of Exod. 19:6 reflects a Jewish interpretive tradition found in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition as well as in other later Jewish sources.<sup>69</sup> Again a sig-

<sup>68</sup>**Exodus 19:5-6.** 5 Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, 6 but you shall be for me **a priestly kingdom** and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.

5 καὶ νῦν ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ φυλάξητε τὴν διαθήκην μου, ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς περιούσιος ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν· ἐμὴ γὰρ ἐστὶν πᾶσα ἡ γῆ· † 6 ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔσεσθέ μοι **βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα** καὶ ἔθνος ἅγιον. ταῦτα τὰ ῥήματα ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ. †

<sup>69</sup>John alludes here to Exod 19:6, where the Hebrew phrase מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים *mamleket kōhānīm*, 'kingdom of priests,' is ambiguous and can be understood as 'a royalty of priests' (Fohrer, TZ 19 [1963] 359–62) or 'kings [who are] priests,' i.e. 'priestlike kings,' to mention just two options (see Durham, Exodus, 263). The phrase is rendered idiomatically by the LXX version: βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα, 'royal priesthood,' which is cited in 1 Pet 2:9 and Ign. Eph. 9:2 (long recension). The literal Greek version of the OT by Aquila reads βασιλεία ἱερέων, 'kingdom of priests,' which is how Mussies thinks the phrase in Rev 1:6 should be understood (Morphology, 94); cf. 4Q 504 = 4QDibHama frag. 4, line 10: '[a kingdom of] priests and a holy people.' Yet it is clear that, when Rev 1:6 is compared with 5:10 (where the phrase βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς, 'kingdom and priests,' is found, also alluding to Exod 19:6), John is thinking in terms of two privileges of the people of God rather than just one (as in the MT LXX and Aquila). The second-century A.D. Greek translations of Symmachus and Theodotion render the phrase as βασιλεία ἱερεῖς, 'a kingdom, priests,' thus reflecting the same understanding of Exod 19:6 found in Rev 1:6; 5:10. The Ethiopic text of Jub. 16:18 has 'a kingdom and priests' (the translation 'a kingdom of priests' in Charlesworth, OTP 2:88 is therefore incorrect), though the Latin text reads *regnum sacerdotale*, 'a kingdom of priests,' or 'a priestly kingdom.' The Ethiopic text seems to be confirmed by Jub. 33:20, which has 'a nation of priests, and a royal nation' (Charlesworth, OTP 2:120), or 'a priestly and royal nation' (Sparks, AOT 104). In allusions to Daniel, John seems to reflect a Greek version similar to Theodotion rather than to the LXX (Swete, Old Testament in Greek, 48). McNamara (Targum, 227–30) has shown that all the texts of the targums understand מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים *mamleket kōhānīm*, 'kingdom of priests,' as two distinct substantives, though the targums use the paraphrase 'kings and priests' rather than John's 'a kingdom, (and) priests.' The same understanding is reflected in allusions to Exod 19:6 in Philo (Abr. 56; Sob. 66), 2 Macc 2:17; and the Peshitta Syriac *mlkwt. wksn*, 'a kingdom and priests,' a reading so close to Rev 1:6; 5:10, however, that it may have been influenced by the NT. Similarly, 4Q504 4 line 10 alludes to Exod 19:6 with the phrase מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ [ממלכת] *kwahnym wgwyy qdws*, 'a kingdom of priests and a holy people' (M. Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4*, vol. 3, DJD 7 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1982] 154–56). John, then, appears to be drawing on a very early Jewish understanding of Exod 19:6 in terms of two distinct privileges rather than the single one reflected in the MT and LXX.

nal of influence from these Jewish sources upon John's thinking.

The idea of priests, ἱερεῖς, while present in Rev. 1:6; 5:20; 20:6, is not very prominent in the document. The concept speaks of the status of Christians before God with direct access to Him, rather than indirect. Contrary to Roman Catholic tradition that say these statements as justifying a Christian priesthood in the church, John saw the image affirming direct access to God by every believer.<sup>70</sup> Additionally as every Jewish

Isa 61:6 addresses the people of Israel with these words: "You shall be called the priests of the Lord." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 47–48.]

<sup>70</sup>The related term ἱεράτευμα, 'priesthood,' is applied to Christians in 1 Pet 2:5, 9 (the latter also alludes to Exod 19:6). Using an extended metaphor in Rom 15:16, Paul speaks of himself as 'a minister [λειτουργόν] of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service [ἱεουργοῦντα] of the gospel of God.' Here ἱεουργεῖν means 'to serve as a priest' (Dunn, *Romans* 2:859–60), though Paul himself rather than ordinary Christians is in view. ἱεουργεῖν is specifically used by Philo in referring to something that the whole people can do (Spec. Leg. 2.145; Mos. 2.229); the verb ἱεραῖσθαι is used the same way in Philo Mos. 2.24. In two references in Josephus, however, ἱεουργεῖν apparently means 'to offer sacrifice' (J. W. 5.14, 16) without implying the priestly status of those doing so. These metaphors are only rarely applied to ordinary Christians in early Christian literature (Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 4.8.3 ['all the righteous have the priestly rank']; Clement Alex. Strom. 7.7; Tertullian De oratore 28.1–2 [sacerdotes]; De exhort. cast. 7 [quotes Rev 1:6]; De monogamia 7 [quotes Rev 1:6]; Esaias Abbas Or 5.3; Apost. Const. 2.25). Cyprian later refers to the 'priesthood of martyrdom' (Ep. 20.3), a conception close to that found in Rev 20:6. Oecumenius thought Christians were appropriately designated priests because they are enjoined in Rom 12:2 to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God (Comm. in Apoc. 5:10; Hoskier, Oecumenius, 81–82). The Stoics reportedly held, in an aphorism with wide variations, that 'the wise are the only priests' (Diogenes Laertius 7.119; Origen *Comm.* in Joh. 2.10 [on 1:4]; Stobaeus Ecl. 2.67.20; see SVF 3:604–10), while for Marcus Aurelius (3.4.3), the good man is 'a priest and minister of the gods.' A priest may normally be defined as a religious specialist who performs religious rites, usually sacrificial rituals at a fixed location (e.g. an altar), and in so doing functions as an intermediary acting for or on behalf of a community (W. G. Oxtoby, "Priesthood: An Overview," *EncRel* 11:528–29). Here (as in 5:10; 20:6) there can be no sacrifice involved and no community to represent, nor are these priests specialists since all who have been freed or ransomed by Christ's death (1:6; 5:10), who have participated in the first resurrection (20:6), have this status. It is possible that the universal application of 'priesthood' is the result of the spiritualization of the notion of 'sacrifice' that characterized early Christianity, for everyone can offer the sacrifice of prayer. The notion of the 'priesthood of believers,' or 'general priesthood' (meaning that every Christian has direct access to God), particularly emphasized in a polemical way by Martin Luther, is distinguished from the ministerial priesthood in Roman Catholicism, which regards the latter as superior to the 'priesthood of the laity' (cf. Schelkle, *Discipleship*, 108–37, and his insistence that πρεσβύτερος, 'elder,' should be translated 'priest' [the English term 'priest' is in fact etymologically derived

priest represented complete dedication of one's life to the service of God, in like fashion believers are to be completely dedicated to the service of God throughout their life.

The expression τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ most likely should be translated as “to His God and Father,” with the His referring back to Christ.<sup>71</sup> This is the proper translation as per the Greek grammar construction.<sup>72</sup> There is nothing in the history of the copying of the Greek text here to signal a basis for “to God and His Father.” It represents a mistaken reading of the Latin Vulgate, *Deo et Patri suo*, that found its way into modern Bible translations. In the five uses of πατήρ in Revelation (1:6; 2:28; 3:5, 21; 14:1), all of them refer to God as the Father of Jesus.<sup>73</sup> What we are being introduced to here is the

from πρεσβύτερος]), while most branches of Protestantism do not (Eastwood, *Priesthood*; see the instructive excursus by N. Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, 2nd ed. [Neukirchen: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1986] 108–10).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 48–49.]

<sup>71</sup>“To his God and Father: the preposition to here is a way of saying ‘serve.’ In the phrase *God and Father*, care must be taken that the two refer to one being, not to two. The possessive *his God* may cause a problem if somehow his seems exclusive—that is, the God of Jesus Christ alone and of no one else. If there is a problem, in some languages it will be helpful to restructure the phrase and say ‘God his Father.’ As for *his ... Father*, there should be no problem, inasmuch as it is clear here and elsewhere in the New Testament that God is the Father of Jesus Christ in a special way. Other ways of translating the whole phrase are ‘to serve God, who is his Father’ or ‘to serve God, who is the Father of Jesus’.” [Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 22.]

<sup>72</sup>Note the translation patterns:

**English.** *unto God and His Father* (KJV, 21cent KJV, DRA); *unto God even his Father* (GNV); *for God his Father* (NLT, VOICE); *to God and to his Father* (WYC); *unto his God and Father* (ASV); *to his God and Father* (ESV, ESVUK, CEB, PHILLIPS, LEB, MOUNCE, RSV, RSVCE); *to His God and Father* (NASB, NKJV, HCSB, NLV); *to serve his God and Father* (GNT, NET, NIV, NIVUK, NRSV, NRSVA, NRSVACE, NRSVCE); *serve God his Father* (CEV, KNOX, NCV).

**Spanish.** *para su Dios y Padre* (LBLA); *de su Dios y Padre* (DHH); *para Dios, Su Padre* (NBLH); *para Dios, su Padre* (NTV, RVC, RVR1960, RVR1995); *para Dios y su Padre* (RVA); *para su Dios y Padre* (BL, BLPH); *de Dios su Padre* (NVI, CST, TLA); *a Dios su Padre* (PDT).

**German.** *vor Gott und seinem Vater* (LUTHER 1545); *vor Gott, seinem Vater* (LUTHER 1984, EU); *die Gott, seinem Vater, dienen* (HOF); *für Gott, seinen Vater* (ZB); *für seinen Gott und Vater* (NGU-DE, SCH1951, SCH2000, MENGE); *die seinem Gott und Vater dienen dürfen* (GNB); *um Gott, seinem Vater, zu dienen* (NL); *seinem Gott und Vater* (EB).

**French.** *de Dieu, son Père* (BDS); *pour Dieu son Père* (LSG, NEG1979, SG21).

<sup>73</sup>This pattern is not unusual throughout the New Testament:

**d. as Father of Jesus Christ**

intimate relationship between Christ and the Heavenly Father that is very unique. And that this Father/Son relationship continues to define their relationship after Jesus ascension to Heaven.

What is then to be given to Christ is ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, *glory and dominion*. Is this something believers give to Christ through singing and words of praise? Actually not! The doxology is a prayer to be prayed more often than a song to be sung. Foundational it is a confession of faith commitment. But in either instance the point is not to give something verbally to God. Central is that we affirm both our understanding of who God and Christ are and that our desire is for a full disclosure of these qualities to take place either now or else at the final day. The doxology represents our commitment to God, not our gift to Him! Most of all, it is our response to this deeper disclosure of God's nature and being. The contextual settings of the doxologies make this very clear.

The content offered up in doxologies across the New Testament includes ἡ δόξα (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 2 Pet. 3:18), and ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος (1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 1:6). But elsewhere in Revelation this content given to either Christ or God is τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, *glory and honor and power* (4:11); τὴν δύναμιν καὶ πλοῦτον καὶ σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύον καὶ τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν καὶ εὐλογίαν, *power and wealth and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing* (5:12); ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, *blessing and honor and glory and dominion* (5:13); ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ σοφία καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἰσχύς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, *bless-*

*a. in Jesus' witness concerning himself* ὁ πατήρ μου Mt 11:27a; 20:23; 25:34; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; Lk 2:49 (see ὁ 2g and Goodsp., Probs. 81–83); 10:22a; 22:29; 24:49; J 2:16; 5:17, 43; 6:40 and oft. in J; Rv 2:28; 3:5, 21. ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς μου 2 Cl 12:6 in an apocryphal saying of Jesus. ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν (τοῖς) οὐρανοῖς Mt 7:21; 10:32, 33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19. ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος 15:13; 18:35 (Just., A I, 15, 8). Jesus calls himself the Human One (Son of Man), who will come ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ 16:27; Mk 8:38. Abs. ὁ πατήρ, πάτερ Mt 11:25, 26; Mk 14:36 (s. GSchelbert, FZPhT 40, '93, 259–81; response ERuckstuhl, ibid. 41, '94, 515–25; response Schelbert, ibid. 526–31); Lk 10:21ab; 22:42; 23:34, 46 (all voc.); J 4:21, 23ab; 5:36ab, 37, 45; 6:27, 37, 45, 46a, 65 and oft. in J. Father and Son stand side by side or in contrast Mt 11:27bc; 24:36; 28:19; Mk 13:32; Lk 10:22bc; J 5:19–23, 26; 1J 1:3; 2:22–24; 2J 9; B 12:8. WLofthouse, Vater u. Sohn im J: ThBl 11, '32, 290–300.

*β. in the confession of the Christians* π. τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Ro 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3a; Eph 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Pt 1:3. π. τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ 2 Cor 11:31. Cp. 1 Cor 15:24; Hb 1:5 (2 Km 7:14); Rv 1:6; 1 Cl 7:4; IEph 2:1; ITr ins 12:2; MPol 14:1; AcPl Ha 2, 33; 6, 34; AcPlCor 2:7 (cp. Just., D. 30, 3; 129, 1 al.).

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 788.]

ing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God (7:12); δόξαν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *glory to the God of Heaven* (11:13); ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, *salvation and glory and power be to our God* (19:1).

The idea of ἡ δόξα, *glory*, is the divine Presence, the Shekinah (שְׁכִינָה, lit. “the dwelling”). It is when God’s presence is disclosed in overwhelming fashion, and all that humans can do in response is to acknowledge this Presence in reverential awe. The other affirmation, τὸ κράτος, *dominion*, is an affirmation of utter control and power that overwhelms. We completely acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of Christ and of God, as affirmed in 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Pet. 4:11, 5:11; Jd. 25, as well as here and in Rev. 5:13.

How long is this overwhelming Shekinah and dominion? The doxology affirms εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, *forever*. This very Jewish way of defining eternity, as opposed to the normal Greek expressions, underscored the very different Jewish perspective by the beginning of the Christian era. For the Greeks to step into eternity through death was to step into a completely static, timeless realm where individual consciousness ceased to exist. But for ancient Jews -- and thus early Christians -- eternity was an endless succession of eras of time. The phrase εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων literally means ages stacked on top of ages without end. Within this view individual consciousness continued on but at a higher, better level without the limitations of this material world. Thus eternity is a conscious relationship with this Christ and this God elevated to a higher level of endless enjoyment. The resurrection is the portal through which we enter into such a relationship with Christ and God.

And as the doxology affirms our response should be ἀμήν, *amen!* This ἀμήν signaled the congregational response to Jews worshipping in the Jerusalem temple. When the scripture was read, or the Levites sang one of the psalms, the assembled worshipers in the temple replied in unison, ἀμήν in Greek but actually אָמֵן in Hebrew.<sup>74</sup>

Thus we move from letter Praescriptio to Doxology of faith confession about this Jesus who has accomplished our deliverance from sin. This then sets us up to hear a couple of prophetic oracles declaring in the tone of the ancient Israelitic prophets the message of Almighty God.

<sup>74</sup>“as expression of faith *let it be so, truly, amen* liturgical formula at the end of the liturgy, spoken by the congregation (cp. 1 Ch 16:36; 2 Esdr 15:13; 18:6; TestSol, TestAbr; TestJob 53:8; GrBar 17:4; ApcEsdr 7 end; ApcMos); hence τὸ ἄ. λέγειν **1 Cor 14:16**, cp. **Rv 5:14**.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 53.]

### III. The Prophetic Oracles to the Sovereign God, vv. 7-8.

7 Ἴδου ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν,  
καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς  
καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν,  
καὶ κόψονται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς.  
ναί, ἀμήν.

8 Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

7 *Look! He is coming with the clouds;*  
*every eye will see him,*  
*even those who pierced him;*  
*and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.*

So it is to be. Amen.

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

As we noted above under the discussion of prophetic oracle<sup>75</sup> in the Literary Genre section, John affirms his label of Revelation as a προφητεία, *prophecy* (1:3), with a pair of declarations using literary forms taken straight from the division of the Prophets out of the Hebrew Bible. Thus he anchors the divine message of the book solidly within the framework of the Israelite prophets from Amos onward in the eighth century BCE.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup>“A message from God delivered through a prophet. This is the primary way in which the word ‘oracle’ (Heb. *massa*) is used in the Bible. The word derives from a Hebrew word for ‘burden,’ implying that it is something placed by God upon the prophet that the prophet must ‘unload.’ The divine inspiration for oracles plays into the Balaam narrative, in which Balaam is hired to curse Israel, but discovers that when he opens his mouth, words of blessing come out instead (Num. 23–24); as a prophet, he is only able to speak what the Lord says through him (cf. Num. 24:13). Mic. 3:11, however, mentions prophets who give oracles for money, assuring rulers of what they want to hear. David delivers an oracle, in which the ‘spirit of the LORD’ speaks through him (2 Sam. 23:1–7). Oracles tend to be proclamations of doom or judgment (against the nations, Isa. 13:1; Nah. 1:1; against Israel, Ezek. 12:10; against Judah, Isa. 22:1). Acts 7:38 says that Moses received ‘living oracles’ from God at Mount Sinai, and Paul says in Rom. 3:2 that ‘the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.’ Heb. 5:2 uses the same expression (‘oracles of God’) as a description of basic Christian teaching.” [Mark Allan Powell, “Oracle” In *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated), ed. Mark Allan Powell, Third Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 726-27.]

<sup>76</sup>“Although discussions of prophecy in the OT often use the English word ‘oracle’ as a general term for any speech by a prophet, the RSV and other modern translations use it mostly to translate a single Hebrew word, *maššā*. *Maššā* designates a specific type of speech used by ancient Israelite prophets. Thus when translating *maššā*, ‘oracle’ indicates that a prophetic passage or speech belongs to this specific type.

“The OT identifies eighteen passages by means of the Hebrew term *maššā*. The RSV labels all of them with the term ‘oracle.’ These are: 2 Kgs 9:26a; Isa 13:2–14:23; 14:29–32; 15:1b–16:12;

His tendency will be to pair up two oracles at various points throughout Revelation: 13:9; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 21:5-8; 22:12-15, 18-20. But he does often introduce a single oracle message elsewhere in the book.

**The first oracle** in verse seven is formed by combining language from Dan. 7:13<sup>77</sup> and Zech 12:10-14,<sup>78</sup> and this is also found in Matt. 24:30.<sup>79</sup> The close affinity of Matt. 24:30 and Rev. 1:7 strongly suggests a common Christian tradition in circulation among the first century communities of believers.<sup>80</sup> But the differences

17:1b-11; 19:1b-25; 21:1b-10, 11b-12, 13b-17; 22:1b-14; 23:1b-18; 30:6b-7; Ezek 12:11-16; Nah 1:2-3:19; Hab 1:2-2:20; Zech 9:1-11:3; 12:1b-14:21; Mal 1:2-3:24[—Eng 1:2-4:6].”

[Richard D. Weis, “Oracle: Old Testament” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 28.]

<sup>77</sup>**Dan. 7:13.** As I watched in the night visions, I saw one *like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven*. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.

ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὄραματι τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο, καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν, καὶ οἱ παρεστηκότες παρῆσαν αὐτῷ.†

<sup>78</sup>**Zech. 12:10-14.** 10 And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, *when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him*, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. 11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 *The land shall mourn, each family by itself*, the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; 13 the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; 14 and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

10 καὶ ἐκχεῶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Δαυὶδ καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας Ἱερουσαλὴμ πνεῦμα χάριτος καὶ οἰκτιρμοῦ, καὶ ἐπιβλέμονται πρὸς με ἀνθ’ ὧν κατωρχήσαντο καὶ κόπονται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν κοπετὸν ὡς ἐπ’ ἀγαπητὸν καὶ ὀδυνηθήσονται ὀδύνην ὡς ἐπὶ πρωτοτόκῳ.† 11 ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ μεγαλυνθήσεται ὁ κοπετὸς ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ ὡς κοπετὸς ροῶνος ἐν πεδίῳ ἐκκοπτομένου.† 12 καὶ κόπεται ἡ γῆ κατὰ φυλὰς φυλὰς, φυλὴ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καθ’ ἑαυτάς, φυλὴ οἴκου Δαυὶδ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καθ’ ἑαυτάς, φυλὴ οἴκου Ναθαν καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καθ’ ἑαυτάς,† 13 φυλὴ οἴκου Λευὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καθ’ ἑαυτάς, φυλὴ τοῦ Συμεων καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καθ’ ἑαυτάς,† 14 πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ αἱ ὑπολειμμέναι φυλὴ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καθ’ ἑαυτάς.†

<sup>79</sup>**Matt. 24:30.** Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see *‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’* with power and great glory.

καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ τότε κόπονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄνουνται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς·

<sup>80</sup>Interestingly this combining of Dan. 7 and Zech 12 continues on in the church fathers, although done in a variety of ways, as Aune illustrates:

also suggest that neither text is directly dependent on the other.<sup>81</sup>

The standard ‘day of doom’ for the OT prophetic oracles exists here, but with a Christian perspective. The return of Christ is pictured with its corresponding reaction of wailing by those seeing Him come.

The first word ἰδοὺ follows the standard meaning consistent in Revelation when introducing discourse material: it is an emphatic validation of what is to be said.<sup>82</sup> Thus what is declared is indeed going to happen.

**The first strophe** of the oracale, ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, *He is coming with the clouds*, stands as a major theme in the book: [ἰδοὺ] ἔρχομαι ταχύ, *Indeed I am coming soon* (3:11); ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης, *Indeed I am coming like a thief* (16:15); καὶ ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ, *and indeed I am coming soon* (22:7); ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ, *Indeed*

A relatively apocopated version, which combines allusions to Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10-12, is still recognizable in *Did.* 16:8:

τότε ὄψεται ὁ κόσμος τὸν κύριον  
Then the world will see the Lord  
ἐρχόμενον ἐπάνω τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ  
coming on the clouds of heaven

A similar combination appears in Justin *Dial.* 14.8:

οἱ δὲ εἰς τὴν δευτέραν αὐτοῦ παρουσίαν  
But others [prophets] refer to his second coming  
ὅτε ἐν δόξῃ καὶ ἐπάνω τῶν νεφελῶν παρέσται  
when in glory and upon the clouds he will appear  
καὶ ὄψεται ὁ λαὸς ὑμῶν  
and your people will see  
καὶ γνωριεῖ εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν,  
and recognize the one whom they pierced,  
ὡς Ὡσηέ [sic! Zechariah] εἰς τῶν δώδεκα προφητῶν,  
as Hosea [i.e. Zechariah] one of the twelve prophets,  
καὶ Δανιήλ προεῖπον, εἰρημένοι εἰσι.  
and Daniel have predicted.

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 52-53.]

<sup>81</sup>“The similarities between Matt 24:30 and Rev 1:7 make it highly probable that there is some kind of traditional link between the two, while the differences indicate that neither text is directly dependent upon the other (Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 60-71).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 52.]

<sup>82</sup>“Ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, ‘Indeed, he is coming with the clouds.’ The demonstrative particle ἰδοὺ, derived from the verb ὄραῖν, ‘to see,’ occurs twenty six times in Revelation. ἰδοὺ, frequently translated ‘behold,’ has two different related meanings (Louw-Nida, § 91.10, 13; the discussion in EDNT 2:173 is overly subtle): (1) It functions as a marker of strong emphasis indicating the validation of the statement it introduces and can be translated ‘indeed, certainly,’ and in Revelation is always used with this meaning in speech (thirteen times: 1:7, 18; 2:10, 22; 3:8, 9[2x], 20; 5:5; 9:12; 11:14; 21:3, 5). (2) It functions as a marker to draw attention to that which it introduces and can be translated ‘look, listen, pay attention.’ In Revelation it is always used with this meaning in narrative (thirteen times: 4:1, 2; 5:6; 6:2, 5, 8, 12; 7:9; 12:3; 14:1, 14; 15:5; 19:11).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 53.]



I am coming soon (22:12). With variations on this core expression are ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ, **yes I am coming soon** (22:20a) and Ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ, **Amen, come Lord Jesus** (22:20b). Clearly an allusion to Dan. 7:13 (see above footnote 77), it omits the ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, **as the Son of man**, reference. But this omission is relatively common in early Christian uses of Dan. 7:13.<sup>83</sup>

The coming μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, with the clouds, is distinctive, and reflects John's use of a specific text tradition of Dan. 7:13.<sup>84</sup> This prepositional expression means that the clouds are not the vehicle of His coming; nor is He riding on top of the clouds (ἐπὶ), which is the image (ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) in Matt. 24:30, 26:64 and Mk. 14:62 (ἐν νεφέλαις, Mk. 13:26, Lk. 21:27). Rather the clouds are accompanying Him as a part of His vast army. Thus a variety of images are pictured inside the NT regarding the role of the clouds in the coming of Christ.

The point is to affirm the supernatural and dramatic return of Christ to this world at the close of human history. This will usher in the day of judgment for all humanity. This Christ has absolute control over the natural world and it stands ready to assist Him in making His return.

**The second strophe** καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς, **and every eye will see him**, picks up on Zech. 12:10b with the similar καὶ ἐπιβλέψονται πρὸς με, **and they will look upon me**. Both Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27 use the Zechariah image, but in distinctive ways: καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις [Luke: νεφέλῃ], **and then they will see the Son of Man coming with clouds (a cloud in Luke)**.

The point here is to affirm that every human being will be aware of this coming by Christ. It will not be secretive or limited to only a select few people knowing about it.

**The third strophe**, καὶ οἶπινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, **and as many as pierced him**, clearly picks up on the Hebrew text of Zech. 12:10b rather than the LXX common reading of καὶ ἐπιβλέψονται πρὸς με ἀνθ' ὧν κατωρχήσαντο, **and they will look upon me whom they**

<sup>83</sup>Other passages that omit this phrase include Did. 16:8; Justin I Apol. 52.3; Dial. 14.8; 120.4 (see Borsch, Son of Man, 48).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 54.]

<sup>84</sup>“The preposition μετὰ, ‘with,’ is found in Theodotion (reflecting the Aramaic preposition ܡܝܝܡ), while the LXX version (only extant in MSS 88 and 967, but reflected in the Syro-Hexapla as well) has ἐπί, ‘on, upon’; see Ziegler, Daniel, 169–70. There are several texts that refer to the coming of Christ with clouds (Matt 24:30 = Mark 13:26 = Luke 21:27; Matt 26:64 = Mark 14:62; Did. 16:8; Apoc. Pet. 1; Justin I Apol. 51.9; Dial. 14.8; 31.1; 120.4; see 4 Ezra 13:3).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 54–55.]

**have treated despitely.**<sup>85</sup>

Clearly in John's perspective the piercing of Christ alludes to the cross, although the Zechariah text refers to physical harm done through persecution.

**The fourth strophe**, καὶ κόπονται ἐπ' αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς, plays off of Zech. 12:12, and also matches Matthew 24:30. Here all humanity is included in the guilt of crucifying Christ and will recognize in that moment of His coming their guilt and accountability before Almighty God for their actions. The response will be κόπονται, the beginning of ‘wailing’ that is verbal expression of desperation prompted by terror from knowing what lies ahead in divine judgment. It is not repenting from sin, for by that moment no one will be allowed to repent since the time for repenting is over. Rather it is the terror of realizing that an horrible fate awaits and that absolutely nothing can now be done to alter it.

John's response is an emphatic affirmation of the truthfulness of what the oracle contains: ναί, ἀμήν, **yes, amen**. Used three times in Revelation (1:7; 16:7; 22:20) and a fourth time in altered form ναί, **yes** (14:13), the ναί is equivalent to ἀμήν and represents an intensifying of it when used together as in 1:7.<sup>86</sup>

**The second oracle** in verse eight does not have the poetic tones as per the first one. But it plays off a very Hebrew oriented background.

Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, **I am the Alpha and the Omega**, actually reflects a Hebrew structure commonly found in Jewish writings. The Hebrew word for truth,

<sup>85</sup>“The verb ἐξεκέντησαν is used together with the pronoun αὐτόν in Rev 1:7, as well as in John 19:37, where αὐτόν is omitted, though understood (as well as Aquila [σὺν ᾧ ἐξεκέντησαν], Theodotion [ὄν ἐξεκέντησαν] and Lucian [εἰς ὄν ἐξεκέντησαν]; Symmachus has ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεξεκέντησαν), and is therefore closer to the Hebrew text. Jellicoe (Septuagint, 87) claims that the citation from Zech 12:10 in Rev 1:7 reflects a Theodotianic reading, perhaps more accurately described as a proto-Theodotianic reading. Justin reads ‘and your people will see [ὄψεται] and will recognize whom they have pierced [εἰς ὄν ἐξεκέντησαν]’ (Dial. 14.8); cf. I Apol. 52.12: ‘and then they will see the one whom they pierced [εἰς ὄν ἐξεκέντησαν]’ (see Dial. 32.2); this is identical with the Lucianic text. In Dial. 64.7, the allusion to Zech 12:10 is phrased differently: ‘those who pierced him will see him and shall mourn him [ὄν ὄραν μέλλουσι καὶ κόπτεσθαι οἱ ἐκκενήσαντες αὐτόν]’ (see Dial. 118.1).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 56.]

<sup>86</sup>“**69.1 ναί:** an affirmative response to questions or statements or an emphatic affirmation of a statement—‘yes, yes it is true that, yes it is so, sure, indeed.’ πιστεύετε ὅτι δύναμαι τοῦτο ποιῆσαι; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Ναί, κύριε ‘do you believe I am able to do this? They said to him, Yes, Lord’ Mt 9:28; ἡ δὲ εἶπεν, Ναί, κύριε, καὶ γὰρ τὰ κυνάρια ... ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ ‘yes, indeed, I am coming soon’ Re 22:20.” [Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 664.]

תמא, is made up of the first consonant ת, the middle consonant מ, and the final consonant א of the Hebrew alphabet. This was a common way of referring to God. The Greek equivalent was to use the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.<sup>87</sup> This expression will be used two more in Revelation, in 21:6 referring to God and in 22:13 referring to Christ. The point of the expression is the sovereignty of God who controls everything from the first to the last.

The expression λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, *says the Lord God*, combines κύριος ὁ θεός in a way common to Revelation (11 times: 1:8; 4:8; 11; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 18:8; 19:6; 21:22; 22:5, 6) but not found often in the rest of the New Testament (6 times: Mt. 4:7, 10; Mk. 12:29; Lk. 1:16; Jhn. 20:28; usually as *my/your God and my/your Lord*). Who makes this claim of absolute sovereignty? The God is also is Lord makes this claim.

And how does He make this claim? As ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, *the one who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty One*. For the discussion of ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος see the same phrase above under *Salutatio*.

The other qualifier ὁ παντοκράτωρ, *the Almighty*, affirms again the sovereignty of God.<sup>88</sup> Used some

<sup>87</sup>Interestingly in the Greek magical papyri writings ΑΩ often function as a secretive divine name that carries supernatural power and authority.

The vowels Α and Ω occur together in the magical papyri as a permutation and abbreviation of the seven vowels (PGM IV.411,528, 992,993, 1224, 2351; V.363, 367; VII.476, 720; XIII.849–59 [twice], 931; XLIV [illustrated with a figure holding a staff with the letters Α and Ω on either side]; see Stanford, *Hermathena* 98 [1964] 43–44). Further, in the magical papyri, the seven vowels often function explicitly as a divine name (PGM XIII.39; XXI.11–14). This seven-vowel divine name can be used in self-predications (perhaps under the influence of Egyptian magic, where the magician pretends to be the deity): “I am ΑΕΗΙΟΥ[Ω ΑΕΗΙΟΥΩ]” (PGM III.661), or in PGM XIII.207: “Lord, I imitate [you by saying] the seven vowels ... Α ΕΕ ΗΗΗ” etc. Occasionally ΑΩ is found in conjunction with another divine name, as in “Abraxas ΑΩ” (PGM V.363, 367; cf. IV.528), or as a divine name (under the supposition that the seven vowels, individually, in various combinations, and collectively symbolize the divine name), e.g., “I call upon you with your name ΑΩ ΕΥ ΗΟΙ” etc. (PGM IV.1182–83; cf. IV. 992–93, 3238–39). Further, the letter aleph was understandably associated with the concept of beginning or ἀρχή: “First origin of my origin, ΑΕΗΙΟΥΩ, first beginning [ἀρχή ... πρώτη] of my beginning” (PGM IV.487–88). The divine name most frequently used in the magical papyri is iao, a name also used in conjunction with ΑΩ in sequences of vowel permutations functioning as voces magicae, “magic words,” often juxtaposed with series of other divine names (see Aune, “iao,” *RAC*, 17:1–12).

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 57.]

<sup>88</sup>“The term παντοκράτωρ, referring to God’s supremacy over all creation (from the terms πᾶν, ‘all,’ and κρατεῖν, ‘to rule’), occurs nine times in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22) and is a favorite designation for God found frequently in early Jewish sources, and occasionally in pagan sources (for

nine times in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22), it is a popular reference to God in Jewish writings, and also to pagan deities in the pagan sources.

The one who claims sovereignty is indeed the sovereign ruler over all. And the return of Christ -- to be pictured in the book -- will validate that claim dramatically.

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

In this somewhat disjointed second part of the Prologue to Revelation in vv. 4-8, what message is there for us?

discussions of this title, see Höfer in Roscher, *Lex.* 3:1558–59; Michaelis, *TDNT* 3:914–15; MM, 478; Beskow, *Rex Gloriam*, 295–307; Horsley, ed., *NewDocs* 3:118). In Revelation the term is always used of God (as is ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, etc. in 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17) and occurs nine times (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22), though never in the secondary frame of Revelation, i.e., in 1:1–3, 12–20; 2:1–3:22; 22:6–21. The title occurs six times in the fixed invocation κύριε/κύριος ὁ θεός ὁ παντοκράτωρ (4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22). Elsewhere in the NT the title occurs only in a quotation from Amos 3:13 in 2 Cor 6:18. The term occurs nearly 170 times in the LXX, most frequently as a translation of the divine titles שְׁבָאֵ־וֹת (KB3, 3:934–35; in the transliterated form σαβαοθ [and related spellings], the name occurs frequently in the magical papyri and on magical gems) and ἡσάδδαι (often translated *omnipotens* in the Latin Vulgate; see KB, 4:1319–21). παντοκράτωρ occasionally occurs in other Jewish Greek literature also (T. Abr. [Rec. A] 8:3; 15:12; Paral. Jer. 1:5; 9:6; 3 Apoc. Bar. 1:3; Ep. Arist. 185.2; Pr. Man. 2.22.12 [Denis, *Fragmenta*, 115]; Sib. Or. 1.66; 2.330; T. Sol. 3:5; 6:8). It also occurs in four Jewish inscriptions from Gorgippia (Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 136) and in a dedicatory inscription from the Sardis synagogue (Robert, *Sardes*, 48–49; Lifschitz, *Donateurs*, no. 20). παντοκράτωρ occurs with some frequency in the magical papyri, sometimes as the result of Jewish influence (PGM III.218; XIII.761–62), but often clearly not (PGM IV. 272, 1375; VII.668; XII.71, 238, 250; XIV. 17). In the magical papyri, παντοκράτωρ is used of Agathos Daimon (PGM XII.238; XIVa.9; LXXI. 1–5), Typhon-Seth (PGM IV. 272; VII.962; XIVc.17), Albalal (PGM IV.968), Adonai (PGM IV. 1552), Helios (PGM XXIIa. 19), and Hermes (PGM VII.668); cf. Nock, *Essays* 1:383. The title is applied to Helios in an invocation in Macrobius *Sat.* 1.23.21. A relatively close parallel to Rev 1:8 (which includes the title ὁ ὢν) is found in PGM LXXII.3: ὁ ὢν θεός ὁ Ἰάω, κύριος παντοκράτωρ, ‘The God who is, iao, Lord Almighty.’ The title also occurs with some frequency in early Christian texts (LPGL, 1005) such as the Apostolic Fathers (Did. 10:3; 1 Clem. inscr. 2:3; 32:4; 56:6; 60:4; 62:2; Pol. Phil. inscr.; Hermas *Vis.* 3.3.5; Sim. 5.7.4 [var. lect.]; Diogn. 7.2; Mart. Pol. 14.1; 19.2). In Christian magical papyri, the title is most frequently used in connection with other divine titles in invocations (PGM 1.1; 8.1; 9.1; 13a. 1; 21.1, 43–45; 24.1; Kropp, *Koptische Zaubertexte* 2:176, 178, 180; Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia*, 15.1, 11, 14; 26.7; 55.13; 409.23; 410.11, 13; 413.25; 477.9–10), where it is frequently applied to Christ. The Greek and Hebrew forms of the title are occasionally juxtaposed as if they represented different titles (Kropp, *Koptische Zaubertexte* 2:181, ‘Pantokrator Sa[baoth],’ and 2:182, ‘Jao Sabaoth Adonai Elohi, Pantokrator’; cf. 2:188).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 57–58.]

**First**, we must recognize both the summary and the anticipatory nature of this Prologue (vv. 1-8). The foundational images painted with brushes often from the OT prophets captures the essence of the coming Day of the Lord that was central to the messages of Amos and the others from the eighth century on in ancient Israel. These images first put on the table in this beginning section will be repeated and developed all through the document. But most of the images have their roots in the OT and must be interpreted against this backdrop from a Christological perspective in early Christianity.

**Second**, the epistolary *Praescriptio* reminds us of the care and concern of an aged Christian leader for believers that he was writing to in the seven churches of Asia. This literary form, particularly in the expansion elements such as here in the *Salutatio*, affirm a sense of closeness from the sender to the recipients of the document. Some preachers with increased fame and recognition distance themselves from the people God called them to minister to. I know of one Texas Baptist pastor who mostly out of his bloated ego surrounded himself with several body guards so that no one but a small group of select friends and family could get through to him. Nothing to could more opposite than the stance of the apostle John here toward his readers.

**Third**, we need to do a “God check up”! The images of both God and Christ in this text are awe inspiring and push us to bow in humble reverence before such a powerful God. He reigns over the earth from His throne, but yet through His seven-fold Spirit makes His overwhelming Presence felt over all the earth. His Son stands as His main witness affirming that power through His resurrection, and exercising ultimate control over all the kings of the earth. He loves us deeply as affirmed in His sacrificial shedding of His blood for us on the cross. And He is returning to His people in order to bring accountability upon those who have opposed God and His people. Indeed He is the sovereign Almighty over everything and everyone!

**Fourth**, our great spiritual need is that of the Doxology here. We need to fall on our knees in profound confession of this greatness of our God. John through the vehicle of the Doxology calls upon his readers to affirm this nature and character of God. We do not make God to be like this in confession. Rather, we accept and affirm God as being this way in doxological confession of Him.

**Fifth**, we are privileged to stand on the shoulders of the Old Testament prophets, Daniel and Zechariah in particular, to glimpse into a spiritual certainty as sure as the rising of the morning sun! He is coming! To be sure, that coming will spell the doom of those who have opposed and sought to harm Him. But for the people of

God who have also suffered at their ungodly hands, this coming represents justice full and complete. The doom of the wicked is guaranteed by the sovereign Almighty who controls all things. The powerful and the mighty of this world will stand utterly helpless in condemnation before this awesome God. His justice will prevail upon this earth.

Sixth, John has set up us to expect more to come. This Prologue comes as the appetizer letting us know that the heart of the spiritual meal is yet to come. In saturating ourselves with the words of these eight verses we begin catching a glimpse of what remains in the book.

I hope that this excites you as much as it does me! Challenging yes! But interesting yes even more! We can look forward to submerging ourselves in the waters of apocalypticism out of early Christianity and Judaism. They are sometimes a bit choppy but none the less refreshing and exciting.