

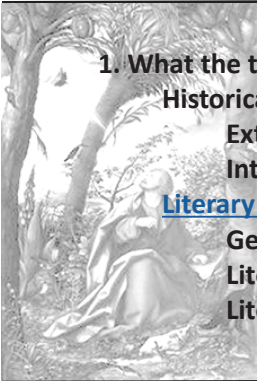


# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 49

Text: Rev. 21:1-8

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# A New Heaven and Earth

### Greek NT

### La Biblia de las Américas

### NRSV

### NLT

21.1 Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν. ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι. 2 καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἠτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς. 3 καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης· ἴδου ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός], 4 καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν.

1 Y vi un cielo nuevo y una tierra nueva, porque el primer cielo y la primera tierra pasaron, y el mar ya no existe. 2 Y vi la ciudad santa, la nueva Jerusalén, que descendía del cielo, de Dios, preparada como una novia ataviada para su esposo. 3 Entonces oí una gran voz que decía desde el trono: He aquí, el tabernáculo de Dios está entre los hombres, y ellos serán su pueblo, y Dios mismo estará entre ellos 4 El enjugará toda lágrima de sus ojos, y ya no habrá muerte, ni dolor, porque las primeras cosas han pasado.

21.1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

21.1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband. 3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever."

5 Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· ἴδου καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα καὶ λέγει· γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν. 6 καὶ εἶπέν μοι· γέγοναν. ἐγὼ [εἶμι] τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος. ἐγὼ τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς δωρεάν. 7 8 ΠERO los cobardes, incrédulos, abominables, asesinos, inmorales, hechiceros, ídólatras y todos los mentirosos tendrán su herencia en el lago

5 Y el que está sentado en el trono dijo: He aquí, yo hago nuevas todas las cosas. Y añadió: Escribe, porque estas palabras son fieles y verdaderas. 6 También me dijo: Hecho está. Yo soy el Alfa y la Omega, el principio y el fin. Al que tiene sed, yo le daré gratuitamente de la fuente del agua de la vida. 7 El vencedor heredará estas cosas, y yo seré su Dios y él será mi hijo. 8 Pero los cobardes, incrédulos, abominables, asesinos, inmorales, hechiceros, ídólatras y todos los mentirosos tendrán su herencia en el lago

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

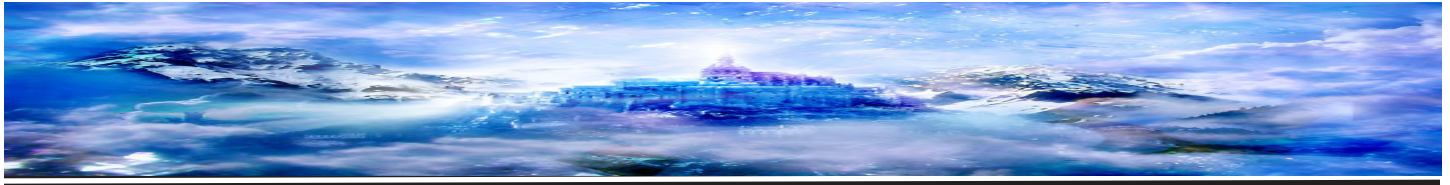
5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making all things new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." 6 And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega -- the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give the springs of the water of life without charge! 7 All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they

ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν  
καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις  
καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν  
τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν  
ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ  
καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ  
δεύτερος.

que arde con fuego y azufre,  
que es la muerte segunda.

fornicators, the sorcerers,  
the idolaters, and all liars,  
their place will be in the lake  
that burns with fire and sulfur,  
which is the second death.”

will be my children. 8 But  
cowards who turn away from  
me, and unbelievers, and the  
corrupt, and murderers, and  
the immoral, and those who  
practice witchcraft, and idol  
worshippers, and all liars --  
their doom is in the lake that  
burns with fire and sulfur.  
This is the second death.”



## INTRODUCTION

With 21:1-8 we come to a dramatic turning point in John’s apocalyptic vision. All evil is now destroyed and banished forever into the lake of fire. His sole focus from this point forward will be on the marvelous provision of God for His people in eternity.

As explained below, this unit of text is transitional in nature. It brings to a close the emphasis upon the destruction of all evil begun in detail in chapter seventeen. The great battle of evil against God at the end is over and all evil has been condemned to eternal torments. God has protected His people from harm in this attack. They have now experienced the transformation into eternal existence which allows them to stand before Almighty God forever and without fear of harm.

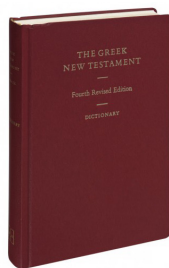
In the final two chapters of Revelation, more detailedly 21:9-22:5 (22:6-21 takes on the form of a letter Conclusio), the sole focus is on heaven and the variety of images that help explain the meaning of being in God’s presence in eternity.

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

Again the literary aspects will play a more important role than the historical aspects largely due to the apocalyptic visionary nature of the text.

#### Historical Aspects:

**External History.** In the history of the hand copying of this text prior to the printing press, variations in wording surface. In the Text Apparatus of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev ed), three places of variation arise in comparing the still existing manuscripts of the passage, which the editors feel may possibly impact the translation of this passage.



**21:3 λαοί, peoples, {B}.**<sup>1</sup> The issue here is be-

<sup>1</sup>{B} λαοὶ x A 046 2050 2053 2062 2329 itar Irenaeus<sup>lat</sup> Andrew // λαός 051supp 205 209 1006 1611 1841 1854 2030 Byz

tween the plural λαοί, *peoples*, and the singular λαός, *people*. The external evidence slightly favors the plural, but the internal evidence is rather evenly divided.<sup>2</sup> The essential meaning remains the same whether the plural or the singular is adopted.

**21:3 μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται, [αὐτῶν θεός], with them he will be [and be their God], {C}.**<sup>3</sup> The issue is whether the phrase αὐτῶν θεός, their God, was a part of the original writing of John or not. It seems to be redundant, which is reflected in the various alterna-

[P] it<sup>gig, sin</sup> vg syr<sup>ph, h</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> arm eth Ambrose Augustine Primasius Apringius Beatus

[Kurt Aland 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>2</sup>“It is difficult to decide between the readings λαοί (peoples, so NRSV and TOB) and λαός (people, so RSV, REB, NJB, TEV, and most modern translations), although the plural has slightly superior manuscript support. Has the author followed the prophetic Scriptures that consistently speak of the one people of God (for example, Jer 31:33 [= LXX 38:33]; Ezek 37:27; Zech 8:8)? In that case, the plural λαοί was introduced by copyists who simply made the noun agree with the preceding plural pronoun αὐτοί (they). Or, did the author deliberately modify the traditional concept, substituting ‘the many peoples of redeemed humanity for the single elect nation, the world for Israel’ (Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. xxx)? In that case, the singular λαός was written by a copyist who changed the plural to the singular to agree with the imagery of the OT.” [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), 549.]

<sup>3</sup>{C} μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται αὐτῶν θεός A (1854 θεός αὐτῶν) 2030 (2050 καὶ ἔσται) 2053<sup>comm</sup> (2053<sup>txt</sup> 2062 ὁ θεός) 2329 2377<sup>vid</sup> vg eth Irenaeus<sup>lat</sup>; Ambrose<sup>1/2</sup> Apringius Beatus // ἔσται μετ’ αὐτῶν θεός αὐτῶν, P 051<sup>supp</sup> 205 209 Andrew // μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται θεός, 1006 1611 1841 (cop<sup>sa, bopt</sup>) // μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται (x ἔσται before μετ’) Byz [046] it<sup>gig, (sin)</sup> (cop<sup>bopt</sup>) Ambrose<sup>1/2</sup> (Augustine) (Primasius)

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]



tive wordings.<sup>4</sup> Again no meaning shift is at issue here. Rather, just a matter of how much emphasis is placed on His people belonging to God.

**21:4 [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα, [because] the first things, {C}.**<sup>5</sup> The issue here is over the presence or absence of the causal dependent conjunction ὅτι. Given the thought flow of the full sentence, the idea of this final statement standing as a reason for what precedes is clear with or without the conjunction.<sup>6</sup>

In the Text Apparatus of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th rev ed), some 29 places

<sup>4</sup>“It is very difficult to determine the original reading. Did copyists omit the expression αὐτῶν θεός (or θεός αὐτῶν) because it seemed totally unneeded, or was it added as a comment in the margin, taken from Isa 7:14 and 8:8? The preceding clause (καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται [and they will be his people]) seems to require some such parallelism as provided by αὐτῶν θεός or θεός αὐτῶν (and he will be their God). But were these words the author’s or were they supplied by a copyist who recognized the need for the parallelism?”

“Moreover, in choosing between αὐτῶν θεός and θεός αὐτῶν, one is faced with conflicting considerations. The word order αὐτῶν θεός seems to be contrary to the author’s usage elsewhere (only in 18:5a does such an order appear). The order θεός αὐτῶν, however, may have arisen because a copyist wanted to avoid the word order αὐτῶν ἔσται αὐτῶν. In light of all these considerations, the text of manuscript A has been followed, but the words αὐτῶν θεός have been put in brackets to indicate uncertainty regarding the original text.

“A literal rendering of the text is ‘God himself with them will be their God.’ This may be translated ‘God himself will be with them, and he will be their God’ (TEV and similarly NIV) or ‘and he will be the God who is with them’ (TOB). NJB follows the longer text and takes this as a title: ‘and he will be their God, God-with-them.’ The shorter reading is followed by NRSV and REB: ‘and God himself will be with them.’”

[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), 549–550.]

<sup>5</sup>{C} ὅτι τὰ πρῶτα κ1 205 209 1854 Byz [046] it<sup>ar</sup> (it<sup>gig</sup> τὰ γὰρ πρῶτα) vg<sup>cl, ww</sup> sy<sup>rh</sup> cop<sup>sa, (bo)</sup> arm Irenaeus<sup>lat</sup>; Augustine Quodvultdeus Primasius // ὅτι ταῦτα 2050 // τὰ πρῶτα A P 051<sup>supp</sup> 1006 1611 1841 2030 2053 2062 2329 2377 Andrew // quae prima vg<sup>st</sup> Apringius Beatus // τὰ πρόβατα κ\*

[Kurt Aland 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>“The variant readings will have little significance for translation since the meaning is the same. On the one hand, it can be argued that the reading without ὅτι is original since (a) it has strong manuscript support and (b) copyists would have added ὅτι or γὰρ in order to make a smoother connection between clauses. On the other hand, it is altogether possible that the reading with ὅτι is original and copyists accidentally omitted it because of the preceding ἔτι. In order to indicate this uncertainty regarding the original text, ὅτι is put in brackets.” [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), 550.]

surface where variations of readings appear.<sup>7</sup> But careful examination re-



- 21,1**  
 \* απηλθεν P 1854. 2030 lat (ἀπηλθαν is replaced)  
 | παρηλθεν 051 M<sup>A</sup>  
 \* και την θαλασσαν ουκ ειδον ετι A (καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι is replaced)  
**2**  
 \* P 051 M<sup>A</sup> (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ is listed in different sequences)  
**3**  
 ουρανου P 046. 051s. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329. 2377 M gig sy co; Ambr Prim (θρόνου is replaced)  
 | txt κ A lat; Ir<sup>lat</sup>  
 \* εσκηνωσεν κ\* 1611. 2050 gig vg<sup>mss</sup> sy<sup>h</sup> (σκηνώσει is replaced)  
 \* I λαιος P 051s. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2062com M<sup>K</sup> lat sy (λαοὶ is replaced)  
 | txt κ A 046. 2030. 2050. 2053. 2062txt. 2329 MA ar; Irlat  
 \* 1–3 046 M<sup>K</sup> gig (different sequences for μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται αὐτῶν θεός)  
 | 3 1 2 κ sin; Aug  
 | 3 1 2 5 4 P 051s MA  
 | 1–3 5 4 1854  
 | 1–3 5 1006. 1611. 1841  
 | txt A 2030. 2050. 2053com. 2329. (ο θεος 2053txt. 2062) vg; Ir<sup>lat</sup>  
**4**  
 \* ο θεος A 1006. 1841 vg; Apr (ὁ θεός inserted before πᾶν)  
 | απ αυτων 046 M<sup>K</sup>  
 \* απο P 046. 051s. 1006. 1611. 1854. 2030. 2050. 2053. 2062. 2329. 2377 M; Ir<sup>lat</sup> (ἐκ is replaced)  
 | txt κ A 1841  
 ° κ 2050. 2329 (ὁ before θάνατος is omitted)  
 \* κ 2030 (οὔτε πόνος omitted)  
 \* 1 3 4 A P 051<sup>s</sup>. 1006. 1611. 1841. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> (ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα in different sequences)  
 | 2 3 4 κ1; Aug  
 | ετι τα προβατα κ\*  
 | txt 046. 1854. 2050 M<sup>K</sup> ar sin vg<sup>ww</sup> sy<sup>h</sup>; Ir<sup>lat</sup>  
 \* απηλθεν κ 046. 1854. 2050. 2053. 2062. 2329 M<sup>K</sup> (ἀπηλθαν is replaced)  
 | παρηλθον 1611 sy<sup>ph</sup>  
**5**  
 ° M<sup>K</sup>; Ir<sup>lat</sup> Apr (Καὶ is omitted)  
 \* λεγει 1854. 2030. 2377 (εἶπεν is replaced)  
 \* καινοποιω 051s. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> (καινὰ ποιῶ is replaced)  
 \* μοι κ P 051<sup>s</sup>. 1006. 1841<sup>vid</sup>. 2050 M<sup>A</sup> ar vg<sup>cl</sup> sy<sup>ph</sup> co (μοι is inserted after λέγει)  
 \* του θεου 046. 1854. (2329) M<sup>K</sup> sy<sup>h\*\*</sup> (after ἀληθινοί is inserted τοῦ θεοῦ)  
**6**  
 \* λεγει κ (εἶπέν is replaced)  
 \* γεγονα (γεγοναν κ<sup>2a</sup>, – κ<sup>2b</sup>) εγω (– M<sup>K</sup>) κ P 046. 051s. 1611. 1854. 2030. 2050. 2329. 2377 M sy<sup>h</sup> sa (γέγοναν. ἐγώ [εἰμι] is replaced)  
 | txt A (γεγονασιν 1006. 1841. 2053. 2062) (latt) sy<sup>ph</sup>  
 \* κ 046 M<sup>K</sup> (before ἡ ἀρχὴ is inserted καὶ)  
 \* αυτω 046 M<sup>K</sup> (after δῶσω is inserted αὐτῷ)  
 \* A (τῆς πηγῆς is omitted)

veals a combination of stylistic improvements and careless copying habits account for these variations.

Consequently, we can exegete the adopted reading of the text in high confidence of it being the original wording of the passage.

**Internal History.** The time and spatial references in this passage are exegetical issues without extensive background concerns. They will be treated below in the Exegesis section.

### Literary Aspects:

The literary aspects are the most significant background issues and shape one's understanding of the text meaning.

**Genre:** Of course, the apocalyptic vision of John continues here and serves as a reminder of the ahistorical nature of what John experiences in his vision.

Two natural units surface here -- vv. 1-4 and vv. 5-8 -- with distinctive literary patterns in each unit.

Verses 1-4 effectively form a chiasmus in the following pattern:

- a new [καινός] heaven and the new [καινή] earth (v 1a)
- b first [πρῶτος] heaven, earth, and sea have passed away [ἀπῆλθαν] (v 1b)
- c the sea exists no longer [οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι] (v 1b)
- d the holy city descends from heaven (v 2)**
- d' God dwells with people (vv 3-4a)**
- c' death exists no longer [οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι] (v 4b)
- b' former things [τὰ πρῶτα] have passed away [ἀπῆλθαν] (v 4b)
- a' God creates everything new [καινά] (v 5a)<sup>8</sup>

The functional objective of using such an ancient literary device was to highlight the central emphasis of this unit on the points d/d'.<sup>9</sup> Some likelihood exists that ini-

7

\* δῶσω αὐτῷ 046 M<sup>K</sup> sy<sup>hmg</sup> (κληρονομήσει is replaced)

\* αὐτῶν A 1854. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> sin v<sup>gms</sup>; (Tert) (αὐτῷ is replaced)

\* 2-4 A 1006. 1841 sa (αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός is either replaced or re-sequenced)

| αὐτοὶ εἰσονται μοι υἱοὶ 051s. 1854. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup>; (Tert)

8

\* καὶ ἀμαρτωλοῖς 046. 1854. 2329 M<sup>K</sup> sy<sup>ph,h\*\*</sup> (after ἀπίστοις is inserted καὶ ἀμαρτωλοῖς)

° 051<sup>s</sup> M<sup>A</sup> (καὶ before ἐβδελυγμένοις is omitted)

\* ψευσταὶς A (ψευδέσιν is replaced)

\* 3 4 2 051s. 1854. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> (ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεῦτερος is sequenced differently or replaced)

| θάνατος P

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 783-784.

<sup>8</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1114.

<sup>9</sup>“The structure of this passage is now intended to direct the

tially John sketched out through 21:4 and went directly to 22:3. Later the section of 21:5-22:2 was inserted into the text between 21:4 and 22:3 as an expansion of 21:1-4 in order to give greater emphasis to the new Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup>

The audition nature of vv. 5-8, introduced by καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, *And the One sitting upon the throne said*, is somewhat distinct since only in 1:8 elsewhere in Revelation is the Voice clearly identified as that of God. What follows in the unit is largely a collection of seven declarations made previously in various parts of Revelation.<sup>11</sup> The sequential pattern εἶπεν reader to focus on the importance of the descent of the holy city since the longest description in this text unit is devoted to the significance of that event (vv 3-4a). In 21:1, the new heaven and the new earth are the objects of καὶ εἶδον, ‘then I saw,’ normally used to introduce a vision narrative or to focus on one aspect of a vision narrative in progress. This verse, however, provides no narration and remains as an abbreviated description of a vision that is not narrated.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1114.]

<sup>10</sup>“In order to make sense of the present order of the text, it is necessary to propose that that 21:3-4 was originally linked with 22:3-5 and that 21:5-22:2 was subsequently inserted into this passage. A number of NT scholars have correctly argued that 21:3-4 and 22:3-5 originally belonged together (e.g., J. Weiss, *offenbarung*, 107). But the sometimes concomitant view that all or part of the material inserted in 21:5 to 22:2 was an originally coherent Jewish apocalyptic composition (Bergmeier, *ZNW* 75 [1984] 90-101) does not seem correct. The arguments for the original unity of 21:3-4 and 22:3-5 are these: (1) These units form a poetic composition with four strophes, each consisting of four lines. (2) Twelve of the thirteen verbs in this unit are in the future tense (except ἔχουσιν in 22:5b, which functions as a futuristic present). (3) This poetic text has the formulaic expression οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, ‘there will no longer be’ (21:4b, 4c; 22:3a, 5a), which occurs nowhere else in Revelation. (4) The phrase ‘and the Lamb’ is bracketed because it is probable that the phrase was added to the text when 21:5-22:2 was added since the term ‘Lamb’ occurs no less than seven times in 21:1-22:5 (21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3) and always appears to be tangential and secondary.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1115.]

<sup>11</sup>“The second subunit, vv 5-8, is also an audition but a very special one because it is attributed to God, who is seated on his throne (elsewhere in Revelation only in 1:8 is God clearly the speaker). This speech is striking because it is essentially a collection of seven sayings (the number is probably intentional, like the seven beatitudes scattered throughout the book), the first three of which exhibit a formal similarity in contrast to the last four, thus producing a 3 + 4 pattern (the first three are introduced with verbs of saying, while the last four are not). While each of the sayings will be discussed in more detail in Comment, on 21:5-8 it is appropriate here to list them:

(1) Then the One sitting on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making everything new’ (v 5a).

(2) He also said, ‘Write, for this message is trustworthy and true’ (v 5b).

(3) He also said to me, ‘It is finished’ (v 6a).

(4) ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the

-- λέγει -- εἶπέν -- in vv. 5-6 was somewhat confusing to copyists who tended to harmonize with either the aorist εἶπέν or the present tense λέγει uniformly among the three verbs. In actuality the present tense λέγει surrounded by the two aorist tense verbs εἶπέν stylistically centers greater emphasis on the content spoken with λέγει.

**Literary Setting:** Rev. 21:1-8 comes as the climax of the larger section of 19:11-21:8;<sup>12</sup> End" (v 6b).

(5) 'I will freely give some water to the one who is thirsty from the well of living water' (v 6c).

(6) 'Those who conquer will inherit these things, for I will be their God and they will be my children' (v 7).

(7) 'But as for the cowards and unbelievers and the abominable and murderers and the immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all who lie, they will experience the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death' (v 8)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1114.]

<sup>12</sup>"Rev 21:1-8 is the third and last subsection within 19:11-21:8, a section framed by two parallel angelic revelations in 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9. 21:1-8 consists of two subordinate units of text, (1) 21:1-4 (an angelic speech from the throne) and (2) 21:5-8 (a speech of God, seated on his throne). This section is a textual unit framed at the beginning by the καὶ εἶδον, 'then I saw,' formula (v 1), which is used here to introduce a new vision (see Comment on 5:1), and at the end by the appearance of one of the seven bowl angels in v 9. V 9 serves as an introduction to a new text unit (21:9-22:6), which is carefully framed in a way parallel to 17:1-19:10." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Com-

<sup>21.1</sup> And

**589 I saw a new heaven and a new earth.**

For

**590 The first heaven and the first earth have passed away**

and

**591 the is no more.**

<sup>21.2</sup> And

**592 the holy city, the new Jerusalem, I saw**

coming down

out of heaven

from God

prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband.

<sup>21.3</sup> And

**593 I heard a loud voice**  
out of the throne  
saying:

Behold

**A the tabernacle of God (is)**

with men,

and

**B He dwells**

with them,

and

**C they will be His people,**

and

**Battle:**  
White Horse & Rider  
(19:11-16)

**Judgment:**  
Two Beasts  
(19:12-21)

**Summary of  
seals & trumpets**  
(20:1-6)



*Gog and Magog*  
(20:7-9)

*Satan*  
(20:10)

*White throne*  
(20:11-15)

**New creation**  
(21:1-8)



It brings this emphasis on the final destruction of evil to an end and begins the transition into the final emphasis on heaven for God's people in 21:9-22:7. This section has focused attention upon the final great battle and God's defeat and condemnation of the two beasts, Satan, and all evil people of the world. His own people are preserved for eternal blessing at His throne. The overwhelming power of God to instantly destroy all evil and banish it into the lake of fire is a major theme in 19:11-21:8. Now the scene is set for depictions of Heaven.

**Literary Structure:** The block diagram below visually highlights the internal arrangement of primary and secondary ideas inside the passage of vv. 1-8.

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1113.]

**D** *He will be the God with them*  
(as) [their God]`  
21.4 and

**E** *He will wipe every tear*  
out of their eyes,  
and

**F** *death will be no more*  
neither  
*pain*  
nor  
*crying*  
nor

**G** *pain will be any more,*  
[because] the first things have passed away.

21.5 And  
**594** *said the One sitting*  
upon the throne:  
Behold  
**H** *I am making all things new*  
and  
**595** *He says:*  
**I** *Write,*  
because these words are faithful and true.

21.6 And  
**596** *he said to me:*  
**J** *It is over.*

**K** *I (am) the alpha and the omega,*  
the beginning and the end.

**L** *I will give to the thirsty ... a gift.*  
out of the spring water of life

**M** 21.7 *The one overcoming will inherit these things*  
and

**N** *I will be God to him*  
and

**O** *he will be to me a son.*

21.8  
**P** but  
*to the cowardly*  
and  
*unbelieving*  
and  
*detestable*  
and  
*murderers*  
and  
*immoral*  
and  
*sorcerers*  
and  
*idolators*  
and



(will bē) their share

in the lake

burning

with fire and sulphur,

which is the second death.

### Summary of Rhetorical Structure

Clearly the text divides into two basic units of material: #s 589 - 593G and 594 - 596P.

The first unit, #s 589-593G then subdivide into two clearly defined units: #s 589-592 and 593A-G. What John saw (#s 589-592) is followed by what he heard (#s 593A-G).

The second unit (#s 594-596P) revolved around God speaking from His heavenly throne. The collection of seven 'sayings' here are pulled from previous declarations earlier in Revelation, and thus represent something of a summation of chapters four through twenty.

### Exegesis of the Text:

The exegetical outline thus comes out of this internal arrangement of ideas inside the passage itself. The transitional nature of this passage means elements of it will reach back to the previous emphasis upon divine judgment and condemnation to Hell of all evil. But other parts of it will reach forward in anticipation of the next emphasis upon heaven and God's eternal blessing for His people. But these two sets of elements are intermingled together, rather than set apart in a one-two sequence. Yet, the dominant emphasis in each is first upon what lies ahead (vv. 1-4) and then upon what lays in the past (vv. 5-8).

#### A. What John saw and heard, vv. 1-4

21.1 Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν. ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι. 2 καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς. 3 καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγουσῆς· ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός], 4 καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν.

21.1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be

with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

John begins with his standard new topic signal, Καὶ εἶδον..., And I saw.<sup>13</sup> He then repeats εἶδον, I saw, in v. 2 but differently by placing the direct object τὴν πόλιν, the city, in front of the verb and immediately following οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν, as the direct objects of the first instance of εἶδον: verb εἶδον > **direct objects; direct object** < verb εἶδον.<sup>14</sup> Thus the central image of a new heaven and earth is linked closely with the heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth out of heaven. These critically important symbols communicate basic messages about God's care of His people. He creates an existence purged of all sin and corruption. And He sees His people as a city being protected and prepared for His people. The comparison of this city to a bride highlights its beauty to Christ who symbolically is its husband.

#### 1) What John saw, vv. 1-2

21.1 Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν. ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι. 2 καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

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

<sup>13</sup>καὶ εἶδον functions in three ways: (1) It introduces a new vision narrative (8:2; 10:1; 13:1; 14:1, 6, 14; 15:1; 19:11, 17; 20:1, 4, 12; 21:1; cf. Acts 11:5; Dan 8:2; 10:5; 12:5; Ezek 1:4; 3:13; 8:2; 13:1). (2) It introduces a major scene within a continuing vision narrative (5:1; 6:1; 8:13; 13:11; 15:2; 19:19; 21:2; 21:22; cf. Ezek 2:9). (3) It is used to focus on a new or significant figure or action that occurs within a continuing vision narrative (5:2, 6, 11; 6:2, 5, 8, 12; 7:2; 9:1; 16:13; 17:3, 6; cf. Acts 11:6; Dan 12:5; Ezek 37:8; 44:4)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 338.]

<sup>14</sup>Here the formula καὶ εἶδον, "then I saw," functions to focus attention on a new aspect of the vision (see Comment on 5:1). The style of this clause is unusual, for of thirty-three uses of the phrase καὶ εἶδον in Revelation, this is the only instance in which the object of a vision, in the accusative, is inserted between καὶ and εἶδον." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1120.]

The content of what John saw is first described as οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν, a new heaven and a new earth. In the background here stands Isaiah 65:17, especially in the LXX version, ἔσται γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς καινὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ, καὶ οὐ μὴ μνησθῶσιν τῶν προτέρων, οὐδ' οὐ μὴ ἐπέλθῃ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν, For I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.<sup>15</sup> This same Isaiah text, but following the Hebrew text more closely, is found in 2 Pet. 3:13, καινοὺς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ. But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Jewish apocalyptic literature also picks up on this same theme often.<sup>16</sup> The destruction of the pres-

<sup>15</sup>“This allusion to Isa 65:17 appears to be more closely related to the LXX than to the MT for three reasons: (1) the LXX has no equivalent for the Hebrew term בָּרָא *bārā*, ‘create’; (2) the term οὐρανόν, ‘heaven,’ is singular here and in the LXX, while the plural form שָׁמַיִם *šamayim*, ‘heavens,’ occurs in the MT (the allusion to Isa 65:17 in 2 Pet 3:13 has the plural form); and (3) the LXX phrase τῶν προτέρων, ‘the former things,’ is reflected in the choice of the terms ὁ πρῶτος and ἡ πρώτη, ‘the first,’ in Rev 21:1. The absence of the definite articles with οὐρανὸν καινόν, ‘new heaven,’ and γῆν καινὴν, ‘new earth’ (also absent in the allusion to Isa 65:17 in 2 Pet 3:13), however, may suggest either the independent translation of Isa 65:17 (or 66:22) by the author or dependence on a Greek version other than the LXX. The articles are absent from the MT and the Hexapla but present in the LXX.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1116.]

<sup>16</sup>“The theme of the re-creation or renewal of creation in ancient Judaism is not limited to Isa 65:17 and 66:22 but is referred to in a variety of ways in Jewish apocalyptic literature as the final eschatological act. This view is reflected in 1 Enoch 91:16, part of the Apocalypse of Weeks, written ca. 170 B.C. (Knibb, *Enoch 2:220*): ‘And the first heaven will vanish and pass away, and a new heaven will appear, and all the powers of heaven will shine for ever (with sevenfold [light]).’ Based on this parallel, Milik (*Enoch*, 199) and M. Black (“New Creation,” 17–18) argue that John was dependent on 1 Enoch. Similarly, 1 Enoch 45:4 speaks of the transformation of heaven. This view is reiterated in *Bib. Ant.* 3:10, a document that originated in Palestine during the first century A.D. It contains a description of the events that will follow the general resurrection and judgment presided over by God (tr. D. J. Harrington, *OTP* 2:307): ‘And the world will cease, and death will be abolished, and hell will shut its mouth . . . and there will be another earth and another heaven, an everlasting dwelling place.’

“A number of other passages in early Jewish apocalyptic literature refer to the re-creation or transformation of an eternal heaven or an eternal earth or both (though the ambiguity of some texts often makes it difficult to distinguish between creation and transformation): (1) creation of a new heaven and/or earth (2 Peter 3:13; 1 Enoch 72:1; 91:16; *Sib. Or.* 5.212 [καινὴ φύσις, ‘new nature’]; *Jub.* 1:29 [‘new creation’]; *Jub.* 4:26 [‘new creation’]; *Bib. Ant.* 3:10 [‘there will be another heaven and another earth’]; *Apoc.* *Elijah* 5:38 [dependent on Rev 21:1]; see 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) and (2) transformation or renewal of heaven and/or earth (1 Enoch 45:4–5; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 32:6; 44:12 [“new world”]; 49:3; 57:2; *Bib. Ant.* 32:17; *Jub.* 1:29; 4 *Ezra* 7:30–31, 75; *Tg. Jer.* 23:23; *Matt*

ent earth and heaven are an important part of Jesus’ teaching about the end: Mt. 5:18 // Lk. 16:17; Mk. 13:31 // Mt. 24:35 // Lk. 21:33. This idea comes up some in the early church fathers as well, e.g., *Didache.* 10:6 in the prayer, ἐλθέτω χάρις καὶ παρελθέτω ὁ κόσμος οὗτος. May grace come, and may this world pass by. All of these expressions in both Jewish and early Christian references play off the same source of Isa. 65:17–25. But how the old earth and sky are done away with is not defined by John in Revelation.<sup>17</sup> But 2 Pet. 3:7 speaks

19:28; Rom 8:21). According to IQS 4:25 there will be an equal allotment of the spirits of truth and error ‘until the determined end, and until the Renewal [הַרְצָה וְעִשׂוֹת חֲדָשָׁה עַד קֵץ נְחֻרְצָה *ad qēs nehērāšā wa ‘āsôt hādāšā*]’ (tr. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*). Here the phrase הַרְצָה וְעִשׂוֹת חֲדָשָׁה *wa ‘āsôt hādāšā*, literally ‘the making of the new,’ probably refers to the new creation (Leaney, *Rule*, 160–61). The apocalyptic notion of the re-creation of the heaven and the earth is given an anthropological application by Paul, who refers to Christians as a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), and by the author of IQH 11:13, who speaks of humans as ‘renewed together with all the living’ (tr. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 195).

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1116–1117.]

<sup>17</sup>“ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, ‘For the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea no longer existed.’ This statement, taken together with that in 20:11b, makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author has in view the complete destruction of the physical universe (Vögtle, “Himmel,” 304–6), though there are a number of scholars who think that a renewal or transformation of the universe is in view (Caird, 260, 265–66; Prigent, 324–25; Bauckham, *Theology*, 49–50). One of the striking features of this laconic statement is the fact that a destruction of the cosmos by fire is not mentioned here or anywhere else in Revelation (Bousset, *Antichrist*, 244). In early Judaism there was a tradition of two destructions of the world whereby God judges the human race, once by water and once by fire (Adam and Eve 49:3; *Jos. Ant.* 1.70; b. *Zebah.* 116a; cf. *Philo Abr.* 1.1; 2 Pet 3:5–7). The alternating destruction of the world, first by fire and then by water, is also found in Greek sources (Plato *Timaeus* 22c–d). Berossus speculated that cycles of great years, consisting of 432,000 years, each had a ‘summer,’ which brought a fiery conflagration of the world, and a ‘winter,’ which brought a universal flood (*Seneca Quaest. nat.* 3.29.1; Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, 176; Glasson, *Greek Influence*, 74–80).

“In the OT and early Judaism there is a link between divine judgment and fiery destruction (cf. Mayer, *Weltenbrand*, 79–99; TDNT 6:936–41), though it is often difficult to determine whether partial or complete destruction of the world is in view. In Isa 51:6 and Ps 102:25–26, the eternity of God is contrasted to the temporary existence of the heavens and the earth, which will eventually wear out and pass away. The destruction of the earth by fire in the day of judgment is predicted in *Zeph* 1:18–2:2 and 3:8. The phrase ‘the entire earth will be consumed by the fire of his/my passion’ occurs twice (*Zeph* 1:18; 3:8), but it probably refers to God rising to destroy the nations, not to the literal destruction of the earth itself (Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 133). A literal cosmic destruction is sometimes said to precede the restoration of earth, though it is frequently difficult to determine whether the authors intend partial or complete destruction (Isa 65:17; 66:22; *Jub.* 23:18; 1 Enoch 10:2; 91:16; IQH



11:32–33 [3:32–33]; 14:18 [6:18]). At least a partial destruction of the world by fire is expressed or implied in Isa 51:6 and 66:15–16 (Mayer, *Weltenbrand*, 104–14). In Sib. Or. 5.447 the drying up of the sea is an event predicted for the ‘last time.’ According to 1 Enoch 96:16 (which also alludes to Isa 65:17, though as a prophecy, not a vision), ‘The first heaven will vanish and pass away, and a new heaven will appear.’ The phrase ‘will vanish and pass away’ occurs in both 1 Enoch 96:16 and Rev 21:1, suggesting either literary dependence or dependence on a common apocalyptic tradition.

“There are several early Jewish apocalyptic texts in which the complete destruction of the cosmos is clearly in view (Ps.-Sophocles [Clement Alex. *Strom.* 5.14.121–22; Ps.-Justin *De monarchia* 3; text in Denis, *Fragmenta*, 167–68]; Sib. Or. 2.196–213; 3.8–92; 4.171–92; 5.155–61; 1QH 11:32–33 [3:32–33]; 14:18 [6:18]; LXX Isa 34:4; Jos. Ant. 1.70). The earliest such passage is in Ps.-Sophocles (tr. H. Attridge, *OTP* 2:826):

For there will, there will indeed, come that period of time  
when the gold-faced sky will split apart  
the treasury filled with fire, and the nurtured flame  
will in its rage consume all things on earth  
and in the heavens.  
And when the universe gives out,  
the whole wavy deep will be gone;  
the land will be empty of dwelling; the air,  
in flames, will not bear winged flocks.

“Since these texts originate from the second century B.C. and later, it is possible that the fiery destruction of the cosmos has been influenced by Stoicism (see below), though the infinitely repeated destructions of the cosmos advocated by Stoicism were never adopted (cf. *Tatian Oratio* 25.2). Theophilus (*Ad Autolyicum* 2.37–38) accused the Greek authors of stealing the notion of the conflagration of the universe from the prophets. According to the eschatological scenario in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 3:38 (tr. M. E. Stone, *OTP* 1:576), ‘Then the heaven and the earth and the sea will perish.’ According to *Apoc. Elijah* 2:1, the dissolution of heaven and earth is part of the eschatological scenario. In 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 3:7, the question is asked, ‘Will the universe return to its nature and the world go back to its original silence?’ The fiery destruction of the heavens is even part of the eschatology of the Coptic-Gnostic tractate *Orig. World* 126.29–35. This dominant view, that in the eschaton heaven and earth must either be recreated or transformed, appears to be contradicted by 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 19:2 (tr. A. F. J. Klijn, *OTP* 1:627), ‘heaven and earth will stay forever.’ The same perspective is reflected in *Tg. Jer.* 33:25 (tr. Hayward), where the idea that heaven and earth will pass away is opposed:

Thus says the Lord: Just as it is not possible that my covenant which I swore with the day and with the night should cease, so is the covenant of the heaven and the earth: I have made them that they should not pass away.

“The apocalyptic theme of the destruction of the heavens and the earth occurs occasionally in early Christianity (see Heb 12:26–27 [based on Hag 2:6]; 2 Pet 3:12; Justin 1 *Apol.* 20.1–4; 60.8–9; 2 *Apol.* 7.2–3; 2 *Clem.* 16:3; *Apoc. Peter* 5; *Minucius Felix Oct.* 11.1–3; 34.1–4; *Lactantius Div Inst.* 7.21). This theme is particularly associated with a logion of Jesus concerning the disappearance of heaven and earth, which is found in three major versions, one from the Q-tradition, where it is linked with the issue of the validity of the Torah, a second in the eschatological discourse (Mark 13 and par.), in which it is linked with the permanent validity of the words of Jesus, and a third in *Gos. Thom.* 11. Let us first examine the version preserved in the Q-tradition in Luke 16:17:

εὐκοπώτερον δέ ἐστιν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν παρελθεῖν

of a destruction by fire: οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων. **But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. Not clear is whether the idea of doing away with the old heaven and earth is a ‘destruction’ or a ‘remaking’ of them.**

The creation of a new earth and sky (οὐρανὸς does not equal Heaven, as in the dwelling place of God) comes out of Isaiah’s conviction that a new creation is necessary in order for the world to exist apart from the **contamination of passed sins of Israel.**<sup>18</sup> **One would want**

But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away

ἢ τοῦ νόμου μίαν κεραίαν πεσεῖν

than for one part of a letter to drop out of the law.

“To this may be compared a variant of this logion found in a secondary context in *Matt* 5:18:

ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ,

until heaven and earth pass away

ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου.

not one letter or one part of a letter will disappear from the law.

“It is probable that Luke’s version of this saying represents a more original version of Q in which the disappearance of heaven and earth is a metaphor for the permanence of the Torah. Though Matthew’s version may be understood to mean that the validity of the Law will end with the eschaton (the view of patristic exegesis), it is nevertheless probable that Matthew is using the phrase as an idiom meaning “never” (Luz, *Matthäus* 1:237 [ET 265]; for references see Banks, *Law*, 215 n. 1). Another version of this logion is found in the eschatological discourse (*Mark* 13:31 = *Matt* 24:35 = *Luke* 21:33; *Mark* 13:31 and *Luke* 21:33 are identical, while only insignificant changes are introduced in *Matt* 24:35):

*Mark* 13:31

ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, Heaven and earth will disappear,

οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται. but my words will not disappear.

*Matt* 24:35

ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσεται, Heaven and earth will disappear,

οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν. but my words will never disappear.

“A third major version of this logion is preserved in *Gos. Thom.* 11a:

Jesus said, “This heaven will pass away,

and the one above it will pass away,

and the dead are not alive

and the living shall not die.”

“In this passage the two heavens apparently include the lower created one consisting of the sun, moon, and stars as well as the upper one where God dwells (J. É. Ménard, *L’Évangile selon Thomas* [Montélimar: Marsanne, 1974] 37, 96). The context has completely changed, for there is no mention of the words of the Torah or the words of Jesus.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation* 17–22, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1117–1119.

<sup>18</sup>**Isaiah 65:17–25.** 17 ἔσται γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς καινὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινή, καὶ οὐ μὴ μνησθῶσιν τῶν προτέρων, οὐδ’ οὐ μὴ ἐπέλθῃ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν,† 18 ἀλλ’ εὐφροσύνην καὶ ἀγαλλίαμα

to observe that Isaiah is not projecting here a concept of eternity but a renewed Israel from the remnant returning from exile in Babylon, as he describes in very idealistic ways how God desires to bless His people after divine judgment destroyed Jerusalem and most of Palestine through the Babylonians. Out of this idealistic picture comes later apocalyptic and Christian reorientation of the image to reference the eternal order.

Note that the ancient traditional Hebrew dislike of the sea, especially the Mediterranean Sea, is reflected in the pointed declaration *καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, and the sea is no more.*<sup>19</sup>

The second image seen by John is *καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον, and the holy city, the new Jerusalem, I saw.* This expression here almost functions as a precursor to the detailed presentation in 21:9-22:7. Note the similar expression in 21:10, *καὶ*

*εὐρήσουσιν ἐν αὐτῇ· ὅτι ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ποιῶ Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἀγαλλίαμα καὶ τὸν λαόν μου εὐφροσύνην.† 19 καὶ ἀγαλλιάσομαι ἐπὶ Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ εὐφρανθήσομαι ἐπὶ τῷ λαῷ μου, καὶ οὐκέτι μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν αὐτῇ φωνὴ κλαυθμοῦ οὐδὲ φωνὴ κραυγῆς.† 20 καὶ οὐ μὴ γένηται ἐκεῖ ἄωρος καὶ πρεσβύτης, ὃς οὐκ ἐμπλήσει τὸν χρόνον αὐτοῦ· ἔσται γὰρ ὁ νέος ἑκατὸν ἐτῶν, ὁ δὲ ἀποθνήσκων ἁμαρτωλὸς ἑκατὸν ἐτῶν καὶ ἐπικατάρατος ἔσται.† 21 καὶ οἰκοδομήσουσιν οἰκίας καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνοικήσουσιν, καὶ καταφυτεύσουσιν ἀμπελῶνας καὶ αὐτοὶ φάγονται τὰ γενήματα αὐτῶν·† 22 καὶ οὐ μὴ οἰκοδομήσουσιν καὶ ἄλλοι ἐνοικήσουσιν, καὶ οὐ μὴ φυτεύσουσιν καὶ ἄλλοι φάγονται· κατὰ γὰρ τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς ἔσονται αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ λαοῦ μου, τὰ ἔργα τῶν πόνων αὐτῶν παλαιώσουσιν.† 23 οἱ δὲ ἐκλεκτοὶ μου οὐ κοπιάσουσιν εἰς κενὸν οὐδὲ τεκνοποιήσουσιν εἰς κατάραν, ὅτι σπέρμα ἠὲ λογημένον ὑπὸ θεοῦ ἔστιν, καὶ τὰ ἔκγονα αὐτῶν μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσονται.† 24 καὶ ἔσται πρὶν κεκράξαι αὐτοὺς ἐγὼ ἐπακούσομαι αὐτῶν, ἔτι λαλούντων αὐτῶν ἐρῶ· Τί ἔστιν;† 25 τότε λύκοι καὶ ἄρνες βοσκηθήσονται ἅμα, καὶ λέων ὡς βοῦς φάγεται ἄχρα, ὄφις δὲ γῆν ὡς ἄρτον· οὐκ ἀδικήσουσιν οὐδὲ μὴ λυμανοῦνται ἐπὶ τῷ ὄρει τῷ ἁγίῳ μου, λέγει κύριος.†*

17 For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. 20 No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. 21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well. 24 Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

<sup>19</sup>Interestingly, the copyist of codex A in Alexandria, Egypt with its great sea farewell tradition, drops this statement in its text. Perhaps he felt justified in dropping this reference to the sea since it is not mentioned in the Isa. 65 source used by John.

*ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.* Both 21:2 and 21:10 echo 3:12, *καὶ γράψω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἢ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου,* καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν. *And I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.* Finally, in 22:19, this τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἁγίας, *holy city,* is equated with eternal life in the presence of God.

The promise of God through Isaiah’s oracle in 65:18-24 to rebuild the destroyed city of Jerusalem in the return of His exiled people from Babylon serves as the launch pad for conceptualizing the heavenly Jerusalem as a new city, and one that comes as a gift from God as here in Revelation.

This holy city, the new Jerusalem, is said to be *καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, coming down out of heaven from God.* It is one of several things / beings that come down out of heaven: angel (10:1; 18:1; 20:1); fire (13:13; 20:9); and hailstones (16:21). But John is unique among ancient apocalyptic writers in describing the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, this new Jerusalem as a bride is *ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς, prepared as a bride dressed up for her husband.* Reference is again made to the bride in 22:17, *Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν· ἔρχου. And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”* But in 19:7-8, reference is made to the bride of Christ having prepared herself for the wedding day: *7 χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἡτοίμασεν ἑαυτὴν 8 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν· τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; 8 to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.* A few times in the Jewish literature the historical city of Jerusalem is referenced as a bride, although more often the image of mother is found.

The preparation of the young bride for her wedding day in the ancient world was a very elaborate matter in virtually all of the cultures of the first century world.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup>“In no other early Jewish or early Christian texts is the heavenly city said to ‘descend from heaven,’ but the city is variously described as ‘coming,’ ‘appearing,’ or ‘is revealed’ (4 Ezra 7:26; 13:36; 10:54).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1121.]

<sup>21</sup>“In the Greek world, the adornment of the bride, i.e., her trousseau, consisted primarily of clothing and jewelry (Blümner, *Greeks*, 138–39). Pliny Ep. 5.16.7 mentions the money that the



But married women in the Jewish tradition were encouraged to dress modestly, since the elaborate dress styles apart from that of a bride signaled that the woman was a prostitute seeking business, as is cautioned in 1 Timothy 2:9.

Interestingly only in Revelation is bride used for the people of God, or the church.<sup>22</sup> Note 22:9-10, 9 father of a bride had set aside for her clothing, pearls, and jewels. T. Jud. 13.5 refers to a king who ‘adorned with gold and pearls’ (αὐτὴν κοσμήσας ἐν χρυσῷ καὶ μαργαρίταις) his daughter who was about to be married. 1 Tim 2:9, however, recommends that women should adorn themselves (κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς) not with braided hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes (though this has nothing to do with the bridal trousseau; adornment with pearls and silk garments is a metaphor for virtues in Plutarch Con. prae. 145E). The adornment of the bride = New Jerusalem is in conscious antithesis to the adornment of the whore = Babylon (Rev 17:4).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1122.]

<sup>22</sup>“ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ The term νύμφη, ‘bride,’ is used of the Church here and in 21:9 and 22:17 in Revelation, but not elsewhere in early Christian literature. The metaphorical τοπος ‘as an adorned bride,’ however, is found in a variety of forms in ancient literature, primarily inspired by Isa 61:10, which uses the simile ‘as a bride adorns herself [התעדת כלה *kakkallâ ta’-deh*] with her jewels’ (see also Isa 49:18; van Ruiten, *EstBib* 51 [1993] 489–92).

“Here are several examples of this τοπος: (1) Aseneth is described as κεκοσμημένην ὡς νύμφην θεοῦ, ‘adorned as the bride of God’ (Jos. As. 4.1), a view that M. Philonenko takes not as metaphorical but as suggesting that she will marry a future king of Egypt who is in reality a god in disguise (Joseph et Aseneth [Leiden: Brill, 1968] 141). (2) The only possible allusion to Revelation in Hermas is to this verse, an allusion that occurs in Vis. 4.2.1, ἰδοῦ, ὑπαντᾷ μοι παρθένος κεκοσμημένη ὡς ἐκ νυμφῶνος ἐκπορευομένη, ‘Behold, a virgin met me adorned as though emerging from the bridal chamber.’ Even though this figure is interpreted as the Church (Vis. 4.2.2), the proverbial character of the saying together with the fact that no other allusions to Revelation occur suggests that it is probably independent of Revelation. (3) The character of this description as a τοπος is further suggested by the parallel in Irenaeus Adv. haer. 1.13.3 (Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei* 1:118), where the Gnostic Marcus reportedly says, εὐπρέπισον σεαυτὴν, ὡς νύμφη ἐκδεχομένη τὸν νυμφίον ἑαυτῆς, ‘Adorn yourself as a bride expecting her bridegroom.’ (4) A further parallel occurs in Achilles Tatius 3.7.5, ὥσπερ Αἰδωνεὶ νύμφη κεκοσμημένη, ‘as a bride adorned for Hades’ (a metaphor for Persephone). (5) Again, in Ep. Lugd. 1.35 (tr. Musurillo, Acts), where there does not seem to be an allusion to Rev 21:2, the martyrs in their chains are referred to metaphorically ‘as a bride adorned [ὡς νύμφη κεκοσμημένη] with golden embroidered tassels.’

“For the use of ἐτοιμάζειν, ‘to prepare,’ of the bride = New Jerusalem, see Rev 19:8. The combination of bride and city is mentioned in b. Soṭa 49b (tr. Epstein): “What means ‘crowns worn by brides’?—Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in the name of R. Johanan: A [miniature] golden city.” In b. Šabb. 59a the crown is described as a golden crown in the form of Jerusalem (S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie* 1:662 n. 961). In the OT, Israel is often described with female metaphors: as a young royal bride (Ezek 16:8–14), as a harlot (Ezek 16:15–22; Hos 2:2–3:5; Jer 2:1–2; 3:1; Ezek 16:11), and most commonly as the ‘mother’ (Isa 50:1; Hos 4:5; 4

Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἓκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τῶν γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων· δεῦρο, δείξω σοι τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου. 10 καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα ὃ καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, 9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

But some tension in the significance of the image of the new Jerusalem exists in John’s usage here. 1) In 21:2, 9-10, the city compares to a bride; 2) in 21:7 the saints will inherit the city; 3) in 21:24-28 the city is the place where only the saints dwell. This serves to remind us dramatically that the new Jerusalem is a symbol of God’s presence and protection of His people. Thus John can easily shift back and forth to the city as the bride of Christ, to a treasure to be inherited by God’s people, to a place where God’s people will live. All of these variations of the symbol of city where much easier to grasp from the perspective of the first century world of John’s readers. In the Greco-Roman side participation in a city as a citizen defined one’s being and value; one’s life revolved around the city. In the Jewish side, the religious importance of Jerusalem as the city of God where His presence on earth was found in the temple gave rich and diverse meaning to the idea of city.

## 2) What John heard, vv, 3-4

3 καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης· ἰδοῦ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσεται μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός], 4 καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν

Ezra 10:7–8; 2 Bar 3:1–3), who has ‘children’ (Isa 49:20–22, 25; 51:18–20; 54:1; Ezek 16:20). Jerusalem is described as a captive woman in Pss. Sol. 2:19–21, an image repeated in the various series of Iudaea capta coins minted under Vespasian after the fall of Jerusalem on 7–8 September A.D. 70 (Mattingly-Carson, *CREBM* 2:5–7, nos. 31–44; 115–18, nos. 532–47; 185, nos. 761–65; Cayón, *Compendio* 1:213–14, nos. 93–96) and Titus (Mattingly-Carson, *CREBM* 2:256–57, nos. 161–70; Cayón, *Compendio* 1:243, no. 49). The bridal metaphor is applied to the returning Jewish exiles in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 49:18) and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 61:10; 62:5). In late first-century A.D. Jewish apocalyptic literature, the New Jerusalem is occasionally called a ‘mother’ (4 Ezra 10:7–8; 2 Apoc. Bar. 3:1–3; cf. 4 Ezra 9:43–47; 10:17). In Valentinian teaching, according to Hippolytus (Ref. 6.34.3–4; ed. Marcovich, Hippolytus; cf. Irenaeus Haer. 1.5.3; 1.7.1), the heavenly Jerusalem is another name for Sophia, and the bridegroom (ὁ νυμφίος) of Jerusalem is ‘the common fruit of the pleroma.’”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1121–1122.]



δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

In addition to John seeing the new heaven and earth, along with the descending new Jerusalem, he heard another loud voice speaking to him from the heavenly throne: καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying. The motif of φωνῆς μεγάλης, a loud voice, is found in 4:1; 5:2, 12; 6:10; 7:1, 10; 8:13; 11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:2, 7, 9, 15, 18; 16:1, 17; 18:2; 19:1, 6; 21:3. An unidentified loud voice coming out of the heavenly throne, however, surfaces in 19:5; (cf. 6:6; 10:4) and 21:3. The statement εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, the One sitting upon the throne spoke, in v. 5 clearly distinguishes the first voice from that of God. Also, what the voice speaks in vv. 3b-4 references God in the third person as separate from the voice. This is consistent with the narrative perspective in 19:5 where the voice refers to God in the third person as separate from the voice. But the voice is closely connected to God since it originates ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου, out of the throne, although not in any specified way.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>“The identity of the heavenly voice is not specified, a phenomenon that frequently occurs in Revelation in audition reports (10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10–12; 14:2, 13; 16:1, 7 [var. lect.], 17; 18:4–8; 19:5; 21:3). The unidentified revelatory voice is a motif that occurs only occasionally in the OT, though, when it does, the speaker is usually understood to be God (Num 7:89; Ezek 1:28; Dan 4:31–32; 8:16); in early Judaism the term ‘voice’ is frequently used as a circumlocution for the name of God. Unidentified revelatory voices are mentioned with some frequency in the literature of early Judaism (Gk. 1 Enoch 13:8; Apoc. Ezra 6:3; 7:13; Apoc. Abr. 9.1; 10.1, 3; 19.1 [a voice from the midst of a fire]; T. Job 3.1; Apoc. Sedr. 2:1–4; 3 Apoc. Bar. [Gk.] 8:14; [Syr.] 8:14; Bib. Ant. 28:8 [within a dream of Kenaz]; Philo Decal. 46–49 [fire from heaven became articulate speech]; Ant. 1.185). These unidentified voices come from the heavenly temple (16:1; see 2 Apoc. Bar. 8:1–2; T. Levi 18:6 [perhaps a Christian interpolation; see Ulrichsen, Grundchrift, 204–5; Kuhn, Offenbarungsstimmen, 21–22]; see Jos. J. W. 6.300 and Tacitus Hist. 5.13), from both the temple and the throne (16:17), from the throne alone (19:5; 21:3), and perhaps from the altar (16:7 [var. lect.]). Most frequently, when the vantage point of the seer is earth, the unidentified voice comes ‘from heaven’ (10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:2, 13; 18:4–8; 21:3 [var. lect.]; see Ezek 1:28; Dan 4:31–32; T. Abr. [Rec. A] 10:12; 14:13–15; 2 Apoc. Bar. 13:1–2; 22:1; Apoc. Abr. 8.1 [identified as the voice of the Mighty One]; Bib. Ant. 53:3–5); when the vantage point is heaven itself, the voice is heard ‘in heaven’ (12:10–12). See Kuhn, Offenbarungsstimmen; id., Bat Qol: Die Offenbarungsstimme in der rabbinischen Literatur (Regensburg: Pustet, 1990). The unidentified voice is a motif

What is spoken is the more important item here, since it is a marvelous word of comfort and hope. Packed into a single Greek sentence several promises emerge here for the people of God:

a) *ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.* In the background of a), b), and c) stands Ezek. 37:27, καὶ ἔσται ἡ κατασκήνωσίς μου ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς θεός, καὶ αὐτοῖ μου ἔσονται λαός. And my dwelling place is with them, and I will be God to them, and they will be My people.<sup>24</sup> The

that occurs in Gnostic literature (Tri. Trac. 119.3; Ap. John II/1 14.13; Hyp. Arch. 88.17–18; Apoc. Adam 84.4–24; Paraph. Shem 1.16–17; 40.6; Ep. Pet. Phil. 134.13 [identified as Jesus Christ in 134.17]; 135.3; 137.19; 138.21).

“The unidentified revelatory voice is also a phenomenon of the Greco-Roman world (Plutarch De def. orac. 419b–c; Vergil Aeneid 3.93 [though the context indicates the voice is that of Apollo; see Servius In Aeneidem Commentarii 3.92–93]; 9.112). See Herodotus 1.159.3 (LCL tr.), ‘But while he so did, a voice [φωνήν] (they say) came out of the inner shrine [ἐκ τοῦ ἁδύτου] calling to Aristodicus, and saying ... [an oracle follows].’ The implication is clear that since this fictitious event is set in the temple of Apollo at Didyma, a famous oracle shrine, the voice must be that of Apollo (see Fontenrose, Didyma, 212–14). Strange voices were often regarded as prodigies in the Greco-Roman world (Tacitus Hist. 5.13 [see Jos. J. W. 6.300]; Cassius Dio 62.1.1–2).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 561–562.]

<sup>24</sup>“ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, ‘Behold, the dwelling of God is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people.’ This is almost certainly an allusion to Ezek 37:27, ‘My dwelling place [MT מִשְׁכַּנִּי *miškānī*] shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (Schüssler Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott*, 351; see Ezek 34:30; 36:28; Ezek 37:27 [quoted in 2 Cor 6:16]; cf. Zech 2:11a[MT 2:15a]). Tg. Ezek. 37:26–27 (tr. Levey) reads, ‘and I will bless them and make them numerous, and I will place My sanctuary in the midst of them forever. I will make My Shekinah dwell among them.’

“There are also a number of other relevant OT passages that contain similar themes: (1) Lev 26:11–12 reads, ‘And I will make my abode [Hebrew מִשְׁכַּנִּי *miškānī*] among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people’ (Rissi, *Future*, 57, sees this as the passage alluded to in Rev 21:3; cf. van Ruiten, *EstBib* 51 [1993] 498). (2) Zech 2:10b–11 (MT 2:14b–15; LXX 2:14b–15) is also pertinent: ‘for lo, I come and I will dwell [MT וְשָׁכַנְתִּי *wēšākanī*; LXX κατασκηνώσω] in the midst of you, says the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell [MT וְשָׁכַנְתִּי *wēšākanī*] in the midst of you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.’ It is probable that since ‘many nations’ are mentioned in Zech 2:11, Rev 21:3 should read λαοί, ‘peoples,’ rather than simply λαός, ‘people’; see Note 21:3.d. (3) In Ps 46:4 (MT 46:5) the phrase ‘city of God’ (עִיר אֱלֹהִים *‘ir ‘ēlōhīm*) is parallel to ‘dwelling place of the most high’ (עֲלִיּוֹן מִשְׁכַּנִּי *miškēnē ‘elyōn*). (4) Ezek 43:7 (‘where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel for ever’) and 43:9 (‘and I will dwell in their midst for ever’) use the verb שָׁכַן (= σκηνοῦν) as does the second clause in Rev 21:3b, while the phrase ‘among men’ (בְּאָדָם *bā’ādām*) could have been derived from Ps 78:60 (see Page 1012

original promise made to Israel is now applied to all the people of God with special focus on believers in Christ. God will set up His presence in the midst of His people. In John 1:14, John had earlier summarized the earthly ministry of Jesus with the same language: *Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. And the Word became flesh and set up His tabernacle among us, and we gazed upon His glory, glory as the only begotten One from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Now in Revelation that same promise becomes the everlasting presence of God in the midst of His people.

**b) καὶ σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, and He set up His tabernacle with them and they will be His peoples.** Against the backdrop of the exodus manifestation of the divine presence to the Hebrews, these affirmations reapply these earlier promises to God's people in Christ

**c) καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός], and God Himself is with them, being their God.** As God makes His home in the midst of His people, He alone stands as their God. The image αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται underscores the availability of God's help to His people.<sup>25</sup>

van Ruiten, EstBib 51 [1993] 499–500). (5) The covenant formula is also found in Exod 29:45 in connection with the establishment of the tabernacle: 'And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God.' According to Tg. Exod. 29:45 (tr. Grossfeld), 'And I will rest My Presence among the Israelites and be God to them.' The term σκηνή, 'dwelling,' occurs three times in Revelation, and all three occurrences are articular since the author apparently assumes that his readers are acquainted with that institution (13:6; 15:5; 21:3). The statement 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (Jer 31:33[LXX 38:33]) is a covenant formula, perhaps based on the *verba solemnia* associated with adoption (cf. Comment on 21:7), which occurs with some frequency in the OT and early Jewish literature (Lev 26:11–12; Jer 7:23; 31:1[LXX 38:1]; Zech 8:3, 8; Ezek 37:26–27; 43:7; Ps 95:7; T. Mos. 4:2; 11QTemple 59:13). (6) Ezek 37:27 is also alluded to in 11QTemple 29:7–8a, 'And I will accept them, and they shall be my people, and I will be theirs forever; [and] I will dwell with them for ever and ever.' This covenant language is significant because it is applied to all people universally (nb. the term λαοί), not just to a specific group. Emphasis on a specific group, i.e., the righteous in Israel, is found in T. Jud. 25:3 as well as in the many OT passages in which the covenant formula occurs referring to Israel as the people (Lev 26:12; Jer 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:28; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27–28; cf. 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 8:10)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1122–1123.]

<sup>25</sup>"There is a close parallel in 11QTemple 29:7b–8a (tr. García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 161–62), 'They shall be for me a people and I will be for them for ever.' The phrase 'God is with someone' is a metaphor for the presence of God reflecting victory in battle (Deut 7:21; 20:4; 23:14; 1 Chr 22:18; Isa 8:10; Zeph 3:17; Jos. J.W. 5.368; Ant. 15.138; Bib Ant. 35:5) or for a variety of other spiritual and temporal advantages and blessings (Gen 21:20; 31:5; 48:21; Exod 3:12; Num 23:21; Deut 20:1; 31:6; Josh 1:5, 9; 1 Sam

**d) καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, and He will wipe away every tear out of their eyes.** This statement is a verbatim repeat of 7:17c, ὅτι τὸ ἄρνιον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς καὶ ὀδηγήσει αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ ζωῆς πηγὰς ὑδάτων, *καὶ ἐξαλείψει ὁ θεὸς πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.* for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, *and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.* Clearly this goes back to the promise in Isa. 25:8, κατέπιεν ὁ θάνατος ἰσχύσας, καὶ πάλιν ἀφεῖλεν ὁ θεὸς πᾶν δάκρυον ἀπὸ παντὸς προσώπου· τὸ ὄνειδος τοῦ λαοῦ ἀφεῖλεν ἀπὸ πάσης τῆς γῆς, τὸ γὰρ στόμα κυρίου ἐλάλησεν. *He will swallow up death forever.* Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. Weeping and gnashing of teeth eternally will be the fate of the wicked. But God's people will have no reason to cry whatsoever.

**e) καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν. And death is no more neither mourning nor weeping nor crying nor pain because these former things have passed away.**<sup>26</sup> Again Isa. 25:8a stands in the background,

16:18; 1 Chr 17:2; 2 Chr 9:8; 15:9; 26:23; Neh 3:8; Isa 8:10; 41:10; 43:5; 45:14; Jer 42:11; Hos 11:9; Amos 5:14; Zeph 2:7; Zech 8:23; Job 29:3–5; Rom 15:33; Ign. Pol. 6:12; Jos. Ant. 3.15; 4.182), and occasionally it is affirmed that God was 'with' Jesus (John 3:2; Acts 10:38). It can also be a wish or prayer, 'May God be with you,' which perhaps became as formalized as the English expression 'good-bye,' i.e., 'God be with you' (Gen 48:21; Josh 1:17; 1 Sam 20:42; 2 Sam 14:17; 1 Chr 22:11; 2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:3; cf. 1 Chr 28:20). Here the eschatological reality of the presence of God is no longer just metaphorical but actual. It has been suggested that an allusion to Rev 21:3 is found in Ign. Eph. 15:3, ἵνα ὦμεν αὐτοῦ ναοὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν θεὸς ἡμῶν, 'that we might be his temples and he might be our God in us' (T. Zahn, *Ignatii et Polycarpi Epistolae Martyria Fragmenta*, vol. 2 of *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1876] 20–21), though this covenant formula is found so frequently in the OT that a direct link between Ign. Eph. 15:3 and Rev 21:3 can hardly be proved." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1123–1124.]

<sup>26</sup>"The first part of this clause is an allusion to Isa 25:8, 'he will swallow up death forever' (continuing in a different order the allusion to Isa 25:8 in v 4b), a passage also cited in 1 Cor 15:54. The phrase 'the previous things have passed away' is an apparent allusion to the term *הַרְשָׁוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹנִים* *hārī'šōnōt*, 'the first things,' in Isa 65:17b, which refers to the troubles connected with the earlier fate of Jerusalem, whereas 'the former things' in Rev 21:1–5b refer to conditions obtaining during the existence of the first heaven and first earth. The cessation of an untimely death (i.e., death in one's youth) is mentioned in Isa 65:20b, though this is quite different from the notion of the complete cessation of death (NRSV): 'for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.' However, in Tg. Isa. 65:20, it is precisely the complete cessation of death for the righteous that is in view (tr. Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*; cf. van Ruiten, EstBib 51 [1993] 504–5): 'for a youth who sins



κατέπιεν ὁ θάνατος ἰσχύσας, **Death He swallowed up forever.**

By τὰ πρῶτα, **the former things**, John means the sufferings experienced in the first heaven and earth (v. 1).<sup>27</sup>

This voice from the throne speaks wonderful promises to the people of God. We can look forward to that coming day of entering into God's eternal provision for us as His people in Christ.

## B. What God says, vv. 5-8

5 Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα καὶ λέγει· γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν. 6 καὶ εἶπέν μοι· γέγοναν.

shall be dying a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be expelled.' The ultimate annihilation of death is an apocalyptic theme (Isa 25:8; 4 Ezra 8:53; 2 Apoc. Bar. 21:23; Bib Ant. 3:10; 33:3), and in early Christian literature the notion that death has ultimately been conquered through Christ is a recurring τοπος (1 Cor 15:26; 2 Tim 1:10; Heb 2:14; Ign. Eph. 19:3; Barn. 5:6). This reversal of the negative aspects of human experience is also reflected as characteristic of life in paradise according to T. Abr. [Rec. A] 20:14 (tr. E. P. Sanders, OTP 1:895), 'Paradise ... where there is no toil, no grief, no moaning, but peace and exultation and endless life.' In 1 Enoch 25:6, it is said of those in paradise that 'sorrow and pain and toil and punishment will not touch' them. In Hellenistic consolation literature, death (the separation of soul from body) is referred to as a state in which there is no longer pain or sorrow (Plutarch Consolatio ad uxorem 611C). These Hellenistic consolation topoi were adapted by Christianity, as in 2 Clem. 19:4, where the author speaks of postmortem existence: 'he [the pious person] will live again with the fathers above and rejoice in a sorrowless eternity.' In Hellenistic consolation literature, however, the cessation of death was never envisaged, though one common τοπος regards death not as an evil but as a blessing, a remedy for evils (see Moran, Consolations, 31–39); but see b. Sanh. 100b, " 'Do not worry about tomorrow's sorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth' [Prov. 27:1]. Perhaps tomorrow you will no longer exist and it will turn out that you will worry about a world that is not yours.'" [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1124–1125.]

<sup>27</sup>"The phrase ὅτι τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν, 'for the previous things have passed away,' refers back to the disappearance of the first heaven, the first earth, and the sea in v 1. This particular phrase might allude to three passages in Isaiah: (1) Isa 65:17 (which has clearly influenced the content of Rev 21:1–4), 'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered [LXX καὶ οὐ μὴ μνησθῶσιν τῶν προτέρων] or come into mind'; (2) Isa 65:16c, 'because the former troubles are forgotten [ἐπιλήσονται γὰρ τὴν θλίψιν αὐτῶν τὴν πρώτην]'; and (3) Isa 43:18 (v 19 is alluded to in Rev 21:5a), 'Do not consider the former things [μὴ μνημονεύετε τὰ πρῶτα], or consider the things of old.' A similar allusion to Isa 43:18 is found in 2 Cor 5:17 (the contrast between old and new also occurs in Isa 42:9, where the subject is prophecy). The rabbinic conception of הַדָּשָׁה בְּרִיַּיָּה *bēriyyā hādāšā*, 'new creation,' deals not with cosmic renewal but with various aspects of the renewal of the individual or the renewal of the individual's external situation or relationship to God (Str-B, 2:421–23)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1125.]

ἐγὼ [εἶμι] τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος. ἐγὼ τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς δωρεάν. 7 ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός. 8 τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεῦτερος.

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

But not just the voice from the throne speaks of wonderful things ahead for God's people. In the second unit on vv. 5-8, God Himself speaks of blessings for His people. This is one of the two places where God speaks in explicit identification. Rev. 1:8 asserts this as well: 'Εγὼ εἶμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Interestingly these verses in 21:5-8 comprise the most compact summary of the entire book of Revelation that exists anywhere.<sup>28</sup> John pulls a collection of seven previously declared principles into a summary listing here.

**1) Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, And the One sitting upon the throne said, "I am making new all things"** (v. 5a). Isaiah 43:19a stands behind this declaration, ἰδοὺ ποιῶ καινὰ ἃ νῦν ἀνατελεῖ, καὶ γνῶσεσθε αὐτά· καὶ ποιήσω ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὁδὸν καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀνύδρῳ ποταμούς. Behold I am do new things which now spring up and you indeed know these things, and I will make a path in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.<sup>29</sup> Repeat-

<sup>28</sup>"The second subunit, vv 5–8, is also an audition but a very special one because it is attributed to God, who is seated on his throne (elsewhere in Revelation only in 1:8 is God clearly the speaker). This speech is striking because it is essentially a collection of seven sayings (the number is probably intentional, like the seven beatitudes scattered throughout the book), the first three of which exhibit a formal similarity in contrast to the last four, thus producing a 3 + 4 pattern (the first three are introduced with verbs of saying, while the last four are not)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1114.]

<sup>29</sup>"This is a clear allusion to Isa 43:19, 'Behold, I am doing a new thing.' The apocalyptic theme of cosmic renewal may be reflected in 1QH 13:11–12 (tr. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 199),



ing 21:1, God pledges to create a new existence for His people free from the contamination of the old existence.

2) *καὶ λέγει· γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν, and He says, “Write, because these words are faithful and true”* (v. 5b). This general command repeats similar commands to write the book of Revelation in 1:11, 19 (cf. 10:4). In 14:13 and 19:9 commands to write specific items are given.

The dependability of what John is given to put into writing is asserted with *ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν, because these words are faithful and true*. This is repeated verbatim in 22:6 and in a similar form in 19:9.<sup>30</sup> The point is that the message presented in the apocalyptic vision of Revelation truly reflects God in His being and actions. We don’t see any prediction of history in this writing, for Christianity is not in the fortune telling business. But what we do catch in this vision is a clear picture of God and how He functions in regard to evil and in regard to His people.

3) *καὶ εἶπέν μοι· γέγοναν, and He said to me, “It is done!”* (v. 6a). This echoes the similar declaration of the voice when the seventh angel pours out of the final bowl of wrath in 16:17, *καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ἀέρα, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν φωνὴ μεγάλη ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου λέγουσα· γέγονεν. And the seventh one poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying, “It is done!”*<sup>31</sup> This

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‘For Thou hast shown them that which they had not [seen by removing all] ancient things and creating new ones [תְּבַרְרֵנּוּ וְלִבְרֹרֵנּוּ וְלִיִּבְרֹרֵנּוּ] *wēlibrō’ hādāsōt*.’ A microcosmic application of the apocalyptic notion of the recreation or renewal of the world is found in 2 Cor 5:17, where Paul says that those in Christ are a *καινὴ κτίσις* [cf. Gal 6:15]: *τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρήλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά*, ‘new creation; what is old has disappeared; behold, it has become new’ (see D. E. Aune, “Zwei Modelle der menschlichen Natur bei Paulus,” TQ 176 [1996] 28–39). This is probably also an allusion to Isa 43:18–19 (cf. Isa 65:17). It is clear that the short speech in vv 5–8 is attributed to God himself and is the only such speech in Revelation, with the exception of the brief self-disclosure in 1:8.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1125.]

<sup>30</sup>“The phrase *οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ*, ‘this message is trustworthy and true,’ occurs again verbatim in 22:6 (in both passages *πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ*, ‘trustworthy and true,’ is a hendiadys, i.e., one idea expressed through two different words), while in 19:9 we find the parallel phrase *οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν*, ‘these are the true words of God.’ In Greco-Roman divinatory charms there is a major concern, as there is here, with emphasizing the truthfulness of the revelation, implying the obvious possibility of unreliable revelations (PGM I.320; II.10, 115; III.288; IV.913, 1033, 2504; V.421; VII.248, 571; XIV.6–7; cf. Daniel-Malomini, *Supplementum Magicum* 2:65, line 67 [commentary]).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1126.]

<sup>31</sup>The perfect tense plural *γέγοναν* individualizes the singular *γέγονεν*, but both reference the same reality: God’s judgments upon evil and evil people are completed.

declaration in form is similar to Jesus’ final cry from the cross, *τετέλεσται*, “It is finished!” in John 19:28. The difference in meaning, however, is that Jesus’ cry signaled the completion of God’s plan of salvation for sinful humanity, while the Revelation declarations signal the completion of God’s wrath upon evil and evil people.

4) *ἐγὼ [εἰμί] τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος, I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end* (v. 6b). The first part of this couplet expression echoes 1:8a, *Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God*. A fuller expression is found in 22:13, *ἐγὼ τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος. I the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*. In 1:8 and 21:6 it refers to God, while in 22:13 it refers to Christ. The first and final letters of the Greek alphabet for the core expression while the two expansion elements serve to define the meaning of the alpha and omega references. Similar labels were used of the Greek deity Zeus in John’s world, while later Jewish and Christian references define God with such designations of God’s being and power standing at the center of everything.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>“The title ‘Beginning and End’ occurs just twice in Revelation, here (where it is used of God) and in 22:13 (where it is used of Christ). The divine title ‘the Beginning and the End [and the Middle] of all things’ is drawn from Hellenistic religious and philosophical tradition and has a cosmological rather than a temporal significance, as the detailed study by W. C. van Unnik (*Het godspredikaat*) makes clear. The Derveni papyrus, found carbonized in Macedonia and dating from ca. 350 B.C., contains lines from an Orphic poem that is probably much earlier (col. 13, line 12): *Ζεὺς κεφαλὴ, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δὲ ἐκ πάντα τελεῖται*, “Zeus is the beginning, Zeus is the middle, all things are fulfilled by Zeus.” This is virtually identical to the saying found in Ps.-Aristotle *De mundo* 7 (Diels-Kranz, FVS 1:8, lines 19–20; O. Kern, ed., *Orphicorum Fragmenta* [Berlin: Weidmann, 1922] 91, frag. 21a). This saying is alluded to in Plato *Leg.* 4.715e, ‘God ... holds the beginning and the middle and the end of all things which exist [ἀρχὴν τε καὶ τελευτὴν καὶ μέσα τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων ἔχων],’ a saying quoted by a number of early Christian writers, including Ps.-Justin *Cohort.* 25; Irenaeus *Adv. haer.* 3.25.5; Hippolytus *Ref.* 19.6 (ed. Marcovich, Hippolytus); Clement of Alex. *Strom.* 2.22; and Origen *Contra Celsum* 6.15. The Jewish writer Aristobulus also refers to this saying in a fragment preserved in Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 13.12 (666a), referring to God as ‘Himself the beginning, the middle and the end [ἀρχὴν αὐτὸς ἔχων καὶ μέσσην ἠδὲ τελευτὴν]’ (Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, 247; see Holladay, *FHJA* 4:170). Hippocrates, imitating Heraclitus, refers to the beginning and end as a kind of unbroken circle (Diels-Kranz, FVS 1:189): ‘The beginning of everything is one and the end of everything is one and the end and the beginning are the same [ἡ αὐτὴ τελευτὴ καὶ ἀρχή].’ The Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius reflects the view that the soul that ‘knows the beginning and the end [ἡ εἰδυῖα ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος]’ knows the Logos that penetrates the universe (i.e., God) (*Meditations* 5.32). See Sib. Or. 8.375–76 (tr. J. J. Collins, *OTP* 1:425), ‘Beginning and end I know [ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος οἶδα]; I who created heaven and earth

In John 1:3, a definition of the meaning of this label is used by John in the Prologue of his gospel: πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. All things through Him came into existence and apart from Him not one thing exists. The God whom Christians serve is exclusively the one with existence and with power over all creation.

5) ἐγὼ τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς δωρεάν, I will give to the thirsty out of the spring of life giving water as a gift (v. 6c).<sup>33</sup> Behind this

/ for all things are from him, he knows what is from the beginning to the end [τὰ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος οἶδε]. Macrobius (Comm. in Somn. Scip. 1.6.8) refers to the Monad (i.e., summum deum, the supreme God) as initium finisque omnium, 'the beginning and end of all things.' 'Beginning and End' is a divine epithet also found in the magical papyri (PGM IV.1125, 2836–37) and in other magical texts (Delatte, Anecdota Atheniensa, 26.12, 28; 35.10; 36.9; 45.28–29; 51.28–29; 61.28; 418.27; 419.13; 460.6; 498.6; 585.17; these twelve magical formulas are all of Christian origin, and the titles α [ἄλφα] καὶ ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος, 'alpha and omega, beginning and end,' are juxtaposed in each text, making dependence on Rev 21:6 probable). PGM IV.2836–37 is part of a hexameter hymn to Hekate that reads, in part, 'Beginning and end [ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος] are you, and you alone rule all. For all things are from you and you alone rule all.' God is referred to as 'the Beginning and End of all things' by Josephus (Ant. 8.280) and Philo (Plant. 93). Josephus also uses a threefold formula: 'He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things' (Ag. Ap. 2. 190). Apart from the frequency with which Plato Leg. 4.715e is quoted (see above), the divine title 'Beginning and [Middle and] End' is rarely found in early Christian writers; Clement of Alex. quotes Rev 21:6, which he links with John 1:3 (Strom. 6.16). The Beginning and End motif is also stated negatively; Tri. Trac. 52.34–41 describes the Gnostic God as 'without beginning or end.'" [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1126–1127.

<sup>33</sup>"The phrase ὕδωρ ζωῆς, literally, 'water of life,' is ambiguous in that it can mean 'flowing water' (e.g., Did 7:1, 2), or it can be used in a religious sense of 'living water,' i.e., 'water of [eternal] life' (construing ζωῆς, 'of life,' as a descriptive genitive) or 'water, that is, [eternal] life' (construing ζωῆς as an appositional genitive). The imagery of this verse has several motifs in common with John 4:4–16, including (1) the πηγῆ, 'well,' in 4:6a, 6b, 14 (used interchangeably with φρέαρ, 'well,' in 4:11, 12), (2) the phrase ὕδωρ ζῶν, 'living water' (4:10, 11, 14; cf. 7:38; always as an adjectival participle in John, whereas in Revelation the noun ζωῆ, 'life,' is always used with ὕδωρ as a descriptive or appositional genitive), (3) the emphasis on 'living water' as a gift from God, τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ (4:10), and (4) the use of the verb δίδοναι, 'to give' (4:14, 15). Particularly close grammatically is the sentence in John 4:14, where a partitive genitive is used as the object of the verb δώσω, 'I will give': ὃς δὲ ἂν πῖνῃ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὗ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, 'Whoever drinks some of the water which I will give him will never thirst for ever, but the water which I will give him will be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.' For other references to living water see LXX Zech 14:8; Barn. 11:2 (πηγὴ ζωῆς, 'well of life'); Odes Sol. 11:6 (ἀπὸ πηγῆ ζωῆς, 'from a well of life'); Ignatius Rom. 7:2; Odes Sol. 11:7 (Syriac *mn my' hy'*, 'from the waters of life';

stands Isa. 55:1 as the core idea which John modifies: *Οἱ διψῶντες, πορεύεσθε ἐφ' ὕδωρ*, καὶ ὅσοι μὴ ἔχετε ἀργύριον, βαδίσαντες ἀγοράσατε καὶ πῖετε ἄνευ ἀργυρίου καὶ τιμῆς οἴνου καὶ στέαρ. *Those thirsting, come to the waters* and everyone not having silver, having come buy and eat without silver and price wine and milk. Also 22:17 picks up this invitation from Isaiah, Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν· ἔρχου. καὶ ὁ ἀκούων εἰπάτω· ἔρχου. καὶ ὁ διψῶν ἐρχέσθω, ὁ θέλων λαβέτω ὕδωρ ζωῆς δωρεάν. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.<sup>34</sup> In 7:17, it is the Lamb who leads His people as a Shepherd to the springs of the water of life, while the Father wipes away their tears: ὅτι τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου ποιμανεῖ αὐτούς καὶ ὀδηγήσει αὐτούς ἐπὶ ζωῆς πηγῆς ὑδάτων, καὶ ἐξαλείψει ὁ θεὸς πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, because the Lamb in the midst of the throne will pastor them and will guide them to the spring waters of life, and God will wipe every tear out of their eyes.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had issued this great invitation to those at the temple in Jerusalem (Jhn. 7:37–38):

37 Ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ μεγάλῃ τῆς ἑορτῆς εἰστήκει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔκραξεν λέγων· ἐάν τις διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με καὶ πινέτω. 38 ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ, καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή, ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ρεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος. 39 τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ὃ ἐμελλον λαμβάνειν οἱ πιστεύσαντες εἰς αὐτόν· οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐδέπω ἐδοξάσθη.

On the last great day of the of the feast Jesus stood and cried out saying, "If any thirsts, let him come to me

the Greek text has no equivalent to *hy'*, i.e., ζωῆς); Justin Dial. 69.6 (πηγὴ ὕδατος ζῶντος, 'well of living water,' is an allusion to John 4:10, 14); 114.4. Though some have argued that the phrase ὕδωρ ζῶν (or its equivalent) indicates that Ignatius was dependent on John (P. Dietze, "Die Briefe des Ignatius und das Johannesevangelium," TSK 78 [1905] 563–603), most scholars now concede that the use of this phrase suggests only a common background (C. Maurer, Ignatius von Antiochien und das Johannesevangelium [Zürich: Zwingli, 1949] 43; Wehr, Unsterblichkeit, 36)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1128–1129.]

<sup>34</sup>"This is an allusion, with the addition of the motif of 'the well of living water,' to Isa 55:1 (NRSV), 'Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters ... Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price [LXX πῖετε ἄνευ ἀργυρίου, 'drink without money']. Isa 55:1, applied to Wisdom, is also alluded to in Sir 51:23–25 and Tg. Isa. 55:1. The 'I' of v 6c makes it clear that God is the one who makes living water freely available to the thirsty, whereas in Rev 7:17 it is the Lamb who leads people to the fountains of living water. The same combination of motifs (the invitation to the thirsty to come and drink [freely]; the well of living water) also occurs in Rev 22:17, John 7:37–38, and Odes Sol. 30:1–2." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1127.]



and let him drink. The one believing in me, just as the scripture said, out of his belly living waters will flow. And He spoke of the Spirit which believers in Him were going to receive, since not yet was the Spirit because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

God's promise to His people is crystal clear: He will take care of them! It is from Him alone that eternal life comes and to those in obedient commitment to Him through Christ it flows freely and generously for all eternity.

**6) ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός, *The one overcoming will inherit these things and I will be to him God and he will be My son* (v. 7).** The Promise of Victory literary form at end of each of the seven messages of Christ to the churches in chapters two and three is utilized here thus signaling the inclusion of these seven messages into this summarizing unit of 21:5-8.<sup>35</sup> The meaning of ὁ νικῶν

<sup>35</sup>**Rev. 2:7b.** Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ. *To the one overcoming I will give to him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

**Rev. 2:11b,** Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἕκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου. *The one overcoming will never be harmed by the second death.*

**Rev. 2:17b.** Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων. *To the one overcoming I will give to him from the hidden manna and I will give to him a white robe and upon this robe is written the new name which no one knows except the one receiving it.*

**Rev. 2:26-28.** 26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν 27 καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ὡς τὰ σκευὴ τὰ κεραμικὰ συντριβεται, 28 ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἄστέρα τὸν πρωῒνόν. *And the one overcoming and obeying to the end my works, to him I will give authorization over the nations and he will rule them with an iron rod as when clay pots are shattered just as I received from my Father, and I will give to him the morning star.*

**Rev. 3:5.** Ὁ νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ. *The one overcoming will thusly be clothed in white garments and I will never blot his name out of the book of life and I will confess his name in the present of My Father and of His angels.*

**Rev. 3:12.** Ὁ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι καὶ γράψω ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἢ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν. *The one overcoming I will make him a pillar in the temple of God My and he will never go out of it and I will write upon him the name of My God, of the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

**Rev. 3:21.** Ὁ νικῶν δώσω αὐτῷ καθίσει μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου, ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ αὐτοῦ. *The one overcoming, to him I will give (the right) to sit with Me on My throne just as I have overcome and sit with My Father on His throne.*

was defined in 2:26 as ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, *the one obeying until the end my deeds*. As Jesus defined in Mt. 7:21-23, it is not the one merely professing Christ but the one obeying Him within the framework of the will of God who finds acceptance on the day of judgment. The ταῦτα, *these things*, goes back to the blessings of the new Jerusalem, namely what is promised in the discourse statements of vv. 3b-4.

Out of the inheriting comes then the dual promise of God being his God and he being God's son: καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός. *and I will be to him God and he will be to Me My son*. The framing of this signals the divine adoption of individuals into the family of God.<sup>36</sup> Even though the practice of adoption is not

For detailed exegesis of these see [study 13](#) in volume 32 on Revelation in the *Biblical Insights Commentary* at cranfordville.com.

<sup>36</sup>“καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός, ‘for I will be their God and they will be my children.’ (For the inclusive language translation, see Note 7.a.) This is probably a metaphor based on ancient adoption law, providing an appropriate basis for the right of inheritance mentioned in v 7a. The father-child (father-son) imagery in this phrase reflects the adaptation of adoption language in the Davidic covenant tradition reflected in 2 Sam 7:14 (‘I will be his father and he shall be my son’) and several other passages in the OT (Pss 2:7; 89:26–27[MT 27–28]; Jer 3:19; 31:9c [‘For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn’]; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6). This covenant formula based on the metaphorical use of adoption language is also found in Jub. 1:24 (tr. O. S. Wintermute, OTP 2:54), ‘And I shall be a father to them, and they will be sons to me.’ This may be based on an ancient Israelite adoption formula, i.e., the *verba solemnia*, ‘solemn words,’ used to publicly formalize the legal relations of marriage and adoption (see Greengus, JAOS 89 [1969] 505–32), though the OT contains no legislation explicitly related to the subject of adoption and there are very few possible examples of such a legal procedure (Gen 48:5–6; Exod 2:10; see also Gen 15:3; 2 Kgs 11:20; Esth 2:7, 15). Some scholars have argued that the institution of adoption was unknown in ancient Israel (H. Haag, TDOT 2:155). The oral declaration of relationship could be part of a pact or covenant, as in the treaty in 2 Kgs 16:7 (Ahaz to Tiglathpileser: ‘I am your servant and your son’) and in a treaty between the Hittite king Skuppiluliuma and his vassal Sattiwazza: ‘When I conquer the land of Mittanni I shall not reject you, I shall make you my son’ (M. Weinfeld, ‘Covenant, Davidic,’ IDBSup, 190); cf. Pss 89:27; 116:16; 1 Sam 25:8; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Jer 31:9b. Kalluveetil has suggested that the complete covenant formula would consist of two parts: (1) I am your servant and your son, and (2) you are my master and my father (Declaration, 129–35, esp. 130). The covenant adoption formula in 2 Sam 7:14 is interpreted in a messianic context in 4Q174 = 4QFlor 1–3 i 11 (tr. García Martínez, Dead Sea Scrolls, 136):

I will be a father to him and he will be my son to me. This (refers to the law) ‘Branch of David,’ who will arise with the Interpreter of the law who [will rise up] in Zi[on in] the last days.

“In Babylonian laws pertaining to adoption (Driver-Miles, Laws 1:383–405), there is evidence of *verba solemnia* for dissolving the adoptive relationship, such as “ ‘You are not my father’ (or) ‘You are not my mother’ ” (Driver-Miles, Laws 2:77, § 193), or ‘You are not my son’ (Driver-Miles, Laws 1:403), and an example



certain in the Semitic middle eastern world, it was a very common and important part of the Greco-Roman society in John's world and thus provides a rich backdrop for this expression. And the father-son image is a rich picture of God's relation to His covenant people in the OT: in 2 Sam 7:14 ('I will be his father and he shall be my son') and several other passages in the OT (Pss 2:7; 89:26–27[MT 27–28]; Jer 3:19; 31:9c ['For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn']; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6).

7) *τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένη πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος, But to the cowardly and unbelieving and detestable and murders and immoral and sorcerers and to all liars their part is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death* (v. 8). The first six of these summarizing declarations center on God and His people. But this final declaration reiterates those excluded from the family of God and thus from eternal blessing from God.

The interesting syntactical arrangement of this sentence with only an implied main clause verb highlights the connection of the evil people with their part in the lake of fire. The concept of this declaration echoes first 9:20-21, and then 22:15, both of which contain shorter listings of specific categories of sinners.

**Rev. 9:20-21**, 20 Καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἳ οὐκ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν ταῖς πληγαῖς ταύταις, οὐδὲ μετενόησαν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα μὴ προσκυνήσουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ χρυσαῖα καὶ τὰ ἀργυρᾶ καὶ τὰ χαλκᾶ καὶ τὰ λίθινα καὶ τὰ ξύλινα, ἃ οὔτε βλέπειν δύνανται οὔτε ἀκούειν οὔτε περιπατεῖν, 21 καὶ οὐ μετενόησαν ἐκ τῶν φόνων αὐτῶν οὔτε ἐκ τῶν κλεμμάτων αὐτῶν. 20 *The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.*

**Rev. 22:15**. 15 ἔξω οἱ κύνες καὶ οἱ φάρμακοι καὶ οἱ πόρνοι καὶ οἱ φονεῖς καὶ οἱ εἰδωλολάτραι καὶ πᾶς

of the public recognition of the sons of a female slave as legitimate sons and heirs of her master: '(You are) my sons' (Driver-Miles, *Laws* 2:65, § 170). Given the nature of the sources (OT and ancient Near Eastern law codes), it is not surprising that the positive versions of these public formulas are extremely rare since the largely negative formulations cited above deal with the problem of inheritance rights in unusual situations. These strongly suggest that corresponding positive formulas, in Babylonia as well as Israel, were in use even though poorly attested (Hugenberger, *Marriages*, 219)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1129–1130.]

φυλῶν καὶ ποιῶν ψεῦδος. 15 *Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*<sup>37</sup>

The unusual structure of the Greek article τοῖς qualifying all of the list of substantives following it has the grammar significance of grouping all of the vices into a list of sinners who are excluded from the people of God. This '[vice list](#)' compares with other such lists elsewhere in the NT and early Christian writings.<sup>38</sup>

Two of the vices listed here, δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις, *cowards and unbelievers*, are not listed in the other NT vice lists. The δειλοῖς, *cowards*, defines those unwilling to exhibit genuine faith commitment to Christ. Matthew's rewriting in 8:26 of Mark's statement in 4:40 makes this meaning clear.

<sup>37</sup>“Though this list is slightly longer than that in 22:15, it is natural to understand ἐβδελυγμένοις, ‘abominable,’ and οἱ κύνες, ‘the dogs,’ as parallels, suggesting that both may refer to sodomy or homosexuality (see Comment on 22:15). While 21:8 begins with two categories missing in 22:15, ‘the cowards’ and ‘the unbelievers,’ the lists are extremely similar, though οἱ φάρμακοι, ‘the sorcerers,’ and οἱ φονεῖς, ‘the murderers,’ are reversed in 22:15. The term ‘cowards’ here seems to be intentionally used as the antonym of ‘the conquerer’ in v 7a. There appears to be a close relationship between the catalogues of sins (or sinners; sins and sinners are combined in Rom 1:29–31, Eph 5:3–5, Barn. 20:1–2; Did 2:1–3:10) in early Christian literature (Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21–22; Rom 1:29–31; 13:13; 1 Cor 5:10–11 [sinners]; 6:9–10 [sinners]; 2 Cor 12:20–21; Gal 5:19–21; Eph 4:31; 5:3–5; Col 3:5–8; 1 Tim 1:9–10 [sinners]; 6:4–5; 2 Tim 3:2–5 [sinners]; Tit 1:7; 3:3 [sinners]; 1 Pet 2:1; 4:3; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15; Barn. 20:1–2; 1 Clem. 3:2; 30:1, 3, 8; 35:5; 2 Clem 4:3; Did 2:1–3:10; see Vögtle, *Lasterkataloge*, 1; Mussies, Dio, 67) and the traditional associations of the Ten Commandments (Rordorf, “Dekalogs,” 435–36).

“The list of various categories of sinners in Rev 21:8 has parallels with the Ten Commandments and traditional applications of the Ten Commandments, including other early Christian vice lists: (1) murder or murderers (Exod 20:13 = Deut 5:17; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15; Matt 5:22; 15:19; 19:18 = Mark 10:19 = Luke 18:20; Mark 7:21; Rom 1:29; 13:9; Jas 2:11; 1 Pet 4:15; Barn. 20:1; Did 2:2), (2) sexual immorality (Exod 20:14 = Deut 5:18; Matt 5:27; 15:19; 19:18 = Mark 10:19 = Luke 18:20; Mark 7:21–22; Rom 13:9; 1 Cor 5:9–10; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 1:10; Jas 2:11; Barn. 20:1; Did 2:2), (3) sorcerers or sorcery (absent from Decalogue; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15; Gal 5:20; Barn. 20:1 [φαρμακεία, μαγεία, “sorcery, magic”]; Did 2:2; 3:4), (4) idolaters or idolatry (Exod 20:4–6 = Deut 5:8–10; Rev [9:20]; 21:8; 22:15; 1 Cor 5:10; 6:9; Gal 5:20; [Eph 5:5]; 1 Pet 4:3; Barn. 20:1; Did 5:1; Aristides Apol. 15.2 [Syrian text]; Clement Alex. Paed. 3.89.1; Tertullian Scorp. 2.2), and (5) liars (Exod 20:16 = Deut 5:20; Rev 21:8; 22:15; Matt 15:19; Mark 10:19 = Matt 19:18 = Luke 18:20; 1 Tim 1:9–10; Barn. 20:2 [ἀγαπῶντες ψεῦδος, “lovers of falsehood”]; Did 3:5).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1131.]

<sup>38</sup>One must note that an individual vice list either inside the NT or elsewhere in ancient literature is never intended to be exhaustive in listing all possible vices. Instead, they always are intended to be representative listing of sins.

**Mk. 4:40.** τί δειλοί ἐστε; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν; *Why are you cowards? Do you still not have faith?*

**Mt. 8:26.** τί δειλοί ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστοι; *Why are you cowards, you of little faith?*

The φαρμάκοις, sorcerers, were a fringe group even in the pagan society of John's world.<sup>39</sup>

The rest of the declaration specifies the destiny of these listed as sinners: τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος. *their part in the lake which burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.* The lake of fire is mentioned six times in Revelation: 19:20; 20:10, 14 [2x], 15; 21:8. It is the place of continual torments forever upon Satan, the two beasts, and all evil people who are excluded from the people of God. Similar specification of the eternal destiny of sinners is made in Rom. 1:32a; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21b; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:6; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 22:15a. This destiny is also labeled the second death in 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8.

With this final declaration, the depiction of the complete removal of evil from the new existence that God has created for His people is now accomplished. The remainder of 21:9-22:7 will focus on the significance of this new existence for the people of God.

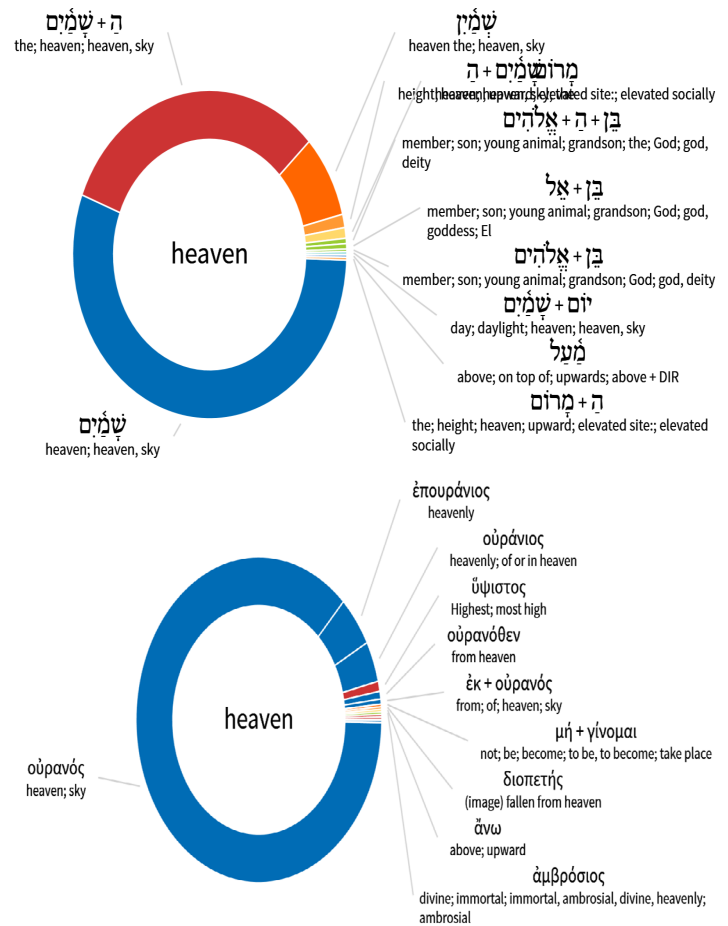
## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

What is Heaven? Modern perspectives generally reflect emotional, sentimental ideas with little or no grounding inside the scripture. The Hebrew people struggled to find a word for it. Most commonly found in

<sup>39</sup>“The term φάρμακος, ‘sorcerer,’ occurs twice in Revelation (21:8; 22:15), both times in the plural and both times in the context of a vice list (on the cognate noun φαρμακεία, ‘sorcery,’ see Comment on 9:21). In both 21:8 and 22:15, the sorcerers belong to a group that is excluded. An ancient Greek purification ritual, the expulsion of the Πηαρμακος, is discussed in Burkert, Greek Religion, 82–84. In an inscription from a private religious association in Philadelphia from the first century B.C., the list of prescribed activities (though more discursive) is remarkably similar to the lists in Rev 21:8 and 22:15. This similarity suggests that a common core of ethical concerns could characterize morally sensitive pagan religious societies as well as Christian congregations. The inscription from Philadelphia reads (text taken from Sokolowski, Lois, 54; translation modified from Boring et al., HCNT, no. 771):

When men and women, whether free or slave, enter this building they should swear by all the gods that they bear no lies against man or woman, perform no malevolent magic [φάρμακον πονηρόν] or malevolent charms [ἐπωιδὰς πονηράς] against others, that they neither participate themselves nor advise others to participate in love philtres, abortions, contraception, nor anything else that kills children... Except for sexual relations with his own wife, a man must not defile a foreign woman whom a man has, whether free or slave, and a man must not corrupt a boy or a virgin or advise others to do so... A woman or man who violates these prescriptions may not enter this building.”

[David E. Aune, Revelation 17–22, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1132.]



the OT is דְּמָשׁ, an Aramaic word that is used some 382 times in the Hebrew Bible, but other words are found also. The very ambiguous idea behind the terms is the location on top of the canopy of the sky as the place where God dwells. The LXX most often uses οὐρανός<sup>40</sup> with the literal meaning of ‘cover,’ mostly in the plural, to bring the Hebrew idea over into Greek. The word itself simply specifies a region above earth and thus is often referring to what moderns label the sky. To some degree the shift between the singular

<sup>40</sup>“U’RANUS (Οὐρανός), the Latin Caelus, a son of Gaea (Hes. Theog. 126, &c.; comp. Cic. De Nat. Deor. iii. 17), but is also called the husband of Gaea, and by her the father of Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, Rheia, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe Tethys, Cronos, of the Cyclopes, Brontes, Steropes, Arges, and of the Hecatoncheires Cottus, Briareus and Gyes. (Hes. Theog. 133, &c.) According to Cicero (De Nat. Deor. iii. 22, 23), he also was the father of Mercury (Hermes) by Dia, and of Venus by Hemera. Uranus hated his children, and immediately after their birth, he confined them in Tartarus, in consequence of which he was unmanned and dethroned by Cronos at the instigation of Gaea. (Hes. Theog. 180.) Out of the drops of his blood sprang the Gigantes, the Melian nymphs, and according to some, Silenus, and from the foam gathering around his limbs in the sea, sprang Aphrodite (Hes. Theog. 195; Apollod. i. 1; Serv. ad Aen. v. 801, ad Virg. Ecl. vi. 13).” [Leonhard Schmitz, “U’RANUS (Οὐρανός),” ed. William Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1870), 1284.]

and the plural forms distinguishes between sky and Heaven in the Greek Jewish writings, and is a pattern somewhat followed by the NT writers with the 273 uses of οὐρανός for both ideas. But the idea of Heaven remains vague and the concept of people being able to enter this place is only an idea beginning to take shape at the end of the OT era with one or two of the very late books in the OT hinting at such an idea.<sup>41</sup> During the intertestamental period from the fourth century BCE to the beginning of the Christian era, the idea of heaven began to take on more detailed expression in large part

<sup>41</sup>“Whereas the Israelites could speak of God as dwelling on Mount Sinai (Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17), in the temple (1 Kgs 8:12–13; Ps 68:17–18; Ezek 43:7), or in Zion (Ps 74:2; Isa 8:18; Joel 4:17, 21), the supreme abode of God was in heaven. In the heavenly palace or temple is God’s throne, from which God reigns as king over heaven and earth (Isa 6:1; Ps 11:4). Heaven is God’s throne and the earth God’s footstool (Isa 66:1). From heaven, ‘above the circle of the earth,’ God looks down upon the earth, where the people appear as grasshoppers (Isa 40:22; Ps 102:19).

“To describe God as dwelling in heaven is to recognize the transcendence of God, God’s separateness from the created order. At times, some individuals within Israel wondered if the clouds of heaven shielded the earth from God; God was shut up in the heavens. Eliphaz accuses Job of thinking, “Is not God high in the heavens? See the highest stars, how lofty they are! Therefore you say, ‘What does God know? Can he judge through the deep darkness? Thick clouds enwrap him, so that he does not see, and he walks on the vault of heaven’ ” (Job 22:12–14; cf. Lam 3:44). The author of Isa 64:1 calls on God to ‘rend the heavens and come down’ in order to make God’s power known.

“Even the vast expanse of heaven, however, is not large enough to contain God (1 Kgs 8:27). The ‘God of heaven’ (2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:2; Jonah 1:9) is also the God of earth, who on occasions was described as coming down from heaven to visit the earth (Gen 11:5, 7; Exod 19:18; Isa 64:3). Moreover, even with the belief in Yahweh’s transcendence, Israel always saw God as one who was involved in the world which God had created. The whole history of God’s dealing with the people of Israel and Judah demonstrated God’s activity in the world. God dwelt not only in heaven, but also among God’s people (Exod 29:45–46; 1 Kgs 6:13; Zech 2:10–11). The NT, which also speaks of God as residing in heaven (Matt 5:16; 6:9; Mark 11:25; Rev 3:12; 4:2), likewise emphasizes the presence of God in the world, with special emphasis given to God’s dwelling in the Church, God’s temple (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21–22).

“Since heaven is the abode of God, heaven is also the source and locus of salvation. The bread which fed the Israelites in the wilderness came from heaven (Exod 16:4). Blessings upon God’s people come from heaven (Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13). Elijah is taken up into heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kgs 2:11). When the idea of life after death developed within Judaism, the location of such existence was often situated in heaven with God (T. Ab. 11:10; 2 Esdras 7; cf. Dan 12:2–3). The idea of heaven as the place of eternal reward for the faithful is well attested in the NT, which describes heaven as having many rooms (John 14:2), as containing the believer’s eternal house (2 Cor 5:1–10), and as being the location of the believer’s commonwealth (Phil 3:20; see also Heb 11:16; Rev 11:12).”

[Mitchell G. Reddish, “Heaven,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:90.]

due to the influence of the Persian religious concepts of a good and a bad place after death for mortals.<sup>42</sup>

When it comes to more detailed depictions inside the NT a wide diversity of perspective surface.<sup>43</sup> Although the idea of Heaven as a place is assumed, the primary point of emphasis is upon the closeness of relationship by God with His people. Revelation especially pictures this in terms of a new heaven and a new Jerusalem. As symbols of being in the full presence of God, believers then receive the blessings of His protection and care of them for eternity. Paul mostly pictures this in terms of being in greater union with the risen Christ (cf. Phil. 1). John stresses this in his gospel in Jesus’ words, ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἰσιν· εἰ δὲ μή, εἶπον ἂν ὑμῖν ὅτι πορεύομαι ἑτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν; καὶ ἐὰν πορευθῶ καὶ ἑτοιμάσω τόπον ὑμῖν, πάλιν ἔρχομαι καὶ παραλήμψομαι ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἑμαυτόν, ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ᾗτε. *In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to*

<sup>42</sup>“Postexilic Jewish literature manifests an intense curiosity about the contents of heaven. Various writings describe heavenly visions or journeys of revered individuals such as Enoch, Abraham, and Baruch (1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Testament of Abraham, 3 Baruch). The topography of heaven, the inhabitants of heaven, the places of judgment, as well as other heavenly secrets are revealed to these persons. Many of these writings describe heaven as containing various levels, referred to as different heavens. The most popular number of heavens was seven. (Compare Paul’s statement in 2 Cor 12:2 concerning the third heaven.) The various heavens contain not only the throne room of God, paradise (the intermediate reward for the righteous), and the eternal abode of the righteous, but in many cases one or more of the heavens also contain the places of punishment for the wicked.”

[Mitchell G. Reddish, “Heaven,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:90–91.]

<sup>43</sup>“In the NT especially, ‘heaven’ sometimes becomes a circumlocution for ‘God,’ a way of speaking of God without using the divine name. Thus, ‘kingdom of heaven’ (Matt. 4:17) is simply another expression for ‘kingdom of God’ (Mark 1:15). A ‘sign from heaven’ is a sign from God (Mark 8:11). To say that something ‘comes from heaven’ is to say that it comes from God (Mark 11:30–31). To ‘sin against heaven’ is to sin against God (Luke 15:18). ‘Heaven forbid!’ means ‘God forbid!’ (Luke 20:16). Still, at some level, heaven is known to be part of creation (cf. Gen. 1:1) and, like the earth, it will pass away (Mark 13:31). There will be new heavens and a new earth (Rev. 21:1, 27; 22:3). For the present, however, Christians are urged to view heaven, not only as the abode of God (Matt. 6:9) and angels (Mark 12:25; Luke 2:15), but also as the realm from which Jesus came (John 6:38), to which he has gone (Acts 1:2), in which he now dwells (1 Pet. 3:22), and from which he will return (Acts 1:11). The NT expectation is that believers will be gathered by Jesus into heaven to live with him forevermore (1 Thess. 4:16–17); their reward in heaven will be great (Luke 6:23). Thus, heaven is the true home of those who believe in Christ—they are aliens on the earth (1 Pet. 2:11); their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). See also eternal life; hell; sky.” [Adela Yarbro Collins, “Heaven,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated) (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 369.]



prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. (Jhn 14:2-3).

In Rev. 21:1-8, some of those blessings are spelled out in terms of God's care for His people. In this we can rejoice, looking forward to that marvelous day when we see Him in heaven:

**There is coming a day when no heartaches shall come  
No more clouds in the sky, no more tears to dim the eye.  
All is peace forevermore on that happy golden shore,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.**

**Chorus**

**What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see,  
And I look upon His face,  
The One who saved me by His grace;  
When He takes me by the hand  
And leads me through the Promised Land,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.**

**There'll be no sorrow there, no more burdens to bear,  
No more sickness, no pain, no more parting over there;  
And forever I will be with the One who died for me,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.**

**Chorus**

**What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see,  
And I look upon His face,  
The One who saved me by His grace;  
When He takes me by the hand  
And leads me through the Promised Land,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.  
What a day, glorious day that will be!**