



tones of the ancient Jewish apocalypse. Mostly likely, this was largely due to the persecution atmosphere of both the composition of the document as well as the situation of his targeted readers. John's move to then present a larger introduction to both the seven letters as well as the remainder of the message from chapter four on to these seven Christian communities is set up in vv. 9-20 in terms of a visionary experience that John had on the island of Patmos.

His insertion of a *Doxology* in vv. 5b-6 comes as his way of underscoring the proper response to this dramatically deeper understanding of God, Christ, and the divine will for God's people. The only way we can respond properly is by reverential awe that affirms complete acknowledgment of God and complete surrender of our lives to this God. We will be privileged to understand the moving of God in human affairs in ways that no non-believer can comprehend. The world in rebellion to this God stands in full ignorance of how God works. But the believing community with its privileged Revelation from this God understands fully what God is up to with the broad strokes of that divine plan being disclosed to His people by God Himself through the apostle John.

Of course, much remains hidden even from the people of God. This divine disclosure paints the movement of God toward finalizing human history with broad strokes, not with intricate, detailed strokes. There remains mystery connected to the disclosure of this plan. We don't know the when and most of the what aspects. But what God does provide is enough understanding for His people to realize that He alone is in charge of this world, and that His intention alone will be realized in the future of this earth. And in that awareness we bow before this great and wonderful God in humble submission of our lives. We entrust ourselves and our eternal destiny into His hands fully confident of His ability to take care of us. The evil rulers of this world may do us great harm and hurt. But even they must give account of themselves to this awesome God and will suffer the same destiny as the Devil and all those following him.

The doxology tone established by this first of seven such expressions scattered through the contents of Revelation periodically remind the reader and hearer of this book to bow in reverential awe in the presence of the Divine in order to affirm our complete surrender to this mighty God.

When did John receive this vision from God? Where was he when it came? The introductory section of vv. 9-20 in the first three verses provides an answer to these questions.

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

Two key time and place markers are present in

this text. John was on the island of Patmos on the Lord's day. These merit detailed consideration under the internal history of the historical aspects. Apart from some rather unusual grammar constructions in these two sentences nothing distinctive surfaces in the literary aspects, apart from these comprising the first two sentences of an apocalyptic vision, which merits special consideration as a literary genre form.

### Historical Aspects:

#### External History.

Regarding sources that John utilized in this first segment of the apocalyptic vision, no direct source can be traced for it, but the literary form and language will reflect significant affinity with a number of OT documents and Jewish apocalypses. More details on this will come under Literary Genre, since this concern provides the better setting for detailed analysis.

In the copying of vv. 9-11, nothing surfaces in regard to variations of wording in these two sentences that the editors of the UBS *The Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.) considered significant enough to impact the translation of the text. Thus no variant readings are listed in their text apparatus.

But this does not mean that no variations in readings are present. The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed.) lists ten places where variant readings are found in the text.<sup>1</sup> A careful examina-



#### <sup>1</sup>Offenbarung 1,9

\* κ- 1006. 1841 *M*<sup>K</sup> (συγκοινωνός is replaced with κοινωνός)

\* εν 2053. 2062 (Either ἐν or ἐν τῇ is inserted before βασιλείᾳ)  
| εν τη *M*<sup>A</sup>

\* υπ. εν Χριστω A pc (a variety of alternatives eith with or without the preposition ἐν and/or with different combinations of Ἰησοῦ Χριστῶ show up)

| υπ. εν Χρ. Ιησ. (κ<sup>2</sup>) 1006. 1841. 2351 *M*<sup>K</sup> ar h vg<sup>cl</sup>

| υπ. Ι. Χριστου 2329 *M*<sup>A</sup> syh\*\* (sa)

| txt κ\* C P 1611. 2050. 2053vid pc gig vg syph bo

\* δια κ *M* sy (the preposition διὰ is repeated before τὴν μαρτυρίαν)

| txt A C 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2062 pc

\*1 Χριστου κ<sup>2</sup> 1006. 1841. 2351 *M*<sup>K</sup> ar vg<sup>ms</sup> sy<sup>ph,h\*\*</sup> co; Prim (Χριστοῦ is added after Ἰησοῦ)

#### Offenbarung 1,10

\* 3 1 2 4 1006. 1841. 2351 *M*<sup>K</sup> (the word sequence of ὁπίσω μου φωνῆν μεγάλην is shifted)

| 3 4 (1: οπισθεν) 2 A et v.l. al

| txt κ C 1611. 1854. 2329 *M*<sup>A</sup> lat sy

#### Offenbarung 1,11

\* -σαν κ<sup>2</sup> (λεγοῦσης is replaced by λεγούσαν)

\* μοι 1611. 1854 pc h (t) bo; Prim Bea (either μοι or a longer insertion is made after λεγούσης)

tion of each of the variations reveals that the ‘corrections’ were either intended as stylistic updates, or as grammar corrections to wrong case usage. None of the variant readers would change the basic meaning of the text.

Consequently, we can exegete the adopted reading of the Greek text in full confidence that it was the original wording of this passage of scripture.

**Internal History. The significant place**



**marker** inside this passage is ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ, on an island called Patmos in v. 9.<sup>2</sup> It was a rather bleak volcanic centered island with few inhabitants. Although mentioned in passing by two Greek and Roman historians (Thucydides, *History* 3:33) and Strabo, *Geography* 10:5), the one moment of fame in its ancient history was the imprisonment of the apostle John on the island at the close of the first Christian century.<sup>3</sup> A



The Island of Patmos (above ▲)  
The Monastery of Saint John (below ▼)



very fanciful legendary text paints an interesting but fictitious account of John’s supposed actions connected to his stay on the island. It is the *Acts of John*, written in the fifth century by an unknown writer.<sup>4</sup> Centuries later

| μοι Ἰωαννῆ 2053. 2062 pc  
 | ἐγὼ εἶμι το Α καὶ το Ω, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἐσχάτος, καὶ Μ<sup>Α</sup>  
 | txt & A C 1006. 1841. 2050. 2329. 2351 M<sup>K</sup> lat sy sa  
 \* εἰς –ραν A C 046. 1611. 1854. 2050. 2351 pc (εἰς Θυάτειρα is replaced by two alternative readings)  
 | ἐν –ροῖς P pc  
 | txt & M  
 \* &\* (καὶ εἰς Σάρδεῖς is omitted)  
 [Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 633.]

<sup>2</sup>“One of the Sporades Islands in the Aegean Sea located off the coast of Asia Minor, 37 miles SW of the city of Miletus and 28 miles S SW of the island of Samos (37°20’N, 26°34’E). The desolate volcanic island is 25 miles in circumference, about 10 miles long N to S and 6 miles wide at its broadest point (the N half). Mt. Elias, the highest point on the island, rises more than 800 feet. On the isthmus at the center of the island a Greek settlement has been excavated.” [Scott T. Carroll, “Patmos (Place)” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 178-79.]

<sup>3</sup>“Roman prisoners and dissidents were often banished to is-

lands, and three islands, in particular, in the Sporades were used for exiles (Pliny HN 4:69–70; Tacitus Ann. 4:30). John was exiled to Patmos, according to early church tradition, in the 14th year (95 C.E.) of the emperor Domitian (Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 3:18–20; see also Irenaeus haer. 5.30.3; Jerome vir. ill. 9).” [Scott T. Carroll, “Patmos (Place)” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 179.]

<sup>4</sup>“The beginning of the book is lost. It probably related in some form a trial, and banishment of John to Patmos. A distinctly late Greek text printed by Bonnet (in two forms) as cc. 1-17 of his work tells how Domitian, on his accession, persecuted the Jews. They accused the Christians in a letter to him: he accordingly persecuted the Christians. He heard of John’s teaching in Ephesus and sent for him: his ascetic habits on the voyage impressed his captors. He was brought before Domitian, and made to drink poison, which did not hurt him: the dregs of it killed a criminal on whom it was tried: and John revived him; he also raised a girl who was slain by an unclean spirit. Domitian, who was much impressed, banished him to Patmos. Nerva recalled him. The second text tells how he escaped shipwreck on leaving Patmos, swimming on a cork; landed at Miletus, where a chapel was built in his honour, and went to Ephesus. All this is late: but an old story, known to Tertullian and to other Latin writers, but to no Greek, said that either Domitian at Rome or the Proconsul at Ephesus cast John into a cauldron of boiling oil

in 1088, the *Monastery of Saint John* was constructed at the traditional site of his visions on the island in tribute to the apostle John.<sup>5</sup> Just how long John was exiled to Patmos by the Roman government is not clear. Eusebius (*Church History* 3:18-20) places him going into banishment in 95 AD during the fourteenth year of Domitian.<sup>6</sup> The *Acts of John* asserts that he was released during the reign of Nerva (96 - 98 AD), who was followed by Trajan (98-117 AD). Church tradition claims that, during Trajan's reign, John served as the spiritual

which did him no hurt. The scene of this was eventually fixed at the Latin Gate in Rome (hence the St. John Port Latin of our calendar, May 6th). We have no detailed account of this, but it is conjectured to have been told in the early part of the Leucian Acts. If so, it is odd that no Greek writer mentions it." ["The Acts of John," *Early Christian Writings* online]

<sup>5</sup>Near the monastery is the *Patmian Theological School* which has been in operation since 1713, and Greek Orthodox seminary students still come here for their training in ministerial duties.

<sup>6</sup>"During the Hellenistic period, Patmos, along with the islands of Lipsos and Leros, were part of the territory of Miletus. The territory of Miletus consisted of the city of Miletus, the surrounding countryside, and the islands (Saffrey, RB 82 [1975] 388-91, with inscriptional evidence). These three islands were also designated as the *φρούρια*, 'fortresses,' of Miletus, since the city was a major maritime power and these islands protected her Aegean side by guarding the entrance to the Latmiqué Gulf where Miletus was located. Beginning with the second century B.C., Patmos and the other two islands were populated by a garrison of reliable Milesians, called *φρούροι*, whose leader was designated a *φρούραρχος*, or 'commandant,' who functioned as a resident governor for Miletus. Patmos was certainly not a deserted island. In an inscription from Patmos dating to the second century B.C. (SEG 1068.2), a certain Hegemandros was honored by the Association of Torch Runners on Patmos. The inscription mentions the presence of a gymnasium on the island and mentions that Hegemandros was gymnasiarch seven times and that he had funded the erection of a stone statue of Hermes as well as performed other benefits for his fellow citizens and athletes. An inscription from the second century A.D. (G. Kaibel, *Epigrammatica Graeca ex lapidibus collecta* [Berlin: Reimer, 1878] no. 872) honors Bera, a hydrophore, 'priestess,' of Artemis (*ὑδροφόρος* was the Milesian term for such priestesses), and reveals the presence of a cult and temple of Artemis on Patmos, complete with a public feast, a procession, and the recitation of hymns in honor of the goddess (Saffrey, RB 82 [1975] 399-407; cf. Peek, RMP 107 [1964] 315-25). It is also likely that the inhabitants of Patmos had their own tradition of the birth of Artemis on that island (Saffrey, RB 82 [1975] 407-10), which may have influenced the version of the *ApolloLeto* myth used in Rev 12. Miletus, of course, is not one of the seven cities addressed by John, either because he himself was from Miletus and is addressing only other cities, or (more likely) because there was not yet a Christian community at Miletus. In Acts 20:17-38, which narrates Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, there is no hint that a local Christian community existed. A Christian presence there during the first part of the second century, perhaps suggested by 2 Tim 4:20, was certainly in existence by the middle of the second century as reflected in Acts of John 18-19; 37." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 77.]

leader at Ephesus until his death during this emperor's reign. Just how accurate these traditions are is another unsolvable issue.

**One major time marker** in this passage is ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, **on the Lord's day**. Does this suggest that John's initial vision happened on a Sunday? The adjective κυριακός in the very limited secular use means "imperial" and refers to the emperor. It occurs only twice in the NT: here and in 1 Cor. 11:20 where it means κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, **the Lord's supper**. This NT usage seems to convey the meaning 'of the Lord' as a qualifying modifier of either ἡμέρα, **day**, or δεῖπνον, **supper**. But clearly it is not a synonym of ἡμέρα (τοῦ) κυρίου, **the day of the Lord**. This phrase is an eschatological term referring to the second coming of Christ in early Christian usage and comes out of the LXX use by the Israelite prophets to refer to the coming doom of God's wrath poured out on first the northern kingdom in 722 BCE with the Assyrian invasion, then the destruction of the southern kingdom in 583 BCE by the Babylonians. During the prophetic activity in the era of the exile, the phrase took on an undefined future reference.

Does the phrase ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ allude to Sunday as the Lord's day? Although very popular, it is almost impossible to prove this meaning for John's use. The earliest unquestionable Christian use of this adjective to refer to Sunday is in the fourth century AD.<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere inside the New Testament, namely 1

<sup>7</sup>"The earliest occurrence in the papyri of the term κυριακή (used absolutely) for Sunday is found in a fourth-century document (POxy 3407.15-16; Horsley, New Docs 2:207). This conforms to other expressions such as ἡ Σεβαστή [ἡμέρα], 'the Emperor's day,' and ἡ κρονική [ἡμέρα], 'Cronus' day,' i.e., Saturday, yet it is highly unlikely that the Christian designation κυριακή ἡμέρα was formulated in conscious opposition to the imperial cult as Deissmann contended (Light, 363-66; id., *Bible Studies*, 218-19). The first day of the week has special significance in early Christianity (1 Cor 16:2; Acts 20:7); this day is called the 'eighth day' in Barn. 15:9. The term κυριακή is later used absolutely to refer to Sunday: Did. 14:1; Ign. Magn. 9:1 (κυριακή is contrasted with σαββατίζοντες, apparently contrasting the tendency of some Judaizing Christians to observe the weekly Sabbath, in contrast with Christians who hold a weekly celebration on Sunday); Gos. Pet. 12.50 (ἡ κυριακή replaces μία [τῶν] σαββάτων, 'the first [day] of the week,' found in the Synoptic parallels); Clement Alex. Strom. 17.12. Melito of Sardis, in Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 4.26.2, wrote a treatise entitled Περὶ κυριακῆς, but since only the title survives, the content of the work cannot be known. The expression κυριακή ἡμέρα, 'the Lord's day,' is found in Dionysius of Corinth in Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 4.23.8; Origen *Contra Celsum* 8.22. In Did. 14:1 we find the pleonastic expression κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου συναχθέντες, 'and when you gather on the Lord's (day) of the Lord,' rejected as impossible by Audet (*La Didachè*, 460) and therefore emended by him in agreement with the Georgian version to read καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ κυρίου, 'on the day of the Lord'; he considered κυριακὴν to be a marginal gloss that first interpreted ἡμέραν and later displaced it." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Com-

Cor. 16:2 and Acts 20:7, the first day of the week, μίαν σαββάτου, gained special importance for Christians because of the resurrection of Christ. But the adjective κυριακός seems to be moving toward specifying Sunday as a special day for Christians in the second century writings of *The Didache* (14:1) and *Ignatius to the Magnesians* (9:1). These documents use κυριακός in contrast to σαββατίζοντες to make the point of proper Christian worship on Sunday rather than Saturday as was being argued by some Jewish Christian groups with Judaizing tendencies.

Much less likely is the view of a few that this phrase refers to Easter Sunday, which evolved into a weekly Lord's day observance.<sup>8</sup> The simplest, and perhaps most likely, understanding is that ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ merely designates a day that John had devoted especially to spend time focusing on the Lord and nothing else. That this day was Sunday has to remain purely a guess that cannot be established.

### Literary Aspects:

As always in biblical interpretation, careful attention needs to be given to the literary qualities of a passage of scripture along side the historical aspects.

**Genre:** Just inside vv. 9-11 no distinctive literary form emerges. But vv. 9-11 are a part of a larger unit in vv. 9-20, which comprises a critically important mentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 83-84.]

<sup>8</sup>“While the meaning of κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ in Rev 1:10 is widely understood to be a new Christian designation for Sunday, some even argue that it refers specifically to Easter Sunday (Strobel, ZNW 49 [1958] 185; Dugmore, “Lord’s Day,” 274–78; Strand, NTS 13 [1966–67] 174–81; arguments against this view are found in Rordorf, Sunday, 209–15, and Bauckham, “Lord’s Day,” 230–31). According to this view, Sunday, the weekly Christian day of worship, developed out of the annual commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. This is problematic, however, since κυριακῇ never unambiguously means Easter Sunday, and Asia Minor (the region where many crucial texts originated: Rev 1:10; Did. 14:1; Ign. Magn. 9:1; Gos. Pet. 35, 50) was a region in which Easter was celebrated on 14 Nisan from the early second century A.D. on. Though many of the early Christian references to ἡ κυριακῇ (ἡμέρᾳ) could refer either to Sunday or Easter (Did. 14:1; Ign. Magn. 9:1; Gos. Pet. 35, 50), some clearly refer to Sunday (Acts Pet. 29; Acts Paul 7: ‘And Paul cried out to God on the Sabbath as the Lord’s day drew near’ [Schneemelcher, NTA 2:371]). Further, the Gnostic association of the Ogdoad (‘the eighth’) with the Lord’s day assumes the Christian association of κυριακῇ, Sunday, with the ‘eighth’ day (Barn. 15:2; 2 Enoch 33:7; Ep. Apost 18 (Coptic); Clement Excerpta ex Theodoto 63; cf. Bauckham, “Lord’s Day,” 230). A less common view is that κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ in Rev 1:10 refers to the eschatological Day of the Lord, i.e., that John was transported in his vision to the eschaton (Bacchiocchi, From Sabbath, 123–31). Why then did John not use the more common expression ἡμέρᾳ (τοῦ) κυρίου, which occurs frequently in the LXX and the NT?” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, Revelation 1–5, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 84.]

literary genre called a vision. In this introductory study we then need to consider this important literary form that will greatly impact how the entire book of Revelation is understood.

The close connection of 1:9-20 to the seven letters in chapters two and three play an important role in understanding the nature of this text in vv. 9-20. Sometimes the label “prophetic call narrative” is used, but this is highly questionable simply because vv. 9-20 do not contain any of the elements of a divine calling to ministry. The commands ὁ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον καὶ πέμψον ταῖς ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, *what you see write in a book and send to the seven churches* (v. 11), and γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα, *then write what you have seen, and what is, and what is about to happen after these things* (v. 19), do not conform to the divine instructions for ministry given in the callings of most of the Israelite prophets.

What does seem to be the case is that John frames his vision somewhat after the model set up in Ezekiel 2:8-3:7.

2.8 But you, mortal, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you. 9 I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. 10 He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

3.1 He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3 He said to me, Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey. 4 He said to me: Mortal, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them. 5 For you are not sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel— 6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to them, they would listen to you. 7 But the house of Israel will not listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. 8 See, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads.

But even here, this text has more in common with Rev. 10:8-11, than with 1:9-20.

What is important to remember is how the prophetic visions were constructed in the OT and Jewish apocalyptic texts. Typically they were anchored around either (1) a visionary dialogue with Yahweh often without a visionary element, or (2) a throne-room vision lacking a dialogical element where the commissioning follows the vision rather than being a part of it.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>“Zimmerli (*Ezekiel* 1:97–100) has distinguished two types of prophetic call narratives in the OT: (1) A visionary dialogue with Yahweh (often lacking a visionary element) in which the prophet’s reluctance is overcome, as in the calls of Moses, Gideon, Saul, and

Where was John when this experience took place? In 1:9-20 no clear signal is given regarding where the Son of Man was when He spoke to John. But in 4:1-2 in an allusion back to this voice in 1:9-20, John clearly indicates that the Son of Man was in Heaven when He spoke to John. What John experienced several times as described in Revelation compares to the throne room vision category of the OT prophets, e.g., 1 Kings 22:19-22; Isa. 6:1-8; Ezek. 1:1-3:15; 10:1-22. Whether this compares to Dan. 7:9-13 and 1 Enoch 14:18-22; 46:1-3; 60:1-3, 70-71; 89:52; 90:20-23, 31-33, 37-38 is highly debated, and unlikely.

When a careful literary analysis is made of the contents of vv. 9-20, what emerges is something of a symbolic vision containing the two core elements of the vision (vv. 9-19) and an interpretation of it (v. 20). Something similar surfaces twice more in Rev. 7:1-17 (vision, vv. 1-12; interpretation, vv. 13-17) and in Rev. 17:1-18 (vision, vv. 1-6; interpretation, vv. 7-18). Additionally signals of John's use of language and concepts from Daniel 7:9-14; 10:2-9; and 10:15-17 are present suggesting the borrowing to concepts from this OT model. Even closer are allusions to the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* (6:11-13).<sup>10</sup> What is also interesting is the

Jeremiah (Exod 3:1-22; 4:1-17; 6:2-12; 7:1-7; Judg 6:15-16; 1 Sam 9:21; Jer 1:4-10). (2) A throne-room vision (lacking the dialogical element) in which prophetic commission is given following a vision of the throne of Yahweh, as in the visions of Micaiah ben Imlah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel (1 Kgs 22:19-22 [though Micaiah himself is not called]; Isa 6:1-8; Ezek 1:1-3:15; 10:1-22). Black ("Throne-Theophany," 67-69) suggests that the same type of theophanic prophetic call is found in Dan 7:9-13 (which is dependent on Ezek 1; cf. A. Feuillet, RB 60 [1953] 170-202, 321-46) and in 1 Enoch 14:18-22; 46:1-3; 60:1-3; 70-71; 89:52; 90:20-23, 31-33, 37-38. Yet these texts exhibit much more variety than Black suggests: (1) While Dan 7:9-13 is certainly a throne theophany, it lacks a prophetic commission and hardly fits Zimmerli's typology. (2) 1 Enoch 14:18-22 represents the culmination of a heavenly journey. (3) Enoch's celestial journey, his vision of God upon his throne, and the divine commission are found in 14:8-16:3; 70:1-71:17. (4) 1 Enoch 46:1-8; 60:1-6 are indeed throne visions, but they lack the element of prophetic commission. (5) 1 Enoch 90:20-39 is a throne vision, though the throne is upon earth, and the entire scene is one that focuses on eschatological judgment." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 70-71.]

<sup>10</sup>**Apoc. Zech. 6:11-15.** 11 Then I arose and stood, and I saw a great angel standing before me with his face shining like the rays of the sun in its glory since his face is like that which is perfected in its glory. 12 And he was girded as if a golden girdle were upon his breast. His feet were like bronze which is melted in a fire. 13 And when I saw him, I rejoiced, for I thought that the Lord Almighty had come to visit me. 14 I fell upon my face, and I worshiped him. 15 He said to me, "Take heed. Worship me not. I am not the Lord Almighty, but am the great angel, Eremiel, who is over the abyss and Hades, the one in which all of the souls are imprisoned from the end of the Flood, which came upon the earth, until this day." 6:16-17 provide the interpretation of the vision.

occurrence of somewhat similar visions in the pagan literature of that time.<sup>11</sup> What can be concluded from these comparisons is that John utilizes literary forms and concepts that were in existence in his day from a variety of sources, although clearly his dominant influence is the Jewish tradition. Although debated among modern scholars as to who is more dominant, John seems to be heavily depending on both Daniel and Ezekiel as models for setting up and depicting his visionary encounter with Christ that 'Lord's day.' In this he is following the established trend of the Jewish apocalyptic writers who did much the same thing.

**Literary Setting:** Our passage of 1:9-11 most importantly stands as a part of the larger apocalyptic vision of 1:9-20. In this first layer of context, it serves to set up the vision which is then described mainly in vv. 12-16 and is followed by a depiction of his reaction to the vision (vv. 17-20). This apocalyptic vision then serves as an introduction to the seven letters in chapters two and three, in that it provides a theological tone and perspective to these letters.

Further 1:9-20 come as the last segment of the introductory material in chapter one. In the Prologue of 1:1-8 John has alerted his readers that this document is fundamentally an Ἀποκάλυψις, *apocalypse* (1:1). In vv. 1-3 the parameters of this apocalypse are set forth in terms of it coming from Jesus Christ. It stands as the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Also it stems from its core nature as a prophecy in the tradition of the ancient Israelite prophets. John then positions the document squarely in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, but reflecting a distinctly Christian understanding of the will of God.

Surprisingly John inserts an epistolary *Praescip-tio* in 1:4-5a in standard Pauline fashion. This signals the personal and clearly defined recipients of the doc-

Also containing similarities to Rev. 1:9-12 is the angelic vision in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (11:2-3). Somewhat similar is *Joseph and Asenath* 5:5 and 14:9.

<sup>11</sup>"In the so-called Mithras Liturgy (PGM IV. 475-834), an appearance of Mithras, who comes to the magical practitioner, is described (PGM IV.634-37, 692-704; tr. Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, 50-52):

When you have seen this, the rays will turn toward you; look at the center of them. For when you have done this, you will see a youthful god, beautiful in appearance, with fiery hair, and in a white tunic and a scarlet cloak, and wearing a fiery crown.... Now when they [seven additional gods] take their place, here and there, in order, look in the air and you will see lightning bolts going down, and lights flashing, and the earth shaking, and a god descending, a god immensely great, having a bright appearance, youthful, golden-haired, with a white tunic and a golden crown and heaven around, moving upward and downward in accordance with the hour. Then you will see lightning bolts leaping from his eyes and stars from his body.

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 73.]

ument as the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. This epistolary marker at the beginning is matched by the epistolary *Conclusio* with apocalyptic tones in 22:8-21. The interpretive importance of this is to signal clearly that John's targeted audience for the entire book, not just the first three chapters, is the members of the churches in the seven cities of Asia.<sup>12</sup>

The *Doxology* in 1:5b-6 places in the midst of these

<sup>12</sup>“The letter format shows that Revelation is to be read contextually. Its visionary contents speak to the congregations identified in its opening salutation. Some interpreters limit Revelation's epistolary aspect to the first three chapters, which deal specifically with the churches in Asia Minor, but this can lead to a non-contextual reading of the rest of the book. Epistolary elements frame Revelation, so that the entire work can be read as a message to the seven churches. This means that interpreters should take the context of Revelation seriously, as they do when interpreting other NT letters.” [Craig R. Koester, “Revelation, Book of,” *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* online]

introductory markers of the nature of the book a tone of celebratory reverence and submission to the One who is the source of this spiritual insight. The concluding pair of Prophetic Oracles in 1:7-8 serve to remind us of the OT prophetic insight that serves as the starting point for this Christian interpretation of God's intention for all of humanity, not just His covenant people Israel.

Although sharing commonalities with the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, John's presentation is distinctly Christian in both its theological perspective as well as its utilization of patterns additionally found in early Christian writings. With creative brilliance, he has painted for us a kaleidoscopic portrait of God that signals how the rest of the document will unfold.

**Literary Structure:** The internal arrangement of ideas in the two Greek sentences that make up vv. 9-11 can be best seen in a block diagram. What follows below is a literalistic English translation based on the diagramming of the original Greek text.

11 <sup>9</sup> I . . . . was  
 John  
 your brother  
 and  
 fellow participant  
 in the affliction  
 and  
 the reign  
 and  
 the endurance  
 in Jesus  
 on the island  
 which is called Patmos  
 because of the Word of God  
 and  
 the testimony of Jesus.

12 <sup>10</sup> I was  
 in the spirit  
 on the Lord's day  
 and

13 I heard...a loud voice  
 behind me  
 like a trumpet  
 saying,  
 What you see write  
 in a book  
 and  
 ---- --- --- send to the seven churches  
 in Ephesus,  
 and  
 in Smyrna,  
 and  
 in Pergamum,  
 and  
 in Thyatira,  
 and  
 in Sardis,  
 and  
 in Philadelphia  
 and  
 in Laodicea.

### **Analysis of the Internal Structure:**

Statement 11 in verse nine introduces the vision of vv. 9-20 by locating John on the island of Patmos when the vision took place. In the qualifiers of the verb subject John goes to great pains to identify himself with his targeted readers especially at their shared experience of persecution. He lays out the reason for being there on Patmos as because of his preaching of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Statements 12 and 13 in vv. 10-11 position John spiritually for this visionary experience. He was 'in the spirit on the Lord's day' when the Lord unexpectedly came up behind him and spoke in a booming voice with the command to start writing. This divine instruction begins the vision of the Lord that will be described in vv. 12-16.

### **Exegesis of the Text:**

Quite clearly from the structural analysis above the passage divides itself naturally into two segments. The exegetical outline below attempts to capture the essence of these two points.

#### **A. Where John was physically, v. 9**

9 Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

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

The absolute core part of this sentence is Ἐγὼ... ἐγενόμην, which is usually translated into English as "I was." But this English expression is actually closer to the Greek ἐγὼ ἦν than to ἐγὼ ἐγενόμην. The use of the Aorist form of the verb γίνομαι here sets up a special circumstance beyond just defining that one is in some particular situation. The sense seems more to be along the lines of "I came to be."

Two situations are affirmed to have taken place for John: 1) ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ and 2) διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

**First**, John asserts that he was on the island called Patmos. For a detailed discussion of Patmos see the treatment above under **Internal History**. One implication from this verb structure with this place marker modifier of the verb is whether John implies that as he now writes the book that he has moved on from Patmos and is somewhere else. The past time action of the Aorist verb is taken by a few to imply that John is no longer on Patmos at the time of the writing of the book. But to read this implication into the tense form of

the verb is unjustified in light of John's use of the Aorist tense throughout the book of Revelation over against the imperfect tense form, as well as the implications of the Aorist form of γίνομαι (here ἐγενόμην) over against the imperfect tense form (ἐγινόμην).<sup>13</sup> Writing over a couple of centuries later, the church historian Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3:20.8-9) suggests that John was released from banishment to Patmos with the death of Domitian in 96 AD. If this is accurate, then John would have spent only a couple of years in imprisonment on Patmos in the mid-90s.<sup>14</sup> But the solid early church tradition is that Revelation was composed during that time and not afterwards.

**Second**, the reason John was on Patmos is given as διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, *because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus*. The causal prepositional phrase clearly defines why John was on the island, but leaves open further implications as to why. Did he travel there voluntarily in order to evangelize the inhabitants on the island? Was he there involuntarily due to official Roman action of banishment? Some background on the Roman legal system is necessary to clearly understand why John was on Patmos.<sup>15</sup> What seems to be clear is that the

<sup>13</sup>The aorist and imperfect are primarily used in narrative contexts (the aorist in past contexts as a background narrative tense, while the imperfect is used in past contexts as the foreground narrative tense; cf. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 151), and the author of Revelation exhibits a marked preference for the use of aorist (451 times) rather than the imperfect (20 times)." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 77.]

<sup>14</sup>The church father Victorinus of Petau (death in appx. 304 AD) in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (10:3) indicates that John was condemned to work in the mines on Patmos and was able to write Revelation during that time.

<sup>15</sup>Roman legal practice exhibited a dual penalty system (described at length by Garnsey, *Social Status*, 103-80), in that the *dignitas*, 'status,' of the defendant was more important than the crime committed. Members of the upper-class orders (*honestiores*) were usually given more lenient punishments in the courts than were those from the lower orders (*humiliores*). In cases where *humiliores* were given the death penalty, *honestiores* were punished with banishment (A. Berger, *Roman Law*, 633). First of all, the term *exilium* or *exsul*, 'exile,' could refer to voluntary or involuntary departures from a region or country. Voluntary exile was permitted those of higher status who had been condemned to death, but they were usually subsequently deprived of both citizenship and property. There were two primary forms of compulsory expulsion, *relegatio*, 'banishment,' and *deportatio*, perpetual 'deportation,' the former more lenient than the latter. *Relegatio* might be temporary (cf. the three-year term mentioned in Pliny *Ep.* 10.56) or permanent. Further, it could be *relegatio ad* or *in*, 'banishment to,' a place or *relegatio ab* or *extra*, 'banishment from,' a place. (1) Suetonius (*Titus* 8.5) speaks of banishment in *asperrimas insularum*, 'to the harshest of islands.' Juvenal alludes to banishment to the island of Gyara in the Aegean sea (*Satires* 1.73). The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus was confined to this barren island and worked on



apostle John suffered some kind of official Roman banishment that resulted in him ending up on Patmos. It does seem to have been a *relegatio in* type, that is, a banishment to category. At least this is how the church father Jerome depicts it with his “*in Patmos insulam relegatus*.” But at what level of banishment we are uncertain. A *relegatio* could imply the death penalty having been given but because John fell into the *honestiores* category of upper middle class individuals he was given the option of compulsory banishment to Patmos instead of being executed. But if he received a *deportatio* sentence, he could have been sent to Patmos with the loss of all property and any citizenship privileges he may have had. The banishment could have been temporary or permanent -- Roman law provided for both. The *relegatio in insulam* did not normally include loss of property or citizenship rights. Interestingly if he had received a *relegatio ab* type sentence, it meant he was merely banished from what was considered his home at that point in time. The Roman governor could impose this sentence but the others required the approval of the emperor. The Latin church father Tertullian in the late 170s (*De praescrip.* 36) interpreted John’s situation simply in terms of relegation to an island using the Latin expression “*Ioannes... in insulam relgatur*.” The Greco-Roman literature suggests that the *relegatio in/ad insulam* sentence was widely used by Roman governors during this period of time. This gave the individual some personal freedom to receive friends, earn a living etc.

Thus behind the stated cause of being there for having preached the Gospel, John had some liberties which enabled the composition of the book of Revelation. But at the surface level John’s stated reason for being on Patmos was persecution of him for his Christian ministry. The prepositional construction *διὰ* plus the accusative case object can suggest either cause or purpose. But John’s later use (6:9; 20:4) of this construction clearly identifies it as cause, and not purpose. This is consistent with the uniform view of the church a forced labor battalion building Nero’s canal through the isthmus of Corinth. (On *relegatio ad* or *in*, see K. von Fritz, RE 16 [1933] 893–94.) In referring to John’s exile to Patmos, Jerome uses the phrase in Patmos *insulam relegatus*, ‘banished to the island of Patmos.’ (2) On *relegatio ab* or *relegatio extra*, ‘banishment from,’ a person’s home territory, see Digest 47.14.3.3; 48.22.7.10–22. In *De exilo* 604B, Plutarch addresses an exile from Sardis. Dio Chrysostom was exiled from his native Italy by Domitian and was recalled after Domitian’s death, but was free to travel wherever he wanted (Dio Chrysostom Or 13; C. P. Jones, Dio Chrysostom, 45–55). Exile was a subject frequently treated in the writings of such Greek and Roman philosophers as Teles, Musonius, Plutarch, Favorinus, and Seneca. For a list of known places of exile, see Balsdon, Romans, 113–15.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 78-79.]

fathers of John being banished by the governmental authorities to Patmos. The parallel expressions of τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (7x) and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ (5x) are common in the book. Especially in combination they designate the Gospel message preached by the apostles in the early church.

The verb subject Ἐγὼ at the beginning of the sentence receives extensive expansion in two ways: personal name and ministry id with his readers. John again inserts his personal name for identification purposes: Ἰωάννης. This is the third time thus far that his name has been mentioned (vv. 1, 4, 9) and each time at the beginning of a distinctive genre unit used generally for introducing documents. The name will not appear again until the beginning of the Conclusio section in 22:8, where it is again appropriately inserted.

What moves toward being an epistolary title in a letter *Superscriptio* follows: ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ, *your brother and fellow participant in the affliction and kingdom and endurance in Jesus*. This pattern stands in line with Ezekiel’s introductory vision.<sup>16</sup> Also somewhat similar is the introduction to Daniel’s visionary experience in chapter ten.<sup>17</sup>

No claim of authority is present here by John with inserting an official title, but instead there is an affirmation of shared spiritual experience that binds John to his readers. He speaks of being ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν, *your brother*. Whether or not John had visited the seven cities named in verse eleven is unknown. But they surely knew of him and revered him as the aged apostolic leader who lived in the region. Now he was a prisoner of the empire on Patmos, but was reaching out to them through this personal document of Christian hope.

The second id tag is συκοινωνὸς, *fellow participant*. In the ancient business world this term normally meant a business partner. Paul uses the term three times in order to identify with the readers of his letters. The Romans share the Gospel with him (Rom. 11:17) along with the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:23). The Philippians share God’s grace with him (Phil. 1:7). What John’s readers in Asia shared with him is spelled out in an interesting and more complex expression attached to the noun.

<sup>16</sup>**Eze 1:1** In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the LORD came to *the priest Ezekiel* son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was on him there.

<sup>17</sup>**Daniel 10:1.** In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia a word was revealed to *Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar*. The word was true, and it concerned a great conflict. He understood the word, having received understanding in the vision.

One should note something in the Greek that is almost impossible to translate clearly. The single Greek article τῆ at the beginning links the three experiences together at a common experience. Thus θλίψει, βασιλεία, and ὑπομονῆ are seen as one experience. And very interestingly all of these take place ἐν Ἰησοῦ, in Jesus. This is, these common experiences take place in spiritual union with Jesus.

These common experiences include θλίψει, affliction. Inside the NT, θλίψις defines an outward experience of extreme trouble normally produced by persecution that causes severe stress and tension. At the heart of the root stem is the idea of imposing high level pressure that causes severe pain.<sup>18</sup> But such intense

<sup>18</sup>“In our lit. (as in LXX, En, Test12Patr, JosAs cod. A; Just., D. 116, 2; Mel.) freq. and in the metaph. sense trouble that inflicts distress, oppression, affliction, tribulation (so Vett. Val. 71, 16; Cat. Cod. Astr. VIII/3 p. 175, 5; 178, 8; pl. 169, 2 [s. Boll 134f]; OGI 444, 15 [II or I B.C.] διὰ τὰς τ. πόλεων θλίψεις; BGU 1139, 4 [I B.C.]; POxy 939, 13; PAmh 144, 18). Of distress that is brought about by outward circumstances (Jos., Ant. 4, 108; En, PsSol, Mel.; Did., Gen. 116, 10), in sg. and pl. **Ac 11:19; Ro 5:3b; 12:12; 2 Cor 1:8; 6:4; 8:2; Rv 1:9; 2:9, 22; 1 Cl 22:7** (Ps 33:18); 59:4; 2 Cl 11:4 (quot. of unknown orig.); Hs 7:4ff. ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θ. ἡμῶν **2 Cor 1:4a; 7:4; 1 Th 3:7**; ἐν πάσῃ θ. (TestGad 4:4) **2 Cor 1:4b**; ἐν (τ.) θ. **Ro 5:3a; Eph 3:13; 1 Th 1:6; 3:3**. ἐν πολλαῖς θ. καὶ ποικίλαις Hs 7, 4. θ. μεγάλη great tribulation (SibOr 3, 186) **Mt 24:21** (1 Macc 9:27); **Ac 7:11**; Hv 4, 2, 4. Plural Hv 3, 2, 1. ἡ θ. ἡ μεγάλη the great tribulation **Rv 7:14**; τὸ ἐλαφρὸν τῆς θ. slight affliction **2 Cor 4:17**. ἀνταποδοῦναι τι θλίψιν repay someone w. affliction **2 Th 1:6**. W. ἀνάγκη (q.v. 2) **1 Th 3:7**. W. διωγμός **Mt 13:21; Mk 4:17; Ac 8:1 D; 13:50 D; pl. 2 Th 1:4**. W. δεσμά (TestJos 2:4) **Ac 20:23**. W. ὀνειδισμός **Hb 10:33**. W. στενοχωρία (q.v.) **Ro 2:9**. W. στενοχωρία and διωγμός **8:35** (w. λιμός and στενοχωρία Hippol., Ref. 5, 26, 12).—On the catalogue of hardships (peristasis) cp. **1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:8f; 6:4–10; 11:23–28; 12:10; Phil 4:11**; s. FDanker, Augsburg Comm. 2 Cor ’89, 89–91; 180f; idem, The Endangered Benefactor in Luke-Acts: SBLSP ’81, 39–48; JFitzgerald, Cracks in an Earthen Vessel ’88; MFerrari, Die Sprache des Leids in den paulinischen Persistenzen-katalogen ’91; MEbner, Leidenslisten u. Apostelbrief ’91.—ἡμέρα θλίψεως day of affliction (Gen 35:3; 2 Km 22:19; cp. En 103:9; TestLevi 5:5) 1 Cl 52:3 (Ps 49:15).—Of the tribulations of the last days (as Da 12:1) **Mt 24:21, 29; Mk 13:19, 24**. ἡ θ. ἡ ἐρχομένη ἡ μεγάλη the great tribulation to come Hv 2, 2, 7; cp. 2, 3, 4; 4, 1, 1; 4, 2, 5; 4, 3, 6.—Distress caused by war 1 Cl 57:4 (Pr 1:27). θ. θανάτου affliction of death B 12:5. Difficult circumstances **2 Cor 8:13; Js 1:27**; συγκοινωνεῖν τῇ θ. show an interest in (someone’s) distress **Phil 4:14**. Of a woman’s birth-pangs **J 16:21**.—ὅταν γένηται θ. when persecution comes Hv 3, 6, 5. θλίψιν ἀκούειν hear of persecution Hs 9, 21, 3. θλίψιν ἔχειν **J 16:33; 1 Cor 7:28; Rv 2:10**; Hv 2, 3, 1; Hs 7:3. εἰς ὑπενέγκη τὰς θλίψεις τὰς ἐπερχομένας αὐτῷ Hs 7:4; cp. 7:6. ἐξείλατο αὐτὸν ἐκ πασῶν τῶν θλίψεων αὐτοῦ **Ac 7:10**. διὰ πολλῶν θ. εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τ. βασιλείαν **14:22**. τότε παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς θλίψιν **Mt 24:9**; cp. B 12:5. ἀποστήσεται πᾶσα θ. ἀπὸ σοῦ ... ἀπὸ πάντων ἀποστήσεται ἡ θ. Hs 7, 7.—Of the sufferings of Christ θλίψεις τοῦ Χριστοῦ **Col 1:24** (s. on ἀνταναπληρῶ and πάθημα 1).

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer,

suffering is linked to βασιλεία, the Kingdom. That is, the reign of God over our lives and the experiencing of suffering for our faith go together. God’s controlling our lives in no way frees us from suffering pain and discomfort. The reality is actually the opposite, contrary to the heretical preaching of some modern western TV preachers. Both John and his Asian readers knew this well out of their own personal experience. John was on Patmos because of his Christian commitment. The believers in the seven churches in Asia knew well what it meant to live with a government hostile to one’s religious faith.

The third common element in this experience is ὑπομονῆ, endurance. Pain from persecution because of God’s leadership could push one into a depression of resigned acceptance as one’s fate. But ὑπομονή is in no way defining passive acceptance of a bad situation. The inherent emphasis of the word is an aggressive meeting of the situation with unwavering commitment to remain true to one’s values no matter what. Thus ὑπομονή is usually translated by endurance, fortitude, steadfastness or perseverance more so than by the English word patience which often connotes a passive acceptance.<sup>19</sup>

The foundational spiritual setting for this common experience is ἐν Ἰησοῦ, in Jesus. Thus it is in the common commitment to Jesus in which His values have become our values that we go through such persecution.<sup>20</sup> This John shared with his Asian readers.

Thus in the further introduction, now with apocalyptic tones, John affirms deep identity with his initial readers. It is such a shared experience of enduring persecution together that has made the book of Revelation a favorite NT document to persecuted Christians down through the centuries. When the world around viciously turns on believers, the witness of those who have already gone through such times takes on new meaning and significance.

## B. Where John was spiritually, vv. 10-11

10 ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην

*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 457.]

<sup>19</sup>William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1039.

<sup>20</sup>“The phrase in Jesus means ‘as a follower of Jesus,’ ‘as a believer in Jesus,’ or even ‘as a Christian.’ Another way of expressing this phrase is ‘who as a fellow believer in Jesus share ...’” [Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 25.]

ὡς σάλπιγγος 11 λεγούσης· ὃ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον καὶ πέμψον ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, εἰς Ἔφεσον καὶ εἰς Σμύρναν καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον καὶ εἰς Θυάτειρα καὶ εἰς Σάρδεις καὶ εἰς Φιλαδέλφειαν καὶ εἰς Λαοδικείαν.

10 I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

The identical core expression in the **first main clause** of the second sentence, ἐγένομην, I came to be, links it back to the first sentence as the exact same experience, but now viewed from a different angle as defined by the qualifying references to this verb.

Again two modifiers are attached to the verb: ἐν πνεύματι and ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ.

**The first modifier**, ἐν πνεύματι, occurs also in 4:2; 17:3, and 21:10.<sup>21</sup> Thus John will be ἐν πνεύματι on several occasions in the narration of the book. What is he talking about? Is he in a trance? In the Spirit? Or what?<sup>22</sup> If πνεῦμα is taken to refer to the human spirit, which it clearly can mean, then the idea of this preposition phrase is connected to being in a religious trance. The absence of the article with the noun in ἐν πνεύματι would point this direction. That is, John's inner consciousness was overwhelmed by God so that he experienced something 'out of body.' On the other hand, πνεῦμα often means the Spirit of God and in this

<sup>21</sup>Rev. 4:2. At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!

Εὐθέως ἐγένομην ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,

Rev. 17:3. So he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με εἰς ἔρημον ἐν πνεύματι. Καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα καθήμενη ἐπὶ θηρίου κόκκινον, γέμον[τα] ὀνόματα βλασφημίας, ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα.

Rev. 21:10. 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.

καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ

<sup>22</sup>The problem in this passage is whether ἐν πνεύματι (1) indicates an ecstatic state (and is thus analogous to phrases such as ἐν ἔκστασει, 'in a trance,' Acts 11:5; 22:17, or ἐγένετο ἐπ' αὐτὸ ἔκστασις, 'he fell into a trance,' Acts 10:10; cf. Bousset [1906] 192; Müller, Prophetie und Predigt, 49; Sharpe, "Reflections," 119–31), (2) refers to an actual experience of divine inspiration in general apart from ecstatic behavior (Hill, New Testament Prophecy, 73; Jeske, NTS 31 [1985] 452–64), or (3) is strictly a literary appropriation of conventional apocalyptic language used to authenticate fabricated vision reports." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, Revelation 1–5, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 82.]

perspective John was 'caught up' by God's Spirit to be able to experience this revelatory vision from God. The absence of the article in this case would be understood as stressing the qualitative nature of his experience with the Spirit of God.

Insight from the remainder of the Bible comes mainly from Micah 3:8 in which the LXX renders the Hebrew as ἐν πνεύματι κυρίου, in the Spirit of the Lord. This text provides affirmation of the prophetic authority behind Micah's preaching as coming from the Lord. The difficulty, however, is that the two contexts signal different case functions. In Micah, πνεύματι is clearly an agency expression in the instrumental case or the instrumental dative (depending on whether a five or eight case system is understood). The use of πνεύματι with the verb ἐγένομην argues strongly for a place or location idea (either locative of sphere or locational dative). Only in Rev. 17:3 and 21:10 with the use of the verb ἀπήνεγκέν με, he carried me, is an agency idea possible in Revelation. Paul's use of ἐν πνεύματι, in the Spirit, (Rom. 8:9; 14:17; Eph. 2:18, 22; 3:3–5; 4:3; 5:18; 6:18; Col. 1:8) is locational in terms of being in spiritual union with Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it moves a very different direction than does John's usage.

If by ἐν πνεύματι John intends his readers to understand being in a trance, his language is clearly different than what is found elsewhere in the New Testament clearly describing such an experience: cf. Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17 where the label ἔκστασις, trance, is used.

Yet, by this phrase John does seem to indicate his experiencing a visionary revelation from God in line with what is commonly claimed by the Old Testament prophets.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, he does not mention the standard preparatory rituals of prayer and fasting leading to such an experience, but such may be implied in the very next statement of also being ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, on the Lord's day. The subsequent three instances of ἐν πνεύματι clearly point this direction.<sup>24</sup> One side note

<sup>23</sup>By using the phrase ἐν πνεύματι, John claims to have experienced a vision trance, for nowhere in Revelation does he claim to speak through divine inspiration. The fact that John does not mention ritual preparations for a revelatory experience (e.g., prayer [cf. Dan 9:3; 10:2–3; 4 Ezra 3:1–36; Hermas Vis. 2.1.1] or fasting [cf. 4 Ezra 5:20–30; 6:31–59; 9:23–37; 13:50–51; Hermas Vis. 2.2.1; 3.1.1–2]) or the behavioral modifications that may have accompanied such experiences does not mean that they did not occur." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, Revelation 1–5, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 82–83.]

<sup>24</sup>The phrase ἐν πνεύματι, 'in the spirit,' occurs four times in Revelation (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Three of these involve responses to an invitation by an angelic being to come (1) to the heavenly world (4:1: ἀνάβα ὦδε, καὶ δεῖξω σοι, 'Come up here and I will show you ...'), (2) to the wilderness (17:1: δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι, 'Come, I will show you ...'), and (3) to a high mountain (21:9: δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι, 'Come, I will show you ...'). The term πνεῦμα, 'spirit,' in these passages is commonly taken to refer to the Spirit of

that is important. Given that John is talking about an unusual elevation of his senses to the presence of God through His Spirit, not much distinction between πνεῦμα as human spirit and divine Spirit really exists in this situation. His ‘out of the body’ experience was in reality being completely in the presence of the Spirit of God.

**The second modifier**, ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, is even more challenging to understand than the first. It has been typically translated as “on the Lord’s day” as though it referred to Sunday. But this is highly questionable and has little basis. In part, it appears to be a frequent translation error. The English expression “The Lord’s day” literally means (1) ‘the day belonging to the Lord’ which then by tradition comes to mean (2) Sunday as that special day. The Greek adjective κυριακός, -ή, -όν literally does mean “belonging to the lord or emperor,” which is very similar to meaning (1) of the English phrase.<sup>25</sup> But the English phrase most often is understood in terms of meaning (2), and no evidence exists during the first century to indicate that Christians ascribed such special significance to Sunday. For Jewish Christians of the first century the Jewish sabbath unquestionably remained the holy day with religious meaning. This in large part because across the Roman empire no single day of the week had religious meaning. The work-week was seven days from sunup to God and so is capitalized in modern English translations (AV [1:10 only]; RSV; NEB; NIV), and is so understood by many commentators (Beckwith, 435; Beasley-Murray, 112; Sweet, 114; Mounce, 133; Lohse, 19, 37; Lohmeyer, 44–45). Yet in all four occurrences of the phrase ἐν πνεύματι, ‘in [the] spirit,’ the noun is anarthrous, though that reveals little, since the article can be omitted optionally from nouns following a preposition. Of the seven uses of the term πνεῦμα in the singular in Revelation, ten use the articular form τὸ πνεῦμα, and all but 19:10 (see Comment) clearly refer to the Spirit of God (2:8, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 22:17). Strangely, the phrase ἐν τῷ πνεύματι in the sense of ‘inspired by the Spirit’ occurs just once in the NT, in Luke 2:27, of Simeon (the phrase is twice used in the instrumental sense of ‘by the Spirit’ in Luke 4:1; Acts 19:21; cf. Barn. 11:11). The phrase ἐν πνεύματι, however, does occur several times in very different senses in the NT (Luke 1:17; John 4:23, 24; Acts 1:5; Rom 2:29; 8:9; 1 Cor 14:6; Eph 2:22; 3:5; 5:18; 6:18; Col 1:8; 1 Tim 3:16), often in an instrumental sense (Matt 22:43; Acts 1:5; 1 Cor 14:16). There is, then, no reason for understanding any of these four passages as references to the Spirit of God. The phrase ἐν πνεύματι is an idiom that refers to the fact that John’s revelatory experiences took place not ‘in the body’ but rather ‘in the spirit,’ i.e., in a vision trance (Charles, 1:22; Swete, 13; Kraft, 95). In 1 Cor 14:15, Paul contrasts two states in which Christians can pray, τῷ πνεύματι, ‘with/in the spirit,’ and τῷ νοῷ, ‘with/in the mind.’ Caird (59) correctly and idiomatically translates ἐγένομην ἐν πνεύματι with the phrase ‘I fell into a trance’.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 83.]

<sup>25</sup>This meaning is clearly seen in the one other use of κυριακός, ἡ, ὄν inside the New Testament. First Corinthians 11:20 has the expression κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, which clearly means “the Lord’s supper” in the context of this use.

sundown. Their only breaks came with the periodic few days of holiday when one of the Roman religions celebrated some kind of festival. Only the Jews celebrated weekly a day as a special religious oriented day. And this was the Jewish sabbath from sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday evening.

For Gentile Christians the gathering together in the house church groups typically was virtually a daily experience, along with the Jewish Christians. That the day following the Jewish sabbath had special meaning is seen in the phrase μία σαββάτου / τῶν σαββάτων, *first day of the week*, (literally, *first day after the sabbath*), used in 1 Cor. 16:2 and Acts 20:7.<sup>26</sup> But neither of these texts even hint that gathering together as Christians on Sunday was normative, or distinct from the more common daily meetings.

In the second century, the *Epistle of Barnabas* (15:9) labels the first day of the week as “the eighth day” (τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ὀγδόην), as a meeting day for Christians toward the middle of the second century.<sup>27</sup> This

<sup>26</sup>1 Cor. 16:2. *On the first day of every week*, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.

*κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου* ἕκαστος ὑμῶν παρ’ ἑαυτῷ τιθέτω θησαυρίζων ὅ τι ἐὰν εὐδοῶται, ἵνα μὴ ὅταν ἔλθω τότε λογεῖται γίνωνται.

<sup>27</sup>Acts 20:7. *On the first day of the week*, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.

Ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων συνηγμένων ἡμῶν κλάσαι ἄρτον, ὁ Παῦλος διελέγετο αὐτοῖς μέλλων ἐξίνααι τῇ ἐπαύριον, παρέτεινεν τε τὸν λόγον μέχρι μεσονυκτίου.

<sup>27</sup>**Epistle of Barnabas 15:3-9.** 3 He speaks of the Sabbath at the beginning of the creation: “And God made in six days the works of his hands and he finished on the seventh day and he rested on it and made it holy.” 4 Pay attention, children, what is meant by “he finished in six days.” It means this, that in six thousand years, the Lord will finish everything. For a day with him signifies a thousand years. And he himself testifies to me, saying, “Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years.” So then, children, in six days (in six thousand years) the whole shall be completed. 5 “And he rested on the seventh day.” This means upon coming his Son will abolish the time of the lawless one and will judge the ungodly and will change the sun and the moon and the stars. Then he will truly rest on the seventh day. 6 Finally, indeed, surely he says, “You will sanctify it with clean hands and with a pure heart.” Therefore, if what God sanctifies that day now anyone can sanctify by being pure in heart, we have been completely deceived. 7 See that as a result, then, rightly resting, we will keep it holy when we ourselves are able, having been made righteous and having received the promise, when lawlessness exists no longer, but all things have been made new by the Lord, then we will be able to keep the Sabbath holy, ourselves having first been made holy. 8 Finally, indeed, surely he says to them: “Your new moons and sabbaths I cannot put up with.” *Do you see what he means? The present sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but the one I have made in which, having given rest to all things, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world. 9 Therefore, we also spend the eighth day in gladness, the day on which also Jesus*

seems to suggest that at least some Christian groups were moving toward a weekly meeting on the first day of the week. But this is not certain. The extremely puzzling phrase Κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου συναχθέντες κλάσατε ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσατε, *according to the Lord's day of the Lord having gathered together, we break and celebrate...*, is difficult to understand what the writer is pointing to. In the context the passage speaks of gathering to celebrate the Lord's supper, but to infer that this took place every Sunday from this text is stretching the text beyond the breaking point. Additionally, in Ignatius' *Letter to the Magnesians* (9:1<sup>28</sup>) the phrase κατὰ κυριακὴν simply refers to the resurrection day of Christ without indicating that the first day of the week had become a regular meeting day.

Much of the remainder of the second century Christian literature is just as ambiguous.<sup>29</sup> Only by the fourth Christian century is it clear that the first day of the week had become the Christian equivalent of the Jewish sabbath. Prior to that some of the Christian literature possibly points this direction, but not conclusively.<sup>30</sup> *rose up from the dead and, being made manifest, ascended into heaven.*"

[*The Apostolic Fathers in English*, trans. Rick Brannan (Logos Bible Software, 2012).]

<sup>28</sup>**Ign. to the Magn. 9:1-2.** 9.1 Therefore, if those who lived in ancient customs came to newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living *according to the Lord's day*, on which our life also arose through him and his death, (which some deny) through which mystery we came to believe, and because of this we endure so that we may be found to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher. 2 How will we be able to live without him, who even the prophets, being disciples in the Spirit, expected him as their teacher? And because of this, the one whom they rightly awaited, when he came he raised them up from the dead.

[*The Apostolic Fathers in English*, trans. Rick Brannan (Logos Bible Software, 2012).]

<sup>29</sup>*Gos. Pet. 12.50* (ἡ κυριακή replaces μία [τῶν] σαββάτων, 'the first [day] of the week,' found in the Synoptic parallels); Clement Alex. Strom. 17.12. Melito of Sardis, in Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 4.26.2, wrote a treatise entitled Περὶ κυριακῆς, but since only the title survives, the content of the work cannot be known. The expression κυριακή ἡμέρα, 'the Lord's day,' is found in Dionysius of Corinth in Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 4.23.8; Origen *Contra Celsum* 8.22. In Did. 14:1 we find the pleonastic expression κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου συναχθέντες, 'and when you gather on the Lord's (day) of the Lord,' rejected as impossible by Audet (*La Didachè*, 460) and therefore emended by him in agreement with the Georgian version to read καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ κυρίου, 'on the day of the Lord'; he considered κυριακὴν to be a marginal gloss that first interpreted ἡμέραν and later displaced it." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 84.]

<sup>30</sup>"While the meaning of κυριακὴ ἡμέρα in Rev 1:10 is widely understood to be a new Christian designation for Sunday, some even argue that it refers specifically to Easter Sunday (Strobel, ZNW 49 [1958] 185; Dugmore, "Lord's Day," 274-78; Strand, NTS 13 [1966-67] 174-81; arguments against this view are found in Rordorf, Sunday, 209-15, and Bauckham, "Lord's Day," 230-

What appears to me to be the best alternative meaning ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ in Rev. 1:9 is its literal meaning. That is, John is asserting that he had dedicated a particular day in order to do nothing but focus on Christ and His will, and it was in the midst of this special day that Christ chose to speak to him in the vision. This implies strongly the traditional Israelite prophetic preparation for such experiences through prayer and fasting. Thus John speaks of one special day completely devoted to Christ during which he experienced this heavenly vision. He does not associate this day with any particular day of a week.

When such an association is made centuries later by Christians, it is largely motivated by antisemitism with the desire to be different from the Jewish practices. The church fathers make this point rather clearly.

**The second main clause** is καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος λεγούσης, *and I heard behind me a loud sound like a trumpet saying.*

Once more John uses some unusual grammar constructions. In ancient Greek the verb ἀκούω could be used with direct objects either in the normal accusative case (φωνήν) or also in the genitive case (σάλπιγγος). The significance was that the accusative case object specified some kind of meaningless noise, while the genitive case object defined sound that contained intelligible meaning. Here John uses both forms to signal that the φωνήν was simply a very loud sound,<sup>31</sup> but the comparison to



31). According to this view, Sunday, the weekly Christian day of worship, developed out of the annual commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. This is problematic, however, since κυριακή never unambiguously means Easter Sunday, and Asia Minor (the region where many crucial texts originated: Rev 1:10; Did. 14:1; Ign. Magn. 9:1; Gos. Pet. 35, 50) was a region in which Easter was celebrated on 14 Nisan from the early second century A.D. on. Though many of the early Christian references to ἡ κυριακή (ἡμέρα) *could* refer either to Sunday or Easter (Did. 14:1; Ign. Magn. 9:1; Gos. Pet. 35, 50), some clearly refer to Sunday (Acts Pet. 29; Acts Paul 7: 'And Paul cried out to God on the Sabbath as the Lord's day drew near' [Schneemelcher, NTA 2:371]). Further, the Gnostic association of the Ogdoad ('the eighth') with the Lord's day assumes the Christian association of κυριακή, Sunday, with the 'eighth' day (Barn. 15:2; 2 Enoch 33:7; Ep. Apost 18 (Coptic); Clement Excerpta ex Theodoto 63; cf. Bauckham, "Lord's Day," 230). A less common view is that κυριακή ἡμέρα in Rev 1:10 refers to the eschatological Day of the Lord, i.e., that John was transported in his vision to the eschaton (Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath*, 123-31). Why then did John not use the more common expression ἡμέρα (τοῦ) κυρίου, which occurs frequently in the LXX and the NT?" [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 84.]

<sup>31</sup>Thus the common English translation of φωνὴν μεγάλην as a loud *voice* is highly questionable. The more literal mean of φωνή as 'sound' is more appropriate here in the context. The use of the

a trumpet, ὡς σάλπιγγος, was what carried meaning. Note that the participle λεγούσης, saying, is linked to σάλπιγγος by the common genitive case spelling rather than to φωνῆν in the accusative case. It is the σάλπιγγος rather than the φωνῆν μεγάλην that speaks the words that follow.

What we are reading is the depiction of a prophetic vision framed inside the Israelite prophetic narrative introductions to prophecy.

How does God speak? A variety of depictions exist in scripture especially when a prophetic vision is being presented.<sup>32</sup> That of a trumpet is common shows up extensively beginning with the theophany at Sinai (Exod. 19:16; 20:18). It continues to be depicted in subsequent similar texts such as Isa. 18:3; Joel 2:1; Zech 9:14; Psa. 47:5. Additionally the sound of thunder (Exod. 19:16, 19; 1 Sam. 2:10; Rev. 6:1; 8:5; 11:19; 14:2; 16:18; also Ben Sira 43:17; 2 Esdras 16:10) and sometimes thunder and lightning (e.g., Exod. 19:16).

Here and nineteen more times in Revelation a φωνῆν μεγάλην, **loud sound**, accompanies the Heavenly voice: 5:2, 12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12, 15 (φωναὶ μεγάλαι; pl. form); 12:10; 14:7, 9, 15, 18; 16:1, 17; 19:1, 17; 21:3. The identical expression surfaces almost 50 times in the LXX translation of the OT.<sup>33</sup>

English word ‘voice’ is done purely for simplification purposes. But it covers over what John is attempting to communicate here.

<sup>32</sup>“A number of different metaphors are used in Revelation to capture the loudness of the voices heard by John. The sound of these voices is compared to the blast of a trumpet (as here; cf. *Apoc. Sedr.* 11:19; Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:612:11:13), to the sound of thunder, and to the sound of roaring water. The sound of a trumpet or shofar was part of the Sinai theophany according to Exod 19:16; 20:18 (in both passages the phrase *קול שופר*, *qōl šōpār*, ‘sound of a trumpet,’ occurs). The motif of the sound of the trumpet continued to be used in theophanic contexts (Isa 18:3; Joel 2:1; Zech 9:14; Ps 47:5); it was also used in the Israelite cult (2 Sam 6:15; Isa 27:13; Joel 2:15; Ps 81:3). The use of the shofar in cultic settings could therefore be considered an imitation of the voice of Yahweh (Weiser, “Frage,” 523–24), or the imagery of the Sinai theophany could have been influenced by the use of the shofar in the cult (Beyerlin, *Origins*, 135–36). The voice of Athena is compared to a trumpet in the introductory theophanic scene in *Sophocles Ajax* 17, where the uncommon term used is *κῶδων*, ‘trumpet or bell of a trumpet’ (Greek tragedies frequently begin with a divine theophany; cf. Comment on 22:20). Thunder is called the trumpet (σάλπιγξ) of Zeus (*Nonnos Dionysiaca* 2.558–59; 6.230–31).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 85.]

<sup>33</sup>“The same phrase occurs nearly fifty times in the LXX, usually in the dative form φωνῆ μεγάλη, three times in the accusative (LXX Gen 27:34; 1 Esdr 3:11; Sir 50:16), and once in the nominative (LXX Esth 1:1). The regular use of the adjective following the noun reflects Hebrew and Aramaic usage. For the idiomatic use



With the combination of φωνῆν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος λεγούσης, **a loud sound as a trumpet speaking**, we are introduced to the first of several ecstatic experiences of John in which God communicates His will to the apostle.

Importantly the content of the speaking of the Heavenly voice provides John an initial command that will be the first of close to a dozen instances.<sup>34</sup> The core expression is two fold: γράψον, **write**, and πέμψον, **send**. The instruction to write positions John in terms of a mediator of the divine message, rather than the author of new ideas. The ideas are given directly to John in a visionary setting with instructions to communicate them in written expression to his targeted readers.

Interestingly what John was to write down is defined as ὃ βλέπεις, **what you see**, rather than **what you hear** (τοῦ ἀκούεις). Thus John is not the Lord’s stenographer writing down each word as dictated to him. Rather, John sees a giant picture and then uses his own skills in putting that visual picture into written words describing the picture.

All that John sees is then to be put εἰς βιβλίον, **in a book**.<sup>35</sup> The βιβλίον is the book of Revelation, and is alluded to in 22:7, 9, 10, 18, 19 (τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου). Of course, what βιβλίον means here is a scroll, not a book in the modern format. In the background of this command from God stands the similar expression in LXX Isa 30:8, γράψον...ταῦτα...εἰς βιβλίον, “**write ... these things ... in a book**.”<sup>36</sup> But John’s non-Jewish read-

of the dative phrase φωνῆ μεγάλη, ‘with a loud voice,’ see Comment on 5:2. However, in four additional instances in the LXX, the adjective is placed before the noun (1 Esdr 5:64; 9:10; Prov 2:3; 26:25; cf. Rev 16:1). The phrase also occurs in the Greek texts of the Pseudepigrapha (Adam and Eve 5:2; 29:11; T. Abr. 5:9; Paral. Jer. 2:2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 11:3; Sib. Or. 3.669; 5.63).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 85.]

<sup>34</sup>Cf. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; plus 1:19; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5.

<sup>35</sup>It is important to note two separate spellings of βιβλίον and βιβλος with essentially the same meaning. John opts to use βιβλος twice in reference ὁ βιβλος τῆς ζωῆς, **the book of life**, (3:5; 20:15). But τὸ βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς, **the book of life**, also shows up with reference to the same document in 13:8; 17:8; 21:27. Thus for John the alternative spellings did not signal a different document. What specifies the intended document is the qualifier (τῆς ζωῆς, **of life**; τούτου, **this**; ἄλλο, **another**) that is attached to the word for book.

<sup>36</sup>“Perhaps the closest verbal parallel is LXX Isa 30:8, γράψον ... ταῦτα ... εἰς βιβλίον, ‘write ... these things ... in a book,’ yet in Isaiah the reason is so that written prophecy can be a witness against the people at a later time (Lohmeyer, 16, and Kraft, 43, regard 1:11 as consciously modeled after Isa 30:8). Moses is commanded by God to write, a command probably referring to the ten commandments (Exod 34:27–28). In Deut 31:19, 21 (a passage similar to Isa 30:8), God commands Moses to write down a song (recorded in Deut 32:1–43) so that it will function as a witness against Israel. Again in Deut 31:24–27, the book of the law that Moses wrote was placed in the ark as witness against Israel. In

ers of this book would have clearly understood such a depiction of divine revelation, since similar commands were common in the pagan religious traditions of that period.<sup>37</sup>

Jub. 1:5–7, after the Lord revealed ‘what (was) in the beginning and what will occur (in the future)’ (Jub. 1:4b; tr. Charlesworth, OTP 2:52), Moses is commanded to write so that Israel will know how faithful God has been to them. At the conclusion of Tobit (12:20), the angel Raphael commands Tobias and Tobit ‘to write down everything which has happened in a book’ (γράψατε πάντα τὰ συντελεσθέντα εἰς βιβλίον), thus providing supernatural motivation for the composition of Tobit.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 85–86.]

<sup>37</sup>“Supernatural commands to write the substance of a divine revelation, occasionally found in Judaism (see Isa 30:8; 4 Ezra 14), are much more common in Greco-Roman texts, in which the gods often command people to write books while asleep: Plato *Phaedo* 4.60E–61B; Callimachus *Aetia* 1.1.21–22; *Propertius* 3.3; Cicero *Academica priora* 2.16.51 (quoting Ennius *Annales* 5); *Pausanias* 1.21.2 (Dionysius appeared in a dream to Aeschylus while he was gathering grapes and urged him to write tragedy); Pliny *Ep.* 3.5.4 (Nero Claudius Drusus, who had died in 9 B.C., appeared to Pliny the Elder in a dream urging him to write the history of Germany); Aelius Aristides *Or.* 48.2 (Asclepius had ordered Aristides to write down his dreams; the present account is a summary of his original diary of some 300,000 lines; cf. *Or.* 48.3, 8); Dio Cassius 73.23.2 (the author claims that καὶ μοι καθεύδοντι προσέταξε τὸ δαιμόνιον ἱστορίαν γράφειν, ‘and while I was sleeping the god commanded me to write history’; the present narrative, he claims, is the result); in 79.10.1–2, Dio claims that the deceased Severus appeared to him and ordered him to write about the life of Caracalla; POxy 1381.8.160–70 tells how Imouthes, an Egyptian god associated with Sarapis and identified with Asclepius, orders a devotee to write in praise of the god. These examples (for others, see Stearns, *Studies*, 9–11) suggest that the claim of receiving a divine commission in a dream to write a literary composition had become a stock literary device in which the dream functions as a prelude to the literary work itself (Stearns, *Studies*, 1–7), thus providing divine legitimation for the composition. In Menander *Rhetor* II.17 (Russell-Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, 207–9), the author recommends that a hymn to Apollo begin with a claim to divine inspiration, another clear indication of the stereotypical literary character of this motif. The earliest full example of this phenomenon in Greek literature (cf. *Iliad* 1.1–7) is found in Hesiod *Theogony* 22–34; cf. West, *Theogony*, 158–61). Though the mechanics are never specified, Apollonius of Tyana is said to have emerged from the oracular cave of Trophonius with a volume [i.e., ‘roll’] filled with the sayings of Pythagoras (Philostratus *Vita. Apoll.* 18.19–20). Lines 1–2 of the Sarapis *aretalogy* from Delos read ὁ ἱερεὺς Ἀπολλώνιος ἀνέγραψε κατὰ πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘The priest Apollonius wrote by the command of the god’ (Engelmann, *Aretalogy*, 7; English translation and commentary in Danker, *Benefactor*, 186–91). Often in magical procedures for procuring divine revelations, the author advises the practitioner to keep a small tablet handy to record whatever the supernatural revealer says (PGM VIII.89–91; XIII.90, 646). In PGM XIII.211, for example, it says ‘when the god comes in, look down and write the things [he] says and whatever name he may give you for himself.’ It is odd that John does not say that he wrote κατ’ ἐπιταγήν or καταπρόσταγμα or ἐλέυσιν, all meaning ‘by command’ and all used in such contexts (Nock,



Thus John conveys to his readers the divine authorization for the contents of the book of Revelation. This then very appropriately takes the place of the missing title of authority in the *Adscriptio* of 1:4. The prophetic visionary nature of what John records in the book more correctly needed to be set forth in this initial apocalyptic vision text of 1:9–20. Thus, the authority of the book grows out of this kind of religious experience by John.

The second command given here is πέμψον, *send*. Clearly what is to be sent is the ὃ βλέπεις, *what you see*, that has been written down in this book. This direct object relative clause picks up on the very similar ὅσα εἶδεν, *as much as he saw*, in 1:2. This, in turn, represents John’s interpretation of τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ* (1:2). This is characterized as ἔμαρτύρησεν, *he witnessed*. That is, John in writing down the visions presents his testimony of what he has personally experienced in these moments of ecstatic religious experience.

Who is he to send this book to? The seven churches, first mentioned in the *Adscriptio* of 1:4 as ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, *the seven churches in Asia*. Now in 1:11, these seven churches are specified by the city they were located in: ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, εἰς Ἔφεσον καὶ εἰς Σμύρναν καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον καὶ εἰς Ἔσσην καὶ εἰς Πάριον καὶ εἰς Σαρδεις καὶ εἰς Λαοδικεας καὶ εἰς Πάτμον. (1:11) [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 86–87.]

Θυάτειρα καὶ εἰς Σάρδεις καὶ εἰς Φιλαδέλφειαν καὶ εἰς Λαοδίκειαν.

As the above map indicates, a tracing of a route in their sequence of listing would create a circle bringing on ultimately back to the starting point in Ephesus. The significance of this is to affirm that the message of Revelation is intended for all the churches in Asia with these seven chosen as representative of the complete Christian community of Asia. The various problems treated in the individual letters given in chapters two and three are exemplary of the kinds of problems most all the churches experienced at some point of their existence. And for that matter, they exemplify most of the problems that churches over the duration of Christianity have experienced at one point or another.

In the studies taken from chapters two and three of Revelation the details of both the cities and the Christian community located in each will be treated in detail.

What especially needs to be noted at this point is that John was instructed to γράψον εἰς βιβλίον, *write a book*. And this one document that will contain all seven letters plus chapters 4-22 will be sent to each of the churches. Again, what is not known is whether only a single copy of Revelation was created by John and then each congregation made its own copy as it was brought to them and read before each

house church group in each city (cf. 1:3). Or, whether seven copies of Revelation were made on Patmos and then carried individually to the seven churches. More likely, the former scenario was what happened but we can't be certain.

One thing does become clear. If not already known, all seven Christian communities through this document became aware of issues and problems in the other six churches! Nothing remained hidden; everything -- spiritual warts and all -- was laid on the table openly for all Christians everywhere who read this document to know about. Therein lies an important motivation both by John and for every reader. When our church expe-

riences problems, we can't hide these problems from others. If we try, we are doomed to failure and we only make the problems worse. Fundamental transparency is essential for a congregation to enjoy spiritual health. Realizing that problems will not be swept under the rug helps deter individuals from creating problems in the church.

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

Again the ultimate question becomes, What can we learn from this passage to help us today? I think several important lessons emerge here that can guide us better in both interpreting the contents of Revelation

as well as remind us of important spiritual principles.

**Clearly** this introductory section of the prophetic vision in vv. 9-20 define in greater detail what John meant with his labels in vv. 1-3: Ἀποκάλυψις, *apocalypse*; τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, *the Word of God*; τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *the testimony of Jesus Christ*; and τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας, *the words of this prophecy*.

Step by step in the subsequent units of vv. 4-8 and 9-20 Jesus has unpacked those labels for his readers. This document will have the personal tones of an ancient letter, i.e., a substitute visit by the apostle himself. But the document in its essential nature is a prophetic vision anchored squarely in

the heritage of the Old Testament prophets of Israel. Out of that basic framework, the contents of the book will be expressed in the ancient Jewish apocalyptic heritage which arises from Israelite prophecy.

**Second**, the language and thought world of that Jewish apocalyptic heritage are going to play a critical role in providing language, imagery etc. for John to present his testimony of Jesus. Already we have observed his heavy dependency on both the OT prophetic writings as well as the Jewish apocalyptic writings in existence by the end of the first Christian century. One can never properly understand the message of Revelation without taking time to become acquainted with this





